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Teachings of the Book of Mormon, Semester 2: Transcripts of Lectures Presented to an Honors Book of Mormon Class at Brigham Young University, 1988-1990

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We got up to chapter 6 of Mosiah. We have just been larruping along; you can see that. That's the best place to begin a new year because it begins the new year with them. Remember, this is the great assembly that is held at the new year to launch not only a new age but a new constitution. This is the time when the constitution is confirmed. At the beginning of the meeting they didn’t take a census (remember, David was rebuked for taking a census; a census is part of it), but after the meeting was over the names were taken of everyone who had registered and signed the covenant; they made the list of incisi. Fortunately, it just happened to correspond perfectly with the names of everybody who was there because everybody signed up. That was ideal, the way it should be. They began a new regime, and the organic constitution of the nation is that of Mosiah. Of course, his father Benjamin established it, and his grandfather, Mosiah, established it too. This is observed right up until the end. They were bound by that which was based entirely upon the law of Moses. It comes up time and again here.

Everybody bring your Book of Mormon. Anybody without a Book of Mormon can go home right now. You must have the Book of Mormon; that’s the notebook. That’s the oracle, and we have to go by that. Where we begin in chapter 6, King Benjamin has just finished his farewell address. We can retrace our steps to Jerusalem and fill in here—you know what happened. Mosiah was the son of Benjamin, who was the son of Mosiah, who came to Zarahemla by command. When he came there the people made him king. That’s a thing not without precedent; you will see that. Where did he come from? He came from Nephi’s community. What was Nephi’s community? As we learned in Omni, after the main body had landed there was so much tension among them that Nephi couldn’t stand it. Right from the beginning, there had been this terrible tension in the family [caused by] hatred and jealousy. It was up and down, up and down—typical of Semitic people of the Near East. They were typical Palestinians actually. They were mixed blood; we have seen this from the genealogy of Lehi, who belonged to Manasseh, and other things. The tension got so great that Nephi decided to leave, just as they had left Jerusalem, with anyone who wanted to follow him. A big crowd left and created the settlement of Nephi. We get the small books from the various descendants. That went on to the time of Amaleki; in his day there was another breakoff. There were these breakoffs all the time. That is the Rechabite process; we’ve referred to that before. In chapter 35 of Jeremiah it tells about them. If you want to live righteously when the city gets bad, what do you do? You emigrate. They do it here; they do it everywhere. Utah has a big outdrain right now. We won’t go into the story of Jonadab and Rechab right now; you can read about that in chapter 35 of Jeremiah. But they left; they were always breaking off.

As you know, Lehi left Jerusalem because he was told to go. When they landed here they had their colony. Then when things got very bad, Nephi was commanded to leave them. He went out and that’s when they built the temple. Then Nephi’s people went bad. Following Jacob there were Enos, Jarom, Omni, Amaron and the rest. Finally, you get to Amaleki and Mosiah. In their time [the people] have become bad. This was the process,
and it was necessary to leave again. We are told that Mosiah himself was commanded to
leave (Omni 12). He went out to form a new colony and came to Zarahemla where they
made him king. He left in the time of Amaleki, who was the son of Abinadom, the son of
Chemish, the son of Amaron, the son of Omni. The people had departed from keeping
the covenants, and that has happened again and again. As we mentioned, that
community was founded when Lehi led a group away. I have been going backwards to
Jerusalem. Well, that was an awfully long journey to make, coming all the way from
Jerusalem to the west coast of South America. Quite a journey. Recently, a lot of studies
have been made of south sea navigation showing their uncanny skill at traveling many
thousands of miles across the open sea. They had secrets of navigation—currents, air
masses, stars, and all the rest of it.

It just happened that 600 B.C. was the great time in the world of colonization and
exploration. If you wanted a colony, you had to explore. Well, why would that be a great
time of colonization? Because things were very bad in the old cities—corruption
everywhere. It only takes a few bad years to start things moving again. Back in Jerusalem
we read that Lehi was in trouble and Jeremiah was in trouble because they objected to the
corruption of the people in the city—above all, their greed. At the same time Solon the
Great of Athens, a contemporary of Lehi, was writing on the very same subject, showing
the very same conditions. He migrated too, but he didn’t take people with him. He gave
them a constitution, and then he left and wandered for seven years. I would say he could
have been a very good friend of Lehi. They not only thought alike, but they did business
in the same area at Sidon. They were both importers, exporters, and merchants.

We are beginning with the sixth chapter of Mosiah where the great assembly ends. It’s the
farewell address of King Benjamin and the inauguration of his son whom he crowns, as
you will see here. They carry on with a new order which doesn’t last very long because
Mosiah is succeeded by judges. But right now Mosiah is the great one. His father was
Benjamin and his father was Mosiah who came and settled in Zarahemla. This takes place
in Zarahemla, which is not a Nephite city. It’s not Nephites and Lamanites at all. They’re
Mulekites, a much greater population than either one. Where did they come from? They
also came from Jerusalem just eleven years after Lehi came from Jerusalem. We might ask,
“What were these people doing running around like this?” Well, the year 600 B.C. is called
“the pivotal year.” That’s a term that Karl Jaspers, a German philosopher, has given it. But
many other people talk about it also. H. G. Wells calls it that too. It’s the pivotal period
because the whole world turned on a pivot, and you get a new age. It was a perfect time
for the Book of Mormon to begin—a new culture history, a new setting, a new world. All
the old sacral kingships collapsed all at once. What would do that? Well, of course, the
weather and migration. If you read the Greek lyric poets from the seventh century, just
before this—like Mimnermus and Callinus, etc.—they tell about the invasion of the
Sumerians. They wrote poems about how the Sumerians came and swept into Asia Minor,
wiped everything out, and settled down there. Some of them from the north became
Goths, our ancestors. Way back in that early time, Lehi’s time, they were invading and
pushing in. Why? Because the steppe had dried out, and they were forced to move.

The most important place in the world at that time was Palestine, as it always has been.
That’s where people have always copped out. One wave after another has been spewed out
of Palestine because of the political tensions. Political tensions are caused by revolutions,
etc., which are caused by migrations, which are caused by weather changes. That’s
gopolitics. We won’t go into that except that Palestine is very important, you see. It’s
very important in the Book of Mormon here because in the Jaredites you have the other
condition. The Jaredites went north into the Valley of Nimrod, which is up by the Caspian Sea. They took the land route across Central Asia. Lehi took the water route. The essence of geopolitics is Haushofer, but the originator of it was Halford Mackinder, a Scotch geographer in the nineteenth century. This is what set Hitler going. That’s why he had to take Russia, the Ukrainian bread basket, etc. That came from Haushofer and was called geopolitics. It’s very simple. The thing is that world history has always been rivalry between the great land power and the great sea power. The great land power was Asiatic at this time. It was the Austro-Prussian agreement, the Axis, what he calls the heartland. The heartland is that area of Asia and Europe which is covered by snow in the wintertime. It takes the form of a shield. It is not all nomadic, but it is marginal. In a bad year they have to move, and they move in all directions. For this reason people have to defend themselves. For that reason you had the Great Wall of China and the Khyber. Here you have the wall of the Asians, the Amu, the Great White Wall of the Egyptians, etc. Clear across Europe you have the limes built by the Romans, way up to Hadrian’s Wall up in Scotland. They built physical walls to keep these people out. Those walls lasted for hundreds of years, and the pressure was on them all the time. The most important place in the world is the cockpit where they all fight. We were talking about World War II, where the sea power was Britain, and the land power was the Central Powers. According to Haushofer and to MacKinder, the sea power always wins. It can shut off the other one from markets and everything else. The last world war was the very same sort of thing, sea power versus land power. The thing that brought on [World War I] was the Kaiser building up a huge fleet because he has to be the sea power.

But where does the sea invade the land? There’s this great land mass of Asia, Africa, and Europe, and there is only one place where the sea goes in thousands of miles, and that’s the Mediterranean. At the end here the three places come together—Asia, Africa, Europe—and this is Palestine. They were always fighting for it, and they were fighting for it in Lehi’s day. Babylon was the great power under Nebuchadnezzar. They had already taken Jerusalem a few years before, but they didn’t destroy it completely. King Josiah (and I think Mosiah was named with him in mind), who reformed the constitution and saved Israel from the Babylonians, was killed by King Necho in a battle up here. The fight was between Necho II and Nebuchadnezzar. Necho II of the twenty-sixth dynasty ruled in the time of Lehi, and he saw this business. He saw that he could not prevail against Babylon as a land power, but he was an Egyptian and had a great navy. In Lehi’s day the trireme was invented by the Corinthians, and they started turning out these marvelous war ships that nothing could resist. Necho bought them all up. He had a navy of Greeks, and he occupied Palestine with Greek soldiers. Greeks were found everywhere. From this time we have inscriptions from way up the Nile at Abydos, and Greek soldiers wrote their names at Aswan in Lehi’s day. And you find Greek names in the Book of Mormon; they pop up occasionally, especially later on.

What did Necho do? In his day he sent a fleet clear around Africa. Nothing like that had ever been done. At the same time he built the Suez Canal. He started it. He didn’t finish it, but it was finished and it worked. This was a time of great expansion. The brother of one of the lyric poets was a mercenary in Necho’s army, and he was a mercenary in the Babylonian army. They would hire themselves out. It was a time when everybody was moving around everywhere and the pressure was on. The one thing was to get good land, so they were exploring. They would take these long exploring trips. They went out to Britain and all over the place. They went up above the Black Sea. At this time they sent a lot of colonies way up into Russia. They stopped to get water and supplies at islands on the
way. They may have left their names at places. The name Moroni is found all across this southern area, but Moroni’s name comes up later.

Things were bad in the ancient world, and the sacral kingship fell everywhere. Solon established the Greek democracy; he was the inventor of democracy. He gave them a constitution with the proviso that they couldn’t change it without his signature. When they agreed to that, he left town for ten years so they would have to live with it. That’s the basis of Athenian democracy from which all democracies come. Other cities followed the example. It’s always been a struggle. It didn’t last very long in Athens, as you know. Pretty soon Alexander came along, and he took a lot of voyages. Some people say Nearchus, his admiral, sailed all over the Pacific, reached America, etc. Don’t be surprised at the things that were happening because this was an explosive age. You notice it was a time when people were trying to decide between kings and popular governments, and it was the age of the tyrants. These were very able men who rose up and put themselves in charge. This happens in the Book of Mormon too. There was Polycrates of Samos, Dionysius of Sicily and his son and Cleisthenes at Athens. Before Cleisthenes there was Pisistratus. They were big families and important men who took over the government and caused things to settle down. They were competent men, but they didn’t have any legal right to rule, either by line descent or by popular vote. They weren’t voted in popularly. A tyrant was somebody who surrounded himself with troops, usually foreign troops (Egyptian troops if they were in Greece and Greek troops if they were in Egypt) and set himself up in rule. This was the rule because the kingship had broken down everywhere. In 600 B.C. everybody was asking, “Who’s in charge around here?” Anybody who could grab the power. That wasn’t good enough, and it led to some terrible things. This is the settling down after the great migrations. There were great migrations earlier. Then there was the settling down and the rivalry between the great houses and the great families. That’s the story of Greek tragedy which is archaic. It goes back to the myths, etc. when the same thing was happening.

But the Book of Mormon is entirely in the milieu here. The theme of the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants is “the anatomy of destruction.” Remember, the Book of Mormon starts out with how that great city of Jerusalem was about to be destroyed, and the Book of Mormon ends with complete destruction. And it all is a warning to us. The opening words of the Doctrine and Covenants are the same way. “Hearken, O ye people of my church, saith the voice of him who dwells on high...The voice of the Lord is unto all men, and there is none to escape; and there is no eye that shall not, neither ear that shall not hear, neither heart that shall not be penetrated... The day speedily cometh; the hour is not yet, but is nigh at hand, when peace shall be taken from the earth, and the devil shall have power over his own dominion” (D&C 1:1, 2, 35).

So we are moving toward some great destruction. These books are given as warnings on the eve of great destruction. But this has happened all through the Bible. As you know, that was what the prophets did; they warned of the destruction of Jerusalem, which was destroyed from time to time. As I said, it had been destroyed earlier. It had been destroyed by the Assyrians in 720 B.C. and by Nebuchadnezzar earlier than 600 B.C. Josiah broke his agreement with [Necho]. That brought [Necho] back, and Josiah was killed in the battle of Megiddo. So it was a very long journey.

Now Zarahemla was not a Nephite city. The racial and ethnic picture in the Book of Mormon is very complicated. We get the simplistic idea that any time we find any ruin or anything in this country it must be either Nephite or Lamanite. That’s absolutely silly. You get a very complex picture, as we’ve seen before, and it’s going to get more complex.
as we go along. Zarahemla was a Mulekite city, and you know who the Mulekites were. It means “the king’s people.” We are told in the Bible that there was only one survivor from Zedekiah’s family, and he got away. All his sons were put to death before the eyes of the king, and he was blinded. Then he was taken to Babylon. That was the king who was ruling in the time of Lehi. We have a contemporary record for that now, the Lachish records, written at the last great fortress that was taken. They describe the fall and destruction at the time of Lehi. These are original documents, not copies of copies. They are not something that has been passed down through the Middle Ages. We have the original documents from the time the city fell, giving us exactly the same picture we get in the Book of Mormon—the factions, the broken families, the rivalries. One side favors Egypt, the other side favors Babylon, and it’s a terrible picture.

Eleven years after them [Lehi’s group], a larger group came. They saw that the city was going to fall and took off. How did they ever make it? I think people were doing it all the time. It was a great thing, but it could be done. They called themselves the Mulekites, the Mulekiah, which means “the king people,” because we are told in the Book of Mormon that the youngest son of the king went with them. Their pride and joy was that they were the king’s people. The word malek is king; but the word mulek [mulaik] means “dear little king.” It’s a caritative and it’s a diminutive. The Mulekites were the people who had the little king with them; they were rather proud of that. When they came over, he was a child about ten or eleven. He may have been older. We saw some stories about him connected with the Lachish Letters. It was all quite plausible, their getting over here. But they were a bigger group, and Zarahemla was a big city. Zarahemla or Darahemla is a very good Oriental name. It means red city. You find it in other places. There’s a very important trading center right in the middle of the Sahara called Zarahemla (Dår) al-Ḥamrā’.

Question: The Phoenicians were ship people. Is it possible that the Mulekites had some connection with them?

Answer: Remember, if Lehi wanted to do business, he would do it either through Sidon, or he could do it through Tyre. But Sidon was the main port at that time. It’s a very interesting thing that the Phoenicians controlled Sidon at that time. They didn’t always, but at that time they controlled Sidon. And there were the Philistines at the same time. They were the coast people too. Of course, the Phoenicians spoke a language just like Hebrew, and they were the great ship people too. The alphabet and other things are attributed to the Phoenicians because they got around so much. They got around all over the place in Phoenician ships. You’ve heard of Cyrus Gordon. The Phoenicians came here, and you can find Phoenician inscriptions in Brazil, etc. In fact, I went down to see what was supposed to be a big Phoenician inscription (I think it was faked) on a rock at Los Lunas in New Mexico, where the ancient turquoise mines were. There was an inscription there and it was perfectly good Phoenician, but I thought somebody may have faked it. There was a bad mistake; somebody had gone over the letters recently with a sharp tool and they were all fresh cut. If they had left them alone so [the experts] could use the lighting etc., then you could see. But that can be decided. So the Phoenicians got around too. Barry Fell, the Harvard marine biologist, has all sorts of crackpot theories about the Libyans coming over here, etc. But actually there were Kon Tiki and the Ra. Heyerdahl’s voyages were to show that the trip could be made in either direction, on either the Pacific or the Atlantic. He crossed from Egypt in a reed boat; imagine a boat made of nothing but rushes. We are told that Lehi’s ship was a more solid structure than that, but these things are all right.
There are some other things to notice here. Mosiah came in with his group and was made king. Remember, he was told to leave this group of people in the Nephite settlement after (Chemish means five) about six kings. He was told to go because the people had gone bad again. He came out and landed up in Zarahemla, and they wanted him to be king. That’s a very normal procedure. I talked about tyrants. Sometimes they were very popular; sometimes they were chosen. Their great desire was to get themselves made king. It happened on numbers of occasions. We have that in our own time. Think of the foreign kings that have come in and been chosen by people. After Charles II it looked as if there was going to be a Catholic succession in England, and the English chose the king of Scotland [James VII] to come in and be [James II]. He was Scotch. He wasn’t English at all, but he came in and became king of England. Then when there was another showdown [during the reign of James II], they brought in William and Mary from the Netherlands. They became the rulers of England. Then later there was more trouble, and they brought in George I who didn’t even speak English. Even Queen Victoria spoke with a German accent. They brought in George I, and there were four Georges in a row. They were Germans, the Hanoverian kings. What were they doing in England? Well, the people elected them and called them in because there was tension, and they represented the dominant party and dominant interests. This sort of thing happens all the time. We think of the Romanovs, the czars, as the ancient rulers of Russia; they weren’t anything of the sort. That was just in the eighteenth century. Romanov was a pirate who just took over the throne and was accepted. It was the same thing with the last shah. His father, Reza Shah, was a giant of a man in the army. He was one of the nobility, but there has never been a single case in the long history of Persia where a legitimate shah has succeeded his father. They were always “bumped off,” and the shah was somebody else. It happened, as we mentioned, in sixty-seven cases. This last shah who was thrown out was put in by the CIA. He really was; that’s no secret. He pretended and put on all the glory of ancient Persia, a two-thousand-year-old empire and kingdom. It was that, but he wasn’t from a long line of kings at all. He was a big bully’s son.

We have two kinds of criticism in the Book of Mormon. When you criticize any ancient record, there are two ways of criticizing. You use macro-criticism or micro-criticism. That’s something new; I just discovered it. You can see what macro-criticism is. When you read the Book of Mormon, you say, “Is this really true?” Now we are talking about evidence here, but this is not the most important thing, of course. The evidence confirms the teachings, but the teachings wouldn’t need any evidence at all to hit you in the solar plexus because they are true. We find that out soon enough. But when you read this, you ask, “Is this the way things really were? Was it that kind of a world? Is that the way the world was at that time? Were the people agricultural and nomadic or urban? What was the setting? It sticks out all over here. Is it a jungle setting? And the geography—they move a great distance, but how great?” I would never waste five minutes on Book of Mormon geography until we get some definite points of reference. Well, you have Zarahemla, but we don’t know where Zarahemla was, as far as that goes. So don’t worry about that; it’s all relative anyway. But in macro-criticism there are great things to go by. There are some big things.

Then the micro-criticism is hundreds of details that get smaller and smaller. As we read more and more, we notice all sorts of little things. It’s their triviality that makes them so important. They are trivial clues, you see. They are the things that nobody ever would have bothered to think of, or dream up, or look up, or know this was the way things were done at that time. In the Book of Mormon these things are sowed around with a lavish hand—things that only an observer could know, like the tokens of recognition in the new
comedy which with the Christians became the recognition literature. The family is separated, like they are in The Comedy of Errors or Twelfth Night, and how do they recognize each other? By a token, by a ring, or something a baby was buried with. A dress or something like that is the token, or the chest in which the baby was found. Or there are certain signs and tokens by which people recognize each other. Well, that’s the way it is with the Book of Mormon. Very often we come on these hints that could only come from a member of the family, you might say—the tokens of recognition you find in the recognition drama.

Notice the last verse of the preceding chapter, verse 15. It ends on a very upbeat affair. This is an interesting thing about this meeting. This was at the end of the very brilliant reign of Benjamin, who has made them victorious over their enemies and assured prosperity in the land. Things were going wonderfully. They are at the peak of their power, glory, and influence. It must have been a splendid affair, and all Benjamin does during his whole speech is to throw cold water on their pride, etc. Don’t get any ideas that you are anybody at all. He really cuts them down to size again and again. “I would that ye should remember, and always retain in remembrance, the greatness of God, and your own nothingness. . . .I say unto you that if ye do this ye shall always rejoice,” he says (Mosiah 4:11-12). We are less than the dust. We are nothing and have no right to claim anything at all. He goes on and on; that’s the whole theme. Then when he gets to the end of his speech, it’s upbeat in Mosiah 5:15: “Always abounding in good works, that Christ, the Lord God Omnipotent, may seal you his, that you may be brought to heaven, that ye may have everlasting salvation and eternal life, through [notice] the wisdom, and power, and justice, and mercy of him who created all things in heaven and in earth, who is God above all.”

This takes us right back to Lehi’s day, and to Solon and to Plato. These are the four Platonic virtues. What are the Platonic virtues? Wisdom, justice, valor, moderation. Here we have wisdom and power. God doesn’t need valor or courage. If you are all powerful, you are not afraid of anything. But it’s God’s power, not men’s power. The equivalent in the Platonic virtues that men should possess is valor, the courage to carry on because our power is weak. But justice and mercy are the two great ones. Incidentally, from time to time a shaggy dog will pass among you. No, better than that, you will be afflicted by a few lines from Shakespeare. But you must allow that; you have to suffer that patiently. We know the speech on justice and mercy, don’t we?

The quality of mercy is not strained,  
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven  
Upon the place beneath; it is twice blessed;  
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes;  
‘Tis mightiest in the mightiest [the king]; it becomes  
The throned monarch better than his crown;  
His scepter shows the force of temporal power,  
The attribute to awe and majesty,  
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings,  
But mercy is above this sceptered sway,  
It is enshrined in the hearts of kings,  
It is an attribute to God himself [here it is],  
And earthly power doth then show likest God’s  
When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, Jew,  
Though justice be thy plea, consider this,
That in the course of justice, none of us
Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy,
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
The deeds of mercy.

Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, Act IV, Scene 1

These are the old classic lines. Shakespeare was picking them up; actually, they go way back. These are called the Platonic virtues because he discussed their being in balance with each other. In the Book of Mormon King Benjamin gave an extremely well balanced and beautifully composed address. It's a marvelous address which teaches above all things humility for men.

Now after that King Benjamin thought it was expedient to take the names of the people. See, he didn't have a census at first. Remember, David offended the Lord by doing that. But it's a very important part of this meeting. Remember, this took place at the new year, we are told, because they all brought their first-fruits. And it was the establishment of the new government because the new king was taking over. The date was set by the old king. He said, I'll make you king on this particular date; you send out the announcement. It's very interesting that he has his son make the announcement. Why should that be? Because according to the normal order, the meeting wouldn't be held until the old king was dead. The son always announced the meeting and brought the people together because his father wasn't there anymore. If he had done that before, he would be guilty of treason. He would be guilty of plotting against his father, to prematurely put him off the throne or something. So they always waited until the old king was out of the way and then his son would summon the people. Benjamin instructs his son that he is to bring the people together, to take charge of the meeting, etc. We saw what kind of meeting it was, including the speech from the tower and all the rest. That's the old Jewish practice, which is not found in the Bible but is found in some other sources we saw last semester.

He had to take the names of all those who had entered the covenant. He didn't force them to sign and take the names. What about their free rights, etc.? Those who signed the covenant were willing. They had already put their names on a covenant. So their names were taken and put on the list which is the Book of Life, which is opened at the new year. It is a register of all the people who have a right to live in the kingdom and pay taxes during that year. That's what the Book of Life is. Remember, we call the Bible “the Book of Life that is opened at the beginning of the world.” It was the Babylonian and Egyptian custom and everywhere else. In Rome it is especially interesting; it's the book, the incisi. At the new year, they told fortunes and used divination to discover what the fortunes of the new year were going to be. Everyone was assigned an appointment. It was the only time you could make contracts in most ancient societies. For example, in England if you wanted to hire a servant you had to do it at the great assembly, which goes way back. They have discovered in the last two or three years that those old stone circles, like Stonehenge and Avebury, should be dated differently. They have put them back two thousand years earlier. They go way back, and it's very interesting that Silbury Hill, which is up there by Avebury, has the same dimensions exactly as the Great Pyramid and is now given the date 2750 B.C., which is the date of the Great Pyramid. It looks just like it. It's a marvelous structure, the highest artificial mound in Europe. It's up there in England by Marlborough.
They put them on the list of the *incisi*, the incised list. In Rome they had big wooden pillars. Like we have these swinging leaves with advertising on them, etc., they had these lead plates that would swing around. They used lead because it is easy to inscribe. They inscribed the name of every citizen, and every citizen had to come. We are told that at the end of the book of Zechariah, the next to the last book of the [Old Testament], that if any do not come up to Jerusalem at the new year to hail the new king, upon them shall be no rain and they will receive no blessings. You had to come, and in Rome they would come clear from Sicily and from Gaul so they could be present at the meeting. Way back in the time of the Republic, before the emperors, we are told of one venerable gent who was coming up from Calabria with his daughter to come to the meeting. On the mountain pass down there they were struck by lightning, so we know they were making a struggle to get to the meeting.

Everyone who signed agreed to keep the covenants. “You are this day reborn.” Remember, he gave them a new name. It was their birthday, it was the beginning of a new age. Everything began anew on that day. Everything was renewed. He had them all registered and took their names down, so they were all set for the new age now. Verse 2: “There was not one soul, except it were little children, but who had entered into the covenant and had taken upon them the name of Christ.” Then all the people were registered, so now they could vote. Notice, he did this before he anointed or crowned his son because these people had to be registered voters in order to give the *acclamatio*. That’s the acclamation of the king. If you don’t raise your voice in acclamation of the king, then you are considered an outlaw, and you are banished from the kingdom for three years. This is the rule that you find almost everywhere, so that’s what we have here. “There was not one soul, except it were little children, but who had entered into the covenant” and had their names taken, and then they could approve the king because they were now full-fledged citizens.

Verse 3: “And again, it came to pass that when king Benjamin had made an end of all these things, and had consecrated his son Mosiah [and it’s a sacral government] to be a ruler and a king over his people, and had given him all the charges concerning the kingdom [now he can take it over], and also had appointed priests to teach the people . . .” You notice it is as in the law of Moses. They had kings of Israel and of Judah, but the priests taught the people in the temple and in the synagogue. The king was a teacher too, but in the temple and the synagogue the priests had their teachings to perform. It was Solomon Zeitlin who showed that synagogues did not first develop after the fall of the temple to take its place. They were just plain meeting houses, and they had them all along right from the first, “to stir them up in remembrance of the oath which they had made.” They had taken a covenant and an oath, so he is to stir them up. You notice, this is the *eniautos*. They don’t repeat the ceremony. You only receive an endowment. You only take the oath once, but you remember it after. That’s why in the sacrament they always “remember him that they may keep his commandments which he has given them, and always have his spirit to be with them.” They renew the covenants, not by going through them again, but by a different ordinance. It renews the covenants we made of remembrance. “This do in remembrance of me,” as he said in the sacrament in the New Testament.

The king “appointed priests to teach the people, that thereby they might hear and know the commandments of God, and to stir them up in remembrance of the oath which they had made” to renew the terms from time to time. Every year the oath was renewed. That’s why the people had to come and renew it. They didn’t say you only take it once because
you take it for life. You take it forever, and you are never going to break it. That’s the idea, but we weaken and sometimes we have to renew them. And it’s as a witness. When we take the sacrament, it is as a witness that we remember. That’s what it’s for; you make the covenant once. That difference is interesting, whereas the Catholic mass claims to be the actual repetition of the event—that it actually is the sacrifice in a mystic way. With us, it is just recalling to memory. Then “he dismissed the multitude, and they returned, every one, according to their families, to their own houses.” Another very interesting touch. The great assembly in the Mosaic law and throughout the ancient world is by families. Everybody had to come as a pilgrim and be dismissed to his home after that. “Thou shalt not celebrate the Passover within thy gates which the Lord thy God giveth thee.” Everyone had to come to this event as a pilgrim. They sat by family groups in circles, every family with its back to every other, every family by itself. We are told this not only in the New Testament and the Old Testament but in the Talmud too. In the last meeting when they take the meal, everyone must eat a piece of the meat at least as big as an olive, and they must eat it with a staff in their hand, their shoes on their feet, and their cloaks ready to go. Then they must leave when they are finished and not look back because it is a sacred place. It’s mactus. This is the holy place where [people] meet commonly with the ancestors, gods, and everything else. I’m talking about an order beginning the Hierocentric rites on which I have written a good deal. There’s a lot of stuff on this. If the place is mactus it’s the place open to the other world. You’ll notice with the Hopis, it’s a sand patch in the beginning. This is where you sit around here. There’s the altar and the two little trees on either side with their Christmas tree decorations on them. This is very ancient.

The Greeks called it the sand patch, the konistra, where nothing could grow and no mortal could stand. The chorus acting as kachinas would dance in there. Then right in the center of everything is the sipapu. That’s the hole that goes down to the underworld, which in Rome was called the mundus. It means the universe or the world. It had a stone on the top of it called the lapis manalis. This was the stone called the omphalos or the umbilical stone at Delphi, and it stood over this hole to the underworld. The lapis manalis means “the stone for keeping people in place, for keeping the spirits in their place.” During the festival the stone was taken off. The lapis was removed, and mundus patet was the formula. Our word mouth is cognate with mundus, and the word for world or universe is the same word. When they moved the stone, then it was mundus patet. The Mount Mundus is now open, the spirits come forth, the place is sacred, and everyone there is now mactus. You are exposed to great powers. The best [description] was from Egypt, recently written by Phillip Derchain on this very subject. What happens then? He said the meeting place at the temple was a powerhouse and was full of spirit electricity. Tremendous surges of power went through the place. It was a very awesome thing when they would come together at these meetings. Then when it was over, the mundus was closed and everybody went home. But they couldn’t go back there, except at the proper time and place, or they would be taken away and never seen again. Well, these things all run together. This is quite a detailed description of the meeting that we have been given in the book of Mosiah here. But it’s important that they met by families with their staffs in their hands, their shoes on their feet, and wearing their cloaks. They were not to look backward when they left because they were leaving until another year when they would come again.

Now we are on verse 4: “And Mosiah began to reign in his father’s stead. . . . And king Benjamin lived three years and he died.” Later on we are going to find what he did. He kept the books because he was a great antiquarian. We learned that from the early part. Remember, he made his sons learn Egyptian, as little as they liked it because it was a
痛苦的工作。‘‘基王摩西行走在主的道上，并遵守他的判断、法度，并遵守他所吩咐他的一切命令。’’现在这里有一个古老《死海古卷》的公式：判断、法度、命令。它们是三大要素，总是一起出现的。例如《塞利克卷》中，这三个要素中没有一个单独出现过。判断、法度、命令。国王是法官，当然。记住，基王所罗门是法官。判断是法律的制定，命令是神所命令的。法度是由人写下的，经过议会的讨论，并决定下来的。所以我们有判断、法度、命令。

“并且基王摩西使他的人民耕种土地。”现在这是一个巨大的线索。我们谈过了微批评和宏批评。一个好的例子是智慧、力量、正义、慈爱。是巧合吗？他怎么会知道那些在利黑时代极为重要的四重美德？现在我们来到这一点。这是一个宏批评，它给了我们一幅毕生的生活画面。这些人已经过着标准的印第安人的生活。在.Driver和Massey的那本大著作中，他们收集了所有在哥伦布时代有关印第安人的所有情报。有超过半的美国领土，东部比西部大一倍，都是在耕作的。他们是农民；他们不是游牧民。有狩猎，就像在中美洲的丛林和米帕斯一样。他们在丛林中狩猎，却耕种。这是一种耕种方法。但他们都在这里耕种过；这是重点。他亲自动手耕种，所以他的人民不成为负担。他按照他父亲所做的事情去做，他在所有事情上都是这样的。所以这是他们的习俗；他们是完全的农业民族。

好的，我最喜欢的人是霍皮印第安人。它是高度发达的文明。他们的历史、他们的传说、他们的艺术等。然而，他们完全的生活是依靠没有但是玉米。那几乎就是他们的一切。他们用阿科马交换辣椒，种植西瓜。在一堆沙子里，你会看到一两棵小的树，任何将生长的东西——因为那里非常荒凉。但是这是农业。你可以有一个完全没有其他东西的社会而且能生存和成为伟大的社会。我们下次再谈。

“并且在所年间他们没有争斗。”非常有趣的是他们没有争斗，因为他们自称为Moquis，和平的人，不争论的人。任何人有争斗就是kahopi，那是非常糟糕的。他们已经和平地生活了几个世纪。情况是完全在他们的掌控之中，因为他们在每粒玉米的来源处都很清楚。非常简单。

我看到时间到了，所以我们必须停止。我们现在就要到摩西亚7章。我们正在飞快地前进。是不是令人惊讶他们已经过着印第安人的生活呢？这是印第安人的文化已经在这里建立了。当然，他们已经在这里很长时间了。500年之后他们已经完全建立了。
TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

HUGH NIBLEY

Semester 2, Lecture 31
Mosiah 7
Stable Civilizations
The Search for the Lost Colony

We are on chapter 6 of Mosiah, and this is why, usually in the second or third week, a good portion of the class drop out. They just don’t like it, and you will see why. This is a marvelous chapter, and it is going to tell us an awful lot. We come to chapter 7 now. The Book of Mormon tells us things we don’t like to be told. If it told us only what we wanted to hear, of course, we wouldn’t need it. But that’s the only part of the scriptures we are willing to accept. Well, here we go. Notice the last verse of chapter 6 before we get to chapter 7. What a strange economy this is. King Mosiah was king of Zarahemla, and he was a Nephite not a Zarahemlite. “And king Mosiah did cause his people that they should till the earth [I would say that was an agrarian society, wouldn’t you?]. And he also, himself, did till the earth [the king goes out and plows], that thereby he might not become burdensome to his people, that he might do according to that which his father had done in all things.” His father had done the same thing; he is keeping the rule his father laid down in all things. As we said last time, here you have the organic constitution of the land. The constitution of Benjamin and Mosiah remains right to the end, and the great rival to it, of course, is that of the Nehors. But here he did as his father had done in all things, including cultivating the earth. He wanted to be like him in that, too.

“And there was no contention among all his people for the space of three years.” That’s as long as Benjamin was alive. Benjamin lived for three years [after Mosiah became king]. So what is going on here? What a strange economy this is in which everybody lives by the sweat of his brow. This was Adam’s economy, too. He didn’t live in the stock market; he lived by the sweat of his brow. But should the king be doing that sort of thing? Well, why not. That was Brigham Young’s ideal—everybody would spend two or three hours in the field a day. That would be plenty if we all worked. “Then we would have time to do the things for which we are here, namely improving our minds,” he said. That’s what we should be doing. But this was Adam’s economy—both in the garden, where he was told to dress and keep the garden, and out of the garden, where he was condemned to toil and sweat all the days of his life. By the sweat of his brow he would earn his living. Are there such societies? Well, yes. Anciently, the king always cultivated with everybody else. Remember, it tells us how old King Laertes toiled in the vineyards and on the fields—old King Laertes on the hillside in the sun, etc. They used to think if the king didn’t cultivate the fields things wouldn’t grow. We see lots of folklore about that sort of thing. These are the normal societies that pervade throughout the earth. The other societies are expansive and acquisitive, as ours is. And they are necessarily destructive; we destroy as we go. We have Aristophanes and Thucydides describing how it happened. Aristophanes wrote a long list of plays all criticizing the transition of Athens from its old-fashioned, quaint, agrarian society to a new aggressive, expansive business society, and it’s biting satire. Then if you want clinical analysis that belongs very much in our day. General George Marshall was “chairman of the board” during World II. He was a great general and a great man, but he
always had them start out by reading Thucydides. He warns us when we get expansive and ambitious.

The utopian ideal was tried, but it didn’t work in this country. We are talking about where everybody works in the field, etc. With the Latter-day Saints it worked, but when they tried it with the Amana Society (Brother Robert Owen) and other idealistic societies, it didn’t work because the people were factory workers who had just decided to get away from it all and go back to the soil. They weren’t accustomed to it; it wasn’t their way of life. But this is a way of life that is extremely ancient. We find these fields in Britain now. There’s a new collection of air photographs of Britain by a person called Richard Muir that just came out. They show fields of solid cultivation way up to the north, way up into Scotland around 4300 B.C. The real heavy agriculture began about 3800 B.C. That’s [58] hundred years ago. That’s older than Egypt or anything else, and the fields are still good. On my mission I was in Baden, Germany, in the Black Forest, etc. I walked by Michelsburg every morning for a while when I went out to the villages on my trusty bicycle to tract. The roads were so worn that they would go down ten or fifteen feet, and the roots of the trees would grow together over them. In winter time you just walked through a tunnel there because those roads were so ancient. The Michelsburg civilization around there has left its remnants. It so old that it goes back to the Upper Neolithic—the pots and pans and bell beakerware, and that sort of thing. But the point is that the soil was still fertile. After thousands of years they were still planting because they didn’t waste anything. They didn’t use chemical fertilizers either. They had the way of doing it. Across the river there in the Vosges, there was a continuation of it. They took these pots and pans and scraped off what was cooked in them. They scraped it out of the bottom and analyzed it, and it’s the very same soup that the peasants make there today, after all those thousands of years they have been doing this. It is a stable civilization, you see. Are stable civilizations dull? No, they are not. They are much more interesting than the others—much more interesting than the prime-time TV.

In these next chapters (those coming today if we get to them), I refer to the Hopis because they give us a good standard to judge by. Theirs was such a society, absolutely stable. Sister Theresa Harvey’s house was the first house that was measured by the tree-ring method when it first began. She lives in a house out on the point at Walpi in the first mesa there. She was the one who revived the old pottery custom because there was a pottery dump right outside her house. You go to the edge of Walpi and then it drops right off. There’s this ancient pottery there. She started making pots and printing the designs of the pottery on them, and it became a big thing. She was very responsible for reviving the ancient pottery. But her house was 1100 years old, and it had been inhabited there [all those years]. This is an urban civilization. They call their villages cities—the twelve villages. The thing is just about on the same scale we find in the Book of Mormon. This is surprising. You mustn’t think of these cities as something like Pittsburgh or Chicago, or something like that. They were not. This is by our standards very small stuff, but everything that is said here [in the Book of Mormon] would apply very well there. You can use them as a good yardstick. And life is not dull there. Every weekend they have a grand “blowout.” They have a dance every weekend, and then in November it ends with the Hemmen dance. Then it begins again on March 15. In the meantime in the winter they cheer themselves with all sorts of things, and this is very ancient.

I’m tempted to recite Titania’s speech from A Midsummer Night’s Dream because this describes exactly what happens when the people fail to observe the ancient rituals and their dances, etc., and all nature is in rebellion against them because they are wrangling
and fighting among themselves. Well, we will get on with the lesson, but those are wonderful lines though. She says what’s happening because the people are not doing things as they should and now they are becoming mean, ambitious, over-reaching each other. The opposite end of the scale is that which we have reached today in the MBA. Here is an article from the last Business Monthly, December 1988. It’s talking about the MBA program. This is the opposite extreme of that other civilization—that agrarian, stable civilization I was describing, which I will attempt to show later on, is not a dull form of life. “It is a nearly unanimous view of executives that MBA’s are lacking in humility, humor, and humanity—all valued attributes for executives. A poll of 480 chief executives were asked that, and they agreed on it. One of them said, ‘Those young people seem to be intent on destroying each other to get to the top.’ [You are not going to have a stable or enduring civilization on that; there is no survival value in this sort of behavior.] ‘I have been watching MBA’s in the business for twenty years,’ said a partner of Lazıere Frères & Company. I have found the great majority of them immature in their judgments, inclined to make strong judgments without the background of experience, ill mannered, rude, brash, impatient, and condescending.’ [This is a nice generation coming up, isn’t it? I have a son-in-law who was very active in the MBA program at Harvard. He left it. He said they could think of nothing but money, and that was very jarring.] Competition is the sine qua non of the MBA program. [These people were noncompetitive. Notice it says here, ‘And there was no contention among all his people for the space of three years.’ It didn’t last too long either; we will come to that, too. There was no competition, no rivalry, none of this sort of thing. That’s the sine qua non of MBA programs.] There is fierce competition to get into the best programs. A placement director for a major MBA program asserts, ‘If our students don’t look out for themselves, no one else will. In fact, they can count on other people taking advantage of them if they don’t get the advantage first [you see, it’s “Do unto others or they will do unto you.”] Cooperation is a nice ideal, but cut-throat competition is what’s real.’ ”

This is the situation, so what do we get? Well, is this a Book of Mormon lesson? Yes, it is. We just look slightly ahead here to Alma. There’s a lot of this, but this is the nearest example. In Alma 1:32 you see the type of character this develops. They “did indulge themselves in sorceries [that’s a shortcut], and in idolatry or idleness, and in babblings, and in envyings and strife [highly competitive—envy, strife, babblings, spreading the gossip around; you can injure a person that way]; wearing costly apparel [you must dress for success; what are they doing?]; being lifted up in the pride of their own eyes [as it said, the MBA’s are arrogant, ill-mannered, brash, impatient, and condescending; that’s pride of their own hearts]; persecuting, lying, thefting, robbing, committing whoredoms [that’s on the side, but it’s de rigueur. It’s what you always get in the TV prime—time], and murdering, and all manner of wickedness.”

Well, that’s the picture. That’s the alternative, the other civilization. Now I have some gems from last Sunday’s paper that I am going to show you. This is a treat: “Suspect in Massive Fraud Flaunts His Wealth,” “Bogus Brokers Sell Worthless Utah Firms Worldwide.” Well, this suspect is quite a guy. He went up to Park City. I am quoting the manager of the real estate company that sold it to him. He went up there and dropped at least a million and a half to two million bucks in the place, in a fancy house in Park City. “If you drive down that road, you are going to see one of the most beautiful estates in Utah. I bet his gate cost $20,000, and nobody knows where the money came from [isn’t that remarkable?]. Well, now this is not the same economy as a king working in the field by the sweat of his brow so he wouldn’t be a burden to his people—so no one would have
to pay the price of his ease. But look at the people who go down the drain in these [schemes].

This is what the Book of Mormon is telling us about. Why all this emphasis on economy, etc.? It was never so in my day. We thought this was fantastic, long ago and far away. It was considered romantic. The missionaries always pushed the Book of Mormon as a romantic history and story of the Indians—that’s all. We never saw any connections at all in this stuff, but you see what it is now. Therefore, wo be to the generation that understands the Book of Mormon. So this is what we reach today—the point when the fruit is ripe. Is the cup full yet? Remember, the Lord said that he would let it go on until the end, until the fruit is ripe. Then there’s no point to letting it go on any longer; it will just rot after that. Or if the cup is full, it can’t be diluted or cleansed because it is full. You just have to empty. Then what will happen? “As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be at the Second Coming.” They bought and sold, they married and gave in marriage, they ate and drank. Everything was normal; it was business as usual. Then in a single day, it hit them. The flood came. Not that there wasn’t preparation and warning before it—the prophets were yelling their heads off. But it will be this way, and this is what the Book of Mormon has to tell us.

So now we start out our story with chapter seven. This can be confusing if you try to trace these people around because later on in the account of Zenos there is a flashback. The whole story of King Noah, etc., all takes place long before this takes place. So it is not put in chronological order here. The person who wrote this had to be very careful. They were juggling plates and records, and the chance of getting things mixed up and using the wrong names, dates, and places, etc., is very great here. You have to sweat to unravel it, but Joseph Smith never missed a point. It was quite a performance!

King Mosiah sent some of his Mulekite subjects looking for what? They were looking for a colony that had gone out two generations earlier, not just before. That’s why they didn’t know where it was. Everybody was dead from that generation, and after they were out of sight who knew the direction they took? They [Mosiah’s group] got lost and couldn’t find this lost colony. They thought it would be a great thing because they remembered its being sent out. This idea of lost colonies is a common thing. The story Bar-Hebraeus and Aurel Stein’s lost colony. Eldad ha-Dani was a Jew who looked for the Lost Tribes of Israel. He found lost villages and settlements of Israel all over the place. You can find them in China, etc. You all know James Hilton’s novel *Lost Horizon*. There are these lost villages and civilizations. Pennache, the old French settlement way up in the Black Forest, that I practically discovered. Of course, it had been there for years; everybody knew about it. They were refugees from France from the twelfth century who had gone up there during a persecution. But the best, of course, is the Seven Cities of Cibola, which became fabulous. They are down in the Hopi country in New Mexico, but they were lost. Everybody was hunting for them because they were supposed to have been made of gold. The Spanish Father Esteban and the others were looking for them.

Anyway, it says they couldn’t find [the colony]. Let’s see what it says about it. It pays to look at the text once in a while, doesn’t it? Verse 2: “King Mosiah granted that sixteen of their strong men might go up to the land of Lehi-Nephi.” They kept teasing him about it. This is tradition, and, of course, it’s romantic and exciting. Look at the people who want to go treasure hunting. For a mile off the Florida Keys, or wherever it is, we see them. They go out in their yachts and find Spanish gold. And there is Spanish gold, so you can’t blame them for getting all excited. Remember the great treasure hunting in Joseph
Smith’s time. He was accused of being a treasure hunter because he dug for somebody who was a treasure hunter. Well, anyway these people wanted to go “up to the land of Lehi-Nephi, to inquire concerning their brethren.” That land of Lehi-Nephi wasn’t the place from which Mosiah had set forth, the land that Nephi went to because that migration was 460 years earlier. That had nothing to do with this; that was something else. This is called the city of Lehi-Nephi here. Their leader was Ammon. He was a “strong and mighty man, and a descendant of Zarahemla. So this was a Mulekite crowd that went. They didn’t know the course to take because it had been just about a hundred years before that this had happened. Verse 4: “And now, they knew not the course, they should travel in the wilderness to go up to the land of Lehi-Nephi; therefore, they wandered many days in the wilderness.

These wanderings [are recorded]. You know the stories of Utah Valley—Father Serra and others that went through—the Spanish who discovered Utah Valley. They wandered around and got lost. They found marvelous things here in the valley and peaceful Indians that had no intentions of fighting at all—marvelous societies. Like Athenian imperialism, Spanish imperialism came in and became very oppressive because what they wanted was the gold. I’m not thinking of just Junipero Serra, who was in California, of course, but of Escalante and Dominguez, who came down Spanish Fork Canyon. So they wander around and wonder how they will get home. It’s a great country for wandering—not a very dense population. That’s a thing which is understood. This is what you call the macro-criticism—low population and a lot of territory. That’s still the case in a place like Nevada, etc.

Anyway, they went to look for this place, and they couldn’t find it. They wandered all over the place for forty days, but they did find something. Notice the type of land they came to. Verse 5: “They came to a hill which is north of the land of Shilom, and there they pitched their tents.” In Semitic language, Shilom means “the land to the east” when you are facing south. It can also mean secure, safe. They parked there, north of the land of Shilom. When it talks about pitching on a hill, you get the idea that they weren’t in the midst of mountains. It was pretty flat country, if the hill was a landmark, which it was we learn later on. “And Ammon took three of his brethren [with very interesting names], and their names were Amaleki, Helem, and Hem.” [Brother Nibley shows places on a map.] Jerusalem is down here, and Amman is up here. When the Israelites received their allotments, Manasseh was out here, and remember that Lehi was of the tribe of Manasseh. They were out here in the desert; they were desert people. His cousin or a relative, whoever it was that went with him, was Ishmael, and anyone called Ishmael would hardly be a Jew. These were the people of Ishmael out here. These were Arabs, Amorites, and Ammonites that were out here. They have these typical types of names. If Lehi was from here, the Mulekites would have also been most likely to escape. These were the people who were able to escape when Jerusalem fell. So we get these interesting names. I just looked them up in the big lexicon here, and it gives some references that are very interesting. First, Amaleki with a prophetic A. It’s Aramaic from melekh. They all mean the same thing, the king, lord or ruler. The second one, hālam, is a very good one because it is very rich. In Hebrew it means healthy, but in Aramaic and Arabic it’s much richer. In Arabic it contracts to ḥilm which means a close friend. In Aramaic it is hālam, which means strong, good humored, close to one. A derived meaning, the second form, means “gather humors, sleep well, dream.” The Arabic word ḥilm is a dream. It’s strong, good humored, a good name for a person, but the point is that it’s an Aramaic name. It’s an Ammonite name, and so is Amaleki. Finally, we come to Hem, which is interesting for two reasons. Of
course, Hem is the first king of Egypt on the records; and it means warrior. It is always written just with two arms, one holding a club and the other holding a shield. It’s not an uncommon name, meaning warrior chief. On the other hand, I think the Amaleki name is a better one. Ham means father-in-law in all Semitic languages. It is a popular Amorite name, so that’s what it probably is.

So we have these Mulekites going out looking for their brethren and lost and unable to find them. They “parked” near a hill, and he chose three of them to go down into town and meet the king. They met the king of the people, and they meant to meet him. They wanted to fall into his hands. They didn’t know it would be so unfavorably, but they had to take the risk. It shows that the king was offended here by what happened, because he said, how did you have the nerve when I was out scouting to come right up to my city? He could see them, and he took them in. They were captured on the spot. Of course, they were clever and wouldn’t have been taken otherwise. But see how it goes here. Verse 7: “And behold, they met the king of the people who were in the land of Nephi, and in the land of Shilom; and they were surrounded by the king’s guard, and were taken, and were bound, and were committed to prison.” Were they being very tactless and careless? No, he meant to see the king. That’s what he wanted to do. He had to get an introduction some way, as he tells us later on. After they were in prison two days, they were taken before the king. “They stood before the king, and were permitted, or rather commanded, that they should answer the questions which he should ask them.” So here’s IPW (interrogation of prisoners), a thing in which I was supposed to be very much trained but was never any good because I couldn’t intimidate anyone. That’s true—with Germans you have to be able to intimidate them. I couldn’t do it and had to do something else. I had a friend who owns the largest importing bookstore in New York, Louis M. Miller. He was very thin and small, but he was very schoolmasterish. He could scare the daylights out of those prisoners because the schoolmaster had always been the one they feared most of all. He would just have to look them in the eye and ask them a question, and they’d “spill their guts.” They would tell him anything, but I could threaten and swear and stamp back and forth, and they’d just laugh.

Verse 9: “And he said unto them: Behold, I am Limhi, the son of Noah, who was the son of Zeniff, who came up out of the land of Zarahemla.” Now here is another of those tricks, one of those micro—critical points. See, he is the third generation. He is Limhi, his father was Noah, and his grandfather was Zeniff. It was Zeniff who came out of Zarahemla. Zeniff is another very interesting name; that’s a very good name because this is exactly where it is [referring to the map]. You go down into the Jauf here and get over to see the ruins of Baalbek. That’s where in the year 270, Odenathus decided to revolt and make himself an independent king because his great queen was in charge. The emperor Aurelian came and got rid of Odenathus and took Queen Zenobia. Zenob or Zenab is a very popular name in that part of the world. Zenobia is a feminized form of Zenafi. They took her to Rome, and she was paraded through the streets wearing chains of pure gold. That was supposed to flatter her, I suppose. But the name Zaynab is still popular among the Arabs. That’s the diminutive; it means “little Zeniff.” So Zeniff belongs there, too. Another interesting one is “Limhi, the son of Noah.” What is Limhi? Well, this is a dialectical form of Lamech. Again, it’s one of those diminutives. Who was Lamech? He was the father of Noah. We have a family tradition or something in here—that a father and son should bear the names of another father and son—Noah and his father, Lamech. It’s the other way around here, “I am Limhi, the son of Noah,” but there’s the name Lamech among them. You notice the dialectical changes that go on here: “who came out
of the land of Zarahemla to inherit this land, which was the land of their fathers [so they look back to the first Mulekites; these are all Mulekites he is talking about, not Nephites], who was made a king by the voice of the people.”

Unfortunately, they had moved right smack into Lamanite territory. The Lamanites had expanded at this time. Remember, they had all been here hundreds of years. There were only eleven years between their two migrations, and this was 460 years later. He “was made a king by the voice of the people.” Well, that was the Mulekite king, and that was the way the people had made Mosiah their king, even though he was a stranger. Well, kings were very often chosen, like George I and William I. He forced them to make him king, but there were others that were actually chosen. They came in and took over because people wanted them to be king. There’s the story of the knight errant who was chosen. He comes in and the people choose him.

Verse 10: “And now, I desire to know the cause whereby ye were so bold as to come near the walls of the city, when I, myself, was with my guards without the gate?” We were outside the gate on patrol, and you had the nerve to come near the walls. He wanted to get picked up at the point. The king didn’t see that at the time; it looked like pure insolence. They could have avoided him. Was it at night? If it wasn’t night, they were even more bold because they were quickly captured. It took no skill at all in that case. Verse 12: “And now, when Ammon saw that he was permitted to speak, he went forth and bowed himself before the king [that’s exactly what he wanted]. . . . For I am assured that if ye had known me ye would [you would have been glad to see me]. . . . For I am Ammon [that good old name], and am a descendant of Zarahemla [a good old Mulekite name], and have come up out of the land of Zarahemla to inquire concerning our brethren, whom Zeniff [ah,ha, the king’s grandfather] brought up out of that land.” That was Limhi’s grandfather, you see. “And now, it came to pass that after Limhi had heard the words of Ammon, he was exceedingly glad [cousin, how are you feeling?], and said: Now, I know of a surety that my brethren who were in the land of Zarahemla are yet alive [again, if Zarahemla had been a mighty city at the time they left it, he wouldn’t be worrying whether they would survive or not; it was a very small affair, hanging on probably by the skin of their teeth]. And now, I will rejoice; and on the morrow I will cause that my people shall rejoice also.” As I said, every week the Hopis have their dance and celebration. They come from all the twelve cities. One village will host it one week, and another one the next week. The whole nation comes together. There’s no work or anything like that. They have a high old time, and it’s a very solemn affair with those costumes. There can be nothing bought, nothing artificial, nothing cheap. The colors all have to come from the berries and the minerals. The macaw feathers have to come from Guatemala (very interesting). Why are the Hopis getting their macaw feathers from Guatemala? They are forbidden because of psittacosis from crossing the border, but they go down and get them. That’s another story; you’d be surprised at the connections here, showing where they came from. To make things official at the spring dance, they have to wear macaw feathers. They have to be real, and they have to be fresh all the time. This is important. As I said, they have a great time. It keeps them occupied and happy between their long hours in the field.

For their agriculture they have the poorest land in the world. If you have been to in northeastern Arizona, you know there is nothing there but sand and the mesas. What they do is take a stick and push five (a sacred number) seeds of corn down about twenty inches. They push them down and trust that the ground water will make them grow. They do grow, but never more than about a foot or eighteen inches high. And I’ve never seen a
stalk that had more than one ear of corn on it. That ear of corn is treasured; it’s precious. They are taken and piled like wood in front of the house; everybody keeps track of every ear. They say, “If one of us has corn, we all have corn.” But they have been able to live and live well with hard work. They don’t mind that. All these years they have lived on [practically] nothing. They were pushed to the most out of the way place in the world. They were the Moquis or the Hopis, the peaceful people, but they were once the most terrible fighters of all. They were on these high mesas. When I first went down there years ago, you still had to get to first mesa by ladder. Then they put a road up, and everybody started driving off and getting killed. But it’s amazing that they could not only survive and be happy, but go on for [hundreds] of years. They came up from the south. They tell how they came from the south, but that’s another thing. This is another thing about getting lost. The story of their wanderings is very important. They kept a record of their wanderings. They came up from the “great red city of the south” when it was destroyed because of wickedness. Zarahemla means “red city,” as you know, Dar Aljmar. Aljmar is red. Feminine is ḥamrāʾ, and dār or zar is a settlement, a colony, or a community. If you say Zarahamra, it means a red city. That’s a coincidence. I don’t know if there’s anything to it or not, but it’s good clean fun to engage in these things. They say they came up from the south along the Little Colorado. They tell about their wanderings, etc. They kept the record, and thereon hangs a tale.

He [Limhi] was exceedingly glad. Verse 15: “For behold, we are in bondage to the Lamanites.” See, they walked into a Lamanite trap. The Lamanite king welcomed them in with open arms and sold them the land. He settled them down in this beautiful acreage, and immediately they were paying for it through the nose all the rest of their days. It happens, you see, “for it is better that we be slaves to the Nephites than to pay tribute to the king of the Lamanites.” See, they knew that these people were sent out by a King Mosiah and they represented the Nephites. Mosiah brought quite a crowd with him, too. Though Zarahemla was a Mulekite city, it had a Nephite government. They recognized the superiority of the Nephites. This is a very common thing when you have two civilizations come together. The superior one takes over, and sometimes it’s just understood. There were the Norman French and the [Angles] and Saxons in England. Verse 16: “And now, king Limhi commanded his guards that they should no more bind Ammon nor his brethren, but caused that they should go to the hill and bring their brethren into the city.” You see what kind of country it was because they had been there waiting and wondering what happened to the four men who disappeared. “They had suffered hunger and thirst and fatigue.” They were looking around for something to eat and for water; they were thirsty. It was a lush jungle with plenty of fruits growing. It may have been pretty far north—like the territory in central Mexico or something like that. The whole scene reminds us very much of a Pueblo Indian society. They have real settlements, permanent cities. “King Limhi sent a proclamation among all his people, that thereby they might gather themselves together to the temple to hear the words which he should speak unto them.” The king is the chief. They use the words interchangeably; it doesn’t make any difference here. And, of course, the temple is the center of everything. That’s the kiva, and it’s a real temple. The temples of the Hopis are built like the temples of South America. They have stairways going up on either side. The best ones are in Hotevilla. Everything takes place there [in the temple]. It would really quite surprise you if you go sometime. There is the first spring festival on March 15 which is all at night by moonlight. It exactly follows the Egyptian rites of the same time. The Havawuhiti comes out, and the men march on either side of her. They have the whips and all the rest of it. It’s amazing the way these things go. They are a highly developed civilization.
So they gathered themselves together. The king gave them a speech and told them what was happening here. “O ye, my people, lift up your heads and be comforted [our brethren are still existing]. . . . Lift up your heads, and rejoice, and put your trust in God, in that God who was the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob [they are going to celebrate and dance]; and also, that God who brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, and caused that they should walk through the Red Sea on dry ground.” They knew these traditions if only because King Benjamin, who was a Nephite, had a long reign and taught the people. He was a great antiquarian and forced his sons to learn Egyptian. They would know that anyway as people living east of Jordan. “It is because of our iniquities and abominations that he has brought us into bondage [that’s the old story]. And ye all are witnesses this day, that Zeniff, who was made king over this people, he being overzealous [he is going to tell us his story a little later on; it was his greed here] to inherit the land of his fathers, therefore being deceived by the cunning and craftiness of king Laman, who having entered into a treaty with king Zeniff [he sized it up; they made a treaty and he signed on the bottom line], and having yielded up into his hands the possessions of a part of the land.” He gave him part of the land called the land of Lehi-Nephi. Notice that they were city states, the land or the city of Lehi-Nephi. Every city or village had its surroundings. That was the city state of antiquity until the time of Lehi, when they broke up and became more like empires. One overtook the other. It’s exactly in the time of Lehi that we find all this expansiveness, all this colonizing and exploring. This is the tradition here. “And all this he did, for the sole purpose of bringing this people into bondage.” He had a clever plan. Just like the sharecroppers, they got half of it and then were stuck for the rest of their lives—a treaty and a trick. There are good examples of this in Caesar’s Gallic wars at the beginning. He made such treaties with tribal chieftains or kinglets in Gaul. He was in Switzerland, and all his people moved out because the valleys were too close for them. Before they knew it, he had taken advantage of the contracts, etc. There are some wonderful stories about Caesar and this tribal way of playing the game with each other.

So they [the people of King Limhi] had to pay him [the Lamanite king] one half of their corn and one half of all they had. Verse 24: ‘. . . how many of our brethren have been slain, and their blood has been spilt in vain, and all because of iniquity.” They rebelled against them and tried to get free, but it didn’t work. Because of their iniquity the Lord was going to keep them in bondage. “There arose contentions among them, even so much that they did shed blood among themselves.” They started shedding blood among themselves, and this is the old story. This is the story of the Indians also. After it is peaceful, they all start fighting each other. They have tribal wars and contentions among themselves and shed blood. “And a prophet of the Lord have they slain . . . because he said unto them that Christ was the God, the Father of all things [well, why would he do a thing like that?] and said that God should come down among the children of men, and take upon him flesh and blood.” When Jesus said that, they stoned him, too. Was that enough provocation? Oh yes, it was enough provocation. You’ve got to watch yourself, you see.

They have two societies, the one horn and the two horn. The Zunis have them as well as the Hopis. The two horn act as benevolent spirits; they go around and do what good they can to people and help people out of trouble, etc. But look out for the one horn; they are the dangerous ones. If you do anything that’s the least bit out of line, there is just one solution, and, believe me, they take care of it. It’s the end; they kill people. And this is exactly the sort of thing that the one horn society would do if a person said something that was out of line. If a prophet said that God should come down among the children of
men—wham! That’s it. There’s quite a tale behind this, too. Because he said this, they put him to death—that was enough reason. Well, after all look at Persia [Iran] today under the Ayatollah. If a woman just raises an eyebrow and says something—bam! You’re a nonperson and you’re killed for just the slightest sign of disaffection or rebellion. We’ve seen dictatorships in which that is so in our day. It’s not exaggerated. A person who shows the slightest sign of dissension or disagreement is in real trouble. Well, the prophet went around yelling about things, and they got him out of the way. These people are being punished for it [that kind of behavior]. Verse 30: “And again, he saith: If my people shall sow filthiness they shall reap the chaff thereof in the whirlwind; and the effect thereof is poison.” That’s pollution, this filthiness. It’s an Old Testament expression, “and they shall reap the east wind.”

The time is nearly up now. We have to move faster or we’ll never finish the book this semester, will we? Then in chapter 8, “And he caused that Ammon should stand up before the multitude, and rehearse unto them all that had happened unto their brethren.” He told the story of how they went up out of the land, and they both compared records and compared their stories of what had been going on since. And he told them the last words of King Benjamin, which were very important “so that they might understand all the words which he spake.” So he gave them the laws that Benjamin laid down. Of course, his father, Mosiah, was a great lawgiver, too. As I said, these [laws] became the basic teachings, the “standard work” for these people. Then King Limhi dismissed the multitude that everyone should go to his home. Notice, it is by families, and they all went to their homes. That’s an interesting thing, too. Although societies like the Hopis are very communal and share everything they have—so they will all [survive] they have to—they are very family conscious. They divide into the seven clans. They have clans and groups and belong to clubs which are secret and have their own signs, symbols, etc. Then you have the whole group, and there are very strong feelings among separate tribes and nations there. The time is up now, so we won’t go into that. He is going to tell them how they went to find the land of Zarahemla, so we will end here and resume the next time. Can you wait? Read the next chapter and see what happens. Then it gets into the record of Zeniff which is a flashback. Zeniff takes us way back to the time of King Noah. Zeniff was his father, and he was a terrible man. Noah was one of the worst characters in the Book of Mormon, and Zeniff was a great man. So that goes to show you never know.
We are on chapter 8 of Mosiah, and it is absolutely staggering what’s in here. I’ve been missing everything all these years. We can’t stop for everything, but nevertheless it’s jammed in here. Remember that Ammon has come to King Limhi and has been invited to speak to the king. He’s in the palace now, and it follows strictly the proper palace procedure as you get it in all the epics, etc. Limhi makes an end of speaking. He tells his story, and then he invites the guest to speak and tell his story. This is a thing that is common in epics, of course. When Odysseus comes to the Phaeacians, the king of the Phaeacians is Alcinous, and he gives a long speech that runs through two books explaining how they happened to get there. Then he says to the guest as he is about to leave at the beginning of the ninth book, “Now tell us your story.” So Odysseus starts out, “I am Odysseus, the son of Laertes, noted throughout the world for my sufferings [everybody is watching my sufferings] and my fame goes to heaven. I live in Ithica [and he describes what a beautiful land it is]. It’s rough but it’s a good land, a nourisher of people rather than nothing.” The way it skips along is a marvelous thing, and then two lines later he tells how he lived for ten years with the nymph Calypso. But how beautifully it skips along. So he tells his story, and the same thing happens in the story of Dido and Aeneas. [If you are studying] Latin, you remember that. Aeneas comes to Dido’s kingdom. Dido was a queen of Carthage in North Africa. They had come from Phoenicia back in the year 800 B.C. When they came, Dido and her sister settled there. She tells her story first. “We’ve suffered a lot, so we know how to accept and be kind to somebody else.” Then she assures him, “We’re not as uncivilized as you think. The sun doesn’t yoke his chariot as far away from [Carthage] as you think; we have some culture, too.” Then Aeneas tells his story, etc. So this is the procedure.

Limhi told his story and then Ammon told his story. He stood up before the multitude and delivered a formal discourse. He gave his report by invitation, and remember, he clued them in on the last words of Benjamin and what had been going on in the old hometown. After he had done this, the king dismissed them all. Everybody had been there, and they all went home. Notice, it was small stuff here, but they used exactly the same vocabulary in exactly the same sense with small groups that they did with big groups. I’ve been thinking about the Hopis, and it’s so very true, everything they say here. I make reference to the Hopis because their migrations, their cities, their wars, etc., are so much like this.

It happens now that Limhi’s people had kept a record of a minor migration. These people were always migrating—always meeting, joining, separating, fighting, etc. This was the story, and they kept records of it, too. I’ll mention the four Hopi stones later because I’m one of the very few who have ever seen the real one, the big one. They showed it to me on two occasions. Verse 5: “He caused that the plates which contained the record of his people from the time that they left the land of Zarahemla [Hopi stone number four is a very
careful record of the migrations up from the ‘great red city of the south.’ They think it may have been Palenque, but the red city is Zarahemla, should be brought before Ammon, that he might read them.” So he read the record, too. As soon as he read the record, the king said, By the way, do you know anything about how to interpret languages? [paraphrased]. The king told him the story about how they got these twenty-four plates that he wanted Ammon to read. Where was this land of many waters? [verse 8]. Was it the Great Lakes country? It was great in metallurgy because they found all these breastplates of bronze, etc., there. There were great copper works up east of the Mandan country. Around the Great Lakes they found prehistoric metal work in great abundance. They mined those iron and copper mines up there in prehistoric times.

In verse 7 King Limhi said they were desperate for relief. “And the king said unto him: Being grieved for the afflictions of my people, I caused that forty and three of my people should take a journey into the wilderness”—let’s go back and see if we can get some help from the old country. They were going back to find Zarahemla, but they had been gone for three generations now. Would they be able to find it? He looked to Zarahemla, the mother city, for aid, which colonies always do. Then he said to Ammon, By the way, can you read these things? [paraphrased]. Incidentally, the interesting thing about these people who have kept their records and their legends, etc., is that you can check them because they left their marks everywhere. That’s what these glyphs are. The tribes have their particular marks, and they cover vast distances. They don’t think anything of crossing the country. During the forties and fifties all our Navajo and Hopi students were very primitive and poor. They would walk home and think nothing of walking back to northeast Arizona and New Mexico. They would walk home for vacation and then walk back again. They could get rides, too, but they thought nothing of walking. These people really cover distances, so don’t worry about Book of Mormon geography. I’m not going to worry about that or even talk about it because there are endless points of argument.

Well, forty-three people (that’s the size of a company or a troop) took a journey to find the land of Zarahemla. Instead of that, they found where the Jaredites had been, among many waters with the ruins of buildings and the twenty-four plates of pure gold. He asked Ammon if he could translate them. Now we come to the mystery of language. What did he mean by “translate” them? Translate them in general. Some people can; they actually have that gift. Canst thou translate? What do you mean? Which languages? Translate how far? Well, there are people who can do that. George Smith did it at the British Museum. He could read Babylonian tablets before anybody could read them; he just knew what was on them. It turned out that he was right when they finally deciphered them. He stacked hundreds of them in the British Museum. It was the same way with Llewellyn Griffith. He could read Meroitic, the Book of Mormon Egyptian. His students couldn’t, and nobody has read it since. But he could do it we know now because we have parallel texts, etc. Some people have this gift. And, as a matter of fact, just last week there was a remarkable manifestation of the gift of tongues in the Provo Temple. I won’t go into that. My daughter and son-in-law were there, and it was most astonishing what happened. Well, I can confide so much of it. It had to do with the sealing of names of a very ancient Chinese family, going back to 200 A.D. My son-in-law had just got back from China on a short assignment back there, and they had picked up these names and got permission overnight to do the work. It was very unusual because these were very important people. Anyway, they were Cantonese. Nobody speaks Cantonese. Mandarin is what everybody learns in Chinese, but Cantonese is vicious. They can’t learn that. Here was this little old man from Provo who had never been out [of the country], and they had this long list of Cantonese names to read off. I was there when they did the work for a lot
of Illyrian or Dalmatian royalty from the Croatian coast. The sealer was a professional linguist, and he had an awful time with those names. But this man read off these long Cantonese names, with at least three parts to each name, without one slip in a perfect Cantonese accent and without one moment’s hesitation. It was a remarkable demonstration. I couldn’t hope to do a thing like that in a million years. And there was a lot more that happened besides that. We won’t go into that, but it was quite a session. We have them every once in a while. There is such a thing as the gift of tongues. It comes and goes; those who deal with languages know that’s so. It depends more on faith than anything else. If you lose your faith and confidence, the page will be perfectly blank to you. On days when you have had good sleep and feel “gung ho,” it’s easier than English and you say, “Why did I ever stop at this?” That’s the way it goes.

They want to know the cause of their [the Jaredites’] destruction. What can this tell us about destruction? Notice, there is always that theme in the Book of Mormon. How do people get destroyed, etc.? Then Ammon explains this business about seers. Verse 13: “I can assuredly tell thee, O king, of a man that can translate the records . . . of ancient date; and it is a gift from God [we know a man back home, Mosiah, who has this gift from God, and he can interpret]. And the things are called interpreters [well, the gift is the urim and thummim], and no man can look in them except he be commanded, lest he should look for that he ought not and he should perish [very dangerous, lots of power]. And whosoever is commanded to look in them, the same is called seer. And behold, the king of the people who are in the land of Zarahemla is the man . . . who has this high gift from God.”

Now it is very interesting that the oldest and highest office held by a Pharaoh was that of the wrmšw. It means “the great seer” or “the greatest of seers.” The title appears both ways—the wr mš or wr mšw. You write it this way, and these things are the two stones he used to see with. He was the high priest of Heliopolis—the oldest center, the original center in Egypt. The high priest of Heliopolis was the On of the Bible, as the name shows. This was the ancient observatory, and he was the great seer, the great observer. He saw everything with these two stones. As I said, that’s the oldest title that Pharaoh had, and it’s the “great seer of Heliopolis” because he had the gift of seers and the two stones. It’s an old tradition that he is referring to here. It comes up in a very striking way in the book of Ether, which comes later on and is archaic.

Verse 16: “And Ammon said that a seer is a revelator and a prophet also; and a gift which is greater can no man have. . . . A seer can know of things which are past [and present, and future], and also of things which are to come.” As Homer said, “… of things that are, things that shall be, and things that were.” That’s the gift of the seer; he knows all these things. Notice [in verse 17] that this knowledge is a great blessing: “Hidden things shall come to light, and things which are not known shall be made known by them, and also things shall be made known by them which otherwise could not be known.” This knowledge is by revelation and it comes through faith. Verse 18 is a marvelous verse; it really packs a punch.

While I’m here on this subject of knowledge, since I took the trouble to lug the darn book up the hill, I’m going to read what Brigham Young had to say on this particular subject—why we are here and the great importance of knowledge. There’s a reference later on that’s very important, that comes in this very story. Brigham Young said, “What will feed and clothe you? Will education feed and clothe you, keep you warm on a cold day, or
enable you to build a house? Not at all [ho, ho, is he ever wrong; he should come around today]. Should we cry down education on this account? No. What is it for? The improvement of the mind [and he underlined the mind], to instruct us in all the arts and sciences, in the history of the world, in laws, and in how to be useful while we live—in the things of the mind that are greatly useful. Truth, wisdom, power, glory, light, and intelligence exist upon their own qualities.” Now this is Brigham. Remember, he had only been to school eleven days in his life. He was an uneducated man, but he was the best speaker of his time. He never made a note. Nothing is written down; it was all from the cuff. There were people eager to take it down. He would fling these things out in this powerful, vigorous, straight-forward, very moving prose.

He never dropped his style, a marvelous gift. You see he had a gift. “Truth, wisdom, power, glory, light, and intelligence exist upon their own qualities. They do not, neither can they exist on any other principle. Truth is congenial with itself, and light cleaves unto light. It’s the same with knowledge and virtue and all eternal attributes; they follow each other. Truth cleaves unto truth because it is truth, and it is to be adored because it is an attribute of God, for its excellence, for itself. Like knowledge, it is an attribute to God himself. There can be no ulterior motive in the study of heavenly things [‘knowledge is power’ is a slogan of a rascally world, he tells us]. What do you love truth for? Is it because you can discover beauty in it, because it is congenial to you, or because you think it will make you a ruler or a lord? [all these powers mentioned by Bacon who was a very ambitious man]. If you think you will attain to power upon such a motive, you are much mistaken. It is a trick of the unseen power that is abroad amongst the inhabitants of the earth that leads them astray, binds their minds, and subverts their understanding.” He goes on. It’s a long discourse, but we won’t continue with it here. But this is the point: this knowledge is a great blessing, whether we believe it today or not. There are other things we would rather have than knowledge, unless it’s knowledge that will make you rich such as the knowledge that comes in the stock market—previous knowledge that is slipped to you by somebody who works in the office.

Verse 18: “Thus God has provided a means that man, through faith, might work mighty miracles; therefore he becometh a great benefit to his fellow beings.” It’s all through faith, and it actually is something that couldn’t be done without faith, which is miraculous. And they [seers] are very beneficial to the human race. That’s a powerful statement. God wants us to ask, and he wants us to know. “And now, when Ammon had made an end of speaking these words the king rejoiced exceedingly, and gave thanks to God, saying: Doubtless a great mystery is contained within these plates, and these interpreters were doubtless prepared for the purpose of unfolding all such mysteries to the children of men. O how marvelous are the works of the Lord.” But are we interested? This is how people react to that. Now this is a remarkable thing. Occasionally, we have breakthroughs in the Book of Mormon of what is known as the “wisdom literature.” Recently, it’s the big thing. More articles and studies are written today about this than anything else in Egyptian and Hebrew, showing that Egyptian and Hebrew wisdom literature are the same. Way back years ago the great Erman discovered parallel passages and whole speeches (well, Proverbs, etc.; that’s an Egyptian Amenimit), and he hid it. He was ashamed of it because [he felt] this shouldn’t be. The Egyptians and Hebrews shouldn’t be like that, but today everybody is getting on the bandwagon. The Hebrew and Egyptian wisdom literature are very close. Then you have the Sophia, the literature of the Greeks.

But this idea is interesting here: “How blind and impenetrable are the understandings of the children of men; [Why? Because they’re stupid? No.] for they will not seek wisdom,
neither do they desire that she should rule over them!" I think it’s an interesting thing that wisdom, which is 
Hokmah and Sophia and ms’t and the Norns or anything you want to call her, is always personified as a woman. Even in our scriptures, too; there it is. You all know about Athena who is wisdom personified. The ancient axiom explaining this is that wisdom is feminine, Mother Earth. Wisdom comes from the Norns. Remember, Mother Earth, Erde, speaks wisdom. The sacred spring ran, and he went to the sacred spring to consult it. And the sibyls and the Delphic oracles were all women. They held the secrets. The Egyptian was Seshat. Her name means secret. She held the secrets to the knowledge that the men wrote down, etc. She was the bookkeeper; she held control of things. You always have the woman in here in control. Then, of course, there were the perversions in witches which were always superior to wizards. This bit of wisdom literature is nice here because it is true. “They will not seek wisdom [which should be capitalized], neither do they desire that she should rule over them!”

Verse 21: “Yea, they are as a wild flock which fleeth from the shepherd, and scattereth, and are driven, and are devoured by the beasts of the forest.” Well, here is a parable, but what is “the beast of the forest” in this particular case? There are monsters out. Aristotle [described] it very well at the beginning of the Metaphysics. He said, Why do we study these things? Because we know darn well that if we don’t we are in real trouble. What you don’t know can scare you [paraphrased]. See, it’s the distant drum. William James defined intelligence as “the ability to react to an absent stimulus.” If you touch it, a bug or a mouse will react. But a person who thinks reacts to an absent stimulus. He can hear the rumble of a distant drum. He can hear the danger of the flood water [far away]. Animals have that gift, too; they have it instinctively. There are some very remarkable cases. But in this case, there’s the idea that the beast of the forest is waiting for you out there. This goes back, you might say, to prehistoric memories; it’s an atavism, so to speak. There are monsters out there. In prehistoric times there were monsters, and they live on in fairy tales, etc. in the gnomes and the trolls. Tolkien capitalizes on it. We have the ancient folk tales, etc. [According to Aristotle] seeking for knowledge is like flight from ignorance because you’re scared of it. It’s like ignorance pushes in on you on all sides and is suffocating. Like an airbag or a fog, you have to keep pushing it out all the time because you are in danger if you don’t. So this knowledge is very important for survival. If you don’t pay attention to things, it may be the end of you. This has happened again and again, and, of course, today we are not paying attention to a lot of things. As it says here, they don’t seek wisdom even when she should rule them, and the beasts of the forest are waiting for them there. They flee from the shepherd who could give them good advice and take care of them, but they run away. They know best themselves and they destroy themselves by this agnosia, ignorance.

In the next chapter we have a flashback. Notice that it has a title: “The Record of Zeniff—An account of his people, from the time they left the land of Zarahemla . . .” In Omni [28] we read about how they went out and left Zarahemla. [Limhi] is the third generation after they left Zarahemla. They [Zeniff’s group] were trying to go back to the land of Lehi-Nephi; now they are in this position. [Limhi] is the son of Noah, they are living in an enclave. Limhi told how they had been completely surrounded by Lamanites. The enclave is very interesting, and we will get to that here. We also learn that Zarahemla was bilingual because he says, “I, Zeniff, having been taught in all the language of the Nephites.” Notice how he starts out with a formal introduction, which is required. We have hundreds of Egyptian autobiographies. The most popular form of writing in Egypt is autobiography, believe it or not. This is a formal beginning: “I, Zeniff, having been
taught in all the language of the Nephites.” That’s [very much] like what Nephi says in the beginning: “I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father.” Notice that the Nephites had their own language; they kept their dialect. The Zoramites still have theirs in Zarahemla. That still happens on First Mesa, which is about four or five acres. It must be smaller than that, but there are three villages. There is Tiva at one end and Walpi at the other. In the village of Tiva they speak a totally different language than they do on the rest of the mesa. They have lived together for hundreds of years right on the same mesa. The whole mesa is about the same size as this building [the Harris Fine Arts Center]. I asked one of the Tiva brethren, “How many Tiva are there? How many people speak Tiva?”

“Oh, lots of people speak Tiva; a hundred people speak Tiva.” They have kept their language all that time, so you can be sure that the dialects flourished here. Being scattered, as we find them in the Book of Mormon, with all these migrations going out and settling here and there, they would preserve local dialects and languages. They are mixed up in the proper names, etc. He was taught in the language of his father, and he knew where they had come from. Now, this is the flashback. He knew the old Nephite country which had been taken over by the Lamanites. Remember, when Mosiah and his group went out of Lehi-Nephi, the Lamanites took over. They left it to them and went out and joined the people in Zarahemla. Then Mosiah became their king. But Zeniff knew about the territory of the Lamanites that they had taken over from the Lehi-Nephites, and they wanted to occupy it again. That’s exactly what they wanted to do, as we find out. This is one of the very few cases where the Nephites were aggressors—Zoramites actually. “And having been sent as a spy among the Lamanites that I might spy out their forces, that our army might come upon them and destroy them.” So he was sent as a spy to spy out the land. After Mosiah’s departure, others were absorbed into the Lamanite people, and they [his group] reinforced the people of Zarahemla. Now the descendants of Mosiah want the land back again; they are expanding.

Zeniff is not a Rambo or a John Wayne. Note that it’s wise to adopt the enemy’s good things. After all, what did we adopt from the Indians? Corn, potatoes, tobacco, chocolate, cotton, all sorts of nice things. Of course, we had cotton in the Old World. In armies and in war you always adopt what the enemy has. That’s why armies get to be very much alike. You can’t afford to let him have the advantage of a weapon or anything at all that will give him an advantage for any length of time. You immediately have to copy it. That’s the best thing to do; you steal it and copy it. That’s why spying is so important before anything breaks out to find out what they’ve got that we don’t have because that will give them an edge. In a very short time armies come to look exactly like each other. Notice that we adopted the German and British type of helmets in [recent wars]. The first thing we wanted when we got into Normandy was something the Germans had that was far better than anything we had. It was their field kitchens. They had these big pots of lentil soup cooking. It was marvelous stuff, very nourishing and hot, etc. It was so much better than our tricky little K rations with all their high priced packaging. What a lot of nonsense. So the command was, “Go out and steal all the field kitchens you can find.” So all through World War II we were fed on German rations in German field kitchens because they were so much more efficient, so much more simple and effective than what we had. We adopted them, and there’s no shame in that, you know.

So Zeniff sees that they have some good things. Why waste it? Let’s make a treaty with them and see if we can make some arrangements, he says [paraphrased]. But we see that the leader was Rambo, and he wanted Zeniff to be executed for treason. Zeniff wanted to
give aid and comfort to the enemy, which is a definition of treason. This is rough and
tough, so they had a wild melee. The breaking up of these groups is a very common thing,
of course. They fight, the leaders fight, and they break up. It’s a long, tragic story among
the Indians, but elsewhere, too. This wild melee wrecked them. It failed completely, and
they had to return crestfallen to Zarahemla. We think of Jamestown. They quarreled
among themselves, and that was the end of it. We think of the Donner party. They
quarreled among themselves, and that was the tragedy. There were very few survivors; the
only eminent one was Mary Johnson. Marysville, California, was named after her. She
was the only Mormon in the troop. She survived and went down the Feather River and
the American River. But that happened to the Donner party because they quarreled
among themselves.

There’s a new book out called *The Last Place on Earth*, the story of Captain Scott and
Amundsen. Amundsen got to the South Pole, not easily, but he got there. There was no
quarreling or fighting among them; they were in high spirits. But Scott was a very
authoritarian person. You did what he said and nothing else, and as a result they all died.
He became the great hero, but he didn’t get to the South Pole until after Amundsen
because they fought among themselves. He was pulling rank, and they were always
fighting because there were various officers, etc. It’s a sad story, but this is what happens
here. There was this bloody melee. “Father fought against father, and brother against
brother, until the greater number of our army was destroyed in the wilderness [quite a
group]; and we returned, those of us that were spared, to the land of Zarahemla. As I said,
they returned crestfallen. But Zeniff was still over-zealous. He was gung-ho and not to be
discouraged by that. Colonists and miners are not, you know. They always go again and
make another try. This third verse is a nice psychological touch. Zeniff himself wasn’t so
idealistic as he was greedy. “And yet, I being over-zealous to inherit the land of our
fathers, collected as many as were desirous to go up to possess the land.” So he started
again and organized another company to be run by himself. He soon ran into trouble
because it was impulsive; they weren’t properly prepared. Like Scott and his group in
Antarctica, they were smitten with famine and sore afflictions. And they were slow to
remember the Lord. They were not up to it. They didn’t have the necessary preparation
here. In Mosiah 7:21 we find, “And ye all are witnesses this day that Zeniff, who was made
king over this people, he being over-zealous to inherit the land of his fathers.” He just
couldn’t wait, you see. We don’t have heroes and villains here. We just have human
beings, typical men. He wasn’t as bad as the other leader, but he was bad enough because
actually you can see that it was a fight between Zeniff and the other guy. The other guy
wanted to eliminate him as his rival, but he immediately took over. He was a direct
descendant of Zarahemla and the [father] of King Noah.

I see I’ve been taking too much time with these things, but I think it’s rather interesting.
So he wanted to make the takeover on the cheap here, and it didn’t work. Like all
prospectors and settlers, setups didn’t stop him. He organized his own migration and soon
ran into trouble, impulsive and ill prepared like the first handcart company. Brigham sent
them message after message, “Don’t go—October is too late! You’ll get caught in the
mountains.” The leader said, “No, we’ll go,” and it was tragic, as you know. In 1856 the
handcart company went against orders because they thought they could get there. This is
the sort of thing that happens all the time.

Like Arctic explorers, they [Zeniff’s group] reached the camp marking their last advance.
They got back to the old camp—a sad sight to see only bloody remnants there. It marked
their last advance and the defeat. They were in country familiar to Zeniff. It was near a
city where Ammon was to arrive later, incidentally. He had no trouble in seeing the king and making a deal. (Remember, Ammon had trouble later on.) So he met the king and made a deal. Zeniff should have been suspicious, but, as he says, he was blinded by a promising real estate deal. He was overeager, so he could be taken in, you see. They say that Utah is a fraud capital; that’s only because people are eager to get a lot of money in a hurry. Verse 6: “And I went in unto the king, and he covenanted with me that I might possess the land of Lehi-Nephi [which is what he wanted], and the land of Shilom. And he also commanded that his people should depart out of the land, and I and my people went into the land that we might possess it.” Now, that’s a funny thing; that should have made him very suspicious. (That was a common procedure in ancient times to move out and make way for other people to occupy. A classic example of that is in Caesar’s Gallic Wars. The Gallic tribes were doing this all the time; they were a big outfit.) Here is an explanation of the king’s behavior in verse 8. Why did they do it? Because the land was run down and needed a lot of rebuilding and repair. The Nephites were industrious, and the Lamanites were not industrious. If you look at verse 12, you see that his own people “were a lazy and an idolatrous people.” They didn’t want to work, and they had allowed the land to get run down. Verse 8: “And we began to build buildings, and to repair the walls of the city.” They had to rebuild and repair things. No wonder the king was eager to let them go in and take it over and fix things up. Then he would just close in on them. See, they were an enclave, completely surrounded by Lamanites. (I never used to have to pause for words that way. Something is wrong here—old age takes its toll.)

Then they began to till the soil. Now here’s an interesting touch. King Laman knew what he was doing. Notice that it was the Nephite custom to work in the fields—King Mosiah and King Benjamin did. The Nephites were agricultural right down to the ground, so to speak. He [King Laman] knew he could trust them if he gave them the land. They would make it flourish, and then he could take it over. This is [similar to] what the Egyptians did in the Delta with the Libyans. Five generations before the twenty-second dynasty the Sheshonqides, a Libyan family, were made royal patrols, policemen, etc. But before long the Libyans began to take over the land. Finally they ended up as their own dynasty; they took the throne. This is exactly what King Laman is afraid of, because it began to happen. Verse 11: “Therefore it came to pass, that after we had dwelt in the land for the space of twelve years [things were really flourishing then] that king Laman began to grow uneasy, lest by any means my people should wax strong in the land.” You can see why—they were becoming prosperous, and this is what happened. The Libyans were able to take over Egypt after they were invited in to guard the frontiers and cultivate the land, etc. The same thing happened with Israel. When Israel grew strong, Pharaoh was afraid of them and grew jealous. He cracked down on them and made things harder and harder for them. They finally had to leave. But they were invited in to the land of Goshen to cultivate it. Then he [a later Pharaoh] wanted to exploit them and put them all to work. This was the pattern they followed in ancient times—getting people to work for you. Well, that’s what we have here. So in verse 11 the Nephites began to get too prosperous.

Well, what about the Palestinian problem? The Jews were easily able to go in and take over militarily. But the Palestinians had been there for many centuries, and they were quite competent tillers of the soil. That’s what has happened today. If the Israelis give them all they want, they will become just as powerful because they are increasing much faster. They are having children much faster than the Israelis are having children, and the Israelis are really worried about it. So what can you do? You have to put the lid on. Naturally, they react. This is the same pattern. The Israelis didn’t let them in. They were in already, but they allowed them to live in certain enclaves like the Gaza Strip and the West
The same thing is happening here. Verse 12 is the classic confrontation between nomad hunters and farmers. Both of them work hard, but they work hard at their own thing. The nomads have a rough time; they wander seeking the grass, etc., but they take cities and farmers. They take serfs and slaves and put them to work and exchange them with each other as gifts. The farming goes on, but it is their serfs that do it. It was the patres and the plebs in Rome where the same thing happened. They [the Lamanites] wanted this sort of an order. They desired to bring the Nephites into bondage for that very reason, so they would work for them. They had the upper hand and would hold the Nephites in bondage. That’s the feudal system with the lord and his power. Norman laws against the Saxons made it a capital crime for any Saxon to own a weapon—to own a bow as a matter of fact. The punishment was terrible. It was an evisceration in a most horrible manner if any Saxon had any weapon at all. They couldn’t trust them because they were more numerous, etc. They settled things later on, but they wanted to bring them into bondage for that reason. The [Norman] laws did bring them into bondage. There were forest laws; they could no longer gather in the forest. They no longer had the village green and couldn’t have the commons anymore. The Normans took over everything and said, “Now, you can go back to it again, but we take the profits.” It was a sharecropping sort of thing. Well, that’s what good old Laman wanted.

Here we have the people of Zeniff forming an enclave completely surrounded by the Lamanites, just as we have the Hopis today in an enclave completely surrounded by Navajos. Their original reservation was quite large, but completely surrounding it is the Navajo Reservation. And completely surrounding the Navajos are the whites. So what do you do if they have a lot of coal, oil, and uranium there? It’s their land and their nation; the United States has a treaty with them. Well, the Bureau of Indian Affairs appoints a tribal council of their own men, and the tribal council decides that the land shall be given [to the U.S. government]. Well, they made a law when uranium was discovered that no Hopi should be seen outside of the mesa, because they might go exploring for it. They didn’t get any of it. Then they passed another law when others started exploring for it that no one with capital of less than ten million dollars should be allowed to explore for uranium. Well, these things go on. Today it’s the coal and the oil, especially the coal right now. The Hopis form an enclave that is completely surrounded, and they [government agencies] have been steadily reducing and cutting in on it. The interesting thing is that now suddenly the corporations, “Ah, we must champion the Hopis against the Navajos.” They pit them against each other. The Navajos haven’t been out there for ages; they just do some grazing out there. But [the corporations] have put them to fighting, and this has been going on in the courts—the claims of the Navajos. Of course, they are going to prove that they [the Hopis and the Navajos] are both incompetent at governing, etc. This is used as a front for the giant corporations. They have set the Navajos and Hopis contending in court and fighting with each other so they can take over the lands of both, which they are doing.

The Armenians want to be independent; they are an enclave. They keep quarreling with the Turks, and the Russians can control them that way. This is the way things go. There was a surprise attack. Well, we may go into this later. But the situation today is very much like this. They are just completely surrounded with Lamanites, and what are they going to do? In verse 14 they [the Lamanites] launch a surprise attack, the real blitzkrieg. It was a raid; all ancient wars are raids. They just go in to get stuff. The fresh invaders find everything up for grabs, an exhilarating victory. In German victory movies of when they moved into Belgium, Norway, etc., surprise is the whole element. The Germans emphasize that very, very much. For eight months I was at Camp Ritchie where Camp David is
today, and I was put to translating secret German documents from World War I. They were fascinating documents. Of course, there are entirely different tactics now. But the big thing is always surprise; anybody will tell you that. Napoleon said that the one thing a general should never do is be surprised. This [in Zeniff's society] was a surprise attack, and the fresh invaders came in, numerous hosts all at once. They attacked in force and didn't mess around. They didn't filter in or anything like that this time. It was a real blitzkrieg that hit them all at once. It caught them in the fields and with their flocks. They ran to the high places. [People] always do—to the Acropolis; or to the capitol, which means the highest place and is a defense; or to the castle. That's where they would go. If people were in the fields, they ran to the castle. That's what they did. They fled to the castle, to the city, to the redoubt, the altimoenia Roma. They called on [Zeniff] for protection, and there were weapons awaiting them there because Zeniff had arms ready for them. He had foresight here, and he would have more later.

Now this is the Lord's plan in operation in verse 17. Remember, the Lord told Nephi in 1 Nephi 2:24, I'll always have the Lamanites breathing down your neck to stir you up to remembrance. They will have no power over you as long as you behave yourselves, but if you don't then this is what will happen [paraphrased]. And it did stir them up to remembrance. “We were awakened to a remembrance of the deliverance of our fathers.” That's what the purpose of this was, and it did stir them up to remembrance, as we read in verse 17. So the plan was in operation. What had happened? A major Lamanite horde had been brought to a halt. The commentary on the population is very interesting—3043 against 279 dead. If ten percent of them were killed, that would mean there were only 30,000 male Lamanites that the king was able to put into battle. It may have been three percent, which is considered the minimum. At the very most, the male Lamanite population would have been 300,000, but it was probably 30,000 or even 15,000. They lost, but since they retreated, they could have saved themselves. There are all sorts of calculations here that you can use. In my division in World War II, we had to make these calculations, and it was figured that in the average operation three percent would be lost. But this was a disaster; they got beaten. This gives us a hint about the population. Thirty thousand for a nation is about what it would have been. Don't expect anything fabulous—nothing out of Arnold Freiberg and all that nonsense of gigantic, super cities, etc.

Now in the next chapter the subject is the quest for coexistence. The first verse is very interesting. It was necessary to make a reassessment of the situation after what had happened. They were geared for peace, and it lasted twenty-two years, but they had to be wary all the time of the Lamanite administration. They couldn't trust them anymore, not after that sneak attack, as it tells us here. “We again began to possess the land in peace. And I caused that there should be weapons of war made of every kind [they were preparing], . . . that the Lamanites might not come upon us again unawares and destroy us.” They kept a guard all the time; the Lamanites were no longer to be trusted. They lost but look out, they're dangerous! Notice in verse 3: “We did inherit the land of our fathers [that's what they came for] for many years, yea, for the space of twenty and two years.” Again the question comes up, what do they mean by many? If it said many years without twenty-two, how would you know? Well, fifty years, a hundred years, two hundred years [you wouldn't]. But it says twenty-two years.

Then we get the normal, typical Indian culture carrying on—farming with characteristically Indian division of labor. Notice that the men do specific things, and the women spin. Among the Hopis the men spin, and among the Navajos only the women
spin. At Moenkopi there’s a big cave. The old men sit there and sing songs as they weave away, just like Penelope at the loom. Verse 5: “And I did cause that the women should spin, and toil, and work, and work all manner of fine linen, yea, and cloth of every kind,” while the men did the tilling of the ground. The division is different, of course. Women make pottery among the Hopis; women don’t among the Navajos, etc. That’s the way it goes. “Thus we did have continual peace [the culture carried on] in the land for the space of twenty and two years.” Then Laman died and there was a new administration. His son was “gung-ho,” and the people were eager to go [to battle]. After all, that was supposed to be their living, so he had no difficulty in stirring up his people. “And he began to stir his people up in rebellion against my people; therefore they began to prepare for war, and to come up to battle against my people.”

Question: When it says, “stir up the people in rebellion,” the word rebellion sounds like the Nephites might have gained some kind of power.

Answer: Yes, after twenty-two years they resented the success of the [Nephites]. They had no power over them, and it tells us why. Remember their traditions were that they had been offended and that the Lamanites were the true masters, and that Nephi was in a state of rebellion. It tells us a little later on that they always taught their children that the Nephites were rebels and they had rebelled against the true authority that should be theirs [the Lamanites]. So it was always preached to them as rebellion. That’s a good point to bring out. These subtle things hit us all the time in the Book of Mormon.

Laman died, and, given the nature of the society, they were “chomping at the bit.” As we see in verse 12, they were adapted to living by exploitation. A young man took over who was eager to get going. It was an easy matter to stir up his people with the Nephites and Lamanites bordering on each other on all sides. He stirred up his people here to get them to make certain claims. But Zeniff had sent out spies. So this sort of thing goes on. That the Book of Mormon [story] should still be going on and still be relevant, and with the same people that we thought had disappeared into nothing, is strange. All my youth I studied Arabic. At Berkeley I was Professor Popper’s only pupil. Nobody knew anything about it. The Arabs were the poorest forgotten people; they were nobody. They were dirt poor and lived on the sand and had nothing else. Now they are the richest people on the earth, and this happened in about five years. All of sudden there was this big change. They have become big princes and powers. Everybody is petitioning them, and they can buy up anything they want. They bought up the land west of the Salt Lake Airport. What a surprise; you would never expect that. The last people in the world you’d expect [to do these things] would be Arabs. [We thought] we’d never hear from them again; they died hundreds of years ago. Then all of a sudden they own the world. So these things are still happening, though they seem to be happening on a very small scale down there among these people. But what is happening is very serious, and the Lord knows what’s going on.

I don’t know if we should go on bit by bit, but the Book of Mormon is really worth considering in this regard. People ask, “What should we read in this course?” Well, there’s plenty to read here. I read that passage from Brigham Young, and you want to find out for yourself. The Bible is relevant here; we get into the prophets. We had to read Jeremiah for the first class. Isaiah is going to be extremely important later on. We also have the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price. They all go together. And you’ll notice in your book that you have footnotes giving you reference to other sources. It’s an apparatus down here; why don’t you look those up once in a while? You’ll see how things hang together in the story. They will mention Bible parallels, and the Doctrine and
Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price, and other passages in the Book of Mormon. Here I see he is quoting John 13:3 and Titus and 1 Nephi. If you will just look up notes in the apparatus at the bottom of the page (I think you have a fuller one than I have now), then you will have plenty of reading. If you think about it, you will find it entertaining. And don’t go to bed before 3:00 o’clock [laughter]. That’s the way it used to be; anybody who went to bed before 3:00 o’clock was just being lazy. Well, you can go to bed at 2:00 o’clock, but make sure you keep going until then.
We are on Mosiah 10:8, and things begin to happen that have a familiar ring. They try again here. Zeniff sent out his spies, and [the Lamanite king] is watchful and doesn’t miss a thing. This attack doesn’t go so well, but notice the situation and how they do it. He [Zeniff] has his spies watching because he has been burned once. Verse 8: “They came up upon the north of the land of Shilom, with their numerous hosts, men armed with bows, and with arrows, and with swords, and with cimeters, and with stones, and with slings; and they had their heads shaved that they were naked; and they were girded with a leathern girdle about their loins.” You notice the standard equipment here—the leather clothing and the wild hairdo. They are like a motorcycle gang, aren’t they? They had the equipment and their heads shaved, and they were naked except for the leather garments they had on. They were trying to inspire terror, of course, and this is a very important thing.

Dressing up is an essential part of soldiering. In any other line it would be considered overdoing it, but you have to distinguish rank and superiority. The dressing up and all this nonsense is just a necessary part of the uniform, as we read from Clausewitz. The purpose of the military, of course, is to break the enemy’s will, not to destroy them. The Lamanites don’t want to destroy the Nephites; they want the Nephites to work for them. That’s the whole thing—they want to enslave them. There’s no point to destroying them. That’s exactly what Clausewitz teaches the Generalstab. This was the textbook for World War I. The important thing is to break the enemy’s will. When he does what you want, that’s all you want—the war is won then. There’s no point to body count at all. It’s utter absurdity and makes no sense, as the great Clausewitz said. His book is the standard work on war, as you know, Kriege by Clausewitz. You want to discourage [the enemy] and make him lose heart, so you make yourself look as terrible as you can when you approach. That will break his spirit sometimes if you look very awful, and they thought it would work. This is part of it. The posture of dominance requires this high profile and distinct superiority. You have to be able to distinguish rank at a distance, of course, in armies. That’s why you have the banners and the trumpets. The banners are to distinguish particular units, etc. They all go back to the Steppes of Asia. We won’t go into that, but you get more of it in the book of Ether. We’ll get to that. As I said, their objective was to put the Nephites to work and not to destroy them. Intimidation is the quickest and easiest way of dominance, so you try that and see if it will work. This was part of the policy of the German staff. They actually adopted Schrecklichkeit, and Hitler adopted it, too. Schrecklichkeit means terror, making yourself as terrible as possible, and they did. That was the idea of the blitzkrieg—be absolutely overpowering and absolutely merciless, strike and intimidate right from the very first. You look terrible, you sound terrible, you threaten, and all this sort of thing. So that’s what these people are doing, and they do it all through the Book of Mormon. And it works, [especially] if the people are wicked, feel guilty, and that sort of thing.

So it’s all out here, the worst possible case, as we see in verse 9. There’s extreme danger for the Nephites, and it requires full mobilization of every bit of manpower they can possibly
get. The women and children are taken off and hidden in the wilderness, which follows a pattern, too—hiding them in the wilderness, taking them out of sight, etc. You can put them on ships or you can put them in the syech. When the barbarians invade, there are special places where they go and hide, certain woods, etc. You see a lot of this sort of thing. At a place called Wegel in Holland, where we were stuck, there was this huge grain elevator with its vast area underneath. All the women and children from the towns around were down there, and that’s where we set up headquarters. They had to get them out of sight, and that’s what was done. They [the Nephites] were mobilized and organized according to the pattern of Israel, as we read in the Milhāmāh Scroll, the Battle Scroll. By age is the easiest, the most obvious, and the most natural and workable way—people of the same age groups working together. So that’s what he did; “and I did place them in their ranks, every man according to his age.” So they went up to battle against the Lamanites, and they went up “in the strength of the Lord.”

Then we have this interesting thing. The odds are with the Lamanites “as to the strength of men.” Now this is an important thing—peace through strength, as to the strength of men. Of course, we have a marvelous discourse on that, and I’m very tempted to go into it. In the very first chapter, the opening of the Doctrine and Covenants, it deals with this problem very, very much to the point, right down the line. First of all we have an exposition of the situation in verse 17, and things are bad. “Wherefore, I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth . . .” He knows what it is, and in verse 35 he says what it is: “. . . the hour is not yet, but is nigh at hand, when peace shall be taken from the earth, and the devil shall have power over his own dominion” (D&C 1:35). Knowing this, the Lord has taken certain steps, and notice what perfectly rational steps they are. What do we do about it? First of all, he called upon one man, as he always does. “Wherefore, I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments” (D&C 1:17).

Just one man in this case, as it has always been. Noah was the only man, Abraham was the only man, Moses was the only man, and the prophets. The knowledge is handed down. It is shared by all of them, as we read in Moroni 7:32. We won’t go into that now. He lets others in on the information, too; notice D&C 1:18. “And also gave commandments to others, that they should proclaim these things unto the world [let’s spread the news around and get this going]; and all this that it might be fulfilled, which was written by the prophets.” The ones he summons for this work are not the ambitious or the powerful ones; he mentions weakness repeatedly. He only takes them on when they are weak. “The weak things of the world shall come forth and break down the mighty and strong ones, that man should not counsel his fellow man, neither trust in the arm of flesh” (D&C 1:19).

Do you tell everybody what to do and back it up with force, which is exactly what everybody is doing today? He says this should not happen; the Lord has what our best defense should be. What about [Moses] in the first chapter of the first book of Moses? Weak and helpless, he said, “Now, for this cause I know that man is nothing, which thing I never had supposed.” It took him hours to get his strength again. He was as weak as a baby, lying as if he were dead on the earth there. As he finally began to stir, that’s when the devil struck. Satan chose that time to attack when [Moses] was at his weakest. It was the same thing with Enoch. “I am but a lad and the people hate me.” He was slow of speech and had no qualifications whatever when the Lord chose him. Moses was also slow of speech, and Aaron had to be chosen to do his speaking for him. And it goes on down
with the prophets. “I’m not the prophet nor the son of a prophet.” Of course, Jesus was “despised and rejected, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” A more lowly beginning than a manger could not be imagined. And then Joseph Smith’s story was the same way. He [the Lord] begins with the weak ones because they are the ones who will listen.

Everyone must have his own testimony [verse 20], and the first point is faith [verse 21] which is our best defense. It’s very interesting how President Kimball brought this out here. He said, “Few men have ever knowingly and deliberately chosen to reject God and his blessings. Rather, we learn from the scriptures that because the exercise of faith has always appeared to be more difficult than relying on things more immediately at hand [making yourself look terrible, etc.], carnal man has tended to transfer his trust in God to material things [we’ll be the strongest, have the most nukes, etc.]. Therefore, in all ages when men have fallen under the power of Satan and lost the faith, they have put in its place a hope in the ‘arm of flesh.’” He is quoting here from the Doctrine and Covenants. This is what has happened here. He goes on here and tells us about ourselves, “Enoch, too, was a man of great faith who would not be distracted from his duties by the enemy. ‘And so great was the faith of Enoch, that he led the people of God, and their enemies came to battle against them’ [they were on the defensive]. . . . What are we to fear when the Lord is with us? Can we not take the Lord at his word and exercise a particle of faith in him? Our assignment is affirmative: to forsake the things of the world as ends in themselves; to leave off idolatry and press forward in faith; to carry the gospel to our enemies, that they might no longer be our enemies.” That was the mission of Ammon in the Book of Mormon. We’ll get to him; he was a great man.

So faith is the next thing that is required in D&C 1:21. Then we enter into the covenant “that the fulness of my gospel might be proclaimed by the weak and the simple unto the ends of the world, and before kings and rulers.” And in the next verse it talks about weakness: “Behold, I am God and have spoken it; these commandments are of me, and were given unto my servants in their weakness.” You have to qualify by being weak. Where is your “peace through strength” and that sort of thing? Then he [the Lord] explains how he can make us much stronger. The only safe defense you have is this, and it’s the perfect defense. It includes three things we find in Moses 7:32. He gave Adam all three things to defend him, and they are these things that follow next.

Imagine yourself wired to receive messages. You are out on a patrol, and you are in a terribly dangerous situation. It’s desperate. Unless you can get through, the division is sunk because we don’t know what side they are going to hit us on. It’s night, etc. But you are wired up, and you can receive messages from somebody who is not in a Piper Cub observing artillery. He is in a spy satellite that has magnificent electronic devises, such as they do today. They can read an inscription on a dime through a dense fog. He is up there, and he can see everything. Well, you’re safe then because he can tell you the three things the Lord says he is going to do. First, he says he will give you knowledge. In the Garden of Eden he gave Adam knowledge. That’s a good thing to have—knowledge of what’s going on. But even if we know what’s going on, what do we do about it then? This is the worst thing. The commanders get all the information, but they want to throw it away. They say, “Well, just plunge ahead; we never turn back or bother about this. We’ll go in and show them.” Then he gets “in the soup.”

But you need knowledge, and then you have to have instructions, advice. That’s what you asked for. The Lord gave knowledge and instruction, and then when they went wrong, he
gave them correction. That’s what it says here. Verse 26: “And inasmuch as they sought wisdom they might be instructed [about what to do—first they received knowledge]. . . .
And inasmuch as they were humble [there’s your weakness again] they might be made strong, and blessed from on high, and receive knowledge from time to time.”

With that you receive instruction. But even in obeying the instructions you make mistakes; you always blunder or go the wrong way. “And inasmuch as they erred it might be made known.” He tells you when you are making mistakes. So you have information, you have advice, and you have correction—and you have it from one who knows everything. If you follow that, you are perfectly safe. But what does everybody do? What would you do as a patrolman? What does the commanding officer do? He turns off the receiver. He says, “We know what’s happening down here. I know the situation best. We’ll hit them right now.” As I said, he loses his shirt. This has happened quite a few times; you would be surprised. He [the Lord] says he has given them everything here, and this is how he helps the Nephites out. He says, if they are weak I’ll give them knowledge.

Finally, in verse 30 of the Doctrine and Covenants he tells us that it is specifically the Church through which we receive this information. That’s where we get the message conveyed. Through the Church we receive the knowledge and the instruction and the correction to act together and know what we are doing, you see. So we have to cooperate; that’s what the Church is there for—to get these things going together.

Very interestingly, from verse 12 to verse 17 he gives a very fair, honest, and unbiased presentation of the Lamanite case. The Lamanites had a case, too. They had a reason. They felt offended and threatened. They saw the Nephite power building up, and King Laman started to get worried when he saw the Nephites getting too strong. That’s why they began to make trouble for them. Then he stirred up his people to make trouble so they would do something about it. Here [in verse 12] it says, “They were a wild, and ferocious, and a blood-thirsty people.” But they firmly believed “that they were driven out of the land of Jerusalem because of the iniquities of their fathers, and that they were wronged in the wilderness by their brethren.” They blamed Nephi for everything. That [explains] the terrible pressure that Nephi was under at the end of 1 Nephi—his discouragement and absolute desperation. He was pressed all the time and held responsible for everything. They said Nephi was to blame for it all, and they firmly believed that because they were taught that by their fathers and would teach it to their children. And the basic thing is defense. Clausewitz also said, “All wars are defensive. You are always just defending; you never attack.” That’s the first rule. So the German staff changed themselves from the Kriegsamt, War Office, and Kriegsschule, War School, to Wehrmacht, “the Defense Power.” Until World War II we called them the Secretary of the Army and Secretary of the Navy and Secretary of War. In World War I, Baker became Secretary of War. We changed that to Secretary of Defense. Now we are just defensive; we never make war anymore. Everything is defense. We took that hint from the Germans.

That’s what they did here, and it’s very important. That’s necessary for morale and justification and everything else. Of course, they could understand this, and they had been wronged. Verse 13: “And again, . . . they were wronged while in the land of their first inheritance, after they had crossed the sea [you notice then that the author puts in parentheses the real explanation of what it was], and all this because that Nephi was more faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord [that’s what their real ‘beef’ was about]—therefore he was favored of the Lord, for the Lord heard his prayers and answered them, and he took the lead of their journey in the wilderness [this is what they resented].
And his brethren were wroth with him because they understood not the dealings of the Lord; they were also wroth with him [poor Nephi] upon the waters [they tied him up] because they hardened their hearts against the Lord. And again, they were wroth with him when they had arrived in the promised land, because they said that he had taken the ruling of the people out of their hands; and they sought to kill him.” They felt they were robbed; the objection was that the Nephites had betrayed them. They were the real ones in charge, and the Nephites had taken away their birthright, their right to rule. This [feeling] was built up. This is like the case the French and the Germans built up against each other for hundreds of years. “They raided us; they burned our castles.” They said that on both sides of the line, and this went on for hundreds of years. The French and the Germans are finally beginning to see that sort of thing is not going to pay off. That was the big thing in Europe for centuries, as you know—the two divisions of the Frankish people.

So they [the Nephites] had taken the ruling out of their hands. We ought to rule. It’s our right, and you have robbed us of our right [they said]. Well, that’s what the Shiites say. They believe that Ali, the nephew of Muhammad, should be the head, and the Sunnis believe that Omar, his uncle, should be the head of Islam. That’s what all the fighting has been about. Because of bloody war, it’s not safe anywhere in Lebanon today because of this. They are both devoted, passionate Moslems, but all the fighting is about this [disagreement] over Ali and Omar. These feuds that continue are so absurd.

Verse 16: “And again, they were wroth with him because he departed into the wilderness as the Lord had commanded him [Remember, he broke off and left them; they said he shouldn’t have done that. That was betrayal; that was treason. You see how these things get started], and took the records which were engraven on the plates of brass, for they said that he robbed them.” They said he robbed them of their inheritance. They had no interest in those plates. What did they care about the plates until he took them? “And thus they have taught their children that they should hate them [They built this in, so really, if you were a Lamanite, you would have a good case. You could argue and pound the table and make your case very clear that Nephi was the younger son and had no right to those things he took. The other brethren went along, etc. You would build up a big argument], and that they should murder them, and that they should rob and plunder them [to get their birthright back], and do all they could to destroy them; therefore they have an eternal hatred towards the children of Nephi.”

We see those feuds in the world that have been smoldering for many generations everywhere. Of course, Ireland is a classic example. Ever since 1620 there has been no peace. The other side has always been guilty. My grandmother left Ireland when she was seventeen years old and said she never wanted to go back. All she could remember in Belfast was blood running in the gutters. That was a long time ago, they are still doing that sort of thing. It’s awful, but these things go on and on. In the Philippines the Moriscos and the Christians go on forever and ever. Of course, in Palestine it is just endless between the Jews and Arabs, the Shiites and the Sunnis, etc. This is the world we live in with these perpetual feuds.

After 150 years they are still digging up the same old stuff about the Mormons. They are still just as bitter as ever. And you will find that the people who write about this feel personally robbed by Joseph Smith. You find a great resentment among those people. I correspond with these anti-Mormon groups more than anybody, I think. They feel a personal bitter resentment against Joseph Smith—he’s the one to blame for all this. Poor
little Joseph there, just a farm kid trying to do his best, and 150 years later big powerful institutions blame him for something or other. They hold him personally responsible. But, as I said, the Lamanites had a case; it was the national myth. As we see in verse 17, they taught their children that. It was handed down to the little ones. What could they do but accept this eternal hatred?

What do we have here? As I said there’s the IRA syndrome in Ireland. There are the Jukes and the Kallikaks, the feuds in the South. Well, we have the North and the South. They were never going to stop until the bloody settlement. It was still going on when I was in grammar school; we were still fighting the Civil War. The only songs we ever sang in class were Civil War songs, “Marching through Georgia,” etc. These feuds are costly and exhausting. They are permanent and simplistic. They set policies between parties, as in Latin America, to destabilize and disrupt. That’s their idea. Notice that the Lamanites did all they could to destroy them; that was the solution. They didn’t just leave them alone; they tried to destroy them in this eternal hatred. They tried to destabilize, undermine them, strike them wherever they could, and keep constant pressure on them. These are the policies we see. This should all be over with after two world wars. We should have learned something about this sort of thing,—instead it gets worse. That’s why we have the Book of Mormon, why we are warned. I should have mentioned this in connection with D&C 1:17. “Wherefore, I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments.” And gave him the Book of Mormon. This is a special handbook for these particular dismal times.

King Laman set his trap and bided his time all those years. Notice, “For this very cause has king Laman, by his cunning, and lying craftiness, and his fair promises, deceived me, that I have brought this my people up into this land, that they may destroy them; yea, and we have suffered these many years in the land.” All these years this has smoldered. So Zeniff roused them up and stimulated them to go to battle. If you must fight, you do as he did. Verse 20: “And it came to pass that we did drive them again out of our land; and we slew them with a great slaughter. . . . We returned again to our own land, and my people again began to tend their flocks, and to till their ground.” It was right back to square one again, which is an interesting thing. All wars in the Book of Mormon take place on Nephite territory, except the last one. We are told in Mormon 4:4, “And it was because the armies of the Nephites went up unto the Lamanites that they began to be smitten; for were it not for that, the Lamanites could have had no power over them.” As soon as they did that, he knew “the jig was up.” In the next verse he says, Don’t worry about the wicked neighbors you have. “But behold, the judgments of God will overtake the wicked; and it is by the wicked that the wicked are punished.” If you feel you must punish them, you’ll get right into it yourself. “It is by the wicked that the wicked are punished.” At an early phase of the Korean War it was announced by our general staff that the North Koreans were virtually beaten, but they hadn’t been sufficiently punished. So they decided to continue the war—because they hadn’t been punished. “It is by the wicked that the wicked are punished.” The Lord repeatedly says in the Book of Mormon, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay.” At the end it is climactic, but it is already [going on] at this time.

Then in the next chapter we see that Zeniff is not a man of very good judgment. You notice that he has done foolish things. In Mosiah 9:2–3 he got into trouble with the leader of the crew. He wanted to make peace, but he wasn’t too tactful about it. He was partly responsible for the breaking up of that group. Then soon after he insisted on leading another expedition which was poorly equipped, and they suffered from hunger and thirst.
They had a terrible time because they weren't properly prepared. Then he gave the kingdom to a son who was [a poor ruler]. It shows at best that he doesn't have good judgment because the son was a rotter. But this is the most interesting thing. His judgment wasn't the best, but we overlook the fact that the wicked Noah was an extremely popular king. He was the most popular king in the Book of Mormon. We say, "He was wicked; terrible Noah." We look at pictures drawn by Arnold Friberg, and we say, "Ooh what a fiend he was!" But he wasn't that way at all. He was very popular, as I said. Notice, when it says, "Do that which was abominable in the sight of the Lord," that's a euphemism. That's when you use one word to cover another word, particularly a displeasing word. A good example of that is the emerods in the Bible. Hemorrhoids are not nice, so they used a totally different word for it. Where it is used here, abominable means kinky sex and whoredoms in the plural, all kinds of depravities. This is the idea. What's more, we read that the people went along with it; they joined him in it. "And he did cause his people to commit sin, and do that which was abominable in the sight of the Lord." It wasn't just in his court that they were doing it; he set an example that was followed. "Yea, and they did commit whoredoms and all manner of wickedness." That covers a lot. Oh, yes, for emerods they used the word āpāďār which just means dust. It was a complete coverup; you'd never guess what it meant from that. But this is the same thing, and it covered a lot of vices, you can be sure.

Verse 3: “And he laid a tax of one fifth part of all they possessed.” Now that was a perfectly normal tax, twenty percent, in all ancient societies—Babylonian, Egyptian, everywhere. It was not oppressive; you could still prosper with it. But, of course, [the problem] was what it was used for—the waste it was put to. The next verse tells us that; he did it all to support himself. It was a whole new ball game, a new culture. Talk about a new administration! It says, “thus he had changed the affairs of the kingdom.” He completely changed the whole thing. He put in new personnel all the way—his wives and his concubines and his priests and their wives and concubines. Remember, it was a sacral state, a priest state. He was the priest king. They were the priestly governors, and they were the highest court of law. He made a clean sweep and put down all the priests that had been consecrated by his father. He removed all the priests that were in there and consecrated new ones to suit his own fancy, “such as were lifted up in the pride of their hearts.” They were proud and were going to take over and really do things—and note the kinds of things they were going to do!

Question: Where did Zeniff get his power to consecrate the priests?

Answer: They came out of [the land of Lehi-Nephi] and Mosiah was in charge. He got it from Mosiah. Mosiah’s [authority] was passed down from the beginning. He was Nephite too and had it from Nephi; it came through that line. Imagine Joseph writing all this out with all these migrations. He never got mixed up, but I get mixed up all the time. He was writing this just cold with no notes, no references, no evidences of any study, no handbooks or sources available anywhere. He produced this, and it was “quite a trick”!

Well, I think of other administrations, like Alexander VI; Roderigo Borgia was a Spaniard who became pope. He put his son, the famous Cesare Borgia, in charge, and it was just such an orgy. Italy was completely in the hands of those people. It was divided between the scrupulous and bloody use of power and vast immorality—all sorts of ingenious devices for misbehaving. So we're getting that order of things now. The people joined him in the idolatry; they also became idolatrous. Notice, “thus did the people labor exceedingly
to support iniquity." Now the fact that they worked hard doesn’t sanctify their wealth or the uses of it. Remember, Jacob said, you have worked hard, and by your industry you have acquired great wealth. But it’s vile; you shouldn’t have it. The fact that you have worked for the stuff doesn’t mean that it is sanctified at all. Here the people were all for the program. He was a very popular king and put on a great show. “Thus did the people labor exceedingly to support iniquity. Yea, and they also became idolatrous, because they were deceived by the vain and flattering words of the king and priests [he told them what they wanted to hear; they joined in it and were won over by the official rhetoric, the flattering which the public loves to hear] for they did speak flattering things unto them.”

They joined with Noah in his excesses, too. We read in verse 15: “He became a wine-bibber, and also his people.” They joined him in all these things. And, of course, elegant and spacious buildings are the things we’re proud of; they are the things that make the civilization. They’re very showy and magnificent with all the work in the metal, etc. This reminds me of the Moche grave which was recently discovered in Peru, the great unplundered grave so far. That was from the fourth century, and this is in the second century B.C. It was five or six hundred years after this; that’s close enough. But you can see the lavishness on the wall and vase paintings, etc. Everything is overdone—the massive work, the feathers, the plumes, the jewels, the necklaces, the bracelets. You could be crushed with the stuff. It’s vulgar excess all over the place, just too much. This is characteristic of this civilization, and the Book of Mormon complains of it all the way through—the costly apparel. It’s not beautiful necessarily, but it’s costly. That’s the main thing about it. Verse 9: “And he also built him a spacious palace, and a throne in the midst thereof.” He got great public support on that too because they were proud of that and proud of their king.

I may have mentioned C. N. Parkinson, inventor of Parkinson’s law. He wrote a very good essay on the building of great buildings in the world. Always the great, magnificent, marvelous show buildings come right as the last gasp of a civilization. Just on the verge of collapse they build these tremendous buildings; he shows that this happens every time. I refer to the contemporary issue of the National Geographic, which is on the skyscrapers of New York. It is almost sickening. There are these enormous skyscrapers going up a hundred stories, right next door to each other with no air space in between them, just for show. The way it boasts about them, etc., is really astonishing. Where can we go from there? What would happen? I mean they are not practical. How can people get out of them all at once? Here you have a hundred thousand people right next to each other and one little, narrow street between them. How do they all get out in ten minutes? That sort of thing. It’s not going to happen.

But the palace and the throne are legitimate appurtenances of civilization—architecture, building, the temple, of course. Anciently they put it all on in the temple. This was the big thing. We are told that in the Greek and Roman orations, too. In ancient times the people were proud of the temple and their sacred buildings. Now it’s all in the private houses, and the poor old temple goes neglected. You get that in Aristophanes and others. Verse 9: “And he also built him a spacious palace, and a throne in the midst thereof, all of which was of fine wood and was ornamented with gold and silver and with precious things. And he also caused that his workmen should work all manner of fine work within the walls of the temple, of fine wood, and of copper, and of brass.” He was pouring it on because that’s the way it was. Here’s a nice touch of irony; there’s real satire in this one. We think of Matthew 6:2, where the Lord puts a touch of irony and humor in there—there’s more than you think in the Bible and the Book of Mormon. He talks about
the rich men going to give alms. They must go to give alms, so they have a trumpet sounding before them to show they are giving alms to the poor. Well, that’s utterly ridiculous, of course. It’s meant to be, and this is, too. Verse 11: “And the seats which were set apart for the high priests, which were above all the other seats, he did ornament with pure gold; and he caused a breastwork to be built before them, that they might rest their bodies and their arms upon while they should speak lying and vain words to his people.” It was magnificent and impressive. They would sit there in their majesty and speak to the people. You know what they would speak to them. This brings up a very interesting parallel, but we’ll go on.

Question: Was it the practice of the Nephites to construct their buildings out of wood rather than cement?

Answer: That’s true; they only built with cement when they found a place that had been deforested. Deforestation was very important there. That’s a thing the Book of Mormon takes a good leap on, too. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries deforestation was of great concern to scholars. They worried about that because once those forests go they never come back again.

It’s very interesting that he [King Noah] built a tower near the temple. One thing we all remember from pictures of Central America and visits is that it was a tower culture. There are towers spotting the jungle everywhere you go. Verse 12: “He built a tower near the temple; yea, a very high tower, even so high that he could stand upon the top thereof and overlook the land of Šilom [the high land], and also the land of Šemlon [on the east], which was possessed by the Lamanites; and he could even look over all the land round about.” Those of you who have been to Palenque know that’s exactly the setting. Incidentally, the tradition of the Hopis is that they came from Palenque. It’s a very interesting thing. (The parrot clan is the main clan, the mother clan, but let’s not get sidetracked onto that.) The towers are very interesting here. They had both the round and the square towers. There were two civilizations anciently around the Mediterranean that coexisted. There was the pyrgos, like Pergamum, etc. That’s the square tower on a high, safe place. So we get the words like burg; any safe, high place is a burg, or a borough as we spell it, or the German Berg. That’s a mountain, Heidelberg or Nürnberg. A burrow is a hole in the ground, a place of retreat, a safe place. But the pyrgos is the square tower, and you find the square tower people all over. The Greek word for tower is pyrgos, completely unknown to the Latin. That is the other word, turris, which is round tower. The Latin word is turris in the feminine. All the Celtic people that came down from the north had the round towers, so our word tower means around or circle, and it’s dór in Semitic language, meaning a round tower. The main feature in the oldest city in the world is that huge round tower in Jericho. [Some] say it goes back as far as eight thousand years ago. So you have the turris, the tower, and our word tour means to “go around in a circle.” All these things are very rich in meaning—tour, turn as against pyrgos, burg, borough. What other burgs do we have? Bergen means to protect.

They had both types of Mediterranean towers in South America; you’ll find both types. But the round towers are astronomical towers—that’s a different thing. The normal thing is square. Chichen-Itza has both, as you know, but the round ones are for the stars. They built these towers. At Palenque there’s not only that magnificent tomb, but there’s that high tower on a high place, and it was meant as a watch tower. You can go to the top and see the whole land, all the way down to Villahermosa there on the coast. It’s all flat, but you can see other towers sticking up here and there. You can see everything from that
tower. All of a sudden the mountain is there with heavy jungle and magnificent trees, and there are these big towers up there. You can go up there and see everything from them. That was the purpose of them. Why would you bother to build a tower if you were going to build it lower down? Just for the symbol of the tower? No, you want to see as much as you can. Those are watchtowers at Palenque. You have all seen pictures of them. I guess we should show slides and things like that, but I never remember what I see in slides.

Verse 13: “And it came to pass that he caused many buildings to be built in the land Shilom; and he caused a great tower to be built on the hill north of the land Shilom [you can be sure that was a great square tower, a great defensive tower] . . . and thus he did do with the riches which he obtained by the taxation of his people.” Like fourth-century civilization, it was flashy, superficial, and very impressive. But it collapsed very quickly. In this security they lived the lifestyle of the rich and famous. “He placed his heart upon his riches, and he spent his time in riotous living with his wives and his concubines; and so did also his priests spend their time with harlots.” They had a high old time here. Then he planted vineyards, and this is an important thing, too. “. . . he planted vineyards round about in the land; and he built wine-presses, and made wine in abundance; and therefore he became a wine-bibber, and also his people.” See, he brought them along with him. Wine is native to America, as you know. You know where Vinland is? Martha’s Vineyard, etc.? In the year 986 Bjorni Haraldsson was a merchant who, along with Eric the Red, sailed along the coast of Labrador and New England. They came down as far as Massachusetts, reported grapes around there, and went back. Then exactly in the year 1000, which is easy to remember, his son, Leif Ericsson, visited the coast and came back with a lot of grapes. Then another merchant followed in 1002, just two years after that. He took 160 people with him in three ships, and they lived there. Then there was the usual thing, the big fight. They had the big squabble, broke up, and went back again. But the land was rich in grapes here. Who else do we have? That’s about it. Well, the Skraelings, the Eskimos. They did away with them; the colony disappeared after a while. The point is that they called it Vinland and they were good grapes, which are native to America. But they could have been planted by other people. A very important thing they are finding today is that the whole geographical face of the earth now is the result of man’s work to a far greater degree than we ever supposed, including even things like the Sahara Desert, vast as it is. It’s the result of our monkeying around.

Well, then what happens here? Ah, now look! This was the way they were acting, so against this rich and apparently strong kingdom, the Lamanites adopt a policy of terrorism—infiltration, but it’s terrorism. It’s not banditry which is just stealing. Bandits and pirates can be good-natured and even be friendly. There’s Bernard Shaw’s Captain Brassbounds’ Conversion and stories about the good natured bandits of southern Italy, etc. But this isn’t the thing. These people are animated by hatred and by a policy. They are real terrorists, in other words. They think they are idealists, as it tells us here. Verse 16: “And it came to pass that the Lamanites began to come in upon his people, upon small numbers, and to slay them in their fields, and while they were tending their flocks.” Then it says in the next verse: “Thus the Lamanites began to destroy them, and to exercise their hatred upon them.” See, they were motivated to exercise their hatred; they were real terrorists. Remember they had the case that they were just freedom fighters for their particular cause, etc. This is terrorism, not just banditry. They didn’t just come in to rob them. “The Lamanites came upon them and killed them, and drove many of their flocks out of the land; thus the Lamanites began to destroy them, and to exercise their hatred upon them.” This is a very bad thing, this terrorism.
Then the Lamanites became bolder. They infiltrated en masse, and the army gave them an unexpected setback. Verse 18: “King Noah sent his armies against them, and they were driven back [they got overconfident; they had been getting away with this] or they drove them back for a time; therefore they returned rejoicing in their spoil.” With that easy victory, surprised and elated by their performance, they suddenly found themselves standing tall. They were very much pleased with the game. That was fun, and they began to enjoy it. The author deplores the situation; he holds the administration responsible.

“And now, because of this great victory they were lifted up in the pride of their hearts [Well, why not? What is wrong with victory? They were enjoying the shedding of blood and having the upper hand; it tells us that here, you see]. . . . Thus they did boast, and did delight in blood, and the shedding of the blood of their brethren.” The Lamanites are their brethren, and they shouldn’t do that, even with the bad Lamanites. Moroni never refers to the Lamanites as anything but their brethren. They shouldn’t have done that. “They were lifted up in the pride of their hearts; they did boast in their own strength, saying that their fifty could stand against thousands of the Lamanites; and thus they did boast, and did delight in blood, and the shedding of the blood of their brethren, and this because of the wickedness of their king and priests.” Would he be responsible for that?

Now we get the story of Abinadi, which has a most striking parallel. You talk about recurrent scenarios; there’s nothing more striking than this story of Abinadi and the story we have of the Teacher of Righteousness in the Dead Sea Scrolls. His story is Abinadi’s story at the same time. This happened about the second century B.C. the same way. We find it in the Damascus Fragment, the Manual of Discipline, the Habakkuk Scroll, and the Thanksgiving Hymns from Qumran. So both of them are well documented, and they both go through the same routine, like this idea in Mosiah, “that they might rest their bodies . . . while they should speak lying and vain words to his people,” etc. The 1Q8 says, “But they did lead my people astray; speaking smooth things, practitioners of vain rhetoric. Lying speakers and vain seers [they are called]. In their insolence they would sit in judgment . . . and from the mouths of lying prophets led astray the people.” See, they were just like these people.

Then Mosiah says, “They did boast, and did delight in blood, and the shedding of the blood of their brethren, and this because of the wickedness of their king and priests.” And the Damascus Fragment says, “And they took the offensive against the life of the righteous and all who walked uprightly, and they hated in their hearts and pursued them with the sword, and rejoiced in controversy.”

Mosiah 11:26 “When Abinadi had spoken these words unto them they were wroth with him, and sought to take away his life; but the Lord delivered him out of their hands.” In the Hodayot Scroll, where he gives his autobiography, he says, “The ruthless ones sought my life. The gang of no-goods [bums], the conspiracy of Belial, they knew not that my security was in Thee and that through Thy mercy is my soul delivered. They sought to take away my life and shed my blood, but our God has helped the weak and the suffering out of the hand of the one who is stronger than he.”

In Mosiah 11:28 the king says, “I command you to bring Abinadi hither, that I may slay him, for he has said these things that he might stir up my people to anger one with another, and to raise contentions among my people; therefore, I will slay him.” In the 1Q8 the prophet says, “I became a man of controversy ish rîb, a troublemaker, to the
preachers of error.” And Joseph Smith says, “I was destined to prove a disturber and annoyer of Satan’s kingdom.”

Mosiah 12:1: “And it came to pass that after the space of two years that Abinadi came among them in disguise, that they knew him not, and began to prophesy among them.” Then here he says, “For they drove him out of my land and like a bird from my nest, and all my friends and relatives they turned against me.”

Then he talks about his disguise and all the rest of it, but it’s rather interesting, isn’t it? (Then let’s see what we have here now.) Abinadi comes into the picture. In Mosiah 11:22 we read that God is a jealous God and will not acknowledge the excuse of worldly temptation. Granted you are tempted, but you can’t use that as an excuse because he knows you are strong enough to resist. Their status as God’s people has passed, and it’s now a liability and not an immunity.

The seven earlier writers after the New Testament are the Apostolic Fathers. Especially in Clement, who wrote 1 Clement and 2 Clement, and in Ignatius (well, in all of them as a matter of fact), you find this theme: “They think because they are members of the church that God has invested so much in them so far that he can’t possibly go back on them now.” [The people said] “We are safe home because we are members of the church and it is established.” He said that’s the most dangerous thing you can do because “the greater the security you feel, the greater the danger you are in.” And then the Apostolic Fathers would cite, “For if the angels who kept not their first estate were cast out, what do you think will happen to you?” You feel secure because you have been blessed, but for that reason you are more responsible. You are in greater danger than anybody else. Can’t you see that? You are never safe home. Once you’ve got the blessings you are stuck with something, and you are under double obligation.

Verse 23: “And it shall come to pass that except this people repent and turn unto the Lord their God, they shall be brought into bondage . . . and I will suffer them that they be smitten by their enemies.” The Lord will allow all this to happen; there comes a time of no return when even prayer won’t do. “And except they repent in sackcloth and ashes, and cry mightily to the Lord their God, I will not hear their prayers, neither will I deliver them out of their afflictions.” Once the shooting starts, that’s that. It’s too late then, and they’ve got to remember that. The people didn’t like that and were very much upset by it. “When Abinadi had spoken these words unto them they were wroth with him, and sought to take away his life.” Noah was in a rage and said, by what authority does this upstart speak? Abinadi is called a troublemaker and a subversive for stirring up the people to contentions—just making trouble. The more corrupt a government is the more zealous it is for law and order; it has to make a show of that.

They failed to see Abinadi’s point completely. Verse 29: “Now the eyes of the people were blinded.” The didn’t see the point of the real evil, and they were determined to root out the protestor, to condemn and fire the whistle blower. He was the one who was guilty [according to them]. The people were blinded, “therefore they hardened their hearts against the words of Abinadi, and they sought from that time forward to take him.”

The time is about up as we come to this interesting thing. He enters among them in disguise, and he appears among them saying, “Thus has the Lord commanded me, saying—Abinadi, go and prophesy unto this my people, for they have hardened their hearts against my words.” Well, that’s some disguise if he says “Abinadi.” No, that’s not it.
I should take it back to the Dead Sea Scrolls. He says that he was only able to enter into the town that way. They would have stopped him long before at the gates. He was in their midst when he cast off the disguise, as it says here. “And it came to pass that after the space of two years that Abinadi came among them in disguise, that they knew him not, and began to prophesy among them.”

Well, you see the same thing in the Old Testament and in the New Testament when Jesus went in disguise to the Passover so they didn’t know him. In John 11:54 the Lord is disguised, and the prophets went about in disguise. Saul was in disguise when he visited the Witch of Endor, etc. Disguising is very common; Isaiah is an example. They go and hide themselves. Elijah hid and was fed by ravens. They hide and disguise themselves and circulate among the people. They are also hid by the people in their houses. That’s the normal career with the prophets. He tells how he went and lived among the fishing people, then went out into the desert for a while, and then came back. To get into the town he was disguised. But when he was in there, he cast off his disguise and preached to them as Abinadi. It hit them like a bolt of lightning and there was more trouble. (You find in John 11:54 where the Lord is disguised.) So Abinadi came back and began to prophesy and really got things stirred up.

I see the time is up now, so we will start next time with Abinadi’s sermon. Incidentally, these chapters 12–16 are one of the most important doctrinal parts of the Book of Mormon. Chapters 15 and 16 are probably the hardest chapters in the Book of Mormon. Abinadi turned out to be a tremendous teacher, and he was a nobody. Then we get to Samuel the Lamanite, who was even more offensive.

1. This quotation is taken from the speech by President Spencer W. Kimball referred to in an earlier lecture.
TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

HUGH NIBLEY

Semester 2, Lecture 34
Mosiah 12–14
Abinadi’s Message

We are on chapter 12 of Mosiah where he [Abinadi] comes among them. He gains entrance in disguise, and once in the midst of them, he throws off the disguise. That is a common device of the prophets, and angels do it. We are told that men have often entertained angels unawares. And the Lord himself was not recognized. It’s a way to get an audience.

We have a very interesting thing here. This is an important element that we need to mention here right now. Verse 2: “And the Lord said unto me: Stretch forth thy hand and prophesy, saying [this is what’s going to happen; this is the picture]: Thus saith the Lord, it shall come to pass that this generation, because of their iniquities, shall be brought into bondage; they shall be smitten on the cheek; yea, and shall be driven by men, and shall be slain; and the vultures of the air, and the dogs, yea, and the wild beasts, shall devour their flesh.” This is resumed when somebody reports to the king later on, in verses 11 and 12, the things that will happen.

Then in verse 4 it says, “I will smite this my people with sore afflictions, yea, with famine and with pestilence; and I will cause that they shall howl all the day long. Yea, and I will cause that they shall have burdens lashed upon their backs; and they shall be driven before like a dumb ass.” They are really pouring it on. That is a very characteristic element, as you know, in Meso-American art. I have a recent (October 1988) National Geographic that depicts that. This is typical of a scene. Pictures like this number in the hundreds. This is the way they are treating their enemies and their prisoners in this particular one. You notice the violence and ferocity, the unmitigated savagery, of these people—it’s absolutely deliberate. This is from a very rich tomb down in Peru, and you will find the same thing up in Mexico and in Central America. But why this dedicated viciousness in these things? Things aren’t done halfway, and this is rather characteristic of [these people]—this going to extremes. They have illustrated what’s going on in this one here. You notice the lavishness and the wealth, etc. This is the wealthiest tomb yet discovered in Peru. But you notice the thatched roof. It isn’t the sort of thing that Arnold Friberg imagines, although they were fabulously rich. There’s marvelous stuff in this tomb. Notice the deliberate hideousness of things. Why? They make such gorgeous things and make them as hideous as they can. It’s an interesting psychological study, isn’t it?

We have some more here. Here’s the richness of the tomb the way they found it. Again, it’s the viel zu viel; they just pour it on. (You don’t recognize much there; that’s the way they found the guy.) But there’s this costly apparel, the feathers, the beads, the jewelry, and the clinking and the flapping. These people were just walking Christmas trees. This is a thing that is often reflected in the Book of Mormon, this excess, and especially this treatment of the enemy the way it is described here. There are many pictures of this; it’s a favorite theme. Here they are cutting people’s throats, etc. They show lots of pictures with vultures and dogs eating people. That’s what it says here. The [Lamanites] will smite them and cause burdens to be lashed upon their backs. There are some famous pictures with one
people bearing the burdens and the others driving them, etc. “Yea, and shall be
driven by men, and shall be slain; and the vultures of the air, and the dogs, yea, and the
wild beasts, shall devour their flesh.” We have pictures all over, as if they gloated on that
sort of thing. It’s a most interesting aspect of the Book of Mormon, this savagery.

Then we come to the east wind and the insects and the pestilence, which follows the war.
And verse 8 tells us, “Except they repent I will utterly destroy them from off the face of
the earth; yet they shall leave a record behind them, and I will preserve them for other
nations which shall possess the land; yea, even this will I do that I may discover the
abominations of this people to other nations.” Well, why worry about the abominations?
Why go out of your way to show how abominable they were? Why keep the record just to
show that these people were destructive and wicked and this is what happened to them?
This seems to be a very negative approach to history, doesn’t it? Well, this is for a definite
reason and purpose. We should know that today.

Civilizations and cultures do not have to be destroyed. There are cycles; you get those in
Spengler and Thomas Henry Buckle. In the cyclical theory of civilizations, they have a
youth, a maturity, and an old age. Then they collapse. It has routinely happened to many
of them. That goes with civilization. They become acquisitive and expansive, and you
can’t do that forever. You’ll always collapse if you have an acquisitive and expansive
civilization. We seem to think that unless the GNP goes up every year we are in trouble.
If it stands still, then nothing’s going to happen. But we could talk about the stable
civilizations that have been there for thousands of years and are still doing very well—one
on this continent, too, as far as that goes. There are such permanent societies. You can see
them on these documentaries; they misname them “savages” in New Guinea and places
like that. They say, “Since the Stone Age, they have been living like this for millions of
years.” It’s not necessarily that, but they have a stable form of existence. Their food supply
is regular.

There is a lot of lamentation now about the destruction of the jungle and all resources,
and about the destruction of the ozone. It can’t go on, you see; you can’t expand that
way. It always shows us that if we would just leave these things alone, where the balance of
nature is established, and wouldn’t try to prey on each other and to get richer and richer,
people could go on indefinitely. They can enjoy themselves and have a good time. It’s
much better than our miserable rat race that everybody complains about; we’re always
under pressure. There are these “noble savages.” The sixteenth- and seventeenth-century
explorers and the Jesuits and others were impressed by what they called “noble savages,”
the first people that Columbus met, etc. They had no weapons; they didn’t fight at all. It’s
a very interesting thing that lots of people like that have been found. The “noble savage”
wasn’t all a myth; there’s something to it. We know more about it now. We see these
people who seem to be very happy.

This time Abinadi expected to be caught, of course. He threw off the disguise and said who
he was. He wanted an audience with the king, and he got it. They took him to the king.
Then they accused him of this prophecy. Now this is a very interesting study in textual
criticism because this is what he said. Verse 3: “The life of king Noah shall be valued even
as a garment in a hot furnace; for he shall know that I am the Lord . . . [verse 11] And
again, he saith that thou shalt be as a stalk, even as a dry stalk of the field, which is run
over by the beasts and trodden under foot. And again, he saith thou shalt be as the
blossoms of a thistle, which, when it is fully ripe, if the wind bloweth, it is driven forth
upon the face of the land.”
These passages are very interesting because they are found [in another place]. I was talking last time about a parallel case of the Teacher of Righteousness in the Dead Sea Scrolls, who goes through the same routine—the same persecution, the same hiding, and everything else—as Abinadi. And it happened about the same time, but it was in the Old World. He prophesied, too, and he used the same expressions. We see that these expressions come from a common source. There are references in chapter 50 of Isaiah. This is what it comes down to. First, put down Isaiah 50:9–11. This is the prophet speaking, just as Abinadi is speaking, just as the Teacher of Righteousness is speaking. They both quote Isaiah, and they quote it in a very interesting way from an older text. We find the parallel texts not in Joseph Smith and the Bible, which he could have used, but in Joseph Smith and the Dead Sea Scrolls, which he couldn’t have used because they are a recent discovery. They quote it in the same way that Joseph Smith quotes it. If you can keep this straight, it is a neat example of textual criticism. So Isaiah says, “Who is he that shall condemn me? lo, they all shall wax old as a garment [he is not talking about the garment being burned]; the moth shall eat them up [that’s what happens to garments]… Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled,” you people that play with fire. These irresponsible priests in their wickedness are playing with fire, and they will be burned up by it.

Bearing that in mind, what does the Dead Sea Scrolls man say? “For those who stubbornly oppose God, there shall be violence and overpowering and a flame of fire. They are playing with fire and throwing sparks around.” I suppose he got that from Isaiah. This is from the Damascus Covenant 5:13. Then the next verse is interesting. “Their weaving is a flimsy thing, the weaving of spiders.” Notice how Abinadi combined them. If you play around with flimsy old garments and put them in the fire, they will be burned in a hurry. Here he says they are playing with sparks and throwing fire around, and their weaving (their arguments, etc.) is flimsy, as the weaving of spiders. Then he says another thing, “Thou scatterest the remnant of the men who fight against me, like chaff before the wind.” Now Abinadi saith that thy life shall be as a garment in a furnace of fire. And again, he saith that thou shalt be as blossoms of a thistle, which, when it is fully ripe, if the wind bloweth, it is driven forth upon the face of the land.” Well, I guess they got that from the first psalm about the wicked man. He shall be “like chaff which the wind driveth away.” But the thing is that Abinadi put them in the same combination that the Teacher of Righteousness did in the Old World. They both used the same old text is the point. It’s an older text. Remember, we have the Isaiah text from the Dead Sea Scrolls, which is a thousand years older than our Old Testament Isaiah. Ours comes from the ninth century, and this is the first century B.C. This is the older text, and Abinadi cites the older text.

Abinadi is the most interesting character from the point of view of literature of any writer in the Book of Mormon because he is very subtle and clever. In his long speech here he uses puns, and a bitter humor comes through. And he knows the scriptures and sticks to them. He chides these people for not knowing the scriptures, for their ignorance. They claim to know them and he says, you’re ignorant; you don’t know anything about them. “The life of king Noah shall be valued even as a garment in a hot furnace.” And [the king’s] servants report to him, “And he also prophesieth evil concerning thy life, and saith that thy life shall be as a garment in a furnace of fire. And again, he saith that thou shalt be as blossoms of thistle, which the wind bloweth.”

At the same time the Teacher of Righteousness was saying, “For those who oppose God there shall be violence and flame. They are playing with fire and throwing sparks. Their
weaving is a flimsy thing, the weaving of spiders.” The other is the likeness of thistles, and they are “scattered like chaff before the wind.” They play with these ideas and bring them in. This is a neat literary problem in the Book of Mormon.

We proceed then after he tells them about that. What do we have here? Verse 13: “And now, O king, what great evil hast thou done, or what great sins have thy people committed, that we should be condemned of God or judged of this man. And now, O king, behold, we are guiltless, and thou, O king, hast not sinned; therefore, this man has lied concerning you, and he has prophesied in vain [How do we know we are righteous? Because we have prospered, they said]. And behold, we are strong, we shall not come into bondage, or be taken captive by our enemies; yea, and thou hast prospered in the land, and thou shalt also prosper.” They are talking about the king. They are pretty nice, and this is an important thing. The message here is we are good because we are strong and prosperous.

A special concern of the prophets, and especially in the Book of Mormon, is the self-image. This is a big thing in the Book of Mormon, as you know. The more corrupt and wicked people are, the more they insist on their respectable, proper, decent, upright self-image. After all, who dresses flawlessly in the height of style? The mafioso, of course. You've seen plenty of TV dramas; you know the oil fellows on Dynasty, etc. The most ultra-respectable people are those who are up to the nastiest business on all fronts. They have to have this front of respectability and righteousness, and they work on it awfully hard. This has something to say about our times, too, as you can easily see. But this is a necessary fiction if they are to meet the charges and put the prophets in the wrong.

I’m sorely tempted, and I’m going to yield to temptation this time and read something I wrote thirty-six years ago in a journal on this subject. “And thus Western Civilization was nursed in the schools on a legend of Western goodness [this is the fourth century], the Western world of clean, fresh, simple, unspoiled pioneers [America’s image abroad, you see]. This fiction became the very cornerstone of the official Virgilian doctrine of Romanitas. ‘Rome was great because Rome was good. The emperors, who after the second century took the name of Pius and Felix, were giving expression, we are told, to the old Roman belief in the close association between piety and success’ while indulging in the ingrained Roman vice, blatantly paraded throughout the whole of Latin literature, of dwelling with a kind of morbid fascination on one’s own simple goodness [like Horace describing his puritas, or the famous ode—tell me how pure I am]. School boys have been told for centuries that the Romans were simple, severe, and virtuous folk with a near monopoly on pietas and fides, piety and faith, because forsooth, the Romans themselves always said so, though almost every page of their record contradicts the claim. What better demonstration for the effectiveness of the official propaganda? Teachers and orators drilled the essentials of Western goodness into their pupils and auditors until by the fourth century, when hardly a speck of ancient virtue remained, men could talk of nothing but that virtue.”

Salvian was a Christian who made a grand tour through all of Europe in the fourth century and reported on moral conditions in the church there. And what a report! “They go right on sinning,” Salvian reports, “in the sublime conviction that no matter how vilely they may act, or how nobly the barbarians behave, God must necessarily bless them and curse the barbarians for being what they are.” Yet Salvian himself shows how well the lesson has been taught when he stoutly affirms that, “after all, no barbarian can be really virtuous.”
“To the lessons of the schools, carefully supervised by the government, was added the more aggressive policy of deliberately widening the gulf between the two worlds [the Asiatic world was the world of the Persian Empire at that time]. For centuries, barbarian and Roman, East and West, had been mingling on terms of greatest intimacy, producing a borderline culture where it was quite impossible to draw the line between one culture and the other. Priscus mentions [he visited in the fifth century] quite casually the presence of people from the West visiting relatives in the camps of the Asians. He notes the busy coming and going of merchants between the two worlds and describes the kind hospitality shown to him, a complete stranger, in the homes of the easterners. But with this he gives us the other side of the picture, the official side—the ubiquitous activity of spies and agents in Roman pay, the infusion into the very court of Attila [he was a contemporary who visited the court of Attila and described it], large sums of money to corrupt and divide [they wanted to destabilize them, you see]. The insane and mounting conviction of the rulers of the two halves of the world [both barbarians; the other one was Theodosius] was that his was the divine calling to liberate the human race from the intolerable ambition of the other.

“The official attitude of the barbarians was set forth a few years after this in Synesius’ instruction to the feeble emperor Arcadius.” Synesius was a flashy character. He was a bishop in Libya in North Africa. He was a fox hunting cleric who loved to hunt and enjoy life. He told an amusing story. After a session in Italy, he was going back to his bishopric in Africa on a Jewish boat. The Jews had a navy and were great sailors; we forget that. As they approached the African shore, a terrible storm came up and started blowing them toward the rocks on the shore. The crew worked like fury until the sun went down, and then it was Sabbath. Not a member of the crew would raise a finger after that. They dashed on the rocks, and there was nothing he could do about it. He described the wreck and what he was able to save. They were really observant Jews. As soon as the sun went down, suicide it must be—here she goes! No one would lift a finger or pull a rope as long as it was the Sabbath. That is what you call Pharisaical.

“He admits that they surpassed the Romans in energy, honesty, reliability, and perseverance. ‘Yet for all that they are still barbarians and as liable to murder citizens in their beds as were ever any savage ancestors [security becomes the name of the game]. Your father has made allies of these Scythians,’ he tells the young and idiotic emperor. ‘He should have known that there is no virtue in a barbarian. From that day to this, they have simply laughed at us. Lacking the heroic qualities of their fathers, they are slaves, for they are a people without a land of their own.’ Hence the proverb ‘the empty waste of the Scythians’ for they are always running away from settled life.”

See they didn’t understand the significance of nomadic life at all; it didn’t mean anything. It sounds like what Nixon said, “There’s no such word in Russian as liberty or freedom.” That’s the silliest thing in the world. It’s swoboda. “Plainly Synesius thinks that the primordial ways of the nomads are some new sign of degeneracy. So far was one of the most learned men of the day, an expert adviser on foreign affairs, from comprehending the Asiatic way of life, which was impinging upon the Roman world at a thousand points.” Then the barbarians just ran over them—that’s all. Well, it goes on and on. It’s quite an article. It has been used in a lot of law schools, etc. It was required reading in the Yale Law School years ago.
Now we go on here [in the Book of Mormon]. Verse 15: “And behold, we are strong, we shall not come into bondage, or be taken captive by our enemies.” This was a very religious, sacral society governed by priests. Like in Thebes, they were priest kings. Then King Noah caused that the priests should gather to consult. The king summoning his wise men together to consult about things is a standard theme in ancient literature, of course. Not only [the priests of Pharaoh trying] to baffle Moses or the priests of Baal trying to baffle Elijah, but especially in the life of Abraham, as a child or a grown man. Every time Abraham threatened the king, the king immediately called his wise men, and then there was a contest between them. Moses’ staff [turned into a serpent and] ate the other seven serpents. And actually from the Old Kingdom there is in the Pyramid Texts mention of that—the staff serpent that eats the seven other serpents. It’s a very old story.

So we have this competition between the [prophets] and the king with his official wise men. He calls his counselors or wise men. This is a theme in the scriptures; we get it all through the prophets. We get it in Revelation where they call together the wisest people they have, and all their wisdom comes to nothing. They put their heads together and have no counsel at all; they are absolutely paralyzed. We reach that stage. Just by adding more men to the committee, you’re not going to make it any smarter. You might add up their total IQ and get a good hundred [laughter], but that won’t do it. Verse 17: “And he commanded that the priests should gather themselves together that he might hold a council with them what he should do with him.”

The king is worried. He is a very interesting character. He’s a playboy and has made himself very popular. He’s not entirely bad. He had a good father, but his father showed bad judgment in making him king, etc. But he has his problems, and he is going to have more of them, too. Verse 18: “And it came to pass they said unto the king: Bring him hither that we may question him; and the king commanded that he should be brought before them.” They are going to question him, so here we have a disputatio. It’s like Luther in Worms, where they brought all the councils together to face him. Or like Giordano Bruno in Rome before Clement VIII. He tried to convert Clement and failed, so Clement burned him. There are lots of these. We have the trial of St. Joan; you know Shaw’s play, where she has to stand before the council, and they all take turns asking her questions. That’s the routine way for a king to get rid of somebody who has made himself very obnoxious. They show the way the person stands up to it, etc. It’s a theme—the Scopes trial and things like that—in which we try to make heroes.

Notice the one question they ask him. Verse 19: “And they began to question him, that they might cross him, that thereby they might have wherewith to accuse him; but he answered them boldly, and withstood all their questions, yea, to their astonishment; for he did withstand them in all their questions, and did confound them in all their words.” Again, we go back to our Teacher of Righteousness, back in Palestine. The same thing happened, and it’s worded almost the very same way. [We just read verse 19 the Book of Mormon], and this is from the Hodayot Scroll, which is the Thanksgiving Hymn of this prophet after he has been delivered by the Lord from their clutches. “They spread a net to catch me, but it caught their own foot. Thou deliverest me from the spite of the manipulators, the rhetoricians of lies [see, this is the same situation]. From the counsel of those who seek smooth things, thou hast rescued the soul of the poor one whom they desire to destroy because of his service to thee. I was zealous against the deceitful men, for all who are near to thee resist not thy mouth or change thy words.”
Verse 25: “And now Abinadi said unto them: Are you priests, and pretend to teach this people, and to understand the spirit of prophesying, and yet desire to know of me what these things mean? . . . For if ye understand these things ye have not taught them; therefore, ye have perverted the ways of the Lord.”

In the Hodayot Scroll the Teacher of Righteousness says, “I became an accusing spirit against all who taught smooth things, and all the men of false teaching, deception, illusion, stormed against me. They profess to be in the covenant of repentance.”

In verse 27 Abinadi says, “Ye have not applied your hearts to understanding.” They hadn’t really made an effort to understand; we will see that in a minute. Verse 28: “And they said: We teach the law of Moses. And again he said unto them: If ye teach the law of Moses why do ye not keep it? Why do ye set your hearts upon riches? [see, he hits that first] Why do ye commit whoredoms and spend your strength with harlots?”

Then from the Dead Sea Scrolls, “They profess to be in the covenant of repentance, but they have not departed from the ways of the apostates. They have wallowed in the ways of whoredoms and godlessness.” Abinadi said, “Why do ye commit whoredoms and spend your strength with harlots?” And the [text from] the Old World says, “They have wallowed in the ways of whoredoms and godlessness. Everyone has deserted his family for immoral practices, zealous in the acquisition of wealth [he brings that in] and property—every man doing what is right in his own eyes, confirming the people in their own sins.” It’s as if these passages from the Dead Sea Scrolls had been lifted from the Doctrine and Covenants or the Book of Mormon. How valuable they are! And the Dead Sea Scrolls are in discredit. Nobody likes them because they say the wrong things; it’s very interesting.

He goes on in verse 33: “I know if ye keep the commandments of God ye shall be saved; yea, if ye keep the commandments which the Lord delivered unto Moses in the mount of Sinai . . . Have ye done all this? I say unto you, Nay, ye have not.”

Back to the Hodayoth Thanksgiving Hymn: “The preachers of lies and the seers of illusions contrived devil’s tricks against me to make me exchange the law, which Thou has engraven in my heart, for the smooth things they teach to the people—they who shut up the drink of knowledge from the thirsting ones [the Lord said this] to give them vinegar, to turn them to false teachings that they fall into your nets.”

Abinadi said [Mosiah 13:27], “I say unto you that it is expedient that you should keep the law of Moses as yet; but I say unto you that the time shall come when it shall no more be expedient to keep the law of Moses.”

The 1QS says: “From no precept of the Torah shall they depart until there shall come a prophet and Messiah of Aaron and Israel.” There’s even that idea that the law was absolute; this was the last word as far as the Jews were concerned. Here we have this Jewish scroll saying, “From no precept of the Torah shall they depart until . . . [the] Messiah of Aaron and Israel [comes].” That’s exactly what Abinadi taught them.

Abinadi goes on [in Mosiah 13:30]: “Therefore there was a law given them, yea, a law of performances and of ordinances. You have to go through the forms as a drill, keeping yourself on the road. It’s a discipline. However well you might understand it, it prepares you for serious things. They were to observe this “strictly from day to day,” but they
didn’t pay attention to that. “But behold, I say unto you, that all these things were types of things to come. [They did not understand the law] and this because of the hardness of their hearts.”

Well, back to the Damascus Covenant: “And according to this rule they shall walk, even the seed of Israel, and in this way of living for the camp. This is the way they shall walk [again it says] in the time of the wicked until the Anointed One, the Messiah of Aaron, arises.”

Verse 33: “For behold, did not Moses prophesy unto them concerning the coming of the Messiah, and that God should redeem his people? Yea, and even all the prophets who have prophesied ever since the world began—have they not spoken more or less concerning these things?” It has all been about the Messiah, he says.

Then the IQS says, “As commanded by the hand of Moses and by the hands of the servants, his prophets, to atone for the sins, to please God in the land more than the flesh of burned offerings [this was the atonement which goes beyond the old law of Moses] and the fat of sacrifices—the heave offerings of the lips for a mishpat, like the sacrificial odor offering acceptable to Him.”

It goes on and on here with very interesting parallels. (I didn’t realize this was so interesting; I’ll have to read it more.)

Question: Is the fate of the Teacher of Righteousness mentioned in the Damascus text?

Answer: Yes, he was put to death all right.

Question: [Not audible]

Answer: Now that’s interpreted differently. When you say “a man of possessions,” you mean a rich man. But ish ḥokmāh means “a man of wisdom, a wise man.” But a “man of righteousness” means a righteous teacher. The Teacher of Righteousness means “the teacher who had the quality of righteousness.” It is usually read today as “the righteous teacher.” Sometimes they call him the Star; he goes by different names. But there were different groups under teachers like that. They were only twenty-eight miles from Jerusalem when they were driven out by Herod’s soldiers. Most of the company went north and settled at Damascus. They kept the record there, and then the fragment was found in the genizah of a wall in an old deserted synagogue in Cairo, that had been converted to a mosque. Solomon Schechter found it and took it up to Cambridge, and it rested there for twenty-seven years. Nobody paid any attention to it at all. Then they found the Dead Sea Scrolls and said, “Ah ha, this is a Dead Sea Scroll.” But everybody thought it was a fake. Solomon Zeitlin, the old editor of the Jewish Quarterly Review, believed it was just a medieval forgery, just a joke. He would never change his mind, although hundreds of documents came forth to attest to it. Stubborn people we are dealing with here.

Now, why do they ask this question? Well, it’s obvious why they ask it. Mosiah 12:20: “And it came to pass that one of them said unto him: What meaneth the words which are written, and which have been taught by our fathers, saying: How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings; that publisheth peace; that
bringeth good tidings of good; that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth . . . Break forth into joy; sing together ye waste places of Jerusalem; for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem.” What he is asking is this: If you are a true prophet, why don’t you bring us this good news. Why don’t you teach us to rejoice; that’s what prophets teach. This is the kind of message you should deliver—good tidings that publisheth good and salvation, that bring joy and comfort to the people. Why aren’t you bringing comfort and joy if you are a real prophet? That was a logical thing to ask because they believed that we should enjoy ourselves and teach people what they want to hear. If you were a prophet like this, you would bring us good news.

“The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.” Well, that’s a cheerful promise. Notice that it was the corrupt priests of Noah who were quoting these comforting words. They knew the scriptures, too, but they used them to back themselves up. We reinterpret things today very comfortably for ourselves, also.

“And now Abinadi said unto them: Are you priests, and pretend to teach this people, and to understand the spirit of prophesying, and yet desire to know of me what these things mean? I say unto you, wo be unto you for perverting the ways of the Lord! [they were twisting the words, as Abraham said] For if ye understand these things ye have not taught them; therefore, ye have perverted the ways of the Lord. Ye have not applied your hearts to understanding [it’s a lawyer’s interest you have, how you can manipulate and interpret the words; you haven’t applied your hearts to understanding this at all]; therefore, ye have not been wise [what are you teaching this people?] . . . And they said: We teach the law of Moses [they insist that’s it, and then again:]. If ye teach the law of Moses why do ye not keep it? Why do ye set your hearts upon riches? Why do ye commit whoredoms and spend your strength with harlots, yea, and cause this people to commit sin, that the Lord has cause to send me to prophesy against this people, yea, even a great evil against this people? . . . ye know that I speak the truth [that’s why you feel bad] . . . And what know ye concerning the law of Moses? Doth salvation come by the law of Moses?”

That’s the old law, the law of forms and observances. Salvation is Atonement—the center and climax of all the laws in the Day of Atonement, when we become one with everything. Atonement is the “universal field” that brings everything in. John 13–17 deals with that—how the Father and the son are one, the Apostles will be one with them, they to whom they preach will be one “even as we are one.” We will all be one. We will all be joined together hereafter in the world to come, when the world is as it should be. There will be the Great At-one-ment, the bringing together. This we don’t have here, but the law of Moses prepares us for that.

Verse 33: “I know if ye keep the commandments of God ye shall be saved.” The law of Moses will lead you on the way. Then he gives the Ten Commandments, but notice the thing he plays up here is that there shall not be any images. He talks about that here. Notice verses 12 and 13 in the next chapter. What about the graven images? Why bow down to them and serve them? Because see what was happening—there was a strong tendency at this time in the religion to go to idols. Idols became the big thing with these people, along with this lush, overdone sort of art, etc. The images, idols, and the visible display became a big thing. So he emphasized idols first of all because that was the way the religion was going, and that’s the way it went all the way. The first thing about the idols is that you should not bow down to them. Then he recited the Ten Commandments, and he said “And have ye taught this people that they should do all these things? I say unto you,
Nay, ye have not. In Mosiah 13:27 he says, “I say unto you that it is expedient that ye should keep the law of Moses as yet; but I say unto you, that the time shall come when it shall no more be expedient to keep the law of Moses.” But it was certainly not now; that’s what he talks about here.

If this were an Old Testament class, we’d go through Deuteronomy especially, but also Leviticus and Exodus. The law of Moses is far more humane, broad-minded, and just than the law we live by today in this country. It’s amazing how humane and generous and kind it is. Yet we talk about the old, savage, tribal law of an “eye for an eye.” etc. What a lot of nonsense! As Abinadi says, we don’t really study; we don’t want to find out what it really says. It’s like these people who criticize the Book of Mormon. They ask good searching questions that should stump anybody. But then they don’t wait for an answer. They stomp out of the room on a triumphant note, “We’ve won.” You can’t answer them if they don’t stay. They never wait for an answer. This is the only way they can maintain their ground. It’s a very common procedure in argument; it’s one of the ways lawyers win, etc.

Verse 28: “And moreover, I say unto you, that salvation doth not come by the law alone [this is the point here]; and were it not for the atonement [That’s the key; salvation isn’t the law, it’s the atonement, the arrangement that the Lord Jesus Christ made by which we are all going to be brought together again and become one with the Father. Without that] they must unavoidably perish, notwithstanding the law of Moses.” The law of Moses doesn’t take care of the law of entropy. The Book of Mormon tells us very clearly that the Atonement does.

Then he talks about their being a stiffnecked people. Even with a very strict law “they were a stiffnecked people, quick to do iniquity,” so the law was adapted to them. Is this the best the Lord could do with the chosen people? Nobody seems to be willing to accept it, and that’s true. No one has accepted it; no one keeps the law of Moses today. Are we ready for the higher law? He gave them the law of Moses, which they did not keep. Why do we have lawyers? Why do we need the Word of Wisdom? It shouldn’t even exist [for us] because we shouldn’t be able to break it. That’s a lower law which is preparatory. But you have to keep it; you’re not going to be saved without keeping the Word of Wisdom. So you say, “See, saved by the Word of Wisdom.” Nobody said anything like that. Remember, the introduction in Doctrine and Covenants 89 says, “Given for a principle with promise, adapted to the capacity of the weak and the weakest of all saints, who are or can be called saints.” This is a step you have to go through before you can expect the other things. So keep these preparatory laws like that. You do certain things and carry out certain instructions, which they were to “observe strictly.” Is there virtue in that? Yes, there is. But in nothing else than that? No, as the prophet said, that just prepares you; then you go on. Verse 30 states it beautifully: “Therefore there was a law given them, yea, a law of performances and of ordinances, a law which they were to observe strictly from day to day, to keep them in remembrance of God and their duty towards him.”

That’s why we have the sacrament; it’s in remembrance. It’s about the only set ritual we have outside of the temple, isn’t it? The same words always have to be repeated, and repeated in exactly the same way. The bread and water have to be passed the same way, etc. We have a rite there, and we say it is in remembrance, to keep our minds on track, to keep ourselves concentrated on that. It’s an act of duty and obedience. “Why do you do this?” the [angel asked Adam]. “I know not save the Lord commanded me.” Then [the angel] told him why, but first he requires that you do it—the law of sacrifice.
Verse 31: “But behold, I say unto you, that all these things were types of things to come [they are similitudes]. And now, did they understand the law?” They didn’t understand the law in the Old Testament, and they didn’t understand it in the New Testament, as the Lord makes very clear. They don’t understand it in the Book of Mormon. We don’t understand it in the Pearl of Great Price; we pay practically no attention to it. And we don’t understand it in the Doctrine and Covenants. We slide over these things. He says here, “Nay, they did not all understand the law; and this because of the hardness of their hearts; for they understood not that there could not any man be saved except it were through the redemption of God.” As Mosiah said, Always keep in remembrance your own nothingness and the greatness and goodness of God; then you can always manage to be happy [paraphrased]. But that’s the thing you have to do.

Abinadi said, “Did not Moses prophesy unto them concerning the coming of the Messiah, and that God should redeem his people? Yea, and even all the prophets who have prophesied ever since the world began—have they not spoken more or less concerning these things?” (This is an important verse in the Book of Mormon.) Well, they could ask, Where does Moses speak of these things? Where do the prophets tell us about the Messiah? The Jews still ask that. They say, “We don’t see any Messiah there.” Well, in the next chapter he proceeds to recite chapter 53 of Isaiah, which is the source of much of Handel’s Messiah. That’s the very thing he was talking about; this describes the coming of the Lord. This says that he shall come forth in the form of a man and go forth in mighty power—that “God himself shall come down among the children of men. . . . Yea, and have they not said also that he should bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, and that he, himself, should be oppressed and afflicted.”

Well, all that is in the Old Testament, but, as I said, you don’t have to see it there. The Jews don’t see it there at all. In Mosiah 12:21–24, he talks about the same thing. Verse 24: “The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God? [verse 23]: Break forth into joy; sing together ye waste places of Jerusalem . . . .” This was a passage that they themselves quoted, which prophesies the coming of the Messiah.

Then he quoted these wonderful words from Isaiah 53. Most people find this impossible to believe, so naturally it starts out, “Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” As I said, most people find it impossible to believe; they say that John and all the rest can’t possibly have meant this literally. It’s out of the question—this is in a spiritual sense. They forget that if Christ had spoken spiritually, he never would have had any trouble with the scribes, Pharisees, or anybody else because spiritual was the thing in that day. Everybody had gone hermetic, you see. A spiritual Father? Fine, no objection whatever. Spiritual sacrifice? Fine, no objection whatever. It was because it was real that they were sorely offended; they couldn’t take that. So [Abinadi] talked about it.

We all know these immortal lines: “He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief . . . Surely he has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. . . . He was wounded for our transgressions [this is the Atonement—the price that was paid to bring about an atonement, the reconciliation]. . . . All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way [Section 1 of the Doctrine and Covenants says, ‘Every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god, . . . whose substance is that of an idol, which waxeth old and shall perish in Babylon, even Babylon the great, which shall fall]. . . . He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter [that’s the
sacrifice]. . . . For the transgressions of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked [as low as you can get], and with the rich in his death; because he had done no evil, neither was any deceit in his mouth. . . . When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied; by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities . . . and he bore the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

Well, what does all this mean? Now we come to chapter 15. Did I mention chapter 13? (How could I get so lost here?) This is too good to miss, talking about the sharpness of Abinadi. The character of the man stands out very sharply. Let's go back to the text in chapter 13: "And now when the king had heard these words, he said unto his priests: Away with this fellow, . . . for he is mad." That's the great solution. That's the Stalinist solution—a nice way to handle your enemy. You don't have to be responsible for him. You don't have to give any answer or explain if a person is mad. This is an alien mentality; there's nothing in common between you. There's no fault or sin or anything like that; you can do what you want and just put him out of the way. By calling him mad, the king won't have the pain of putting a prophet to death. Just treat him like he's mad and lock him up. He [the king] won't be under any responsibility to believe him or anything like that, so that takes care of it. The "alien mentality argument" exonerates both opponents and solves your problem.

They used it for Enoch (Abinadi is an Enoch character), John the Baptist, and Elijah. They are wild men [people said]. “There's a strange thing in the land; a wild man has come among us.” He scared them; it was a culture shock. If they went his way, it would be an awful jolt. They had to assume that he was mad because they were frightened. That's a beautiful expression in the Book of Moses, “There's a strange thing in the land; a wild man has come among us.” Let's go up in the mountains and see this strange guy and listen to what he has to say, his ravings, etc. They treated John the Baptist the same way. Remember, he was “the mad mullah of the desert.” He dressed in camel skin and lived on wild locusts and honey. The people flocked out to see him, etc. Josephus said an interesting thing about him. When people asked him who [John the Baptist] was, Josephus didn’t know his name. He knew all about him, but he didn’t know his name was John because he never told anybody his name was John. He said he was Enoch, a very interesting thing, and they took him for Enoch Redivivus, “the returned Enoch.” And, of course, Enoch is going to return with Elijah, another one who was treated the same way. So this Abinadi character, the wild man prophet, is a masterful invention of Joseph Smith, if you want to put it that way. That Joseph Smith could do almost anything!

Abinadi said, You are angry with me because I tell you the truth [paraphrased]. “Touch me not . . . for I have not delivered the message which the Lord sent me to deliver; neither have I told you that which ye requested that I should tell.” He said, You asked for a message; don’t throw me away now. You know darn well I’m not mad [paraphrased]. Then his face shone. He was something special, and they were overawed. They “durst not lay their hands on him, for the Spirit of the Lord was upon him; and his face shone with exceeding luster, even as Moses’ did while in the mount of Sinai, while speaking with the Lord.” And Joseph’s in Liberty Jail. We have an Enoch figure, something very special here. “Yea, and I perceive that it cuts you to your hearts [see, they were overwhelmed] because I tell you the truth concerning your iniquities. Yea, and my words fill you with wonder and amazement, and with anger.” The establishment had drifted so far.
Here is another very interesting statement in verse 10: “But this much I tell you, what you do with me, after this, shall be as a type and a shadow of things which are to come.” The choice is up to you, he says; you will do according to your nature. The Arabs say “a man will do according his nature.” Or, as the immortal Heraclitus said, “A man’s character is his fate.” What you will do is determined by what you are. Of course, that’s the tragedy—not what happens to you, not what becomes of you, but what you become. It’s finished, as far as that goes; the Book of Mormon makes that wonderfully clear. Long before the Nephites were exterminated, they had ceased to be a civilized people. They were finished because of their character; they couldn’t do anything but lose. So he said, I tell you what you do with me shall be a type and shadow of what will happen to you. You will do according to your nature and suffer accordingly [paraphrased]. Your character prescribes the role you play and all its consequences.

You have the stock characters in the new comedy of Plautus, Terence, etc., in Rome. You have an old miser, a clever servant, and the son who wants to marry [the miser’s] daughter, etc. You know what’s going to happen. The miser is going to withhold his money; the clever servant is going to steal the money by a ruse, and the daughter will get married. They were stock plays, and each character had a wig. The saucy servant had a red wig. The girl had to be blond, of course, and the man had to have a long beard. And he had a miserly old friend to make more comedy. But your character will determine the role you will play. You’ll do those things because it is your nature. “You will do only according to your nature.”

Here is some of his bitter humor in verse 11. They are the great scholars who have been asking him questions about the scriptures. “And now I read unto you the remainder of the commandments of God, for I perceive that they are not written in your hearts.” I have to read them to you now because they are not written in your hearts. Oh, you have studied all your lives, and you are great students of what? Iniquity—you have studied and taught iniquity all your lives. He commends their study and their knowledge, but he is going to read a simple thing to them because they don’t understand it. It is not written in their hearts. Then he says, “I perceive that ye have studied and taught iniquity the most part of your lives.” They are great students, but students of iniquity. He gets some dirty digs in here.

Then he refers to the graven image again because, as I said, graven images were getting to be the thing—to bow down and worship them. Then he goes through the Ten Commandments. Well, the time is up now; we’ll have to resume later with all these things.
We are told that the Book of Mormon contains the fullness of the everlasting gospel. That has often been challenged. Does it have everything in it? Well, what is the gospel? What is a fullness of the gospel? The gospel, of course, is the good news. In Old English that’s either godspel or goodspel. Evangelium is another word that’s used. It means the good message. What is the good message? The good message is that all is not lost—because aside from the gospel, all is lost. Nobody else has anything to offer. You hear a lot of impressive talk today, and you see documentaries on the religions of the Far East. They are ancient and impressive, but not as ancient and impressive as the Western ones. The whole philosophy they have to offer you is, “If you don’t expect anything, you won’t be disappointed because you definitely aren’t going anywhere.” It’s true—we’re not going anywhere. That’s the point: without the gospel, you are helpless; 2 Nephi 9:7 will tell you what our situation actually is. He doesn’t mince matters here; it’s the law of entropy that’s at work here. “Wherefore, it must needs be an infinite atonement—save it should be an infinite atonement this corruption could not put on incorruption.” We are doomed and fixed. As Shakespeare said, we are going,

To lie in cold obstruction and to rot;
This sensible warm motion to become
A kneaded clod . . .
The weariest and most loathed worldly life
That age, ache, penury, and imprisonment
Can lay on nature, is a paradise
To what we fear of death.

Shakespeare, Measure for Measure, act III, scene 1

You are going nowhere, buster! That’s the whole idea here. He tells us that’s the way it is—if it were not for the gospel. The gospel is the only alternate plan that was ever offered. You have legends and myths, but the Hades—hereafter of the Greeks, Germans, etc., is a very, very bleak situation. But this is different. “Wherefore, the first judgment which came upon man must needs have remained to an endless duration [this is our natural state]. And if so, this flesh must have laid down to rot and to crumble to its mother earth, to rise no more.” We would be absolutely finished. But we have the gospel, so we don’t have to take that.

That’s what these two chapters [Mosiah 15 and 16] are about. They are perhaps the hardest chapters in the Book of Mormon. They are the most important and the most condensed because here we are going to find the fullness of the gospel message that we need to be saved. They read like a lot of theological verbiage, but they aren’t. Actually these chapters have a precision which is disturbing. It’s the precision, the accuracy, the literalness that are
disturbing. They are not theological jargon at all. If we take these things seriously, we are really in for it. You’ve got to make a decision here. If it’s all or nothing, if it’s that important, you just can’t fool around with it. By seriously, I mean viewing the whole discourse as factual. We are alarmed by being committed to this all the way, you see.

And yet if these things are not real, there is nothing. They are mere words. The earliest Christian apologist was not Justin Martyr; it was Aristides. He was arguing with a learned pagan who said, “Well, of course, we understand resurrection and things like that. They are to be taken allegorically, spiritually, and abstractly.”

“Oh, no, there you have it all wrong. That’s the whole difference,” Aristides said. “If these things are not real, they are nothing. It has to be the real thing or it’s nothing. You can have all the words and abstractions you want; that doesn’t interest us. We are interested in really carrying on hereinafter.”

Taken literally, the whole thing reads more or less like a scientific statement, but dealing with spheres that make it more like science fiction. Remember, the science fiction of yesterday is the science of today; it has been like that all the way along. The things we do today are way ahead of the science fiction of the 1920s. If it follows from that, the things that they write about in science fiction today are far behind what we will be doing in another fifty or sixty years. We can imagine the situation as this—two galaxies or two families.

Two households, both alike in dignity,
In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,

From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.

Shakespeare, Prologue of *Romeo and Juliet*

It’s a situation something like this because we have two galaxies. They are inhabited by related people, but with a difference. Those living in the one are immortal and exalted. They have it made. They achieved their status long ago, and they are there. That’s the way we want to be. They are doing things that those living in the other environment cannot even imagine. Here’s an interesting touch, you might say, of science fiction. If the gospel is true, everybody in the world today has a completely cockeyed view of things—completely warped and impossible. It has always been that way. If Copernicus, the smartest man, was right, then everybody in the world of his time was wrong. Everybody accepted the Ptolemaic theory. If Copernicus was right, everybody had been wrong for all those hundreds of years. Then if Newton was right, the whole world had been completely wrong on the most basic matters of time and space. But if Einstein was right and Newton was wrong, the whole world was wrong.

Either the world knows the gospel or it doesn’t. That’s why you have this huge gap here, and that’s what these two chapters deal with. We are dealing with two totally different spheres. There is a great and yawning gulf between them, and we want to get over into the one because we think it is possible here. The plan has been given; this is the plan by which we are going to do that. But those in the other sphere have great potential. That’s where we are, but it is only potential. Their superior brethren want [those in the lower
sphere] to come over and join them; they want to make that possible. We want to join
them in their perfect way of life. We have visitations; we have revelations and all sorts of
things—angels breaking through, etc. We want to come and join them, but we on this
side have not yet qualified for it. We’re far, far from it—way out of the picture. So we
must be put on probation if we are going to make it at all. That’s the word the Book of
Mormon uses throughout, “Therefore this life became a state of probation.” We are being
tested every minute we are here to see how we will do. Every minute you have to make a
decision, and it’s never too late to make the right decision, as Ezekiel 38 says. If you have
made the right decision every day of your life and suddenly decide to make the wrong
decision, then you are on the way down. Then you are wicked. If you have been wicked
and made wrong decisions every day of your life and finally decide to make the right
ones, then you are righteous no matter what you have done in the past. It depends not on
how high or low you are on the stairway but in which direction you are facing. If you are
facing down, your condition is lamentable. If you are facing up, your condition is
joyful—even though you may be on the bottom step facing up. It’s the direction you are
facing. We are subject to this test here. We haven’t qualified for it [the higher life], so we
are put on this time of probation to determine who, if any, can come up to the required
standards. Can we do that?

In 2 Nephi 2:21 we read, “And the days of the children of men were prolonged, according
to the will of God, that they might repent while in the flesh.” Isn’t that a break that I’ve
been able to hang around this long? I can do some high class repenting, and it’s about
time, too. I can catch up on my repentance, and that’s going to take a bit of doing. You
repent all the time because that consists of two things, as the Book of Mormon tells us. It is
gnōthi seauton, “knowing yourself as you are.” Remember what King Benjamin said, “I
would that you always remember your own nothingness.” Know what you are and bring
yourself around. The other part is “to endure in that knowledge.” You have to keep
repenting and repent every day, unless you are perfect. When can you stop repenting?
When you are like the Son, full of grace and truth. Then you can stop repenting; there
won’t be need for anything else. You will have all knowledge, all truth, and nothing but
grace. That’s to be well meaning and have no ulterior motives and nothing else but pure
charity. Grace is what charity is. Charis and grace are the same thing. Caritas is cognate
with the Greek charis, and that’s our word grace. Anyway, when you are full of grace and
truth, then you can stop any old time.

We begin here with Mosiah 15:1, and how disturbing it is. “And now Abinadi said unto
them: I would that ye should understand [this is something you have to understand] that
God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people.”
That is a hard one to take; that’s why they would always start stoning the prophets, etc.
That’s why they said he was worthy of death. Remember, this is the only crime they could
charge against him: he said that God himself would come down among them. This was
very disturbing. These people are less than they could be, and they’ve had a setback, a fall.
We are [subject to] the Fall and must be redeemed and brought back. To do that he [the
Father] doesn’t just send an angel, or a dream, or raise up a leader because the leader would
be just as fallible as anybody else. No, it is God himself that comes down, and that is really
something. And while he is here dwelling in our kind of vulnerable flesh, “And because he
dwelleth in flesh he shall be called the Son of God [not God, but the Son of God] and
having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, being the Father and the Son.”
The Son is not second rate. He is as close as you can be without being identical [with the Father]. We talk about the rivalry between the Caesars and the Augustuses that led to the Council of Nicaea in 325, when the big fight was about [the question], “Is the Father jealous of the Son, or the Son jealous of the Father? If they are equal, then the Father is jealous of the Son. If they are not equal and the Son is lower, then the Son is jealous of the Father.” People in those days couldn’t think of it in any other terms but that because, after all, each Caesar had an Augustus ruling with him, and each was jealous of the other’s power. They were always poisoning each other and knocking each other off. And Constantine, who called the convention in 325, had gotten to the top. He had eliminated everybody, even his own family, by poisoning and other forms of murder. That’s the way you got to the top. He was the man who presided over the Christological question: Is Christ equal to the Father? You can see the terms everybody was thinking in; we’ve been loaded with that.

Well, that has nothing to do with it. Why should the Father be jealous of the Son, or the Son jealous of the Father? This is what glory is for, to be shared. The more it is shared, the greater the glory. It’s not like something else—giving out a little of it and not having as much left. No, his glory is this. “For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). He brings them up, and then his glory is increased. Glory increases the more it is spread around. So this is a different concept. He comes down himself, but he comes as a Son. He is the Son of God. Again, we don’t argue about the Christological question, the equality, etc. In coming down here and following commandments, he identifies his will with the will of the Father. He does exactly what he is told to do because he is setting the example for us. We must do the same thing; it’s going to make this very clear here. That’s why he comes down here, and he is called the Son.

Why is the status of Son so important? Because he is not here to rule and reign, which is his proper calling when he returns. Remember, he says, “I will return to my kingdom and the glory I had with thee before the world was.” He lays it all aside to come here to do the will of another [the Father], to show us how it is done. We must not take over the reins. For all our free agency, we would recognize the will of the Father if we only had the wisdom. Being highly imperfect, shifting, uncertain, worried, frightened, and ignorant as we are, we must attach ourselves to someone who is none of these things. As a son to a father, we attach ourselves to the Lord. Isn’t it nice that we make all our covenants with God alone, and not with each other? We are unreliable among ourselves, not equally, but nobody is completely reliable. We are shifting, slippery, uncertain, worried, and frightened. If two such people make a contract with each other, what a slippery interface that is. Either one of them could slip, or be tempted, or fall, or lie, or anything else. It compounds the danger if you have two people like that. The covenants we make are with the Father. We don’t even make a marriage covenant between two people; each one covenants with the Father. If he [or she] breaks the covenant, he knows whom he has to deal with. It’s not a case of personal rancor, suing each other, or anything like that. We all make direct covenants with the Father. That’s a marvelous thing, you see. We are right in it there. If there is anything that can bring people together as one, it’s to have all made that same covenant because they all have it in common.

Verse 2 indicates that we do not sacrifice our own agency or intelligence at all, such as it is. But we recognize a good thing and want to be identified with it. The identification of the Son with the Father is complete. As an ardent pupil of the violin, in that respect you want to be as much like the teacher as possible. Then you can become your own master.
when you have mastered all that he has to teach you. But you are eager to identify with him.

Verse 3: “The Father, because he was conceived by the power of God.” What does that have to do with it? The status of the Father goes back to another order of existence, obviously way back there. He [the Son] was conceived by the power of God, a godly power which is not of this earth and has nothing to do with this earth at all. This is a place where men dwell in perishable flesh, a condition designated as “the Son.” Not second rate, but completely dependent. They are identical species working on different levels. This is the whole point—we are identical species. We get this in 3 Nephi when the Lord goes and prays. It’s the very same thing we have in John 13–17, showing exactly how we are identical. If the Father and the Son are one, we are one with the Son; thereby, we are one with the Father exactly as they are one. Of course, the Bible says that over and over again, and people won’t believe it. They say, “John can’t be that naive; this must all be just spirit.” So they make John the most ghostly, the most spiritual, the most unreal of all the gospels. They say, “John is the great mystery.”

They hold that supreme power which belongs only to “the very Eternal Father of Heaven and of earth,” as it says in verse 4. Notice, this is connecting up to something very big indeed. They are one God, that’s why “the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth.” If you go back to the eternities, time and space take on totally different meaning. I hope you are all reading Stephen Hawking’s book called *A Short History of Time.* It’s just a new book by the most brilliant physicist of our time. Imagine a man who cannot speak and cannot write. He is so crippled with Lou Gehrig’s disease that he can’t hold a pencil and he can hardly get a word out. He has to whisper this way, and yet he is the most brilliant physicist alive today. It’s astounding what a person can do, isn’t it. All he does is just sit and think; that’s all he can do now. He’s had that disease for many years. That’s a great book. You must get it because it will bring you up-to-date on things. It’s not clogged with equations, which would be way over my head anyway, so I really enjoy it. But notice that this is going outside of time and space. This goes out to the eternal, everlasting order of things. When you say eternity, you are saying something bigger than we can even realize. It goes on and on and on.

“And they are one God, yea, the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth.” That’s a very thrilling statement to make—that we are in on that. Then the next verse tells us that the flesh is to the spirit as the Son is to the Father, or the Father is to the Spirit as the Son is to the flesh. It’s exactly alike. They both belong to the spiritual order of things. The flesh is not against the spirit but “subject to the Spirit,” we are told. When mortals become totally subject to God, they will have passed the test and are ready to go on. You have to be subject—that’s the thing. “... the flesh becoming subject to the Spirit, or the Son to the Father, being one God, suffereth temptation, and yieldeth not to the temptation.” This is saying that you belong to this same category. He came to the same category as you. He was tempted just as much as you are, etc. You don’t have to give in, but we all do because that was the Fall. That’s where Adam did give in. This is necessary for experience, knowing the good from the evil.

Verse 6: “And after all this, after working many mighty miracles among the children of men, he shall be led, yea, even as Isaiah said, as a sheep before the shearer is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.” He left the celestial circuit to bring us into that celestial circuit, you might say (verses 6 and 7). The Lord must come down to us to arrange for our removal to a higher realm; we can’t go up there to make arrangements. He must come to
us to give us a chance to acknowledge him, and accept the offering, and understand what the thing is. It’s a sort of martialing area here. Verse 8 tells us that it is a physical breaking of confining bonds, a barrier beyond which life ceases. The bands of death have to be broken, as we are told in 2 Nephi 9:7. The second law would be in effect if it weren’t for that. That’s what Hawking talks about here. Why should the second law [have to] be broken? Why should it ever be there at all? They are all right back where they started, at square one, now. There’s no limit to the power of whatever put us here. It could put other people in other places. As Voltaire said long ago, “Once we get a person born, the idea of getting reborn is just a technical matter.” Just a matter of working out a few bugs. If you’ve already got him born out of nothing—all you have to do is repeat the thing.

In verse 8 it’s a breaking of bands. One thinks of passing into a black hole. His [Hawking’s] views on black holes are very interesting. The reverse of a black hole may be another universe just as good as this and just like it. Is there such a thing as a singularity? Lots of people are drawing back from that now, but we won’t go into that. But this talks about breaking of the bands. You have to break through something; you have to gain a victory. There is an absolute block there, a stone wall, and you’d never get through it if somebody didn’t know how. “... giving the Son power to make intercession for the children of men.” He has done that; he has broken the way through and makes intercession for us. He can get us through, too, if we follow certain instructions.

It says here, “He arranges for us to emerge on the other side. He is our admission to the other order.” He goes ahead as our sponsor then. This is interesting that he sponsors us. Notice verse 9: “Having ascended to heaven [he goes up there; he wants to sponsor us and get us in], having the bowels of mercy; being filled with compassion towards the children of men; standing betwixt them and justice [we haven’t deserved all this; to deserve eternal life is really something; but he says we have good stuff in us, and he doesn’t want it all thrown away]; having broken the bands of death [he did that], taken upon himself their iniquity and their transgressions, having redeemed them, and satisfied the demands of justice.” Then he says, Now can I get them through? [paraphrased]. It will be on certain conditions that they would be glad to accept for what they are going to get out of it. So he goes ahead as our sponsor and clears the legal difficulties. There is serious doubt about whether our admission is really justified, so he generously intercedes for us. He breaks the barrier, and then he faces the problem of our legal right to go on. Do we deserve it? No. His argument on our behalf is for mercy and compassion.

There is a great wealth of ascension stories—the ascension of Abraham, the ascension of Isaac, the ascension of Paul. It was in 1878 that Haug, a German scholar, first discovered the ascensions. There is an ancient ascension text for every apostle and every prophet you can name, and every ancient hero. These are stories in which he ascends to heaven and visits, and then comes back and reports. There is a vast number of texts on this particular thing. But in the ascension texts, the person who goes to heaven is rebuffed—whether it’s Abraham, Enoch, Isaac, Jacob, Paul, or Peter. The heavenly hosts say, “Look, they are human beings. They are tainted with all sorts of imperfections; we can’t have them in here. That’s when the Lord says, “No, I’m here to vouch for them. I’ll sign for them. I’ll take the responsibility for them.” So then it’s all right.

[On the same theme] we have the magnificent writings about the Council in Heaven in the pre-existence, when they were discussing the creation of the world. When the earth said, “Please, don’t send that race down onto me. They will do nothing but defile me and mess things up. They are a horrible lot. That’s the way men will behave; you can foresee
it.” They took the vote in heaven. The Abbatôn is a very important early writing on this. There are quite a number of writings on this subject, but this is a particularly good one, the Abbatôn by Bishop Timothy Alexandria. In 380 he was at a conference in Jerusalem, and he discovered this document in a great chest in the library of the Apostles, which had still been preserved in the house of John Mark’s mother in Jerusalem at that time. It’s a very old document. Well anyway, the vote went against it. This was going to be too terrible—too much suffering, too much sin, too many people damned—if they had to go through with this plan of salvation. Then there was this deadlock. Then the Lord said, “Go ahead and I’ll vouch for them; I’ll pay the price, whatever has to be paid.” Then it was that they sang the Hymn of the Creation—all the angels, the rest of them, and the morning stars shouted for joy because the world could now be created. It could now go on. “The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.” That was the Creation Hymn to celebrate the creation of the world. That’s what our word poetry comes from. Poëma means Creation Hymn. It was first sung by the muses to celebrate the creation of the world—each one representing a different factor and feature of the scientific structure of it. There’s a very good book on that subject called Die Musen.

Let us go on. Here we are getting into the picture. As it has here, he [the Savior] intervenes with his goodness and mercy. Verse 10: “Who shall declare his generation?” This is a quotation from Isaiah. Who will sponsor this particular generation? These characters, do you trust them? Who will vouch for them? Then it says he introduces them as his zera’, which means “progeny, one’s very own.” All the way through the Old Testament seed is freely translated that way because it means seed in many senses. This is what has happened. Now, who shall vouch for this generation? “Behold I say unto you, that when his soul has been made an offering for sin he shall see his seed.” He shall see his progeny and accept them as his very own. The next verse says who will qualify. First, the prophets and all those who follow their teachings. “Behold I say unto you, that whosoever has heard the words of the prophets, yea, all the holy prophets who have prophesied [from the beginning] concerning the coming of the Lord—I say unto you, that all those who have harkened unto their words, and believed that the Lord would redeem his people, and have looked forward to that day for a remission of their sins, . . . these are his seed, or they are the heirs of the kingdom of God.” That’s who we mean. Those are the ones who will enjoy his intercession and will become successors.

Remember, in the most famous of all the parables the sower went forth to sow his seed. Then he [the Savior] compares himself with the sower. Some accepted the seed and some didn’t. It calls to mind both the Lord as a sower who sows his seed, whose work is the planting for ages to come, and the patriarch Abraham who establishes his line. We all know that expression “the seed of Abraham.” It’s the line and it’s representative and productive. In Alma, the gospel plants the seed. He says that you must plant the seed in yourself. Our word seminary comes from that word. It’s a germinal planting, anything that grows and leads to more of the same. It’s used about an equal number of times for progeny and any productive project in the scriptures. It’s designed to be fruitful and bring forth more of the same—the on-going, expanding, life process that we see in all nature. As we are told to begin with right in Genesis, “each bearing seed after its own kind.” A seed is anything which is productive of more. This is the seed image that we get here of the parent, which is the same as the parent of such like image—Father and Son. It’s all one. Which generation is which? This is what you call atonement, at-one-ment—bringing everything together in one particular plan. This is the thing they are all obsessed with. The thing that all science has been working at is one uniform field, one uniform theory—the
GUT (the Grand Universal Theory), as Hawking says. There must be something that accounts for everything. The motion of every quark in the universe is accounted for by the same law that accounts for my reason for blowing my nose, as far as that goes—all the same. That’s what At-one-ment in the gospel is. That’s what it’s talking about here—doing the thing on a level that we can grasp. They are trying to get this through the mathematical route and getting closer and closer to it, they think, but always there is the frustration that they run into. They always think they just about have it. There are some other very good books on that by Nigel Calder and others.

Again today, there’s the old familiar assertion of the Sophists, “Man is in charge. There’s no problem that the scientific method can’t handle [this is trying to solve it by the other way]. We can now create life in any form we please.” But there are two problems here that we are talking about in verses 10 and following. The first is the problem of staying alive indefinitely. You say, “Well, that’s just a technical problem.” But we are as far from that as ever, of course. The second problem is enjoying it. What monstrosities that must produce if you have to hang around. We have these problems: first, to get our eternal life and then to make it worth having. It’s like the person who was caught in the sewer. They said to him, “Well, don’t worry, we can get food down to you. You can live indefinitely there just fine.” His problem isn’t to be fed and stay alive; it’s to get out of the sewer. If we projected our life indefinitely as we are living it here, we would just go on living in the sewer and getting worse and worse, as things are today. So there’s the problem of enjoying it. This is the misery of the old ones. In science fiction that’s a thing. Robert Heinlein used to write quite movingly about the old ones who have seen everything and been through everything. They have lived ages and ages and just yearn to die, the one thing they can’t do. It’s terrible! They’ve seen it all, and there’s nothing. Then there’s the idea of hell. If you have a real nightmare, it’s where the same thing keeps repeating over and over again. You’ve seen it already. It won’t be an unpleasant thing, but if you see it coming back again, this déjà vu, you think, “I’m getting schizophrenic; I’m losing my mind. Let’s put an end to this. I don’t want to walk in here and have a dinner and walk out; then go in and have the same dinner, and just keep doing that forever—even though I enjoyed the dinner the first time.”

So that’s a big problem—to make a reason for living forever. Do you have any good reason for living forever? Well, because I’m afraid of dying now. “I’m tired of living and scared of dying,” as they say in “Old Man River.” That’s not a happy condition at all. He tells us here in verse 11 that only the healthy seed hear the gospel and believe that the Lord will redeem them if their sins are remitted, which he alone can do. He gives them life as a parent; they are his seed. The prophets are his seed. They are his productive offspring because “these are they who have published peace.” There’s no need for conflict if the good tidings guarantee salvation. Verses 15–18: “And O how beautiful upon the mountains were their feet!” Why the feet? Well, it’s the feet that bring the message, so we have the stock phrase from Homer, those beautiful lines. [In mythology] whenever a messenger, like Hermes, received a message, immediately upon receiving the message—without any delay—to his feet he bound his beautiful slippers. Kala pedila is beautiful feet, and we get our word pedal from that. “They were immortal, they were golden which bore him over the seas, or over the endless expanse of the earth like a wind.” His sandals are always represented as having wings. It’s the winged messenger, the messenger that comes to the door, the postman who brings the good news. So it’s the feet that you hail—“How beautiful are the feet of him upon the mountainside”—because he is the messenger. You can hear his footsteps. Ah, here he comes—clump, clump, clump. Well, not if he is riding on the wind, as Hermes is here. This is a theme that is very
beautifully brought out in the story of Joseph and his brethren before they went down to Egypt. We won’t go into that though. He [the Savior] has redeemed his people. What a message! The poetic and romantic parts of the Old Testament are culturally aligned to the Mediterranean Minoan zone; they use that business of the feet, “How beautiful are the feet,” which means “How beautiful is the one who brings the message.” Without the feet he would never deliver the message. He doesn’t need his hands. He could hold it in his mouth, but he has to have feet to deliver it. Well, we won’t split hairs over that.

Whoever thought up such a scenario as we are going into here? Where did it ever come from? Verse 19: “For were it not for the redemption which he hath made for his people, which was prepared from [ah, ha, nobody made it up here; it goes way to the beginning and takes us to another realm entirely] the foundation of the world, I say unto you, were it not for this, all mankind must have perished.” There you have what we are told; that would be the second law. But somebody somewhere had enough knowledge, wit, power, and virtue to break that—to get us out of that. It begins with a basic proposition which recognizes entropy and that all mankind must perish. Are we cheated? Here were are, “One moment and annihilation’s waste.” This fundamental fact was taken into consideration from the foundation of the world, and something was done about it. Otherwise, it says, we would not be here—“all mankind must have perished.”

The next verse says that those in charge are neither stupid nor cruel. This was only to be a preliminary; the answer to mortality was resurrection. But how could that be arranged? The power to give life is unlimited. Synt Giorgi, the famous biologist, has written on that, and also Lewis Thomas in his book on the cell. They have written that life is an absolute—it’s either there or it isn’t. They point out that the power to give it is unlimited. If it is primal, it is not dependent on fortuitous combinations of circumstances. If that were so, if it were just an accident—there would be one chance in a trillion worlds that it would happen by accident. And if it can be given once, it can be given again, without limit. If you can let it happen, you can also make it happen, and if you can do it once, you can do it again. See, once you have broken the code, you are in. Somebody broke the code to this thing and broke out into the open. We talk about “the breakthrough” and “breaking the bonds.” These terms are used today a good deal when they talk about breakthroughs in science and breaking codes and getting out into a whole new world. Suddenly there’s a whole new possibility that we never dreamed was possible before. When we are talking about anything as fantastic as the Resurrection, don’t be too fast. We accept ideas now that we never accepted in my day. If you suggested life on other worlds in astronomy with old Professor Larkin, he would order you out of the room in a temper, “Get out of here! That’s fantasy, that’s wishful thinking, that’s fairy stories.” There couldn’t be such a thing as that. Now, everybody accepts it as a matter of course. Step by step we are approaching nearer to this fantastic picture that we are given, which we call the gospel, “the good message,” especially in these two chapters of the Book of Mormon. So it has to be the resurrection here. “But behold, the bands of death shall be broken, and the Son reigneth, and hath power over the dead; therefore, he bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead.” How did he do it? Well, it’s power and energy. There has to be some form of energy that will do it; and he has it. He knows what it is.

Verse 21: “And there cometh a resurrection, even a first resurrection; yea, even a resurrection of those that have been, and who are, and who shall be, even until the resurrection of Christ.” Why does it make such a fuss about the first resurrection? We are going to be resurrected anyway. First, second—a little waiting around won’t do any harm, will it? What is the difference? Well, as it tells us here, the first resurrection isn’t a
time—it’s a condition. You are resurrected in a different condition from what you are in
the second resurrection—the condition of dwelling with God. The time isn’t the
important thing if you can dwell with him. The second resurrections take place on
another level, too. There are others later. So to come forth in the first resurrection will be a
great privilege—the condition of dwelling with God.

Verse 22: “And now, the resurrection of all the prophets, and all those that have believed
in their words . . . shall come forth in the first resurrection; therefore, they are the first
resurrection. They are raised to dwell with God who has redeemed them [that’s the first
resurrection; that’s why it is so very important]. . . . And these are those who have part in
the first resurrection; and these are they that have died before Christ came, in their
ignorance, not having salvation declared unto them.” And the children qualify for the
first resurrection if they would have received it. Not all of them heard the prophets. That
includes little children, who don’t hear the prophets. “And little children also have eternal
life.”

But if they have heard the prophets, it’s a different thing. “But behold, and fear, and
tremble before God, for ye ought to tremble.” We are not little children; we are
responsible here. I have written down some trembling passages here, the shudder. Pascal
wrote about the shudder when you contemplate the universe. Pascal was perhaps the
greatest French scientific genius; he was certainly the greatest prodigy. “You shudder
before the universe,” he said. Then you remember Søren Kierkegaard. He calls it “the
shudder before God.” Then you have Heidegger’s “shudder before death” and Sartre’s
“shudder before the other person.” Everybody is scared stiff of something in this life. Then
I was just reading something by John Eccles. He was a great authority on the brain, and he
wrote about “the terror of my self-conscious life.” The fact that he is self-conscious and
living is such a mystery. It haunts him so that he called it “the terror.” He got the Nobel
Prize for this work on the brain. So everybody is shuddering about something. There is
cause for alarm in neglecting such an offer of help made by such a God. The thing is that
if we get by it all, it will be a very narrow squeak—this is the point—because very few are
qualified. If it weren’t for that margin of mercy, that tolerance, we would all be sunk.
How narrow is this thing that we get by on? The chance that we will neglect such an offer
of help, the chance that we will miss it, that we will be remiss and lax when we should
know better is a terrifying prospect. You’ll miss it all. It’s like putting it all on one chance;
that’s Pascal’s famous dicing analogy.

When such a One puts himself out for you, his kindness is not lightly rebuffed. He is kind
and forgiving and may not hold it against you. He is only warning you what you are
doing to yourself by this foolishness; you are missing the chance for eternal life. He says
in verse 27 that he can’t help you if you won’t go along. Everybody is going to be given a
chance. “Therefore ought ye not to tremble? [for those who would not keep the
commandments] For salvation cometh to none such; for the Lord hath redeemed none
such; yea, neither can the Lord redeem such [he can’t even if he wanted to]; for he cannot
deny himself; for he cannot deny justice when it has its claim. And now I say unto you
that the time shall come that the salvation of the Lord shall be declared to every nation,
kindred, tongue, and people.” That is important, too; it has to be a universal thing.
Everybody is going to be given a chance. The gospel doesn’t just apply to those who are in
the Church, who have accepted it or rejected it. Everybody is going to be given the test in
one form or another. Of course, that’s where the temple work comes in. The universality
is a very important thing.
Verse 29: “Yea, Lord, thy watchmen shall lift up their voice; with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion.” The earth has been the scene of Zion before; Enoch’s Zion was here. There have been Zions before. Well, he is going to bring it again. This is repeated, of course, in the Doctrine and Covenants. We are all in it together, and we should enjoy it all the more being together and seeing eye to eye. Incidentally, we are all saved as individuals; we all make our own covenants with the Lord. But because we are all in it together and we all experience this together, we know what others are feeling, and we can feel with them. We have perfect empathy, so we see eye to eye in these things when the Lord brings Zion. Of course, you can put it in other words. The Lord called his people “Zion” because they were of one heart and one mind; they saw eye to eye. We’ll see eye to eye when Zion comes again. We’ll see that we are in it together, and it’s all one grand, happy family, etc.

Verse 31: “And all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.” Now Abinadi is preaching these things to King Noah. They’ve heard the scriptures. These priests he is talking to are proud of their knowledge of the scriptures. Remember, they tried to stump him with passages from Isaiah—“how beautiful upon the mountains,” etc. They know what he’s talking about, but he is explaining now what it means. Of course, this is completely beyond them. They don’t get this at all because they have just been living it up and giving their own learned interpretations of things, like the doctors in the schools.

The next chapter begins by repeating the theme of universality “when every nation, kindred, tongue, and people shall see eye to eye and shall confess before God that his judgments are just.” Well, that will be Zion indeed when it’s universal. “And then shall the wicked be cast out.” It will be a purged society then, and they will be of one heart and one mind. Those who would not participate will be simply wild at being left out, but what could they expect “because they would not hearken unto the voice of the Lord.” He wanted to redeem them, but it all depended on their agency. When the wicked are cast out, there will be weeping and wailing “because they would not hearken unto the voice of the Lord; therefore the Lord redeemeth them not. For they are carnal and devilish, and the devil has power over them.” They are under Satan’s power. In Moses 4:4 he says that all who do not obey God will be in Satan’s power. He is telling the truth, of course—you are. You have your choice between them here. We are here in a position of choice, and you can’t just hang around in limbo all the time saying, “I won’t go this way, or I won’t go that way.” Remember what [John] said to the Laodiceans. The Lord said, “I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth” (Revelation 3:15–16). I will have nothing to do with you; I want you to be hot or cold, one or the other. “For they are carnal and devilish, and the devil has power over them; yea, even that old serpent that did beguile our first parents, which was the cause of their fall; which was the cause of all mankind becoming carnal, sensual, devilish, knowing evil from good, subjecting themselves to the devil.”

Even becoming carnal, sensual, and devilish, you are not completely sunk in evil, though you wonder about somebody like Bundy, don’t you. That’s about as far as you can go, and it shows how far you can go. None of us have gone that far, I’m sure, but we all somewhat partake of that. Everyone can share his feelings and vicious temptations to some degree because all mankind has become carnal, sensual, and devilish—but “knowing evil from good.” He knew it all along, of course. That became clear. He went all the way down, and yet all the time he knew evil from good. Because of the pious way he talked in the end, he showed that. It was just a bluff, “knowing evil from good, subjecting themselves to the devil.” You do that freely. It’s very interesting that in the valley here we have a lot of devil
cults and people like that. It’s quite widespread in the country. They don’t even know what the devil is. It sounds romantic to them, I suppose.

Well, this is the normal declination of human nature, and it would have been final. After all, if you are carnal, sensual, and devilish, where are you going? You are not going to pull yourself up by your own bootstraps. What can you do then? Well, we would have been sunk if God hadn’t intervened. Verse 4: “They would have been endlessly lost were it not that God redeemed his people from their lost and fallen state.” This doesn’t come in the course of nature. Evolution no longer follows an unimpeded, unconscious course of natural selection at all. Any biologist will tell you now that it isn’t natural selection anymore. Man has long been in a condition where he makes his own selection—natural selection “ceased” a long time ago with the human family. We do our own selection now, and it’s a deliberate selection. How long has that been the case? Verse 4 says that mankind would have been lost, but God redeemed his people. “But remember that he that persists in his own carnal nature [that’s your vicious circle; he makes himself worse; it’s an obsession, like the paranoid, etc., he is not going to get out of it], and goes on in the ways of sin and rebellion against God, remaineth in his fallen state and the devil hath all power over him. Therefore he is as though there was no redemption made, being an enemy to God.”

He has declared himself for the other side. Why would anybody be as foolish as that? Well, that isn’t a moot question. It’s fact—we don’t say why. As Professor Wormuth used to say up at the University of Utah, “Mormonism is the only nonspeculative religion.” We don’t ask the questions, Should we be here? Should the earth have been created. It’s too late to discuss that now. There’s no point. We don’t argue those things. It’s the same thing here. When redemption is made, how could he possibly be lost? Well, it happens. It’s a fact.

Verse 6: “And now if Christ had not come into the world [all being carnal, sensual, and devilish], speaking of things to come as though they had already come, there could have been no redemption.” Notice that the time is relative here. He hadn’t come yet, but he [the author] uses the pluperfect here because the plan was working and had been going on all along. Those who follow the prophets are qualified for it, just as those who would be here in the time of Christ. Christ had to come personally here to make it possible—to loose the bands of death. Now that is the bottom line, again. “And if Christ had not risen from the dead, or have broken the bands of death that the grave should have no victory, and that death should have no sting, there could have been no resurrection.”

This is the exclusion here in verse 2. Being caught in the quicksand is a good example of [their situation]. As Homer said, “Many noble heroes were caught like rats in a trap.” It was proiapsen. They were already sunk before the war began. They were lost and sent down to Hades. Proiapsen is to grab a person before their time. This is the condition we are in, and, of course, it’s our character that makes us do that. The oracles of men play tricks. “They were helpless victims,” he said, “and the will of God was being fulfilled.” It’s an inexorable law. There is no Sympathetic One with power; there is no Savior. There is none to intervene. That is the tragic situation of ancient literature, the epics, etc. We are caught, as it were, in the quicksand, and the more you struggled, the deeper you get. It won’t do you any good at all because you are held down by your own weight. Our very nature itself drags us down the more we struggle because you are not going to purify yourself—you can’t purge it. We must have help from outside; that’s all there is to it.
That’s why we have to have this. Otherwise, “Many noble souls were already doomed to hell before they even came here.”

This about the resurrection is quoted by Paul, and it’s elsewhere. Verse 9: “He is the light and the life of the world [there’s much more to it; there’s more light where this came from, he is telling us]; yea, a light that is endless, that can never be darkened; yea, and also a life which is endless, that there can be no more death.” He comes as the Light into the world—not just in a special role or something like that. This comes from the eternal order of things. He is the Light and Life that has always been there and always will be there, “that is endless, that can never be darkened [whether it’s on this earth or anywhere else]; yea, and also a life which is endless, that there can be no more death. Even this mortal shall put on immortality, and this corruption shall put on incorruption, and shall be brought to stand before the bar of God, to be judged of him according to their works whether they be good or whether they be evil.”

Something has been added physically to make this possible, you see. This is not just spiritual. We will not dispense with our bodies because there is a resurrection. The grave has lost its victory. “If they be good, to the resurrection of endless life [this is a release] and happiness; and if they be evil, to the resurrection of endless damnation.” That means detention. Damnatio means “to hold back.” The Egyptians use the word htr for imprisonment. This is because they went “according to their own carnal wills and desires [if they want that kind of an eternity, they can have it—you can have a carnal eternity]; having never called upon the Lord while the arms of mercy were extended towards them; for the arms of mercy were extended towards them, and they would not; they being warned of their iniquities and yet they would not depart from them; and they were commanded to repent and yet they would not repent.”

Now, do these people deserve eternal damnation? Look at the situation. They damn themselves entirely. There are these steps: First, “the arms of [his] mercy were extended towards them and [they didn’t want it] they would not; [This is a very eloquent passage here, incidentally.] they were warned of their iniquities and yet they would not depart from them; and [then] they were commanded to repent and yet they would not repent.” That makes it as strong as it could be. First, mercy—I’ll give it to you just out of love.

Uh, Uh, nothing doing.

All right, then a serious warning. How about that?

No, I don’t want it.

Then, finally a command. I’m giving it to you, and you must do it now. I’m giving you a last chance. I want you very badly to do this.

No, I won’t do it.

So they refuse the command. You notice that there is a mounting urgency and mounting importance. Finally, they deserve what they get. It’s very clear here. Verse 13: “And now [in view of that], ought ye not to tremble and repent of your sins, and remember that only in and through Christ ye can be saved? [those are phases you will go through if you don’t] Therefore, if ye teach the law of Moses [he says to the priests of Noah], also teach
that it is a shadow of those things which are to come.” That’s all in the law of Moses, but you have to look at it carefully; it’s buried pretty deep there. Just as you will find in the Book of Mormon better than anywhere else the whole temple ceremony. People don’t know it’s there, but it is there. Marvelous book, the Book of Mormon!

The time is up now. We’ll go faster, but these basic chapters are very important. Now the story resumes after this. It was important to linger on these two chapters because they contain an awful lot of information. When we get to Alma and Moroni, we will see that they carry on the same way. The Book of Mormon is the gospel handbook if there ever was one.
TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

HUGH NIBLEY

Semester 2, Lecture 36
Mosiah 16–18
Abinadi and Alma

Now with Mosiah 17 come a series of extremely interesting and significant stories. He really pours it on here. After Abinadi gave his sermon, what was the reaction? “The king commanded that the priests should take him and cause that he should be put to death.” And it’s very obvious why. After the sermon in chapters 15 and 16, what else was there left for the king to do? The contrast between what I am doing and what I could be doing is simply intolerable—I can’t face it. I must get rid of the one, or get rid of the other. You can’t share them. As Brigham Young said, nothing is harder than trying to carry the load on both shoulders. It will just tear you apart. You’ve got to decide one way or the other. He [King Noah] heard the story, and he knew it was true, but it was intolerable. He couldn’t face it. The only thing to do was get the man out of sight and out of mind. So take him away and put him to death.

“But there was one among them whose name was Alma,” and there’s a very important thing about Alma. You’ll notice his situation and what kind of fellow he was. What was Alma’s situation? It goes out of the way to tell us why he was in this situation. He was a direct descendant of Nephi. That meant he had the priesthood, but he wasn’t among those—the old guard—that had been kicked out by Noah at an earlier time. Remember, Noah cleaned out Zeniff’s priests that he had appointed. And as we read back here in Mosiah 11:5, he got rid of them. “For he put down all the priests that had been consecrated by his father [so Alma hadn’t been consecrated by Zeniff], and he consecrated new ones in their stead.” And Alma was apparently one of those new ones. Why? Well, in the first place he was young. It says that he was a young man. He hadn’t been in that old group at all. In the second place, he was in the highest aristocracy. Remember, the first Nephi had been the king, so he was the nearest thing you would get to royal blood. He couldn’t avoid the job. He would naturally be appointed by the king and also have the king’s ear because he was in high respect, of course. And he was also honest, and he knew [Abinadi] was telling the truth. He knew too much, as a matter of fact. That’s why the king had to get rid of him now. His name was Alma, he was a descendant of Nephi, and he was a young man. He was one of the new guard, but he believed the words of Abinadi. He knew what had been going on, the iniquity Abinadi had testified about. Of course, he interceded for Abinadi. He had the ear of the king and he said, well, what about it? Let’s let him go. The least we can do is let him go in peace. The king wouldn’t have that, and so now he wanted to get rid of Alma himself. To agree to this [Alma’s exhortation] would be an admission of his guilt. He couldn’t afford to do that, so he had to get rid of Alma, too. He was a troublemaker [for the king], and he knew too much, as we learn in verse 2.

Then what happened? He “sent his servants after him that they might slay him” so that nobody would know about it. See, that’s the way he did things, not in the open. This Noah was quite a character, and yet he turns out to be a rather sympathetic character, and that’s surprising, isn’t it? “But he [Alma] fled from before them [Alma was up to that—he knew what was going to happen, so he got out of the way in time; he was no fool to stay around] and hid himself that they found him not. And he being concealed for many days
did write all the words which Abinadi had spoken.” Remember, those were scripture. Abinadi was heavy with scripture. He taunted the priests of Noah for teaching the scripture and not knowing it, not understanding it, and not following it. Then the same thing happened here. So here we come to that interesting parallel in the Dead Sea Scrolls with the Teacher of Righteousness or the Star. From now on he goes through exactly the same routine as Alma. Well, it’s altogether too close. They’re stamped from the same mold, even the same details. Here’s one from the Dead Sea Scrolls, first published in 1950, discovered in 1948. This wasn’t known, of course, to Joseph Smith, and yet he gives an identical, carbon copy of Alma’s story, all the way through. Now how is that possible? Well, this is one of those recurrent scenarios. It happened before here; we can go back to 1 Nephi 4:30. We have him right here. The same thing happens—this going out.

I must tell you about the Dead Sea Scrolls, but the first semester is the time we deal with them. We don’t want to get hung up on them now, but I must tell you something about them because we haven’t had them in here. The parallels to the Book of Mormon are so striking. Just a year ago, a very good explanation was brought out by a Jewish professor at the University of Chicago. It explains why these parallels are so close, and it’s very convincing, too. But you know about the people of the Dead Sea Scrolls. You’ve got to put them on here now. [Draws map on the board.] This is the delta, and here’s the Dead Sea, and here’s the Sea of Galilee up here. Here’s Jerusalem and Qumran along here. This is En-Gedi here, and here’s the Nahal Hever. Masada is down here, all along the Dead Sea shore. I’ll read some of this new report by Golb, and we’ll go by that. These people came down there and settled. This is the way Lehi came down here. These are the people of the Dead Sea Scrolls, and they came out from Jerusalem when Jerusalem was about to fall to the Romans. It was going to be destroyed utterly and completely. They lived out in the desert in the same way Nephi did, and they were inspired. They took Isaiah as their guide, and they went out into the desert to prepare the way for the Messiah. They had the baptisms, and they had all the teachings. But it is so Christian, it worries everybody, you see. It’s the same religion we find in the New Testament, so everybody says, “Well this is just the sect of the Essenes, there.” That got to be the popular explanation. At first they wouldn’t hear of the Essenes, but then everybody went overboard for the Essenes. They were a sect of four thousand that Pliny and Josephus tell about, the four thousand religious people who went and settled near Qumran there. But these people weren’t Essenes at all.

Let me tell you what Mr. Norman Golb of Chicago wrote in 1987. He said they’re not Essenes. The first thing discovered in Cave 1 was the Serekh Scroll, their Doctrine and Covenants. Not only the doctrines, [but] their reason for being there, their organization, their oaths, their covenants—everything was discovered in the first book. Since then there have been hundreds and thousands of fragments discovered in many caves—fragments and lots of complete documents. But here it was that it gave us everything we wanted to know—when they went out, why they went out. And it’s just a parallel of Lehi—the same sort of thing, skipping out like that. We see here in Nephi’s account that they were doing the very same thing that was done in the scrolls. Let me just tell you about the scrolls here so we can get this because they are a very, very powerful witness to the Book of Mormon. You can’t neglect them very well. This Serekh Scroll, called the Manual of Discipline when it was first discovered by Brownley down at Claremont, was particularly intriguing. It “strayed radically from what was thought to be the mainstream of Jewish thinking. It wasn’t the rabbinical religion of the Jews at all.” As we saw last semester, when the temple was burned and Jerusalem fell, Johanan ben Zakai went out and got permission to found the first rabbinical school at Jamnia. After that schools were founded in Babylonia when
they went there, and this was the beginning of rabbinical Judaism, which is a very different type of Judaism. They were very much against the temple, they didn't preach these things, they soft-pedaled the Messiah and everything else. And so it's not like the religion of Lehi at all, but that's what we find in these scrolls. That's where the difference is.

As he [Golb] says here, “This strayed radically from what was thought to be the mainstream of Jewish thinking. How did this happen? Moreover, it foreshadowed the Christian doctrines, as found in the New Testament.” What are these people doing 150 years before Christ, 50 years before, during the time of Christ and after, talking just like apostles and prophets? It was a church organized with twelve disciples and a presidency of three. They had the sacrament that looked forward to the coming of the Messiah—the bread and the wine and all that. Well, these are Christians; the Jews shouldn’t be doing it that way. But, of course, this is what we find in the Book of Mormon. This is the religion they brought from Jerusalem with them. And so he goes on here and says, “The secrets and the hidden message of the scripture, the concept that stands in stark contrast to the type of personal wisdom extolled in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.” They’re not philosophical at all about this; this is not philosophical wisdom that the rabbis favor. Well, they said it must have been written by the Essenes. They found there was only one group of Essenes, and they said they were up here.

Down at En-Gedi you have the cave of letters. We mentioned Alma, so let’s start with En-Gedi right there in the cave of letters, in the Nahal Hever. There was a young man called Alma. When they dug there, they found that the people had fled from Jerusalem. They took their personal and legal documents with them, which tell us an awful lot about them. Moreover, they had been fleeing to the caves and doing this thing way back since the Old Kingdom of Egypt. They had been doing it for over three thousand years. So it was before there were ever Jews there. Other people were doing it. They found some marvelous bronze temple vessels and other things that they had buried in these caves. Every time there was trouble and Jerusalem fell, the people would flee to the wilderness, as the Lord tells them to do in the chapter 24 of Matthew. When it comes, then flee to the mountains. They had always fled to the mountains and to the caves. Well, they did it this time, and they took their stuff with them. One of the first things discovered was this document, and it was a deed to a farm. Now when you go into the Scrollery [Shrine of the Book], that big turtle-shell building in Jerusalem now called the Scrollery, the first scroll you come to on your left is actually papyrus. They were still getting the stuff from Egypt, and it stopped, of course, with the war. The light shines through it so you see it very bold and clear, and here is this deed for “Alma, the son of Judah.” And it’s Alma, A-L-M-A. Now people always make fun of the name Alma. They say it’s a Latin name, alma mater, etc. They say, “This is Latin. This has nothing to do with the Jews—they never had a name Alma like that, and you wouldn’t call a man Alma anyway.” But among the first things they discovered here in the cave is this deed to a farm. (I should have brought Yadin’s book along, but it’s not necessary.) Sure enough, his name is A-L-M-A, “Alma, the son of Judah.” So it was a good Jewish name. A man in the company had this farm, and his name was “Alma, son of Judah.” So the name deserves notice. It couldn’t have been invented by Joseph Smith; it wasn’t known. Lots of people laughed at it until it turned up in the cave here. But we find these things not only up there at the north end.

Incidentally, here is Jericho, just a few miles away. That’s the Musa Bey Alamy farm there. That’s where they raise chickens, and a mob came down and killed 3,000 chickens one night just before we got there. The mob came out of Jericho. Those people play rough.
[Quoting again from Golb:] “... at En-Gedi, twenty miles south of the caves. [It is] widely accepted the Essene sect had a formative influence on Christians. Today, all propagate the theory of Essene authorship, but,” he says, “it won’t hold. The Qumran Essene is at odds with almost every shred of evidence there is. Analysis of the scroll actually reveals that to Judaism as a whole, not just one obscure sect, it was a salient influence.”

We find a whole stash of them down here at Masada, their last hold, and they were brought directly from Jerusalem. And these were brought directly from Jerusalem. Now it turns out that this library wasn't written there at all; it was brought from Jerusalem. They were taking their books out, and these were the things that were taught and preached at Jerusalem in the time that it fell. The temple was gone. The rabbis were hostile to the temple, and they took over. A rabbi holds no priesthood, you see, and has nothing to do with the temple. From then on they set the norm of Judaism, and there was a ferocious struggle. It went for centuries in which they completely wiped out every trace. Now we have this great work of Edwin Goodenough, nine volumes on Jewish symbolism. It goes into the earliest Jewish symbolism and shows what a struggle there was before they finally wiped out the old Judaism. And that's the old Judaism we find in the Book of Mormon. That's why it's always talking about the Messiah, the resurrection, and all that sort of thing, which the rabbis play down as much as they possibly can. In fact, they would deny it completely if they could. They say the Bible says nothing about resurrection, and they also reject the passages like Isaiah that refer to the Messiah. But they weren't rejected by these people.

The Essenes, as described by Pliny, were celibate monks. Well, these people weren't. Their cemeteries show men and women all buried together there. “The excavations showed well-developed settlements with cisterns, pools, reservoirs and water sources. There was a great deal of baptizing going on.” When these were first discovered, Rockefeller sponsored a lot of [the work]. All the churches got together. There were five different groups, and each one had a claim on so many scrolls. But they all declared that all these pools and washing places at Qumran were just for dyeing leather or something like that. They were water storage tanks for plumbing or the like. Well, the Jews took it over after the 1967 war, and they changed the labels on all these. They said these were not for industry at all—they were for baptism. They used these for baptism; it was very plain they had. And they went back and showed that this was so. They were great people for baptizing out here. “... well-developed settlements with cisterns, pools and reservoirs. Their dining halls, kitchens, stables, pottery, and tower adjoined the buildings whose identity remains uncertain.” They went out and settled for a while until they were driven out by the Romans. There are various theories. We won’t hold you on this. But the [Roman] soldiers came, fought a protracted battle, and finally drove them out. Some of them went to Damascus, where we find the Damascus Fragment. Some of them went out to al-Ragim in the desert. I wrote an article in *Revue de Qumran* on that. That may be another settlement of those that went out a few miles south of Amman there in the desert. It’s very interesting—since then, that has become a shrine, not of the Essenes or anything like that. It has become the shrine of the Cave of the Seven Sleepers. They run bus tours out there and everything else. It was set up by the Moslems—that’s another story.

“By 1956 scrolls were being discovered in ever greater numbers of caves, altogether too many of them, and hidden there were specially made pottery containers and linen packets to hold them [they're hidden away here]. They weren’t made in the scriptorum; they brought them from Jerusalem with them [and he tells us why that is]. By the spring of
1956 a total of eleven caves spread over a distance of about two miles [had been discovered]." Cave 11 was quite high up, quite a hard one to get to. But by that time they had found at least 500 manuscripts. And this was just the beginning, you see. These were all from the time of Christ and before the time of Christ.

When I was teaching at Claremont at Scripps College, I used to teach alternate days with Professor Goodspeed who retired from Chicago. He was teaching there, and we would teach the girls at Scripps College on alternate days—his on Tuesdays and mine on Thursdays. We arranged it that way. Goodspeed said, "The New Testament was not written down at all in the time of Christ. It wasn’t written down until the fourth century. The Jews never wrote anything. We have no record of the Jews writing anything at the time of Christ." He died, and the year after they found thousands and thousands of things written by Jews everywhere—written in rapid, cursive hands, very familiar with the whole thing. Everybody had been writing. The Jews had the scribendi cacoethes very badly. They wrote everything down. So all of a sudden, it turns out, they were great writers and kept records of everything. And so we have it here. There were 500 scrolls. "The scrolls embraced a wide variety of themes, literary genres, every type of literature one would expect to find among the Palestinian Jews. And the Qumran Essene theory could not convincingly account for such an astoundingly large and heterogenous body of literature." The Essenes would never produce that. So they had to expand their definition of Essene to include everything, but that didn’t work either.

Then of the Qumran caves [writings], only one was an author’s original. They had all been brought from Jerusalem. They weren’t written there. "... five hundred to eight hundred extremely diverse texts from the Qumran cave, and these scrolls derived from one or more large libraries." Just like in the Book of Mormon, they were kept all together in libraries. And they had no libraries at Khirbet Qumran. "In 1952 at Murabba‘at [an enormous cave much larger than this room, just eleven miles south of Qumran], they discovered not only letters dating to 132 A.D. written by the hand of senders, containing many precise geographical and personal names, but equally specific legal documents." It was 1966 when they discovered the Cave of Letters in the Nahal Hever, and then they were really into it. These people had buried them deliberately in the dust and they were speaking from the dust. Digging them up, people were just enveloped in clouds of dust, tears streaming down their faces because of emotion because of the dust. The kids could actually pick these up and read them. They had been buried 2,000 years there, and they spoke out of the dust. They spoke so much like the Book of Mormon—it’s just astounding. People doing the same thing.

In 1952 the Copper Scroll from Cave 3 [was discovered]. The Copper Scroll was kept on bronze sheets, and that was called brass in Joseph Smith’s day. The word bronze wasn’t used until end of the nineteenth century. You won’t find the word bronze in the Bible, for example. They just used brass, which means bronze. It’s a mixture of copper and tin rather than zinc and tin, which is brass. The description said they put it on copper because they didn’t want it to perish. It had the most valuable information on it, so they put it on copper. We have the thing now, and it was originally written on sheets about this size. They were riveted together like this, the whole sheet of them, and then they were rolled up so that they could be stowed away rather than be put on top of each other. But it was originally a copper book. And they gave descriptions of precious objects buried in various hiding places, so it was a record they wanted to keep. They didn’t want it to perish. The experts said the treasures were purely fictional, but not at all. “The Copper Scroll has been
executed not in a scribe’s elegant hand, but the relatively crude and haphazard style associated with documentary autographs—terse straight-forward enumeration, including written documents.” It tells where other written documents were hidden. That’s why it is so valuable.

“Many of the hiding places were located in the wadis eastward and southward from Jerusalem. [The] text describes caches hidden near Jericho, for example. But it describes widespread sequestration of books, valuable artifacts, at sites scattered throughout the whole Judean wilderness in a pattern radiating not from Qumran but from Jerusalem.” These people fled from Jerusalem and took their records with them. That’s the point. And they buried them deliberately when they thought they weren’t going to survive. “In the early ‘60s, they found Masada and fragments of fourteen more scrolls of similar age and scribal character, songs of the Sabbath sacrifices. The scrolls were brought to Masada by such refugees, among other items. Thirteen scrolls of these emanated from Jerusalem. The inhabitants of Jerusalem undertook massive concealment of scrolls at Qumran and elsewhere between 68 and 70 A.D.”

Then [there was] the idea that the Essene sect had a major influence on Christianity and that mainstream Judaism did not. It was the mainstream Judaism that went over into Christianity, that Christianity took over. It was revealed through Christ and the apostles. It’s the New Testament that picks up the mainstream of Judaism, which was interrupted by the rabbis. They give us what they call the normative Judaism today, which is very different. The Judaism of the Book of Mormon is what we find here. That’s why this is so striking. “The Christians’ ideas attributed to the Essenes—predestination, election, duality of flesh and spirit, darkness and light, falsehood and truth—evolved out of Judaism as a whole. But Judaism and Christianity cease to be distant theological cousins and become much closer relatives because of these scrolls.”

So that’s the situation. And the stock situation is that the people run out into the desert and hide there and carry on their religious activities and their devotions. We have this back here, as I was mentioning, in 1 Nephi 4:30. He [Nephi] is going to have [Zoram] join the company, and you see what kind of a company they were. They fled from Jerusalem. They knew Jerusalem was going to be destroyed. Remember, the prophets had all been preaching that at the time. He saw the servant of Laban and grabbed him and held him. He swore an oath to him that if he would come and live there with them, they would spare his life. “And I spake to him, even with an oath, that he need not fear; that he should be a free man like unto us if he would go down in the wilderness with us” (1 Nephi 4:33). See, they considered themselves as being free, now that they had escaped from the bondage of the wicked priests at Jerusalem. They were founding their own community now, and they brought the priesthood with them. They were going to continue the ordinances, looking forward to the coming of the Messiah. That’s what they were all doing. And this is a typical one of these communities, because it comes from this. He says, come down and live with us and you’ll be a free man like us, if you go down into the wilderness with us. If we don’t do that, then we won’t be diligent in keeping the commandments of the Lord. He said, “Surely the Lord hath commanded us to do this thing.” If we’re going to keep the commandments in diligence, we can’t stay in Jerusalem any longer. That’s the point.

It talks a good deal in the scrolls about the corruption of the priests of Jerusalem—the priests of the lie, etc. Exactly like the priests of Noah and his crowd, we’ll see in a minute here, I suppose. I didn’t want to get hung up on this, but this is important because it’s
very strong evidence right here. “Therefore, if thou wilt go down into the wilderness to my father thou shalt have place with us.” There will be a wide place, and you will be able to join our family. See sahl means “a wide place for you,” and ahl means a family, a tent, and the community. So they were going to accept Laban’s servant, Zoram, into the family, and he joined them down there. Remember the Zoramites in the Book of Mormon. And he also made the covenant with them. See, everybody who came out to Qumran had to make a covenant to stay with them, and then he lived there according to the rules. It [the Book of Mormon] says, “Yea, and he also made an oath unto us that he would tarry with us from that time forth,” and they trusted him. When he made the oath, “our fears did cease concerning him.”

So here is such a community, and we find another one after they get to the New World. In 1 Nephi 16:37 they’re still in the desert, and this is their idea. See, Laman and Lemuel know the sort of thing that’s been happening, and they say this is all going to happen again. They’re planning to establish just such a community as this one in the wilderness, and he says “Behold, let us slay our father, and also our brother Nephi, who has taken it upon him to be our ruler and our teacher, who are his elder brethren [they’re just like the sectaries] . . . He tells us these things, and he worketh many things by his cunning arts [He’s going to make himself the leader. See he’s the teacher of righteousness. There’s always the leader, the star, that leads them out into the wilderness. They always depend on the leader, and he’s going to be the one] . . . that he may deceive our eyes, thinking, perhaps, that he may lead us away into some strange wilderness; and after he has led us away, he has thought to make himself a king and a ruler over us” (1 Nephi 16:38). That’s the plan, you see—they’re going to lead us out into a strange desert here, and there he’ll set up the community. He’ll be the head and he’ll rule it. And that’s the sort of thing they’re suspecting him of.

So this is the pattern that’s being followed: “. . . that he may do with us according to his will and pleasure. And after this manner did my brother Laman stir up their hearts to anger.” But then when they got to the New World, he did that, remember. Nephi broke off with as many as would follow him, and they went and they settled a community of Nephi. Later, Mosiah left that one and went off and ended up in Zarahemla. But remember when they settled in Nephi’s colony, they made Nephi king. Well, that’s the very thing Laman and Lemuel said they would do when they got him out in the desert—they’d make him king. And they did make him king over them. He didn’t want to be, but they made him. And so this is following a very sharp, a very distinctly marked pattern.

Question: Why would their fears concerning the servant of Laban cease as soon as he made the oath?

Answer: Because he made an oath, a covenant. An Arab wouldn’t think of breaking his oath. He’d rather die than break his oath. This is very important when you’ve made the oath. We don’t think of oaths—we love to break oaths, we do it all over the place.

Question: What about Laman and Lemuel? Didn’t they make any oaths that they broke?

Answer: Well, they wanted to go back home, remember? Their father Lehi said, okay, go back home. Jerusalem’s been destroyed; you’re on your own. You’re perfectly free to go. They were intimidated, so they stayed. They didn’t know what would happen to them. They got cold feet and wouldn’t go home. It was safer where they were.
Mosiah 17:3: The king “caused that Alma should be cast out from among them, and sent his servants after him that they might slay him.” Remember, we had the Abinadi story. It parallels this very closely. Abinadi preached to the priests, and they did the same thing—the priests that lied and tried to catch him in his words. He fled and he said he lived among the fisher folk and the farmers, and he hid out from them. Then he came back into the town and started to preach. This is what Alma did. “But he fled from before them and hid himself that they found him not. And he being concealed for many days did write all the words which Abinadi had spoken” (Mosiah 16:4). That’s what we just read. And we read in the 1QS, especially the Thanksgiving Hymn where the leader praises the Lord that he has been rescued after all his sufferings, and he says, “I praise thee Lord for thou didst not desert me when I was among the people and didst not leave me in my secret affairs, but saved my life out of the pit and grave in the midst of lions. And thou didst take me to a place removed among the fisher folk and hunters [so he hid out for a while, you see]. “Thou didst hide me, O God, from the children of men and hid thy law in me [he wrote it down when he was there; the same thing is happening here, you see] until the time that thy help should be revealed to me, Thou didst preserve my life, the life of the poor one in the place of lions.” So he went out to the desert and hid there, just as Alma hid out and wrote these things down that he heard from Abinadi.

Then notice the beginning of chapter 18 tells us (we’re getting ahead of the game) that Alma went about “privately among the people and began to teach the words of Abinadi. . . And he taught them privately (the first and third verses). So he appeared this way, just as Abinadi had gone around in disguise before until the time came when he cast off the disguise. And he did it deliberately, because he told the king here that he had deliberately put himself into his hands. Notice Mosiah 17:9: “. . . that ye may know of their surety I have suffered myself that I have fallen into your hands,” so my blood would witness against you. He says he deliberately allowed it to happen. He only cast off the disguise when he wanted to be discovered. When he came into their midst, then he said, “Thus has the Lord commanded me, saying—Abinadi . . .” Then they knew who he was. And he [Alma] says here in the ninth verse, “. . . that ye may know of their surety [that my words are true; he’s going to testify with his blood and so he says,] I have suffered myself that I have fallen into your hands.”

The Hodayoth, the Thanksgiving Hymn, says, “Thou hast not kept hiding for shame. All those who permit me to visit and instruct them, who came together in the church of thy covenant to listen to me and to follow the ways of thy heart, they rallied to my defense as a group of saints.” So the Teacher of Righteousness got some people together supporting him.

And the New World Qumran: “And it came to pass that as many as did believe him did go forth to a place which was called Mormon, having received its name from the king, being in the borders of the land having been infested, by times or at seasons, by wild beasts” (Mosiah 18:4). This is very interesting.

After these people were driven out of Qumran, they went up to Damascus and continued in the desert there. It tells us in the Damascus Scroll, “And the volunteers from the people who bear the staff, the wandering Moses, go to the fountain of the spring, which is the law. There the inhabitants of Israel depart from the land of Judah and dwell in the land of Damascus as strangers.” But they go by a fountain of water. They have to settle there, where there’s water. The staff is the one who teaches them the law, as Isaiah says. And as
Nephi says in 1 Nephi 19:23, “I did read unto them that which was written by the prophet Isaiah [when they were in the desert]; for I did liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning.”

He says people go up to the Damascus desert when they’re driven out (Damascus is a desert, as you know). One step out of town and you’re in howling wilderness. And they went up there and settled the same way with this leader. Back again to chapter 17. Alma went and hid, and the king caused his guards to surround Abinadi. They took him and burned him, and they said he was worthy of death. Now this is interesting, too—this is the crime. This is the titulus. This is the charge against him; it’s the accusation. When a person was crucified, above his head was a sign telling why he was being crucified, like ‘This is the king of the Jews.’ Pontius Pilate said, ‘I’m going to put up there, ‘This is the king of the Jews.’”

The elders and high priests said, “No, no, no. Put, ‘He said he was king of the Jews.’”

And Pilate said, “Oh, no—he is the king of the Jews.” He put the blame on them; they have to answer. They tried to put it on him, you see. With “He said he was king of the Jews,” they’d get out of it that way. And the same thing happens here. He’s guilty of this because this was the crime. He [the Savior] said he was king of the Jews, and he [Abinadi] said the same thing—that Christ was the Redeemer. “For thou hast said that God himself should come down among the children of men [well, that was the claim that Christ made; that was the charge against him in the titulus on the cross], and now for this cause thou shalt be put to death.” Because he said Christ should come down. That’s the same reason that Christ himself was crucified. And it was for blasphemy, for saying a thing that was unthinkable, that the doctors would not permit for a moment, and it was appalling. And then he says, all right, that’s what I expected. “I have suffered myself that I have fallen into your hands. . . . I will not recall my words, and they shall stand as a testimony against you. And if ye slay me, ye shall shed innocent blood, and this shall also stand as a testimony against you at the last day.”

Why does blood stand as a testimony? Well, when a murder has been committed or there’s dirty work going on, it’s blood that’s the evidence, isn’t it? It’s the blood that testifies that there has been the shedding of blood, of course. Nothing testifies better than that—the blood itself testifies. If there’s blood on the ground, you know that someone has shed blood. And that’s why we get this idea of the blood testifying against you.

Then Noah changed his mind. He wanted to let him go now. He didn’t like it, and he was afraid of him. He feared the judgment of God would come upon him. Now this is interesting. Noah feared God? This man? Yes, he did. Remember, he considered himself the leader of religious [people]. By [their] standards, he was a righteous man. Remember, in Mosiah 12:13–15, they say he hasn’t done anything wrong. They say, “And now, O king, what great evil hast thou done, or what great sins have thy people committed, that we should be condemned of God or judged of this man? And now, O king, behold, we are guiltless, and thou, O king, hast not sinned; therefore, this man has lied concerning you, and he has prophesied in vain. And behold, we are strong, we shall not come into bondage, or be taken captive by our enemies; yea, and thou hast prospered in the land, and thou also shalt prosper.” That proves you shall also prosper, so you’re righteous. Because we’re prosperous, we’re victorious and everything else. They really believed that.

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So what’s wrong with King Noah? He was a very popular king. He put on a great show, and the people loved him. This is a very interesting thing about Noah. He was worried, and he wanted to do the right thing here. He was afraid because he knew darn well that Abinadi was right, and he wanted to let him go. But, notice what happened. The priests wouldn’t let him out. The very same thing happened with Pilate. Remember? Pilate wanted to put it onto the Jews, and they got their revenge. Notice that he had this dialogue with the Jews, and they were each trying to outwit the other. Who had the last word? Each one tried to stick the other with responsibility for the crucifixion, the death of Christ. And so he [Pilate] said, “He is the king of the Jews.”

And they said, “He said he was King of the Jews.”

“No, he is the King of the Jews.” Well, they have their revenge on him. They said, “All right, we have no other king but Caesar.” Well, what a thing for the Jews to say because, after all, that was Pilate, and Pilate was serving Caesar. This would make a traitor out of Pilate. See, if he [Jesus Christ] was recognized as King of the Jews, then he would be a Rex amicalis, and there would be nothing wrong. His rule would be perfectly legitimate. Pilate recognized Christ as King of the Jews. That would make him a Rex amicalis and perfectly legitimate. He would not be in rebellion against Caesar. But the Jews said, “We are loyal only to Caesar. We do not acknowledge him as king. We acknowledge only Caesar as our king.” Where did that leave Pontius Pilate? He was Caesar’s representative there, and this ruined his career. He ended up in disgrace. It left him to say he recognized him [Jesus] as king, but they recognized only Caesar. Here we are wanting to support Caesar, you want us to support him. What are you doing? Taking us away from Caesar and having us support him? We think this guy’s a fraud [paraphrased]. And it was only the high priests and the elders who insisted on it; they kept shouting that. So that put Pilate on the spot. He had to give in, and they went ahead and did the deed.

And the same thing happened here. Notice, the king wanted to give up. He recognized Abinadi, but the priests wouldn’t let him do it. Verse 12: “But the priests lifted up their voices against him . . . saying: He has reviled against the king.” They were putting it on the king to make him responsible. He’s reviled against you. You can’t deny your office. You can’t deny that you’re the king, and he has reviled against you [paraphrased]. They were forcing him to put Abinadi to death, to defend the kingly office and keep his royal dignity. “He has reviled the king. Therefore the king was stirred up in anger against them, and he delivered him up that he might be slain [they put it all onto the king, but it was the priests again]. And it came to pass that they took him and bound him, and scourged his skin with faggots, yea, even unto death. And now when the flames began to scorch him, he cried unto them.”

How do you scourge the skin with faggots, and what’s the difference between scourge and scorch? They’re the same word, the same word exactly. Scourge, scorch, scotch, score—it means to damage the skin of someone. Our word scratch is the same thing. And you have the very same thing in Semitic languages. Ḥārash is the Hebrew word for scratch and for to plow. Ḥāratha is the Arabic word for “mar the surface, engrave, make a mark on something, or plow the ground.” They all have that same word that means “to scorch, to scourge, to scratch.” When his skin started to curl up, in other words, he said this. It’s interesting. The faggots are burning brands. They burn, and we think of scourging as with a scourge, as “to scourge with a whip.” But they’re the same word exactly. They scourged him and scorch him—in other words, he was being fried. It’s not a comfortable way to
die, either. Verse 14: “He cried unto them saying: Behold, even as ye have done unto me, so shall it come to pass that thy seed shall cause that many shall suffer the pains that I do suffer, even the pains of death by fire. And then he pronounced that the same thing was going to happen to the king himself out in the woods later on. “Yea, and ye shall be smitten on every hand, . . . And in that day ye shall be hunted, and ye shall be taken by the hand of your enemies, and then ye shall suffer, as I suffer, the pains of death by fire.”

Now who was recording all this that he said? Remember, Alma wasn’t on the scene in disguise then. But remember, after this happened, many repented and went out and joined Alma, and there were some there that did, you see. They had the record of this thing. They were able to report what went on because it was a public execution. Verse 20: “And now, when Abinadi had said these words, he fell, having suffered death by fire.”

Now what happened? Alma fled from the servants of King Noah, repented of his sins and iniquities, and then went about privately among the people and began to teach just exactly as the Teacher of Righteousness did here [in the Dead Sea Scrolls]. And this is what he taught—the absolute basics of the gospel. These are the big questions, these are the essentials. Without them you have no gospel; with them, you have everything. The first is resurrection of the dead. Is there any more [after this life]? That’s a terrible question, you see. Is this all there is? The answer is no, as we saw the last time. There’s much more, and it’s the resurrection of the dead. The second is that you’re not only resurrected to make life possible but to make it endurable and enjoyable. I don’t want to live forever, if I’ve got to suffer forever. No that’s not it, but to make life desirable for eternal life—to make it possible and then to make it desirable. And that’s the same thing. Redemption of the people. That is atonement, bringing them back to the presence of God, and that happens through power. Things are done through power. It’s a physical, real thing that happens. The suffering and death of Christ and his resurrection and ascension—now that’s the atonement. What he’s preaching here is resurrection, redemption, atonement, buying back again, bringing together again where you were. Notice all these words that begin with re. That means again. A re-surrection means “a rising up again.” That means you were in the flesh before. Of course we’re here now, and then we will rise up again. But then after, it is the redemption. You are bought back again. You came down here, you suffered the Fall, you committed all these sins, etc. Then you’re freed. Emptio is “to buy something,” and redemption is “to buy somebody back again who was with you before.” See, you were in the presence of the Lord before; now he’s buying you back into his service again after you’ve been out of it for a while. You’ve been serving the devil. That’s what he [Alma] preached.

“And as many as would hear his word he did teach. And he taught them privately, that it might not come to a knowledge of the king. And many did believe his words. And it came to pass that as many as did believe him did go forth to a place which was called Mormon, having received its name from the king, being in the borders of the land having been infested by times or at seasons, by wild beasts” (Mosiah 18:3). See, it was in the mĭdḥār, between the cultivated and the desert. It’s not absolute howling desert. It’s a place where there’s a spring of water, and there are trees growing. This is an important picture because at Qumram, right down the coast, there is Ras Fashkha, a great grove trees. Not huge, but it’s a nice grove of trees and springs that come up. They’re quite salty now, but it’s just a couple of miles south of there. They have plenty of water, and that’s why they settled there, of course, along the Dead Sea.
Verse 5: “Now, there was in Mormon a fountain of pure water, and Alma resorted thither [notice this is the country, and it’s a desert terrain; it’s no jungle, as you have to hide in a thicket], there being near the water a thicket of small trees, where he did hide himself in the daytime from the searchers of the king.” So obviously it was fairly open country, desert country, because they had to search out a water place. There were groves growing around the springs; an oasis is what it was, where they were hiding here. “And . . . as many as believed him went thither to hear his words.” Well, this is exactly what was happening with the Dead Sea community. But that’s only a morning’s walk from Jerusalem, if you walk downhill to Jericho and then to Qumran. How could they be there for years and not be discovered? Well, they were known and watched. There was always tension going on, people coming and going. It was the same thing here. Finally they had to leave, as you know. They weren’t able to stay long. The king’s soldiers kept snooping around, and they finally drove them out. Then they went to another place, as we find out later.

And the same thing happened here [at Qumran]. They went up to Damascus, and they went out west into the desert. Then many became Mandaesans. They went clear over to Mesopotamia and down to the south. The Mandaesans at the mouth of the Tigris and Euphrates now are their descendants. Their records are full. They keep their records on lead plates, because lead plates are preserved in the water. The water won’t destroy them. The Mandaesans at the mouth of the Euphrates and the Tigris down there are the marsh Arabs today. They have a great thing about lots of baptizing and purification. They have the same garments we do, etc. They go through all that, and they have these records there. They say they came originally from the Jordan, and their baptisms are continued from the Jordan there. That goes back to the time of Christ. So you find these people all over the place, and this is the pattern that’s being followed in the Book of Mormon. It’s a very old one. You can parallel it many places. And it’s in such detail. It’s so interesting the way it comes out in the case of Alma, because he had been tipped off. Abinadi knew the record and all this sort of thing.

This is the 1QS, the Serekh Scroll, the Manual of Discipline: “At the fulfillment of these times, they shall separate themselves from the dwelling in the midst of a perverse people and go forth into the desert to prepare a way for him, even by the study of the law as it was given to Moses according to that which has been revealed from time to time as it was shown to the prophets through the Holy Ghost.” See, they talk about the Holy Ghost and things like that that the rabbis never talk about or never mention. It’s full of this very un-Jewish talk.

And, says the Book of Mormon, “as many as believed him went thither to hear his words. And it came to pass after many days there were a goodly number gathered together at the place of Mormon, to hear the words of Alma. . . . And he did teach them, and did preach unto them . . . [and he said unto them] are [ye] willing to bear one another’s burdens?” (Mosiah 18:6–8).

The 1QS: “. . . to lead and instruct them in knowledge and so give them understanding in the hidden wonders of truth in the midst of the men of the church, to walk each one blamelessly with his neighbor in all that has been revealed to them in the time of preparing the way in the wilderness, to instruct them in all that must be done at this time.”

And Alma says here at the waters of Mormon, “What have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with
him, that ye will serve him and keep his commandments?” (Mosiah 18:10). There is no mention made here of baptism for the remission of sins. It’s a witness and a covenant only, and it’s exactly the same thing at Qumran. Well, this is what it says here: “With baptism he submits his soul in all humility to every commandment of God, after which he applies himself to walking carefully in all the ways of God as he commanded him for the specific time and conditions in turning aside to the right or to the left. And then he will truly be a covenant member of God’s eternal church,” as a testimony that he has entered into a covenant to serve him, as Alma tells them. And they agree, they are “willing to bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light; . . . willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort.”

There’s this oneness. They called themselves the yah\textit{\textdagger}ad out there, which means “the oneness, the unity in everything.” And so we read in their Doctrine and Covenants, “for all shall be united in one true church, the oneness of truth and in becoming humility, and the love of mercy and fair dealing each with his neighbor, to be perfect, each in supporting his fellow, in truth and humility and love of mercy toward all.” You see the same sort of code and everything followed here.

Question: One thing I notice when I read this is that the warning before Christ had been crucified is different from that which is followed today and that which was followed after Christ came. Is that due somewhat to the difference in the nature? The words are in verse 13.

Answer: Yes, as I said, the baptism words are different. There’s no mention of the remission of sins, either. Up until long after my grandparents’ time, they baptized more than once. Every saint who came out here in the first few years got rebaptized when they got here. And the same thing with the baptisms here. It talks a great deal in the Serekh Scroll about the waters of niddah, the waters of purification, the waters of baptism, and then the waters of washing before the anointing. This was a very important thing. They would have their regular washings and anointings. These were regularly repeated, but with the baptism it was only once, and it was for entering the covenant. Once you had entered that, you were in it. It’s the same thing here. There are very close parallels. We don’t need to split hairs about these things, but it’s a stunning parallel all the way through anyway.

In chapter 18 here: “. . . as ye are desirous to come into the fold of God and be called his people, and are willing to bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light.”

“The sons of Zadok [Zadok means Melchizedek—Zadok, the righteous one] are following the patterns. The priests are the penitent ones of Israel. Those who have left the land of Judah [they are the Levites], they are the elect of Israel who shall be called up by his name in the last days [they were always referring to the last days, too; that’s another thing] and to stand witness of God at all times and in all things and in all places.” See again, we repeat the same words practically with the sacrament. They witness unto Him that they remember the covenants they’ve already made. They witness unto Him—that’s what the sacrament’s for. And they had the sacrament too the same way. There’s an appendix to the first scroll here that describes how the sacrament is, because this shall look forward to the time when the Messiah shall partake of the sacrament with them, just as we look backward to the time, and also forward to the time when he will. Whenever the Lord came after his resurrection, he broke bread, and ate with them, and had the sacrament with
them, as he does in the Book of Mormon. So it stands as a witness at all times and in all things.

The 1QS says, “... not to turn away from him out of any fear or terror of any burning [that’s persecution], that is the threat in the government of Belial, that ye may all be redeemed and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life. . . . [And he says] I was comforted amidst all the raging people gathered together, for I know that after a time thou wilt raise up the living one in the midst of thy people and a remnant of thine inheritance and purify them in purification of forgiveness for their deeds.” They talk a great deal about purification, too, naturally.

Question: What was Alma’s authority in the priesthood?

Answer: Well, he was a direct descendant of Nephi, so he had the authority; whereas, King Noah was a descendant of Zeniff who was a descendant of Zarahemla. So they were Mulekites, but Nephi was really of a priestly line of Lehi.

Question: So even when Alma was living with the king and his court he had the authority?

Answer: Yes, as we learn from the first chapter of Luke, priests were ordinary people like Zacharias and his family. Zacharias had to serve as a priest in the temple behind the veil, where only the high priests could go. He had to serve there a week every year; that was his [responsibility]. But he was just an ordinary citizen. The same thing with Lehi, but he was a man of high position, as you know, and had considerable influence in the town. He had the priesthood all right. Notice these people call themselves the sons of Zadok. Of course, that’s Melek Zadok—that’s Melchizedek, as composed of the priesthood of Aaron. In the Dead Sea Scrolls, it says these things shall be in effect until the High Priest comes who will have the priesthood of Aaron. He shall come who is a priest of Israel and Aaron. But they only had the lower priesthood; they admitted that here. And these will only be done this way until the High Priest comes. So they were looking forward to the coming of the Savior this way, and Alma was doing the same thing here.

Now [to] the fountain of pure water and the many believers. Verse 7: “After many days there were a goodly number gathered together at the place of Mormon, to hear the words of Alma. . . . And now, as ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people and are willing to bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light; Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn [very poetic, eloquent passages] . . . even in death . . . being baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that ye have entered a covenant with him . . .” Notice, it uses the language of water and pouring out. There were the waters of Niddah, the waters of pouring. And it says here, “. . . and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you.” Notice he uses the image of the water connected with the baptism. He pours out the Spirit with the baptism. No mention of sins. And notice he says in the verse 12 again, “O Lord, pour out thy Spirit upon thy servant, that he may do this work with holiness of heart. And when he had said these words, the Spirit of the Lord was upon him, and he said: Helam, I baptize thee, having authority from the Almighty God, as a testimony that ye have entered into a covenant.” That’s why he baptized him, as a testimony, but it doesn’t say for remission of sins, you notice. This is very interesting. They’re following strictly the order before the time of Christ, and this is the order we find in the Dead Sea Scrolls, “as a testimony that ye have entered into a covenant to serve him until you are dead as to the mortal body;
and may the Spirit of the Lord be poured out upon you [he refers to pouring again—this figure of pouring the Spirit, pouring the waters of baptism and dunking him in the water]; and may he grant unto you eternal life, through the redemption of Christ, whom he has prepared from the foundation of the world.” [They were] looking forward to the pre-existent, eternal, unchanging gospel that’s to be given later.

The time is already up, and I haven’t even got started on this. I wasn’t going to get slowed down on it. Well, there were 204 souls. Verse 17: “Whosoever was baptized by the power and authority of God was added to his church.” And then Alma gave the authority from God to ordain priests, and again we find this in the Dead Sea Scrolls. They divided themselves into companies of fifty, and the high priest, the Teacher of Righteousness, visited one community after another and checked up. He had them teach only what he wanted them to teach, very strictly; and Alma [also] said, [teach] only what I teach you. Verse 18: “Alma, having authority from God, ordained priests; even one priest to every fifty of their number [that was the normal class in Qumran] did he ordain to preach unto them. . . . And he commanded that they should teach nothing save it were the things which he had taught, and which had been spoken by the mouth of the holy prophets.” The opening lines of the Serekh Scroll, the first scroll that was ever found, says, this is according to all the teachings that came by the mouth of the holy prophets, which has been revealed through Moses by the hand of God and to all the holy prophets. This is what we’re going to teach, what we’re going to do [paraphrased]. So this says the same thing, “by the mouth of the holy prophets.” He uses that very same expression.

Verse 20: “Yea, even he commanded them that they should preach nothing save it were repentance and faith on the Lord.” This is the first step and the last. They’re out there to preach repentance. (Well, we’ll have to mark it here, because an interesting thing comes next.) This is an astonishing parallel. Well, we find Nephi doing the same thing. We find Jeremiah doing the same thing. We find David hiding out doing the same way with his own community, and lots of people. This is the Rechabite plan. Remember, when Jerusalem fell, it was the sons of Jonadab ben Rechab who were put in charge of the temple, the only people who could be trusted. Way back in the early days, they were the ones who went out into the desert. They made a covenant not to live in houses of stone, and they felt they must live in the desert if they were to be righteous. [Thereafter], the custom of going out and fleeing into the desert to get away from the wicked city was called the Rechabite custom after Jonadab ben Rechab and his family, which Jeremiah tells us about in the chapter 35 of Jeremiah.

Well, we’re dragging along here. But these things are so relevant, these little stories that come in here, and the parallels are so stunning. These things certainly came forth in the time of the Lord. Here they were hiding all this time. As I said, Goodenough, who was supposed to be the authority on the Old Testament and New Testament, said, “No, John didn’t write until the fourth century. There was nothing there at all because the Jews never wrote anything.” And here it was, all written down, all waiting to be discovered until the shepherd boy by the name of Mohammed Dhib [discovered them]. He was the nephew of the major domo in the house of President Barnes of American University in Damascus. Well, I stayed with President Barnes for a couple of weeks there, and the fellow who was in charge told me about it. It was his nephew, and this man was very much interested in the Pearl of Great Price. I don’t know how he got onto it. We did have missionaries in Lebanon then, but they usually went just to the Armenians. He was enamored of the Pearl of Great Price, and it was his nephew who discovered the Dead Sea Scrolls. It’s an amazing
thing, the way things hang together. I don’t know what’s going to happen yet, but the Lord has his way of doing these things.

But isn’t it interesting that the scrolls have gone under a cloud today. For ten years there was great excitement, and then all of a sudden, a damper. Jews, Christians, everybody agreed, we won’t talk about the scrolls any more. We don’t like what they say. Remember, John Allegro was one of the first to discover this. He lost his job at Oxford because he pointed out that after 1960 the scrolls were actively suppressed by both Jews and Christians. Nobody wanted them to be circulated. As a matter of fact, Joseph Fitzmeyer was here teaching. He’s the foremost Roman Catholic authority on the scrolls and teaches at Catholic University, where my daughter is now, incidentally. He taught Aramaic here one summer. There were three or four of us in the class; that’s what it amounted to. The Dead Sea Scrolls were his specialty, and Father De Vaux was in charge of them there. They had the book of Enoch and other things like that, and the Dead Sea Scrolls. And could Fitzmeyer get to see them? No, when I come near he won’t let me see any of the scrolls [he said]. Well, they were suppressing them at that time, a few years ago. They wouldn’t even let Father Fitzmeyer see them. Father De Vaux, who was the principal Catholic excavator, wouldn’t let Father Fitzmeyer see the newly discovered stuff. Oh, what I was getting at is, at that time less than five percent of the scrolls had ever been made available, had ever been published or shown to anybody. Less than five percent—that’s how popular they’ve been. You’d think people would be falling all over themselves to find out what was in these scrolls. No, they don’t like it. It’s too close to the Book of Mormon, if you ask me.
King Noah is one of the most clearly drawn characters in the Book of Mormon. He is drawn as a great artist would do it, by what he does and not by what he says. It's very subtle throughout the Book of Mormon here.

The great American historian, Freeman, says he can tell you where General Lee was and what he was doing every day between such and such years during the Civil War, but he would never dare to guess what he was thinking. But other types of authors, critics of Joseph Smith like Fawn Brodie, could never tell you exactly where Joseph Smith was or what he was doing, but they can always tell you exactly what he was thinking. No, it doesn't work that way.

But Noah is a very clearly drawn character, and note how the person behaved. We are in Mosiah 19. Alma and his people departed from the waters of Mormon. Hey, we hadn't got to the waters of Mormon, had we? There's that song at the end. I shouldn't have left out that marvelous song. We're jumping ahead, but I'm going to go back and talk about that for next time. Let's talk about King Noah now and what happened. Alma and his people ran away, and they got back to Zarahemla, so they [Noah's soldiers] weren't able to catch up with them. They searched in vain and didn't find Alma and his people. How is that possible? Well, that happens quite often. The United States Army chased Chief Joseph for three years, all over Montana. He didn't quite make it over the border, though, and they finally caught up with him (and other chiefs like Cochise). David spent a good part of his youth hiding out here and there with little groups of soldiers and retainers. There's a lot of description of how he hid in the rocks and on the heights, escaping notice. So this happens. And they searched in vain and couldn't find them [Alma's people].

Fortunately, I found some old notes, and they're not bad, so I'm going to follow them. The king's forces were not up to the task. He lost face, and the king's forces were small. They had dwindled, and they weren't able to do the job. Already because of his excesses, he had alienated a good part of the people, a small number. The forces of the king were small because there was division among the remainder of the people. He had been alienating the people with his excesses. Also, his wastefulness and extravagance had given rise to this popular unrest, and an opposition party was formed by Gideon. A little later we find out that his group actually bears his name—they're called the men of Gideon. They're referred to a number of times by that name, making it very clear who they were.

Question: Later in the Book of Mormon it mentions that Gideon had the priesthood. Do you think that Gideon was of an aristocratic family who had the priesthood and who was ousted by Noah?
Answer: Well yes, he had always been hostile, and Alma could have given it to him. It's another tradition, another party. He had always been opposed, it tells here. He was an old personal enemy of the king.

Verse 3: “And the lesser part [notice] began to breathe out threatenings against the king [ah, things are getting tough here, and the opposition party is becoming outspoken]. And now there was a man among them [the opposition party] whose name was Gideon, and he being a strong man and an enemy to the king, therefore he drew his sword, and swore in his wrath that he would slay the king” So this was a personal feud going on, and this was a real revolution, if you pronounce that you’re going to slay the king. He met him and he chased him to the top of the tower. Verse 5: “And it came to pass that he fought with the king; and when the king saw that he was about to overpower him, he fled and ran and got upon the tower which was near the temple.” Remember, it was the tower from which you could view the whole land. Notice that it’s on a small scale. He chased him through the town, and the king went up the tower with Gideon hot on his heels. Gideon pursued him right to the top, a very dramatic moment here. Verse 6: “The king cast his eyes round about towards the land of Shemlon [that means east], and behold, the army of the Lamanites were within the borders of the land.” He could even see that.

So he [Gideon] could see them, don’t worry. He could see that things were stirring on the eastern part of the country, and they were coming in from that side when he got on the high tower. I always think of Palenque when that comes in about getting on the tower.

Here’s a comment on the character of [Noah] in verse 8. The king wasn’t really interested in his people—it was his own life he wanted to save. That reflects on his character. You notice [Noah’s] greatest sin was not lechery or luxury; it was his meanness. He was a mean, petty person. He had no feelings for anybody else but a great deal for himself. It’s characteristic here of people with great power. He said, “Gideon, spare me, for the Lamanites are upon us [he uses that as the ruse, you see; it’s the enemy at the gates routine, and it was mostly to get him out of the jam], and they will destroy us; yea, they will destroy my people” (Mosiah 19:7). So Gideon gave him the benefit of the doubt. He spared him and let him go. These are interesting human relationships that go on in the Book of Mormon. And then what did he do? He said the king was concerned about his own life; that was what really concerned him. He had no appetite for fighting, notice. He had lost his nerve along with most of the army. He panicked and said, we’ll clear out of town. He ordered a general evacuation—a silly thing to do. It shows again that he’s not really a strong character at all. He did it again when they go a little further on. He ordered his soldiers with himself to leave the women and children and hightail it to save themselves. Then when he got out with them, he fled with just a company of priests to get away from them. This is the kind of man he was, and we’re going to see this all through here. Nice reflection on King Noah. So he lost his nerve along with most of the army, and in the Book of Mormon, the actions tell the story and speak for themselves. He ordered a general retreat to the wilderness, an evacuation. This is the reverse of the Rechabites, you’ll notice. He went out with his court, and especially with his priests, his immediate accomplices. They accompanied him deeper and deeper into the woods while he left more and more of the others farther and farther behind.

Today’s a marvelous day for this. What is the classic retreat to the woods from the royal court? It’s the duke in As You Like It. What happens there? His brother stirs up a revolution and trouble. He’s a treacherous character, so the good duke has to flee, and he takes his court with him. They flee to the Forest of Ardennes. I spent a winter—January
and February—in the Forest of Ardennes, and it was just as cold and had just as much snow as we have here. Fortunately, I didn’t have to go to Bastogne with the rest of the division. Just as I was warming up the jeep, there came the four-star order from Paris saying I had to go back there for reassignment. And I was sent right back where I would have been anyway because they wanted people who spoke French and German. That was Rundstedt’s last “throw of the dice,” so they sent in a lot of people in false uniforms and dressed up as civilians behind the lines. And especially they were hiding stuff in caves in the Ardennes. I visited so many caves in the Ardennes. It was marvelous because these are the oldest inhabitations in the world. It was in the dead of winter. Then when Patton came up and saved the day, I was attached to the Third Army and was there for the rest of the time, and in Luxembourg.

The point is here we were in the Ardennes, and this is where the duke is, in the Ardennes. And Shakespeare is no fool. The only way you can escape the sophistication and corruption of this thoroughly corrupt court, says the duke, is to go out into the wilderness. Well, people have that idea, but it’s impractical. Well, it was impractical. Notice, he doesn’t show the Ardennes as it’s shown in the usual production of As You Like It, as an existence à la Watteau—everybody just happy there in the green forest with the green scenery. They bring in the deer and everybody’s celebrating. The court is sitting around the fire enjoying themselves. No, none of that. It happens in the dead of winter, and it’s a miserable time. They’re all standing around shivering, and the duke in the opening scene in the forest is trying to raise their spirits. He’s trying to give them a pep talk. He says,

Now, my co-mates and brothers in exile,

[He treats them as his brothers, being very generous with them.]

Hath not old custom made this life more sweet
Than that of painted pomp? Are not these woods

[They left the peak of civilization with sophistication, ease, comfort, luxury, etc., to live out here in the woods. It’s terrible—it’s midwinter when you shiver around.]

More free from peril than the envious court?

[There’s actually a physical danger; everybody’s poisoning and bumping off people. Well, look at the trouble he had at court. Remember, Orlando? His brother has sought his life, too. He’s a member of the court, too, following Duke Frederick, and he’s after his brother Orlando’s life. And so it goes—it’s dangerous. And so he says],

Are not these woods
More free from peril than the envious court?
Here feel we but the penalty of Adam—
The seasons’ difference: as the icy fang
And churlish chiding of the winter’s wind,
Which when it bites and blows upon my body,
Even till I shrink with cold, I smile and say,
This is no flattery [what you get at court]; these are counsellors That feelingly persuade me what I am.
He has no vanity here. He has a right sense of values, but he had to come back to the dank woods. Imagine, people have been hunting in those dank woods of the Ardennes for possibly 15,000 to 20,000 years [and living] in those caves. During the war they were still running around, and the GIs used to shoot them. The reason was that they [the U.S. Army] had been dropping materials there—radios, ammunition, explosives, weapons, and things like that. We had to go flush out the caves, and there were people in them. This was the old Ardennes.

After the line, “That feelingly persuade me what I am,” we all know the lines that follow:

Sweet are the uses of adversity;
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head;
And this our life, exempt from public haunt

[You get away from the public.]

Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, Sermons in stones, and good in everything. I would not change it.

He’s trying to cheer them up. And that’s why Jaques is so downcast and says such cynical things, because everybody is standing around with the royal court and having no fun at all—standing in the snow and shivering their heads off.

The king [Noah] escapes here with his court ever deeper into the woods, and it has happened with many others. Kings do that. There’s the syech in Russian. There’s a famous story by Gogol called “Taras Bulba,” about how the people would flee to the *Syech*. Those are the big islands in the River Volga, and there they would build up their strength and their companies. Then there were the *Bagoudi* in the early Middle Ages, in the fifth and sixth centuries. All over France bands, spontaneously to support themselves in dead of winter, would come together, hide out in the woods, and form what strength they could with some leader. They’d start out plundering the country and end up building a castle. [People] had the Middle Ages upon them before they knew it. Well, you have these things happening everywhere.

It happens repeatedly through the Book of Mormon. Lehi left Jerusalem because the pressure was too great. And then Nephi left his brethren in the New World and went off by himself. Then, Mosiah left Nephi’s community after Nephi died, of course, and went out and ended up in [Zarahemla]. Then Ammon left Zarahemla and went out and tried to convert the people. So we have this process going on all the time. Then finally the Saints came west here, didn’t they? As George Albert Smith used to say, “We came west of our own free will because we had to.” We had no choice—we were driven out, like Israel in the wilderness.

So it’s God’s wandering people. A famous book was written by Erich Käsemann called *God’s Wandering People*. God’s people are always being driven out. They’re always wandering because here, as Paul says of Abraham, we are pilgrims and strangers. Here we have no abiding kingdom; don’t look for it. So I smile when I see these books called *How to Have a Happy Life* or *Secrets of Successful Living* and all that sort of tripe. Don’t fool yourself. We’re too strong on that in the Church, because this isn’t where we’re going to
have our successful living. This isn’t what we’re going for at all. It’s the eternities, and
eternity is a big thing.

Well, we go on with our story now, “And the king commanded the people that they
should flee before the Lamanites [a foolish thing to do], and he himself did go before
them, and they did flee into the wilderness, with their women and their children [Mosiah
19:9. Now I’ve fled into the wilderness and hid out more than once. In Operation Market
Garden we lost our shirts and had to run away]. And it came to pass that the Lamanites
did pursue them, and did overtake them, and began to slay them [you can’t evacuate a
whole people all at once; they catch up with them; and then the king panicked again].
Now it came to pass that the king commanded them that all the men should leave their
wives and their children, and flee before the Lamanites [still running away—what a king].
Now there were many that would not leave them [they wouldn’t do it—they wouldn’t
follow the king; he has a ruinous effect wherever he goes], but had rather stay and perish
with them. And the rest left their wives and their children and fled [so part were left
behind]. . . . Those who tarried with their wives and children caused that their fair
daughters should stand forth and plead with the Lamanites that they would not slay
them.”

Again, this is ancient custom. (Do we have anything about it here? Yes.) Those who
stayed behind had their daughters go out to meet the enemy. Well, there’s the story of
Lysistrata, the comedy of Aristophanes about how the women end the war. They go out
and plead with the other side. The men, being starved for sex, make concessions and they
settle. And there’s the story of the “Rape of the Sabine Women.” We have lots of stories
of armies being stopped in war. The German anthropologists make a great thing of
Frauraub, the robbing of brides. You had to go and steal brides outside of the tribe. That
was required of you. You were not supposed to marry within your tribe. You must steal
the brides from outside the tribe, and some Indians practice that. The Hopis still do; you
don’t marry inside your own clan. You must marry outside your clan, which is an
important and a healthy thing.

Verse 14: “And it came to pass that the Lamanites had compassion on them, for they were
charmed with the beauty of their women [this is chivalric; the Lamanites are always shown
as being barbarians, but this is a more chivalric attitude than the others]. Therefore the
Lamanites did spare their lives, and took them captives and carried them back to the land
of Nephi.” They went back with the women. That crowd went back, and they delivered up
King Noah, when they caught him, into the hands of the Lamanites and delivered up their
property. You can come back and settle again but you’ll be sharecroppers from now on.
We’ll get one-half of your crops, one-half of your gold, silver, and everything else [they
were told]. And this was a condition on which they went back and suffered. Then we have
Limhi. This is where Ammon found Limhi. They were completely enclosed. Notice this
interlacing and all this harking back. It’s very complicated [and amazing] how the author
keeps this all in order, because there are different plates being used here. Verse 16: “And
now there was one of the sons of the king among those that were taken captive, whose
name was Limhi [he is the one Ammon found, or that found Ammon].

Well, let’s see if we’re missing any gems here. Another love-hate issue surfaces, a very
interesting reflection on character, you’ll notice here. Verse 17: “And now Limhi was
desirous that his father should not be destroyed [Limhi was a righteous man, but Noah was
his father; he did the noble and right thing, even though Noah was his father, which
threatened to make him unpopular]; nevertheless, Limhi was not ignorant of the iniquities
of his father, he himself being a just man.” Even in such a cesspool there can be just men, and there are. It never gets that bad. Limhi had feelings [for his father]. He was Noah’s son, and we don’t judge people. Don’t judge people by their parents and relatives. Verse 18: “And it came to pass that Gideon sent men into the wilderness secretly, to search for the king and those that were with him.” Gideon wasn’t going to let up; he was a tough character, you know that. He pursued him all the way. Gideon still had it in for the king; he secretly continued the searching operation. He caught up with the whole royal force, except the king and his priests who had skipped on ahead again. He [the king] was always leaving his supporters in the lurch if he could get away faster. “And it came to pass that they met the people in the wilderness, all save the king and his priests.” The king and the priests were the cause of the whole trouble, so when they fled, there was no reason why the people shouldn’t go back. So they decided they’d go back again, all the rest of them.

Or would they? This is what happened; this is why the king had gone on ahead. “Now they had sworn in their hearts that they would return to the land of Nephi [so they wanted to go back; they wanted to go back to their wives and children; they didn’t want to be out here with the king]... And the king commanded them that they should not return [they had to stay with him again] and they were angry with the king, and caused that he should suffer, even unto death by fire” (Mosiah 19:20). This is the priests that went on with them. They were going to go back, and finally he commanded the last group that was with him to continue, and this had gone too far. They were going to go back, so they burned the king. This is the normal thing. It’s very interesting. Right in front of Mina Lansa’s house, the first house you come to in old Oraibi, you see the four holes in the ground. They are still there from the year 1768. I think it was 1768 when a new group of priests was imposed on the Hopis by the Spanish, and they ruled very cruelly. They had one leader. They enslaved the people, actually, but they [the Hopis] didn’t put up with it for long. And then when they started playing around with the women, that did it. This was the place where they set up a gibbet and burned them. They burned the chief that came with the Spaniards, and they burned the priests—that was a way to get rid of them. So they still have this custom of burning the people they don’t like. The Spanish were tyrannical from way back when Cabeza de Vaca came over. The Hopis always had a rough time with the Spanish, but that was the final solution. After that, they never came back.

So this is what they did. They burned the king, and then they fled by themselves without the king. “And it came to pass that they were about to return to the land of Nephi, and they met the men of Gideon.” Once they got rid of the king, everybody wanted to go back home to the land of Nephi. But was it safe? They’d have to go back under these conditions, that they share, because of what they’d done. They went back to the land of Nephi, and on their way back who should they meet but the men of Gideon. And notice the men of Gideon is definitely a title here. It’s referred to four times all of a sudden. We find in verse 24 that Gideon wasn’t present with them. They weren’t called the men of Gideon because they were his company. He was back home, and they called themselves the men of Gideon. So it was a regular party now. (I guess we should capitalize it.) “They met the men of Gideon. And the men of Gideon told them of all that had happened to their wives and their children; and that the Lamanites had granted unto them that they might possess the land by paying a tribute to the Lamanites of one half of all they possessed [so they explained the situation back home to them]. And the people told the men of Gideon that they had slain the king, and his priests had fled from them farther into the wilderness.” This was the rest of the company that went. The priests went on ahead after they got rid of the king. So the priests were the ones who were off in the woods by themselves, and they really did some mischief.
Verse 24: “And it came to pass that after they had ended the ceremony, that they returned to the land of Nephi.” This is a very interesting thing here—what ceremony, you immediately ask? Notice the men of Gideon—we’re going to find out about them here. The term men of Gideon is used three times in these two verses like a title. Gideon’s followers, as might be expected, had formed a party around the old reliable fire-eater. Gideon was not with them, as we learn in verse 24. They were a special party or alliance to bear the name even in his absence, the party of Gideon. He’d been going right from the beginning, too. Now the 24th verse: “And it came to pass that after they had ended the ceremony, that they returned to the land of Nephi.” Now what ceremony is mentioned in verse 24? Well, it’s very clear. Remember these people had left the town, and Gideon had come to catch up with them and punish their leader. Gideon couldn’t leave Noah alone—he was on his heels all the time.

So they were hostile parties who were opposed to each other. One was the refugees, and the other was the avenging party following them, so they were hostile. They couldn’t go back home together until they had settled, smoked the peace pipe, and had the ceremony. You have to have a ceremony before you can reach peace with a hostile group. You either fight them or have the ceremony, so that’s what they did. They had a peace ceremony. They always have that, but this is putting it so casually, as if Joseph Smith knew exactly what he was saying. They carried out certain rites of reconciliation here, which is very common and has to be done, as far as that goes. It’s unthinkable to omit it. Then they went back and told Gideon himself all that they told the men of Gideon about the king, his old rival. Then Limhi and the Lamanite king both agreed and swore to the treaty. Limhi hadn’t left; they’d been out with Gideon’s people. They swore to the treaty under which the Nephites would settle down as wards of the Lamanites, completely surrounded by them. This was the condition that Ammon found them in. And the treaty was respected on both sides for two years, as we learn in verse 29, but it had the seeds of conflict in it.

Incidentally, I should have noted something at the beginning of this chapter here. Chapters 15 and 16 are the doctrinal chapters of Abinadi, and then 17 and 18 describe Alma’s community in the wilderness by the waters of Mormon as an idyllic setting. There’s an existence à la Watteau; there’s the forest of Ardennes. But these chapters, from 19 on, are the most enlightening of all. After the description of the Church, the subject here is how to deal with your enemies. Many interesting test cases are presented here for our profit and learning on how to deal with your enemies. They’re dealing with enemies here. Notice this settlement we’ve just mentioned. They made their peace. After the ceremony, they were all ready to go back home and be happy together, but they were still dealing with them. Then Limhi was under very close guard by the Lamanite king. You’ll notice in verse 28 that the Lamanite king was taking no chances; he’d had experience. He sent out inspection teams to insure compliance. He’d the king of the Lamanites set guards round about the land.” He’s going to watch to make sure they keep the treaty now that they’ve made it. It shows various ways of dealing with enemies, various degrees.

Now in the next chapter it breaks into a real cold war. Two years was all they could take of this; the pressure was too great on them. After they made an oath and paid a tribute of one half, “the king of the Lamanites set guards round about the land, that he might keep the people of Limhi in the land, that they might not depart into the wilderness [he was going to keep them here; they had been fooled too many times; this departing into the wilderness had been routine]; and he did support his guards out of the tribute which he did
receive from the Nephites.” So the tributes they paid went to support the guards that watched over them, a very normal operation. You’ve got to pay for them somehow. All right, we collect half the Nephites’ crops, and that pays for the guards. Verse 29: “And now king Limhi did have continual peace in his kingdom for the space of two years, that the Lamanites did not molest them nor seek to destroy them.” It was profitable to them, but it wasn’t very pleasant for the Nephites. So what are they going to do?

More dealing with your enemies in chapter 20. “Now there was a place in Shemlon where the daughters of the Lamanites did gather themselves together to sing, and to dance, and to make themselves merry.” Now this reminds us of all sorts of things. Notice, there was a particular place to sing and dance and make themselves merry. At the end of the year, after all the formal dances have taken place, then the girls among the Hopis have three dances. These are fun dances. They are for relaxation more than anything, but they are still very ritually conditioned. They go out to the desert alone by themselves to celebrate. They go to a big black rock that has a lot of bumps in it, and these bumps are supposed to have significance. The Lakon and the Marawu are the most important. The Owaglt is the basket dance that comes at the end. In each of these three dances the preceding rites are the most important. They divide into four groups under four maidens. Each one has a different color, and they represent different directions. They have competitions, they run races among themselves, and things like that. All the rites and ordinances have to do with two things here. This is play, this is just for fun. The whole tribe doesn’t enter into this. As it says here, the girls go out to a particular place to make themselves merry. That’s exactly what they’re doing. And the reason I’m emphasizing this is that we’re going to see exactly the same thing in the Old World, and our ancestors doing exactly the same thing in England. If you go through the four volumes of Grimm, of which I’m the proud possessor (I got the whole thing for four bucks many years ago), you’ll find hundreds of instances of it happening on the continent in the nineteenth century. These are very ancient rites, and they’re universal. We get that very interesting problem of why they are universal and why they are so much alike. In the first dance, the lakon, they make a big cloud pattern on the ground with meal, and then they throw little corn images wrapped in cornhusks at it. They try to hit it, and this represents both rain coming from the clouds and the wind. They get things going. In all of them they scatter things. In the basket dance they give away baskets free. But in between them they give away food. Everything has to do with rain, weather, and food. If you live in the sand and have nothing, you depend on the rain. Remember, there’s not a running stream on the whole reservation, so they depend on the rain. They say that’s a blessing that God sends them there because they must always depend on it. No matter how hard they work or what they do, they cannot guarantee success in this world. Don’t think that hard work will do it. It won’t. No people worked as hard as the Hopis. In some years, the stuff just won’t grow. But if they do these things, the food will grow. This is a very important thing, too. They time them by the rising of the Pleides, and these rites take place at dawn. That’s very important to have these contests done by the Pleides.

Now we go to the oldest Greek songs, Alcman’s poems. Alcman, a very early poet writing in Sparta before the days when Sparta degenerated into a military state, wrote the maiden songs, which still survive. The girls were divided into two companies, and they would have a foot race at dawn. One group is called the Pleides, or the doves. There’s a passage in Aeschylus where he says they are also the Pleides, which means the doves. They had a foot race at dawn in order to elect the queen, and they had a beauty contest. They formed in antiphonals on either side and sing to each other. There had to be twelve on either side. And I notice here [Mosiah 20:5] that it says specifically there were twenty-four maidens
when they caught them out by themselves. They also had to time themselves by the moon. As you know, the women always follow the moon, and there are twelve months in the year. Once a year they held this for the year rite. This was at the end of the year, right at the end when they have to guarantee food and succession for the new year. It’s the same thing whether it’s with the Hopis or Greeks way back there—it makes no difference. They run and have this beauty contest, and one side says, “Hagussicora’s hair is of spun gold,” and the other says, “I am black but comely.” You get the very same things in the Songs of Solomon. In Solomon’s love song they have the contest where they say, “I am black but comely.” They’re competing for the hand of the king, for David. They say “Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands” (1 Samuel 18:7). They were having a contest, too. All of these contests are very ancient. But here [among the Hopis] they are competing to choose the queen for the year, while the big rites are to be held later. They do the same thing. They [the rites] have to do with the sowing and with the weather and all that sort of thing. They sing these songs.

Now we come back to Shakespeare, and this is one I like, too. Remember what Titania says? This takes us way back to the early days, but these things were still being practiced. [Henry] John Feasey wrote a very good book on English Easter ceremonies, because Easter is much older than Christianity, and this was in England. Titania [A Midsummer Night’s Dream, act II, scene 2] is talking about the equinox and the solstice:

And never, since the middle summer’s spring,
Met we on hill, in dale, forest, or mead,
By paved fountain, or by rushy brook,
Or on the beached margent of the sea [the women go out here],
To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind.

[I was just looking at some photographs last hour of the lakon dance. They are always in a ring, and there are always twelve. They throw away the baskets with the food on them.]

But with thy brawls thou hast disturb’d our sport.

[They’re out there to disport themselves, and the men have come and bothered them.]

Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,
As in revenge, have suck’d up from the sea
Contagious fogs; which, falling in the land,
Have every pelting river made so proud
That they have overborne their continents:
The ox hath therefore stretch’d his yoke in vain,

[They’re not getting any crops because they’ve stopped the rites, so the ox has therefore stretched his yoke in vain.]

The ploughman lost his sweat; and the green corn
Hath rotted ere his youth attain’d a beard:

[See, the crops are rotten. Nothing happens if they don’t do these things right. They call themselves the corn maidens in this dance, and the corn has rotted.]

The fold stands empty in the drowned field.

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[The field has drowned, there are no crops, and there are no flocks anymore.]

And crows are fatted with the murrain flock;

They’ve got the disease, murrain, of the flocks, and the crows are fattening on them. Now this is a very important thing because it refers to the very oldest rites. This goes right back to paleolithic times. You find these designs on cave walls everywhere. It’s the Troy game, and I made quite a study of it once because the Romans made a big thing of it. It’s very old. They took it back to Troy, etc. That’s these designs with the maize. So Titania says:

The nine men’s morris is fill’d up with mud.

That’s where the men dance the ring dance; it’s the Mars dance. Morris is Mars. It’s the same thing, and it’s very old. In the North they don’t have the seven. It’s nine they emphasize, and they dance these ring dances.

And the quaint mazes in the wanton green,
For lack of tread, are undistinguishable:

They’ve grown over. They’re not using the mazes any more, which they should use. In the maze, you see, you get back to the center of the underworld. Then the sun emerges again, and you emerge again. A resurrection is what the maze signifies. It’s a universal rite throughout the world.

The human mortals want their winter here;
No night is now with hymn or carol blest:

See, hymns and carols belong to the Christmas season, the turn of the year, and to Eastertime. With these solar festivals, the whole thing is to assure the crops. It’s not the water they’re after. They get too much water, these people in England. The Hopis have to have more water and less sun. These people have to get less water and more sun, and this is what’s worrying them.

Therefore the moon, the governess of floods,
Pale in her anger, washes all the air,

[Those are magnificent lines; this is all women’s rites.]

That rheumatic diseases do abound:

[The human race is afflicted. Everything is sick. Nothing is working here.]

The seasons alter: hoary-headed frosts
Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose;
And on old Hyem’s chin and icy crown
An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
Is, as in mockery, set: the spring, the summer,
The childing autumn, angry winter, change
Their wonted liveryes; and the maz’d world,
By their increase, now knows not which is which:
It shows everything is cockeyed now. “Hoary-headed frosts fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose.” When it should be spring, we get frost. When it should be winter “an odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds is, as in mockery, set.” In the early spring everything blossoms out. That’s what’s happened in the East this year. Everything was 70 and 80 degrees a week or so ago, and then all of a sudden—whammo. This is what hits them. The seasons alter, and we shouldn’t be having these summer buds in the middle of winter. “And this same progeny of evils comes from our debate.” This is what brings it up—when men quarrel, when they do not cooperate, when there’s a fight between them, this is what happens.

And this same progeny of evils comes
From our debate, from our dissention:
We are their parents and original.

[We started all these things. It’s the same thing.]  

In one of the last verses of the Bible, just before you get to Malachi, they’re told the very same thing. I mean these rites are very common among the Jews. And it says here in Zechariah 14:16: “And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts [the lord of hosts, Adonai Šebā’ôt, which means the gathering of the people; it doesn’t mean the military host; it means the general assembly of everybody] and to keep the feast of tabernacles.”

See, when they came there, it was a natural feast. It had to be in the desert. Remember, the tabernacle was a temporary tent thrown together of green boughs or anything you can get. It tells us that its purpose was to shelter you from the sun in the daytime and the rain and the weather because you’re out in the open. “Thou shalt not celebrate the Passover within thy gate.” You have to come as a pilgrim and you have to live outside, and this is in the desert. Remember, Moses asked Pharaoh [to let them go] and said, we cannot celebrate the Passover at home. We must go out in the desert to celebrate it there [paraphrased]. Pharaoh didn’t want to let them go, but they had to go. That’s why he said, because this is the festival of the Lord, we have to go out to the desert to do it.

We have the same thing here [in Zechariah]. It’s the feast of the tabernacles, and everybody has to come. And what happens if you don’t come? Then he says “And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain.” Zechariah 14:15: “And so shall be the plague of the horse, of the mule, of the camel, and of the ass, and of all the beasts that shall be in these tents, as this plague.” If you don’t come to do this, you’ll not get any rain. So they were doing the same things as our ancestors were doing in England quite recently, and as the Hopis do today, and as these maidens are doing here. It’s the very same thing.

Now, what is the rationale of this? These things are much too close together to be accidental. I mean the same number of maidens doing the same number of things, having the same types of songs. I would say the purpose is to keep the people acting together in one purpose with one mind in a community. Remember, these people were struggling for existence. Back to the Hopis again. They live on the margin of nothing, nothing but dry
sand to live on. Yet they’ve kept going, and this is what’s kept them going. Everybody’s tried to undermine them, and they’ve still kept going. They’re the only people in the world who still do this exactly as it should be done from the beginning, and at what a cost, because they are the poorest people on earth. Well, anyway, it focuses their minds on these things, on dependence on the Creator. They say, “We have no streams, no irrigation, nothing like that. We push the corn in the sand and hope it will grow. That’s all we have to pray to God about. And they always talk about God. They don’t talk about the gods or the demons. They don’t have anything like that. It is the Lord.

We find this later on in the Book of Mormon. When Ammon is preaching, he says to the king, "Do you believe in the Great Spirit?"

And he says, “Yes, we believe in the Great Spirit.”

And Ammon says, “That’s God—the same God we believe in.” So don’t think we’re dealing with wild pagans here.

But this is very necessary here. It keeps the common interest in survival. It’s to plan and complete the common enterprises that have to be done. It’s to give beauty and variety to the scene—to banish boredom and monotony in what would otherwise be a very dull existence. But remember, as the duke says, this is much more interesting than life in the painted pomp and dangerous jealousy of the court, if you have a choice between them. This is pretty hard, but I would not change this life [he says]. See, his people all want to go back, of course, just as they do here. They want to go back where it’s easier. So it [the dancing] does that, too. It prevents this boredom and monotony. It’s always interesting, always exciting, always fun. It’s a completely stable and reliable way of life which could be repetitious and dull—[most Americans think it’s dull] unless you are expanding and acquisitive. Unless the stock market is going up, we panic, but you can’t go on doing that forever. But how can these people stand it out there living life like that? Well, I love to go down there just to enjoy myself. Everybody enjoys themselves with these dances; that’s why they don’t miss them. You would think that old people who have seen them hundreds of times wouldn’t bother to go. Oh, no. Nobody ever misses them, regardless of the weather.

These [Lamanite] girls were out there [dancing]. The discredited priests of Noah were afraid to go home, and they watched a small company of the girls. If a man watches these rites, he’s [supposed to be] struck blind. Well, there’s a very famous case in Egypt where a man was struck blind for doing this very thing. Or he could be struck dead, like Actaeon. He saw Diana (Artemis) and her maidens. He was out hunting and accidentally blundered on the place in the woods where the maidens were dancing. She turned his own dogs against him and they tore him to pieces because he was not supposed to be there. Well, these priests were also not to be snooping there. But you know what they had in mind, and they watched the daughters of the Lamanites. It says there were twenty-four of them, which is very interesting, there you have your double row, your antiphonal with twelve on each side. They had to have a contest, you see, with one girl for each month of the year, or each moon—these moon maidens. All these things go together in a very interesting way. “And when there were but few of them gathered together to dance, they came forth out of their secret places and took them and carried them into the wilderness; yea, twenty and four daughters of the Lamanites they carried into the wilderness.” This is plundering, which used to be a common thing, according to an anthropologist at Berkeley. They used
to teach that the bridal veil came from that. You had to catch your bride, and so you went and threw a net over her. That was the bridal veil, the net you threw over her to catch her.

When they found out that their daughters were missing and didn’t come home, they thought naturally it was the people of Limhi that had fled out there from the town—they hadn’t all come back, and that they had done this. Now we have a very interesting business on how to deal with a very touchy, dangerous situation. Notice how well the leaders, Limhi and the Lamanite king, handled it. This is what happened: “And now Limhi had discovered them from the tower, even all their preparations for war did he discover [like the glistening goggles that I was talking about; I mean, if that dark thing disturbs the peace of our celebration here, you can see what all this shining metal would do in the woods]; therefore he gathered his people together, and laid wait for them in the fields and in the forests [so that’s what the terrain was, and he was going to catch them]. . . . The people of Limhi began to fall upon them from their waiting places, and began to slay them. And it came to pass that the battle became exceedingly sore, for they fought like lions for their prey” (Mosiah 20:8–10). And they won—they fought like dragons. That’s a very interesting thing that it uses the word *dragons* here. There was this surprising ferocity. You wouldn’t think *dragons*, a concept from the Old World, would be found among these people, but it is. The one-horn and the two-horn societies get themselves up as savagely as possible, and you know in Central America this is common. The warrior phratries, every one of them, had monsters for their emblems, and they wore the mask. You see this on the vase paintings and the murals, etc. They wore these monster masks for emblems, and there was nothing more popular than the snake with the horns and all the rest. The dragons, and other monsters appear there. So it says they fought like dragons. The Lamanites must have been pretty spectacularly gotten up. They did these things later on, even more so.

There was a great deal of slaughter with their warrior castes. Verse 12: “And it came to pass that they found the king of the Lamanites among the number of their dead [they thought he was dead but he was only wounded]. . . . And they took him and bound up his wounds, and brought him before Limhi.” Well, that was the right thing to do, of course. And then what happened? They brought him for execution and said, “Let us slay him.” But you notice Limhi was a very sensible person. He was tolerant of his own father, because there was nothing much he could do about it. Being that kind of a person, his father was going to go on doing it. But he did what he thought was right because he was a righteous man. Here again, they all came saying, hurray, hurray, we’ve won; let’s put the king to death—which is the thing you do. That’s what *checkmate* is—“the king is dead.” In all Semitic languages, and especially Egyptian, *mat* means *dead*. *Checkmate* means “the king is dead,” when you win the game. We’ve won the game; let’s kill the king. But Limhi said, no. “Ye shall not slay him, but bring him hither that I may see him [and they question him]. . . . What cause have ye to come up to war against my people? [what are you fighting for, anyway?] Behold, my people have not broken the oath that I made unto you [but they thought they had broken the oath]; therefore, why should ye break the oath that ye made unto my people?” You broke your oath, we didn’t break ours—the usual charges.

Verse 15: “And now the king said I have broken the oath because thy people did carry away the daughters of my people; therefore, in my anger I did cause my people to come up to war against thy people.” Limhi had heard nothing concerning this. He didn’t know anything about this breaking of the oath, because it was the priests who had done it, not his people. So he said, “I will search among my people, and whosoever has done this thing shall perish.” I’ll launch a thorough investigation, he says in verse 16. This is not the usual
reaction. The usual reaction would be “boys will be boys.” Following lots of atrocities, we can just say “boys will be boys,” but he’s going to see that this is done. I could a tale unfold here. And if it was done on our side, it was all right. There were terrible things done, worse than the Germans did, but that was all right.

Verse 17: “Now when Gideon had heard these things, he being the king’s captain . . .” He was there when they had brought the captive king up there; naturally the chief military man had to be present for consultation. So he said, hey, we know who did that, remember? Don’t search this people; go out and look for the priests of thy father [paraphrased]. Now there’s a very interesting rhetorical device used here. It tells us what the word is here. In Arabic, for example, and in Hebrew less, you cannot begin a sentence cold. You just can’t say “he went into the house” or “there was a house on the hill.” You have to begin with hinneh, behold. Behold, this happened, whether it’s a nominal sentence or a verbal sentence. You begin with hinneh or behold, or it is so. But in urgent cases you have to introduce what you’re saying by an excitement word. In Egyptian you have to use it before every sentence. In this case it would be wn in. And notice the way he builds up here. The way it’s translated here is behold. He says in verse 18: “For do ye not remember the priests of thy father whom this people sought to destroy? [he gets more excited about it]. And are they not in the wilderness? And are not they the ones who have stolen the daughters of the Lamanites? And now behold, and tell is redundant, but it’s used three times in this sentence: “And now, behold, and tell the king of these things, that he may tell his people that they may be pacified towards us; for behold they are already preparing to come against us; and behold also there are but few of us. And behold, they come with their numerous hosts” (Mosiah 20:19–20). See, he builds up the climax and excitement; he says we’ve got to act quickly here. It’s just like it came to his mind in a flash. He knows who it was now, so he uses this series of beholds, which are very Semitic, very eloquent, and very necessary. Anybody could see that. Joseph Smith knew this very well, of course [speaking ironically].

Verse 20: “And behold, they come with their numerous hosts; and except the king doth pacify them toward us we must perish [you’ve got to do something]. For are not the words of Abinadi fulfilled, which he prophesied against us—and all this because we would not hearken unto the words of the Lord and turn from our iniquities?” All this progeny of evil comes of us, from our debate, from our dissension. It always comes back to our own guilt. Here we are, having come full circle here.

I find the Book of Mormon quite convincing; somebody did an awfully good job on it. But, of course, you can’t stay to listen to this—the usual thing for critics of the Book of Mormon. They ask a perfectly logical and reasonable question, let’s say about horses or something, and then they leave the room. They won’t wait for an answer. If they were honest about asking the question, they would use every means they could to answer the question, but they don’t. We know they [early inhabitants of the Americas] came by Alaska; they came by the north side [critics say], but that’s the only place they ever think of. Hrdlicka spent all his life trying to prove it and failed. Of course, they came that way. The Hopis called that “the back door.” Many people came by the back door, they say, but it’s not the way the Lord sent them. There are other people. The Navajos came in the eighth century by the back door, speaking another language. They overran the Hopis, and there have been very great pressures on them ever since. But although they came by the back door, there’s no reason why that’s the only way people had to come. There are plenty of Mongolian types among them, but they’re by no means the only types.
It’s nice to be provided with a handbook and a syllabus and something that has all the answers in it under one cover. It’s just a marvelous book to have—all this editing and so forth. We might ask, why did they put this part in? This isn’t doctrine. What’s it doing in here? Ah, it is doctrine. It tells us how to get along with each other—which we need today.

Question: Why do you think that Limhi became king after his father was deposed instead of Gideon seizing power?

Answer: He didn’t seize power. It was the Lamanites that made him king; they put him in. The Lamanites trusted him, and he was a man you could trust. He was reliable. You’ll notice he had this agreement all along with the Lamanite king, and that’s why he was in. Gideon was a fire-eater. He was chasing around anyway. He was too busy getting rid of Noah.

Question: Are you saying that if the Lamanite king hadn’t put Limhi in charge, Gideon might have become king and seized power?

Answer: Yes, if he had seized power. He was a revolutionary and had already chased the king out with a sword. He was not necessarily ambitious, but he had a thing for Noah—one of these classic feuds.
We are on chapters 20 and 21 of Mosiah, on the important subject of how to deal with an enemy in just about every situation that comes up. It’s marvelous how these things are analyzed here. You get the impression that it really was carefully edited. You notice in Mosiah 20:6 that the Lamanites were literally up in arms when the girls had been missing and failed to show up. Limhi saw their preparations from the tower; we saw how a little glitter was enough to give it all away. Their dealing with the enemy was a general ambush. They were greatly outnumbered, etc. The general ambush is sometimes very effective; there have been some “beauties.” [One of] the best, I suppose, was Zhukov’s ambushing of Paulus’s sixth army. The entire sixth army was ambushed. It surprised the daylights out of them, but not as bad as we were surprised in the Bulge.

They [Limhi’s people] fought like dragons. Then the Lamanite king was wounded and brought in. They immediately wanted to put him to death because of what he had caused them. Limhi said, nothing doing; let’s find out what’s going on first. He asked reasonable questions; there was no threatening or bullying or righteous indignation here. Then King Laman explained why: We didn’t break our oath, but you did. You stole those girls. Limhi’s reaction was not “boys will be boys” at all. He said, well, let’s find out who did it and they will be severely punished. He immediately launched a full scale investigation to find out who to punish, but old Gideon was at hand. He was the one who had kept check on Noah’s crowd, as you know. Although he wasn’t there, the men of Gideon had made contact and reported to him about these hiding priests out there in the “sticks.” So Gideon said, don’t blame your own people until you have checked on your father’s immoral priests loose in the jungle. We’d better explain them to the Lamanites in a hurry. Then we get this urgent speech, where he goes “Behold, behold, or hinneh.

Verse 19: “And now, behold, and tell the king of these things, that he may tell his people that they may be pacified towards us; for behold they are already preparing to come against us; and behold also there are but few of us [we are in a bad fix]. And behold, they come with their numerous hosts; and except the king doth pacify them towards us we must perish. For are not the words of Abinadi fulfilled, which he prophesied against us [now this is the old fire-eater Gideon speaking; he’s a great patriot, but he says, it’s our blame—we are responsible. ‘We are their author and original,’ as Titania says]—and all this because we would not hearken unto the words of the Lord, and turn from our iniquities? And now let us pacify the king, and we fulfil the oath which we have made unto him.” Notice that he is being very realistic; these are the steps by which the problem is solved here. It’s a very touchy thing, but they solve the problem very sensibly on both sides—a thing people rarely do. He’s being a realist, of all people. Where’s your Patrick Henry? He says, “For it is better that we should be in bondage than that we should lose our lives [well, that’s a terrible thing to say; we have ‘sooner dead than red’ and all that
sort of thing, our slogans that never get any farther than slogans]; therefore, let us put a stop to the shedding of so much blood.”

Gideon is the last man you would expect to do this. But he had the experience of these things, and he knew. It’s the old commander that knows. The most passionate talks I’ve ever heard against war in the Army have been by generals, without any exception. They know what it is, and boy do they light in! There were some wonderful ones by Omar Bradley, Max Taylor, and others. Eisenhower said some pretty strong things, too. “Therefore, let us put a stop to the shedding of so much blood,” Gideon said, with his rush of excitement. This is the Gideon who chased the king up the tower with a sword, and all that sort of thing. He is the one who is making a plea to put an end to all this bloodshed, whatever they do.

Limhi explained that the priests in the wilderness were the most likely kidnappers. Notice that Limhi took the blame for his father’s behavior, and the king was pacified. Everybody did the sensible thing, and Limhi was a realist. Verse 22: “For it is better that we should be in bondage than that we should lose our lives; therefore, let us put a stop to the shedding of so much blood.” Then Limhi had the courtesy to explain everything to the Lamanite king. Then instead of standing tall the king humiliated himself. The Lamanite king humiliated himself before his own people to plead for the enemy. Can we imagine doing such a thing today as that? Both sides were being very reasonable, and they solved their problem that way. Verse 24: “The king was pacified toward his people; and he said unto them: Let us go forth to meet my people, without arms; and I swear unto you with an oath that my people shall not slay thy people. And it came to pass that they followed the king, and went forth without arms to meet the Lamanites. And it came to pass that they did meet the Lamanites; and the king of the Lamanites did bow himself down before them, and did plead in behalf of the people of Limhi.”

There’s none of your standing tall here and refusing to make concessions. Then there is the most important element of all—the humanity of it. “And when the Lamanites saw the people of Limhi, that they were without arms, they had compassion on them and were pacified towards them.” You have to have the humanity, too, and that solves it. It’s going to appear a number of times here that the Lamanites were always more merciful than the Nephites when they had the upper hand; it’s a very interesting thing. The Indians will still spare the whites, and not the other way around. I have some wonderful things on that. The Lamanites “returned with their king in peace to their own land.” Now that’s a happy solution to what could have been a long and nasty war, but they were pretty fed up on that by now. Then things were back to normal, but there was still human nature. It only lasted for two years, and the people got restless again. It was an unstable situation. The Lamanites resented the prosperous, defeated Nephites again. They resented them, just as we resent the prosperous, defeated Japanese and Germans. After being beaten, they ran circles around us in the things we excel at, namely making money. It’s the same thing here. The Lamanites had always been nervous about these industrious Nephites. They brought the Nephites there in the first place so they would cultivate the land. The country was run down in that particular area, so they let them come in. It was a trick the king played. This man’s father played this trick on them to get them to settle there. Then they really began to prosper, and it made the Lamanites worried. So that began to happen again.

“After many days the Lamanites began again to be stirred up in anger against the Nephites, and they began to come into the borders of the land round about” (Mosiah
They started harassing; that’s the way it starts. They couldn’t kill them because they had made an oath to King Limhi. (Isn’t that nice they observed their oaths? We observe oaths, too, as long as it is convenient. Our treaties with the Indians, for example; there are some “beauties.”) But they did bother them and do what Indians would do. They were brutal. They would hit them in the face, boss them around, and then “put heavy burdens upon their backs, and drive them as they would a dumb ass.” That was the prophecy—they started bullying them. “Yea, all this was done that the word of the Lord might be fulfilled.” They had brought it on themselves.

This should cause us concern here. This is not a blessed land unconditionally. The promise is the same for every people that shall inhabit the promised land. I’m going to read chapter 2 of Ether on that, which is very good. That’s getting slightly ahead of the game, as you’ll see. But this is what the promise is. Notice that these people have been good for a long time. They’ve been valiant and saved themselves, but the time isn’t up. They still have to pay a price here. So we have this situation. “And he had sworn in his wrath unto the brother of Jared, that whoso should possess this land of promise, from that time henceforth and forever, should serve him, the true and only God, or they should be swept off when the fulness of his wrath should come upon them” (Ether 2:8). Until then everything is [apparently] fine; it’s business as usual, as it was in the days of Noah. They bought and sold, gave in marriage, ate and drank. They did all the normal things, and then suddenly it hit them. That’s what the Lord says it’s going to be like. “And now, we can behold the decrees of God concerning this land, that it is a land of promise; and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall serve God, or they shall be swept off when the fulness of his wrath shall come upon them. And the fulness of his wrath cometh upon them when they are ripened in iniquity” (Ether 2:9). Notice fulness and ripened. When the cup is full, you can’t add anything else. You can’t dilute it or do anything about it. And when the fruit is ripe, if you let it go on ripening, it will just get rotten. So when the fruit is ripe, it is plucked. But he waits until it is ripe, and he waits until the cup is full. How soon is it going to be full now? You see things going on.

Again he repeats it the third time in verse 10: “For behold, this is a land which is choice above all other lands [true]; wherefore he that doth possess it shall serve God or shall be swept off; for it is the everlasting decree of God. And it is not until the fulness of iniquity among the children of the land, that they are swept off [so he’s going to let them go all the way; this is a very interesting pattern]. And this cometh unto you, O ye Gentiles, that ye may know the decrees of God—that ye may repent and not continue in your iniquities [the assumption here is that they are wicked] until the fulness come, that ye may not bring down the fulness of the wrath of God upon you as the inhabitants of the land have hitherto done. Behold, this is a choice land, and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall be free from bondage, and from captivity, and from all other nations under heaven, if they will but serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ, who hath been manifested by the things which we have written.”

That’s the condition, and it’s a very close thing in that case. You have to do more than we are doing if you are going to serve the God of this land. It’s very clearly stated there the way it happens, and it happens all of a sudden. Notice that this is unique. They are still writing all sorts of studies about the disappearance of the Toltecs, the Mayans, the Aztecs, etc. There are some theories, but nobody has the vaguest idea why they disappeared. The point is that we have ruins and we have remnants of people, some Aztecs and especially Mayans. Everywhere we have the scattered remnants of these [civilizations] after they have broken up, but the civilizations have gone completely. But in the Old World
doesn’t happen that way at all. The people sin and go on sinning. They suffer and pay for it, but it’s a going concern. They pay as they go. The Greeks, the Arabs, the Chinese, the Hindus, the Egyptians were ancient civilizations when Lehi left Jerusalem, and they are still there. Their languages, customs, and everything are still there; they were not swept off. But what they suffer and go through! The Russians, for example—suffer, suffer, suffer—like the Moscow Art Theatre. They have to go through that, but we don’t. It’s different here—we prosper. We are powerful, free, and everything else. Then we take advantage of that and start misbehaving. It’s a hard test. Who can stand prosperity? Nobody has stood it yet, as we see in the Book of Mormon. Why does this [the Book of Mormon] come to us? All the others have fouled up, but we never shall! In that case, why have such pains been taken to give us the warning? Not that we will be saved, but, as the Lord says, “that they may be left without excuse” when they get hit. We can’t complain that we didn’t hear it.

Now here, for example, with their advantage and after fighting like dragons, they are going to do the thing again. But they don’t pull it off at all. “And now the afflictions of the Nephites were great [they couldn’t stand it very much longer], and there was no way that they could deliver themselves out of their hands, for the Lamanites had surrounded them on every side [as I said, they were in a trap, an enclave]. . . . The people began to murmur with the king because of their afflictions; and they began to be desirous to go against them to battle” (Mosiah 21:5–6). They said, we’re not going to stand this anymore. They kept pestering the king until he couldn’t take it anymore. Notice verse 6: “And they did afflict the king sorely with their complaints; therefore he granted unto them that they should do according to their desires.” All right go against them; fight like dragons and see what happens this time. “And they gathered themselves together again, and put on their armor, and went forth against the Lamanites to drive them out of their land [it didn’t happen at all]. . . . The Lamanites did beat them, and drove them back, and slew many of them. And now there was a great mourning and lamentation among the people of Limhi. . . . Now there were a great many widows in the land [the widows started raising a rumpus and stirring up patriotic fervor], and they did cry mightily from day to day, for a great fear of the Lamanites had come upon them [we’ve got to do something about it] . . . their continual cries did stir up the remainder of the people of Limhi [and himself] to anger against the Lamanites [they said, all right we’ll go out and do it this time]; and they went again to battle, but they were driven back again, suffering much loss.”

They were beaten again. Well, how long can this go on? Verse 12: “Yea, they went again even the third time, and suffered in the like manner.” So the Lord said, have you learned your lesson? You’re not going to take it by force. It’s not going to be done that way [paraphrased]. So three vain attempts to free themselves by war were not the answer. God is in charge of these things. So what happened? They did the very opposite of marching forth in their might. “And they did humble themselves even to the dust, subjecting themselves to the yoke of bondage [not just to the Lord, but to the Lamanites, their enemies], submitting themselves to be smitten, and to be driven to and fro, and burdened, according to the desires of their enemies.” You can’t go lower than that. But the point here is this: Was their spirit completely broken? No, God doesn’t break anyone’s spirit. To be humble before him is only to be honest. Everyone must be humble before something. This is a very interesting thing. In the first volume of Miller’s great work on Islam, he talks about the ferocious khans of the Steppes, who ruled the universe. I mean they were the cosmoocrators. They ruled everything with blood in absolute power—the grand khans, Kublai Khan and Genghis Khan, etc. They accepted Islam eagerly so that
they would have a god, someone before whom they could be humble without losing face. They couldn’t be humble before anyone without losing face, but you can be humble before God without losing face.

The Book of Mormon tells us in Ether, the brother of Jared said, God talked to me in all humility, as one man to another. To be humble is not to bow down to somebody who is above you, not to lick the boss’s boots, not to be subservient to higher rank, but to be equal with all. That’s to be humble. Our thing is usually to be arrogant to those below you and subservient to those above you. That’s the way you get success in this world, but that’s not to be humble at all. Remember, the Lord himself is humble, as the brother of Jared said. The Lord said he was meek and humble. Everybody has to humble themselves to something; the idea is, what are you going to humble yourself to? Before God it is easy. That’s no test at all. If someone has overpowering might and glory and all the splendor of a Spielberg production, or Paul Lucas and the glories of space, you can be humble with that sort of thing. But that isn’t to be humble at all. If somebody knocks you down, you can be humble. No, to be humble is to speak to one as you would to another. The person who was really that way was President George Albert Smith. There was a man who was really humble. Never subservient or looking down on anyone, but he would get up at 3:00 o’clock in the morning and go down to the lower part of town. (My mother knew him very well.) If some poor old bum had been picked up at the police station, he would come down and try to help him out, bail him out, etc. He put himself out all the time, and nobody knew about it. I know some stories like that. As President of the Church, he was on a big business trip in Portland. Brother Westergard was a Dane and a poor carpenter in our ward, with a lot of girls. His little girl was sick, and the President sat up with him and his little girl all night. He let the business go and everything else. That little sick child and sitting with Brother Westergard were more important to him. The President stayed with my grandfather who founded the Oregon Lumber, Western Pacific, and all that stuff. But all business had to wait so that he [President Smith] could sit with a sick child. And, of course, he never told anybody about a thing like that. It was Brother Westergard who told me about that years later. He said, “He stayed up with me all night when my little daughter was so sick.”

You have to humble yourself to somebody, and who is it to be? Remember Mosiah 4:11: “And always retain in remembrance, the greatness of God and your own nothingness, and his goodness and long-suffering towards you, unworthy creatures, and humble yourselves even in the depths of humility.” And Helaman said, “How great is the nothingness of the children of men; yea, they are even less than the dust.” Here it says, “And they did humble themselves even to the dust, subjecting themselves . . . to the desires of their enemies.” Now that is humility, but is it abject humility? No, it was their own sins that lay heavily on them. The Lamanites were merely an instrument; they knew that. They had beaten the Lamanites badly on other occasions when they were greatly outnumbered by them. Pray that one may never become such an instrument because, after all, to be an oppressor is far worse than to be oppressed, as we learn later on in Mormon 4:5 where he says, “But, behold, the judgments of God will overtake the wicked; and it is by the wicked that the wicked are punished.” Your business isn’t to dominate or punish anyone; it’s the wicked that do the punishing, as well as the wicked who are punished. The Lord sees to that.

Then there was no military solution. Verse 15: “And now the Lord was slow to hear their cry because of their iniquities [which had been building up for a long time. There is no military solution but this]; nevertheless the Lord did hear their cries, and began to soften
the hearts of the Lamanites that they began to ease their burdens.” There must be a softening and a yielding on both sides. This is sort of an anti-climax. You might say, “Where are the heroics?” The Lamanites themselves began to yield now under those circumstances. Compare the long and foolish war between Iran and Iraq, in which they practically destroyed each other—near exhaustion accomplishing nothing. After all the mighty boasting and the unconditional damnation of the other side, they accomplished nothing. It has been absolute idiocy, and they are still at it. And in Lebanon it’s even worse. That’s the only way that will do. And even our huge naval force solved very little; they didn’t do anything there.

Now notice what Limhi does in verse 17. His people were living under oppression, but they are now forced to live the Law of Consecration. That’s the only way we’ll ever live it, if we’re forced to live it. “Now there was a great number of women, more than there was of men; therefore king Limhi commanded that every man should impart to the support of the widows and their children, that they might not perish with hunger; and this they did because of the greatness of their number that had been slain [slain in vain]. Now the people of Limhi kept together in a body as much as it was possible [that was the strategy], and secured their grain and their flocks; And the king himself did not trust his person without the walls of the city.” This is going to finish up the story and take us back to Ammon, where he meets the king outside the gates. The king was out there with a patrol at night; nobody trusted anybody else. The Lamanite king kept constant watch over them, and they were paying for the watch with the grain he took from them. And they kept watch over the Lamanites because they were constantly patrolling the borders there. “And the king himself did not trust his person without the walls of the city, unless he took his guards with him, fearing that he might by some means fall into the hands of the Lamanites. And he caused that his people should watch the land round about.”

They were keeping a check on everything here, and always on the defensive. It was a very tense situation there; you can see that. They were going to watch the land round about and keep an eye open and do some scouting and patrolling, I suppose, to see if they could catch those priests because there would be the solution. They were the troublemakers who had stolen the daughters. The priests had been robbing and plundering. There was rather a small scale thing going on, like the Apaches or the Navajos and the Hopis. The Navajos are constantly stealing sheep and things from the [Hopis]; they are always going over the boundary and taking them. Verse 21: “For they had come into the land of Nephi by night, and carried off their grain and many of their precious things.” For their supplies, they were stealing horses, etc. First Nephi lists the four things, and 2 Nephi lists the same four. People are after power, gain, popularity, and the lusts of the flesh.

Anyway, they would come and loot them, just as the Zunis do and the One-Horn Society does. There’s all sorts of looting that goes on and these tricks. It’s very dangerous if you go around in some parts, such as the Four Corners country. I was with a couple of characters a couple of years ago, and we had some touch-and-go. Verse 22: “And it came to pass that there was no more disturbance between the Lamanites and the people of Limhi, even until the time that Ammon and his brethren came into the land.” Things were quiet for the time being. The fire-eating Gideon had urged peace through concessions. Then Ammon comes in, and that takes us up to where we were before; the story resumes at this point.

Here was the king outside the gates with his patrol, and he discovered Ammon. He supposed them to be the priests of Noah; they had been keeping an eye out for them all
along. What would be more natural? So that’s why he hauled him away and brought him into court to see who he was. When he found out who he really was, that he actually came from Zarahemla, “he was filled with exceedingly great joy. Now king Limhi had sent, previous to the coming of Ammon, a small number of men to search for the land of Zarahemla.” Now how would Zarahemla get lost? Well, as I said, there were the Seven Cities of Cibola, etc. People are always getting lost. Anciently there are some good examples of lost cities in Asia. The legends of lost cities are numerous, “A Thousand and One Nights” sort of stuff. We won’t go into that. When the story resumes here, Limhi’s search parties can’t find Zarahemla! On what scale are they operating? Well, a good example is the Siwa Oasis, where the great shrine of Amon was. It was a large oasis with a great temple; in fact, the most important temple in all of Africa, more important than anything in Egypt. Some people think the Egyptians originally came from there—that they were Libyans who came to Egypt. But anyway, Alexander the Great looked for it, and his whole army would have perished if they hadn’t been guided miraculously, according to one story, by two snakes, according to another by two birds. But Cambyses, the mad Persian king, went out to find it, and his whole army disappeared in the desert. They never could find it. Finding Siwa was a big thing. It was the most important oracle of the ancient world in Hellenistic times. The people missed it very often, and yet it was this huge settlement out there in the desert. It was only four days journey from the Nile, if you kept going in the right direction. But you can lose things like this. It may have been the desert. All you can do is guess the type of terrain, the sort of thing that was going on, and think of like things that have happened.

Anyway, just before the arrival of Ammon the search party returned. They had missed Zarahemla, but they had found a land of dry bones. When Ammon and his party came in, he [the king] said, strange that you should mention it; we just had another party come in, too, a party we sent out to look for Zarahemla. They didn’t find anything but a lot of dry bones and a record [paraphrased]. This finding of dry bones and a record! If you ever visit Awatobi, you’ll know what I mean. Awatobi was destroyed in October 1700. All the villages zeroed in on the great city. It was a real city. You can walk around on that mesa now and see bones and pottery scattered everywhere for miles around. You wonder, what kind of a thing was this? It’s immense, and where the old part was there are ashes, etc. Of course, you are not supposed to go there. There’s a curse, and the Hopis are ashamed of it. They won’t go there. But there’s a city of bones still lying out there. Since it has been discovered in recent years, there has been lots of plunder. The Hopis keep guards over it now to keep people from going in there and plundering because it’s just picking up. A surprising place! In 1938 Harvard spent a million dollars just excavating one corner. They found beautiful murals, the first murals ever found in that part of the country. And they found sacred shrines. I got a crystal from one of the sacred shrines there.

So they did find these dry bones, an impressive thing. Ammon’s people mourned for Abinadi who had been put to death and for the departed Alma, who left King Noah’s people. This isn’t Zarahemla; these are the Nephite people who were in bondage to the Lamanites. They were found by Ammon who did come from Zarahemla. They come together now. It says that they mourned for both of them. Verse 31: “Yea, they did mourn for their departure, for they knew not whither they had fled. Now they would have gladly joined with them, for they themselves had entered into a covenant with God to serve him and keep his commandments. And now since the coming of Ammon, King Limhi had also entered into a covenant with God, and also many of his people, to serve him and keep his commandments [remember, Ammon did not have the priesthood, as Alma did; a direct descendant of Zarahemla, he was a Mulekite, not a Nephite]. And it
came to pass that king Limhi and many of his people were desirous to be baptized [but you notice that Ammon wouldn’t do it; he refused to do it because he didn’t have authority or wasn’t worthy] but there was none in the land that had authority from God. And Ammon declined doing this thing, considering himself an unworthy servant [we learn in Mosiah 7:3 that he was a Mulekite]. Therefore they did not at that time form themselves into a church, waiting upon the Spirit of the Lord [well, that’s what the people were doing at Qumran—waiting upon the Spirit of the Lord, but they did form a church]. Now they were desirous to become even as Alma and his brethren, who had fled into the wilderness. They were desirous to be baptized as a witness and a testimony that they were willing to serve God with all their hearts.”

What did they know about Alma? Remember, Alma had left this community; he had fled from King Noah. He had been a priest of King Noah and had preached among them. They knew about this thing. And a lot of them came back. Those who had gone out with the priests came back to the city again. Alma’s story was familiar to these people, and they wanted to be like Alma who had gone now. Verse 36: “And now all the study of Ammon and his people, and king Limhi and his people, was to deliver themselves out of the hands of the Lamanites and from bondage.” Well, that’s the first problem. So there was more dealing with the enemy. They held a general conference to discuss the matter, now that Ammon was there. Ammon and King Limhi consulted together. They could see only one way out, the Rechabite recourse—to do the same thing that Lehi, Nephi, Mosiah, and Alma had done; namely, to take off with as many of your people as will go with you. That’s a standard pattern which happens regularly. I always come back to the Hopis. There are at least twenty instances in which a group or a clan from a village has gone out and settled in another place, or gone out and joined another village, or gone up to Canyon de Chelly, or gone down to Azteca, or gone down to the Little Colorado and settled in colonies, or come back there. They are always moving around in these groups and settling, and resettling, and fighting, and coming together again. It’s the most amazing picture. It’s fluid, going on all the time. This is the sort of thing we seem to have happening here, maybe on a larger scale, or maybe on a smaller. It doesn’t make any difference. So that is what they are going to do. “Even they did cause that all the people should gather themselves together; and this they did that they might have the voice of the people concerning the matter” (Mosiah 22:1).

In Lonesome Dove there is a body of people, a group of men with an awful lot of cattle, supposedly moving from the Mexican border almost to the Canadian border, up to Montana. That’s the way they moved around, following the Indian pattern. Everywhere they were running into Indians on the move the same way. They would say, “It’s dangerous—the Cheyennes are on the move now.” When they were on the march, they would march against each other and burn each others’ villages back and forth. Some of them were big nations—ten, twenty, or fifty thousand people moving like that. It was a very impressive thing. So this is a reflection of that sort of thing. This is a prologue to that sort of thing, we might say. This is the type of thing that’s happening; it’s not as fantastic as you might think.

They gathered themselves together and took a vote concerning the matter. Again, “And it came to pass that they could find no way to deliver themselves out of bondage, except it were to take their women and children, and their flocks, and their herds, and their tents, and depart into the wilderness [the Rechabite act again]. . . . Now it came to pass that Gideon went forth and stood before the king, and said unto him, you’ve listened to me before. Gideon was a very savvy character, a leader, and the man of greatest experience
among them. He offered to submit and execute a plan of escape; he had devised a plan for escape. He would not only submit it, but he would execute it. Verse 4: “I will be thy servant and deliver this people out of bondage [hand it over to me]. The king granted unto him his wish and said, do what you want to. So Gideon said, “Behold the back pass, through the back wall, on the back side of the city [everything is the back side here]. The Lamanites, or the guards of the Lamanites, by night are drunken [this is the famous ploy]. . . . And I will go according to thy command and pay the last tribute of wine to the Lamanites, and they will be drunken [notice that ironic, humorous touch; the Lamanites don’t know it, but this is the last tribute of wine they are going to get from the Nephites]; and we will pass through the secret pass on the left of their camp when they are drunken and asleep.”

Now, how could they do that and escape notice? It has been done time and again with whole armies. Do you realize that an army of 200,000 was mobilized within a couple of miles of the front in the Bulge. For months it went on. I was in charge and had to keep the situation up at Mourmelon. The reports were coming in from scouts, and peasants would come in and tell us the story. We knew what was happening. The roads to the north were crowded all night long with bicycles, wagons, anything that could move from the south—all coming to a particular point. He collected six divisions there right under our noses and caught the men completely by surprise. There was no need why they should have been surprised at all because it was very obvious what was happening. I even said it would happen the night of December 17, 1944, and it did. They hit and completely overran everything. They were there all the time; for months you could see what was happening. A couple of our fellows went down to the Seventh Corps. The new Lion Head Division had just come in from Normandy. They had only been in Europe a week and had no experience at all. They put them on this most sensitive place because nothing was going to happen there. They said, “This is a place for them to rest and get used to things.”

They said, “Have you sent out any patrols?”

“No, we’re moving tomorrow.” They were packing up their maps and things.

“Well, you don’t know what’s happening there?”

“No.”

Well, the Lion Head Division was spread on an eight-mile front, and it should have been a quarter of a mile at most to cover that. They had spread it over eight miles, so all they [the Germans] had to do was just walk right through. A captain came staggering in all black, dirty, and exhausted. “They completely overran us,” he said. So we had to get in these big gondolas in a hurry and get there in no time. That’s when they went to Bastogne. The point is that they caught our intelligence and everything else by surprise, although we knew what was going on. Because of this wishful thinking, it’s amazing what you can get away with.

Here these people had the Nephites under their thumbs. Then life got to be a bore; everything was going on the same as ever month after month. Guard troops have nothing to do but see that nothing happens. If nothing happens, they’ve fulfilled their duty. It gets very boring, and they welcome a little nip now and then. The wine was so welcome to them. They took it joyfully and passed out, and the people just went out. This sort of thing has happened again and again. I had a whole list of cases like that—like Singapore
on the Malay Peninsula. The British couldn’t point their guns in that direction because they never expected anyone to come by the Malay Peninsula. But as the famous General Surorov said, “Where a deer can go, a man can go. And where a man can go, an army can go.” Well, that was the Japanese policy in the Malay Peninsula. They came down the whole Malay Peninsula. The British said that an army could never come down there, but the Japanese did. As I said, the British guns weren’t even made to face in that direction. They could do nothing to stop them, so the Japanese just overrun them. That happens again and again. Especially the British are that way; they are so smug and let themselves get overrun every time.

Then there was Washington at Trenton. Remember, he caught the Hessians having Christmas Eve at the time. They were drunk and completely at his mercy. They didn’t expect anyone to cross the river on Christmas Eve of all times, and especially on a night like last night [a very cold one]. Who would ever do that? Well, it caught them completely off guard. They should have expected it at that very time. There’s also the Exodus [of the Israelites] and that of Chief Joseph. And the wine trick works. It worked with the Cyclops; that’s how Odysseus got away. I’ve seen whole headquarters get drunk under great tension. That really happens.

And here’s the paradox. The bigger the operation, the more likely it is to escape detection. Remember, the classic example is Normandy. We caught them by surprise because Hitler insisted it was going to be LeHavre Peninsula and not Cherbourg. That went on for months. He had ten tank divisions at Paris, and he wouldn’t release them. Any one of them could have pushed us back with the greatest of ease. We didn’t have a chance, hanging on by our fingernails there. But Hitler wouldn’t let a single tank division go because he thought we would go somewhere else. See how easy it is to fool people when they have their minds made up about something? The same thing is happening here [in the Book of Mormon]. The first day, immediately upon landing, I picked up a mimeograph. They had been having a CPX on the coast there to practice for the invasion, and they had it all correct. The first man that came out had his hands up and a look of surprise. He said, “We thought you were coming yesterday.” Well, the fifth was the day we had planned, but there was the storm that postponed it to the sixth. They were expecting us and had the whole thing lined up. That’s the very reason we were able to fool them because they expected we would do it just that way. We did it just that way, but the thing that saved us was that everything went wrong with ours. There was a whole company of the 502nd that landed 55 miles away from their target. Well, nothing could have been better for us than that because the Germans said, “What on earth are they doing? Are these people crazy?” They didn’t know where to counterattack; they didn’t know what to do. They didn’t know where to group their forces or anything else because we were in complete confusion, scattered everywhere under the sun. It was the best thing that could have happened. So that’s the way the Lord takes care of things.

To say that they [the Nephites] could have walked out on them in the middle of the night [is not farfetched]. It would have been the easiest thing in the world. For two years this had been going on, and the tension was built up now. They had the Nephites where they belonged; they were completely submissive now. If you were at a guard post, you wouldn’t be worried about them. [Someone would say], “Oh, forget it; get some sleep for heaven’s sake!” Before you know it, they are all gone. So they paid their last tribute of wine. Verse 10: “And king Limhi caused that his people should gather their flocks together; and he sent the tribute of wine to the Lamanites; and he also sent more wine, as a present unto them; and they did drink freely of the wine which king Limhi did send
unto them. . . . And they went round about the land of Shilom in the wilderness, and bent their course towards the land of Zarahemla. . . . And after being many days in the wilderness they arrived in the land of Zarahemla, and joined Mosiah’s people, and became his subjects.” That was a short one; they finally got there. It was like the Exodus—they took all their gold and silver and everything else. [Their becoming Mosiah’s subjects] was like the alliances of the Latins and Greeks.

What happened then? After two days the tracks gave out, and their enemies couldn’t chase them. They couldn’t be found. That makes us wonder what kind of terrain it was if the tracks gave out. Of course, through the woods everything would be broken and smashed as they went along. It’s obviously desert, and there could have been a strong wind. You can lose tracks very easily. How can you lose track of an army? Well, it has often happened. We were fooled at the Bulge and a whole army was gathered within just a couple of miles of where we were. I was making out reports every day and screaming to the general, “What’s going to happen? Look, this is what they’re doing. They are obviously going to do this. Hitler is very fond of this particular time. Because of astrology, he’s going to try to make it then.” He did—that’s when they tried to break through.

Anyway, they couldn’t follow their tracks. Now the story resumes, and we go back to Alma in chapter 23. “Now Alma, having been warned of the Lord that the armies of king Noah would come upon them . . .” Remember, this is his company that fled to the wilderness. They followed the Rechabite routine. They fled eight days. This is another repetition of the same motif. But this is the very nature of this civilization, this mobility, even though they were settled people. It’s like the Asiatic peoples and the Americans, especially on the America frontier. We’ve always been on the move. How many people are living now in the houses your grandparents lived in? In Germany we held our meetings in Bruchsal in Baden, an old Roman street. Old Sister Glück had lived in that house, and her parents and grandparents before her. The house was almost a thousand years old, and that’s where we lived. We don’t do it that way. Those are stable civilizations. Can anyone think of staying in Provo or in California more than a few years? You have to become mobile and go somewhere else if you are going to survive now. Can you live without a car now? How could you make it here today without a car? Well, you walk.

Verse 3: “And they fled eight days’ journey into the wilderness. And they came to a land, yea, even a very beautiful and pleasant land, a land of pure water.” How could a land very beautiful and inviting like that have gone unsettled all that time? When the Saints came, Jim Bridger went into ecstasies about Utah Valley. He said, forget about all the rest of it—Utah Valley is the best. There were Indians living in Utah Valley. You can go down to Lincoln Beach and see some marvelous houses and everything else there in those caves. There’s the most beautiful collection of glyphs I’ve ever seen, but they have been plundered all over the place. Right after the war, Princeton came out and dug there for a couple of years and then left. That settlement out on the point is dated back to the eleventh century. When the lake was way up, you could see it was a fishing place. It had a ritual center with magnificent things. There was one I was particularly fond of called the “blue goat,” a beautiful thing. I took Bill Russell, who was President of Westinghouse Electric. He was a big dignitary, so I showed him around the sites. We went out there, and it was very interesting. He was impressed by the blue goat, too. A couple of years later, somebody came from New York where he saw Bill Russell. He said, “Isn’t it marvelous, that thing with the blue goat he has in his office there?” He sent some man out to fetch it. He liked it and so that was that. Of course, the law of 1906 says that it’s strictly against the
law to plunder those, but everybody does. As you know, it’s a big problem in Utah now. The best thing we can do is to keep those places away from the roads.

There was this beautiful land that had not been settled before, so they [Alma’s people] went in and settled it. Verse 5: “And they pitched their tents, and began to till the ground, and began to build buildings [see, they started right in here]; yea, they were industrious, and did labor exceedingly [the thing that most surprised the settlers in the early days of America was that the Shenandoah valley had never been exploited by the Indians; they said, ‘It’s the most beautiful place in the world; why aren’t there more people there?’]. And the people were desirous that Alma should be their king.” Now this little group wanted a king. The word is obviously chief throughout here. A king is a chief. A chief is on the same scale as the Anglo-Saxon kings were—the Edwards, the Eldreds, the Harold, and all the rest of them. It was small stuff, but they were kings, and we’ll see that’s exactly the way it was. We are going to get that marvelous story now [about] Amulon and Alma. There is a real scenario there, and what a character study between these two men here. They want Alma to be their king, so he gave them a speech on being king. “Behold, it is not expedient that we should have a king; for thus saith the Lord: Ye shall not esteem one flesh above another, or one man shall not think himself above another [that is equality—he says there should be no racialism and no elitism]; therefore I say unto you it is not expedient that ye should have a king. Nevertheless, if it were possible that ye could always have just men to be your kings [like Benjamin or Mosiah] it would be well for you to have a king.” That would be a dandy thing.

As a matter of fact, just as rex means king, as far as that goes. recte facere is judgment; the Cynung is “the one who knows.” According to Horace, “You will be king if you do what is right, but who doesn’t do right will never be a king.” Rex means king, and rex means right. With the same meaning, we have rule, regulation, right, and righteous. All those words go together. The rex is “the one who knows and understands.” That’s why in Zion we can accept an absolute monarchy because God is the king there. He doesn’t make the mistakes that men do. Anything else won’t do. We don’t have dominants and submissives here, or the usual achievers.

The people of Ephesus were equalitarian all right. They had a rule that if anybody wanted to excel in anything, let him go to some other town and excel over somebody else. They said, “We’re not going to have anything like that.” So if you were particularly good at anything, the Ephesians would always throw you out. They were the ones who threw Paul out. They all cheered together, “Great is Diana of Ephesus!” They stood there cheering all day long, the idiots. But they made an imperfect union, and they threw anybody out who excelled in anything, they said. “Let them go and excel over somebody else.” That was a law with them.

“Nevertheless, if it were possible that ye could always have just men to be your kings it would be well for you to have a king [that’s the only problem, of course; but here was a thing vivid in their memories]. But remember the iniquity of king Noah and his priests; and I myself was caught in a snare, and did many things which were abominable in the sight of the Lord, which caused me sore repentance.” Because of his association with Noah, Alma himself did abominable things. He was one of the bad priests of Noah, so obviously he went along. That’s why he had Noah’s ear, and that’s why there was this understanding. When Alma defended Abinadi, Noah decided he would have to get rid of him. He knew too much. He [Alma] went along there, and he is ashamed of it now. “Nevertheless, after much tribulation, the Lord did hear my cries, and did answer my prayers, and has made
me an instrument in his hands in bringing so many of you to a knowledge of his truth.”

His prayer shows what you should ask for when you pray. He said that his prayer had brought many to a knowledge of the truth. Darkness covers the earth. Why? Because people don’t ask for truth. Remember, the Lord commands us to ask for certain thing, and then we will receive them.

Verse 11: “Nevertheless, in this I do not glory, for I am unworthy to glory of myself. And now I say unto you, ye have been oppressed by king Noah [they remembered that], and have been in bondage to him and his priests, and have been brought into iniquity by them; therefore ye were bound with the bands of iniquity.” Now there is the great threat to freedom. You are bound in the bands of iniquity; it’s not somebody who is going to take over and put you in jail and things like that. That’s not it, of course. “And now as ye have been delivered by the power of God out of these bonds; yea, even out of the hands of king Noah and his people, and also from the bonds of iniquity, even so I desire that ye should stand fast in this liberty [this is what liberty really is—to be rescued from the bonds of iniquity] wherewith ye have been made free, and that ye trust no man to be a king over you [no man to be a king over you; the emphasis is on that. Who must you fight to be free?] And also trust no one to be your teacher nor your minister, except he be a man of God, walking in his ways and keeping his commandments.”

Now here’s the catch. How do you decide who is a “man of God, walking in his ways and keeping his commandments”? Nobody who puts himself forth for that is going to qualify. But it’s actually rather easy, isn’t it, to find out whether a man is doing this. A TV evangelist is obviously a fraud in most cases, not always. They [men of God] can be easily distinguished by what they do not do. For example, ask any one of them about a project. The Wall Street Journal recently made a survey of several hundred top executives on whether they thought it was necessary to cheat to prosper in business—if from time to time you had to cut corners and to cheat. Seventy-nine percent of them said, “Yes, it is necessary to cheat if you are going to stay in business.” You can find out if a man is worthy or not by suggesting a project and seeing what kind of solution you will get. It’s just like handing somebody a questionnaire. You can soon find out whether the person is a rascal or not, though we often prefer them that way.

Verse 15: “Thus did Alma teach his people that every man should love his neighbor as himself, that there should be no contention among them.” Well, how could you avoid that? He is going to tell us that. Ephraim is always under stress. Ephraim is always the overachiever, the scriptures tell us. (We’re Ephraim, not Manasseh.) Ephraim is always making himself obnoxious, always pushing people around, etc. That’s a temptation, and one has to control those things. Brigham Young used to say, “A wild horse is easier to control than these people.” Anything would be easier to control than such people. But how do you get people to love their neighbors as themselves? How can you avoid contention? Alma was their high priest, and this is the way he did it. He had this plan, the same one that was used at Qumran. Verse 17 “He consecrated all their priests and all their teachers [they were personally consecrated by him; he had that authority which Ammon didn’t have]; and none were consecrated except they were just men.” He saw to that, like Samuel of old. Remember, he was a direct descendant of Nephi. The priesthood was patriarchal, and he had the power to bestow it. “Therefore they did watch over their people, and did nourish them with things pertaining to righteousness [Nourishment is increment, of course, as we learn in verse 10. It was necessary for them to have high visibility. To nourish is to improve the condition of a thing]. And it came to pass that they began to prosper exceedingly in the land; and they called the land Helam.”
Now that’s a most interesting thing because you have the soft *h* Helam in Hebrew and Arabic. It means *sweet*, a *dream* and various things. But the meaning of Helam is *prosperity* and *hope*. It’s like the name *phoenix*, which means *new colony*. I have it down here from Smythe, actually. Helam means “to become suitable, to be well established.” You could name a land Helam if it was a new colony. But I like this one better. It’s the word in all Semitic languages for *dream*. It means “to be healthy, to recuperate, to restore, to revive a place, to prosper.” A better name you couldn’t give to a new settlement than *prosperity*, or *restoration*, or *health*, or *revival*, or *suitability*, or *happy land*. Helam was a good name, a name of good omen. So we’ll end here. But then we come to that marvelous story of Alma and Amulon. What a study in character that is!
Now we come to one of the most satisfying parts of the Book of Mormon. This is what historiography should be. It’s full of drama, personality, and all sorts of things. We’ll start with Mosiah 23:31. Remember how it happened [background information]: Mosiah had gone out from the Nephite community and ended up in Zarahemla. He became king of Zarahemla, which was a Mulekite settlement. Then out of that came other settlements. Zeniff went out and got himself stuck in the midst of the Lamanites, but he flourished there completely surrounded by Lamanites. His son, Noah, was the corrupt one. Noah was hard pressed and decided that the whole nation should take off and flee, which they did. When the enemy started to overcome them, he said to his army, “We will go on—forget the women and children.” That was not a nice thing to do. But they did go on, and a lot of them started to regret it. A lot of them refused to go and stayed back; others started to drift back very soon. King Noah got very unpopular and got himself burned up. Then the priests continued on under the leadership of a man called Amulon. This man, Amulon, was a VIP, a very important and ambitious person, which becomes clear here.

Verse 31: “And behold, they had found those priests of king Noah, in a place which they called Amulon.” They named it after their leader—just like Brigham City. Amulon was their leader, and he must have been important back there. We learn a little later on that he had been a rival and “old friend” of Alma back in the priests’ quorum, and he hated his guts. This tension between them is really something. Verse 32: “Now the name of the leader of those priests was Amulon [look ahead to verse 9 of the next chapter].... For Amulon knew Alma, that he had been one of the king’s priests.” He was a priest too; they had both been in the quorum. Apparently, Amulon was an important guy who was aspiring to be chief priest. He was here. They named the settlement after him, and he became leader of the priests. He still aspired to leadership and achieved it; he got a real break. He got a sponsor and was able to rule, as people do who get sponsors—like Angelo in [Shakespeare’s play] Measure for Measure. Notice what he [Amulon] did. The reason the priests were being chased now is that they had captured the Lamanite girls. They married them. Notice what “small potatoes” this is; there were only twenty-four of them. Amulon decided that they should go forth and plead with the Lamanites. After all, we’re fellow Lamanites [ha, ha, ha]; let’s let bygones be bygones, etc. The Lamanites were always more compassionate than the Nephites, so this is what happened. Verse 33: “Amulon did plead with the Lamanites; and he also sent forth their wives, who were the daughters of the Lamanites, to plead with their brethren that they should not destroy their husbands.” That worked; the Lamanites had compassion.

Verse 35: “And Amulon and his brethren did join the Lamanites, and they were traveling in the wilderness in search of the land of Nephi when they discovered the land of Helam, which was possessed by Alma and his brethren.” After Amulon joined their company, a mass of them were moving on and discovered the land of Helam, the happy land which means prosper. Helam is like Phoenix; it means reborn, prosperous, flourishing, and that sort of thing. It was a name of good omen for a colony, and that’s where Alma was. They
came to Helam, and what happened? Amulon took over everything and not only pushed Alma into the background, but started persecuting in grand style. “The Lamanites promised unto Alma and his brethren, that if they would show them the way which led to the land of Nephi that they would grant unto them their lives and their liberty.” Amulon was putting them on; you can be sure of that. Alma agreed and showed them the way, and then they said “April fool.” They wouldn’t keep their promise. I see the fine hand of Amulon there, don’t you? He refused to do it.

You notice we have no race problem here. You can’t talk about Nephites and Lamanites [as distinct and separate groups] because look how these things are mixed up now. Here is another mixing of Lamanites, and a group in which the women are Lamanites and the men are Nephites. That’s a common phenomenon, as you know. Certainly as late as the 1940s, the women in the city of Seville [Spain] still spoke Arabic. Since 1492 there haven’t been any Arabs [in power] in Spain, but the women all spoke Arabic. The men didn’t know Arabic, but the women in the city of Seville spoke Arabic and Spanish. This happens—women have their own language. Oh, they do among the Hopis too. They have a special language just for the women. I remember that I got laughed out of court because I once said “thank you” to some people, using the women’s language. Oh boy, that was a real boo-boo! Anyway, notice how these things are all mixed up here. You mustn’t be too simplistic about the Book of Mormon; it’s complicated enough.

Then what happened? They wouldn’t keep their promise, but they went on. They were moving through. Verse 38: “And the remainder of them went to the land of Nephi; and a part of them returned to the land of Helam, and also brought with them the wives and the children of the guards who had been left in the land. And the king of the Lamanites had granted unto Amulon that he should be a king and a ruler over his people, who were in the land of Helam.” Amulon said he would stay there, and he persuaded the king of the Lamanites to make him the local chief and give him absolute power there. We see now that the king of the Lamanites had a lot of territory, as the Indians always do. The idea is that you have a great chief and chiefs under him. You have tribes and then you have clans within the tribes; every tribe has clans within it. This is what they had. Of course, in the Mabinogion you have the same, especially among the Celts. You’ll find a beautiful example of this in Caesar’s Gallic Wars. Orgetorix was the great king, and Casticus and Dumnorix were under him. Everybody was aspiring to be the great king. There was the high king and the kinglets under him. Anglo-Saxon England was divided up the same way with the Edwardses, etc. Harold was the high king over a lot of others.

So Amulon got himself made king over the Nephites of Alma’s community. They joined up with Alma’s people, and this put Amulon in the driver’s seat. Mosiah 24:1: “And it came to pass that Amulon did gain favor in the eyes of the king of the Lamanites.” You can be sure he would; the high king was only too glad to turn over to him the responsibility for judging those people. Remember Macbeth was Thane of Glamis, and then the king made him Thane of Cawdor. “All hail, Macbeth! that shalt be king hereafter!” His wife got more and more excited as he got higher ranks. These were petty kingships. The Thane of Cawdor was a betrayer, so he lost his kingdom. It was given to Macbeth who was planning the big treason. So these things go throughout the tribal histories.

Notice that most tyranny works through patronage. It’s usually a patron, a well-meaning king, who knows what’s going on back home. We find this a little later on in the Book of Mormon. The classic example is what I mentioned from Measure for Measure, where the
duke in Vienna is going away and makes Angelo, his secretary, [lord deputy] in his place. Then Angelo really “loads it on.” When he plays his dirty tricks, exercises power, and throws his weight around in the most repulsive way, Isabella says,

But man, proud man,
Drest in a little brief authority,
Most ignorant of what he’s most assured,
His glassy essence, like an angry ape,
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
As make the angels weep.

Give a man a little authority, and this is what happens. He didn’t have any authority himself; it was granted to him by the duke. But the fact is that the duke was prowling around, dressed up as a monk, and seeing just how this man could manage. He was thinking of turning it over to him, but that wouldn’t do at all. This guy didn’t know how to handle authority. This happens. Remember Doctrine and Covenants 121:39: “We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion.” That’s what happened with Amulon, and he took it out on Alma. And the classic example is in Matthew 24 & 25, where the master of the house goes away and leaves the house in the charge of his servant. The apostles were asking, “How shall we behave until you come again?” He said this is the way: You don’t know when the Lord is coming again, but don’t act like this man. As soon as he was put in charge of the house, he started lording all over the other servants, oppressing them, giving high commands, and making everybody miserable. What will happen when the Lord comes home and discovers him doing that sort of thing? That’s why he [Jesus Christ] is going to come by surprise and not announce his coming—we would all be dressed, spit polished, and ready for inspection, like when the general comes around. If we knew ahead of time, it wouldn’t be a good test that way. So the Lord comes like a thief in the night and catches everybody by surprise, including the servants. What are these servants doing? Don’t be found living riotous and expensive lives while you are oppressing other people. That’s what the Lord doesn’t want to find when he comes back, but that’s what he’s going to find.

He [Amulon] was appointed not only this [a ruler], but “the king of the Lamanites granted unto him and his brethren that they should be appointed teachers over his people.” That was natural because they were educated priests, in this case a mixture of Lamanites, Nephites, and Mulekites. Here was Amulon and his college of priests, Noah’s council, some of the most learned men in the land. They are the ones to appoint as teachers, so he naturally appointed them teachers. They took the job naturally as a part of the empire, “...teachers over his people, yea, even over the people who were in the land of Shemlon, and in the land of Shilom, and in the land of Amulon.” It went right back to the place where they had settled originally; they connected the two lands. They must have been close together. It was all connected and put under the rule of Amulon. The city called Amulon was a village. If you have a big village, that’s ten or fifteen thousand; that’s a good size. So they had the Amulon lands; and the Shemlon lands, which means the lands to the east on the left side; and the Shilom lands, which means the “higher lands, the high and dry lands.” Here’s an ambitious man. We overlook Amulon among the dangerous characters in the Book of Mormon. We just pass by him, but he was as clever as any of them.
Verse 2: “For the Lamanites had taken possession of all these lands; therefore, the king of the Lamanites had appointed kings over all these lands [that’s the idea, to appoint chiefs; he was the high king, and he appointed kings to take the load off his shoulders]. And now the name of the king of the Lamanites was Laman [that’s natural; just as you have a long string of Caesars, you’re going to have a long string of Lamans here]; . . . therefore he was called king Laman. And he was king over a numerous people. And he appointed teachers of the brethren of Amulon [as I said, they were the educated, priestly class here] in every land which was possessed by his people [so he sent them around not just in Amulon territory, but throughout the whole Lamanite territory, which was an extensive and populous one; they were circulating and being the teachers] and thus the language of Nephi [notice this racial mixture again] began to be taught among all the people of the Lamanites.” They broke up very soon into dialects and languages.

As I said, you have twelve Hopi villages on three mesas, and each village has a different dialect. They are only a few miles apart, but you can recognize which village a person comes from. It’s like the islands of Friesland. They speak a language very close to Old English. They are all connected, but any native can immediately spot what island you come from by the words and dialect you use. They are different languages, and very soon they become so that people can’t understand each other. Two years ago we were visited by some cousins from the Hebrides, the islands off the west coast of Scotland. They spoke perfectly good English; they could use the same words we did. We took them around the valley and showed them all the sights, and we couldn’t understand a word they said, although they were speaking English. So this can happen very soon. They had been on those islands since 1621, about 300 years. These people [in the Book of Mormon] had been there 500 years. Dialects are certainly formed everywhere. Kramer found twenty-seven different Indian languages still surviving in California. That doesn’t mean there were twenty-seven different migrations, or anything like that—they just develop. It makes a problem for American Indians, unless you want to take the trouble to learn them. Like the man on the First Mesa. When I asked him how many people spoke Tiwa, he said, “Lots of people speak Tiwa; a hundred people speak Tiwa.” So there you are, and that’s what we have here. They learned the common language, like learning the lingua franca.

England was [covered] with Anglo-Saxon dialects. For Old English you study with Northumbrian because Northumbrian has the oldest surviving documents. Then Beowulf is something quite different. Then you have standard Saxon or West Saxon, used by King Alfred, in which there is a lot of literature surviving. But then the Normans came over and imposed Norman French on the whole thing. The Saxons drank it up like milk and adopted all the usages and grammar of the Normans that they needed, but they kept their own language. They mixed them together, so we have the most flexible language in the world today and also the biggest vocabulary. There are over 470,000 words in the Webster Dictionary; a tremendous [language] mixed together. The Book of Mormon uses only 3,000 words—that’s great. Shakespeare uses 34,000 words, and for one writer that’s something. A lot of the words he has given have stuck with the language. So with the language problem in the Book of Mormon, I’m afraid you need a Urim and Thummim if you are going to translate those plates. People say, “Oh well, they’re Reformed Egyptian, they’re Hebrew, etc.” Sure, they’re all that mixed together, just like our English. English is not from Anglia; that’s from the north coast of Holland. And the Saxons are more central. We have both languages now and call it Anglo-Saxon (we hyphenate it). So it goes.
They began to have the people learn the language of Nephi. It “began to be taught among all the people of the Lamanites. They were going to have the lingua franca. They used it for business, and, of course, they became very prosperous. This is a great tool, you see. We want to make English the one language of the country because that will expedite business. That’s why in the Middle Ages they used Latin until the great banking houses of Italy were established. Then Italian became the official language everywhere. But here it was Nephite, and it tells exactly what you would expect. They did this to keep the records that they might write to one another. What kind of writing did they have? I think they used something like drawings. The sand drawings of the Hopis are combinations of symbols you recognize. There’s no such thing as a picture language that you can read—look and tell what it is by pictures. There are some that look like it, like Egyptian hieroglyphics. It’s made up of pictures, but when two men start to read it, they won’t come to the same conclusion at all. You have to be trained to recognize the symbols. Well, that means you have a written language then. It doesn’t have to be alphabetic; it can be syllabic. But it is not picture language. For “he went into the house,” you don’t show a word for he. You put an f, a snake, instead of that. You do put walking legs following the word. But for ee you put the two feathers first; that’s phonetic, you see. Then the two legs. Then you do draw a picture of a house, but only after you have put the letters pr meaning house. “He went into the house.”

It’s the same thing here. The Indians do have a written language. Again, back to the Hopis. They have left their glyphs all over the Southwest, showing the various places they’ve been. They’re the same characteristic things. These drawings are familiar signs used by various clans, etc. Up into central Utah and down into New Mexico, all the way down to Mexico, you can recognize the blazons of the Beaver Clan or of the Reed Clan, or the Bear Clan especially. That’s the great wandering one and one of the more powerful ones. The Parrot Clan is the second most important, but in some cases they are the ruling clan. Why would they be parrots if they came from the deserts of southern Utah? Well, they didn’t, of course; they migrated to there, but you get the characteristic. Then you have the flute man; everywhere you go you find an insect that looks if he were playing a double flute. He has antennas and walks along as if he had a big hump on his back. It’s like he’s carrying a load as he walks along. You will find that all over the place. That represents, “We were wanderers here; we camped here.” That’s the wandering sign. They have wandered all over the place, and you find these things everywhere.

So they did have a conventional use of symbols, which is writing. That’s all our writing is. Our capital A is just aleph, a picture of an ox with his horns upside down. In the alphabet that’s the beginning of all. Beta was a picture of a house that was written square like that. Now we write it this way to speed it up. You don’t want to draw an angular house each time; you just go [like this] and that’s your house. We are writing ideograms in English when we write. Delta is an upside down bush. You don’t want to draw a triangle every time, so you just go like that, and you have your three sides. It’s the old, conventional Semitic alphabet—Phoenician, but probably taken from the Egyptian, as we find in the Sinai Penninsula, where you find a transfer from Egyptian hieroglyphs to the Phoenicians. That was the theory of Petrie and others.

This is all perfectly credible and perfectly in order that they had them learn the Nephite language and had them adopt writing as a means of expediting business. Clear down in Peru they use grass and tie the grass knots. They are very efficient at communicating a message in knots. There are various ways you can use. Our ancestors used the tally stick. But there are these various ways of communicating, and they had them. Just like the touch
sticks and a certain wand passed around. You know the herald always passes a wand. You always see Hermes with his caduceus, his staff. That’s the staff the herald makes, which has his markings and message on it. So it goes. With these exchanges they [Amulon and his brethren] were able to increase their riches. They began to trade with one another. How would Joseph Smith figure out this? It’s a marvelous thing the way this is constructed, with such tremendous economy. While he is telling this story of Amulon and Alma, he just throws this in without any extra charge.

“And thus the Lamanites began to increase in riches, and began to trade one with another and wax great, and began to be a cunning and a wise people [if you start trading, you do], as to the wisdom of the world, yea, a very cunning people, delighting in all manner of wickedness [that means exchanges and tricks] and plunder, except it were among their own brethren.” (Mosiah 24:7). No white-collar crime—that’s very interesting that they wouldn’t rob their own people. It’s the same thing in Israel. You can’t charge interest, and you can’t enslave a person. That’s wrong if he’s an Israelite. They have two rules, one for dealing with Israel and one for dealing with the world. We learn this in the case of Shylock [in Shakespeare’s The Merchant of Venice].

If I can catch him once upon the hip, I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him.

So they were doing that, but they didn’t cheat their own. White-collar crime is by far the worst because you are fooling and robbing people that trust you. And we are living in the capital of that. Many people have been taken in; don’t invest in anything in Utah. “. . . delighting in all manner of wickedness and plunder, except it were among their own brethren [they had that honor among thieves]. And now it came to pass that Amulon began to exercise authority [you can believe that] over Alma and his brethren, and began to persecute him.” He had it in for Alma. Now, would he think that Alma was a traitor because he walked out on the priestly group? He fled with the priests, but he took the families with him and set out. He could have an argument that Alma was a traitor, but he was the worst traitor. He was with the ones who walked out on their wives and children. He not only deserted the king, but he deserted everybody. He went out and took over himself, and then he stole the Lamanite girls, etc. But who was guilty of doing the wrong thing? Alma kept the people together and took them out. We know the reasons, etc. But you can imagine what the rivalry would be between the two men—how he would hate Alma. Alma was the great man who was doing the right thing. This represents the famous maxim, “We can pardon those who injure us, but we can never pardon those whom we injure.” He had wronged Alma, so he could never pardon Alma. That’s true. We can easily forgive those who have wronged us, but never those we have wronged. That rankles. You have to have a reason for it, so you will never forgive that guy if you have wronged him. But he began to persecute him; Alma got on his nerves, etc. Notice this pecking order of the corporate ladder. He [Amulon] is middle management. The king put him in, and he could do what he darri pleased. Alma had been chosen as king of his people, and now Amulon just pushed him out. He was going to take over now.

Verse 9: “For Amulon knew Alma, that he had been one of the king’s priests, and that it was he that believed the words of Abinadi.” He knew about that, you see. You’ve started all this, he said. You can imagine that Shakespeare at this point would have marvelous dialogue between them, like in the king plays where he has these long accusations back and forth. In Greek that is called a stichomythia, where I say a verse and then you say a verse. One person recites a line, and the other tops it with another line. This goes on for
half an hour, as the two heroes or villains shout at each other in a *stichomythia*. We have a situation here that could be very well dramatized. This is what happened. “For Amulon knew Alma, that he had been one of the king’s priests, and that it was he that believed the words of Abinadi and was driven out before the king, and therefore he was wroth with him [he was mad at him for that reason]; for he was subject to king Laman, yet he exercised authority over them, and put tasks upon them, and put taskmasters over them.”

He was really rubbing it in; he was the unjust steward. This again is a Nephite characteristic. It’s their meanness when they have the upper hand. It’s like the insolence of apartheid, etc. “And Amulon commanded them that they should stop their cries [if they complained]; and he put guards over them to watch them, that whosoever should be found calling upon God should be put to death.” Well, how low can you go? See, he was a priest himself, but anyone calling upon God he would put to death because these were the people he didn’t like—and all this because of his personal enmity with Alma. So they prayed in their hearts. How can you pray in your thoughts? The standard prayer is, “Lord, hear the words of my mouth.” We are required to pray vocally, although Joseph Smith didn’t until he went to the Grove. He was raised in a religious family, but nobody ever prayed out loud at that time. That was a new thing. “And Alma and his people did not raise their voices to the Lord their God, but did pour out their hearts to him; and he did know the thoughts of their hearts.”

Well, the most powerful force in the world is thought, and the most powerful form of thought is faith. They could count on this; suddenly they were feeling reassured. This is a perfect setup for revenge, but they have no thought of revenge at all here. Then they began to be comforted [in verse 13]: “for I know of the covenant which ye have made unto me [the Lord tells them through Alma]; and I will covenant with my people and deliver them out of bondage. And I will also ease the burdens which are put upon your shoulders, that even you cannot feel them upon your backs, even while you are in bondage.” We are going to be disappointed that we don’t find the revenge scenario here. After all this villainy of [Amulon] we are not going to have the mandatory, final super explosion at the end of the film, when everything has to be blown up. No, the vengeance never takes place. I’m afraid we’ll be disappointed because the theme of all our John Wayne epics, etc., is the guy shown as being very bad at the beginning so you’ll really see that what he gets is what he deserves. And we all wait to see him get it, but we wait here in vain. Verse 15: “And now it came to pass that the burdens which were laid upon Alma and his brethren were made light; yea, the Lord did strengthen them that they could bear up their burdens with ease, and they did submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord.”

Now that was the pioneers. A less aggressive people could not be imagined in every case when there was a showdown, when they had a great possibility of [taking revenge]. There were some hotheads, but it was remarkable how they avoided [violence]. After they left, then the mobs broke loose and started destroying each other—the Bushwhackers and the Jayhawkers, etc. There was “bloody Kansas,” the burning of Lawrence and the like. These terrible mobs would circulate and destroy. The thing became a riot of mobs after they left. It wasn’t just the Mormons that took it [the persecution]. They took it and left, and then with the others terrible things began to happen.

So what were they going to do about it? They were going to get out. Verse 16: “so great was their faith and their patience that the voice of the Lord came unto them again, saying: Be of good comfort, for on the morrow I will deliver you out of bondage.”
we've had Rechabites before; this is the way they do. I think you could list at least twenty examples in which large factions or tribes or clans [have done this]. Anyway, they had a tug of war [among the Hopis]. They had decided that the clan that lost the tug of war would have to move, so the whole clan moved out and went to Moenkopi and joined another village, another society. This is the way they do; they've done it time and again. If there was too much tension between two groups, sometimes they would cast lots and decide which should go. That’s out of ancient history; that’s a common theme too—to decide to migrate as the Phoenicians did under Dido and her sister Anna. They left and founded Carthage.

So the Lord said to Alma, “Thou shalt go before this people, and I will go with thee and deliver this people out of bondage. Now it came to pass that Alma and his people in the night-time gathered their flocks together, and also of their grain.” We notice that the same thing happened back here in Mosiah 22:2, where it is talking about Ammon and Limhi. “And it came to pass that they could find no way to deliver themselves out of bondage, except it were to take their women and children, and their flocks, and their herds, and their tents, and depart into the wilderness.” These two migrations are very close together, but this is the way things were being done. That’s what they were getting to in a time of tension like this. We talk of the Swarming Time—the great migrations, during the fourth and fifth centuries, of the barbarians, when our ancestors overran Europe. That is called the Swarming Time. The Germans call it the Völkerwanderung, when the people were wandering, mixing up, and settling down. The most amazing thing is how people from the Far East, way up there almost to Alaska in Asia, ended up in Portugal of all places—the Goths who settled there.

Well, anyway the same thing happens here [as happened in Mosiah 22:2], all night long they were gathering their flocks together and getting ready. (Oh darn, I was going to bring Marion’s book along. He gave a very interesting report. He got all the British reports on the Battle of the Bulge and how completely fooled we were—how they could organize and set in motion just a few miles from our front an army of 200,000 men.) With the enormous intelligence operation we had, our generals were completely fooled. Little me, I wasn’t fooled, but it didn’t do any good—nobody listened to me. I was keeping in closest contact with the situation. We’d send out scouts on patrol, and they would say, “Well, they are gathering up; they are building up here and there.” This went back, but they didn’t like to hear it in Brussels. So nothing came of it, until Rundstedt overran everything. They just came all of a sudden, and then it was wild.

This is what happened here; in the night-time they built up. Remember, we mentioned before that these people had been watching. They used the wine trick the other time, but they didn’t this time. They didn’t need the wine because it was the Lord that “caused a deep sleep to come upon Lamanites, yea, and all their task-masters were in a profound sleep.” So they sneaked out, and they came to a valley which they called “the valley of Alma [just as we have Brigham City, and Smithfield, and the little, infinitesimal town of Nibley up in Cache Valley; they name them after the people that settle them], because he led their way in the wilderness. Yea, and in the valley of Alma they poured out their thanks to God” with a sigh of relief and settled down. Don’t fool yourself; you’re still in danger. Get moving. You’re not safe yet just because I have performed one miracle. Go on [paraphrased]. Verse 23: “And now the Lord said unto Alma: Haste thee and get thou and this people out of this land, for the Lamanites have awakened and do pursue thee; therefore get thee out of this land, and I will stop the Lamanites in this valley that they come no further in pursuit of this people.” Don’t worry!
We think of Nephi’s prayer when he said, Lord, block up the way of my enemies pursuing me. Don’t block up my way. Make the level way open for me. He was talking about fleeing through the desert and said, block up the way of my enemies; place stumbling blocks before them so they won’t pursue me. It’s the same thing here. The Lord does that. He stopped the Lamanites. I think we’ve all heard the story about Colonia Juárez, down in north Mexico. The Romneys lived down there in those days. When Pancho Villa came through with a big crowd burning, looting, and all that sort of thing, they were held up when they saw very clearly a lighted train coming along. There was no train there, but they all saw the lighted train. They thought troops were coming or something, so they took out and left the town alone. I’ve heard that story many times. See, the Lord blocks people in various ways. He did it here [for Alma’s people].

Verse 25: “And after they had been in the wilderness twelve days [that gives us a geographical tip since there was such a gang of them moving, and they stopped a while, in fact too long; the Lamanites nearly caught up with them, but they got away], they arrived in the land of Zarahemla [these places were fairly close together, but they were safe home now in Zarahemla]; and king Mosiah did also receive them with joy.” They celebrated that, of course.

When people come together, there are these great gatherings. We have descriptions and marvelous paintings by Bierstadt and others of Indian life in the West. They used to meet up at Jackson Hole, for example. You may have been to Kelly’s Grove in Springville. That was a place where Indians would come by the thousands and meet in the fall. Kelly’s Grove is a beautiful place. There were places where the Indians met in great numbers and came from great distances. The trappers would do the same thing because they would come there to trade the furs, etc. There were these places where they would have congregations once a year, sometimes once every four years, and they were huge affairs—like giant camp meetings, powwows, etc. This is what it was. “And now king Mosiah caused that all the people should be gathered together” (Mosiah 25:1). Well, this is ancient too. I wrote an article on that, too, a long time ago called “The Hierocentric State” about when they did that same thing in the ancient world. They didn’t have the Book of Mormon at all in those days, but it’s all down here. Here they all come together, so this gives us a survey and a census. It doesn’t give us numbers, but it says there were the descendants of Nephi and the people of Zarahemla, the descendants of Mulek. And the Mulekites were far more numerous than the Nephites. But the Nephites and Mulekites together weren’t even half as numerous as the Lamanites, so they had increased much more rapidly. It breaks them down into tribes.

Let me show you something in the Doctrine and Covenants 3:16. On the 116 pages that were lost there was information that we don’t have today. This is a broad hint of the sort of things that was in them. Section 3 discusses the loss of the 116 pages, which were not going to be replaced at that time. It’s a very interesting thing here. “Nevertheless, my work shall go forth, for inasmuch as the knowledge of a Savior has come unto the world, through the testimony of the Jews, even so shall the knowledge of a Savior come unto my people—And [this message will go] to the Nephites [there are still Nephites around], and the Jacobites [it breaks them down into seven tribes], and the Josephites [they are still distinct], and the Zoramites, through the testimony of their fathers.” Now they are the four tribes that are classed as Nephitic; as it tells us later, that is just purely a cultural, political classification to call them Nephites because they include these four tribes: Nephites, Jacobites, Josephites, and Zoramites. The other three are the Lamanites,
Lemuelites, and Ishmaelites. That makes the seven tribes. You usually have to have seven tribes. Seven or twelve you have to have. But it’s more complicated than you think. And even though the Lamanites had only three tribes, they were far more numerous—an interesting development. Well, it’s because they had a healthier family life. It tells us that they loved their children, and they didn’t play around, like Amulon and people like that.

Verse 4: “And now all the people of Nephi were assembled together, and also all the people of Zarahemla [it was a great assembly and must have been an impressive gathering], and they were gathered together in two bodies.” That’s natural, of course. If I had a Bible, I would read Deuteronomy 31 and Exodus 24, where the same thing happened in Israel. They united in separate bodies and kept a certain identity, as it says there. These tribes were still aware of their identity because genealogy is important. What they did is have the law read to them; that was what they must do. If you go up north to Iceland, you will still find the thingstadar, the place where they used to hold the ancient allthing. As you may know, Spanish Fork is the oldest Icelandic settlement in the Western Hemisphere. When I first came to Provo, there were five wards in Spanish Fork where they still spoke Icelandic. I gathered a good Icelandic library there. You will find throughout Iceland in certain places the sites, the places where the nation met. The allthing was the “great meeting of the people.” They met in a circle. And you will find the circles of rocks, the rocks and boulders around where they set up their booths of branches, green trees, rocks, blankets, anything they could throw together. It was exactly like the booths of Israel or the seh of Egypt. They always met at the mount of the law. The godi, which is our word god, was the high priest who would stand on the logberg and read the law to the people. Remember, those people had writing very early. The only people in the world with a complete history are the Icelanders; they have a complete history of every family that was ever with them because everything was recorded.

The point is that he [Mosiah] read them the law. The same thing happened in Israel, in Rome, in Greece, etc. When the law was pronounced, it was sent down from the mountain and read to the people, as Moses read it to them. He brought it down and read it, and the people were camped at the foot of the mountain living in booths. It is called “the festival of the booths—the gathering.” These are customs you will find throughout the world. It’s a very surprising thing. This is not the sort of thing you would invent spontaneously; it went back to a single source. They [Mosiah’s people] met here in the two bodies, and it was very impressive. He read them the records of Zeniff and the account of Alma, and this gave them a new perspective entirely. The reading filled them in on both the history and the important events. We must be informed, and this was something new to them. Notice that it says in verse 8: “For they knew not what to think.” They never knew such things were going on.

Question: Why do you suppose they were so struck with amazement when they read these records?

Answer: This is back in Zarahemla and is telling us what has been going on with these people who had been going out everywhere. He is talking about three or four different colonies of people—where they originated, their tribulations, etc. They didn’t know any of this had been going on with their relatives or anyone. Is this what has happened since we left Jerusalem? Well, they were struck with amazement. It says, “For they knew not what to think; for when they beheld those that had been delivered out of bondage they were filled with exceedingly great joy” (Mosiah 25:8). They were glad to hear this. You
have to have the book of the law read and by acclamation you have to approve it. The classic example here is King Benjamin. With the new coronation and the new year, the people came, brought their first fruits, and camped in booths. The king gave them a speech from the tower, exactly as happens in “Nathan the Babylonian,” who recorded that thing happening with the Jews in ancient times. There’s nothing in the Bible about that, but it’s in the Book of Mormon and in Jewish records. That’s the way they used to do when they gathered all together.

Notice that they were filled with both joy and sorrow. These people are easily moved; they sit around and weep their heads off at conferences, etc. It’s a very cheerful event when you go to a conference with the Indians, and they “even shed many tears of sorrow.” This is the warp and the woof—this in our life. There are many accounts of the old man at the gate in heaven. There are two gates, one where the righteous go through, and one where the wicked go through. An old man sits there. It’s Enoch with a book, and he records. He weeps and he smiles. He smiles and is happy every time a righteous person comes, and he weeps every time a wicked one does. We find the same thing in the Book of Mormon a little later on in Alma, when he talks about the Title of Liberty. That’s another story, and we’ll never get to it if we don’t get along here. But this is all relevant, you see—it’s all here. How did this ever get in the Book of Mormon? By some kid trying to fool the family, as Mrs. Brodie said?

Verse 11: “And again, when they thought upon the Lamanites, who were their brethren, of their sinful and polluted state, they were filled with pain and anguish for the welfare of their souls.” Can we suffer that they go in ignorance? The thought of the pagans in ignorance breaks the hearts of Christians, supposedly, so they send missionaries out. Then this is a very interesting note. Amulon and the priests had children with these Lamanite girls. The Lamanite girls were still Lamanites, and they raised their children. The children always stay with their mothers until they have regular initiations into puberty. These kids were all raised by Lamanite mothers, so they “were displeased with the conduct of their fathers.” Their mothers were much more moral than their fathers were, and probably their fathers didn’t treat their mothers very well. So they wanted to be Nephites, and “they took upon themselves the name of Nephi [no desire to dominate here at all], that they might be called the children of Nephi and be numbered among those who were called Nephites.” Here’s more racial complication; this is not a simple ethnic story at all. These kids wanted to be called Nephites and join the Nephites. This is a thing that happens.

Verse 13: “And now all the people of Zarahemla were numbered with the Nephites [so we don’t call them Mulekites anymore; they’re Nephites too; they are numbered with them and that’s the name], and this because the kingdom had been conferred upon none but those who were descendants of Nephi.” See, it’s a political designation beginning with Mosiah, because only Nephites could rule. Then [Mosiah] desired that Alma should take charge of the church. Now we come to the most interesting parts of what happens—how to manage the church is very important. (This information comes very soon now.) They are back in Zarahemla now, not out with that other crowd, and the king said, I’ll put you in charge of the whole thing; you can go around and establish the church [paraphrased]. Alma went from one body to another, preaching unto the people repentance and faith on the Lord. And he did exhort the people of Limhi and his brethren, all those that had been delivered out of bondage, that they should remember that it was the Lord that did deliver them. And it came to pass that after Alma had taught the people many things, and had made an end of speaking to them [this is still at the meeting], that king Limhi was desirous that he might be baptized [Alma is the one who brought the authority; Ammon
refused to do it until Alma showed up]; and all his people were desirous that they might be
baptized also.”

It’s the same thing that happened in the case of Benjamin, when they all accepted the
covenant and cried out in a single voice that they accepted it when the king asked them.
[Limhi and his people] accepted the covenant also and were baptized to show that they
accepted the covenant. Verse 18: “Therefore, Alma did go forth into the water and did
baptize them; yea, he did baptize them after the manner he did his brethren in the waters
of Mormon [using the same method]; yea, and as many as he did baptize did belong to
the church of God; and this because of their belief on the words of Alma [it’s very much
like the Dead Sea Scrolls here]. . . . King Mosiah granted unto Alma that he might
establish churches throughout all the land of Zarahemla [remember, this is a large expanse
here with many cities]; and gave him power to ordain priests and teachers [wherever he
wanted to] over every church [it was going to become a sacral state, in other words; the
priesthood is approved by the king]. Now this was done because there were so many
people that they could not all be governed by one teacher; neither could they all hear the
word of God in one assembly [so they had different assemblies in different churches
everywhere; they couldn’t all have to come together in one group because they had to
come too far]. Therefore, they did assemble themselves together in different bodies, being
called churches,” and they were ruled by Alma. And they were to preach nothing in the
churches “except it were repentance and faith in God.” Verse 23: “And now there were
seven churches in the land of Zarahemla.” We just said there were the seven tribes there.
When John wrote in Revelation, he wrote to the seven churches in Asia. That’s probably a
coincidence. But seven churches would certainly suggest seven tribes or seven groups.
“And they were called the people of God [they were given a name; remember, Benjamin
said, I’m going to give you a name today when he talked to the people in the general
assembly]. And the Lord did pour out his Spirit upon them, and they were blessed, and
prospered in the land.”

The next chapter is devoted to the church. This is another very important thing. What
about the church? What authority does the church have over people? What authority does
the church have over individuals if they don’t want to belong to it, if they want to leave
in a group, or if they want to join a group? What do we do in that case? These are the
rules that are to be laid down here. Both the king and Alma are completely stumped. They
don’t know what to do, so they call upon the Lord and get instructions. This is the reason
this becomes troublesome. Can the church force people to stay in it? “Now it came to pass
that there were many of the rising generation that could not understand the words of
king Benjamin [and it tells us why they didn’t understand them], being little children at
the time he spake unto his people; and they did not believe the tradition of their fathers.”
So they weren’t there for Benjamin at all, and Benjamin is basic. Well, do we understand
Benjamin’s teaching? Do we follow it? It is addressed to us actually. They didn’t follow it.
They gave it up, and they didn’t understand it because they didn’t believe on the two
main points.

There are two standards tests of whether a person is a real believer or not in ancient
records, like the recently discovered Bodmer Papyrus. There were various sects that broke
off from the church in the first and second centuries, especially the second century which
was the great age of heresy. Eighty different gnostic and other sects were listed by
Epiphanius, and he told what they believed. All of these sects broke off from the church.
What are the tests of whether they are real Christians or not? Well, this is a letter
discovered about 1950 in which Paul was writing his third letter to the Corinthians. He
said, how can you tell [a person who does not believe]? The first thing is that they will deny the literal resurrection. The second thing is that they will deny the literal returning of the Lord, the coming of Christ. Notice that these are the two things these people can’t believe. They will believe in the morals. They will believe in the Word of Wisdom and all the rest if you want it. But they won’t believe in the literal resurrection (when people die, they die dead), and neither will they believe concerning the coming of Christ (he won’t come again). This is why they didn’t believe; it’s a vicious circle. Because of their unbelief, they couldn’t understand it. And because they couldn’t understand it, they wouldn’t believe it.

Verse 3: “And now because of their unbelief they could not understand the word of God; and their hearts were hardened.” They started to campaign against it. This always happens when people turn away from the church—that’s the way. Verse 3 is the process, the anatomy of apostasy, and verse 4 goes on with it. “And they were a separate people as to their faith, and remained so ever after, even in their carnal and sinful state [they wanted it that way]; for they would not call upon the Lord their God.” This is going to lead very soon to the establishment of the religion of the Nehors, which dominates throughout the rest of the Book of Mormon. The religion in which they call themselves “Christians” is not the dominant religion among the Nephites and Lamanites; it’s the Nehors. They far outnumber them, persecute them, and everything else. We haven’t gotten to Nehor yet, but they dominate throughout the Book of Mormon.

We’ll see now what happens. How do you deal with these people? If you are the king or the high priest, and you have a state religion here, and the king has recognized and authorized the priesthood, what are you going to do with these people who don’t want to cooperate and won’t believe any of that stuff? That’s what he talks about, and it’s a very interesting chapter.

Mosiah 26 is an enormously important chapter, and the first verse is very impressive. We mentioned it before. “Now it came to pass that there were many of the rising generation that could not understand the words of king Benjamin, being little children at the time he spake unto his people.” Well, the first thing we notice is the tremendous speed with which things move in the Book of Mormon. This generation was alive in the time of King Benjamin, and all that has happened. It impresses one how much has happened in how short a time.

Matthew Arnold, in what has been considered the greatest work of literary criticism in the English language, said there are four things that make Homer preeminently great. First, he is preeminently rapid; second, he is preeminently noble; third, he is preeminently simple and direct in content (what he tells); and fourth, he is preeminently simple and direct in language. By far the hardest of these to achieve, that no other great epic poet ever achieved, is the rapidity. Milton drags on all day just to have Satan turn around twice. But not Homer—he rushes along. And the Book of Mormon moves like an express train, right from the first chapter. Right from the first event at the beginning, Nephi plunges into it, and he never stops going. The book just moves like lightning all the way through. That’s a feat that nobody can accomplish who doesn’t know exactly what’s going on, or doesn’t have a document before him. Nobody can get away with that. Look at how much has happened, how much is going to happen, and how fast it happens. But it’s the situation that’s significant here. Notice this: “Being little children at the time he spake unto his people . . . they did not believe the tradition of their fathers.” Well, why shouldn’t little children believe the tradition of their fathers? What’s wrong with that? Most of the little children I know took it from me. In my family on both sides, the grandchildren have far stronger testimonies than the children did. Is being young going to stop you from getting a testimony? What went on here? The reason for it is very well explained here. What is happening here is this, and we will see that it comes out very clearly in this chapter. And notice Mosiah 24:4–7. The Lamanites and Nephites over a wide area started mingling freely and exchanging goods, services, and information. They were friendly, etc.

About 35–50 miles south on the main highway to Flagstaff from where you turn off at the gap there in Hopi land, there’s Waputka. It’s quite near the road, and it’s a very ancient ruin. It’s quite extensive, and all sorts of junk has been found there. It was the center of a network of roads or trails. There you find beads, pottery, basketwork, and metalwork that come from all over—from the Great Lakes region, from up in the North, from down in Central America, from the Central Plains. They find fragments of artifacts from everywhere. In other words, there was a great trading center; people traded very widely there. In ancient times they did move around that far north. We know they did this in the south because you find different types of work. All up and down the Andes and all through Mexico there’s all sorts of evidence of trade. It’s a very important thing, of course.
They had this business civilization here, and we are told in verse 7 that with the business civilization and prosperity, crime began to flourish. They began to increase in riches, in trade, in cunning, and in all manner of wickedness and plunder (sophistication). The connection is made quite clear, for example, a little later on in the case of the sons of Mosiah. Turn to Mosiah 27:7–8 for just for a moment to see what the situation is there. It tells us “they became a large and wealthy people.” And notice that the sons of no less than the great King Mosiah and the oldest son of Alma joined the hell-fire club, the smart-aleck club, and rejected the gospel completely. They wouldn’t take it from their parents. That’s a remarkable thing, isn’t it? But you notice what it was. It’s right in the same breath with their being a large and wealthy people. Then the next verse says that the kids weren’t taken in by religion anymore. With this sort of thing, it becomes a corrupt society. Verse 8: “Now the sons of Mosiah were numbered among the unbelievers; and also one of the sons of Alma; . . . he became a very wicked and an idolatrous man.” These kids were rich, sophisticated, and cynical; they spoiled a lot of things.

Your special delectation business is not the flower of civilization, but of barbarism. It’s the way of the barbarians and was born of the wandering and plundering tribes of the Steppes. One of the first settlements of our Viking ancestors from the North was Elphinstone on the north coast of Scotland, where they had a mine. Genealogy now turns up that three Hugh Nibleys in succession were mayors of Elphinstone. I just discovered that less than a year ago. All sorts of things happened. But they went around plundering, looting, and taking everything they could. If you want to know what went on there, read the Orkneyinga Saga about the wonderful things they did. They plundered and looted and burned each others’ houses down, etc. But they always carried a set of scales with them for business—for weighing precious metals, jewels, gold, and things like that. They were traders every inch of the way, and trading, business, and looting all went together. To grab what you could grab was the idea. The chiefs of the tribes across the Steppes lived by plunder and exchange. There was the ring giver. Remember how Beowulf starts out. Everybody goes out and plunders. The king has the richest plunder. Then he divides it among them, and there is a good deal of argument about who has the most honor, etc. They got very clever in banking arrangements and in keeping their books. “You owe me so much, and I owe you so much.” In the barbaric societies, your mead of honor depended on your share of the mead. It’s a very interesting thing. The Egyptian word for it iw is a picture of a side thigh of beef that a person gets as his particular lot.

Anyway, these semi-nomads had to have their wealth portable because they were traveling around. It was the weather, the bad times, that forced them to move. It gets everybody moving, and everybody is plundering everybody else. That’s what happened in Lehi’s time in 600 B.C. All the world started moving; the whole ancient structure collapsed (we discussed that last semester). Everybody started to go looking for homes and colonizing. But their wealth had to be portable and in concentrated form—mainly precious metals and jewels. They were great on collecting those. Well, that’s the theme, the gold and the jewels, whether it’s Raiders of the Lost Ark or any of our prime-time TV—the detective and murder mysteries. Now drugs have a big part to play. But these valuable, small, mobile items are the soul of business, and they make for ferocious business customs, etc. They kept jealous accounts of what they gave and how much. It was always counted. And, of course, they dressed in gorgeous attire. We say “barbaric dress,” as far as that goes. And again, this was a necessity. As you can see from the National Geographic, the women among all this sort of people, including the Indians, traveled with all their personal wealth hung around their necks. It was usually in gold coins with holes through them; you see all
sorts of them. Among all the Asians and everywhere you go, you find this. All this splendor they carry around with them is characteristic. All their personal wealth was strung about their person, so that it was mobile. They could always put their hands on it.

By contrast, you notice that the inhabitants of the civilized cities, like the Ionian and Egyptian cities, were content with wearing a simple white or gray robe with a little tasteful decoration or fringe—that’s all. They all wore basic white in Athens. In Rome you would know exactly what a person’s status was. If it was brown or white, he was a servant. If it was white with a toga \textit{picta} then he was a “big wheel.” If it had a toga \textit{clavata} on it, he was a senator. As I said, business is not the fine flower of civilization, nor is civilization the product of business. It’s the other way around; it’s essentially barbaric.

This is what happened to these people; this is what it is describing now. Let us proceed happily here. We got down to verse 5. It seems that every chapter is the most important, but this one tells us about the church—what the church is for and why we have to have a church. The problem is this, you will notice. “And now in the reign of Mosiah they [the dissenters] were not half so numerous as the people of God; but because of the dissensions among the brethren [inside the church itself; this is what caused the apostates to grow in number] they became more numerous [and finally they outnumbered them]. For it came to pass that they did deceive many [these outsiders deceived the members of the church; these apostates were able to get away with it—how?] with their flattering words.” They came on strong with all sorts of flattering words—words flattering to the intellect like: “You can’t believe that infantile stuff; you don’t believe that stuff.” Some of my friends don’t believe the gospel, but the interesting thing is that they don’t believe I believe it either. They can’t believe that I actually believe this stuff. It’s one of the tests. They’re so naive about it; they don’t know a blessed thing.

Verse 6: “They did deceive many with their flattering words, who were in the church, and did cause them to commit many sins; therefore it became expedient that those who committed sin, that were in the church, should be admonished by the church.” If you are a member of the church and you have accepted some of this smooth talk and started misbehaving yourself, [you might say:] “We can’t quibble about these things. This old puritanical strictness just doesn’t go. We are an enlightened people; we’re emancipated.” If you had started that and were still a member of the church, then you would be admonished by the church, and they would tell you to get back on the track again. They didn’t like that, of course. Notice that we have priests and teachers in verse 7. It was the teachers who would catch onto it first, of course. The teachers reported them to the priests. I guess we could call them “home teachers” in this case. Notice it says, “They were brought before the priests and delivered up unto the priests by the teachers; and the priests brought them before Alma, who was the high priest.” What could the priests do? The teachers wouldn’t have anything to do with it. This is a “hot potato,” and nobody will take it, you notice. It was handed to the priests, and they went up to Alma, the high priest. (Well, take it to the General Authority; he should know.) But Alma didn’t know; this is another surprise in verse 9. Alma wasn’t aware of what had been going on at all. Now that’s a surprising thing. Why not? Shouldn’t he have known that? Verse 9: “And it came to pass that Alma did not know concerning them; but there were many witnesses against them; yea, the people stood and testified of their iniquity in abundance.”

But Alma didn’t know about what was going on. Was he ever naive! But there were many witnesses against them. He was apparently reluctant to believe it; they had to pour on the witnesses. It took a lot of pressure to make Alma give in there. He was a real idealist,
wasn’t he? He didn’t want to get involved in this thing; yet he was the head of the church. He was troubled. The next verse tells that Alma was upset by this sort of thing. This is a common thing, too. A good example that I’ve cited before here is the duke in Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure*. The duke wanted to know what was really going on in his kingdom, and the only way he could find out was to put on a disguise and go around and see. It was the same thing with Harun al-Rashid. He had his faithful servant Ja’far, who was a gigantic black man. To find out what was going on in the kingdom, he would disguise himself and go out by night and circulate. He’d visit all the gambling halls, etc. They did it for fun as much as anything because Harun al-Rashid was very much bored by what was going on. But the king has to disguise himself and go around if he wants to know what goes on. With King Lear it’s the same thing when he is kicked out and no longer king. Then he goes out and mingles with some of the people in the cold winter time, poor Tom’s a-cold, etc. He says, “If I had known what has been going on all this time . . .” But he was the king, and it never got to him. So it pays for kings to be demoted and look around a while. This is what happens.

Incidentally, I imagine that’s why the British monarchy has remained so popular—they do get down and circulate. Today, Prince Charles is very much interested in social affairs and everything else. And what made the trouble is that Edward VIII got too sympathetic. He was Prince of Wales and he got to sympathetic with the Welsh coal miners. He found out what their troubles were and started feeling with them. Certain industrial interests didn’t like that sort of thing, and there was a lot of trouble.

Well, anyway Alma didn’t know, so you’ll have to excuse him for not knowing. It took some pressure to convince him, but when he was convinced, he was upset. He was “troubled in his spirit,” and said, Well, I’ll have to take this to the king. He is passing the buck, too, see. Verse 11: “And he said unto the king: Behold, here are many whom we have brought before thee, who are accused of their brethren; yea, and they have been taken in divers iniquities.” Now what can the church punish them for, and how can the church punish them? That’s what this chapter is going to tell us. He doesn’t know what to do about it, and neither does the king, because they are civil offenses. Here he says, “Therefore we have brought them before thee, that thou mayest judge them according to their crimes.” See, they are civil offenses. If they commit a crime, the church doesn’t punish them. The king punishes them; the government punishes them. If they haven’t committed a crime, what can the church do about it? They are not criminals, so we’re going to decide that.

What does the king do? He passes it on, too. It’s a “hot potato” for him just as well. Verse 12: “But king Mosiah said unto Alma: Behold, I judge them not; therefore I deliver them [right back to you] into thy hands to be judged.” So the king passes them right back to Alma again. See, the question is, “What action should I take?” The answer is that it’s through the church that God intends to deal with men. The human race is admittedly lost and bemused. This is the closest exposition you will get of the purpose of the church. Why do we have to have a church? Why do you have to have a ship? Why do you have to have a house? Well, we have no choice but to live together is the reason. If we were living alone, we wouldn’t need them. But we all have to live together. Even Cain had an entourage wherever he went. We are living in a community with each other; and we will see what comes of that.
Alma is not the typical boss, you'll notice. He isn’t the manager that knows exactly what
to do and does the wrong thing. The spirit of Alma was troubled—he was worried. He was
afraid that he might do the wrong thing, a very humble man. Notice it says, “for he feared
that he should do wrong in the sight of God.” Well, how many leaders, bosses, managers
are in constant fear that they will do wrong when they are faced with a problem? They
may not know how to solve it, but the idea of doing wrong doesn’t bother them.
Nobody does wrong anymore, as you know. They deny all guilt no matter what they do.
You may be caught with your hand in the till, but you deny every charge because the
lawyers always tell you, “Only fools plead guilty—always say that you’re innocent.” But
he was worried about it and “feared that he should do wrong in the sight of God . . . [so]
his whole soul to God [this is where we take it—to the Lord, of course, and]
the voice of the Lord came to him, saying: [this is in the manner of the Doctrine and
Covenants; when Joseph Smith wanted to know he asked] . . . Thou art blessed because of
thy exceeding faith in the words alone of my servant Abinadi.” Now what about childish
faith? What about being gullible, etc.? He believed in the “words alone.” He saw no
evidence, no proof, or anything like that. And it wasn’t the words of God; it was the
words of Abinadi alone that he believed in. What’s going on here? Why is there merit in
this?

The great Krister Stendahl is now bishop of Lund and chief of the Swedish church. He was
here at a luncheon and someone (namely me) quoted Joseph Smith as saying, “Nobody
was ever damned for believing too much.” Well, he found that extremely offensive. But
when it comes to it, everybody believes too much. There’s not a person here who believes
a single thing that has been absolutely and completely proved—gravitation or anything
else. You have to believe all sorts of things that you can’t possibly prove, and everybody
believes them. Well, what’s the point here then? Because Alma believed in his words
alone. I would emphasize his. You are blessed because of the things you choose to
believe—not by the act of believing, not just by faith. You weren’t blessed because you
believed, but because you chose what to believe. Everybody chooses what to believe. The
atheist is a very strong believer. He is the most passionate arguer you can possibly find,
and the positivist. Where will you find greater faith and firm conviction than among
economists? No two of them agree, but boy they can give you the straight thing. You
find faith all around you. You must believe in something and everybody does. But the
Lord said, blessed are you because of the things you chose to believe; you chose to believe
in the things that Abinadi taught [paraphrased]. He could have chosen all sorts of other
things. So it isn’t that he was naive and gullible, but he was blessed because of what he
chose to believe. It’s up to you to choose what you’ll believe. As I said, everybody does.
You get that especially in politics. With one person, someone is a great man who can’t
sin. Another person will say, “What do you see in that crook?” This goes on everywhere;
we have our convictions. But what he chose to believe were the words of Abinadi.

Verse 16: “And blessed are they because of their exceeding faith in the words alone which
thou hast spoken unto them.” See, “faith in the words alone.” That seems awfully shallow,
doesn’t it, just to accept something on somebody’s word? But they were not accepting it
on somebody’s word. They had chosen what they would believe. What rang the bell for
them is what they believed, and [they were] blessed. And here’s another thing in verse 17.
It is often asked, what authority, what priesthood did Alma have to do what he was doing
here? He went ahead and did it alone, and here he is congratulated for it. He is
congratulated for taking the initiative. “And blessed art thou because thou hast established
a church among this people; and they shall be established, and they shall be my people.”
[The Lord] is going to accept them, but he went ahead and established a church. Having
the priesthood, he took the initiative, and the Lord said that's good. He doesn't want to
command in all things. Verse 19: “And because thou hast inquired of me concerning the
transgressor, thou art blessed.” We love to make moral judgments of others, but Alma
didn't. He would not do that. He was blessed because he asked the Lord concerning those
things.

Verse 20: “Thou art my servant; and I covenant with thee that thou shalt have eternal
life.” Alma was speaking for the church, and yet God always covenants with us as
individuals, as we will see three verses after this. How could it be otherwise? Is there any
virtue in membership? Can you be blessed because you are a member of anything? No.
The Lord deals with you alone—only with the individual participant. It's like an orchestra,
a choir, a faculty, or anything like that. It's a community, but everyone makes an
individual contribution, and he deals alone with the Lord. We have it here: “Thou art my
servant; and I covenant with thee that thou shalt have eternal life [it's between Alma and
the Lord]; and thou shalt serve me and go forth in my name, and shalt gather together my
sheep [then in the next verse he says, whoever is acceptable to me should be acceptable to
you]. And he that will hear my voice shall be my sheep; and him shall ye receive into the
church, and him will I also receive. For behold, this is my church [we're here all working
together; if anyone wants to come back, he says the door is always open]; whosoever is
baptized shall be baptized unto repentance. And whomsoever ye receive shall believe in
my name; and him will I freely forgive.” If I forgive him, you must forgive him. So the
door is always open here. With baptism [the Lord] will receive them again.

Verse 23: “For it is I that taketh upon me the sins of the world; for it is I that hath created
[I am the one that hath created them]; and it is I that granteth unto him [notice it is
singular] that believeth unto the end a place at my right hand.” He is not talking about
the church as a whole here, but is speaking of the individual. He says, Alma, the deal is
between you and me, and I'll grant to anyone that believes unto the end a place at my
right hand. It's a personal relationship. I'll grant to that individual who believes on me a
place at the right hand. That's the Atonement, the yeshivah, sitting down with God.
That's the word that's translated as atonement in the Old Testament. When you go in
and sit down with God, that's yeshivah; that's an atonement, when you become at one.

Verse 24: “For behold, in my name are they called; and if they know me they shall come
forth, and shall have a place eternally at my right hand.” It's one hundred percent up to
the Lord himself. He will make the decision; he will decide who is righteous and who isn't.
As he says in Isaiah, Don't tell me who are my sheep and who are not. Don't tell me who
are the people of God—who are the good people and the bad people. That's for me to
decline; that's not for you to decide [paraphrased]. It's the easiest thing in the world to say,
“Are you on the Lord's side? We are God's people. This is the Lord's university.” Calling
this the Lord's university used to make Harvey Taylor furious when he came here. He
thought that was a gross insult to the Lord. Not because of the quality of this or any other
university, but we had no right to say it. Let the Lord say that if that's so. We shouldn't
pin that medal on ourselves. We have no right to put medals on ourselves that way.

Verse 25: “And it shall come to pass that when the second trump shall sound then shall
they that never knew me come forth and shall stand before me.” And if they absolutely
refuse, he will deal with them personally again. Notice the second trump, the second
resurrection. What's wrong with having to wait a few years in eternity? You are willing to
wait for a second resurrection—six months or something like that—you'll graduate a little
later? What's the difference? There's all the difference in the world. The second

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resurrection is a different type of experience—a different type of resurrection. You’ll be resurrected, of course, but it’s a different environment and a different setting. You’re a different type of person from those who come out in the first resurrection. It’s not a matter of timing at all. What’s going on here is a matter of quality. Verse 26: “And then shall they know that I am the Lord their God, that I am their Redeemer; but they would not be redeemed.” Remember, we mentioned that before? I was nice to you, but you would not. I warned you, but you would not. I commanded you, but you would not. It’s the same thing; they would not be redeemed. There’s nothing he can do; he is not going to infringe on their agency. Verse 27: “And then I will confess unto them that I never knew them.” They thought they could fool him and that they would be recognized anyway. No, I knew what was going on, he’ll say; you never fooled me. That’s why he says, “I will confess unto them that I never knew them,” because they were never behaving; they tried to pull a fast one. Remember, they say, God will beat us with a few stripes and then everything will be all right. He won’t notice what’s going on here [paraphrased]. “And they shall depart into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.” This is explained later in the Book of Mormon.

Then here is the answer to the question. The teachers asked the question, “What will we do with these guys?” The priests asked the question. Then they asked it to Alma. Alma took it to the king, and the king turned it back to Alma. He said, “I don’t know; what will we do?” So Alma asked the Lord, and this is the answer to the question: What do you do with members of the church who deny their testimonies and make trouble? This happens in the church all the time. There are people who don’t want to belong but want to stay in. I know lots of people who are that way because they will lose their audience and have no prestige. Nobody will listen to them once they are out of the church. They always want to be connected with the church so they can get an audience. If they weren’t panning the church, they never could get anybody out. All you have to do is start jumping on the church and then you can get somebody interested; they’ll listen to you. So they always bring that up; they always keep the church in the picture. People who write books against it, etc., always want to keep their membership—Fawn Brodie, for example. You can’t find anything more hostile than her book. How many of you know Fawn Brodie’s work No Man Knows My History? She wrote the book that became the standard work on Mormonism [for the world], although it’s a fraud. But an interesting thing [happened after] she wrote this withering book. When Russell Rich was back East in the New England Mission, she was very sick. Her husband phoned them to come and administer to her. It was a terrible night, and they had to drive eighty miles in an awful storm. They said, “Well, she doesn’t believe it.”

Her husband said, “Don’t ask that—just come.” He was Jewish. They went out and said to her, “You don’t believe in this sort of thing. Why did you call us?”

She said, “But I do believe it.” She was very sick, so they administered to her and brought her around. The next time they visited her, she came up to them with a cigarette in her hand and said, “Wasn’t I silly the other night?” This is the sort of thing you deal with. So what do you do with people like that? They are still members, but they are not cooperating. This is the answer: “Therefore I say unto you, that he that will not hear my voice, the same shall ye not receive into my church, for him I will not receive at the last day.” The only thing you can do is excommunicate them; there’s nothing else. No punishment, no penalty, no sentence—just excommunication. It’s what they want, after all.
But if a person has committed a sin, “if he confess his sins before thee and me, and repenteth in the sincerity of his heart, him shall ye forgive, and I will forgive him also. Yea, and as often as my people repent will I forgive them their trespasses against me [this is the good news of the gospel—it is the gospel of repentance; we are repenting perpetually here; if you are not repenting, you are not improving]. And ye shall also forgive one another your trespasses [he forgives you, too, and you must take his word for it]; for verily I say unto you, he that forgiveth not his neighbor's trespasses when he says that he repents, the same hath brought himself under condemnation.” If he says he has repented, but he hasn’t really repented, do you refuse to forgive him? No, that’s not for you to judge. He has condemned himself then. You know he’s a hypocrite and has made trouble for a long time. He says, “Oh, I’m repenting all right” because he wants to get back into the church and have some influence. You forgive him his trespasses. The Lord says, “Forgive him.” He has condemned himself if he says he has repented and hasn’t; you must take his word for it. Then if he hasn’t, if he has been lying, he takes the consequences. He has brought himself under condemnation.

Verse 32: “Now I say unto you, Go; and whosoever will not repent of his sins the same shall not be numbered among my people [he will be struck off the records]... And it came to pass when Alma had heard these words he wrote them down that he might have them [like the Doctrine and Covenants and like the 1QS here], and that he might judge the people of that church according to the commandments of God.” Remember, he established churches far and wide. He couldn’t be in all of them. There were various churches. That’s why he established the preachers, etc. For his particular branch of the church that he lived in, he wrote down the record for them. There were many communities of like-minded people.

Verse 34: “And it came to pass that Alma went and judged those that had been taken in iniquity, according to the word of the Lord.” It had to be their acts. The church is not a corporation that answers for my beliefs. That’s what St. Augustine taught. He said, whatever the most people believe, we can believe, and believe it without any doubt at all. He also said, I know that I’m a Christian because I’m received by them. In any community that receives me, I’m sanctified. I receive my testimony because I identify myself with the church. Of course, this is the doctrine of the Catholic Church. The church as an institution is its own proof, it’s own evidence of divinity. The theological is actually secondary. You come onto that quite a bit. It’s the other way around: I am a member of the church because I believe, but I don’t believe because I’m a member of the church. In Catholic countries it’s very common that people believe what they can because of the church.

Now here is the “doctrine of the two ways.” We have to move on here. Verse 37: “Alma did regulate all the affairs of the church; and they began again to have peace and to prosper exceedingly in the affairs of the church, walking circumspectly before God, receiving many, and baptizing many. And now all these things did Alma and his fellow laborers do who were over the church, walking in all diligence, teaching the word of God in all things, suffering all manner of afflictions, being persecuted by all those who did not belong to the church of God.” Look at this! Alma, with all his authority and everything else, was being persecuted. They were going around teaching the others, and they were given a bad time. They were greatly outnumbered now. They caused a lot of dissent and concern, cutting all these people off from the church, etc. There was real trouble here, and they had enmity wherever they went, as it says here, “being persecuted by all those who did not belong to the church of God.” There was no obvious advantage in membership
anymore, was there? You see all these guilty people. As we said from Rachfoucauld yesterday. “We can forgive those who wrong us, but never those we have wronged.” The apostates are really bitter, as you know. These were bitter apostates, and they were numerous now.

Verse 39: “And they did admonish their brethren; and they were also admonished.” You notice it wasn’t a case of dominant and submissive here. Just last night I was reading a very interesting thing in Philo of Alexandria. (Nobody ever reads Philo.) He said, “Equality is the mother of righteousness.” That’s a very interesting thing because it’s inequality that starts men fighting among themselves, abusing each other, being ambitious and competitive climbers, and making up mean stories about each other. My youngest son, to his great surprise, has ended up managing a large hotel in Guam and some other things with it. He said, “Ninety-five percent of the problem of management is these troubles that people make for each other—all this sniping that is going on, all this ambition, etc.” He never took a business course in his life or anything like that, but the Japanese owners found that they could trust him, so they put everything onto him. He said, “That’s the whole thing all day long. If it wasn’t for that, management would be a breeze. But it’s all the personalities, all this bitterness that goes on.”

It says here that they admonished their brethren and were also admonished by them, so it’s this equality [that’s important]. There’s not somebody laying down the law to you, and you laying down the law to somebody below you. You lick his boots and somebody else licks yours. It’s not that at all. It was this equality, and we are going have a lot about that. That word equality occurs a great many times in the Book of Mormon. But I like that from Philo: “Equality is the mother of righteousness.”

“And they were also admonished, every one by the word of God, according to his sins, or to the sins which he had committed, being commanded of God to pray without ceasing, and to give thanks in all things.” This is the way you hold on; this is the way they kept going, to pray to God without ceasing. How do you do it? Incidentally, Is this what the Arabs call the fatra. The fatra is when you never stop mentioning the name God, no matter whatever you do all day long. Well, that’s when you are sawing, or walking, or doing any repetitive action, you just keep saying, “Allah, Allah, Allah.” What does it mean by “praying without ceasing”? Well, simply that you continue the practice of prayer. It’s like saying, “They went on having breakfast every morning without ceasing.” That doesn’t mean they ate breakfast all day and all night, but they did it without ceasing. Or “he constantly brushed his teeth” doesn’t mean he did it twenty-four hours a day. The interesting thing is that in a Semitic language like Arabic, the only way you can say continually, or go on doing a thing is là zalla or lam yazil/mà zalla, he did not cease. Mà zalla yaktubu, “he did not cease writing,” means he wrote from time to time, or he wrote regularly. Lâ zalla/mà zalla means “he didn’t cease studying.” We have these practices we continue at. You might say, “He continued to take his medicine.” It’s one aspirin a day, he continues. It doesn’t mean constantly. When it says, “they continued in prayer without ceasing,” that doesn’t mean they had a monastic fanaticism here, or anything like that.

In chapter 27 the persecutions get pretty bad, and this is very important. Here we recognize the source of pride and haughtiness. “And now it came to pass that the persecutions which were inflicted on the church by the unbelievers became so great that the church began to murmur [they didn’t like it], and complain to their leaders
concerning the matter [this was going too far]; and they did complain to Alma. And Alma laid the case before their king, Mosiah. And Mosiah consulted with his priests.” So they had another conference on these things. This is the clue to the apostasy, for example, the Donatists, etc. How do you handle them? The usual thing was persecution, just wipe them out. St. Augustine recommended it. The Donatists were making trouble because they had a different doctrine. They believed people weren’t living the pure life of the early church, and the Donatists were strict old-fashioned Christians. St. Augustine recommended solving the Donatist problem by killing them all, so 400,000 Donatists were slaughtered in North Africa because they practiced Christianity in too strict a manner.

Question: What exactly did Mosiah’s priests do?

Answer: They were appointed and anointed by Alma. They were a council. He brought them and they consulted together. They were appointed to lead the churches, and they came together to have a conference. Alma was the high priest. He was one of the priests of Noah, but it wasn’t Noah that made him that.

Verse 2: “And it came to pass that king Mosiah sent a proclamation throughout the land round about that there should not any unbeliever persecute any of those who belonged to the church of God.” And no member of the church should persecute anybody. “And there was a strict command throughout all the churches that there should be no persecutions among them, that there should be an equality among all men.” There’s your theme of equality. If we’re going to have righteousness and judgment, there should be an equality among all men—a very hard thing to achieve. Are you going to achieve this just by making rules? No, it doesn’t work, as we will see, but this is the best you can do. “That they should let no pride nor haughtiness disturb their peace; that every man should esteem his neighbor as himself, laboring with their own hands for their support.” This shows where the inequality comes from; it’s an economic thing. They should labor with their own hands, and that means that we do not have a professional priesthood. Back a little ways, we are told that the priests also labored for their support. This recognizes the source of this pride and haughtiness. Remember, the people of the church were following the old order of Alma. Alma went out and established his model church in the wilderness, where they were all humble and equal—just like the Qumran community. We saw that they were driven out; then they came to Zarahemla. When he established the church there at the request of the king, it was on that order with that same humility, and with the rule that everybody should labor with his own hands, including the officers. This is what they found offensive, and this is what led them to persecuting, etc. This is what led to the pride and haughtiness of those who were more successful because the others weren’t striving for success.

Verse 5: “Yea, and all their priests and teachers should labor with their own hands for their support.” Well, that they didn’t like at all; this equality was much too austere, much too old-fashioned. A rich Hopi would be something to laugh at. There is no such thing. A Hopi can’t possibly get rich. “If one has corn, we all have corn, and that’s it,” they say. And [the people in Zarahemla] had no professional clergy either. And what did they abound in? “They did abound in the grace of God.” We are promised that if we do that sort of thing, but we’re not willing to trust it, as Brigham Young said. There are people that say, “I trust the Lord, but I feel better with money in the bank.” That may be true, but that’s not the way the Lord wants it.
Verse 6: “And there began to be much peace again in the land. . . . And the Lord did visit them and prosper them, and they became a large and wealthy people.” There is the paradox again, that these people who don’t set their hearts on wealth and don’t strive for it at all become a large and wealthy people. Brigham Young said, “I could easily make this the richest people in the world, but I’m afraid it would destroy them.” It says they were a large and wealthy people; it doesn’t say they had great fortunes among them. Do you realize that in 1987 we almost doubled the number of billionaires in this country from 29 to 49—a million dollars a thousand times. They must have worked overtime to have a billion dollars, if you can imagine that. How could you earn $10,000 a minute during the working day? It must be awfully hard work—making shoes, etc.

Now this is what the situation was: “Now the sons of Mosiah were numbered among the unbelievers; and also one of the sons of Alma was numbered among them [well, they were in a large and wealthy nation; their fathers were the leaders of the church and the kingdom, and they shared the wealth], he being called Alma, after his father; nevertheless, he became a very wicked and an idolatrous man. And he was a man of many words [very clever, a great talker and very popular], and did speak much flattery to the people [it’s like a Beverly Hills party where everybody speaks so flattering to everybody else]; therefore he led many of the people to do after the manner of his iniquities.” He was the glass of fashion; he was the Alcibiades; he was the Beau Brummell. Everybody imitated Alma apparently. This is the sort of thing that happens at the height of fashion. Verse 9: “And he became a great hinderment to the prosperity of the church of God; stealing away the hearts of the people; causing much dissension among the people.” Now, this was the public. Well, why wasn’t he locked up for this? Why wasn’t he punished? He was the son of Alma, mind you, and he got the sons of Mosiah to doing the same thing. Why weren’t they locked up? Their parents had the highest authority in the state. Was it because they were being spoiled? They must have been spoiled in the first place. Alma neglected some things because he didn’t know about the troubles in the church, etc. But they went around secretly, too, making it even worse. “For he did go about secretly with the sons of Mosiah seeking to destroy the church [what a strange thing; why would he do that? Well, just ask hundreds of apostates; I know plenty of them], and to lead astray the people of the Lord, contrary to the commandments of God, or even the king.”

They were going together as a group, a gang of young men. The Egyptians called them a jam‘. There was lots of trouble like this in Egypt on the village and town level. The Wisdom Literature is full of it. There were these gangs of young fellows that went around disturbing things and having their fun, because they were full of spirits, etc. You remember, “Two households, both alike in dignity/ In Fair Verona . . .” Just kids, the Capulets and the Montagues were having their public brawls in the street, having their parties and their wild goings on, raiding each other, etc. Then there was Alcibiades and the “Hell-Fire Club” that caused an awful lot of trouble in Athens. He was the flaming youth of the time. It’s another familiar social phenomenon, in other words. Right at the end of the Republic and the beginning of the Roman Empire, it got so bad that Augustus, the first emperor, established the iuventus, which were youth clubs, all over the empire around the Mediterranean. Young men were required to join one. They included athletic and educational activities. They made a big thing of the cult of the membership with rings, tokens, etc., to interest the youth. Some of them went pretty wild later. They wore their badges and signs and had wild haircuts. In Crete the sign of this particular society that spread all over the island was to go stark naked. That was not a very good defense, but
they were showing how smart aleck they were. They defied all conventions and everything else. This is a familiar phenomenon in the ancient world, the *iuventus*.

Verse 11: “And as I said unto you, as they were going about rebelling against God, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto them.” The only thing that would stop them would be an angel. Their fathers couldn’t do any good. They could appeal. You appeal to such people again and again, but it’s not going to help. “... and he descended as it were in a cloud.” This is an interesting thing. We mentioned before that what makes a miracle a miracle is timing. The damning up of the Jordan was a seasonal affair. The drying up of the Red Sea—where the bitter lakes come, when the wind blows, etc.—had happened before. The bubbling up of the waters where the crippled man was going to be healed, etc. These things do happen, but they happen at just the right time. There were the quails at Sugar Creek. When the pioneers crossed, they were going to starve to death. All of sudden came this tremendous group of quails that were perfectly tame, and that saved their lives. The quails do that from time to time. Or there were the grasshoppers and the seagulls. That was a rare event, but it does happen in the course of nature. But it’s the timing of it that makes it a miracle; it happens just when you want it to happen. Well, healing, for example. People get well; they recover from things like cancer. But when it correlates very closely with an administration, that makes it a miracle. It’s the same thing here. There was an earthquake; it was earthquake country. The earth shook, and there was a lot of dust in the air. There was a cloud and a voice of thunder. It seems to be one of those periodic earthquakes. “And so great was their astonishment, that they fell to the earth, and understood not the words which he spake unto them.”

These [miracles] are correlated, you see. They are correlated from the other side. When the Lord or somebody else can see a comet on a collision course with something, you can predict or prophesy it. You know when it’s going to happen. You see it happening already; it has happened as far as you are concerned. It’s absolutely certain. In the miraculous, the element of time is a very important thing. Here it just happened, and “they fell to the earth, and understood not the words which he spake unto them.” But Alma understood. He passed out, and the angel gave him a good dressing down and talking to. “Alma, arise and stand forth, for why persecutest thou the church of God? For the Lord hath said: This is my church, and I will establish it; and nothing shall overthrow it [period? no], save it is the transgression of my people.” And you are transgressing, Buster. Notice that it is not an absolute promise that since it is [the Lord’s] church nothing shall overthrow it. It doesn’t say that at all. It says, “and nothing shall overthrow it, save it is the transgression of my people.” That can overthrow it, but we forget that. We say we have a guarantee, etc.

Here’s a long sermon without scriptures. It says that Alma had “prayed with much faith concerning thee that thou mightest be brought to the knowledge of the truth [Alma was terribly worried about his son. He couldn’t appeal to him directly. It didn’t do any good, so all he could do was pray to the Lord, just as he prayed about the other wayward members of the church]; therefore, for this purpose have I come to convince thee of the power and authority of God, that the prayers of his servants might be answered according to their faith. And now behold, can ye dispute the power of God? For behold, doth not my voice shake the earth? And can ye not also behold me before you? And I am sent from God.”

Just as Moroni cites the scripture to Joseph Smith, he cites past history here. They do that for our profit and learning, as we read from Isaiah. Verse 16: “Now I say unto thee: Go,
and remember [these are the things within recent history that he would remember; this isn’t Moses crossing the Red Sea or even Lehi leaving Jerusalem; this is things he knew about from the experience of his father] the captivity of thy fathers in the land of Helam [where Alma was in charge] . . . for they were in bondage and he has delivered them. And now I say unto thee, Alma, go thy way, and seek to destroy the church no more, that their prayers may be answered, and this even if thou wilt of thyself be cast off.” It’s very interesting here. Why are apostates not satisfied to go their own way? Even if he wanted to be cast out, he was told not to seek to destroy the church.

Verse 28: “And now Alma and those that were with him fell again to the earth [the earth was shaking and giving them a bad time], for great was their astonishment; for with their own eyes they had beheld an angel of the Lord; and his voice was as thunder, which shook the earth.” Thunder always goes with an earthquake. But again, it’s this correlation. We mentioned that before—the idea from the Talmud that when men misbehave nature responds. The girls danced, and if they missed that there was all this trouble and upset of nature. “This progeny of evil comes of our debate, of our dissension.” If men misbehave themselves, nature will misbehave. You can see why, because they are setting themselves against nature.
Now this story about Alma’s conversion and confrontation with the angel is immensely important. It’s as important as anything in the Book of Mormon, and it’s directly applicable to us. These things concern us very closely. The issue to be decided is this: Which world shall we take seriously? What kind of name will we give the real one? This is not the real world. All you have to do is look at anything you want—stock market reports, the cone of time, or the newest book by James Gleick on chaos, which has become a very scientific study now. Beyond all rules and regulations of science you can think of, there is an element of chaos that must be accounted for. It’s very serious and very important, and it has become one of the major fields of science within the last couple of years or so. There’s a book by Gleick I would recommend to you; I haven’t finished it yet.

The experience of Alma [the Younger] and his friends is our experience. We must all decide how seriously we are going to take this side or the other side. He laughed at the other side and took it lightly. He wanted to make fun of it and have his fun here. How much does this count for? Let’s get started and see what happened to Alma. He was at the top of his form, on the top of a wave. He was the darling of the city; everybody was following him around. The [four] most important young men, the sons of the king, were with him, and he was the son of the high priest. They were going around raising hell. When he was at the top of his flight, all of a sudden (whether in a narrow street or outside, I don’t know) he was stopped cold. There was a shaking of the earth and dust in the air, confusion, and thunder. Obviously, there was an earthquake, but with it an angel stopped him dead in his tracks. Just like that! What a reversal! Talk about embarrassing moments; this is it. The angel caught him “dead to rights” here and rebuked him. You know what happened. How would you react to that? What could you reply to that? Talk about being caught off guard, humiliated, and turned upside down! The only thing he did is just stand there and go blank with a foolish look on his face. He was frozen stiff and couldn’t do anything—he was paralyzed. It’s just what you would do in such a situation. How would you handle it? You couldn’t handle it, because this is a complete reversal. Is he going to explain to the angel and try to talk himself out of it, or something like that? You don’t do that to an angel.

So the subject comes up here. Why do these rascals get to see an angel, and none of the rest of us do? This is very important. There are lots of people who have lived righteously all their lives, and none of them are going to see an angel. But you will notice throughout the Book of Mormon and elsewhere that angels only appear in times of great crisis to reverse the course of history. They turn it around. Whether it was the Angel Moroni to Joseph Smith, or the Angel Gabriel to Zachariah, it [the appearance] started things going in a reverse direction. It reaches a point where everything has to be changed, and this has great results.
What’s going to follow from this is basic to the end of the Book of Mormon history. It was a very important thing that happened, and he was turned around. His three friends carried him home. If it was a pueblo type, it would be in the square in front of the house because Alma was the high priest. Or he would have a porch there, sort of an atrium. They brought him in the house, and a multitude gathered around. Everybody was talking at once when [Alma], a majestic figure, came out and said, what is going on here. Alma [the Younger] was “carried helpless, even until he was laid before his father [and they all started explaining to him]. And they rehearsed unto his father all that had happened unto them.” I imagine they were breathless and everybody was talking at once, the way these things happen. But Alma, who had had plenty of guidance and revelations himself, knew exactly what had happened and said, Oh happy day! (a reaction they didn’t expect).

Bring all the people ’round.
Put on the fire, my maidens fair!
Fetch water from the well
All of us shall feast this night
For my three sons are well.

(Ancient Scottish Ballad)

When the sons [in this ballad] finally came home, they were going to celebrate. It’s the prodigal son [story], except these had come from the other world. They were spirits. That’s another story; we won’t go into that.

He [Alma the Younger] was dumb and out. As high priest, his father sent messengers to bring the priests. He gathered the brethren of the quorum to pray for Alma. He knew what the situation was. They prayed for two days, and then Alma finally bestirred himself and came out of it.

Now the question is this: Why are we expected to invest in an unseen proposition? What evidence do you have for the other world at all? Is there any reason why you shouldn’t celebrate here and make this the whole show? That was it as far as Alma [the younger] was concerned. I have an older brother the same way. Now he’s coming around, but he was that way all his life. He was really a wild one and just pooh-poohed everything. He didn’t exactly always disbelieve it all the way, but he made a big show. He reinforced himself in his position by making fun of things. You have to do that—you can’t just take it indifferently. This happened here. Why should the average person believe in the other world? What experience does he have of it? Well, for one thing, he has a vacuum that disturbs him from time to time, no matter who he is. And then there’s a tradition that moves into the vacuum. There have been connected stories going on all the time, but that’s just tradition and the vacuum, etc. But we will see what explains this here.

They united their faith and prayers and brought him around. Then he came back and said, “I have repented of my sins, and have been redeemed of the Lord; behold I am born of the Spirit.” This sounds like "born again." Is he going to get out of it so easy after all those years of sneering and this sort of thing? Now all he has to do is have one experience and say, “Behold, I’m born again,” and everything is all right. Don’t worry. He's not getting out of it easy at all. The passage in Mosiah 28:4 is the one I was thinking of before. “And thus did the Spirit of the Lord work upon them, for they were the very vilest of sinners [this was after their conversion]. And the Lord saw fit in his infinite mercy to spare them; nevertheless they suffered much anguish of soul because of their iniquities, suffering much
and fearing that they should be cast off forever.” They suffered the rest of their lives because of what they had done. And they put themselves to every extreme of effort and strain to preach the gospel. They were willing to undergo anything to wipe that out—when they asked to go on the mission, etc.

Mosiah 27:25: “And the Lord said unto me: Marvel not that all mankind . . . must be born again.” Notice that it’s nothing less than being born all over again. We are so completely out of it when we are here. We cannot make the change without leaving the scene. You have to be born again. See, there’s the one world or the other; you can’t mix them. It’s a very hard thing, as Brigham Young said, as he tried to take the water on both shoulders. “The Latter-day Saint who tries to live in both worlds is torn apart.” There’s no such agony, no worse experience than that, and it happens to them here. As it explains here, “… yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness [a complete change], being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters.” They become new creatures; it’s an entirely different thing, as this explains.

If there’s another world open to us, why don’t we know about it? This explains why we don’t know about it. We are “miles” removed from any kind of interface here. To the people living in one, the other doesn’t exist. We’re not going to draw time cones here, but it’s very much like the time cone. Nothing can exist outside of the cone of time. If other worlds exist beyond the range of the speed of light in certain time and space, you can never know about it. All you can know about your existence is one single line (it’s monolinear), the line you happen to be on, where time and space meet. Of course, time is measured by space, and space is measured by time. But there’s just one line, and everything outside of that just isn’t there. It’s either past or future, and you’ll never know it’s there. There are absolute limits set to what you know by the speed of light. That’s the constant. It can go so far, and from that you structure your whole universe and all your experience. It turns out to be a very narrow cone of experience. The point is that everything outside of that you can know nothing about as long as you are in this life. You’d never know about everything that exists there. So don’t go making judgments that this is all there is. You have to cut loose from one or the other. Notice he says here that being in the other world, he had nothing to do with God’s world, the real world. We call this “the real world,” which it isn’t.

Verse 27: “I say unto you, unless this be the case, they must be cast off; and this I know, because I was like to be cast off.” That means “cut loose and forgotten.” There’s no easy going for apostates and never has been. They have to be in the one or the other. It bugs them and eats at them all the time. I’ve never known one of them that could be at ease with it. I’ve known some that were genial apostates, but they all came back. It’s a very interesting thing. Those that don’t must fight the Church and must be active about it. It won’t let them rest and leave them alone. That’s not so with other [churches]. If you change from Baptist to Methodist, it doesn’t make much difference. But once you’ve known the gospel (although nobody knows it very well), once you’ve had any experience with the possibility that this just might be so, it’s something you will never shake again.

Again the problem: All right, why doesn’t somebody give us a hint? Why don’t we hear a voice from the other side? Our dreams are crazy, silly dreams. They deal with trivia, unless you’re able to interpret them. But where do we have the dreams and visions of glory, of old returning, and angels coming to visit the earth? Where are they? Well, the point is obvious here: If we had easy contact with that, if that was open to us, this life would be no test at all. As the Book of Mormon tells us repeatedly, this life is a
probation. We are here being tested. You must be in quarantine for that. You are being watched through a one-way window, but you don’t know that you are being watched necessarily. What you do here is your own behavior, and you are to be tested. In the Adam literature, when the three heavenly visitors depart and say, “We’ll leave you alone now for a while,” then Satan strikes. Then he says, “Now is the great day of my power,” and he tells Adam they will never be back again. “Just some fakes will come back; don’t worry about that. Now you are not being watched; now you can do what you want.” If we were constantly being reminded, if we had visits by angels [it wouldn’t be a test].

Brigham Young said, “Pray that you never see an angel.” He was talking historically. Almost everybody who saw an angel left the Church. They came back, but they had these terrible problems. It gave them inflated egos, etc. They thought they were somebody special. They were, but they couldn’t take it. It would be very dangerous if we were exposed to the other world to any degree. Only people that are very humble can do that. Not us, we can’t do that. We are not that humble. I mean some old Hopi or someone like that—like old Tom Kuyushva, the head of the Parrot Clan. He didn’t know a word of English, but when he heard Brother Bushman talk for half an hour, he came up dressed in all his fine regalia and asked to be baptized. Brother Bushman said, “But you didn’t understand; I’ve just been talking to you.”

“I know, it’s true; I know it’s true in here,” he said, and he had to be baptized. That’s the way it is, but we are not in contact with those things because we don’t live that way. Is there anything more distracting than the crazy world we live in? It has become one big, mad theater—one crazy TV show from beginning to end—everything from the savings and loan [problems] to the takeovers, the leverage buyouts, all the criminality everywhere, the drugs, the corruption in politics, the corruption in business, and the corruption in the military contracts. Everything is completely cockeyed. Don’t think this is the real world. What a test for us all! Remember what the Lord told Enoch, “Wherefore, I can stretch forth mine hands and hold all the creations which I have made; and mine eye can pierce them also, and among all the workmanship of mine hands there has not been so great wickedness as among thy brethren” (Moses 7:36). We won’t even let a little slit of light through from the other world. It terrifies us if we do; we don’t want it at all. But why should we be committed to this? You’ve all heard it called “the rat race.” You can call it what you want. It’s silly enough; don’t worry.

And that’s the world that Alma was in. He was a playboy and all the rest of it. What a change this had to be! It had to be a complete change. We are being quarantined here, so don’t expect visions, revelations, and glory. You are being tested all the time. You provide them [the spiritual experiences], and reading the scriptures is the same way. In a poem called Die Huldigung der Künste, Schiller said that a real intelligence brings enlightenment to what it studies; it doesn’t just seek it there. You bring it with you. It’s the same thing here with whatever we study. What is the word he uses? “An exalted spirit puts the greatness into life; it doesn’t seek the greatness there.” If it’s to be there at all, you’ve got to put it there. And Alma does. You notice these great characters in the Book of Mormon. They work both ways. We are about to run into Nehor, and he is the opposite—a great man, a capable man going in the opposite direction.

He speaks now in the terms of the mysteries. Verse 28: “Nevertheless, after wading through much tribulation, repenting nigh unto death . . .” He would rather die than go on, in other words, because he was reduced so low. After this humiliation, being shown what he was, being so guilty, and knowing what it was, he says he was “repenting nigh
unto death.” He would sooner die than go on, he felt so bad. “... the Lord in mercy hath
seen fit to snatch me out of an everlasting burning, and I am born of God [it was a close
call; the word snatch is a good one, isn’t it?] My soul hath been redeemed from the gall of
bitterness and bonds of iniquity.” This is the epopteia. This was the thing that was recited
in the Jewish and Christian mysteries, when you go from the [darkness] to the day. It was
imitated in the ancient temples in Egypt. You would go through darkness and trials and
through three levels. Then in the final stage you went through a veil into a sunlit
courtyard at noon day. Everything was white alabaster and absolutely dazzling in this
celestial room. It was the same thing in the epopteia with the Greeks. You went into a
room that was brilliantly lighted after you had been in the dark. It’s called the epopteia,
“the seeing of the light,” the sudden vision that pops on you when you realize. This was
dramatized in the Hellenistic Period under the Hermetic teachings. They adopted these
things, mixed them up, imitated them, etc. That’s another story. But this is the language
they use: “I was in the darkest abyss; but now I behold the marvelous light of God. My
soul was racked with eternal torment; but I am snatched, and my soul is pained no more.”

There is your definition of “eternal torment.” You might ask, “Well, how could he be out
of it? It was eternal. If his soul was racked with eternal torment, he would still be there,
wouldn’t he?” No, he said, I’m out of it now, “I am snatched, and my soul is pained no
more.” That means the torment by nature is eternal. Anybody who qualifies for it will get
it from now to the end of time. It’s there all the time, not that you have to suffer it all the
time. This is one of the errors of Christian theology: It’s eternal torment. Once you go to
hell, it’s eternal—forever and forever. Well, he had been as most people who go to hell,
but it’s not eternal. He gets out of it now.

Verse 30: “He remembereth every creature of his creating [that is good news—he will
make himself manifest unto all]. Yea, every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess
before him. It’s future, you notice, and everybody is going to be included in this sooner or
later. It sounds like Stephen Hawking writing about being outside of the cone of time and
nothing exists. Everything out of the sphere of influence is lost and astray. Think of some
of the men who have everything in this world. In the old classic Citizen Kane, there was
the man who had everything, and who had nothing. Oedipus is a classical example of the
man. “Nobody didn’t envy his fabulous good luck, but look at him.” And you know the
poem “Richard Cory.” He walked down the street in the New England Spoon River
Anthology. Everybody in town envied him, the rich, proud man. “And Rich Cory, one
calm summer night/ Went home and put a bullet through his head.” He wasn’t happy
after all, although he had everything and everybody envied him. And Belshazzar and
Nebuchadnezzar and Nimrod. In the scriptures the Lord gives the idea of the man who
had increased his farm goods, expanded his land, and had a great estate. He had insured
himself against the future and said, my soul, take your ease. Your future is guaranteed.
You have all sorts of investments. Then the voice came to him and said, “Thou fool—this
night shall thy soul be required of thee.”

I think of Hisham, the mightiest palace an Arab ever built, just outside of Jericho down
there. It belonged to the DiGianni brothers, and they took us down there. It’s closed—you
never can see it. I don’t know whether they’ve made a tourist exhibit of it now or not. But
the prince took twenty-seven years to build it, and it was going to be the finest palace in
the world. It was the finest palace; it was magnificent. We have no idea how expensive
and luxurious it was. The night he was to enter it for the housewarming, there came a
great earthquake. He had a heart attack and died, and the palace was completely destroyed.
They were to have this big housewarming, and everybody was to come. After twenty-
seven years, poof, that’s what happened. This is the idea of the man who has everything. If you have everything, you are going to be awfully disappointed. You’re not going to have anything after all. Notice who are those? [People] “who live without God in the word.” It is possible to be utterly deserted—to live without God. He wants to reach you, but you don’t have to [cooperate]. People do live without God. This generation is certainly doing it. “And they shall quake, and tremble, and shrink beneath the glance of his all-searching eye.” They will try to avoid the issue right up to the end, not wanting to face up to it. Eventually, they will have to. Shrink, tremble, quake, and not want to have to look him in the eye. Of course, that’s the worse thing that could possibly happen to you—more terrifying than anything else, we are told.

Then from this time forward, Alma began to be a zealous teacher. He became alien to the one world. You must be alien to the one or the other. If you are really in the gospel, [you are alien to the world]. See how the early Saints were always persecuted, etc. Why were people so upset? Why did they attack them? Why did they say and do these terrible things? They didn’t worry about anybody else that way. But from the very first, it bothered them terribly. Something was wrong there. So Alma went traveling around the country, just as his father had done, and preaching everywhere he went. He was going to try to make amends here. He traveled around the country “preaching the word of God in much tribulation, being greatly persecuted by those who were unbelievers, being smitten by many of them.” Now this is it. He was a smart boy; you’d think they’d at least receive him for what he was and respect him. Maybe it was his background as the old friend. But now, they were mad at him now; he had betrayed them. They [the believers] are in a tiny minority by now. He had been just going with the majority. Remember the scripture says, “Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil.” That’s what he was doing. No wonder he was popular, everybody was cheering him. He was telling them what they wanted to hear. If you tell people what they want to hear, then you will be their friend, and you will win the election. So it was here, but now he was extremely unpopular. They didn’t want him anywhere. They started kicking him around here.

Verse 33: “. . . confirming their faith, and exhorting them with long-suffering and much travail to keep the commandments of God [he didn’t fight back, you notice]. And four of them [with him] were the sons of Mosiah; and their names were Ammon, and Aaron, and Omner, and Himni.” Now we come to the great Ammon, one of the great characters of the Book of Mormon. The oldest son of Mosiah was Ammon, who would have been the king and the priest. “And they traveled throughout all the land of Zarahemla . . . zealously striving to repair all the injuries which they had done to the church.” This is another thing—when people are “born again” [in other churches], they feel no guilt or anything about their past. When Charles Colson became an evangelist overnight after being a real criminal—planning murders and everything else—he was asked on TV, “Aren’t you going to make it up to some of the people you have damaged? Aren’t you going to apologize?”

“No, I’m born again—I’m pure,” he said. I heard this personally. He had no feelings of guilt whatever. But not these people. You have to make it up. “You go not hence until you have paid the uttermost farthing.” You have to pay every penny before you’re going to get out of it.

Verse 36: “And thus they were instruments in the hands of God in bringing many to the knowledge of the truth, yea, to the knowledge of their Redeemer.” After all, it was good. God turned this evil into good, and this is a thing that often happens. He turns what would be calamity into an all the more glorious victory, and this is what happened. They
were instruments in the hands of God because look at the experiences and background they’d had. We know of cases in the Church like that—of really wicked people who have been converted and done great good. There are some very notable ones, and the other way around. “And how blessed are they! For they did publish peace; they did publish good tidings of good; and they did declare unto the people that the Lord reigneth.” Everything was all right. To worry is sin and folly, and hanging back from the action is also. It was the good news, the gospel, they were preaching now. Talk about happy endings! After all this hectic story, they published peace and good tidings and [told people that] the Lord is reigning after all.

They were helping people and doing what they could, but their thoughts went further. How about the Lamanites; can’t we help them out, too? Remember Enos prayed for his own people, and then he prayed for the Lamanite brethren, too. He said they might as well be included. Of course, we find them all mixed up here. So they got that idea. They took a small number with them and returned to their father, the king, and desired of him that he would grant unto them that they might . . . go up to the land of Nephi that they might preach the things which they had heard, and that they might impart the word of God to their brethren, the Lamanites.” Their father was very cautious because they had been stung. The one thing that kept the peace was a very wide buffer zone between them. They had to travel through quite a wilderness to get to the Lamanites (remember it’s a big country). They weren’t in constant conflict, as they were when they were bordering, as in Central America, where they had the line of division between them and they had the borders they had to fortify and all that trouble. They had trouble then, but here they had no trouble with them. [Mosiah] didn’t want any trouble; he was very cautious and didn’t want to let them go at first. Here’s his policy: “They did plead with their father many days that they might go up to the land of Nephi. And the Lord [finally] said unto Mosiah: Let them go up, for many shall believe on their words, and they shall have eternal life.” So they were following a very cautious policy. They didn’t want to mingle too closely with the Lamanites. But they [Alma and the sons of Mosiah] were so filled with this idea: Let’s go see if we can do this for the Lamanites—if it happened to us it can happen to them.

Question: Could you go back to verse 28 in the last chapter and explain Alma’s use of the words “everlasting burning”?

Answer: Oh yes, in verse 29 he says “eternal torment.” Well, that’s the everlasting part; it’s always available. But he mentions this later on. He says, “It is like the burning of a real fire.” It consumes you and constantly gnaws on you. You can never get it out of your system. It’s like a fever, which he explains later on. It’s also made very clear that this is a metaphor, a figure [of speech]. It’s the best thing you can find to call it. Yet how near is it to real burning; this is the interesting point. In physiology a real fever can be stirred up by certain states of mind, etc. You can think yourself into a high temperature—this sort of thing. These things are connected, but burning is the best image you can use. It doesn’t mean that he is going to be in flames surrounded by elegant imps with tridents, etc. But it means that as long as he lives hereafter, no matter what progress he attains, he will always have that awareness and always have that guilt with him. It will hold him back forever. Well, there are things we have all done that it would better if we hadn’t done. We will regret them forever. They will hold you back no matter what happens hereafter. So let’s make the best of it from here on out. What do you say? The burning is a figure [of speech], and he has a good deal more to say about that a little later on.
Mosiah 28:1: “... that they might impart the word of God to their brethren, the Lamanites [can’t we help them?]—that perhaps they might bring them to the knowledge of the Lord their God ...” If the Lord reigns, there’s no cause for hatred. They were so happy at the end; they didn’t worry anymore. God is in charge of things, and that being the case, why shouldn’t we go to them? What have we got to worry about? Notice this: “... perhaps they might cure them of their hatred towards the Nephites [This is what their tradition was; they had this built-in, traditional hatred. It was a chance, and if there was any chance at all, they felt they should take it.], that they might be brought to rejoice in the Lord their God, that they might become friendly to one another.” This is fraternizing with the enemy, isn’t it? This is the only solution to the problem; we find this throughout the Book of Mormon. This is the basis of coexistence, not self-interest. You can prove self-interest. How many times Germany and France have gone to war, and England and France, where it could be shown. Just on the eve of the Civil War, a famous book was written, The Impending Crisis of the South, by Hinton Helper, in which he showed that there was no profit in it all. He showed that neither side had anything to gain, that they would both lose terribly, and it would be an awful thing. But they went right ahead and did it. You can never stop people from fighting by showing them that it’s in their best interest not to. It’s in everybody’s best interest not to go to war. Helper’s book is the first really good statistical study showing that cotton had stopped paying off in the South and slavery had become a burden there. After all, it wasn’t paying as well. And there were as many slaves in the North as there were in the South. They had nothing to gain by it. It’s the same thing here, but hatred is stronger than self-interest. They will always do it [fight].

Was this a practical idea, you might ask, to go and preach to the Lamanites? Their father hesitated a long time; he wasn’t so sure about it. How did it work out? This is a neglected leitmotif in the Book of Mormon here. What appeals to the simple mind is the military solution. You see that we’re getting nowhere with that. You never get anywhere with that. It’s just going to get worse and worse. We’re doomed if we don’t have a generous impulse and act on that. It’s the impulse. You’re doomed if you have to be in danger of starvation before you eat. You eat because you want to and feel it would be a nice thing to do. If you only drink when you are in danger of dehydration, you are not going to last long. You have to drink because you want to drink. It feels good, and you love to do it. In the same way you are doomed if you don’t get rest until you are dropping from exhaustion. We do these things because they are the proper thing to do, and it works out. That’s the way we should. It’s the same way with this. We are doomed unless we yield to our friendly, generous impulses—the more magnanimous side of human nature—and agree to be friends. Otherwise, it’s going to go on and on. We’ve seen that sort of thing, and the Lord has told us that. The Book of Mormon is a classic treatment of this particular subject, here with this and in the case of the great Ammon, of course. What is not in our interest isn’t the first voice we [should] listen to; we have to listen to that other voice. We are doing our best to damper it now, and it’s going to be disastrous.

Verse 2: “... that they might become friendly to one another [imagine becoming friends with those people; they are their brethren], and that there should be no more contentions in all the land which the Lord their God had given them.” God had given the land to both of them. Why should they be fighting in it? And this overrides everything: “Now they were desirous that salvation should be declared to every creature.” They were like Enos, who was completely worked up about that. When he got assurance of his salvation, then he couldn’t let go. He prayed all the time for both his own people and the Lamanites. Alma was determined that no one would have to go through what he did. He had seen
hell. He had been there, and he wanted none of that. If he could possibly help it, nobody else would have to suffer that. That was the generous impulse that drove him here.

Verse 3: “Now they were desirous that salvation should be declared to every creature, for they could not bear that any human soul should perish; yea, even the very thought that any soul should endure endless torment [what they got a taste of] did cause them to quake and tremble.” So they weren’t happy, settled, and redeemed so that they could go back home and enjoy themselves now because they were forgiven and everything was all right. Far from it. They were just beginning to work it off now. “And thus did the Spirit of the Lord work upon them, for they were the very vilest of sinners [after all their revelation, repentance, etc.]. And the Lord saw fit in his infinite mercy to spare them; nevertheless they suffered much anguish of soul because of their iniquities, suffering much and fearing that they should be cast off forever.” Right to the end they were not safe home—they were fearing that. We are told in the Book of Mormon that God has prolonged our lives that we might have more chances to repent, because we are going to need every minute we can get. They were worried; they were not pleased with themselves.

We see in verse 5 that it was a dangerous undertaking. “And it came to pass that they did plead with their father many days that they might go up to the land of Nephi.” There was this long stand-off with the Lamanites. Mosiah was very cautious here. “And the Lord said unto Mosiah: Let them go up, for many shall believe on their words [so they did go]. . . . And they took their journey into the wilderness to go up to preach the word among the Lamanites.” Notice that a wilderness divided them from the Lamanites. There was a very useful gap there. Modern countries adjacent to each other are always fighting—Germany, Prussia, and Denmark, Germany and France. All border countries throughout the generations, wherever they are, have fought where there’s a border. If you want to read the ghastliest and bloodiest [accounts] about the most intimate and closest of borders, read the Scottish Border Ballads. It’s a volume of nothing but blood and horror about people who were friends and relatives, just like the American Civil War—the North against the South, brother against brother and that sort of thing. There is only one cure for that, as we read here: “They did plead with their father many days that they might go up to the land of Nephi.” So it was that.

Verse 10: “Now king Mosiah had no one to confer the kingdom upon, for there was not any of his sons who would accept the kingdom.” This is an interesting thing that they were not ambitious. They were all in line beginning with Ammon. Why did they turn down the kingship? Well, of course, they had a new sense of values. They knew what had priority now; otherwise, they would have jumped at it, I’m sure. Ammon was the crown prince, so to speak, and he added luster to Alma the Younger and his gang. But they knew what counted now. He wasn’t impressed with it [becoming king] and wouldn’t do it. Then there was this knowledge of the sick world Alma had persecuted and mocked. As soon as they repented and came around, then their old friends, the whole mob, and the general public started making fun of them and giving them a very bad time—started persecuting them. Well, would you want to be king over that crowd? He didn’t want to be king. All they wanted to do was preach the gospel now. That’s it, as far as they are concerned.

It was still the law of the Old Testament they were preaching; they were still preaching the Torah. Remember the brass plates they brought from Jerusalem were the basic law on which Benjamin and Mosiah built the organic law of the Nephites—namely, the Law of Moses. Verse 11: “Therefore he [King Mosiah] took the records which were engraven on
the plates of brass, and also the plates of Nephi, and all the things which he had kept and preserved according to the commandments of God, after having translated and caused to be written the records which were on the plates of gold which had been found by the people of Limhi." These were the national treasures, along with the sword of Laban, the Urim and Thummim, etc. Nations have national treasures. The Hopis have the tiponi—a special box, like the Ark of the Covenant, that has the precious things of the tribe. They have the mongkos, and they have the sacred Hopi stones, and things like that. They are great on these things. But there are certain treasures that must be kept together, and these objects mark the integrity of the tribe. In Japan they have the sacred mirror, the sword, and the other sacred relics of the nation that mark its legitimacy—like the crown jewels of England.

Question: Where did Mosiah get the two stones fastened to the rims of a bow? The reason I asked is that when Ammon’s group found Zeniff’s colony and were captured, they asked Ammon if he could translate the record of the Jaredites they had found. He said that the king had means at that time whereby he could translate. But this appears to be what the brother of Jared hid up with his record.

Answer: Mosiah translated them himself by means of two stones fastened into the two rims of a bow to interpret language. This is a very interesting thing. Notice that it mentions this interpreting language as a very matter of fact sort of thing. Notice that verses 15 and 16 are entirely alien to our world. We don’t have anything like that today, but there are such things. I can assure you of that. We’ll talk about them in a minute. But this is entirely alien to our world, as a computer would be alien to theirs. A few years ago a computer would be absolutely unthinkable, especially a computer that draws diagrams and pictures, makes portraits, and does anything you want it to. That sort of thing is another Urim and Thummim, as far as they are concerned. Did you people really have something like that? Yes, and what did you have? Well, we had this Urim and Thummim, and it worked that way.

Reading itself is a mystery. I was reading an awful text last night, A Man Weary of Life, in hieratic [Egyptian]. I won’t go into it now, but the fact that it can be read is rather miraculous. It really isn’t very hard when you come right down to it because all the letters look exactly alike. The M, the R, the L, and the W are all exactly alike. That’s all there is. They put a list of these, and yet you know what they mean because you know what they should mean in this particular context. You have to have a title tell you what the subject is, and then you can go all right. But it’s quite a strain. It’s like the flying of a bee; there’s no reason why a bee should fly. It can be shown that aerodynamically it can’t fly. But these things happen. This new book by Gleick on chaos is a very good one. There are things that happen beyond all control of science and everything else, and yet they do happen. This has become a very serious subject for science today. You have such a thing as speed reading, for example. Who ever thought a person could read a whole page in a minute? Yet people have been known to do it. What kind of operation of the mind is that? What’s going on? See, you have to cooperate to use a Urim and Thummim. It takes far more concentration and intelligence to use a Urim and Thummim the way Joseph Smith did than it does to use a grammar and a dictionary and wade your way through something like that. You notice as Joseph got more and more used to it, he didn’t need either the seer stone or the Urim and Thummim. As Emma Smith said, he would just lay it aside. You do the same thing if you are reading something in Coptic, Greek, or anything like that. After a while you don’t need the dictionary or the grammar at all. You just sail on without them. Why is that? At an earlier time you had to have someone tell
you what every word meant. Not anymore. How do you do it? Well, it’s like a centipede trying to figure out how he walks, how ice skaters work, and all sorts of things that operate in a rather miraculous way. The seer stone is one of these. Well, crystals do have that strange quality of concentrating light, and they concentrate the attention at least. So there are various techniques. It’s a strange thing. It could have the bow or not have the bow. As I said, the oldest title of Pharaoh in Egypt is that of \textit{wr m\textsuperscript{5}w}, the greatest of seers. It is simply written with two stones, side by side.

Question: So is it possible that Mosiah had a seer stone or something before they found the stones with the bow?

Answer: Yes, you’ll notice in the case of Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon that if we didn’t have the Book of Mormon, we would say he was faking the whole thing. But we have the Book of Mormon, and he wasn’t faking anything. Sometimes it was a seer stone, sometimes it was the Urim and Thummim, and sometimes it was neither. Sometimes it was inspiration. Section 7 of the Doctrine and Covenants is a translation of a particular document written by John on parchment and hidden up by him. We know since the \textit{Dead Sea Scrolls} that in John’s day everybody was writing on parchment and hiding them up in the desert. That’s exactly what happened. It was probably one of the \textit{Dead Sea Scrolls}, but we don’t have the scroll. Joseph Smith translated it. He didn’t have the scroll, but he said it was translated from a scroll. Sometimes the words would appear, or the letters would appear. Emma Smith said, “Joseph never read a proper name; he always spelled it out.” He could see it spelled out for him. If Joseph, being what he was, had given phonetically what he read, and Oliver Cowdery, being the clerk he was, had written down phonetically what he said to him, you wouldn’t recognize a single name in the Book of Mormon. They had to be spelled out, so they can be reliably used as philological evidence, etc. This is a \textit{disciplina arcani}; this is hermetic. Notice verse 16: “And whosoever has these things is called seer, after the manner of old times.” That’s what I mean; it belongs to another culture and to another world.

I’ve been doing a lot of stuff in this hermetic writing now. It has been emerging recently that they were doing and saying things and had knowledge that we don’t have. We’ve sort of joked about it in the past, but they really did. The classic example is the pyramids. As Santillana, the scientist at MIT said, they weren’t idiots who built those. You’d have to be consummate engineers and mathematicians to achieve what they did there. And yet we have nothing of what they did it with; we don’t know. And there’s all this stuff about all the stone cutting they did—tremendous, gigantic, cyclopian masonry without metals. How did they cut the stone? With other stones? There was something going on there. We are not going on to Arthur Clarke’s program on unsolved mysteries. But “whosoever has these things is called seer.” \textit{M\textsuperscript{5}w} means \textit{a seer}. It’s written with an \textit{eye}, and with the two stones under it.

Now this is an interesting thing. What did it [the record] give? Verse 17: “Now after Mosiah had finished translating these records, behold, it gave an account of the people who were destroyed back to the building of the great tower,” which was destroyed. Well, can’t we have anything less negative than that? Why must it always be the grim message? Why is that necessary? Well, Mormon and Moroni, who give us the book, are physicians. They are meant to heal. The Book of Mormon is a prescription for people who are very sick. It’s for us, so it’s going to talk about the diseases that we have. “... building of the great tower ... and even from that time back until the creation of Adam. Now this
account did cause the people of Mosiah to mourn exceedingly.” They didn’t like it; they mourned exceedingly when they read it. It was very sad. Again, why would that be? It’s our story. It’s like American history, a ghost town sort of story. This is what I was talking about, that this does apply to us. It is expedient that all people should know the things that are written in that account about Ether. Everybody should know that because this is the classic story of what happens. Were they expecting something great? They got something very sad. These were solemn admonitions that they received. Yet, what happened next? “Nevertheless it gave them much knowledge, in the which they did rejoice.” They rejoiced in the knowledge, in the ultimate assurance that there is someone who knows and someone who cares—that we are not, as William James said, “an atom on a speck of dust spinning around a bubble of gas.” There’s more to it than that. So this gave them great knowledge and reassurance, and they did rejoice because the story was being told to them for a purpose—not just to gloat over their fate and say, “This is what’s going to happen to you.” No, it doesn’t have to, and it’s all good news. Verse 19: “And this account shall be written hereafter; for behold, it is expedient that all people should know the things which are written in this account.”

They had the Law of Moses on the bronze plates. Remember, in Joseph Smith’s day the word bronze wasn’t used at all—not until the 1880s. That’s a French word that was adopted by the artists in Paris, but it means the same thing. Verse 20: “After king Mosiah had done these things, he took the plates of brass, and all the things which he had kept, and conferred them upon Alma, who was the son of Alma.” These were the state treasures. For example, the British proudly preserve the Magna Charta. We preserve the original Constitution; it’s a token or a talisman really. We have these things to attract our concentration, rally our attention, bring us together, etc. The Bible is a classic example of that. It’s the cultural core of things, like the Torah, the Magna Charta, and the Constitution. That’s what this was, and all this stuff was conferred upon Alma, who was the son of Alma—all the records that had been handed down “from one generation to another, even as they had been handed down from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem.”

The Old Testament is unique in that. It does hand down the records, and they are unadorned. That’s the interesting thing. Other records we have are ritualized and glamorized. The king always wins and is all powerful, whether it [the record is from] the East or the West. In the Old Testament, even if it’s Solomon or David, they are mortal and they sin. They can be very wicked men. They have their faults, and they lose battles as well as win them. They are chased around, etc. Whether it’s a great priest like Elijah or Samuel, they have their sufferings. Nothing is prettied up in the Old Testament at all. It “tells it like it is,” as we say. That’s the only ancient chronicle that does. The rest of them lean very strongly toward the administration.

Then chapter 29 is on government; it’s the last one in Mosiah. We’ve got to get to Alma sometime, don’t we? This has been a very sobering lesson. It’s a lesson on kingship, and this chapter now is a lesson on government. “Now when Mosiah had done this he sent out throughout all the land, among all the people, desiring to know their will concerning who should be their king.” This is the great assembly which happened in all ancient societies. They had to come together for the panegyric, the gathering of the tribes, the festival, the pow-wow. This was when everybody in a particular tribe was required to come. They were always at the spring equinox or at the solstice. They were desirous that Aaron, his second son, should be king. This episode might be one right out of the ancient Near East. We have interesting accounts like the Papyrus of Contendings of Horus and Seth, an Egyptian papyrus from the eighteenth dynasty. “Now Aaron had gone up to the land of
Nephi, therefore the king could not confer the kingdom upon him [he went on a mission, so he couldn’t take it and didn’t want it]; neither were any of the sons of Mosiah willing to take upon them the kingdom. Therefore king Mosiah sent again among the people; yea, even a written word sent he among the people.” Remember, that’s the way King Benjamin did when he couldn’t reach them. Xenophon wrote messages, too; Darius, and especially Alexander, sent messages throughout the kingdom if he couldn’t reach them himself. The written record was the big thing at this time. That was the advantage of writing, which makes empire possible. You have control at a distance, but without writing you have no control at a distance. There’s nothing you can do but be there personally or send somebody to report back and forth. But with the written order, you keep a copy of it and send it out. It’s only writing that makes empire possible. That’s why the Babylonians and Egyptians used it for that purpose. So the king sent again among the people a written word.

Verse 5: “Behold, O ye my people, or my brethren, for I esteem you as such.... Now I declare unto you that he to whom the kingdom doth rightly belong has declined, and will not take upon him the kingdom. And now if there should be another appointed in his stead, behold I fear there would rise contentions among you. [He doesn’t want them to have a king, and this is what would happen, he says] And who knoweth but what my son, to whom the kingdom doth belong, should turn to be angry and draw away a part of this people after him, which would cause wars and contentions among you, which would be the cause of shedding much blood.”

What’s the classic tragedy on that? The play *Seven against Thebes*. Remember the two brothers, Oteocles and Polynices. They were twins, and each one was to have the kingdom for a certain length of time. But when Oteocles’ time came to give it up, he wouldn’t give it up. They killed each other, and this is what happens. There are many examples of this. When the time comes up, the temporary king or the exchange king refuses to leave. The ancient world always had two sacral kings, like the Spartans. It’s the same way here. I had a long footnote in a classical journal many years ago on this particular subject—the instances in which kings in ancient times, having fulfilled their office during a season for which they had been appointed, [wouldn’t give up the throne]. Usually it was the festival king, the Lord of Misrule, or whatever you want to call him. They would set up a king, and then when the time came up, he refused to give up the throne. This is what happened with the first [king] of the Neo-Babylonian Empire—he refused to give it up. He was the son of a gardener, and they elected him king for the period of the festival. When it was over, he had collected gifts from the people as king. He used that money, gave them promises, became king, and founded a dynasty. This sort of thing happened. King Mosiah knew a thing or two about that.
We are in Mosiah 29:34 where he is talking about the king. These chapters are a magnificent treatise on power; that's the thesis here. You won’t find a better one anywhere. Let's go back to verse 8: “Now I say unto you let us be wise and consider these things. . . . And if my son should turn again to his pride and vain things [they made him king, and he decided not to—he was going on a mission; but what if he got back from his mission and wanted to be king—after all, he was in line] he would recall the things which he had said, and claim his right to the kingdom, which would cause him and also this people to commit much sin.” Then they would really be in “hot water.” The classic example of this is [Richard II] when he had to give up the crown.

Give me the crown.—Here, cousin, seize the crown;
Here, cousin: [he says cynically]
On this side my hand, on that side yours.
Now is this golden crown like a deep well
That owes two buckets, filling one another;

Shakespeare, *King Richard II*, act IV, scene 1

They are all met in the court, and Richard has to resign. Then Bolingbroke says, “Are you contented to resign the crown?” And Richard says:

Ay, no;—no, ay; for I must nothing be;
Therefore no no, for I resign to thee.

[He can’t make up his mind; he will resign it, and he will not. In act III, scene 3 he says:]

Down, down I come; like glistening Phaeton
Wanting the manage of unruly jades.
In the base court? Base court, where kings grow base . . .

He’ll give it up, but he won’t give it up. Of course, this is a terrible tragedy. In all these king plays everybody is grabbing for power. Richard gives it up—he’s sick of it. But then he wants it back again, and there’s real trouble for him.

Verse 10: “And now let us be wise and look forward to these things, and do that which will make for the peace of this people.” He repeats that again; this is very important, you see. This is no longer divine kingship; it is now our government. The constitution though is still the *Torah*; they are going by that. “Therefore I will be your king the remainder of my days; nevertheless, let us appoint judges.” They were now going to act together, not the king by himself. He will remain the king, but he will not appoint the judges anymore—as
the President does in our society. Again, you see, it’s the judges that count; it’s the boulê, the council, the judges that really in the end have the say in the government. They did in Egypt where the priest kings were the judges and took over the kingdom of Thebes. “And we will newly arrange the affairs of this people, for we will appoint wise men to be judges, that will judge this people according to the commandments of God.” They were going to change and revamp the whole government from top to bottom. That’s a sensible thing to do.

If you want to read a perfect description of our time, you should read the Edict of Diocletian from the year 296. He completely revamped the Roman Empire to its maximum extent. He revamped the whole thing and turned it upside down; he was a genius at organization. He listed the reasons why he did that and the condition of the state. It sounds exactly like our society today. I should read that to you someday; that Edict of Diocletian is something worth hearing.

Verse 11: “Therefore I will be your king the remainder of my days. . . . We will appoint wise men to be judges, that will judge this people according to the commandments of God.” How can you tell they are wise? Well, just ask them what they would do in a certain situation. If they start weaseling or waftling or something else, you can find out quickly enough whether a person would be wise or not. It’s still the Torah they are going by entirely. “Now it is better that a man should be judged of God than of man.” If we could have perfect judges, everything would be fine. Remember, the Constitution ultimately rests on the judiciary. The Supreme Court decides what is the law after the legislature has made it, and decides how far the executive can go in executing it. It’s all up to the good old court; this is the thing. “For the judgments of God are always just, but the judgments of man are not always just [well, there’s the understatement of the year]. Therefore, if it were possible that you could have just men to be your kings, who would establish the laws of God, and judge this people according to his commandments.”

That was Plato’s theory, the philosopher king: Could we find a just man to be king? He thought in Dionysius the Younger of Syracuse he had somebody who was willing to listen to his teachings. He went to Syracuse and tried to discipline Dionysius, whose father had been the very powerful and magnificent tyrant of Syracuse. It didn’t work at all. Here Plato, the great man, had one chance to make his great theory of philosopher kings work, and the thing was a complete flop. His conclusion in the laws is that the best thing you can do is “to cultivate your own garden. Find a quiet place under a wall out of the wind, the blowing newspapers, and the dust and try to relax in the sun.” That’s about the only thing left for you to do. He despairs of it because you are not going to get human beings that are anything else but this way.

Verse 13: “Yea, if ye could have men for your kings who would do even as my father Benjamin did for this people, . . . if this could always be the case then it would be expedient that ye should always have kings to rule over you.” There have been good kings, of course; there have been great kings, like Diocletian himself. Who would think that a son of a sergeant would ever work himself up to rule the empire and put everything on its feet again? For about three years [laughs]. That’s the way it happens in the Book of Mormon; it doesn’t happen for long. God is king. There’s the divine right. You are supposed to be secure in that. The king claims divine right, but it isn’t. We won’t go into that.
Mosiah established peace throughout the land. Notice the list of crimes here [in verse 14]: “that there should be no wars, no contentions, no stealing, nor plundering, nor murdering, nor any manner of iniquity.” It comes right down the ladder here, but at the top is wars. That’s the worst crime. War is a crime; it’s not just a mistake or something like that. It’s a terrible crime, and everybody knows it, too. Wars are the result of these other things—the contention, the stealing, the plundering. If nobody is going to play fair, you are going to end up resorting to violence. This is what happened because nobody was playing fair—everybody was grabbing. In a gang war who is breaking the law? Well, all wars are gang wars, as far as that goes. That’s the beginning of Clausewitz or the famous Roman maxim, “All laws are suspended as soon as the fighting begins.” Clausewitz said it’s absolutely cynical to think of the laws of war, because the only reason you are going to war is to take every possible mean advantage you can. You want to agree to some laws so you can break them. If you could settle things by sensible discussion, what are you doing shooting at each other and trying to kill each other? It’s the silliest thing in the world. Clausewitz knew the answers. No war is going to come unless somebody wants it; we’ll see that.

Verse 16: “Now I say unto you, that because all men are not just it is not expedient that ye should have a king or kings to rule over you.” Well, what should we do in that case? In verse 26 he tells us what we are to do. He says, remember the case of king Noah—55 years before. Because of his iniquity the people were brought into bondage. In other words, don’t blame the Lamanites. After all, “because of their iniquities they were brought into bondage.” But the king led them in their iniquities; he could be responsible. They were in bondage to the Lamanites, yes, but don’t blame the Lamanites. It was their [the Nephites’] iniquities. Verse 19: “And were it not for the interposition of their all-wise Creator, and this because of their sincere repentance [this is what got them out of it], they must unavoidably remain in bondage until now. [And this is not a special case:] But behold, he did deliver them because they did humble themselves before him. . . . And thus doth the Lord work with his power in all cases among the children of men.” It’s not peace through strength, refusing to yield, standing tall, and all that. He delivered them because they humbled themselves. It is all in his hands “and thus doth the Lord work with his power in all cases among the children of men.” This is the only way our quarrels will be solved. These are lessons in power.

I thought it was so ridiculous on May 7, 1945. One minute you were shooting madly at somebody, trying to kill him. The next hour (or minute) because somebody signed a piece of paper, you were the best of friends. It was the funniest thing you ever heard of. That’s what happened. In Rheims they signed the agreement, and the war was over. All of a sudden we said, “Isn’t that great?” Then we all ran out and embraced each other. Of course, I had been chatting with the prisoners all along anyway, but it was so ridiculous. The Book of Mormon has it all figured out here. The theme here is the foolishness and silliness of men and how it all has to do with their moral wickedness, and their greed, and all the rest of it.

And we don’t accept the reality of the gospel. Verse 21: “And . . . ye cannot dethrone an iniquitous king save it be through much contention, and the shedding of much blood [Cromwell succeeded, but then they dethroned him]. For behold, he has his friends in iniquity [this is the way they do it; notice this case], and he keepeth his guards about him; and he teareth up the laws of those who have reigned in righteousness before him.” Well, the CIA put Noriega in because they thought he would help us with the drug [problems], and now he is in there’s absolutely nothing they can do about it. This is the condition that
he describes here. Once he is in, he makes his own policy. Once a person is elected, he claims his executive privilege. You can’t touch him because this is what he does, and this has happened many times, of course. I guess the worst instance is that of, not Iran, but Iraq, where even a whisper or a suggestion against the government and you disappear just like that. That’s ample reason—there are no laws, no trials, nothing. As it says here, “And he enacteth laws [that please himself] ... after the manner of his own wickedness [he makes his own rules]; and whosoever doth not obey his laws he causeth to be destroyed”—not just punished, but destroyed. This is what happens. Everywhere all over the world when people disagree now, they [the rulers] find that’s the easiest solution, which Hitler called “the absolute solution.” You just get rid of them. He tried it on the Jews, you know. This is what happens in your dictatorships in Iraq, etc.

Verse 25: “Therefore, choose you by the voice of this people, judges, that ye may be judged according to the laws which have been given you by our fathers [that which was handed down, the Torah], which are correct, and which were given them by the hand of the Lord [so we know where the laws come from in the end]. Now it is not common [and this is the key; it does happen but is not common] that the voice of the people desireth anything contrary to that which is right [if they understand what they’re doing]; but it is common for the lesser part of the people to desire that which is not right [there are always some who do]; therefore this shall ye observe and make it your law—to do your business by the voice of the people.” Why? He says because they are going to be responsible then. And for a good reason they should be responsible. Moroni tells us back here in Moroni 7:15–16 that the people can be held responsible. You say, “What, the ignorant people?” It’s for this reason: “For behold, my brethren, it is given unto you to judge, that ye may know good from evil; and the way to judge is as plain, that ye may know with a perfect knowledge, as the daylight is from the dark night. For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil [so you can trust that; every man will know; we do have consciences, no matter how we rationalize and get around them in our interest]; wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God.”

The impulse will tell you it is of God, just as the impulse will tell you when something tastes nasty or smells nasty. It is given you to know with a perfect knowledge the good from the evil, so why shouldn’t the people be held responsible and vote—most of them? But he knows this time will come: Verse 27: “And if the time comes that the voice of the people doth choose iniquity, then is the time that the judgments of God will come upon you; yea, then is the time he will visit you with great destruction even as he has hitherto visited this land.” The Book of Mormon constantly holds up to us this vivid possibility. America is especially vulnerable to self-destruction. Well, look at the Civil War, which was a senseless, terrible thing. We have acquired an insatiable appetite today for violence and destruction. These are keys and indications, etc. Why if they can’t judge any better than that is it going to happen? Because the buck stops with them. If they suffer, they will answer for it, not the king. They can’t blame Noah; they can’t blame anybody but themselves. That’s why it is given to them now because it is given to every man.

Verse 28: “And now if ye have judges, and they do not judge you according to the law which has been given, ye can cause they may be judged of a higher judge.” But who is going to judge the higher judges? The first rule of Roman law was, “Who watches over the watchers; who takes care of the custodians?” He says this is the way it is: A small number of lower judges watches over them; and those lower judges are chosen at the local level.
They are popular judges. The people know them, so they are responsible for the judgments that are made. “Your lower judges should be gathered together, and they shall judge your higher judges, according to the voice of the people.” It always comes back to them because they chose the lower judges at grass level. They elected them locally at the grass roots, so they are responsible. Verse 30: “And I command you to do these things . . . that if these people commit sins and iniquities they shall be answered upon their own heads.” That’s the whole point. That’s why he was having them make the decisions instead of being able to blame the king or anybody else. The judges are truly representative of what the people want, and they are in this country, too.

Otherwise, in the old system, as described in verse 31: “For behold I say unto you, the sins of many people have been caused by the iniquities of their kings; therefore their iniquities are answered upon the heads of their kings.” We think of Henry IV and Henry V. What’s that famous speech? He can’t sleep, you know.

Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast
Seal up the ship-boy’s eyes, and rock his brains
In cradle of the rude imperious surge,

[It won’t let me sleep.] . . .

Canst thou, O partial sleep, give thy repose
To the wet sea-boy in an hour so rude;
And in the calmest and most stillest night,
With all appliances and means to boot,
Deny it [sleep] to a king? Then, happy low, lie down!
Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.

Shakespeare, Henry IV, act III, scene 1

Twenty-five years ago, by uttering those words in a bookstore in Amman, I caused a major riot. It’s not just today that these irrational and wild reactions occur. The king had just written an [autobiography], and Nasser’s agents were everywhere in town. I went in to buy a copy of the book, and the title of the book was Uneasy Lies the Head That Wears a Crown. Somebody took off, and that night there was a major riot. They had to send two tanks down from the palace to stop it, just because I made that remark, “Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.” Talk about a brittle world! Talk about living right on the edge! What kind of world are we living in here? That was really a night! I thought it was a Moslem celebration—I enjoyed it. I didn’t know it was a mob. There was a Moslem celebration that night, and then I saw all this shooting. I thought they were just celebrating. In the morning I went out with my camera and started to take pictures. I said, “Can I take some pictures?” The same people were there. They were excavating an archeological excavation at the bottom of the hill, across from the old Philadelphia Hotel there. We talked about the fun the night before. They said, “Oh, no, that wasn’t a celebration; we were rioting.” They were perfectly cheerful—no bad feelings or anything like that. Remarkable people, aren’t they? Well, that’s the world we live in, you see.

Verse 32: “And now I desire that this inequality should be no more in this land, especially among this my people; but I desire that this land be a land of liberty.” Notice that liberty and equality go together. It’s very interesting that today we interpret liberty as inequality—the right of anyone who wants to pile up as much power and wealth as he can
and take advantage of anybody he can. If they are weaker, that’s just too bad. We have free, competitive enterprise now, and you do what you want. So you have the perfect right to be unequal, but you are not going to have liberty with inequality because some people are in bondage to others. There are all sorts of legal tricks you can play. What are lawyers for? “... and every man enjoy his rights and privileges alike...” But you don’t when you can’t hire the law. You know how the rights and privileges are bestowed in any society. But freedom is equality. I mentioned that [comment] from Philo last time; I just came across that. “Equality is the mother of righteousness.” And it’s the mother of liberty, too. [Mosiah] wants every man to “enjoy his rights and privileges.”

And here’s another thing. He has been a king, and he doesn’t want anybody to suffer the way he has suffered. Verse 33: “And many more things did king Mosiah write unto them, unfolding unto them all the trials and troubles of a righteous king [‘uneasy lies the head that wears a crown’]... And he told them that these things ought not to be; but that the burden should come upon all the people, that every man might bear his part.” And what is his part? Does it consist in making money entirely for himself? We say, “No tax, no burden on us; I don’t have to bear anything.” We absolutely resent any taxation whatever. Well, what is your part? Just to get for yourself. It’s the “me generation.” This is the philosophy we are living by today. A car today is no burden on anybody. “I won’t do anything I don’t want to do.” That was a very interesting thing on the front page of the paper this morning.

[In connection with this idea of] the king being burdened, just before the battle, Henry V gives his famous speech that the king has to bear the whole thing. He doesn’t like to bear it. What advantage does the king have, except ceremony? He gets all the pomp; he’s waited on, etc. But he is responsible for everything.

    Upon the king!—let our lives, our souls,
    Our debts, our careful wives,
    Our children, and our sins lay upon the king!
    We must bear all. O hard condition,
    Twin-born with greatness, subject to the breath
    Of every fool whose sense no more can feel
    But his own wringing!

[Every fool is thinking just of his own interests, but the poor king has to think of everybody.]

    What infinite heart’s-ease must kings neglect,
    That private men enjoy!

[Private men just do their own thing, but the king has to be responsible. Lay it upon the king.]

    Shakespeare Henry V, act IV, scene 1

Incidentally, you’ll notice this remarkable thing. I love to pass from Shakespeare’s poetry to the Book of Mormon prose because you can do that without any declination in loftiness of style. The one is just as exalted as the other. You realize what a masterpiece the Book of Mormon is when you start doing this. Compare Shakespeare’s language with this:

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"And many more things did king Mosiah write unto them, unfolding unto them all the trials and troubles of a righteous king [notice that there's rhythm and poetry in that line; it's a very nice iambic pentameter], yea, all the travails of soul for their people, and also all the murmurings of the people to their king; and he explained it all unto them." That's marvelous poetry. The Book of Mormon is right up there with Shakespeare, and people call that "chloroform in print." Just yesterday, a writer in the newspaper quoted Mark Twain's famous remark about the Book of Mormon as "chloroform in print." Well, of course, he didn't read it.

Verse 34: "And he told them that these things ought not to be; but that the burden should come upon all the people, that every man might bear his part." Then what do you have when you have an unrighteous king? Here is another eloquent passage; listen to verse 36: "Yea, all his iniquities and abominations, and all the war, and contentions, and bloodshed, and the stealing, and the plundering, and the committing of whoredoms, and all manner of iniquities which cannot be enumerated." This is what a king will bring you. Can a king steal? Well, he owns everything anyway. The people were "convinced of the truth of his words." Mosiah got through to them. (A professor of economics here at BYU quotes a remarkable thing on what follows here. Remember, we were talking about the subject of power.)

They assembled in bodies to cast their votes and elect the judges. Since the judges were going to run the country, why not elect them directly and hold them responsible instead of having them appointed by a legislature or executive? Verse 39: "And they were exceedingly rejoiced because of the liberty which had been granted unto them. And they did wax strong in love towards Mosiah... for they did not look upon him as a tyrant who was seeking for gain [this is what tyrants are after], yea, for that lucre which doth corrupt the soul [money corrupts]; for he had not exacted riches of them, neither had he delighted in the shedding of blood; but he had established peace in the land." This is the usual military complex—gain, corruption, riches, the shedding of blood, etc. "With the treasures of the earth I will buy up armies and navies and rule with blood and horror on the earth," [Satan said]. The two go together, as they do here. And when the treasury is empty, whether it's the king or his empire, they're finished.

Of the sixty Roman emperors, at least two-thirds of them were bumped off by the military, [often] by their successor. Look at Diocletian. He rose to a high rank in the army. Then he revolted, got rid of [Numerianus], and established himself. This happened in almost every case, time and time again. Because of the corruption, they were bought off. After Nero was dead, there were Galba, Otho, and Vitellius. Each one offered more to the army than the other offered. Galba was bumped off, Otho was bumped off, and Vitellius was bumped off. Each successor offered more than his predecessor offered. Then things got in such bad condition that the senate took over. We won't go into that now.

Verse 42: "Alma was appointed to be the first chief judge, he being also the high priest, his father having conferred the office upon him, and having given him the charge concerning all the affairs of the church." So he was the head of the state now. It was a sacral state; there was no king anymore. Alma was first judge. He was going to be head of the state, head of the army, and head of the church. He held all three offices at once, and pretty soon he is going to lay them all down. He said you can't do any good with that—even being the top man and having all that authority. Remember, he laid them down and felt that he could do more good by bearing down in pure testimony. He went out on a mission. Then they spit on him and kicked him around, because he had lost his
clout—nobody cared anymore. He was a “has-been” then and went through that. What a remarkable essay on power, and where you get with power, the Book of Mormon presents to us! As we read in Alma 2:16, he could have been absolute dictator. He was in a perfect position to take over and run everything. Well, he was absolute dictator, wasn’t he? No, he refused to do it. The man makes the difference.

Verse 43: “And there was continual peace through the land. And thus commenced the reign of the judges throughout all the land of Zarahemla, among all the people who were called Nephites [notice, they were called Nephites, although they were mostly Mulekites]; and Alma was the first and chief judge. Verse 47: “And thus ended the reign of the kings over the people of Nephi; and thus ended the days of Alma, who was the founder of their church.” The older Alma died, being 82 years old, and also Mosiah died. So we begin the book of Alma with a new reign and new troubles. It starts out with Alma “in the first year of the reign of the judges . . . king Mosiah having gone the way of all the earth, having warred a good warfare . . . [notice these ancient figures of speech—‘the path of righteousness, slept with his ancestors,’ etc.] nevertheless he had established laws, and they were acknowledged by the people [notice this]; therefore they were obliged to abide by the laws which he had made”—because the people acknowledged and accepted them. He didn’t just impose them and say, “This is the law; therefore, you will keep it.” They were obliged to keep the laws which they had acknowledged. They were based on the Torah which was their constitution.

Now they’re already going to have trouble. This Nehor went about among the people. He’s an interesting person. The trouble was that they were living under the law that Alma had given them. Alma and his community went back to the law and a very strict order of things. Men like Abinadi, who were great scriptionaries, were living according to the law of Moses the way it should be kept. It was strict and austere, and the people didn’t like it. They are going to go for this man Nehor “hook, line, and sinker.” From this time on, the Nehors rule the roost, and they claim to be the church. Theirs was a much more genial and easy religion to take. People didn’t like the rigorous religion, so they went over to the Nehors here. This will tell us how it happened. Verse 2: “In the first year of the reign of Alma in the judgment-seat, there was a man brought before him to be judged, a man who had given them. Alma and his community went back to the law and a very strict order of things. Men like Abinadi, who were great scriptionaries, were living according to the law of Moses the way it should be kept. It was strict and austere, and the people didn’t like it. They are going to go for this man Nehor “hook, line, and sinker.” From this time on, the Nehors rule the roost, and they claim to be the church. Theirs was a much more genial and easy religion to take. People didn’t like the rigorous religion, so they went over to the Nehors here. This will tell us how it happened. Verse 2: “In the first year of the reign of Alma in the judgment-seat, there was a man brought before him to be judged, a man who was large, and was noted for his much strength.”
that would go over like a lead balloon in our society, too. Nehor was a sophist, and he was an evangelist. He was very clever and told them what they wanted to hear. Now here’s a nice soft gospel: “And he also testified unto the people that all mankind should be saved at the last day, and that they need not fear nor tremble, but that they might lift up their heads and rejoice [now this is an easy-going, happy teaching—the Bakkers teach this; it’s highly permissive, you notice]; for the Lord had created all men, and had also redeemed all men; and, in the end, all men should [be saved and] have eternal life [period].”

What is wrong with this upbeat, cheerful religion—this popular message? Well, it’s the period that is wrong. It says, “In the end, all men shall have eternal life”—and that’s the whole story. Everyone is saved, and that is that. This short circuits and bypasses the whole plan of salvation, which is that this is a time of probation here, accepting salvation the hard way. When you accept the gift, you prepare yourself to enjoy it here. We do the same thing. We don’t feel bound by all the covenants and commandments very strictly. We are very strict on the Word of Wisdom. Some we make a big thing about, but others we don’t take seriously. Should we lower our standards to gain converts? Well, that’s the great thing. The great Catholic Church historian—not only of our time, but I think the greatest of them all—was Duchesne. He said that’s exactly what happened. The church was able to expand and conquer after the fourth century because it just kept lowering its standards, lower and lower. Every time it lowered them, it could get more people in. Finally, everybody was willing to join because they didn’t have any standards at all as far as morals were concerned. This is the thing that happened here with Nehor; he made himself very popular. He was like a popular evangelist, and this is what people want to hear. They are not too bound by anything; they don’t worry about things like that.

The question arises here: What is the measure of a successful evangelist? There’s Norman Vincent Peale. My cousin Donald Sloan was his business manager for years. Donald is dead now, but he told all sorts of stories about Norman Vincent Peale. We won’t go into that. There was Henry Ward Beecher in the early days and Cardinal John Spellman in our own time—and Jerry Falwell and Dale Carnegie. What is the measure of their success? Well, it’s popularity alone. How to win friends and influence people is the whole secret. Well, what is wrong with winning souls for Jesus? The answer is that it requires rhetoric. This type of missionary must be a crowd pleaser. Truth tellers are something else, as we learn from Samuel the Lamanite, Abinadi, and people like that. We wouldn’t need prophets at all if they told us only what we wanted to hear. We wouldn’t need the scriptures if they told us only what we wanted. Yet we avoid the unpleasant parts very cleverly. “Narrow is the way, and few there be that find it,” but everybody wants to go in the broad path. What’s wrong with that? It frustrates the whole purpose of our being here, which is to test us and see if we are good for the long run ahead. To be good for the long run of eternity, you can’t be very questionable about certain things. You can be let in at lower levels and train—we don’t know what happens later on. But here you are given a great chance to show how much stamina you have for the long stretch ahead in terms of trillions of years, although we don’t think in terms of that at all.

So this was a nice, pleasant, permissive, easy-going religion, and [many] went for it. Verse 5: “And it came to pass that he did teach these things so much that many did believe on his words, even so many that they began to support him and give him money.” Now all religions are supported by money, but the immorality of it (as Plato shows in the Protagoras and the Gorgias) is when you start giving it to individuals. When you have a line veto that it be used for this or that, then you are not giving it at all. If I give money to the church specifying that it can only be used for this, I’m not giving it to the Lord or
trusting him at all. I don’t specify what it’s for; I just pay my tithing and that’s that. If it’s
misused that’s none of my affair; I’ve done what the Lord requires of me.

So they began to support him and give him costly apparel, “and even began to establish a
church after the manner of his preaching.” This crowd-pleasing evangelist established his
church. We have some very interesting Old World documents about this sort of thing, too. The Chilam Balam, the oldest record from Central America, talks about this sort of
thing—how the priests would be lifted up on people’s shoulders dressed in elaborate
apparel and carried around town. It talks about this later on when Samuel the Lamanite
says, “And if a man shall come among you and say this [what you want to hear], ye will
receive him, and say that he is a prophet. Yea, ye will lift him up, and ye will give unto
him of your substance; ye will give unto him of your gold and of your silver, and ye will
clothe him with costly apparel” (Helaman 13:27–28). We have pictures of these
overdressed priests being carried in on poles.

And rhetoric is aggressive. He used a rhetorical message to be a crowd pleaser. Then old
Gideon came along, and there was sharp talk. He was the old war horse, you know. He
took an aggressive approach and began to argue with Nehor, who was a large and powerful
man. They began to dispute sharply. Verse 8: “And it was he who was an instrument in
the hands of God in delivering the people of Limhi out of bondage. Now, because Gideon
withstood him with the words of God he was wroth with Gideon, and drew his sword and
began to smite him.” Now, what’s going on here? What would he be doing with a sword?
This is an interesting commentary on the frontier. There was this great contention going
on. When Alma and the sons of Mosiah changed their opinion, then they started being
knocked around. People started throwing rocks at them and all sorts of rough stuff.
Gideon would probably have a sword for defense because he traveled around a lot;
moreover, the peace was very new here. They had barely settled down. Gideon traveled
throughout various territories in the wilderness, and it was like the Old West. What’s
more, Gideon, in spite of his age, had a truculent temperament, so I guess he would carry
a weapon anyway.

Verse 9: “Now Gideon being stricken with many years, therefore he was not able to
withstand his blows, therefore he was slain by the sword.” It was Nehor traveling around
with a sword here. That was allowed, I suppose. And he was brought before Alma for his
crimes—not for his doctrine, but for his crimes. Then Alma says a very interesting thing
in verse 12. Remember this priestcraft? He knows about it and that in the time of Lehi, in
the twenty-sixth dynasty, it ruled the world.

Palestine had a cultural dependency on Egypt at that time. There were Greek and
Egyptian soldiers all over the place—mostly Greeks. The fleet belonged to Psammeticus
II, and his son, Necho II, organized the fleet. They had ships and arms all over the
Mediterranean. But priestcraft was the thing. At that time the priests took over the
government of Egypt. To be a king in the twenty-sixty dynasty (in Lehi’s time), you had
to be high priest, too. Every king claimed to be high priest or to be intermarried with a
priestly family. But even the king couldn’t do anything without asking the priests of
Thebes, who were tyrannical, crooked, and all sorts of things. There were all sorts of
troubles; it’s a big story. The Nephites remembered this; it made a big impression.
Remember, they kept records of everything as they went.

Verse 12: “But Alma said unto him: Behold, this is the first time that priestcraft has been
introduced among this people [they had never had it before, but they had a memory of it].
And behold thou art not only guilty of priestcraft, but hast endeavored to enforce it by the sword; and were priestcraft to be enforced among this people it would prove their entire destruction.” Alma knew what happens when that starts. Incidentally, the first high priest [of the twenty-first dynasty in Egypt] was called Korihor, and his son was called Piankhi—two Book of Mormon names. They have the same relationship in the Book of Mormon. Paanchi is one of the high judges. Those Egyptian names come in just right here. They knew those names and had those names. Piankhi was a very famous name at the time Lehi left Jerusalem. It was a priestly name and a royal name. Some say it was Piankhi who founded the twenty-fifth dynasty; some say it was Shabako.

Verse 13: “And thou hast shed the blood of a righteous man. . . . Therefore thou art condemned to die, according to the law which has been given us by Mosiah, our last king; and it has been acknowledged by this people; therefore this people must abide by the law.” There it is again. It is the law; they accepted it; therefore, they must abide by it. Then they carried out the old ritual of Hārūt and Mārūt. In the days of Enoch the Watchers came to the earth and started corrupting men. They started taking the sacred ordinances and claiming them, but perverting them. They claimed that they had the right gospel. They gave a false slant and a false teaching to it, and justified all sorts of immorality. Therefore, Hārūt and Mārūt were hanged on a high hill because the earth would not accept them. They were the first to betray the law of God to men. There was plenty of wickedness and murder, etc., but they were doing it in the name of the gospel and the priesthood. They introduced the temple ordinances but falsified them. There is quite a story about the Watchers here. One was Hārūt and one was Mārūt; there are various names given to them. They were hanged between heaven and earth because the earth wouldn’t receive them, just as it wouldn’t receive Cain. Remember, the earth refused her strength to Cain. And heaven wouldn’t receive them. So what can you do? You can just leave them hanging there because neither would receive them. And they hang there until the Day of Judgment—that’s the point. That’s very widespread; everybody knows about the story of Hārūt and Mārūt suspended between heaven and earth because they were the first corrupters of the human race in the name of preaching religion.

It says here in verse 15: “And it came to pass that they took him; and his name was Nehor; and they carried him upon the top of the hill Manti [the hill Months], and there he was caused, or rather did acknowledge, between the heavens and the earth [the one won’t take him and the other won’t take him] that what he had taught to the people was contrary to the word of God; and there he suffered an ignominious death.” He had first corrupted the gospel. Alma said, you’re the first one [among us] to do a trick like this in the name of religion—to take the teachings of the gospel and pervert them in this manner. The penalty is always hanging between heaven and earth. That’s why they put a person on a gibbet; they hang him up on a high tree that way. That is to witness his crimes against heaven and earth and mankind.

Verse 16: “Nevertheless, this did not put an end to the spreading of priestcraft through the land.” This was a winner! This religion is going to last right until the end; everybody goes for it. It’s much more popular than the church is. “For there were many who loved the vain things of the world [they wanted that easy-going religion], and they went forth preaching false doctrines [giving it out as the gospel; they had their missionaries]; and this they did for the sake of riches and honor. [Well, and why do the TV preachers preach? For fame and fortune, of course.] Nevertheless, they durst not lie, if it were known, for fear of
the law, for liars were punished; therefore they pretended to preach according to their belief; and now the law could have no power on any man for his belief.” They pretended this was a sincere religion. With separation of church and state, they couldn’t be persecuted if they really believed it. And who was to judge whether they were sincere or not? Therefore, they were allowed to preach. Remember, Nehor was hanged for his murder, not for his preaching.

They tried to crack down on Jehovah’s Witnesses for their beliefs about saluting the flag, etc. It’s hard thing not to crack down on someone for their beliefs, if you dislike their beliefs. Of course, that was what caused the war against the Mormons; they were a state within a state. Their beliefs made them defiant of the Union. There was the great trial back in 1903 when many of the General Authorities went back and had to testify that the Church was not a state within a state. We were not defying all the laws and the Constitution.

In this early stage, they [the Nehors] “durst not steal, for fear of the law, for such were punished.” The legal system was new, but they soon found ways of getting around it. We will see that. Then they had the Ten Commandments. They couldn’t lie and steal and that sort of thing because they were being judged by the Ten Commandments. “But it came to pass that whosoever did not belong to the church of God began to persecute those that did belong to the church of God.” The church was being persecuted by this other church, which was a big church now. They were able to do it. They persecuted at first with words—slander and all sorts of things like that. Well, is that bad? If you call a person a “communist” or something like that, you can persecute with words. You can make things very bad for him. “Bred of an idle word”—you can put a person into real trouble with words.

Verse 20: “Yea, they did persecute them, and afflict them with all manner of words, and this because of their humility; because they were not proud in their own eyes [now here’s the contrast; here’s what the issue was between these churches: The new system was nice and easy going, and the other was much too rigorous], and because they did impart the word of God, one with another, without money and without price.” Well, that hit them hard. [The Nehors] thought there should be some pay here and some structure. [The true believers] went out and worked like anybody else, and this made them very unpopular. It was a standing rebuke to them, like Socrates and the Sophists. That’s exactly why the Sophists got Socrates put to death, because he didn’t take money for his teaching. Here it is uncontrolled and very suspicious. Religion should be uncontrolled, sincere, etc.

In the early church in the first century there was the three-day test. We read this in both the Clementine Recognitions and in the Pastor of Hermas. Many people went about preaching and becoming professional clergy. The three-day test was that you could entertain them and keep them in your house for three days. But after three days, they had to leave. If they stayed longer than that, they were christemporoi—people who were selling Christ for a price. They were making an emporium, making a business of religion. A christemporoi was one who makes a business or a profit from religion. If they stayed more than three days, that’s what they were. That’s what these people were doing. They didn’t want that rigorous old system. There was plenty of ground for persecution here.

Verse 21: “Now there was a strict law among the people of the church, that there should not any man, belonging to the church, arise and persecute those that did not belong to the church, and that there should be no persecution among themselves.” No persecution
at all! Two things: Don’t persecute outsiders, and don’t persecute each other. But they started doing both. This is a sad thing that happened, especially persecuting each other. Notice that religion is the most socially sensitive subject there is, the one in which offence is most easily given and taken. It touches one’s innermost feelings, and quickly the sparks begin to fly. This is a very sensitive issue here. They were not supposed to persecute anyone. “Nevertheless, there were many among them [now we’re back to the true church; notice what’s happening there] who began to be proud, and began to contend warmly with their adversaries [in the church], even unto blows; yea, they would smite one another with their fists.” That’s an interesting thing that the outsiders couldn’t smite them; it was against the law. During this period they persecuted them only with words. But now the members of the church started fighting unto blows. This was the second year of the reign of the judges. It only took one year, and things were already starting to fall apart—inside and outside. In the second year of the reign of Alma, they had just established their new model government, and the whole thing was “going to pot,” with Nehor and the church itself. Verse 23: “And it was a cause of much affliction to the church, yea, it was the cause of much trial with the church.” Well, you can believe that; it was a terrible time!

Incidentally, the second century of Christianity was not the century of faith; it was always called the “Age of Heresy,” because that’s when everything broke apart. Epiphanius mentioned eighty-eight heresies within the church. Nobody knew which was the real church; it just dissolved. That all happened just after the year 100 A.D.

Verse 24: “For the hearts of many were hardened, and their names were blotted out.” Remember the rule the Lord taught was that if the people separate themselves, argue, and go out and found their own churches, the only penalty is to cut them off from the church. So many were excommunicated at this time—just when the persecution was going on. “And also many withdrew themselves from among them.” Many voluntarily apostatized, and many were struck from the records and excommunicated. This began already. Did they need a king to make them corrupt?

Verse 25: “Now this was a great trial to those that did stand fast in the faith [you can believe that! What were they to do? This is what they were to do]; nevertheless, they were steadfast and immovable in keeping the commandments of God, and they bore with patience the persecution which was heaped upon them.” This was from both sides—inside the church and outside the church. The real church was just a nucleus remaining here now, and this is a standard situation in Church history. It has always been the same, so don’t be upset by things like this. It’s what you can expect.

This is what the motive was. This is why there was a great division between them and the rest of the society—why the other people went on and joined the Nehors, and why they didn’t like the way the church was being run. “And when the priests left their labor to impart the word of God unto the people, the people also left their labors to hear the word of God. And when the priest had imparted unto them the word of God they all returned again diligently unto their labors; and the priest, not esteeming himself above his hearers, for the preacher was no better than the hearer, neither was the teacher any better than the learner; and thus they were all equal, and they did all labor, every man according to his strength.” Well, we [Americans] don’t like that at all; that’s not the way we do things today. They were equal and every man labored according to his strength and wasn’t required to labor more. If he was stronger, that didn’t give him the advantage to accumulate vastly more and take advantage of the weaker person, which is the standard situation. It occurs hundreds of times in the Egyptian record—the strong begin to
dominate the weak. Well, they always will, but they’re not supposed to. Every man is to labor according to his strength.

Verse 27: “And they did impart of their substance, every man according to that which he had, to the poor, and the needy, and the sick, and the afflicted.” They followed the Law of Consecration. Every man gave according to that which he had, to the limit of his capacity as much as he could give, “and they did not wear costly apparel, yet they were neat and comely.” How long could they resist the corroding effects of riches? Four years is the outside limit here. Two of the years were during war. The next year after this war broke out again as a result of this. This is not a happy history, but a very instructive one, and it’s meant for somebody. President Benson really hit it on the head when he said, “The Book of Mormon wasn’t written for people long past; it was written for us here and now!” So here it is.

I see some of you are greatly relieved to find out that the time is up now. It’s too late to talk about this favorite passage that comes next. It says they got very rich, but they still weren’t bad. You’ll see what happened and how they were able to do that. We’re going very slowly, you notice, but this was written for a purpose. We should read it. I recommend the Book of Mormon to your serious attention.
This is a game. I just wrote this down this morning, and it may expedite things. We will call it “The Escape Game” or “Fuga Mundi,” which means “flight from the world.” We will mark it this way: Who does the escaping? and from what? First of all it was Lehi who did the fleeing, the getting out. This game is based on the passage that you find in Revelation 18:4, a passage we all know: “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.” So all of these people are running away from something, and we will see what it is. Each time we are going to refer to the scripture here. We are not talking about Lehi’s Jerusalem this semester, but it is described by his contemporary and friend Jeremiah. So we will put this reference down: Jeremiah 5:25–31 and Jeremiah 7:4 and following. These are good passages which are typical of what he is running away from. I will read them to you for your delectation.

This is speaking to Jerusalem in the time of Lehi: “Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withheld good things from you. For among my people are found wicked men: they lay wait, as he that setteth snares; they set a trap, they catch men. As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit: therefore they are become great, and waxen rich. They are waxen fat, they shine: yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked; they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge. Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land. The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so; and what will ye do in the end thereof?”

The other passage I mentioned was Jeremiah 7:4: “Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, are these. [This was a famous saying; you trust in the temple and everything will be all right.] For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doing; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour; If ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt: Then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever. [But Lehi and his family had to move out.] Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations [because we are in the temple]? Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? [Remember, that’s what the Lord said when he drove the money changers out: My Father’s house is a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves. He was quoting Jeremiah here.] Behold, even I have seen it, saith the Lord.” You are not getting away with anything. God is not mocked, as we are about to find out.
Who else makes an escape? Then Nephi made his great escapes. What was he escaping from? Well, the perils of the desert, but especially from Laman and Lemuel and from the slough of Jerusalem. This is what Laman and Lemuel represent. We will put it this way [writing on the chalk board]. What did they do? They didn’t want to go, and they repeatedly tried to kill him. He was always escaping from them and from the trials and dangers of the journey. In 1 Nephi 17 the brethren [Laman and Lemuel] were reluctant about having been brought along and said, “We’ve got to go back home.” They planned to kill both their father and their brother in order to go back to Jerusalem to this sort of thing, which is what they had been escaping from. 1 Nephi 17:20: “And thou art like unto our father, led away by the foolish imaginations of his heart.” This is the objection; the other side had a case, too. They were escaping to something else. Lehi was escaping from a prosperous city, and the sons resented it. They thought, “Everything is going to be all right; we’re safe.” As they were escaping, Nephi left all their precious things behind. This was a foolish thing [in their opinion]; they wanted to escape from the desert and get back home where they could live comfortably. “. . . yea he hath led us out of the land of Jerusalem, and we have wandered in the wilderness for these many years; and our women have toiled, being big with child . . . Behold, these many years we have suffered in the wilderness, which time we might have enjoyed our possessions and the land of our inheritance; yea, and we might have been happy.”

They had given up gracious living for this, but this is the thing that Nephi was fleeing from, through a much more austere type of life. Even if they had stayed in Jerusalem, he wouldn’t have lived the way they were living. They [Nephi’s family] were getting away from it. The Lord forces us to change. 1 Nephi 17:22: “And we know that the people who were in the land of Jerusalem were a righteous people; for they kept the statutes and judgments of the Lord, and all his commandments, according to the law of Moses [just as Jeremiah said, they went to the temple and all that]; wherefore, we know that they are a righteous people; and our father hath judged them . . .”

So this is another escape. From what and to what? We know that he escaped to the life in the desert, the rigors, etc. But soon after they got in the New World, Nephi had to make another escape. They started quarreling again—remember the big fight? From the New World settlement he escaped with as many people as wanted to go with him. They lived the law in its strictness and austerity. We find what they were escaping from in 2 Nephi 5:10. They went out to a rigorous and austere life. “And we did observe to keep the judgments, and the statutes, and the commandments of the Lord in all things, according to the law of Moses.” That was basic. [The others] wouldn’t believe the warnings, so he took his family and Zoram and others. “And all those who would go with me were those who believed in the warnings and the revelations of God.” They went out, and again they were fleeing from the destruction. “. . . Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues” (Revelation 18:4).

Nephi founded another colony, and then Mosiah escaped from it. That colony went bad. Jerusalem had gone bad, and they went bad after they settled here. Then Nephi went out and settled his own colony, and it went bad. This is a pattern, isn’t it? Then Mosiah was commanded in a dream to escape and take his people. What was he escaping from? I think a good example is that eloquent passage in Jacob 2:13–21. There are plenty of examples in Jacob. We know what they were running away from, what was dangerous, and what was going on here. “And the hand of providence hath smiled upon you most pleasingly, that you have obtained many riches; and because some of you have obtained
more abundantly than that of your brethren ye are lifted up in the pride of your hearts
[already, and they are still in the wilderness], and wear stiff necks and high heads because
of the costliness of your apparel [this is Lehi’s own family—this is his son Jacob; in the first
generation, they have already done this after escaping from Jerusalem], and persecute
your brethren because ye suppose that ye are better than they. . . Do ye suppose that God
justifieth you in this thing? Behold, I say unto you, Nay. But he condemneth you, and if ye
persist in these things his judgments must speedily come unto you. O that he would show
you that he can pierce you, and with one glance of his eye he can smite you to the dust! O
that he would rid you from this iniquity and abomination. And, O that ye would listen
unto the word of his commands, and let not this pride of your hearts destroy your souls!
Think of your brethren like unto yourselves [then the appeal for equality] . . . Ye were
proud in your hearts, of the things which God hath given you, what say ye of it? [God has
given you these things, but you are proud of them] Do ye not suppose that such things are
abominable unto him who created all flesh? And the one being is as precious in his sight as
the other.” He [Jacob] kept rubbing in that equality, but the people wouldn’t take it; they
liked this better. We have two totally different ways of life—two totally different
economies, two totally different disciplines as described here.

Who was the next person to escape then? It was Benjamin. He was the son of Mosiah, and
he undertook a great reform. He gave a great reformist speech. People needed to get back
on the track again. We can find this in Mosiah 4:2 and Mosiah 5:7. You know what he
was escaping from—the inequality. “I would that this inequality should be no more. Think
of your brethren like unto yourselves.” They had acquired riches. He said the Lord would
bless them, but they didn’t need to go bad because of it. You all know Benjamin’s great
speech, so we don’t need to go into that. “Always remember your own nothingness and
the greatness and goodness of God.”

Mosiah 4:2 “And they had viewed themselves in their own carnal state, even less than the
dust of the earth. And they all cried aloud with one voice, saying: O have mercy, and
apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our
hearts may be purified.” He really cut them down to earth. They practically worshipped
Benjamin, and they were celebrating after years of victory, prosperity, and success. This
was a great national assembly to let the “eagle scream.” They were going to stand tall, and
in everything he said, Benjamin just cut them down to nothing. “You are less than the
dust,” he said. Don’t get the idea that you are anything at all. Then you will be equal, and
“then you will feel to rejoice . . . Are your hearts changed? Are you born of him this day?”
In chapter 5 he gave them a new name and a new title. They took the covenant of Moses.
“This day has he begotten you.” It’s a new birth. He said he was going to give them a new
name, and they were going to have an entirely new way of life. Well, how long did it last?
Not very long.

Then Zeniff had a reason for escaping. What was he escaping from? This everlasting
tension and unpleasantness with the Lamanites. It can’t go on like this, he thought. When
he found out the Lamanites weren’t such bad people after all, he wanted to make
concessions. He went out from the settlement [of Zarahemla] and became a king within
them because he was deceived by the Lamanite king. In Mosiah 9:1 we find what he was
escaping from: “I, Zeniff, having been taught in all the language of the Nephites, and
having had a knowledge of the land of Nephi, or of the land of our fathers’ first
inheritance, and having been sent as a spy among the Lamanites that I might spy out
their forces . . . but when I saw that which was good among them I was desirous that they
should not be destroyed.” He wanted to save them, which happens. Then verses 6–8: “And
I went in unto the king, and he covenanted with me that I might possess the land of Lehi-Nephi, and the land of Shilom. And he also commanded that his people should depart out of the land.” Zeniff went out to relieve the tension and started an entirely new community in the midst of the Lamanites. It was quite a project. Mosiah 9:1 and 6–8 are just a few examples; you can find lots of them.

Then who went out from this colony? His son was the wicked King Noah. Alma had to run away from Noah, so we have another escape. Alma went out by himself and founded his own church in the wilderness by the waters of Mormon. He was escaping from Noah (Mosiah 11:2, 7, 15, 18, 27). You know what the situation was when he went out there. [His community] was founded just like that of the Dead Sea Scrolls people—very disciplined. They all worked; the priests visited them and also did their work; they baptized and lived holy lives out there. That’s much too strict for most people. Notice that they settled in the land of Helam, and they were driven out of that. They were able to make an escape to the land of Helam; then they escaped from Helam because they were running away from Amulon. Amulon wouldn’t let them even breathe. He came down so hard because he was jealous of Alma. The Lamanite king made Amulon an underking. We get this in Mosiah 24:7. This time they ran away and they ended up in [Zarahemla]. Mosiah was just waiting for him with open arms because he brought the priesthood and the knowledge of the church and its organization, which he had gotten from Abinadi and from the scriptures. He was a direct descendant of Nephi, and he was able to help Mosiah out.

Mosiah hesitated and felt he couldn’t launch the church in a big way. Then Alma came and they started working together. Then what happened? Immediately, in the first year there was general defection. Mosiah and Alma put their heads together and said, What should we do? We don’t know what to do with these people. The only thing to do is excommunicate them [paraphrased]. They started to do that on a huge scale. It says [the people] were so scattered out that they couldn’t keep control of all the branches of the church. They became more and more independent, although the priests were sent out to them. There were all sorts of local troubles, and they couldn’t hold the church together. Soon [the apostates] far outnumbered the others. So what Alma and Mosiah had to fight against was a general defection—everybody falling away, getting disinterested and going their own way. People aren’t willing to live that strictly—that’s the whole point. We do not like the Law of Consecration, whether we covenant to keep it or not. Mosiah 27:7–10 is pretty good for this last example.

Then what happened? Alma’s son was among the defectors and trouble-makers. You know how he was converted. Alma II made an escape from the bonds of hell actually. He talks about it in Mosiah 27:23 and following. He describes what he has been through. He has escaped, and he doesn’t want anybody else to have to go through that. It is a matter of escaping. He said, “I’ve been delivered; I’ve been snatched; I’ve been saved.” This was a spectacular escape. So what did he do?

Then the sons of Mosiah made an escape. They were nailed for political jobs, but none of them would take them. They all ran away on missions, which was the sensible thing to do. So what they were escaping from was the double burden of royalty. Remember, they were warned about it by their father. The double burden of royalty is the burden on the king himself, which can make an honest king suffer terribly, and the burden on the people if they get an unjust king. It’s one way or the other. There’s an unfair burden either way, and you can’t escape it. The speech on that particular subject is Mosiah 29:16 and
following, especially 33 and 34. This is that a just king has to suffer, and this is with an unjust king everybody suffers.

Then Mosiah put Alma in charge of everything. Now we come to this happy time. Everybody was crazy about the charismatic Alma. But now he had been thoroughly converted, and he was in charge not only of the church, but he was the chief judge in a sacral society. He was head of the church and the state. Anybody writing this would say, “We are in for a golden age—at last a new age dawns with Alma.” And what happens? Before the year is out, the whole thing starts coming apart. Well, well! In Alma 1:26 is what he escaped to. The general corruption—or collapse was what it amounted to—is in Alma 1:16–20. See what was happening? So we come up to this point now. We will find plenty more escapes and collapses as we go on here.

We mentioned Alma 1:29 last time. They did not wear costly apparel or anything like that. “And now, because of the steadiness of the church they began to be exceedingly rich, having abundance of all things whatsoever they stood in need [but in that they were still righteous; this is the interesting point—they were righteous for a whole year]—an abundance of flocks and herds, and fatlings of every kind, and also abundance of grain, and of gold, and of silver, and of precious things, and [even] abundance of silk [that’s an interesting thing, but we won’t go into silk now] and fine-twined linen, and all manner of good homely cloth. And thus, in their prosperous circumstances, they did not send away any who were naked, or that were hungry.” The question is how long could they resist the corroding effects of riches? Four years at the outside, as we learn—the last two years being years of war anyway. In Alma 4:6 it tells us what happened. But what is the problem here? We see this a great deal. Notice that the reason they were able to get along was that “they did not set their hearts upon riches; therefore they were liberal to all . . . whether out of the church or in the church, having no respect to persons as to those who stood in need.” There was no such thing as deserving poor. If you are in need, that’s that, and all there is to it.

These very popular verses with Latter-day Saints must be taken in full context with verses 26 and 30 and the rest. So why does God enrich the righteous then, as we see in Alma 1:29–31 here? Brigham Young gave the answer to that many times. One whose talent, initiative, dedication, and industry have been demonstrated is now in line for the next test, the next step. That’s why. So naturally he is given these riches to test him to see what he will do with them. That’s a totally different test of a different kind of character. Work itself doesn’t sanctify. We are told it is possible to work like the devil, or to work like demons. He works hard. Alma 4:6 and 10:4 say what you gain by your industry is not holy gain. As James said, because of your work you have received these riches. That’s fine; you should receive them. But it’s neutral; it’s not holy. It’s not one way or the other. The qualities for success in business are required in a much higher degree in any other line. We have a hundred millionaires here. But how many first-class scientists or authors or painters or composers or poets—or even generals—has the country produced? Very, very few first-class people [in those professions], but almost anybody and his dog can become a millionaire, said Brigham Young. But it’s what you do with it. If a man has been good and conscientious, we’ll load the stuff on him and see what he does. This is the real test. There are far more important qualities than this. What is missing in our candidates and our big men today, for example? They seem to be a very shallow lot. Greatness is very rare. We clamor for it and slaver over it when we have it, even if we are not so sure if this person really is great or not. But there are very few.
Now comes the next test. God gives a capable man wealth and power, as Brigham says, to see what he will do with it. Nimrod was the first person to establish kingship, fortifications, armies, and things like that. Nimrod was a very righteous king when he was young. He had great intelligence and great strength, and the Lord rewarded him for his service to the human race by giving him the bow. This [story] is universal—you find this everywhere. Men at that time were threatened by the beasts; they couldn’t defend themselves against the wild animals that were large and ferocious. Cave bears, saber-tooth tigers, and creatures like that can be rather dangerous. Men weren’t up to it, so God gave Nimrod the bow to protect the human race. But Nimrod very soon discovered that by using the bow he could put the human race at his disposal. So he turned it against them and made himself the first king who ruled everything. He was given this tool to help people, and he found out, "Boy, what a profit this will give me! How great I can become now that I have the bow." And he did. He used it and organized the first armies, the first empire, the first tyranny, and all that sort of thing. He misused the great gift God had given him.

So everyone must pass the wealth test, and it’s the hardest of all. Remember, Satan tries men and tempts them. How does he do it? You can have anything in this world for money. That’s the way he is going to tempt you, of course. We are to be tested to see if we will be faithful and true in all things whatsoever the Lord commands. He is very experienced in this, and he knows what the number one temptation is. In 1 Nephi 22:23 he tells us the four things, and repeats them again in 3 Nephi 6:15. The things we can’t resist are, in this order: power, gain, popularity, and lusts of the flesh. And they are all interrelated; they are all built around ego, pride, etc.

Here’s an interesting speech by Brother Warner Woodworth, who is on our faculty here. Incidentally, this is from a book that I have, too. I could have read it from that book, but I would have gotten started and never let up. He has some discreet quotations to show us what the problem is. "A top executive described his work experience in several different companies this way: 'We always saw signs of physical affliction because of stress and strain. Ulcers, violent headaches. In one of the large corporations, the chief executive officer ate Gelusil by the minute. That’s for ulcers. [He] had a private dining room with his private chef. All he ever ate was well-done steak.' He went on, ‘You’re always on guard. Did you ever see a jungle animal that wasn’t on guard? You’re always looking over your shoulder. You don’t know who’s following you.’”

Now this doesn’t seem to be the order of Zion or sacred things, where they had all things in common and no poor among them. The four things that Nephi talks about are first power, then gain, then popularity and fame, and then sex and all the lusts of the flesh. They all go together, you’ll notice, if you watch your prime-time TV—as I do very faithfully, of course [laughter]. I did Friday night for once because my son was on a soap opera. In fact, had quite a big part. It was the most sordid, silly, disgusting, and sickening thing. He said, “They have to come up with a new story every day.” They have to keep ten stories ahead, so the writers get together and just cook up any combination of sordid relations—some married person is two-timing his spouse; they divorce. Someone has an abortion. It goes on and on and on. It’s utterly nasty, and here my son is cashing in on it! I never could correct that kid, but he’s the most faithful member of the Church I’ve ever known. Oh boy, is he dedicated; he makes me look like an atheist.

[Quoting from Brother Woodworth’s article]: “A man wants to get to the top of the corporation not for the money involved. After a certain point, how much more money
can you make? In my climb, I’ll be honest, money was secondary [but it was there]. Unless you have tremendous demands, yachts, private airplanes—you get to a certain point [and] money isn’t that important. It’s the power, the status, the prestige. Frankly, it’s delightful to be on top and have everyone call you Mr. Ross and have a plane at your disposal and a car and a driver at your disposal. [This is like King Noah]. When you come into town, there’s people to take care of you. When you walk into a board meeting, everybody gets up and says hello. I don’t think there’s any human being who doesn’t love that. It’s a nice feeling.’ ”

Then here’s an interview with a [presidential campaign manager]: “ ‘Running for President feels exactly like being President. The ordinary experiences of life melt away, are replaced by a constant swirl of limousines and money, jet planes and prepared statements, secret service men and gorgeous political groupies. There is almost an infinite sense of power and prestige. It feels wonderful, which is why it’s so terrible. [The Book of Mormon always zeros in on pride as head of the list; it’s the first of the deadly sins in the classic list.] Yes, I particularly remember the feeling of riding alone in the limousine with a motorcycle escort. Everybody was peering in at me. To them I was a blur: power in motion. To me they were a frozen milieu of still, dumb, gawking faces—as if captured by a strobe light. During those moments I knew the glory the President himself knows and it was an impressive experience. Had it continued, I have no doubt that I would have succumbed to it absolutely.’ ”

Unless you have a general like MacArthur, who had immense ability, of course, it’s the uniform you salute. It’s an interesting thing that the military who live for rank never have any illusions about it because they know how people get promoted. We were always told it’s the uniform you salute, not the person. He doesn’t think he has made a great achievement; maybe they needed him, he had a friend in the right place, or something. But this sort of thing gets to us.

“The interviewer asked, ‘Succumbed to what?’ [The campaign manager replied], ‘To the atrocious assumption that I was more important than other people. [Think of your neighbors like yourself, that you are all alike. I would have this inequality done away with, said King Benjamin.] And I would not have been evil to have done so—just human. If your repeated experience is that you’re in motion and everyone else is frozen on the side of the road, it is only reasonable to conclude that you are a more important person than they, that they expect you to run the universe for them. You don’t feel as though you are being corrupted by power. You feel as though you are intelligently responding to empirical evidence. And that is power’s greatest corruption: the tragic and universal misconception by the wielder of power that it isn’t corrupting him.’ ”

Of course, it’s the same thing with money. That’s the famous dictum of Lord Acton, “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” So look out for power! So we have these things [to look out for]. 1 Nephi 22:23 calls them “gain, power, popularity, and the lusts of the flesh.” And 3 Nephi 6:15 calls them “power, authority, riches, and the vain things of the world.” Who can handle these things? If you are going into the eternities to rule and reign in the house of Israel forever, you can’t go on with a defect like this. As a mortal, you are here to be tested. “This life is a time of probation.” This is the hardest test of all—can you be trusted for infinity? This means, can you be left completely alone for endless ages without doing infinite damage? Well, who can? You make the average person president of a committee of three and he starts acting like Genghis Khan. I’ve seen that happen again and again. That’s the world we live in.
In Alma 1:29–31 the people had the wealth and still were righteous, so the question arises: Are wealth and virtue compatible? We all like to think they are. Today we are actually preaching that sexual promiscuity and virtue are compatible; people are actually trying to believe that. They want that, too. Actually, this vice is less absorbing, less persistent, less demanding, less predatory, and less hypocritical than the pursuit of gain. Sex is way down the list compared with the other one, certainly in the Book of Mormon. But this problem here is treated by no one as well as Brigham Young, so here we go. I’m going to read you some passages from Brother Brigham, who was our greatest businessman and the greatest leader in American history. Nobody performed anything like what he did as a leader. George Washington is the only one within shouting distance of that. I just noticed this passage. I hadn’t intended to read it, but this is thrown in at no extra charge. We often hear the strange perversion of that saying, “The idler shall not eat the bread of the laborer,” which means that the idle rich shall not eat the bread of the laboring poor. That’s the way it has been throughout history; the poor have been ground down supporting the rich. Brigham said,2 “Man has become so perverted as to debar his fellows as much as possible from these blessings, and constrain them by physical force or circumstances to contribute the proceeds of their labor to sustain the favored few.” He discovered the conflict at an early age. Can you have them both? He said he “sought for riches [when he was nineteen], but in vain; there was always something that kept telling me that happiness originated in higher pursuits.”

This was the Sunday School lesson for last Sunday, as a matter of fact: Doctrine and Covenants 6:7. This was the first specific commandment once the conditions were agreed on with the Lord and had been clearly explained and accepted by the brethren to carry on the work. He said they must have faith and all the other things. Then he gave the first specific rule, the first explicit order in clear and ringing words: “Seek not for riches, but for wisdom . . .” They are clearly marked alternatives—not seek for wisdom more than riches, but seek for the one and not for the other. They are mutually exclusive. “You cannot serve God and mammon,” the Lord says. You must necessarily hate the one and love the other, and you must “serve God with an eye which is single to his glory.” This is a common rationalization, and Brigham has a lot to say about it. At the very beginning of the Church, Joseph Smith said, “God has often sealed up the heavens because of covetousness in the Church.” You are not going to have covetousness and revelation.

This is more or less chronologically arranged. “In 1855 Brigham pointed out the way in which love of knowledge and love of wealth, like antipathetical sets of glands, render each other ineffective: ‘It is possible for a man who loves the world [riches] to overcome that love, to get knowledge, to understand until he sees things as they really are; then he will not love the world, but will see it as it is. . . .’ In 1859 [he said], ‘I desire to see everybody on the track of improvement . . . But when you so love your property . . . as though your affections were placed upon the changing, fading things of earth, it is impossible to increase in knowledge of the truth.’”

“In 1860 [he said], ‘There are hundreds in this community [he is talking about the little community in the valley; it was getting quite big then] who are more eager to become rich in the perishable things of this world than to adorn their minds . . . with a knowledge of things as they were, as they are, and as they are to come.’ In 1862: ‘No man who possesses the wealth of wisdom would worship the wealth of mammon.’ In 1863: If we go on ‘lusting after the groveling things of this life which perish with the handling,’ we shall surely ‘remain fixed with a very limited amount of knowledge, and like a door upon its
hinges, move to and fro one year after another without any visible advancement or improvement [until retirement comes, and then you die of ulcers]. . . . Man is made in the image of God, but what do we know of him or ourselves when we suffer ourselves to love and worship the god of this world—riches?”

Then twelve years later he said, “When you see the Latter-day Saints greedy and covetous for the things of this world, do you think their minds are in a fit condition to be written on by the pen of revelation? . . . We frequently hear our merchants say they cannot do business and then go into the pulpit to preach.” It doesn’t seem to bother them anymore. Some feel that you can have a balance of the one and the other. He says, no balance. “A man or a woman who places the wealth of this world and the things of time in the scales against the things of God and the wisdom of eternity has no eyes to see, no ears to hear, no heart to understand. . . . The covetous, those who are striving continually to build themselves up in the things of this life [which we call success] will be poor indeed; they will be poor in spirit and poor in heavenly things.”

This is a thing Joseph Smith talked about. He said, “You must not be contracted; but you must be liberal in your feelings.”

Brigham Young said, “‘Let us not narrow ourselves up. . . . This same lack of comprehensiveness of mind is also very noticeable at times with some men who happen to accumulate property, and it leads them to forsake the spirit of the gospel. Does it not prove that there is a contractedness of mind in those who do so, which should not be? Business is by its very nature narrowing. [We are seeing this today with the insider trading and the takeovers; it all depends on secrecy and limited information]: Take for instance the financial circles, the commerce of the world, those business men, where they have their opponents they. . . with all the secrecy of the grave I might say, will seek to carry out their schemes unknown to their opponents in order that they may win. Like a man at the table with cards in his hands, unseen by any but himself, he will take advantage as far as he can [that’s exactly the game they are playing—that’s the stock market]. So says the politician. So says the world of Christendom, so says the world of the heathens, and it is party upon party, sect after sect, division upon division, and we are all for ourselves.’”

Well, we are told that’s the right thing. It’s a privatized world.

Finally, “Brigham told the well-heeled Saints [and there are lots more of these to the same effect] to ‘keep their riches, and with them I promise you leanness of soul, darkness of mind, narrow and contracted hearts, and the bowels of your compassion will be shut up. . . .’ Even so, Joseph Smith had warned against “those contracted feelings that influence the children of men’ who judge each other ‘according to the narrow, contracted notions of men’ while ‘the Great Parent of the universe looks upon the whole of the human family with a fatherly care and paternal regard.’” That reads like a paraphrase of King Benjamin, doesn’t it? This is the theme we have here then. It goes on in the [Doctrine and Covenants] and says, “Behold, he that hath eternal life is rich.” We mentioned the people who had everything and had nothing.

In their prosperous circumstances, they behaved themselves. There were no deserving poor, and they were equal. But this next thing is very important: Those who didn’t belong to the church took another business—they were taking to sorceries. This is what you do—games of chance and luck, the stock market sort of thing. Verse 32: “For those who did not belong to their church did indulge themselves in sorceries, and in idolatry or idleness, and in babblings, and in envyings and strife [gossip about this and that]; wearing
costly apparel [dressing for success; it’s all one picture—all centered around personal gain, all the prime-time mix]; being lifted up in the pride of their own eyes, persecuting, lying, thieving, robbing, committing whoredoms, and murdering, and all manner of wickedness [this is really competitive stuff that was going on]; nevertheless, the law was put in force [they had laws] upon all those who did transgress it, inasmuch as it was possible.”

That’s an important qualification. They were doing all these wicked things, but you can’t put a person in jail just for being mean, or being cruel, or for oppressing on a debt. You can’t do that. We have to let people do what they want to, so this goes on. So they had two definite societies. In one they did not set their hearts on riches and were liberal to all. In the other they were in for all they could get. Were they grabbing—striving for success and all the rest!

Verse 33: They “durst not commit any wickedness if it were known; therefore, there was much peace among the people of Nephi until the fifth year of the reign of the judges.” Then everything broke loose, so this lasted for only four years. Alma got them off to a good start, but right away they were acting like this. You see that these two societies were very different from each other. There was not much chance of compromise between them; they wouldn’t allow it. In the fifth year there was contention among the people. Then this Amlici took advantage of it. He was a shrewd person. He was able, effective, a born winner, and a member of the Nehor church, which will be the church from now on. Notice in Alma 2:1: “. . . He being a very cunning man, yea, a wise man [he was sharp] as to the wisdom of the world, he being after the order of the man that slew Gideon . . .” He was a member of the Nehor church, and he drew away many people after him. When Alma got in [as chief judge] lots of people had to be excommunicated, and even more of them just left of their own free will. They just apostatized and joined the Nehors. This is what was happening, and it picked up speed with this man Amlici, who took advantage of the motion.

Verse 3: “Now this was alarming to the people of the church, and also to all those who had not been drawn away after the persuasions of Amlici; for they knew that according to their law that such things must be established by the voice of the people.” He had put it on a different level. It was not just religion, or not just a big shot like Nehor, the evangelist. He wanted to be king. Well, this was something else; they had just abolished a kingship. What was going to happen now? Naturally, it got them worried. He got a big party following him and went for the big one. Kingship was out of fashion for only five years here because he got followers. So it alarmed the people of the church and everybody else “for they knew that according to their law that such things must be established by the voice of the people.” Not by the voice of the church, but the voice of the people. They knew they would be shut out if that’s what happened. If Amlici won his victory, it would be legal because the church as such had no voice in the civil government. They had said they would do all things by the voice of the people, and if the people choose the wrong thing, that’s just too bad for them. They will be responsible. So he could legitimately be elected king by their constitution—doing things by the voice of the people. He had a real power base, and “it was his intent to destroy the church of God.” That was the immediate obstacle that he had to get rid of.

Notice that he polarized public opinion. “And it came to pass that the people assembled themselves together throughout all the land . . . in separate bodies, having much dispute and wonderful contentions one with another.” Like everything going on at a political convention, splitting up etc. Verse 7: “The voice of the people came against Amlici, that
he was not made king over the people.” So he didn’t win, but he was like Satan in heaven. Satan wasn’t cast out of heaven for voting the wrong way; most of the people did the first time. The second time Satan refused to accept the verdict. He was going to resort to violence with a third of the hosts of heaven; therefore, he was cast out in a twinkling. There was no war in heaven; the word that is used is polemos. Joseph Smith explains that very well. Satan was cast out for refusing to accept the popular vote.

They went right ahead and wouldn’t accept the [outcome], like Pinochet wouldn’t accept it. We’ve had this happen. It happens again and again. Iraq is another classic example. Dictators just don’t accept defeat. They will hold a free election, but it goes the wrong way. Then they scream “fraud,” etc. Today this is increasingly common, of course. Nobody admits any wrongdoing today, any need to repent, any feeling of guilt. After incriminating events and circumstances, people say, “There is nothing wrong with us. It was bad advice I got. I don’t remember. We don’t agree with those laws; they are bad laws, so we won’t keep them. We don’t like the rulings, which were made by another administration.” This goes on in the world we live in.

Alma 2:8: “Amlici did stir up those who were in his favor to anger against those who were not in his favor,” and they wouldn’t accept the verdict. So they went ahead with their own program in contempt for the constitution, which they had adopted just five years before. Already they were in deep trouble. Verse 10: “Now when Amlici was made king over them he commanded them that they should take up arms against their brethren; and this he did that he might subject them to him.” The church is an obstacle now; you can see that. Like a society of social freaks, they had to get rid of them because they never would accept [the Amlicites]. So what would happen? They would have to. That was Amlici’s obstacle. They were called “Amlicites,” and the remainder were called “Nephites.” This was just what they called them; it was the matter of a name. The whole next chapter is on the subject of race. But this was just a political designation.

Verse 12: “Therefore the people of the Nephites were aware of the intent of the Amlicites, and therefore they did prepare to meet them.” Now we see what had happened; the whole thing had been planned out by Amlici beforehand. He had already made a secret arrangement to join forces with the Lamanites. He chose his strong point, not in the center or anywhere near the center of the kingdom, but right on the borders, right at the crossing of Sidon. The Lamanites were on the other side, so they immediately came to his aid. He took a strong point on a hill there, which was a classic point of defense on the border. If he was sore pressed, that’s where he expected the Lamanites would join, and that’s what happened. They [the Nephites] were going to have a rough time when this happened. This is what Amlici did; he was a very shrewd man.

Verse 15: “And it came to pass that the Amlicites came upon the hill Amnihu, which was east of the river Sidon, which ran by the land of Zarahemla [that was on the border; it was the boundary line], and there they began to make war with the Nephites.” That was their rallying point. They wanted to choose the time and place of meeting the enemy. That gives you a great advantage, so that’s what they did here. They took that position and waited for Alma to attack them—to draw them on as the aggressors. Then Alma, being the chief judge, went up with his captains at the head of the army. Now Alma had three jobs: He was head of the church, he was head of the government as chief judge, and he was also the head of the army. He was a man with a full-time job, and he attacked the base. We will have to stop there and leave things in a state of suspension.
2. The quotations from Brigham Young and Joseph Smith can be found in Nibley on the Timely and the Timeless (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1978), 246–48.
We are on this affair between Amlici and Alma, and it’s a very important one. It’s the second chapter of Alma. Now who is fighting whom here?

Things had been going very bad with the church because of Nehor, who had taken all the people away. They all thought they were the true church. Nehor did, and Alma did, too. A man by the name of Amlici thought he could “cash in” on the Nehor movement. He wanted to go all the way, become extreme right wing, and make himself king. So we have two factions facing each other. Here you don’t have Nephites versus Lamanites at all. On both sides there are Nephites and Mulekites all mixed up. Already Amlici has planned to join up with the Lamanites. As far as the Nephites are concerned, it was not the good people and the bad people. It was not the church against the opponents of the church; they were both following Alma. Most of them didn’t want to go as far right as Amlici went. All the church and most of the other people stuck with Alma, so we have a very mixed thing.

This is a typical Central America mix-up of things. Some guy wants to have power. He’s a general and he wants to be the whole thing. We’re on familiar ground here. All these wars take place on that scale amid great confusion. Who’s on which side? Some of the people are going to start running away; some people are going to change sides. So this is not Nephites versus Lamanites, and it’s not believers versus pagans. There are believers on both sides. Amlici got a lot of Nehor’s people. He was a follower of Nehor himself, and they said, “We are the true church.” On the other hand, most of the people that followed Alma didn’t belong to his church. So it went that way, and it certainly wasn’t the good guys versus the bad guys, as we will find out. You would think that it would be at least that, but no it wasn’t.

We won’t try to put a situation map on the board; it would be useless here. It’s quite a complicated affair militarily, and a very interesting one, too. Amlici was a very shrewd strategist; he knew how to do it. He set up on a hill, which seems to have been a fortified hill. It is referred to at other times. It was apparently on the shore of the river, which made it impossible to surround him. That would give him one advantage at least. It was on a hill which was east of the river Sidon, which was the boundary of the land. The war was fought on both sides of the river. We don’t need to worry about these particulars, but it’s an interesting one if you try to analyze what they were doing here. On the east side of the river Sidon, “they began to make war with the Nephites.” They took that as their post. That’s where they raised their banner, and they invited combat there. Remember, ancient war was formalized and ritualized. Notice that there they chose the time and the place of the war. It was on a hill, a strong point on the river. The river didn’t divide the land, but it “ran by the land of Zarahemla.” It was more like a boundary.

Then Alma went up with his people and his captains at the head of his army. Notice his three-fold function. He was chief judge, head of the army now, and head of the church.
He was everything. He could have easily become a dictator, which was exactly what Amlici wanted to do. He wanted to make himself king. Verse 17: “And they began to slay the Amlicites upon the hill east of Sidon.” So the hill was on the east side of the river, and they attacked the base there. Then the Amlicites began to flee, and the Nephites pursued them that day and “did slay them with much slaughter.” So these were royalist Nehors versus a mixed group of Nephites. The political conflict was nastier than the war with their brethren, the Lamanites. Notice that the Nephite wars were always the dirtiest. They didn’t have much trouble with the Lamanites actually.

Verse 20: “And it came to pass that when Alma could pursue the Amlicites no longer he caused that his people should pitch their tents in the valley of Gideon.” Well, we could put a valley of Gideon [on the board]; that was going to be their base camp. Here’s a reminder of the original trouble. It all goes back to “Gideon who was slain by Nehor with the sword.” These things are all related; we go back to Nehor country again. It was the camp of Gideon against Nehor; now it was their camp against Amlici. These places apparently had strategic value. “And Alma sent spies to follow the remnants of the Amlicites, that he might know of their plans and their plots.” The plot was a clever one. He had an agreement with the Lamanites to get their support; you can see that. It was a chance for the Lamanites to get some support and a chance for Amlici to win the battle. They watched the camp of the Amlicites, and the Amlicites watched their camp “in the foul womb of night,” as Shakespeare said—the two camps watching each other. The camps could have been very close together, too.

On the morrow they [the spies] returned to the camp and were “greatly astonished” to find that the Amlicites had made contact with the Lamanites. It was a complete surprise. They had gone “above the land of Zarahemla.” Where was that? Apparently to the north, because when they fall back it’s always going to be toward the north. That’s where their supplies were coming from. That’s where their strength was—in the north and the west. Verse 24: “And behold the Amlicites have joined them.” This was a planned operation, as we read in Alma 2:15, “upon the hill Amnihu, which was east of the river Sidon.” He took up that position with contact with the Lamanites in mind all the time—perhaps to fall back on it, drawing the Nephites away from Zarahemla. It was a very shrewd action. That’s why the hill Amnihu was not in a central position. We are told in verse 27 that it was the hill on the Lamanite side of the river. But there were Nephites living on both sides. They discovered not only that the Amlicites had joined up with the [Lamanites], but the people who had settled [were fleeing because] the armies were fighting. You may have heard the lecture on the French Revolution the other day. In the French Revolution for the first time you find the people in arms. The people had just stood by and watched wars being fought before that. Moreover, they didn’t have uniforms before. They didn’t have that type of militarism before at all.

The Nephites were still living in the land and cultivating it there, but now they started to run away. Some very funny things happen in [these situations]. I remember going out with a person called Smith, who was a professional prize fighter and General Max Taylor’s aide. General Taylor wanted something fresh for a salad, and Smith had spotted a place where there was some lettuce growing near a farm house, which was deserted. We went out to get the lettuce by the farm house, which was on the German side of the line toward Arnhem. We crossed a canal and there was the lettuce. But as soon as we started to get the lettuce, they started dropping mortar shells. We hid behind the house because things got wild all of a sudden. The house was completely overgrown with vines, though the people had only been away for a couple of weeks. It was in that wet country, and there were wild
sheep running around. They were fierce. It was amazing. We could have gotten some good mutton. There was an embankment and a canal over here. On the green canal there were a dozen little Dutch boys playing soldier. All this bang, banging was going on, and these boys continued to play soldier. They paid no attention to us whatever. They were playing their game, and they weren’t the least interested in our game. The civilians go their own way; they don’t get involved in these things, until we involve them in war now and deliberately do all the sorts of things we do. But it was so interesting to see those little kids. They weren’t interested in what we were doing. They had the real thing over there—the imagination is more important. And that happens on quite a number of occasions like that.

There were some little Polish kids having a picnic, and all this shooting was going on around them. They were right in between, but “these are the nicest trees,” they said, so they would have their picnic. They marched like Boy Scouts. Marvelous kids—they had such spirit! They were led by a little girl and were very neatly dressed, very proper. They were practically slaves; this was in Nazi Germany. There they were marching out to have their picnic, and she was telling them, “Now, watch your step, be proud, don’t make them ashamed of you.” There are strange things.

It was the same thing here, and the people began to run toward the city. Verse 26: “The people of Nephi took their tents and departed out of the valley of Gideon,” which was their camp. They left there and made a race for Zarahemla, too. So both the army and the civilians were going toward Zarahemla to get there before Amlici could get it. They had to cross the river Sidon to get there. It was on the border, we are told, and this was the trap. It was there that [the Amlicites] “being as numerous almost, as it were, as the sands of the sea, came upon them to destroy them. They were waiting for them at the ford. It’s very clear that the Sidon could be forded there.

Verse 29: “And it came to pass that Alma fought with Amlici with the sword, face to face; and they did contend mightily, one with another.” Now here, you might say, you have a good case of Star Wars, the good guys versus the bad guys. The wicked destroy the wicked. Reflecting on this, we can go to Alma 4:2–3 after this war. If you think these people were the good guys, it says: “But the people were afflicted, yea, greatly afflicted for the loss of their brethren, and also for the loss of their flocks and herds, and also for the loss of their fields of grain, which were trodden under foot and destroyed by the Lamanites. And so great were their afflictions that every soul had cause to mourn; and they believed that it was the judgments of God sent upon them because of their wickedness and their abominations; therefore they were awakened to a remembrance of their duty.”

That was the promise given to Nephi, that the Lord would always have the Lamanites breathing down their necks to stir them up to remembrance. This is another case where it happened when they were wicked. That’s what brought on the war. As Mormon tells us later on, don’t worry about the wicked. “But, behold, the judgments of God will overtake the wicked; and it is by the wicked that the wicked are punished” (Mormon 4:5). They are going to be punished, but make sure it isn’t by you, that you are not doing the punishing.

Then Alma “slew Amlici with the sword. And he also contended with the king of the Lamanites” and his guards. Then notice that they cleared the ground; they had to get over to the west bank for the big fighting. They had to clear the ground on the west bank “that thereby his people might have room to cross and contend with the Lamanites and the
Amlicites on the west side of the river Sidon [so a strong force was waiting for them on the west side of the river]. And it came to pass that when they had all crossed the river Sidon that the Lamanites and the Amlicites began to flee before them [so they didn’t have the engagement after all when they got across]. And they fled before the Nephites towards the wilderness which was west and north, away beyond the borders of the land.” Way up there. In fact it went so far that it went to Hermounts, which is a very interesting word. Verse 37: “Yea, they were met on every hand, and slain and driven, until they were scattered on the west, and on the north, until they reached the wilderness, which was called Hermounts; and it was that part of the wilderness which was infested by wild and ravenous beasts.”

Now where does the word Hermounts come from? This is certainly not a Latin word. It’s not a Greek word, a Hebrew word, or a Semitic word. Where was it? It was the land on the borders that was infested at times by wild beasts, at certain seasons of the year. It was way up in the borders. They went way up there. So it is the Egyptian word hr-Mntw, obviously. Month or Monthis was the Egyptian Pan; he was the god of wild places, wild animals, and the wild country. Hr-Mntw was the outmost part of Egypt where the land was sometimes visited by lions and crocodiles and things like that. It was under cultivation, but it was a place that was in danger from animals. They called it hr-Mntw because it was Month’s country, wild animal country. Hr[Mntw] means “under the rule of Month, who was the beneficent lord of wild animals. Hr-Mntw was that ground in Egypt which was the part far removed and yet was visited by animals. So they called this area Hermounts, and no other word could match it so perfectly because it was infested at times by wild beasts. Is that a coincidence? That is the most fantastic word in the Book of Mormon because it has no philological connections until you recognize hr-Mntw.

So we go on. So we have a shattered host. They really were shattered, and they began to run. Alma’s people could go home, and they did. But Amlici’s people could not go home. Where were they to go? They all fled toward the north and the far west, as far as they could get—way up there to Hermounts. Amlici was dead, and naturally you would think the Lamanites would welcome in the poor Amlicites. They’d had an agreement with them. But no, the Lamanites said, we don’t owe you a thing. Verse 38: “Many died in the wilderness of their wounds, and were devoured by those beasts and also the vultures of the air; and their bones have been found, and have been heaped up on the earth.” They could not go home now. It was only an agreement of convenience with the Lamanites. The Lamanites didn’t feel any responsibility for them; they just left them “hanging in the wind.” The Amlicites had nowhere to go. They went up to the north woods and were not able to survive there, so they were destroyed.

We have been saying a lot about ethnology, and now we come to perhaps the most important ethnic chapter in the book. I must get out this book by Filmore S.C. Northrup. He has recently written an anthropology book on East and West, from which I am going to read in a minute. Verse 1: “They all returned to their lands, and to their houses, and their wives, and their children.” All back to where they started. It was a sad affair. “Now many women and children had been slain with the sword, and also many of their flocks and their herds; and also many of their fields of grain were destroyed, for they were trodden down by the hosts of men.” This is the perennial tragedy of Latin America, isn’t it, this sad picture? Verse 1: “Now the number of the slain were not numbered, because of the greatness of their number—after they had finished burying their dead they all returned
to their lands, and to their houses, and their wives, and their children.” Then it says that nothing was gained by this political brawl. That’s what it was, you see.

Notice that this is interesting, too: “And now as many of the Lamanites and the Amlicites who had been slain upon the bank of the river Sidon were cast into the waters of Sidon; and behold their bones are in the depths of the sea, and they are many.” That was near the mouth of the river Sidon. It would be very unsanitary just to throw their bodies in the river, but it said they were swept out to sea. So it would be quite close. Remember, it’s a narrow neck of land here. This puts it into some sort of scale that they were swept out to sea. It shows the river Sidon was not only fordable, but it emptied into the ocean not far away.

The Amlicites had marked themselves. Where do we get the ethnic mark? What makes a race here? Well, they decided to be Lamanites. They identified with the Lamanites. This happens again and again. “They had marked themselves with red in their foreheads after the manner of the Lamanites; nevertheless they had not shorn their heads like unto the Lamanites. [So there were different degrees; they looked like Lamanites because of that mark.] Now the heads of the Lamanites were shorn; and they were naked, save it were skin which was girded about their loins.” Well, people who went around like that all the time would certainly have darker skins than the people who didn’t. This makes the blackness.

Notice he is going to tell us in this chapter that the Lamanites put the marks on themselves. They marked themselves, not knowing that they were fulfilling the promise of the Lord that he would mark them. A way of life produces this darkening of the skin, and it’s the same way all over the world. You have the bayt al-shaîr and the bayt al-hajar. The people that live in the stone houses have white complexions, and the people that live in the tents (the houses of goat’s hair) have dark complexions. Among the Arabs they always distinguished between these people. They are the same people, the same blood, but there is a great deal of difference between them. One is much lighter than the other. It’s the same thing in Greek vase paintings. The women were always painted with white faces because they were in the house all the time. They also used white lead. The men were always painted quite bronze, especially in those marvelous paintings from the various islands. They show these things very clearly—the dark and the light. The Egyptians were the same way, too. The women were always painted a very pale color, and the men were always a dark brown. It’s a matter of living outdoors. This would account for one part of their [color].

For example there’s Santorini, the ancient island of Thera, the one that blew up. There we find these marvelous paintings from 1600 B.C. They are gorgeous paintings. But always the men are dark, and the women are white. It’s the same thing here. They marked themselves and went around naked, so they were going to get that way. You’ll find if you go down and live with those people, you get that way. You very soon get that desert varnish on your face. You learn to walk with a drag of your feet because you are walking in the sand. And you don’t try to walk straight. Why should you when you are slogging through the sand? You get to look and feel just like an Indian there.

Verse 6: “And the skins of the Lamanites were dark, according to the mark which was set upon their fathers, which was a curse upon them because of their transgression.” Well, who set it on them? Their fathers set it on them. It was a way of life and culture. Where do racial characteristics come from in the first place? They come from environment, don’t
they? Adaptation, segregation. Everybody agrees on that. People in the North want to get all the sun they can, so I have no pigmentation at all. If I lived in the South, I’d have to be protected from the sun, so I would be dark. This is the way it goes.

Question: So it was their fathers that placed the curse upon them, [because of] the way of life that they chose?

Answer: Yes, their way of life. They chose it; they took to this way of life by their own free will. And notice that this adaptation is very fast; this is a most interesting thing. (I guess I had better put Hrdlička’s name on the board; you all know about Aleš Hrdlička.) Race is formed by adaptation to certain climatic conditions, etc., and also by separation. When groups separate, they go off at different distances and become different from each other. But in doing so, they also join up with others. Then you get segregation and the process of joining again, which is exactly what you had at Babylon, the so-called Tower of Babel. That was a place where people scattered in all directions, and the languages were scattered. But also people came together from all directions, and new languages were formed. Whenever you bring different people together, you get a new language. Whenever you separate one people, you get two languages. The dialects will start up just like that.

Again, the man who talked about the French Revolution said that until the French Revolution they didn’t speak French—they spoke all sorts of things. They were dialects that melded into French. As soon as people separate, they get their dialects and different languages. Then came the revolution, they started a regular system of education, and within a generation they all began speaking the same French. The same things happened in the Book of Mormon when Mosiah taught the people Nephite and it made them much more efficient in their business, etc. Bilingual people are very common. You hear a lot of Spanish spoken around here now. When I came here you never would hear anybody speaking Spanish, let alone an Oriental language. That was absolutely out of the question. Now you hear it all the time. Things do change and they change rapidly. Hrdlička is a good example because of the way of spelling it. He was a Yugoslav Croatian who came over here from Yugoslavia. He was an anthropologist and became the most famous anthropologist of his time. He spent millions on an enormous project trying to prove the Alaska bridge [theory]—that the Indians came over the Bering Strait. He was never able to prove it because they didn’t have the kind of evidence they do today. It’s still a different story today; nothing has been settled up there. He settled in New York first and then went to Harvard. He was interested in immigration, and he started checking on immigrants and the children of immigrants here to see how they differed in bodily build, complexion, and everything from their parents. He went through thousands of cases; it became a very celebrated work. He became the “daddy” of American anthropology, specializing mainly in dark Mediterranean and Eastern people. He discovered that in the first generation, no matter which country people came from, all their children were noticeably taller. They were also noticeably blonder and had noticeably larger chest measurements and longer legs, etc. In one generation they started changing noticeably.

The Israelis found that, too; there are volumes about the Israelis. The short, swarthy Eastern European Jews would go to Israel and have tall, blond children. Everybody was just electrified. How come [people] change so suddenly like that? It was an amazing thing! You find all sorts of articles on that. These changes are by segregation, joining together, etc. But merely moving over into another environment? How could that work? Well,
nobody knows, but statistically it did work on a massive scale. Hrdlička’s work was very convincing and made him very famous.

Verse 7: “And their brethren sought to destroy them, therefore they were cursed; and the Lord God set a mark upon them, yea, upon Laman and Lemuel, and also the sons of Ishmael, and Ishmaelitish women.” They were also dark, you notice. Was it because they intermarried? We are told that Laman and Lemuel intermarried with the daughters of Ishmael. They all did for that matter. Remember, the Ishmaelites were Arabs of the desert. And, after all, Lehi was of Manasseh; he was just as much of the desert as they were. They all got mixed up here. “And this was done that their seed might be distinguished from the seed of their brethren, that thereby the Lord God might preserve his people, that they might not mix and believe in incorrect traditions which would prove their destruction.” Notice that tradition has the priority here. And here again, there are the things that God does, but men may not do. He may give life; men may not. He may take life; men may not, as we are told in Ether 8:19. He may judge; men may not judge. God may smite; men may not smite. Mormon said, “Man shall not judge, neither shall he smite.”

Well, there are all sorts of things that God does, but he segregates them [the people] here and he segregates them in his own way. He has this way of doing it. But notice that the tradition has priority. He doesn’t want them to mingle with incorrect traditions, so he puts a slight mark on them to keep them apart and distinguish them. And yet they are going to be joining together all the time here. Then this is what happens: “Whosoever did mingle his seed [that is, his people—one people with another] with that of the Lamanites did bring the same curse upon his seed.” They would share the same culture with them. They were not just Nephites, but anybody who did. Remember, there were more Mulekites than [Nephites], but anybody who mixed with the Lamanites “did bring the same curse upon his seed.”

You can call the curse the culture; it depends on how you want it. “Therefore, whosoever suffered himself to be led away by the Lamanites was called under that head, and there was a mark set upon him.” Marriage is not enough; you have to share their culture. It’s not a physical thing; you have to be led away by them and join in their way of life, their culture. He was called by that name, and there was a mark set up on him. You set it on yourself actually. Verse 11: “And it came to pass that whosoever would not believe in the tradition of the Lamanites [notice it’s the traditions that are being separated here—not the blood, not the people], but believed those records which were brought out of the land of Jerusalem . . . were called Nephites.” No matter what your family was or anything else, you were called a Nephite. A Nephite or a Lamanite was one who accepted a tradition—the Nephite or the Lamanite tradition. Verse 11 makes that very clear. “And it is they who have kept the records which are true of their people, and also of the people of the Lamanites.”

In verse 13 they start marking themselves: “Now we will return again to the Amlificites, for they also had a mark set upon them; yea, they set the mark upon themselves, yea, even a mark of red upon their foreheads.” Notice that the Amlificites were Nephites who joined the Lamanites, and they set a mark upon their foreheads in imitation of the Lamanites. They wanted to be Lamanites. “Thus the word of God is fulfilled, for these are the words which he said to Nephi: Behold, the Lamanites have I cursed, and I will set a mark on them.” Well, they were putting the mark on, and this fulfills the prophecy that the Lord said. When they did it themselves, then they fulfilled the prophecy.
I have a statement by a Yale professor and anthropologist. I don’t have too much trust in Yale anthropologists—I’ve run into some of them—or Chicago anthropologists. I shared an office for four years with one of them. He was head of the American Society of Anthropologists, Morris Opler. We had a lot of time together. He was an Indian man, and I may tell you some stories about him someday. But this is what Fillmore N.C. Northrup of Yale writes in his book *The Meaning of East and West*:

> With the effects of the eighteenth century impigmentation on cosmological, highly formalized Christian dogma of the European Spanish invasion upon the people of Mexico, at the mid-point of North and South America and Central American continents, to which vast numbers of humans already had come from Asia across the Pacific and from the Pacific islands during untold numbers of earlier millennia [there’s no reason in the Book of Mormon why there shouldn’t be more than one migration]. These Pacific basin people whom the Spanish invaders found in Mexico showed a crossbred physiognomy embracing every physical feature and skin color known anywhere around the earth [they are all there]. They were so crossbred that they could no longer be spontaneously differentiated into separate color races. This crossbreeding is advanced in both Mexico and India today, but now embraces all European features as well. Every variety of angular pattern, of variation in physiognomy, is found in both countries, in every skin color—every shade from intensely dark to intensely light. Hair ranges through every known variety between straight and tight curly, in every hue from black to platinum blond.

About every tenth child among the Hopis was sometimes redhead and sometimes blond with blue eyes. It was not a case of being bleached or anything like that. I said, “There must have been some missionaries at large here back in the early days.”

“No, no, it’s always been this way,” [they said]. If you go back to the vase paintings, you’ll find it the same way. That same percentage of blondness was always there. Here you have these blonds among the Hopis in the same house [with the others], and it’s quite surprising. You find it among the Greeks and other people, too. And, as he said, you do find platinum blond.

All varieties of hair adorn all varieties of skin color in all varieties of shading from dark to light, in which turn adorn all varieties of facial features and head shapes. Wherefore, few Mexican individuals can be identified as being of any hybrid race. They are simply “Worldians.”

He calls them that because they have every race all mixed up together. So it was very necessary for them to make a special attempt at marking themselves. If they hadn’t, you couldn’t have distinguished them at all. They were all the same dark complexion, but no doubt there were plenty of blonds among them, as there are among certain Indian tribes. The blood types are very interesting there.

Verse 14: “Thus the word of God is fulfilled . . . [when he said], Behold, the Lamanites have I cursed, and I will set a mark on them [they were fulfilling the word of God] that they and their seed may be separated from thee and thy seed, from this time henceforth and forever [separated henceforth and forever, a permanent mark forever and ever? No,
he puts a limit on it here], except they repent of their wickedness and turn to me that I may have mercy upon them.” It is a reversible process. It’s their choice; they control it. Can they even reverse it? Can they do this with race? We can also initiate change in appearance ourselves.

Question: Could the skin color be a symbol of the atonement? When Jesus comes to visit the Nephites and they are praying, their faces turn white.

Answer: That’s light—they are shining. That’s a different thing. That’s like Moses’ face on the mountain and like Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. The shining is another level. Angels belong to a different race, but you get all kinds, I imagine, just the same.

You see, we are all cooperating in this thing, and it is a cultural thing. It all goes together, which makes perfectly good sense. And this tells how it was done. When the Nephites joined the Lamanites, they lived like them, dressed like them, and looked like them. We are told elsewhere in the Book of Mormon that those who changed their way of life and went back and lived with the Nephites became light again. So it’s obviously a cultural thing. It’s not a racial thing which is a permanent stamp or something like that because, after all, these people all had the same genes. Laman, Lemuel, Nephi, and Sam had the same genes, but certain ones were recessive. Certain ones will pop up at different times, etc. And they would be separated.

Verse 15: “And again: I will set a mark upon him that mingleth his seed with thy brethren, that they may be cursed also. And again: I will set a mark upon him that fighteth against thee and thy seed. [The marks he was setting were the marks they were setting on themselves.] And again, I say he that departeth from thee shall no more be called thy seed.” It’s the naming, the identification. The name is important, the way of life is important, the clothing is significant—everything about them and how they identify themselves. We would just call this *culture*, the single package. “And I will bless thee, and whomsoever shall be called thy seed [you are not his seed, but if you are called his seed, it is just the same as if you were; now we are dealing with the seed of Abraham], henceforth and forever; and these were the promises of the Lord unto Nephi and to his seed.” There’s that constant repeating of the word *seed*, and yet you can join in the seed and be called by that name forever after. Can you change your race back and forth? You don’t want to; you don’t need to. It’s this you change back and forth; we’re talking about the seed of Abraham.

“Now the Amlicites knew not that they were fulfilling the words of God when they began to mark themselves in their foreheads [this is it—they did not know that they actually were fulfilling the prophecy and the curse]; nevertheless they had come out in open rebellion against God; therefore it was expedient that the curse should fall upon them.” You notice that it was not according to affiliation. In the same way people mark themselves today; there’s a lot of that now. The SS all had tatoos on themselves. They would mark themselves as SS, and of course, it could never be taken off. They were scared to death. Don’t ask them to take off their shirts because it would give them away.

Then it gives this as a general rule: “... they brought upon themselves the curse; and even so doth every man that is cursed bring upon himself his own condemnation.” You need not fear the curse of the wicked; you need not fear the “evil eye.” If you are to be cursed, you will bring on yourself your own condemnation. You will put the mark on; nobody can force you to sin.
Verse 20: “Now it came to pass that not many days after the battle which was fought in the land of Zarahemla, by the Lamanites and the Amlicites, that there was another army of the Lamanites came in upon the people of Nephi, in the same place where the first army met the Amlicites.” Here it goes again! They [the Nephites] drove them out of the borders of their land, and there was peace for a time. “Now all these things were done, yea, all these wars and contentions were commenced and ended [all in just one year] in the fifth year of the reign of the judges.” Remember, five years ago Alma had founded a model community. Everybody belonged to the church; everybody was happy. They had all sworn the covenant under King Benjamin, etc. That’s how fast they had started to break up. Notice how many factions they had broken up into already. Here in the fifth year they were already engaging in these sordid wars, and here they had an echo war, a backup war, following through. The Lamanites thought they would come back again and take advantage of the Nephites’ weakness. But they drove them out of their borders, and there was peace for a time. All these things happened in one year, and it was just five years from Alma’s inauguration.

Verse 26: “And in one year were thousands and tens of thousands of souls sent to the eternal world, that they might reap their rewards according to their works.” Not according to their affiliation, not according to their flag or their uniform, but according to their works. I’ve known some very, very good Germans and Russians. I was attached to Russians in Heidelberg, some of the best people you could ever know. And some of the nastiest people you would ever know were in our headquarters. So there you go. According to their works they are going to be judged, “according to the spirit which they listed to obey [when they were here], whether it be a good spirit or a bad one.” It’s given to every individual to know with a perfect knowledge which is which. “For every man receiveth wages of him whom he listeth to obey.” With Nephite, Lamanite, and Amlicite it was all the same. The party, the nation, the church itself is not evil; it’s what you choose to do and how you choose to behave, etc. You can behave very vilely in any party. You can break all the Ten Commandments without being a Communist; you don’t have to belong to any particular faction or anything like that.

Now we get to chapter 4, and there is no glorious victory here. Some things I wrote down before class might be worth mentioning here. The royalist Amlicites were mixed; we saw that. The Nephites contained both those in the church and out of the church. These two mixed armies went against each other. You can’t make any distinction there—Nephite or Lamanite, Nephites versus Nehors, the church versus the persecutors. We find these repeated confrontations, as we mentioned the last time. What is this confrontation? Nephites versus Lamanites. No, we just saw it wasn’t that at all; you can’t make a clear—cut case for that. It is the kingdom against the world. The kingdom is always running away and getting beaten. It’s always losing the battle; this is the Rechabite principle. The righteous are always on the run in the Book of Mormon and everywhere else. It’s not the “Christus Victor” idea, “Onward Christian Soldiers” and Christ victorious. That is having a new revival in the Christian churches. There is a new liturgical revival in which Christus Victor is becoming the big thing: “We will be the victorious ones.” Well, that’s not it at all. The victory is on the other side. As Paul said, here we run the race and get beaten, but we will get rewards on the other side, not here. So we have the escape mode; we talked about the Fuga Mundi and the Rechabites.

In John 14:30 the Lord says, “Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.” And they were not going to have it any
better. He said, if they have called the Lord of the house “Beelzebub,” what will they call the servants? if they slay me, that’s exactly what they will do to you. You have no better chance than I have. “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer [you are not going to get your reward here]; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). These two things are very clear.

Why this retreat? Why do we always retreat from the wicked into the wilderness, etc.? The church did in their last moves out of Missouri and Illinois. Well, in the first place they are hopelessly outnumbered. “He came into the world, and the world received him not. He came to his own, and his own received him not.” Those that received him were very few—one of a city and two of a generation, or two of a tribe, as it goes. Very few. As he said, you have tribulation here. They won’t follow him. “Broad is the way, which leadeth to destruction, and many there be who go in thereat; because strait is the gate and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (3 Nephi 14:13–14). The multitude will all go in the other direction, so you are hopelessly outnumbered to begin with. It’s wise to withdraw, especially since you are not allowed to resort to violence. You are not supposed to fight back here. The Book of Mormon tells us a number of times, “Cursed is he who puts his trust in the arm of flesh,” who makes the arm of man his confidence. You’ll never win that way, and of course, they never did, even when they had great advantages, etc. It’s a great story; this is what the Book of Mormon deals with. The kingdom may not resort to violence; we are not allowed to do that. Then what do you do? Well, it was planned that way. We are going to be tried and tempted in this world.

The situation is plainly stated in Moroni 7:12 when he talks about inviteth and enticeth. Here you have them balanced. Moroni is the most instructive book in the Book of Mormon. He tells us that Satan is always inviting and enticing us in one direction. But at the same time the Lord is doing exactly the same thing; he is inviting and enticing us in the opposite direction. Who decides which direction you go in? Well, you do. The enticing and inviting are equally balanced. We allow Satan, our common enemy, [to tempt us]. Does he make himself overly persuasive so that you can’t possibly resist him? In that case you haven’t sinned. He’s not given that power; you are given the power to resist. He can only deceive. All the power you give him, as the Book of Mormon tells us, is by deception. If you want to follow, that’s why you’ll do it—that’s all there is to it. It’s up to you to decide. We are being pulled equally in two directions. Which orbit will you be drawn into? The one you prefer.

This is psychologically sound, too. Every moment of the day the mind must pick out and focus on one particular thing. All the rest becomes background. Who decides what the mind focuses on? You select it and it’s up to you. The things you wish to focus on and dwell on are the things which you choose. Talk about this life becoming a time of probation! The choices you make every minute announce where your preferences are. They make clear where you stand, what your values are, and everything else. You give yourself away every hour of the day. It’s marvelous because it goes on right to the end. As Nephi tells us, God prolongs our lives so we will have more chance to repent. That’s the great blessing of it. You have to make a choice. It’s not just the “two ways.” The ancients used to talk about the “two ways.” But the way of light and the way of darkness are before us at all times. You have the choice of the one or the other, and there is no middle way because they lead in opposite directions. As Heraclitus said, “The up road and the down road are one.” They lead in opposite directions. Being on the up road depends on the way you are facing, whether you are doing up or whether you are going down. To be righteous is to be facing up. You may be right at the bottom of the road and a miserable rat. To be
lost, to be wicked is to be facing down, no matter how high you may be. Jeremiah 38 tells us about that sort of thing.

So we have this choice to make all the time. Talk about a time of probation! It is in every motion you make. We talk about body language and things like that. Everything you do and everything you say gives away what you really want. You give yourself away all over the place. It doesn’t take a trained psychologist [to see this] either. As time mounts up, the elements of what you have done all conform to a particular pattern, and you become a well-marked person. We can change it, too, and that’s the nice thing—knowing that you can make a choice anytime. But you notice this idea of the one or the other. Can’t we balance the two? No, it’s an interesting thing that you can’t. Remember, you can’t serve God and mammon; you can’t have two masters.

That’s the principle of the computer now. Everything is based on just a double route. You can take one route or the other and that’s it. On that simple basis, we build an infinitely complex mesh of problem solutions—just on a simple one two, which is what the Egyptians did. They counted to two and that was their whole thing; everything was twos after that. It’s a marvelous thing. But we are faced with this one or the other business. I guess it really simplifies things for us. You get it in the Book of Mormon. But then it breaks down to divisions within divisions, etc. You may, for example, agree with a person on the subject of nuclear power and yet be against nuclear war, or something like that. You could favor part of the nuclear industry and not another part. You can divide yourself down.

What we were saying here that was so profound was this: Why the retreat? It was not the Nephites against the Lamanites then. The righteous Nephites willingly joined with the righteous Lamanites all through the book, especially later on. They willingly joined together, and there was no trouble at all between them; they became one in a community. Remember, it tells us that after the Lord came there were no more \-ites. And when they were wicked, the Nephites joined with the Lamanites to gain support against the Nephites. They did that all the time. We get more dangerous people than [Amlici] coming along, like Amalickiah. He wanted to be king of both the Lamanites and the Nephites, and he nearly succeeded.

We have two rules, two economies which cannot compromise, the Law of Consecration (which they use) and the law of the marketplace. The Nehors must persecute, and the Nephites must withdraw. There are great temporary disadvantages to the economy that Nephi established, Law of Consecration. Of course, there are eternal advantages. On the other hand, there are great temporary advantages to the law of the marketplace and eternal disadvantages. You run into that. We’ve got to learn that—not to lay things up on earth. This is another thing that surprises us: Because the righteous withdraw, the two kingdoms never contend in war. When there is a war, it is always the bad guys against the bad guys. I don’t think you can find one in which that isn’t the case. As Mormon said, “The justice of God will overtake the wicked.” War is made by common agreement. We agree that we will wear uniforms and have flags, etc. We agree that we will fight each other.

We get to a marvelous thing a little later on when they play the Sebus game. It is just exactly the way it used to be arranged by the ancients. It is a formal game they played, in which you are allowed to kill so many and no more. Why do men contrive these formal ceremonies? Notice that war is a ceremony—war is formal. Civilians wear different
clothes, but in war we wear uniforms and have bands, which are Asiatic. We have banners to identify ourselves. (I’ve written a lot about this, incidentally.) In the open Steppes of the plains, you had to identify a person at a distance, so you have to have bright banners to identify tribes. And you had to have instruments that carry at a distance. There was the Roman trumpet, but especially the Asiatic trumpet. They had a whole brass band. That’s why we have the military band, because outdoors it makes a big noise. You don’t have stringed orchestras for that. They are for indoors, as you know, and they are for shepherds, who don’t intend their sounds to be heard at a great distance. The Jews were great cultivators of stringed instruments, as we get from some interesting Egyptian documents. You have to form yourselves into brigades, etc. because in the Asiatic Steppes they are mounted riders. They move fast and cover vast areas. They have to be able to recognize people at a distance, etc. So they have all these signs and symbols. You have to have uniforms to be able to spot a person immediately and know who he is.

Incidentally, the 101st was to be the first division to land in Normandy. The general was very much worried about bugle calls because the Germans had certain bugle calls by which they would do signals. One of my jobs was to find out what the bugle calls were and what they signified. When your communications break down, you really get down to basics every time. And they used these bugle calls to locate each other or tell men to move in a certain direction. It only lasted for a week in Normandy there. It could have been effective, but there was too much noise to hear these bugles most of the time. It has to be a shrill brass sound that will sound above the outcry.

Why do we do these things? Why do we enter into this ceremony of war? It’s very ceremonial, and that’s the whole thrill of it. That’s the obligation. It gets everybody; it gets me. We think it’s great, though we shouldn’t. It’s our attempt to release ourselves from our individual covenants with God. I have an individual covenant with God, which is a very binding one. If I want to release myself from that and still feel good about it, I can say, “God wills!” That was the banner of the Crusades. On the other hand, it was in sha’a Allâh al-Akbar for the Arabs. When they clashed, each one was there doing the will of God. In 1095 at Claremont, St. Bernard gave his famous speech. It is recorded completely in Fulcer, who was the private secretary of Baldwin. We have the speech, and it’s a marvelous one about the Crusades in 1095. Everything had broken down in Europe. The whole economy had broken down; everybody was fighting everybody else. Every great noble was out to grab all the land he could from his next-door neighbor, because that was considered a rule of chivalry and an obligation. Everybody was robbing everybody else. They were setting up towers along the road. He goes on and on. There was no unity and no peace in Christendom, so [they decided] they must make a common enemy and march against the East. The same pan-Hellenic oration was given against Persia by Isocrates way back in the fifth century B.C. for the same reason. “We can’t unite, so let’s unite against somebody.” And that was the Roman idea: “Our troubles cease if we can only find an outside enemy.” So they had the ager hosticus. “The enemy at the gates” became the one slogan which could unite the Romans. This is what we have here. Throughout the Book of Mormon they were forming these armies so they could escape [their problems] and go out and have some fun.

Question: You mentioned that the knights went around killing each other. Where can we read about that?
Answer: If you want that, you have to read Froissart. He gives a description of the complete collapse of the terrible fourteenth century.

Question: Was he a historian talking about that?

Answer: He was secretary to a duke under Richard II of England. He observed all these things and saw what was going on.
Now we have two extremely important passages; they are worth years actually. We are in Alma 4. In the fifth year of the reign of the judges all that fighting and terrible stuff happened. Now we are in the sixth year, and everything is going pretty well. In the sixth year there were no contentions, for once. Of course there were no contentions; they were suffering too much from the setback in the wars. It says, “But the people were afflicted, yea, greatly afflicted for the loss of their brethren, and also for the loss of their flocks and herds, and also for the loss of their fields of grain.” The place was ruined; their crops were trampled and destroyed. The losses had been so heavy “that every soul had cause to mourn; and they believed that it was the judgments of God sent upon them because of their wickedness.”

It’s interesting in how many cities after World War II everyone had lost somebody. The mayor of Pforzheim told me that in the last air raid of the British on the town of 80,000, there were 30,000 killed in that one raid. It was really something, but this is a different kind of war here. There were no good guys now. They said, “Every soul had cause to mourn, and they believed it was the judgments of God sent upon them because of their wickedness and their abominations; therefore they were awakened to a remembrance of their duty.” This was the promise given to Lehi.

Verse 4: “And they began to establish the church more fully; yea, and many were baptized in the waters of Sidon.” Weren’t there any other rivers around except the Sidon? It looks as if there were not very many. Notice that it was shallow—it was forded. That’s where all the battles took place, at the ford. They could pass back and forth over it; it was the border also, and it washed down into the sea. It was that kind of country; there were no big rivers around. “Yea, they were baptized by the hand of Alma, who had been consecrated the high priest over the people of the church.” He had his work cut out for him. Now another thing to notice: See how small this civilization was. He baptized not 35,000 but only 3,500 souls. Everybody was wanting to get baptized, but that’s how many he baptized in a year. We are dealing with Hopi dimensions here. It’s not a gigantic civilization with millions of people in the manner our friend Arnold Friberg portrays.

Then just two years pass, and it’s all over. In the eighth year they have gone sour again. Do things happen this fast really? You bet they do. “The people of the church began to wax proud, because of their exceeding riches, and their fine silks.” Now here we come to a cultural note; we should mention silks. I have a lot of words for silk on the board. As they will tell you in the encyclopedia, etc., the knowledge of silk was known in China before 1000 B.C.—it was Chinese. But everybody tells you this story: It was brought by Nestorian monks (missionaries) to the West in the year 552. They brought the eggs of the silkworm, which feed on the mulberry bush, concealed in their hollow staves as they came. That’s the story people tell. But way back in the Augustan Age before the time of Christ, Roman
literature is full of silk. They not only talk about silk, but bombax, a word that means both silkworm and the cloth. Aristotle and Pliny both describe the silkworm, but they don’t make a direct connection with silk. But they called the cloth the very same thing. Don’t you think they made connection between the worm and the cloth if they called them both bombax? These cultural things are very interesting and really quite complicated.

It’s interesting that in the Old Testament, in Proverbs, way back there, the word is shēsh. Well, that’s the Egyptian word sšr/šsr for linen or any fine cloth. You just draw it with a bag and a picture of a piece of cloth. Shēsh is the same word the Egyptians were using. It’s translated in the King James as silk. And we have meshi translated as silk way back in Ezekiel [16:10, 13]. In Revelation you have it in Greek. It is sērikos. That comes from the land of the Seres, which is supposed to have been a tribe in India. The Greek sīndōn is the word for linen. But the Arabic word for a silkworm is dūd, “a gauze-spinning worm.” They use the words gauze, silk, and cotton, so no wonder it tells us in Harper’s big Latin dictionary that this word [silk] refers in general to any fine fiber. In English it’s perfectly legitimate to call any fine fiber silk. It goes on here. You have metaxa and various modern Greek words for it. The nicest story about it goes way back to Minoan times. The story of Solomon and Bilqis is the story in Thašlabi. When Queen Bilqis, the queen of Sheba, came to visit Solomon, she posed riddles for him. She was the riddling queen, and they exchanged riddles. Solomon was very sharp, and she was very sharp. She won incidentally; she outwitted him. But her number one riddle was this: She had a nice box with her. She said that in the box was a big bead, and the bead had a crooked hole through it. “How can you put a thread through the bead without opening the box.” Well, this was a non sequitur or something, but you can see what it was referring to. The secret was that she had a little worm that spun a fine thread, and the worm crawled through [the bead]. The secret she brought in her box was, of course, silk because they had silk in Minoan times.

So the use of this word is very free. The Romans definitely had the knowledge, but it was lost for five hundred years and then came back again. These cultural things come and go. That goes with the horse and lots of other things. But you mustn’t get tripped up on things [like this]. Notice it uses silks in the plural. What do they mean by silks? There is one silk. No there isn’t. Silk is any very fine cloth. I think we got all the fancy words here, so we’ll go on.

They had all these fine things like fine-twined linen, and it’s a very interesting thing: In the Central American collections we have here and among things in the Mexico Museum, there is superb metal work, but [they were] especially strong on woven stuff. The ancients were awfully good at weaving, and that’s what their wealth was. Our BYU people have discovered more woven stuff in Egypt at Sera than was known before—all kinds of weaving. We have a very good man, Kuchar, who is perhaps the nation’s foremost man in ancient fabrics. He has identified all sorts. Two weeks ago they discovered the most gorgeous mummy cover [that has been] discovered in the last forty years. The BYU people found it. It is going right now to the Cairo Museum, and they are going to give it a special niche. It’s the most beautiful mummy case and mummy with a gold breastplate and heavy gold plate. It isn’t solid gold, like King Tut’s, but they say it’s far more gorgeous than anything found for years. So we’re having luck in Egypt. But you notice that here the fine weaving is the great thing. As you know, they call the Indians “primitive,” but the one thing they can do is weave. They make magnificent baskets and

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woven wear. The Hopis have very fine stuff; we can’t do it as well as they do. So they are
great at their weaving, etc.

And they had “costly apparel.” Notice they never call it “beautiful apparel.” It’s just costly.
Usually it looks quite ugly, I suppose, but it’s costly. They overdo it, as you know if you’ve
seen the vase paintings and the murals from Central America, Mexico, etc. They are all
horribly overdressed; they look like walking Christmas trees—these grandees being carried
around. It went to their heads again, and Alma took this very hard: “Now this was the
cause of much affliction to Alma.” What’s wrong with this elegance? Note the sharp
distance between the two lifestyles here; that’s what it is. Verse 7: “Yea, many of them
were sorely grieved for the wickedness which they saw had begun to be among their
people.” They were not compromising or anything. Alma was much afflicted, and the
priests and elders were sorely grieved. They were coming down hard; they didn’t agree at
all. We have a definite hostility here. The people went right on with it because they didn’t
like how [Alma and the priests] were doing it. It was two diametrically opposed lifestyles.
That’s what we’re up against. They saw what they called wickedness that had begun among
the people.

Verse 8: “For they saw and beheld with great sorrow that the people of the church [the
church was the main culprit here] began to be lifted up in the pride of their eyes, and to
set their hearts upon riches and upon the vain things of the world [here’s your equality],
that they began to be scornful, one towards another, and they began to persecute those
that did not believe according to their own will and pleasure.” That’s snobbery, contempt,
intolerance, and meanness. But what about persecution? Do people actually go that far?
Do we really act this way because we get rich? Well, we do, of course. Remember, Hamlet
sums it up very neatly:

For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor’s wrong, the proud man’s contumely,
The pangs of disprized love, the law’s delay.
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin?

Shakespeare, Hamlet, act III, scene 1

You have to deal with all these things if you are in official life or anywhere else. “The
oppressor’s wrong”—a person gets power and he becomes oppressive (D&C 121). “The
proud man’s contumely.” It’s not enough just to be proud, but he puts you down. “The
pangs of disprized love.” You are in love with somebody who doesn’t just turn you
down—he or she makes you feel cheap. It’s terrible! They look down on you. “The law’s
delay.” If you try to settle something in court, they make a monkey of you and give you
the run around. This was [written] four hundred years ago, but it hasn’t changed. And
“the spurns that patient merit of the unworthy takes.” The unworthy is the boss, the
manager, etc. You have a patient, competent worker who has to take all this guff from
somebody who is really incompetent himself, but he is the boss or the boss’s son. This is
what we have to face. “… who would fardels bear, To grunt and sweat under a weary life
…” etc.
This really happens. You know how people feel about the “rat race.” You know how they write about their jobs. Read *The Wall Street Journal* faithfully, and you’ll find that. Young men who go in at fabulous fees get fed up; I know many of them that do. One made a “killing.” He was quite rich when he told his stake president in Arizona that he was going to take some time off and do some studying—wouldn’t even go to school. The stake president was furious. He said, “Do you mean to say you are going to spin your wheels reading books when you could be making big money?” Emotions run high in this thing. This isn’t just that some people got rich and some didn’t get so rich. Oh no, it goes this way, and this is peculiar to our society as much as anything, although you find the same injustices everywhere. After all, Shakespeare was talking about England.

So what happens? Great contentions. Notice Alma 4:9: “There began to be great contentions among the people of the church; yea, there were envyings, and strife, and malice, and persecutions, and pride.” You have all these things within the ward, etc. Note the nature of these crimes—the meanness and the pettiness of it. There’s nothing that you can make a law against. You can’t go to jail for being envious of someone. You can’t go to jail for strife or competition. We believe in competition; ours is a competitive system. Or for malice—to catch up and get even with somebody. “Don’t get mad, get even.” That’s the slogan. With persecutions you put the pressure on. And there are the takeovers, hostile and otherwise, and the pride. Iacocca is always talking about his pride, “... even to exceed the pride of those who did not belong to the church of God.” The church members were worse than the nonmembers, in other words. Can it go that way? It does.

Verse 10: “And thus ended the eighth year of the reign of the judges; and the wickedness of the church was a great stumbling-block to those who did not belong to the church.” This is a thing to notice. Here in this eighth year we come to the fatal turning point; from now on it’s all down hill. It seems rather early in the game for that to be happening, but notice we are going on to the time of Christ now. From now on things start getting serious when the church itself is the center of corruption. So this is what’s going to happen.

The Supreme Court recently repealed some state laws, making it a crime not to be visibly making or spending money. That’s to say vagrancy is a crime. If you just walk around without any visible means of employment, you go to jail—if you are a philosopher who wants to see the world, etc. If you have money to spend, you don’t have to go to jail. But if you don’t, you have to go to jail. (I know, I’ve tried it.) That’s some country. We call that freedom and the like.

It tells us here in verse 11 that the church was corrupting the entire nation: “Alma saw the wickedness of the church, and he saw also that the example of the church began to lead those who were unbelievers on from one piece of iniquity to another, thus bringing on the destruction of the people. Yea, he saw great inequality among the people [there we are again; he always hits that], some lifting themselves up with their pride, despising others [*despicio* means ‘to look down on others’], turning their backs upon the needy and the naked and those who were hungry.” Well, we are excellent at this; we talk about the people freezing on the sidewalks in front of the White House, etc. I just heard a report that 170 people died on the sidewalks in San Francisco last year. Well, we certainly pass them by without noticing them. It sounded like an exaggeration to me, but in San Francisco anything can happen. I could give you some statistics that are rather horrendous, but we are not going into them.
But there were the others; this is the other side. Notice that this is a tract for the times. There are no -isms here. We are not talking about socialism, capitalism, fascism, or anything else. It’s just human beings dealing with each other. “Others were abasing themselves, succoring those who stood in need of their succor, such as imparting their substance to the poor and the needy, feeding the hungry, and suffering all manner of afflictions, for Christ’s sake, who should come according to the spirit of prophecy. Looking forward to that day, thus retaining a remission of their sins; being filled with great joy because of the resurrection of the dead [that’s where it pays off], according to the will and power and deliverance of Jesus Christ from the bands of death. . . . Alma, having seen the afflictions of the humble followers of God, and the persecutions which were heaped upon them by the remainder of his people, and seeing all their inequality, began to be very sorrowful.”

What did he do about it? Well, he did exactly the same as when the same thing happened in Athens in the time of Solon—a very well-documented affair because the great Solon left his record. We talked about this in the other semester in the time of Lehi. He was a contemporary of Lehi, and I would “bet a dime to a donut” that he knew Lehi because he traveled to the east. He went to Palestine and dealt in olives and olive oil. He exchanged olive oil and pottery and things like that. He was the greatest Greek; we still call wise politicians Solons, although it’s an ironical use of the word most of the time. And in Rome there was the person who was chosen dictator in crisis. This is a person who is given emergency, plenary powers and becomes a special prosecutor. That’s exactly what Solon became and what this man Nephihah became. Alma had all three offices, so “he selected a wise man . . . and gave him power according to the voice of the people, that he might have power to enact laws according to the laws which had been given [all he was doing was enforcing the laws which people were ignoring] and to put them in force according to the wickedness and the crimes of the people.” They committed crimes, so Nephihah had these emergency powers. This was to free Alma to put the pressure on where it would count most.

Names like Nephihah that end in -ihah are interesting. At the time of Lehi, there was a new revival movement begun in Israel led by Josiah. These names that ended in -ihah in Israel at that time are Jehovah names. That was the revival of the cult going back to Jehovah. Ihah is another form of the name. You find that name later. You find it in Aramaic, too. The name Nephihah would probably be a mixture. They mixed Semitic and Aramaic elements. It might mean “the Lord is Jehovah.” That’s just a guess, but it sounds good.

Verse 18: “Now Alma did not grant unto him the office of being high priest over the church, but he retained the office of high priest unto himself; but he delivered the judgment-seat unto Nephihah. [This is what he wanted to do it for:] And this he did that he himself might go forth among this people, or among the people of Nephi, that he might preach the word of God unto them [it had reached the point that the only thing he could do was], to stir them up in remembrance of their duty, and that he might pull down, by the word of God, all the pride and craftiness, and all the contentions which were among his people.” All he could do was preach, and it went over, as I said, like a lead balloon—as you might expect. Notice that Joseph Smith didn’t invent this. You’d think a happy ending would come out, but happy endings don’t come here. It’s one calamity after another, “seeing no way that he might reclaim them save it were in bearing down in pure testimony against them.”
What good does it do to appoint special officers, make special laws, etc., if people are acting that way? Alma had all the principal offices, as we have seen—head of the church, army, and state. Law courts, judgments, sentences, etc., weren’t getting anywhere at all. There was only one way to do it, he said. He could see “no way that he might reclaim them save it were in bearing down in pure testimony against them,” which is what Solon did, incidentally. And he was driven out of the city, of course. He left for ten years. Verse 20: “Alma delivered up the judgment-seat to Nephihah, and confined himself wholly to the high priesthood of the holy order of God, to the testimony of the word, according to the spirit of revelation and prophecy.” Only revelation and prophecy can make the breakthrough. [People] just keep calling each other names and going around in circles. You have to break the circle somewhere, and it can only come by revelation.

Now we come to one of the most remarkable chapters in the Book of Mormon, this long chapter 5 that is over 60 verses long. The same thing is told in Nephi 1–2 and in Alma 42. This is an account of the Law of the Atonement—of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. These are the ordinances performed at the temple in Israel by the law of Moses on the Day of Atonement. And that’s what we are told here. Alma went first to the people of Zarahemla. He was launching the movement there, and he did it this way throughout the land. “And these are the words which he spake to the people in the church which was established in the city of Zarahemla, according to his own record, saying:” These are formal words, and he repeated these wherever he went. That means the day of establishment, the day of founding which is Yom Kippur, the New Year, and Rosh ha-Shanah, etc. It has all those names. It is the day of the founding of the world in all ancient societies, when everything gets started. (I’ve written so many articles on this.) These are the words he spake when he established it. It tells us in verse 3: “I say unto you that he began to establish a church in the land which was in the borders of Nephi [following the same pattern].” This is an inauguration of the church, an initiation of the order. What we have presented here is the old law of Moses in its purity. Here you recognize the Day of Atonement—that’s what it is. As we have mentioned before, atonement is literally at-one-ment. The word is not found in the new revised version of the Bible; they use reconciliation instead.

I’m not going out of the way, but I must tell you that the basis of the law was this. It is translated reconciliation now; the only time it appears is in Romans in the New Testament. It means “sit down with somebody again,” because the two parts were this. Very briefly, on the Day of Atonement you had the kappōret, the tent in which the Holy of Holies was, and only the high priest could enter the tent. On the Day of Atonement when the people had atoned, the high priest came before the door of the tent, which was the pārōket or the veil. He announced that the people had performed the rites of sacrifice properly with the shedding of blood, etc., and wished to enter the presence of the Lord to be atoned for their sins. The Lord parted the veil and invited the people of Israel to enter. Of course, it was only the high priest who had entered. Only he was allowed to enter. That was the kappōret, the covering of the veil. I have a long article on the Day of Atonement which is coming out in the Ensign in a series pretty soon, so we won’t get sidetracked on that. But they had to observe the law which was the old law. And this is the law he talks about here. We have the rites. He is going to talk about the rites, such as “The Song of Redeeming Love,” which is part of them.

We can’t emphasize too much this law of consecration. I’m going to tell you what it was. It was the old law. This is point one: There was only one law given to Israel at any
time—only one law given to the human race, and this was it. Point two: It was the minimum requirement. Incidentally you will find all this in the Old Testament in Zachariah 14:18 and following. It’s a minimum requirement. Anyone can be expected to keep it, like the Word of Wisdom which can be kept by the “weak and the weakest of all saints, who are or can be called saints.” It was given complete to Moses, but the people would only accept it in part. It has always been that way. As we are told in Exodus 32:19, when he smashed the tablets, they did not get the higher priesthood because they were not worthy of it. They got only the lower priesthood. Moses prophesied at the end of Deuteronomy in his farewell, just before he was about to leave the people. (It’s quite a speech here.) He says, you’re a stiffnecked people. If you are rebellious while I am still with you, what will you do when I’m gone [paraphrased]. Then he says, I “call heaven and earth to record against them. For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you” (Deuteronomy 31:27–29). And they did in record time. Therefore, he leaves upon them just what we have on the promised land. He says, Behold I set before you this day a blessing and a curse. They go together, and you understand why. If thou wilt not hearken, these curses are for you [paraphrased]. Then he lists the promises and blessings and the curses, which are the blessings in reverse in Deuteronomy 28:15. He says in short, “I have set before you [this day] life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live” (Deuteronomy 30:19). Well, the people accepted the conditions wholeheartedly, just as they did in the time of King Benjamin. They all voted and chose to go into it. In one voice they shouted, “Amen,” for they were accepting the curse along with the blessing. It’s the same in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

This is the reason they have to be different: They can’t just go back and be like ordinary [people]. He really rubs this in, and you will find most of this in the book of Deuteronomy [Brother Nibley paraphrases most of it]. “Ye all stand this day before Jehovah your God that he may establish you this day for a people unto himself.” There are to be no mental reservations as to what you are to be sworn to; God is not mocked. Don’t say, “This won’t bother me; I’ll go just my way. I’ll take the oath.” The Lord will not spare him that does, but “all the curses written in the book shall be upon him.” Because you are something different from the world, he says—holy, set apart, chosen, special, peculiar, ʿam segullāḥ (that’s the word sealed, a sealed people), not like any other people on the face of the earth. “God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth” (Deuteronomy 7:6). That’s why you can’t do just like other people. He says this will remain the law until God himself sees fit to change it. That’s another point.

Then he told them what to do. This is what you do. First, you must establish the center, the temple, according to my instructions. This is the place which Jehovah, your God, has chosen out of all your tribes to put his name there for his dwelling. You shall seek that place out and go there. You shall bring your offerings there—your sacrifices, your heave offerings, your firstlings of your flocks. (Remember, they brought their firstlings at the beginning of Mosiah when Benjamin was going to speak to them.) There you hold your feasts before the Lord joyfully with your families. It follows the rule right throughout the Book of Mormon. And this is what you are supposed to do when you come there: The first thing you do in the new land when the holy place is established is to take all your first fruits in a basket and take them before the altar and recite this speech: “A Syrian was my father ready to perish from hunger.” This is Abraham, you see. Abraham was a Hebrew. The word ʿavar means a person from the “beyond,” a homeless, an outcast, a bum—all
sorts of disrespectful things. That’s what Abraham was, a wanderer. Remember, he never had a home or a place to settle. Lekh Lékîhâ was the rule he lived by. “Keep going and don’t stop.” No one would put up with him very long. Then he says, and he went down into Egypt and there he became a nation. And the Egyptians treated us badly. The Lord brought us forth and brought us to this place and has given us this land. This is the Book of Mormon theme all the way through, too. The King James Version renders Sirion as Amorite. The Hebrew word is Amorite. He is a person from the beyond. And the word Hebrew means a displaced person, a tramp, an outcast, a homeless person.

You bring in your basket, etc. A tribute is a free-will offering of thine hand required at the feast of the weeks. The offering is required. You must bring it, but the amount is determined by yourself. So you are testing yourself here as to whether you will be willing. It’s a free-will offering, but it is required of you. It’s on the basis “of how much the Lord has given you.” The Septuagint has it better: “… to the limit of your ability.” The Hebrew says, “… according to that which he has given you, even with which your God hath blessed you.” It’s the law of consecration. From everything with which he has blessed you, you are supposed to bring. But you give according to your own free will; nobody is going to twist your arm. He requires you to take the test, which is whether you will try to short-change him. Three times a year—at the [feasts of] the unleavened bread, the weeks, and the tabernacles—all males come together. Every man shall give as he is able according to the blessings which the Lord has given him. And how much is to be given, it asks. Exactly as much as the Lord has given you. All of that with which the Lord has blessed you and with which he may bless you. So they had the law of consecration.

He says this twice in Deuteronomy: When you have eaten and drunk and are full, and silver and gold has piled up, and you say to yourself, “My ability and hard work have made this fortune for me,” don’t get the idea that you are telling the truth. Bear in mind that God has given you the capacity to get what you have only for the sake of confirming the covenant which he made with your fathers. If you forget that in any degree, you will be destroyed just like the other nations. Don’t get the idea that all this is being done because of your righteousness. “Speak not in thy heart saying, ‘For my righteousness, the Lord hath brought me to possess the land, but for the wickedness of the nations, the Lord doth drive them out,’ because you are not a righteous people but wicked. You are stiff-necked people.”

At this point, special pleading by Moses is all that saves the people from destruction, actually. There is to be no dickering or cheating. Above all, the Lord detests one who tries to bargain with him. “Thou shalt not sacrifice unto the Lord a bullock or sheep with any blemish or fault whatever, or any evil favor.” It’s your shearing time. You can’t use it or sell it anyway, so you might as well make a sacrifice of it. He says, don’t try to do that. Don’t try to cheat the Lord. It’s the type of tithe you bring. (Brigham Young said some very humorous things about a person who brings a horse or cow that is diseased and falling apart.) That is an abomination unto the Lord thy God to try to dicker with him.

Now this is the Yom Kippur; this is the Lord’s release. At the end of every seven years, every creditor must cancel all debts, never to be paid again. It’s quite a system! With all men either debtors or creditors, this is not a convenient arrangement, but it is the only way. Only God can draw the line and say, “Here, this business of exploiting each other must stop.” The Lord guarantees to make up any losses to those who keep the law, for the Lord will greatly bless you if you do this. But only if you carefully hearken and observe
and do these commandments. The important thing is the spirit in which you do it; this is a very important part of the law.

“If there be a poor man of your brethren anywhere within your knowledge, thou shalt not harden thy heart nor shut thy hand from thy poor brother, but thou shalt open thy hand wide to him, and shall surely lend him sufficiency of need of whatever he is in want. And since it is a loan, beware there is not a thought in thy wicked heart saying, ‘The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand. If I give it to him now, he will not have to repay it, and I’ll never get it back,’ and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother and thou givest him not, and he cry unto the Lord and it be a sin unto thee. [This is not to be regarded as a business operation.] Thou shalt surely give him, and thy heart shall not be grieved when thou givest.”

You don’t say, “I hate to do this, but it’s the law—fiscally unsound.” If you give in the spirit God requires, he says, you will not be without your reward because for this thing “the Lord God shall bless thee in all thy works.”

Now comes the famous verse quoted by the Lord, “The poor you have always with you.” This is taken as proof that we will never get rid of the poor so why bother about them—there’s nothing you can do about it anyway. It was Judas who said, why don’t we sell this ointment and get a lot of money and then we can give it to help the poor? Knowing that Judas was a hypocrite and really didn’t mean it that way, the Lord said: Look, if you want to help the poor, you can do that anytime. The poor are always with you, but I’m only with you today and then I’ll be gone. If you want to help the poor, you’ll have plenty of opportunity to help the poor. That’s what he was talking about, but we twist that around and say, “Well, you can’t help the poor—no use trying because they are always there.” We love to play games, don’t we? There’s nothing like an economist going around and around the bush.

“After six years of service any and all servants must go absolutely free no matter what is paid for them and thou shalt not let him go empty. Thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, out of thy winepress, out of whatsoever the Lord God has blessed thee thou shalt give unto him. [Why?] And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondsman in Egypt, and Jehovah, thy God, redeemed thee.” God saved you and gave you eternal life, and in return the least you can do is remember that you were a bondsman in Egypt.

“Therefore, I command you this day that when you do this thing, it shall not seem hard unto thee when thou sendest him away free. [This is an interesting thing; it’s the spirit in which it is done.] Thou shalt not deliver unto his master a servant which is escaped from his master unto thee. [Human rights supersede property rights there, you see.] Not only shall the refugee dwell with thee in the place which he shall choose, but while he is with you you shall not tonēnū [that means ‘mutter under your breath’] about him. None of that.

He is loading it on here: Moreover, everyone is under sacred obligation to get involved. You can’t cut corners here and pretend that you were busy at something else. These are famous; this is the Law of Israel. “If you see a stray ox or sheep and recognize it, you must absolutely return it to your brother.” You keep nothing you find for yourself, but hold it until the owner shows up. If you see someone’s ox or ass fall down, you cannot pretend not to notice or make yourself scarce. Remember in the story of the Good Samaritan how
the priest and the Levite passed by on the other side of the road so they could pretend not to notice the man over there. It’s the same way we do it here, and we get some nice Book of Mormon stuff on the humanity of it.

If someone falls from the roof of your house because you have failed to put up a railing around it, you may not plead contributory negligence—that he should have been more careful. Moreover, you cannot take a millstone or anything else upon which a man’s livelihood depends for pledge. You can’t take anything from him if he needs it. And talk about private property, this is private property that is property. He says, “You may not go to the house of a creditor to take something as a security, but you must stand at a distance and let him bring it out to you.” His house is sacred whether he owes you money or not. What’s private is private. If the security is something he needs, you must return it to him by sundown so he can use it. You shall not appeal to the iron law of wages. He doesn’t call it that, but that’s what it means—paying a worker as little as you can because he is desperate for work. This applies to strangers as well as Israelites. (Of course, that’s the basic law of our economy today.) “You must pay a worker before sundown because he is poor and setteth his heart upon it.” Everyone has a right to his daily bread (see Deuteronomy 24:15).

The whole law is validated only when carried out in the spirit. “And now Israel what doth the Lord require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God and walk in his ways; to love him and serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul? Behold, everything in heaven and earth belongs to him; all mortals are his children; all living things are his creatures. He does right by the orphan and the widow, and he loves the stranger and wants him provided with food and clothing.” So how much more kind, just, humane, and edifying is the strict law of Moses than the laws by which we live today in which you have an army of lawyers just to get the smallest claim for an insurance company, for example? (Not that I’ve had any such experience or anything like that!)

So that’s what we find here [in Alma 5]. We are going to get the law of Moses here, and we are also going to get the rituals and ordinances carried out in the Day of Atonement, which he refers to here. He tells us he is establishing it, and he tells us how his father, Alma Sr., began the whole thing by baptizing in the Waters of Mormon. It began with the baptizing in his community; then he organized the community. Verse 5: “And behold, after that, they were brought into bondage by the hands of the Lamanites in the wilderness [there must be a stirring below before there can be a stirring above; this gives us some vivid images here and eloquent passages], yea, I say unto you they were in captivity, and again the Lord did deliver them out of bondage by the power of his word [notice he is giving them the same introduction that Moses gave the people—my father Abraham was brought out of Egypt to a land of promise]; and they were brought into this land, and here we began to establish the church of God throughout this land also.” Now, he has used the word establish three or four times in a row here.

It is just like reading from Deuteronomy when he says in verse 6: “Have you sufficiently retained in remembrance the captivity of your fathers? [We are going to rehearse that all over again.] . . . Have you sufficiently retained in remembrance that he delivered their souls from hell? [That’s a much better thing than delivering them from Egypt.] Behold, he changed their hearts; yea, he awakened them out of a deep sleep, and they awoke unto God. Behold, they were in the midst of darkness; nevertheless, their souls were illuminated by the light of the everlasting word; yea, they were encircled about by the bands of death, and an everlasting destruction did await them.”
Yom Kippur means embrace. It means enfolding or hugging a person. And I should have told you that when the priest goes to the door to be received by the Lord, they embrace each other. There are interesting old Jewish pictures of the Lord’s hand coming through the door of the tent and Moses taking the hand. He [Alma] is going to talk a lot about embracing here and the arms open to embrace. We have a few minutes so let’s refer to this article on the Law of Atonement. How do you become one? Well, the ultimate becoming one is a fusion in an embrace. That’s how you signify it, whether it’s the marriage vow that “they two shall become one flesh,” or something like that. This embrace is a very important thing, and it figures here.

We are told in Genesis, right at the beginning of Moses, that all the newborn are taken into the family. They must be united, and that’s what atonement is. Kippūr means atonement, and it also means embrace, the literal act of hugging. “All the newborn are taken into the family, which is united in an eternal covenant by the token of shedding blood.” That’s a personal shedding of blood, the circumcision. They become the seed of Abraham. This is a real atonement, you see. The Greek equivalent is ἱλατία, meaning a ransoming. Then there is all this business of being bought free. The Hebrew and Aramaic word for atonement is kāpar, and it’s an extremely rich Semitic word. It’s not just in Semitic languages, but in our own language, too. Our words have, seize, and grab are from the Latin word capto. Kāpar is the starting place. It has the same basic meaning in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic, meaning “to arch over the hand,” hence, “to wipe over, to cleanse, to expiate, to forgive, to renounce.” But also first, “to put the arm around” and also “to wipe off.”

Now this is where the Book of Mormon really strikes twelve o’clock; it’s a remarkable thing here: The Arabic kafara puts the emphasis on a tight squeeze, such as tucking in the skirts or drawing a thing close. Closely related are Aramaic and Arabic kafata, meaning a common ritual embrace, written with the ideogram of embracing, or the Egyptian ḥpt, written with the ideogram of embracing arms. This is the way you write ḥptor kafara in Egyptian—a pair of arms like that embracing and taking you into a hug. “It’s cognate with the Latin capto, and from it comes the Coptic kaftan. A kaftan is a cape that completely covers your head and everything else, a monk’s robe. Most interesting is the Arabic kafata, as it is the key to a dramatic situation.1

This is the Book of Mormon situation: It was the custom for one fleeing for his life in the desert to seek protection in the tent of a great sheik by crying out, “Ana dakhīlūka—I am thy suppliant.” The lord had to take you into his tent, and then he would place his robe over your shoulder, the kāf (which is the word for shoulder, too) and declare you under his protection. He would have to protect you then. In the Book of Mormon (way back in 1 Nephi) we see this world as a dark and dreary waste, a desert. We see Nephi fleeing from an evil thing that is pursuing him. He is in great danger and prays to the Lord to give him an open road and a low way to block his pursuers and make them stumble. He comes to the tent of the Lord and enters as a suppliant. In reply the Master, as was the ancient custom, puts the hem of his robe protectively over the kneeling man’s shoulder (his

This puts him under the Lord’s protection from all enemies. They embrace in a close hug, as the Arab chiefs always do. The Lord makes a place for him and invites him to sit down beside him. They are at one (see 2 Nephi 4 and Alma 5).

But you notice you have him enter. The two parts of the Yom Kippur are the yeshivāh and the teshûvåh. Teshûvåh is to return home; it’s when you return and are let in. Yåshåh means to sit down beside your Lord. In one you return home, and in the other you enter the tent and sit down beside your Lord. That’s what you do. These are very nicely set forth in a couple of places in the Book of Mormon, in Alma 5 and in 2 Nephi. This is what happens. This is the imagery of the Atonement. This is what 2 Nephi 1:15 tells us: “But behold, the Lord hath redeemed by soul from hell; I have beheld his glory, and I am encircled about eternally with the arms of his love.”

And 2 Nephi 4:33 says: “O Lord, wilt thou encircle me around in the robe of thy righteousness! [see the chief puts his robe around his servant, and this is at the time when he is running away from his enemies]. O Lord, wilt thou make a way for mine escape before mine enemies!” That’s exactly what he does. When the lord puts his protecting robe around your shoulder, that protects you from your enemies.

“In 2 Nephi 4:33, the chief’s robe is compared to the heavenly robe that the Lord wears. The words “encircle me” and “robe of righteousness” are used to denote the Atonement, which is the act of God juxtaposing the person with his mercy and receiving them into his presence.”

In Israel when the sacrifices and sin offerings were completed on the Day of Atonement, the high priest went to the door of the kappōret. That’s the name of the tent covering that covered over the Ark. Before they had a temple, they had a big tent there, and the door of it was the kappōret. There’s your cover again. See, there’s kāpar and our word cover. The eᵗ(eth) is just the feminine ending. It’s our own word for cover; all these things go together. It’s not because we borrowed it from the Hebrew. We have words like that—like cave and any kind of covering. This is what [they did]: The high priest went to the door of the kappōret to receive assurance from the Lord within that he had accepted the offerings and the repentance of the people and forgiven them of their sins. I will meet you at the door of the congregation and speak to you there, the Lord says to Moses (Exodus 29:42).

We get this situation in the first chapter of Luke when Zacharias, a direct descendant of Aaron (as was also his wife), entered behind the veil into the Holy of Holies (naon tou kuriou, the skēnē or tent of the Old Testament) while people waited on the outside. He didn’t meet the Lord but his personal representative, a messenger of the Lord standing beside the altar (Luke 1:11), who identified himself as Gabriel, who standeth in the presence of God, sent down to converse with thee and to tell thee the good news. The news was about the great at-one-ment, the great Atonement, about to take place in the restoration of the gospel, in which the children would “turn to the Lord their God” while the hearts of the fathers would be “turned again to the children, the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” That’s what at-one-ment is—to bring them together again. That’s why it is properly called re-conciliation, meaning “to sit down with the person again.”
It is all a preparation for the great bringing together again through the office of baptism after they had been separated by the Fall. Back to Exodus again: "And I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation and . . . Aaron and his sons, . . . I will dwell among the children of Israel and be their God" (Exodus 29:44–45). They will all be one happy family forever. It is understandable that the kappōret is also translated in the King James Bible as “the mercy seat,” where a man is reconciled at one with God on the Day of Atonement.

Paul talks about it in his letter to the Hebrews. They would understand this, you see. “And after the second veil, the tabernacle [sucqoth, booth, tent; it’s interesting that the Hebrew word sucqoth is exactly the same word the Egyptians use], which is called the Holiest of all [contained] the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy seat” (Hebrews 9:3, 5).

I should bring a big picture of the famous Dura Synagogue. At Dura Europus was discovered the oldest synagogue known. We have pictures of how this [ceremony] was done there, and it’s very interesting. “The scene as designed shows the curtains drawn back at either side to disclose the objects behind them.” The custom has persisted in the Torah shrine. In a stock presentation found in early Jewish synagogues, as well as on very early Christian murals (there’s a picture of it printed in a book of mine called An Egyptian Endowment. “The hand of God is represented but could not be called that explicitly [that would be blasphemy], and instead of the heavenly utterance, the bāt-kōl is given.” 2 A bāt-kōl means a whisper or a voice from a distance. From the hand radiate beams of light—the five beams; they have a great deal to say about the five beams of light that come from the hand. “To show the hand and light thus emerging from central darkness is as near as one could come in conservative Judaism to depicting God himself.” In early Christian representations the hand of God reaching through the veil is grasped by the initiate or human spirit who is being caught up into the presence of the Lord. Philo of Alexandria, who for all his philosophizing had a thorough knowledge of Jewish customs, compares all the hangings of the tabernacle with the main veil. “But in a sense the curtains are also veils, not only because they cover the roof and the walls but because they are woven of the same kinds of material.” They represent the cosmos.

As I said before, the yearly rite of atonement included the teshuvah, a return to God, repentance. The prophets repeatedly invite Israel to return to God who is waiting with open arms to receive them if they will only repent (Jeremiah 3:14; Leviticus 16:30). They not only return and are welcomed in but they also sit down. That is the yeshiva, which means “a sitting, a rest, a settling, a dwelling with, a session, a council, a court.” All meanings are combined in the yeshivāh shel ma’ālah, the heaven where the angels and the souls of the righteous are believed to dwell, a place of divine justice to which all will be summoned. The root yāšahb has the basic meaning of sitting or settling down to live in a place. You have a place because you have returned home.

All this we find in the Book of Mormon. Along with the embrace already mentioned, we have the formula “have place” in exactly the same sense—“a place on my right hand” (Alma 5:25; Enos 1:17). We are quoting Enos, Alma, Moses, etc. “There is a place prepared for you.” Thus Nephi promises Zoram: “Therefore, if thou wilt go down into the wilderness to my father thou shalt have place with us” (1 Nephi 4:34). Of course, when

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you enter a tent everyone must say “ahlan wa-sahlan wa-marhaban.” Ahl means a tent or a family; it’s the same word. You are a member of the family. Sahl means “all in good faith,” and marhaban means “we will make a place for you.” It’s the compulsory greeting and the normal one.

This is the metaphor that Alma uses combining the teshûvāh and the yeshivāh in the proper order: “Behold, my brethren, do ye suppose that such an one can have a place to sit down in the kingdom of God, with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob, and also all the holy prophets, whose garments are cleansed and are spotless, pure and white?” (Alma 5:24). Well, that’s another one. Need we recall that it’s on the Day of Atonement that the priest entered the tent, that the people’s garments were all made white by the atoning sacrifice of the Lamb.

We don’t have any more time now, but this fifth chapter [is very important]. I’ve heard people actually say that the Book of Mormon can’t contain the fullness of the gospel because it doesn’t have anything about the temple in it. Well, don’t fool yourself. It has all the ordinances in it, in their old form. This is an interesting thing because with the destruction of Jerusalem in the time of Lehi these rites disappeared and were never renewed again. The second temple didn’t have this, so the Nephite people preserved it. They preserved the rites in their old form, not in the later form. That’s what we have in the Book of Mormon.
Now, we’re on the fifth chapter of Alma. These papers are really something. If it hadn’t been for the computer, I would be far ahead. I would have finished it [a book] years ago. With everything else I’ve ever done, I’ve not only used no computer, but I’ve never had a secretary. Every single word I have typed myself on every book, and it’s gone swimmingly. Now I have a secretary and a computer, and it takes four years to do what I could have done in one very easily alone. That’s the progress of science.

Now here’s the situation we have in Alma 5. Both Alma and his father had been having a constant struggle, as you know, to keep the Nephites in the path of duty. They were always drifting away, as Israel does. Could they [the two Almas] be to blame? Were they too severe? You notice both of them are overstrict. In the first place, Alma Senior [may have] made his own son rebellious, and the same thing with Mosiah. Perhaps they were being too strict because the kids went off and went overboard.

Remember when he ran away from King Noah and went out and founded the church on the teachings of Abinadi (and you know what kind of a fire-eater Abinadi was), it was very strict. It was the strict, austere brotherhood of Qumran, or it was nothing. He always insisted that that’s the way the church would be. And he no sooner got the church started in cooperation with Mosiah than what happened? People started drifting away in large numbers, as a matter of fact. First it was in the outskirts of different settlements with which he wasn’t too often in contact. He didn’t even know what was going on. What kind of a leader is this? And people, as I say, were becoming disaffected in large numbers and it got worse and worse. They started walking out in droves. Then Nehor put himself at the head of this movement. He took advantage of it for a more easygoing, a more relaxed, a more permissive church. That’s what he wanted. It became popular and remained the more popular church. But must the church be that strict? It probably must.

Then we see next that Amlici capitalized on that. He wanted to go to the other extreme and with a disaffected group formed a party to make him king. It wasn’t quite strong enough, but it was a very serious threat; you see that. Alma was able to check it and overcome him in a hand-to-hand combat, but did it go back to normal? No, they didn’t go back to normal. That’s what we get here. In this chapter he decides on a general reformation; this is a long chapter. He goes out to the outskirts in the next two chapters after that. He goes to the people of Gideon, and then he goes to the people of Melek and Ammonihah and tries to do the same thing. He is refounding the order of things to establish it exactly in the pattern as was done in the first. It’s the law of Moses he’s following very strictly, as we read later on. It was strictly the law of Moses.

So he celebrated the covenant, just exactly as Benjamin did in a great renewal at the coronation rite—renewing the covenant, renewing the state, the society, and the creation.
of the world. This is one of the best-known phenomena of ancient history now. It wasn’t a few years ago, but I’ve been yelling about it for years. As is well known, this is a stock theme. It’s a rehearsing of the creation, the refounding, the rebirth of the human race. It’s the natality, it is the refounding of the kingdom, it’s universal. Everybody is reborn and receives a new name on a particular day, which is the new year—it’s gauged by the sun. And it [this ceremony] is very conspicuous in the documents, and only within the last three or four years, the anthropologists have latched onto it. Finally when they catch up to it, it has become very obvious. You can see that. And this is a very basic theme.

I notice the three principal anthropologists writing about this now. They’ve all got into the act, and they’re talking about primitive societies. This is universal. Van Gennep’s theory is that society has to regenerate itself by rites of passage. You know what a rite of passage is—the rite of passage into the other world. Then you have to get passage to come back. That’s what they’re talking about now. There are two worlds. You go to the one, and then you come back refreshed and renewed to your old world and begin a new cycle of life. This is what they’re saying today. Well, it’s been obvious for a hundred years, but they didn’t notice it. They’ve been following Frazier instead, which is a very different pattern.

Well, Van Gennep’s theory is regeneration by rites of passage. He says it sometimes takes the form of rites of death and rebirth. And Victor Turner says the rites all apply to the society and don’t affect the individual at all. The society first separates itself from its former life. That is what you do when you drive out a scapegoat, etc. You purge yourself of what you were before. They separate themselves from their former life. Then there’s what he calls the transition; and then there’s the reincorporation when you come back to ordinary life and you’re good for a new period.

Finally the third one, Edmund Leach, says, “Each festival shifts from the ordinary community to the sacred order and back again.” It’s sacralization, separation from the secular of this world. There’s transition, and then there is what he calls “marginal time.” It’s all in terms of time. You go into another time. You go into marginal time, and that’s your transition. Then you come back again to desacralization, the aggregation as a new beginning of secular time. Well, they like to use all this gobbledygook, etc. It has been staring us in the face for a hundred years, and finally they have made it a great discovery. They like to theorize, etc. It’s funny because they’re dealing supposedly with the most simple, primitive people, to which they feel vastly superior—but who were vastly superior to them. The recent work of Levi-Strauss, the famous anthropologist, shows this. It was fifteen years ago now that he wrote his revolutionary work on primitive man. Well, they weren’t primitive at all. He says they knew an awful lot more than the anthropologists who come to study them. And it’s true; they did. The anthropologists didn’t know that.

For four years I shared an office with Morris Opler, who was the president of the American Archaeological Association. Every Thursday Hoyer (they were Indian men) would come out from UCLA, and we would listen to records and talk about this sort of thing. Anyway, Aristotle’s point of view is that the observer is always superior to the observed. If I’m looking at a bug or a leaf or something like that, I’m superior. If I study you as an anthropologist, then I am the superior mind. I’m viewing an inferior object because I have you in my power. You are whatever I say you are. It is enormous vanity—that Chicago School and Ruth Benedict and those people. We won’t go into that. That was before your time, fortunately.
What makes the theories different from *The Golden Bough* of Frazier, as I said before, is the fundamental idea of two worlds. That’s what they all recognize—that you go to the other world and then you come back to this one. They recognize two worlds. The Hopis have the four worlds, but it’s just the other world and this world. There is a Jewish girl, who is a very good anthropologist, Nadia abu Zahara. She’s made a study of basic rain rituals from Morocco to Afghanistan, especially in North Africa with which she is familiar. All the way from Morocco to Afghanistan, you find rain is the main subject because it is desert country. Their rites are very elaborate, but absolutely identical with the Hopis. That’s true. They go through the very same sort of thing. But it has to do with this fundamental idea of two worlds, and it’s nowhere better expressed than in the Koran. The Arabs have a marvelous idea about this. There is the *‘alam al-shahida* and the *‘alam al-ghayb*. They are both very rich roots, and they both mean the same thing. The word *shahida* means “to be present.” A *shahid* is a witness; *shahada* is “evidence, a testimony, to behold, to witness personally.” But the basic meaning of *shahida* is to be present on the scene and see what’s going on. So the *‘alam al-shahida* is the world to which you can bear testimony by your own personal experience. You can only bear testimony to so much, no more, no less. What you’ve experienced is real to you, and naturally you assume that’s the only world. But then there is the *‘alam al-ghayb*. We find all words in Arabic that begin with a *gh* have to do with a covering. If you say, *ughm® alayhi*, meaning “he passed out or fainted,” literally it means “there was a covering over him.” The *‘alam al-ghayb* is the world behind the veil. The basic word *ghayb* is to be absent, not to be there. See, this means to be present and know what’s going on. This is to be both absent and not know. It means confusion, vagueness, and dimness; it means “the other world, the other side, something beyond our ken.” They call it “the infinite world, the vast world, the world that’s unknown to us.”

The Egyptians put it very nicely: Their word for everything is *nt.t iwt.t*—all that which is and all that which is not. All that which is all that I know about; but if I’m going to include everything, it has to include a lot of things I don’t know. It’s just possible there’s something I don’t know that exists. And of course the *iwt.t*, the part you don’t know about, is vastly greater than the other. Now the world that God knows about, and the world that you know about are two totally different things. You know that. So we’re living in the *‘alam al-shahida*, and reality would be the *‘alam al-ghayb*.

The purpose of these festivals is [to give you a look at the other world]. They all have these festivals, and this is true in Islam, too. That’s what our temple does, you see. You get a peek behind the veil; you go into the other world. You try to make yourself intimate. You ease yourself into a vaster life and nearer to reality. That’s all that physics is trying to do today. It’s getting so far out now. You’ve heard of Peter Higgs and his *boson*. Everybody is looking for it; they’re spending hundreds of millions of dollars in Europe and here. Stanford is competing with Cal Tech on it, they tell me, trying to discover the Higgs *boson*. It’s namely this: After all the particles are considered and everything else, there is one vast enclosing essence or particle (or whatever it is—it’s one field) that accounts for everything. Its force produces all the particles. Peter Higgs in Edinburgh suggested it; he didn’t discover it. They’re looking for it, and they’re spending hundreds of millions of dollars to discover that ultimate particle, an ultimate field of force—the ultimate one that will be the real one and will explain all the others. And they say, “Well in a few years we’ll know everything.” They’ve said that before.
It’s exactly what we have here. [Arabs] go to Mecca, and we go to the temple. At BYU we have to teach religion to everybody.

President Harris established the Four-Point program for bringing Near Eastern students over here, so we got a flood of Moslem students here at BYU in the forties and fifties. And they had to take religion, so they took Book of Mormon. I taught the only Book of Mormon class [for them]. In one class I had nine students from Mecca. They had been brought here by a \textit{\textit{tawwâf}}. A \textit{tawwâf} is a person who accompanies you. He’s your \textit{paralemptor}. When you go through the temples, or when you go through the rites, you have somebody standing at your elbow telling you to give the right answers and what to do so you won’t make any mistakes. He was the \textit{tawwâf} from Mecca and knew all that, and he was so excited about the gospel. He brought all these friends from Mecca, of all things. The thing that surprised me more than anything else was that none of them had ever seen a camel. Now anybody from Egypt or from Palestine has seen camels all over the place, but these people from Mecca had never seen camels. Isn’t that amazing? Well, that’s another story.

No, we’re talking about the same thing here. We’re all in the same boat, and it’s a very interesting thing. The Koran expresses it well in this here. So this is what you have in Alma 4, 5, 6, and 7 here. They have to do with the Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Professor Popper used to explain that. The \textit{kippur} means “the covering of your sins, the day of covering.” But Yom Kippur is a rededication, the Day of Atonement, at-one-ment, becoming one with God again. We’ve been separated from God, we’ve been cast out, we have sinned (the Fall in the Garden). We must get back again into the presence of God, and that is \textit{at-one-ment}, which you write \textit{atonement}. It surprises people to know that \textit{atonement} is not a Latin or Greek word. It is a genuine Old English word, and it means just what it says, \textit{at-one-ment}. It’s been replaced now in the Bible by \textit{reconciliation}, as mentioned before, which means “come back to a person and sit down with him again.”

And so we have these rededications everywhere. For example, ten days before Yom Kippur, every night (if you’re pious enough) you have to go to the synagogue and pray the \textit{selihôt} prayer at midnight, which is a prayer of repentance. You repent for the ten days preceding it. It’s a great time of repentance and change so you can go back and be reunited with God at Yom Kippur.

The oldest Egyptian document that we have is the \textit{Shabako Stone}. The twenty-fifth dynasty was founded either by Shabako or Kashta, but Shabako is responsible for the stone. He renovated the Temple of Menes which was built to celebrate the founding of the first dynasty of Egypt, which represented the founding of the world and the creation. It was the creation story, the drama of Adam and Eve in the Garden, the outcasting, the processes, the ordinances by which you return to the presence of God, and finally the veil. Well, this is in the \textit{Shabako Stone}. We often refer to it in classes because it’s come in for a lot of recent study. Shabako was an Ethiopian who founded the twenty-fifth dynasty, and he wanted to set off his dynasty in style. There were thirty-one dynasties, and every one of them had to be a refounding of the world. This is necessary to show the universality of these things, so forgive me. When they were renovating the temple, it was like when they were renovating the Nauvoo House. They found the Oliver Cowdery text of the Book of Mormon in the cornerstone. And this was found in the cornerstone of the Temple of Menes going way back 5,000 years ago. What would be better than to use this for the
temple drama, the creation story? This is what they wanted, so at the top he [Shabako] says he caused it to be copied, etc. But everything now was going to be done exactly as it was then, but better than it was before. So they went through and rehearsed all this stuff.

In Rome they had the Restitutio Orbis, the restitution of the universe, of the world. The orbis is the earth or the city, but the orbis represents the world, just as the temple does at Jerusalem. And in 274 A.D. when things were badly run down, the emperor Aurelian wanted to turn everything around with his great conquests in the Near East, etc. So he celebrated the Restitutio Orbis, everything being made new and fresh, though that’s supposed to happen every new year anyway at the festival of Janus.

And the Greeks called it the eniautos. “Here we are again; we’ve come full circle.” Of course, our ancestors called this celebration the Yule. In Israel the Yom Kippur is the Yule, which is just the word wheel—it goes round and round. In Arabic the word is ħāla. Leo Wiener, Norbert Wiener’s father, has written extensively on this, and the Grimms also. In Arabic ħāla means “the wheel turned a complete turning.” We’re back where we started. We say the wheel is the Yule, and they roll wheels down the hill and do all sorts of things with the Yule. The Yule is where you complete the circle and you come back again. That’s what it means. So you get this completion of the circle, etc. That’s what we’re going to have here [in Alma], a refounding—every Day of Atonement is supposed to be this.

Notice how it starts out. He emphasizes that it is the first. Verse 2: “And these are the words which he spake to the people in the church which was established.” It is a formal rite he’s talking about. These are the words with which he established it. In the next verse he says “he began to establish the church in the land” beginning with an ordinance, baptism, it says here. Before you enter the temple you’re washed.

Alma 5:4: “And behold, I say unto you, they were delivered out of the hands of the people of king Noah, by the mercy and power of God [and he gives them a history of their bondage], . . . brought into this land, and here we began to establish the church of God throughout this land also.” He was introducing everything anew here, and he was reestablishing—there must be a stirring below. Do you remember the captivity of your fathers? This is so very interesting because the first Dead Sea Scroll discovered was the Serekh Scroll, the Manual of Discipline, their Doctrine and Covenants, which told exactly why they were out there and what they were doing. It begins right like this: On the first day all the candidates for the ordinance will meet together in a meeting. The first thing they were told was how their fathers were led out of Egypt and their sufferings and all they went through and how they’d been delivered. It’s exactly this speech that he gives us here in the Serekh Scroll. So I’ll write in the margin “1QS” here, the Serekh Scroll.

Verse 6: “Have you sufficiently retained in remembrance the captivity of your fathers? . . . [and how] he has delivered their souls from hell? Behold, he changed their hearts [see, we’re going into a new life here; it’s going to be a rebirth]. . . . They were in the midst of darkness; nevertheless, their souls were illuminated by the light of the everlasting word.” I said before that goes back to the mysteries, but the mysteries are very secondary here. This is always the festival of light; it’s always held at sunrise. It’s the rising of the sun in the new year; you date it by that. When the sun comes up, you’re in a new age, a new cycle has begun, and the sun has come again.
Verse 7: “Their souls were illuminated by the light of the everlasting word; yea, they were encircled about by the bands of death, and the chains of hell, and an everlasting destruction did await them.” Instead they’re going to be encircled, as we said, by the kappōret, by the arms of God when he welcomes them into the tent after he has parted the veil. The priest says they have passed the test, they have purified themselves, they have repented, etc. Then he says, “Let Israel enter my presence,” and they come into the tent. The kappōret is the veil that he parts in the tent.

Verse 9: “And again I ask, were the bands of death broken and the chains of hell which encircled them about, were they loosed? [Notice, he keeps talking about this encircling—to be encircled by the bands of death, encircled by the chains of hell.] . . . Their souls did expand, and they did sing redeeming love.” Now here we have the song of redeeming love, which is a very interesting thing. Remember, these rites were last performed in Lehi’s generation. After that, Jerusalem was destroyed. Well, it was rebuilt again, but they [the Jews] never restored these rites again. This is where you have to go (to the Book of Mormon) for the old rites the way they were performed. And this is the way we find them in the law of Moses, too. So he says here the soul did sing, and he’s going to mention the song of redeeming love a little later here. It’s an interesting thing.

Verse 10: “And now I ask of you on what conditions are they saved?” Are you ready to enter? This parallels Benjamin’s speech which was given at the new year. The people had all come to the temple. They were camping, as they should, with their tents facing the temple. We don’t get this from the Bible; we get this from Nathan the Babylonian who was present at a coronation of the prince of the captivity many years after the destruction of Jerusalem. But he described exactly how it used to be carried out, and of course that’s what we find in Mosiah. Now here’s another repetition. He’s refounding. Alma was desperate, and he was going to establish everything all over again. The Jews are used to this business of getting a new start. “And now I ask of you on what conditions are they saved? Yea, what grounds had they to hope for salvation? What is the cause of their being loosed from the bands of death and also the chains of hell?” There he goes again. We’re in the darkness. It’s this: First you have to believe in the words, and he asks them, “Did not my father Alma believe in the words which were delivered by the mouth of Abinadi?” The whole movement began when Alma started to believe the words of Abinadi. Verse 12: “And according to his faith there was a mighty change wrought in his heart. [And thirdly:] . . . he preached the word unto your fathers, and a mighty change was also wrought in their hearts.” His heart was changed, and then he changed others. He’s giving a lot of credit to his father here.

Now we said it was the birth day, and with the Romans it was a universal day. It was the same thing in Egypt, for example. Everybody who was born on the same day as the Pharaoh had a birthday identified with him. He could go live in the palace with him or anything like that. And in Egypt everybody dated his own birthday not from the day he was born, but from the day the Pharaoh assumed the throne. That was the beginning of years. In the Western world we call it the Natalis, the great birthday. Everybody is born. That’s the Saturnalia when everybody celebrates, etc.

Here it is: “Have ye spiritually been born of God? [See, this is your birthday, you have now been spiritually born.] Have ye received his image in your countenances?” Now you’ll notice that this chapter and the next, but especially this one, is extremely rich in the most powerful imagery of the atonement rites. They’re full of vivid imagery. He mixes
them very freely, and the people understand what he means. This is very characteristic. So he starts out with this image here, and see what happens now. Verse 15: “Do you look forward with an eye of faith [see, there’s an image] . . . to stand before God to be judged . . . [another image].” But it’s more than an image; it’s a reality in the future, because now he starts talking about imagination. Notice verse 16: “I say unto you, can you imagine to yourselves that ye hear the voice of the Lord . . . ?” In verse 17 he says “Or do ye imagine to yourselves that ye can lie unto the Lord in that day . . . ?” In verse 18: “Or otherwise, can ye imagine yourselves brought before the tribunal of God?”

Notice each verse begins with the word imagine. Can you imagine this? Progressively, you imagine. Well, is it legitimate to imagine? Are you cheating if you imagine too much? Is all that we have of the gospel just imagination? Are we just making it up? We think it’s very real to us. These are the stations. You can imagine you hear the voice of the Lord. Before you can carry out any operation, you must visualize it. You must imagine it, no matter what it’s going to be. So there’s nothing wrong with imagining things—you have to. Where does history exist? One hundred percent in imagination. Did I read to you out of Stephen Hawking’s book on that? I should have brought that along. I’ll bring it next time. It’s a very good one. He says there’s nothing in science. It’s just pure imagination, nothing else. He says you’ll never be able to prove any of this; it’s just the structure of your own mind. He feels it very strongly. In his condition, one would, I suppose.

Verse 16: “Can you imagine to yourselves that ye hear the voice of the Lord, saying unto you, in that day: Come unto me ye blessed, for behold, your works have been the works of righteousness upon the face of the earth?” That would be wonderful. “Or do ye imagine to yourselves that ye can lie unto the Lord in that day, and say—Lord, our works have been righteous works upon the face of the earth—and that he will save you?” He’ll believe you? No, you can’t do that. The first alternative is to be righteous, the second is to try to bluff it and say you were righteous. Then third, “. . . can ye imagine yourselves brought before the tribunal of God with your souls filled with guilt and remorse, having a remembrance of all your guilt, yea, a perfect remembrance of all your wickedness?” Very vivid. You can imagine that. You can imagine it right now, he says. You do have a remembrance of your guilt, as far as that goes, and it will come back more quickly, of course, in the presence of God.

Verse 19: “I say unto you, can ye look up to God at that day with a pure heart and clean hands? . . . Can you look up, having the image of God [notice he started out, ‘have you received the image in your countenance?’] engraven upon your countenance?” It’s the same thing you began with. In other words, this is a real at-one-ment, when you’re united with God and, like the Father and Son, are exactly alike, a perfect correspondence. It’s not unio mystica or anything like that, but becoming exactly alike. Of course, a problem arises if everybody looks exactly alike. We don’t really have a model of perfection. Is it blond? Is it brunette? When you have a beauty contest, what are the rules you have to follow? The girl that wins has something that the others don’t have. It’s not measurements. I mean you can measure with a caliper until the cows come home and you’re not going to establish beauty that way, are you? If we all look alike, if there is a standard, I mean. I’d like to be much taller than I am, for example. That would be nice. But I don’t need to be. It doesn’t break my heart or anything like that. Around here everybody’s tall, so it’s nothing to be proud of anymore. When I walk down the street in Athens, I feel great because I’m as tall as anybody. But then I cross the border into Yugoslavia, and I’m a runt. I feel terrible, so I’d better get back to Athens.
Well, that’s the way it is. Well, what is it then? We all wear the same basic white. What could be simpler? It wasn’t the clothing. Moroni was dressed in nothing but a white [robe], and that was it. Joseph says very clearly you could see that was all; he didn’t need any more. He didn’t need a protective garment; he was not in this wicked world. He was not in this dangerous place. But what’s the difference? Well, you notice as people excel in certain things, they get to be more alike and more different. You take the greatest scientists or the greatest composers or the greatest painters. Composers are usually the best to deal with. With Bach that is about as far as you could go. That’s perfection. Then Beethoven comes along—the man who liberated music supposedly—and he’s great, too. He shares Bach’s grandeur and greatness, but is totally different. Bach would have never written like that, and he never would have written like Bach. Then along comes Brahms. He’s not a bit like the other two, but he has that same stature, that same greatness goes with it, that element of sublimity. We have a very interesting book on Brahms—how very religious he was and how deeply he prayed before he ever composed anything like that. And Bach the same thing. Those men were all deeply religious. The point is the more alike they become in stature, the more different they become in nature. So the great ones never founded a school. There’s not a school of Bach or a school of Beethoven, but there are plenty of minor composers you can think of that have founded schools. Diabelli would be a good example. As they say, as you become more enlightened, you become more yourself and absolutely more unique. It’s an amazing thing. The Father and the Son look so much alike you can’t tell the difference between them. We don’t know about their [differences]. We know in our case. And, of course, there’s no room for jealousy, because why should the Father be jealous of the Son, or the Son jealous of the Father? I mean greatness recognizes and glories in greatness. You love to see someone that can do better than you can. That’s the way it should be done. That’s a thrilling thing, instead of the petty envy, etc. In science there’s jealous rivalry. There are half a dozen Nobel Prize winners with a difference of ten or fifteen minutes between who gets the Nobel Prize—the one who phoned his findings in first—and who’s forgotten forever. This has happened on more than one occasion.

But we go on; [Alma] is talking about this. As I said, this is very rich imagery. You can imagine these things, and then he says [verse 21]: “There can no man be saved except his garments be washed white; yea, his garments must be purified until they are cleansed from all stain, through the blood of him of whom it has been spoken by our fathers.” Now there is a strange paradox: Washed in the blood of the lamb. Have your garments been washed white in his blood? Well, how can blood wash garments white is the point? If you have ever attended a kosher slaughter, you know that the priest has to wear his priestly robes, the rabbi, though he does not have authority. No Cohen or Levite can establish his priesthood today; they don’t have the genealogy. But still he puts on the robes, and when he cuts the throat of the beast he becomes completely spattered with blood. There’s no way of avoiding it because it has to be hung upside down. All the blood has to run out. When he makes that first cut, there’s a terrific spurt of blood, and he gets spattered.

After they have performed this rite and slain the pascal lamb, then Aaron and his sons appear before the people with their garments splattered with blood, which shows that the atonement has been made. The blood has been shed, after the similitude. That means that the people’s own blood has been washed white. This is explained here, how blood can wash you clean. He’s going to tell us. Notice that your garments are stained with filth; they’re bloody. That’s the blood that’s washed out. Notice the difference here: “. . . cleansed from all stain, through the blood of [the lamb].” And the next verse says, “And now I ask of you, my brethren, how will any of you feel, if ye shall stand before the bar of God, having
your garments [not cleansed] stained with blood and all manner of filthiness?” So we have two kinds of stained garments; the one is the blood and filthiness that stains your own garment. He says the blood will testify against you. We are guilty of what we assent to. We may not have shed very much blood, but we are all guilty of what we assent to. We all pay the same half shekel. It’s a very interesting that everybody must pay a sin tax, a tax for sin, on the Day of Atonement. But the interesting point is you don’t know how to valuate sin. Who is more guilty than the other? There’s no way of knowing that, how guilty a person really is. So everybody must pay, whether it’s a woman, child, rich, poor; it makes no difference. Everyone must pay exactly the same amount, because only God knows who the real sinners are. So everybody pays the half shekel. Everybody has sinned some, so everyone must pay a half shekel, not more and not less. That puts us on an equal footing. But as far as giving an appraisal value to sins, we can’t do that, like the Jesuits did in their doctrine of probabilism. We won’t go into that now. But he says here, “washed white through the blood of the lamb,” and this is it.

This reminds you of the two serpents. Remember, in the wilderness the people were bitten by serpents and were dying. They were stinging serpents. So Moses raised a bronze serpent on a staff, and all who looked upon the serpent lived. Well, the serpent healed [the bite of] the serpent. Have you noticed on the staff of a physician, on the caduceus, the medical staff has two serpents intertwined. The Greeks tell us that Hermes was the founder of the medical profession. That was of Egypt, the Egyptian Hermes Thoth. The two serpents are both copulating serpents because they beget, but they are also opposing each other. The one kills, the other heals. The two must be intertwined because it must be the coincidentia oppositorum that brings things to a balance. So you have the two serpents. [As for] the serpents in the wilderness—as they were killed by the serpents, so they were healed by the serpents. We’re told the same thing about the hyssop, and here’s the same thing. As they got the bloody filth on their garments, so by the blood on the priest’s garments [they were atoned]. Notice it says the blood on our garments testifies. We’re told in Leviticus and Deuteronomy that when the priest and his sons come out, having performed the sacrifice, their garments are spattered with this blood. That blood testifies that the sacrifice has been made, and the other garments are washed clean. The other blood is off then. So there’s no contradiction in having garments washed clean by the blood of the Lamb. It testifies that they have been cleansed. Of course, we say this is all symbolic, but these symbols were very real to these people. Alma 5:21: It’s the Lamb’s blood on the garment of the high priest that makes your garment white. So that’s what he’s talking about here. Notice this rich symbolism. It will testify against you. We can’t apportion guilt, because we’re all guilty. We must all be purified. All our lives we have to repent.

Notice again he says in verse 23: “Behold will they not testify that ye are murderers [remember, carnal, sensual, and devilish], yea, and also that ye are guilty of all manner of wickedness? [Well, we are]. Now we come to the teshûvåh and the yeshîvåh. Here is the yeshîvåh. See, you have to have your garments cleansed before you can come into the tent and sit down. That’s what the priest testifies, that they’ve done the rites. Then he says you can come in. But you have to be cleansed, and notice that’s what he talks about here [in verse 24]: “Behold, my brethren, do ye suppose that such an one can have a place to sit down in the kingdom of God, with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob . . . whose garments are cleansed and are spotless, pure and white?” You have to cleanse your garments before you can come into the tent and sit down. As I say, it’s called the yeshîvåh, a very important part of the Yom Kippur, the sitting down by the side of God.
That’s why it’s translated now in the new Revised Version [of the Bible] as reconciliation. In the Latin, reconcilios was spelled originally with s. Re means again, con means with, sedere means to sit down again with. Reconcilio means “sitting down as in a council, conciliate and giving counsel.” Then you can come in the tent and sit down with them. Nephi used that expression. He went into the tent of the Lord when he was fleeing from his enemies and asked for the Lord to protect him and put his garment over his shoulder. That’s what happened there.

Then he goes on here in verse 25: “I say unto you, Nay: except ye make our Creator a liar from the beginning, or suppose that he is a liar from the beginning, ye cannot suppose that such can have place in the kingdom of heaven.” That’s the other expression. You will sit down, which is aylan wa-sahlan, and you will have place; marhaban is the wide place. No, the opposite of atonement is to be cast out, to be rejected, “but they shall be cast out for they are the children of the kingdom of the devil.” You are cast out into that other kingdom here. Remember, this “have place” [idea]. When Nephi grabbed Zoram and held him tight, he said down to him, come down to my father’s tent and you can have place with us. You can be members of the family, and you’re in [paraphrased]. But if you’re rejected, this is what happens. You’re cast out into the outer darkness, into the desert night, because you’re children of the kingdom of the devil.

Verse 26: “And now behold, I say unto you, my brethren, if ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now?” Now this song of redeeming love is something interesting because this is found elsewhere. Archaeologists have found it. [Paraphrasing a Jewish archaeologist:] The oldest known synagogue is the ruin of Dura Europos, discovered in 1932. It was preserved perfectly by the sand since A.D. 256 when it was destroyed and covered up. The focal point of the assembly hall was the niche which was originally behind the veil. (The Torah Scroll which was behind the veil). That is the synagogue equivalent of the Holy of Holies. Immediately above the niche was painted a great tree rising nearly to the ceiling, a vine tree without grapes. There is a table and a cup (of course this is the vine in the Book of Mormon). According to the Jewish scholars, “the tree led to the great throne above,” under the high ceiling. On the panel immediately above the niche on one side of the tree is depicted the great sacrifice, the sacrifice of Isaac, the qêdâd—the because Isaac permitted himself to be sacrificed. Qêdâd means the binding; he allowed himself to be bound, therefore that was an atoning sacrifice for the Day of Atonement. “On the other side we see Jacob blessing his twelve sons. Some lions had been painted over to accommodate the picture, but there are animals in it. Another panel shows [Jacob] blessing Ephraim and Manasseh in the presence of [Joseph].1 So we’re getting all these Book of Mormon motifs.

Along with the Old Testament figures, we see felines and masks of Dionysius and fertility symbols of Demeter (what are Dionysius and Demeter doing there? They have to be there.) In the midst of the tree are mingled various bird and animals. Above them there sits Orpheus, very conspicuously playing his harp. His music brings all things into love and harmony—that’s the business of Orpheus. A Jewish scholar suggests he may represent David here “who saved Israel through his music.” Music is certainly the theme. Every figure in the elaborate display is facing the viewer full face, and they seem to have their mouths open as if they are all singing together. The Orphic motifs are found in other

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1 Taken from Brother Nibley’s article, “The Meaning of the Atonement,” in Approaching Zion, CWHN 9 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1989), 554–614.
synagogues as well, but how does this pagan theme of Orpheus relate to the Day of Atonement? The connection is found in the Hebrew word for the *kappûre†*, or mercy seat for the Day of Atonement. In Greek, both the Old Testament Septuagint and the New Testament, the *kappûre†* is called the *hilasterion*, the place of the *hilaria*. In both Greek and Latin it’s called the *hilasterion*. That is the tent that the priest goes up to where the veil is parted. It’s called in the New Testament in all the Greek translations, of all things, by this word *hilasterion*. That’s the place where the *hilaria* is held. Our word *hilarious* comes from that. *Hilarion* is a word used by Paul for *atonement* in his address to the Romans, since the Romans would understand it.

The Roman writer Macrobius in the *Saturnalia* (the *Saturnalia* is the equivalent of the Day of Atonement and of Yom Kippur for the Romans, and it’s very old; it goes back to archaic times) tells us that [the *hilaria* was held] at the spring equinox to celebrate the revival of life with a new vegetation year—all life is renewed. The *Dea Mater*, the great mother goddess, and *Attis* preside, he says, the very figures we find at Dura Europos. You find Demeter and her son, Attis Dionysus, at Dura Europos [and] in the other synagogues. Why do they put these pagan figures in there? Because it’s the *hilasterion*. [Macrobius] says [the *Dea Mater and Attis* are] the very figures we find at Dura Europos as Dionysius and Demeter, the latter drawn by her lions. Another Roman tells us that on that occasion Orpheus was regarded as the king of the *primum regnum*, the primal god and creator, first king ruler, begetter of the human family. The *hilaria* was the occasion on which all the world joined in the great creation hymn, as they burst into a spontaneous song of praise recalling the first creation.

See, that’s where our word *poem* comes from. That means *creation*. The Greek *poiema* means the *creation hymn*. Walter Otto has written a book on this subject called *Die Musen*. At the beginning and founding of the world, each of the muses represented one department of knowledge, and matter, etc. They all sang together the great creation hymn, which we read about in Job “when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.” That’s the creation hymn, and you find it everywhere. It’s very important. So the *hilaria* was the occasion when all the world joined the great creation hymn, when they burst into a spontaneous song of praise recalling the first creation. That song of creation has left its mark throughout the literature of the ancient world everywhere.

Now about the mingling of pagan with Jewish symbols in the early art. Notice how rich [the symbols are in the Book of Mormon]. Alma doesn’t draw back at the most sumptuous symbolism here—he just throws it all over the place. It’s to be accepted at face value, too—that’s literal and what isn’t. The mingling of pagan with [Jewish and] Christian symbols in the early art of the synagogue and church, which was very common, was long discounted as “purely decorative.” The Jews just put this in for decorative purposes, [they claimed]. Why would they bring these pagan symbols right into the synagogue just to decorate it? This explanation was soon discredited by the evidence. As Goodenough sees it, “Dura presented its Old Testament scenes clustered about a great vine over the Torah shrine, a vine in which Orpheus played his lyre to the animals, while numerous other pagan symbols appear in various parts of the room. The two, the pagan symbols and the Old Testament illustrations, could not be separated.” And they can’t be separated in Alma, either.

Well, now here is some stuff I just added here [in the same article]. The Apostolic Constitutions, if not the oldest, is one of the earliest Christian writings to appear after the days of the apostles. It mingles early Jewish and Christian formulas (Judeo-Christianity) with strong predominance of the Jewish. Here the bishop leads the congregation in the litany, praising the “Creator and Savior, rich in love, long suffering; who leads the chorus of mercy; always mindful of the salvation of thy creatures…. The rolling sea…. sustaining countless forms of life…. instructs all thy creatures to shout: ‘How exalted are thy works, O Lord!’ All things hast thou created in wisdom,… the holy Seraphim along with the Cherubim;… with unwearied voices cry, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts.’”

It’s the old Hebrew trishagion (Isaiah quotes this hymn, too, in Isaiah 6:3) as all Israel in the Church unite their voices “and the powers below heaven sing,” as the stars join in “this Hymn of the cosmos to God’s bounty and love.” It’s the hymn of redeeming love. See, this is the time of the at-one-ment, when the two worlds come together, we were talking about. They fuse now in this glorious music, and all the lights and other effects. Well, he says, “Israel, thy earthly church,…. gathered together in one [it’s the assembly] by the powers under heaven by day and night with a full heart and willing spirit sings the hymn.” The four elements join in. “The creatures praise Him who gave them the breath of life, and the trees Him who caused them to spring up. Whatsoever things exist by thy word testify to the might of thy power. Hence, it behooves every man to feel in his heart to send up a song to thee through Christ for the sake of all; for thou art kind in thy benefactions and generous in thy compassions.”

We have Alma asking here in Alma 5:26: “If ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now?” And here we’re told in the Apostolic Constitutions, “it behooves every man to feel in his heart to send up a song to thee [to feel to sing the song of redeeming love] through Christ for the sake of all; for thou art kind in thy benefactions and generous in thy compassions.” And that’s the way Alma describes it. “My brethren, if ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now?”

And John tells us [about it] in Revelation [14:3]; he’s the closest, you see, “And they sung as it were a new song before the throne .…. and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.” You have to be qualified. And so he goes on, and we have the song of redeeming love. Then [Alma] says again in the next verse that it is necessary to be humble for this and to have your garments cleansed and made white. Verse 28: “Behold, are you stripped of pride?” This is very important, you see. This is the metaphor. Notice that the white garments signify humility, because they don’t put on any display or anything like that, and purity because they’re white. “Are you stripped of pride?” means you put your pride off; that’s another metaphor. Pride is [displayed in] costly apparel, as we read a little later on. In verses 54 and 55 of this chapter it tells us that’s what pride is. We’re stripped of pride here with that garment.

Verse 29: “Behold, I say, is there one among you who is not stripped of envy [this idea of taking off your old finery]? Again I say unto you, is there one among you that doth make

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3. Apostolic Constitutions VII, 35.
a mock of his brother?” This is equality. Mock no one. We say, “No one is perfect.” We like to say that. That’s an easy thing; it lets everybody off the hook. But remember, that means that everybody has something seriously lacking. We’re all seriously faulted, you see, when you say no one is perfect. And we’re all short of it in every case. In fact, that is the theme of that marvelous writing, The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith. It’s been years since they used that in priesthood, but it’s the best manual in the world. That’s the theme Joseph is always hitting at—how far we are from perfection, and he’s as far as anybody else. He says we’ve got to get that through our thick heads, that we’re all seriously defective. That’s why we have the gospel, that’s why it has to be so strict. That’s what Alma was talking about. If a person is pompous and pretentious, tries to be a ballet dancer or something like that when he can’t, he deserves mockery. He mocks himself; you don’t have to mock him. He’ll take care of that. He’ll make a fool of himself. You don’t have to go into that. And so nobody can make a mock of his brother; don’t do that whatever you do.

Verse 33: “Behold, he sendeth an invitation unto all men . . .” [here we are, the arms extending; here’s the embracing. Remember, that’s what Yom Kippur means, to cover with the arms first of all. That’s the basic meaning—kafara, capto, and all those words that go with cover], for the arms of mercy are extended towards them, and he saith: Repent, and I will receive you [that’s what it is, remember, the ten days of repentance]. Yea, he saith: Come unto me, and ye shall partake of the fruit of the tree of life [here’s another image], yea, ye shall eat and drink of the bread and waters of life freely [it’s not enough to have the tree of life; it’s the bread and waters of life, using Lehi’s allegory here]. Yea, come unto me and bring forth works of righteousness, and ye shall not be hewn down and cast into the fire.” Now he’s using the vineyard image again. Notice that the vineyard is the most conspicuous thing; it’s both the good and the bad. It’s whatever Israel brings forth as the vineyard. In Jacob 5 is the long story of the vineyard.

And then again, “Whosoever bringeth forth not good fruit [there’s another image] . . . the same have cause to wail and mourn. . . . Ye that have professed to have known the ways of righteousness nevertheless have gone astray, as sheep.” There’s another image; now it’s sheep he’s talking about. What is their claim? They claim that they have been righteous, but it won’t work at all. They have “gone astray as sheep.” That’s why he’s bringing them together again. So according to that in the next verse, he brings another image. Christ is the good shepherd. “Behold, I say unto you, that the good shepherd doth call you; yea, and in his own name he doth call you, which is the name of Christ; . . . and now if ye are not the sheep of the good shepherd, of what fold are ye [using another one]?” The devil has his fold, too. It’s yours.

There’s no alternative ever mentioned between these two. When Alma speaks, or anybody else in the Book of Mormon, it’s the one or the other. That’s what we have here. It’s the ʼalam al-shāhida, the world which you see and know, your world, or the ʼalam al-ghayb, the world which is the real world, the world which God knows and sees. We only see a little bit of it. When we adapt ourselves to this world, naturally it’s the only world, and we’re making ourselves very small.

I thought we would at least finish this chapter today, and we still have through verse 62. But you see, this is powerful stuff. This isn’t just something that some kid sat down and wrote off as nothing at all. It’s all in here. He’s got it all worked in, just as if he were weaving an elaborate tapestry, and it comes out a beautiful picture. You can’t do that, you
know, if you're just bluffing. I love Mrs. Brodie’s comment that he just did this as a practical joke on his family so he could laugh at them. She said, “Now I have the damn fool fixed, and I’ll really laugh at him.”

Question: I’m still not sure I understand why the pagan symbols were in that early synagogue.

Answer: Oh, well, I have a section here that I might have read it on how that happened. This was the Hellenistic period, and it’s perfectly legitimate. Remember these are only images, just as he [Alma] uses them. He’s not talking about real sheep. He’s not talking about real wine. He’s not talking about these various things he talks about, gone astray, etc. They’re not sheep. Well, if you can use one image, you can use another. They were purely symbolic, and the Jews are great for that stuff. They have the freedom of Oriental imagery, you know. They do it all over the place.
TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

HUGH NIBLEY

Semester 2, Lecture 47
Alma 5–10
Good and Evil
Foretelling Christ’s Birth

Now we’re on that long fifth chapter of Alma. In verse 53 he gets specific on something. You’ll notice in verses 40 to 43 he talks in general terms about evil and good. Verse 40: “For I say unto you that whatsoever is good cometh from God, and whatsoever is evil cometh from the devil [well, what is he talking about?]. . . . I speak in the energy of my soul.” Here he’s specific; he tells what he’s talking about in verse 53: “Can ye lay aside these things, and trample the Holy One under your feet; yea, can ye be puffed up in the pride of your hearts [now this is when he talks specifically about being evil]; yea, will ye still persist in the wearing of costly apparel and setting your hearts upon the vain things of the world, upon your riches?”

I’ve always been taken up with costly apparel. It’s so much in the Book of Mormon, and I’ve read it since I was a little kid. I loathe the costly apparel. I get all my duds at Deseret—all this outfit comes from Deseret Industries—except that I have kids who make me wear other things occasionally. They’d sooner be found dead in a back lot than shopping at Deseret Industries. I don’t know why. The only thing wrong with these is the linings sometimes fall out, and the zippers misbehave. But why not, when you get this for four bucks and the pants for three? You can’t beat it. But you’re not supposed to wear “costly apparel and [set] your hearts upon the vain things of the world, upon your riches.” It summarizes all that here. Here we are again on this theme.

And the next verse, of course, is equality again: “Yea, will ye persist in supposing that ye are better one than another.” And then you get a reflection of this persistent tension. As long as Alma’s around, you’re going to get this tension. You’ll notice this tension and this extreme contrast. “Yea, will ye persist in the persecution of your brethren, who humble themselves and do walk after the holy order of God, wherewith they have been brought into this church, having been sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and they do bring forth works which are meet for repentance [two totally different worlds we have here, as we mentioned before]. Yea, and will you persist in turning your backs upon the poor, and the needy, and in withholding your substance from them? [again, the distribution-of-wealth business]. And finally, all ye that will persist in your wickedness, I say unto you that these are they who shall be hewn down and cast into the fire except they speedily repent.” It’s not a stable situation at all.

Verse 57: “Come ye out from the wicked and be ye separate, and touch not their unclean things.” He wants to keep them separated. We [don’t] come out in our society anymore. We used to. The Saints got into trouble doing it; they don’t do it anymore. “The names of the wicked shall not be mingled with the names of my people.” When one is called (as many are called) to any office or calling, it’s an invitation to change your ways completely. Do we take it completely? We do for a while as missionaries. They will
change, and then they go completely back again. There’s an interesting case about that, but we have to get on here.

Notice he’s talking about being sanctified, being hagios, being set apart, being segullah—people sealed and set apart. He’s still talking in terms of the rites of atonement here. “For the names of the righteous shall be written in the book of life, and unto them will I grant an inheritance at my right hand.” Part of the rite, of course, as we’ve mentioned before, is that everyone is registered in the book at that time. And if your name was not registered in a book, you were out of the kingdom for three years. That’s all there is to it. You had no rights whatever; you were outlawed.

Then he compares them with sheep. Sheep in the New World? Well, sheep is like silk, if you’ll look it up in the dictionary. There are scores of varieties of sheep. Some no more resemble sheep than other [animals] do. The llamas and the vicunas, or anything like that, are all classified as sheep. They’re grazing animals. The Egyptians had just one word for them idr—the short-horned as against the long-horned animals. They use one word for sheep, for rams, for goats—for all short-horned animals, wild or not; I guess a steenbok would be a sheep with them. But anyway, it’s one of those generic terms.

Verse 60: “And he commandeth you that ye suffer no ravenous wolf to enter among you, that ye may not be destroyed.” You notice the ravenous wolf, which means acquisitive, greedy, predatory, exploitative—the ravenous wolves. We talk a lot about greed today in the front pages of journals and everything else. The Wall Street Journal, Time, and the rest of them are always talking about the greed. Well, would you admit [to be] the wolf? “And now I, Alma, do command you . . .” He can command those who belong to the church; the others he simply invites, as he says here. The covenant people not only separate themselves from the world, they’re necessarily bound. They’re commanded here. “I speak by way of command unto you that belong to the church; and unto those who do not belong to the church I speak by way of invitation.” Of course, we invite the world to enter the covenants which we are commanded to obey. Or do we follow the lead of the corporate world?

Now we come to the sixth chapter, which is a very short chapter and simply implements just what he has said. This is how he went about doing it, he says. Alma ordained priests and elders. He went about setting up the official structure of the church, the ordinances, the priesthood, and the rites. The people who repented were duly baptized. Notice there was a cleansing of the church, straightening things out. If people wanted to join and repented, then they were baptized. On the other hand there were members of the church, who had been members all their lives. If they didn’t repent, they were cut off. See, he is straightening things out again. Alma’s strict as ever.

Verse 3: “Whosoever did belong to the church [he was cut off and rejected] that did not repent of their wickedness and humble themselves before God—I mean those who were lifted up in the pride of their hearts—the same were rejected [they were not in the records then], and their names were blotted out, that their names were not numbered among those of the righteous.” So they took the repenters in and they threw nonrepenters out.

Verse 4: “And thus they began to establish the order of the church in the city of Zarahemla.” That’s what it’s about. That’s how you set it up; you implement what you’ve done. And the usual routine was followed; the law of the gospel was followed here. Notice,
they’re commanded to gather themselves together often and join in fasting and prayer “in behalf of the welfare of the souls of those who knew not God.” So they held their meetings and their fasts as well as their ordinances. Then Alma, having set things up here, departed to the city of Gideon. He came to a neighboring city, and was going to do the same thing there. He started out by telling the people of Gideon in chapter 7, “I attempt to address you in my language,” which shows that they were speaking dialects. Dialects very easily spring up, as I said. These people had been here hundreds of years, and these out-settlements had become quite aloof. You can be sure they had different dialects. As I said, there are the twelve Hopi villages. They are close together, within a range of sixty miles, and each one has a separate dialect. You can recognize one villager from another. That’s the way it happens. So he said, “I attempt to address you in my language.”

He said, I’ve given up everything else. I gave up the judgment seat; it has been given to another. I’ve done that deliberately so that I could come and preach to you. He had left Zarahemla, and he was pleased with them. Verse 5 “My joy cometh over them after wading through much affliction and sorrow.” [Now I trust it’s going as well with you, he says.] But behold, I trust that ye are not in a state of so much unbelief as were your brethren.” Zarahemla he had to work with. What did he mean? What is the state of unbelief? What’s the wickedness? Back to the old song again: “I trust that ye have not set your hearts on riches and the vain things of the world; yea, I trust that you do not worship idols, but that ye do worship the true and the living God, and that ye look forward for the remission of your sins, with an everlasting faith, which is to come.” See, if you’re saved, you’re looking forward to a remission of your sins; you haven’t got it yet. You have them remitted, but as long as we’re here in this world, we’re under the troubles of our proud and angry dust. They won’t fail here. Unbelief necessarily leads to setting one’s heart on riches, since you must put your trust in something. Satan’s doctrine, of course, is that you put your trust in them. And these things all go together. But we’re not in the clear here. One’s sins have not yet been remitted, as we learn in 2 Nephi 2:21 where he tells us that right up to the last day of our life we must repent. And that’s why our lives have been extended, so it gives a better opportunity.

Then he says an interesting thing. He talks about the Lord who’s going to come. Verse 9: “Prepare the way of the Lord. . . . He shall be born of Mary, at Jerusalem which is the land of our forefathers, she being a virgin, a precious and chosen vessel.” He talks familiarly, as if they already knew about Mary. Well, imra’a means a human being, but it also means a woman. The regular Mary and Martha are both the same word, and they both mean woman. He shall be born of a woman, of Mary or of Miriam, at Jerusalem. They are all just words for woman. She’s a special woman, and her name is Mary. He gives them the benefit of that; but they shouldn’t be surprised at that.

And again, “born of Mary, at Jerusalem” has been a great charge against the Book of Mormon. He was born in Bethlehem. He wasn’t born in Jerusalem, was he? Just read the Amarna Letters from the much earlier period than this. The Amarna Letters were written by princes and by a king from Jerusalem to Pharaoh [Amenhotep III] asking for military aid. They constantly refer in the Amarna Letters to “the land of Jerusalem” and various towns—to Bethlehem, which is in the land of Jerusalem. They always refer to “the land of Jerusalem” as city/state. Attica is the land of Athens. When you say Athens, what do you mean? You mean Attica, Athens and all the land around it. When you say Sparta you mean the same thing. But it’s interesting that it specifically states this in the Amarna Letters; that was the usage, to talk about “the land of Jerusalem,” and then the various
towns in it. He doesn’t say he shall be born in the city of Jerusalem, [but] in “the land of Jerusalem,” which is where he was born. Bethlehem is just six miles south of Jerusalem. It’s a suburb, and it’s always been part of the land of Jerusalem, and the seat of David as well.

“. . . she being a virgin, a precious and chosen vessel, who shall be overshadowed and conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost, and bring forth a son, yea, even the Son of God. . . . He will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people [now, this is the mission, the atoning sacrifice]. And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities.” This is his task. But notice here. He could have done all this spiritually. After all, anyone with a sufficiently vivid imagination could have such an experience and go through with it, but here he must descend below all things. He would know exactly what it would be like, but that wasn’t it. He must perform the thing himself, he says—must go through it himself. “And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people.”

I don’t doubt that he has other people everywhere, but when he comes down to deal with us, he takes on human flesh and goes through what we go through. He descended below all things. He took on flesh that he might redeem us, and so go all the way and suffer more than we can, in the flesh. This is the point, so that we never can say, “Oh yes, you were a god, it was divine with you. You could just imagine it, and it was done, or you could just snap your fingers.” No, it isn’t that way; it doesn’t go that way. It says “that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities,” that he may be filled with mercy, go all the way and know exactly what we’ve been through.

Verse 13: “Now the Spirit knoweth all things [he didn’t need to do that, he could have handled that easily]; nevertheless the Son of God suffereth according to the flesh that he might take upon him the sins of the people, that he might blot out their transgressions according to the power of his deliverance; and now behold, this is the testimony which is in me.” This is the power. He [Jesus Christ] has the power given him to do this. Because of sin, everything goes wrong. It cannot be corrected, because we go right on sinning. You can’t pull yourself up by your own bootstraps. We’re in quicksand, as far as that goes. The more you struggle, the deeper you’ll get. You’re not going to get out of it.

We’re not going to be able to redeem ourselves or anything like that. It’s our nature to be carnal, sensual, and devilish, and that’s all there is to it. This is [Alma’s] testimony.

Now, what we do is repent. Remember how Benjamin describes repentance: knowing who you are and what you are. When you know what you are, you will repent, and you’ll become humble enough. And [Alma’s] going to talk about what goes right along with this, the two rules. The two rules from Delphi were “know thyself” and “nothing to the right, nothing to the left—nothing in excess.” These two rules are given right in these verses here. Verses 14: “Repent and be born again. . . . Be baptized unto repentance, that ye may be washed from your sins, that ye may have faith on the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world [going through the same imagery again] . . . Lay aside every sin . . . and show unto your God that ye are willing to repent of your sins and enter into a covenant with him to keep his commandments, and witness it unto him this day by going into the waters of baptism.” Of course, they witness after that that they are willing to take upon them the name of the Son and keep his commandments which he has given
them. When we partake of the sacrament, we witness the same thing we witness at baptism. When we partake of it we renew it each time. You enter into a covenant and witness it and refresh it that way. They use almost the same words here: Witnessing unto him by water, but here it’s by the sacrament.

Verse 16: “And whosoever doeth this, and keepeth the commandments of God . . . shall have eternal life.” This is the object; this is what we’re after. We’re going to find out that everybody’s going to have eternal life anyway. They cannot die, we learn later on. The resurrection has been taken care of. So why are we so worried about eternal life? Well, if it’s going to be eternal, the quality’s going to be rather important, isn’t it? Where you spend it and how you spend it has a great deal to say if it’s going to be eternal. The [point] is not to go on living in the sewer. That’s the difference “And now my beloved brethren, do you believe these things?” he asks you. As I said before, there’s never been any dispute about the atonement. It’s a very interesting thing; even among the doctors of the church, that word has never been debated. “Do you believe these things?” I know them by the spirit, he says.

Verse 19: “I perceive that ye are in the path which leads to the kingdom of God.” Now he comes to the other one. Repent is to know yourself, and the other is “nothing in excess.” As I’ve said before, this is not just a rule for behavior—don’t eat too much or drink too much or eat too little or drink too little. That’s true, but the whole universe is sustained by a fine tuning. The physicists call it the Fifteen Constants that must be finely tuned. The earth cannot be too far from the sun nor too near to it. Just a little too much, and there would be no life. The sun cannot be too hot or too cold. It’s raising the devil now, though, isn’t it. We have records of sunspots for over four hundred years. Every sunspot has been recorded. When I was a little kid I made them all the time; it’s very easy to do. The largest protrusions and the largest sunspots ever seen are occurring on the sun now, so keep your hat on when you go out. I wouldn’t like to be on the shuttle right now. Strange things happening now. For four hundred years it never happened like that before. It always comes and goes, and what’s more, there are more sunspots appearing at one time than have ever appeared at one time before. It’s beginning to look serious. Maybe the sun will wipe out. Well, we’ll have a congressional committee and consult about what we’ll do with the sun then, won’t we. That’ll settle that [laughter].

But notice, here’s this fine tuning. It can’t be too dry, it can’t be too wet. Parts of the earth are becoming desert now, and it’s utter catastrophe. Other parts are becoming too wet. We know that utter catastrophe. As he says here (verse 20): “He cannot walk in crooked paths; neither doth he vary from that which he had said; neither hath he a shadow of turning from the right to the left [stay on the path; you don’t go too far to the right, you don’t go too far to the left], or from that which is right to that which is wrong; therefore, his course is one eternal round.” It’s one round, and it’s eternal. How can it be straight and round at the same time? Well, straight meaning strict, staying on the course. “The time shall come, yea, and it shall be at the last day, that he who is filthy shall remain in his filthiness.” We must break with it while we can, he says, because this offer is not permanent. This will be changed. You reach a point of no return. Then you have to settle for something lower, and you’re going to have another kind of life after that. [People] do reach those crisis points. They either go to the right or left—go too far to one side or the other. They’ll stay there and stick there.

Now the main thing: “I have said these things unto you that I might awaken you to a sense of your duty to God, that ye may walk blameless before him, that ye may walk after
the holy order of God, after which ye have been received.” Again, he talks about the specific sins and names them—we just had them. But what about these virtues? What does doing right consist of? Now he makes a specific list of them. This is helpful here in verse 23: “And now I would that ye should be humble, and be submissive and gentle.” Notice these aren’t acts; these are states of mind. What makes a sin a sin is not what you do; what may be a virtue one day can be a vice the next. It always amused me in Germany before the war, everybody would go to the city baths to bathe. There was this big bathhouse. Thursday was family day, and everybody would go in. Well, they had no swimming suits or anything—they’d just go in. On family day everybody would go in together, and that was fine. But any other day, if anybody of the opposite sex came in, they’d be arrested and taken to jail. That was terrible, it was obscene. But as long as it was Saturday, it was all right. It was the very same thing. Saturday is the ancient Scandinavian laugardagr. That’s wash day, bathing day. So all the families would bathe together on Thursday. But if you strayed into the wrong pool on a Friday or a Monday, there’d be a scream and an uproar, and you’d be hauled out of there. An amazing thing! It’s just custom that does it here. But see it’s the state of mind that makes the difference, and it is here, too. Well, of course, “to the pure all things are pure,” as Paul says. But to be humble is a condition, a state of mind. To be submissive and gentle; easy to be entreated; full of patience and long-suffering; being temperate in all things; being diligent in keeping the commandments of God at all times.” Here is a thing you must do: you are commanded to ask. We hesitate to ask because we’re too proud to ask, as if you go as a beggar. It takes more pride to give than it does to ask. It takes more humility to ask. A proud man can give, but a proud man won’t ask. It makes a difference, “asking for whatsoever things ye stand in need, both spiritual and temporal.”

You have a perfect right to ask the Lord for what you need. Don’t hesitate. Of course, in doing so, you look into yourself and ask yourself whether you deserve it or not. It will make you feel guilty. It will bring you around to these other things, “always returning thanks unto God for whatsoever things ye do receive. And see that ye have faith, hope, and charity.” Now these are the big three. You say, “Well, here’s the Book of Mormon being lifted from the New Testament.” No, it isn’t. Richard Reitzenstein showed many years ago that the formula—faith, hope, and charity—is a very ancient one. It’s found in Hebrew writings, and it’s a formula found in the Hermetic writings quite commonly. It’s not limited to the New Testament at all. It’s very ancient. These three go together.

But notice what I notice here. I don’t see in this list of virtues hard work, thrift, drive, ambition, prudence, smarts. I don’t see any of that at all. You find the same thing in Isaiah. The sins Isaiah lists are the things we consider virtues. The virtues Isaiah lists are the things we consider weaknesses and wimpishness. Only a wimp would have all these things—being diligent and asking for whatever you want. Notice you’re always submissive. You do the asking of what you stand in need—always returning thanks, temperate. It sounds like Uriah Heap, except he was a hypocrite. Diligent in keeping the commandments, patient, gentle, etc. and so forth. This is what God demands of us, and what we don’t give. This is a very important theme in the Book of Mormon, always having faith and charity. Verse 27: “And now, may the peace of God rest upon you, and upon your houses and lands [all things are blessed where the Saints settle, as Brigham Young says] and upon your flocks and herds, and all that you possess, your women and your children.”

So he left them and went to another city. Next he went to the city of Melek. This was a very interesting mission he had in the city of Melek. What he was doing was going
around establishing the order of the church in all these places. It says here [Alma 8:1]: “having established the order of the church, according as he had before done in the land of Zarahemla.” Zarahemla is the model; it is just like the center stake of Zion. They’re all organized on the pattern of Zarahemla here. “Yea, he returned to his own house at Zarahemla to rest himself from the labors which he had performed.”

Then he decided to go to the land of Melek and look that one over, west of the river Sidon. We’re told that Sidon bounded Zarahemla on the east, so he went west to Melek on the Pacific Coast side, which was the wilderness side, too. It has always been the wilderness side, and still is. The wildest parts of Central America are all down the western side. The eastern side is where all the populations are, the cities, and this is so in the Book of Mormon. Verse 4: “And he began to teach the people in the land of Melek according to the holy order of God, by which he had been called.” [See, the west of the Sidon was by the wilderness side.] “And they were baptized throughout all the land; So that when he had finished his work at Melek he departed thence, and traveled three days’ journey on the north of the land of Melek.” He was getting up there now, and he came to Ammonihah, which was the wickedest city, perhaps, in the Book of Mormon. They were really wicked. They were worse than the Zoramites, and the people in Ammonihah were the ones that were utterly wiped out when the destruction came. They were Nephites, notice. Verse 7: “Now it was the custom of the people of Nephi to call their lands, and their cities, and their villages, yea, even all their small villages, after the name of him who first possessed them,” just as we have Brigham City, and we have Provo here. Etienne Provost, a French trapper, was the first man to settle and camp here. The man who settles it usually gets it named after him.

The people of Ammonihah were rough. Verse 9: “Now Satan had gotten great hold upon the hearts of the people of the city of Ammonihah; therefore they would not hearken unto the words of Alma. Nevertheless Alma labored much in the spirit, wrestling with God in mighty prayer.” Wrestling with God? Does God resist you? Do you have to resist him? No, you have to put yourself into position, in the right state of mind. Remember, in our daily walks of life as we go around doing things, we’re far removed. If you’re bowling, or if you’re in business, or if you’re jogging or something like that, doing the things you usually do, and then you have to go from there to prayer, it’s quite a transition. It’s like a culture shock if you really take it seriously. You have to get yourself in form, like a wrestler having to look around for a hold or get a grip, as Jacob did when he wrestled with the Lord. You have to size yourself up, take your stance, circle the ring, and try to find out how you’re going to deal with this particular problem. You’re not wrestling with the Lord; you’re wrestling with yourself. Remember, Enos is the one who really wrestled. And he told us what he meant when he was wrestling; he was wrestling with himself, his own inadequacies. How can I possibly face the Lord in my condition, is what he says. So this is what we’re doing.

In the world we operate on a different level. It takes great mental effort to confront the Lord in all seriousness. We do it at various shallow levels, by routine. We have a prayer here because we feel we should. If we’re going to make it really serious, we have to work on it harder. We couldn’t do it cold. In other words, you can’t just come in cold. It’s like an artist, a cellist, or a pianist. I have lots of relatives who are musicians. You can’t just come in cold and begin a concert. Or even a tenor has to warm up and get his voice ready. But you have to warm up your fingers. My wife plays the cello, and she has to warm up her fingers and her instrument. It takes at least 15 minutes to warm up. Then you’re in the mood. Then you have to take a while to think about it, and then you’re
ready to go. Now if it comes to confronting the Lord, you have to be very serious about that sort of thing. It’s quite a preliminary exercise, which is called wrestling with the Lord, wrestling with yourself. He’s at a distance. That’s what he had to go through here, and very few people are willing to do it, but it really pays off because you know exactly what you want and where you stand.

But they wouldn’t have anything to do with him. These weren’t dissenters. See, these were people who had been living alone by themselves. They broke off at an early time, and they’d had their own religion for a long time. And what’s more, there’s evidence later in the Book of Mormon that they had been adopting some of the earlier religions that had been there, too. We know who you are, all right, they said, no matter how hard he worked. Verse 11: “Nevertheless, they hardened their hearts saying unto him: Behold, we know that thou art Alma; and we know that thou art high priest over the church which thou hast established in many parts of the land, according to your tradition; and we are not of thy church, and we do not believe in such foolish traditions.” No thank you. They were very frank about it—very rude, as a matter of fact. [There is a saying that] nothing is worse than a great man who has lost his clout, and here he had. “Thou hast no power over us.” They leaned over backwards to insult him because they knew he had no power, by the constitution he himself agreed on. He could not use any religious compulsion on anyone. “And thou hast delivered up the judgment seat unto Nephihah [and you’re not chief of the army anymore]; therefore thou art not the chief judge over us.” He had lost his clout, and what did they do? They reviled him. They spat on him “and caused that he should be cast out of their city.” They threw him out. The same thing happened to Samson, King Alfred, Ammon, and King Lear after they lost their office. It wasn’t that they were just retired to nothing—they were kicked around after that. [It’s as if] the people have been waiting for the time when you would retire, and they could tell you what they think of you. And this is what happened here. He had a rough time.

He was very upset. His mission had failed. He had a “terrible anguish of soul,” as he said in verse 14. He was weighed down, and his heart was broken. He was going to leave and go home. He was met by an angel, and the angel told him to rejoice. I’m the one from whom you received your first message, he said. Verse 15: “Behold, I am he that delivered it unto you.” That’s an interesting thing. Remember in Luke when the gospel was first being established, an angel went around and visited various people, namely Mary, the shepherds in the field, and Zacharias in the temple. It was the same angel; it was Gabriel. He said, I’m Gabriel. That was his particular mission, to introduce that dispensation of time. Obviously this angel was assigned to Alma. He said, I’m the same one who visited you before, and now here I am again. He was watching over Alma. We used to say much more about guardian angels in the Church. We used to teach much more of that doctrine, always taught it to our kids. We don’t do it anymore. I don’t know why not, because it’s a very real thing, the presence of another world.

Well, anyway, the angel said, I’m the same one that visited you when you were a naughty boy—remember me? Now I’m visiting you in another condition. You’re the one who’s sorry now. It’s their wickedness that afflicts you now. I brought the first message: “I am he that delivered it unto you.” Now you just return to the city of Ammonihah, just go right back, and tell them they will repent or the Lord will destroy it—and he certainly did destroy it. He entered the city, and he was hungry, “and he said to a man: Will ye give an humble servant of God something to eat? And the man said unto him: I am a Nephite.” Notice that they were mixed races, mixed blood all over the place. He introduced himself as a Nephite. Although Ammonihah was a Nephite city, they were not all Nephites in it.
Question: I'm just curious. I notice your pronunciation of the city is different from that in the pronouncing guide. I was curious as to who made up the pronouncing guide and does it claim to be correct?

Answer: Well, there are very strict rules to accenting Hebrew and Arabic; they’re unbreakable. But this is an Egyptian name. The -iah part means “Ammon is God.” Of course, Ammon was the god of the empire. Ammon is by far the most common name in the Book of Mormon. It also means “the great god, most high god, the hidden god,” and all sorts of things. The name was used freely on both sides of the line. In classics the unbreakable rule is this: Always convert a Greek word into Latin, and then pronounce the Latin word as if it were English. But this doesn’t necessarily apply to Semitic words necessarily, to Bible words. This would actually be Am-mo-NI-hah, if we were saying it in English. It couldn’t be AM-mo-ni-hah in any Semitic language because the recessive accent doesn’t go that far, if you have a double consonant in between. So Am-MO-ni-hah is good enough.

Question: Who made the pronouncing guide?

Answer: Oh, a committee up in Salt Lake. They sit around and make these things. I’ve been on it, and it was fun. It was a million laughs the way they go around and around about things. It’s a matter of taste. But remember, it’s English we speak, and it’s perfectly correct. Now for example, when Professor Gregroire, who was a foremost authority on Byzantine history, gave a class in Byzantine history at Berkeley, he always said CON-stant-n. He would never say CON-stan-teen. That would be considered bad taste. We say CON-stan-teen, and he said CON-stan-tine. Because it’s ine, we pronounce it like English, but the English call it CON-stan-tine. They pronounce things quite differently there. You can call it Phelo or Philo if you want. We call him Philo. But we don’t say Phi-la-delphia. There are people who do, though. So, take your choice. Nephi would be Neb-hi. You notice I don’t spell it with an f, because it’s not an f. It’s two separate letters b h. It means “my Lord is God” actually, and it was an Egyptian name at the time of Lehi. Remember Nephitites sometimes had Egyptian names.

Now for example, the Germans pronounce Book of Mormon names very differently from us. A-BIN-a-di, which is perfectly natural with us, is Ah-bee-NAD-ee with them. They wouldn’t recognize A-BIN-a-di in a million years. It’s Ah-bee-NAD-ee, which is probably closer to the original. It means “my father has vowed.” Abi is “my father.”

We’ll get along here now, because an interesting thing is going to happen here in the city. This man said (verse 20): “I am a Nephite [which points out some racial difference here], and I know that thou art a holy prophet of God,” because he’s been visited by the same angel. Gabriel got around in the New Testament. This angel gets around here. Sorry he didn’t leave his name. “Therefore go with me into my house and I will impart unto thee of my food.” [Alma] told him about the situation, so he took him to his house. The man was called Amulek, and notice they go very strong for the mulek words. Its basic root meaning is property or possession. But it also means “king, to rule, to have power”—all sorts of things. Like the word Alexander and the word Michael, it means that you have power and force.

Verse 21: “And he brought forth bread and meat and set before Alma. . . . [And Alma introduced himself and said] I am Alma, and am the high priest over the church of God
throughout the land. And behold, I have been called to preach the word of God among this people.” And Alma tarried many days at Amulek’s house. And the people got worse and worse and didn’t repent. They [Alma and Amulek] went around preaching, but it didn’t do any good. In verse 30 Alma and Amulek joined forces: “And Alma went forth, and also Amulek, among the people to declare the words of God unto them, and they were filled with the Holy Ghost. And they had power given unto them, insomuch that they could not be confined in dungeons; neither was it possible that any man could slay them; nevertheless they did not exercise their power until they were bound in bands and cast into prison.”

They got away with all sorts of things, but you know this often happens. One thing after another happens to some people, and they get through all sorts of things—Alexander the Great, for example. It’s incredible what he went through until he got drunk at a party and got a fever. He was poisoned, some say. Or Prince Eugene. Some people have been through untold battles without any scars at all. Porter Rockwell was shot at more than a duck in a shooting gallery, but he was never harmed. There are such people, you know, that just walk right through. And this happens often. There are some stories about that, but there are guardian angels. There is such a thing; we are being watched. But they were able to put them in jail just the same. “They were bound in bands and cast into prison. Now, this was done that the Lord might show forth his power in them.” He let that happen.

Now, Alma preached to the people of Ammonihah. This is what he preached to them. But Amulek’s story is in the chapter after that; that’s the amusing story. But first Alma was preaching to them. Was it the same old thing here? Well, it was different because they put up a fight. They argued back. They shouted back and forth. It turned out to be a shouting match. Alma began to preach to the people, and he said (chapter 9, verse 1): “As I began to preach unto them, they began to contend with me, saying . . .” This is Alma’s own record here; before it was Moroni’s record. They said, you have no clout—we don’t know who you are.

Verse 2: “Who art thou? Suppose ye that we shall believe the testimony of one man, although he should preach unto us that the earth should pass away?” We can’t take it on your word alone. Now, here’s a nice touch of tragic irony. This is right out of Oedipus, isn’t it, when they said, “Suppose ye that we shall believe the testimony of one man, although he should preach unto us that the earth should pass away? Now they understood not the words which they spake; for they knew not that the earth should pass away.” They were pronouncing the doom on themselves. Their city was buried completely. As Oedipus says, even if it’s somebody in my own house, I’ll have revenge on him—even if he’s the one who killed the old king. Of course it was he himself he was pronouncing the curse on. And it’s the same thing here about accepting the testimony of one man that the earth should pass away. At the beginning of Oedipus, the prophet comes in and prophesies what’s going to happen. Then he [Oedipus] says, He’s only a single man; what’s his prophecy worth? See, he has to have a whole college of prophets.

They’ve just discovered a new Egyptian papyrus I’m working on, a fascinating thing in which the school of the prophets of Pharaoh do exactly as they did with Moses. There was a real prophet with great gifts, and they did everything they could to snow him under. They did everything they could to keep him from access to Pharaoh because he’d show them all up. [It tells] how they plotted against him. The main thing was to keep him low profile, keep him out in the country (he was very young), don’t let anybody notice him.
They did everything they could to dampen his career, in other words. It’s an amusing story on how all the great prophets at court, the magicians, did that sort of thing.

Verse 5: “Now they knew not that God could do such marvelous works.” For them, things just happened. If marvels do happen, are they without cause? When something remarkable happens, and everything is remarkable that happens, we should consult the causes and what is behind it. It does help us. Shouldn’t we ask questions? Shouldn’t we be curious about things? People aren’t today. That’s the thing—we’re not curious in this school. I was talking to a faculty member yesterday, and he said that the majors he is teaching are not in the least bit curious about the subject they’re supposed to be learning. It used to be that majors were completely absorbed in it [their subject] and wouldn’t do anything else. They would go without eating and sleeping; they’d live on a dime a day. They were just so passionately involved in the subject. Today—it’s career, something you go through with.

Verse 6: “And they said: Who is God, that sendeth no more authority than one man among this people, to declare unto them the truth of such great and marvelous things?” The lone dissenter is the main theme in the Book of Mormon, whether it’s Lehi, Nephi, Alma, Ammon, or Enos or whoever it is. What they want is big authority, as if truth couldn’t stand alone. He says, “Have ye forgotten the tradition of your fathers? . . . Do ye not remember that our father, Lehi, was brought out of Jerusalem by the hand of God?” If you want to know one man alone, [remember] what he did. This is in answer to that question: Why should we believe just one man? Well, he gives them the case of Lehi. Verse 12: “He [God] has commanded you to repent, or he will utterly destroy you from off the face of the earth.” Now this was to be a test case and a model, this city here. And here is the rule that’s given again. “Inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper in the land. . . . Inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord.” Now all the promises are given with the curse in the Book of Mormon, as in the Dead Sea Scrolls. There’s the beråkåh, the blessing, but never without the qelålåh. The qelålåh is the cursing; the beråkåh is the blessing. The two fit right together, and they do all through the Book of Mormon. It’s the condition. You don’t enter a very profitable contract without a penalty clause. If you flout the contract and break the rules, are you released then because you broke the contract? Oh, no, you have to pay a penalty for that. You go to jail for that or something else [happens].

Verse 14: “Inasmuch as the Lamanites have not kept the commandments of God, they have been cut off from the presence of the Lord.” Then he talks about the Lamanites here. He says, there’s still a chance for you. If there’s a chance for the Lamanites, there’ll be one for you, too. “For there are many promises which are extended to the Lamanites; for it is because of the traditions of their fathers that caused them to remain in their state of ignorance; therefore the Lord will be merciful unto them and prolong their existence in the land [they’re not the same]. And at some period of time they will be brought to believe in his word, . . . and many of them will be saved.” This is the prophecy for the Lamanites, because their fathers are to blame more than anything. But, not with you, he says in verse 18: “Your days shall not be prolonged in the land, for the Lamanites shall be sent upon you [he’s going to turn the tables; these are supposedly the good Nephites he was talking to]; and if ye repent not, they shall come in a time when you know not, and ye shall be visited with utter destruction [because you’ve had the greater privilege]. . . . He would rather suffer that the Lamanites might destroy all his people who are called the people of Nephi [remember, this is just a designation], if it were possible that they could
fall into sins and transgressions, after having had so much light and so much knowledge." He would prefer to have the Lamanites destroy them utterly if they don’t remain true and faithful. We should envy the Russians [in light of what] he says. “Yea, after having been such a highly favored people of the Lord; yea, after having been favored above every other nation, kindred, tongue, or people; after having had all things made known unto them . . .” If that happens, you’re much worse off than anybody else.

Verse 21: “Having been visited by the Spirit of God; having conversed with angels, and having been spoken unto by the voice of the Lord; and having the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and also many gifts, the gift of speaking with tongues, and the gift of preaching, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the gift of translation.” [He keeps repeating after. Notice how very powerful an orator is Alma.] Yea, and after having been delivered of God out of the land of Jerusalem [there it is again, the land of Jerusalem, not the city of Jerusalem; remember, their county house, the land of their inheritance, was in the land of Jerusalem, too], by the hand of the Lord; having been saved from famine, and from sickness, and all manner of diseases of every kind [all the things they have gone through]. . . . And now behold I say unto you, that if this people, who have received so many blessings from the hand of the Lord, should transgress contrary to the light and knowledge which they do have, I say unto you that if this be the case, that if they should fall into transgression, it would be far more tolerable for the Lamanites than for them.” The Book of Mormon rubs this in so much; it must have something for us. It must be saying something to us. I can’t get away from that.

Verse 24: “For behold, the promises of the Lord are extended to the Lamanites, but they are not unto you if ye transgress [notice they’re extended to the Lamanites unconditionally, but they’re not extended to you if you transgress]; for has not the Lord expressly promised and firmly decreed, that if ye will rebel against him that ye shall utterly be destroyed from off the face of the earth?” [He can’t make it strong enough. This is the promise on the land.] And now for this cause, that ye may not be destroyed, the Lord has sent his angel to visit many of his people [see here again, an angel always comes in a great crisis to turn things around; this city is in decay and out of control; the only thing that can turn things around is the appearance of an angel, just as he turned Alma around when he was a young man] declaring unto them that they must go forth and cry mightily unto this people, saying: Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is nigh at hand.”

This is a mighty angel flying. This is what the angel Moroni had to preach, was this. Moroni is the man who wrote this book. What is he doing? He’s warning us all over the place. He’s the one on the Salt Lake Temple, you know; you may have seen him. And they’re threatened with this. Well, would we welcome this?

Verses 26: “And not many days hence the Son of God shall come in his glory; and his glory shall be the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace, equity, and truth, full of patience, mercy, and long-suffering, quick to hear the cries of his people and to answer their prayers. And behold, he cometh to redeem those who will be baptized unto repentance, through faith on his name [and membership levels are not the decisive factors]. . . . The time is at hand that all men shall reap a reward of their works . . . [whether you belong to the church or not] . . . If they have been righteous they shall reap the salvation of their souls, according to the power and deliverance of Jesus Christ.” Notice, there are just two conditions, and he told us what righteousness is. He just said, as the Lord: grace, equity, truth, patience, mercy, long-suffering. These are the characteristics the Lord has shown us, and if they’re righteous, they’ll reap salvation to their souls. But if
they’ve been evil—no. Verse 30: “... bring forth works which are meet for repentance [he says] ye are a lost and a fallen people.” This is the last call, and we don’t like it either. Were the people satisfied with this? This made them mad as hornets, as the next verse tells us. When he tells them frankly, he ends up by saying, “ye are a lost and a fallen people. Now it came to pass that when I, Alma, had spoken these words, behold the people were wroth with me because I said unto them that they were a hard-hearted and a stiffnecked people.”

So then Amulek stood forth and began to preach to them. Amulek introduced himself, and he is a very striking character. These vignettes, these character sketches in the Book of Mormon, are very clearly marked. He was the most respected citizen you could possibly imagine. He was a blueblood. Alma 10:2: “I am Amulek, ... a descendant of Aminadi, ... and Aminadi was a descendant of Nephi, who was the son of Lehi.” He was proud of his genealogy. And here we have an extremely important genealogical note. Lehi was a descendant of Manasseh, who was half Egyptian. His mother was Asenath, who was of the blood of Ham, a pure Egyptian. She had to be—her father was a high priest of Heliopolis. [Lehi] was a descendant of Manasseh whose twin brother was Ephraim. We claim that we are descended from him. He was also a son of Asenath, the Egyptian woman. (I should be writing this on the board—I’m getting myself all mixed up here.) Verse 3: “... and who was the son of Joseph who was sold into Egypt by the hands of his brethren.”

They have the blood of Egypt in them, and they have the blood of all the Twelve Tribes from Joseph and Manasseh. And they have about everything you can imagine in the mixed blood of Egypt. We’ve seen that before. And notice he says, besides his distinguished birth and background, “I am also a man of no small reputation among all those who know me [he had a great reputation, was well known and highly respected]; ... I have also acquired much riches by the hand of my industry.” He had been a successful businessman, and made himself very rich. He had been very successful and very respected. He was la creme de la creme.

Verses 5: “Nevertheless, after all this, I never have known much of the ways of the Lord.” He said he was born in the church and knew about the gospel. How come, what’s happening here? Well, of course, here we have the parable of the sowers. The seed falls and the cares of the world make them so busy after they’ve accepted the gospel, they get lost and drop it. So he says, “I never have known much of the ways of the Lord, and his mysteries and marvelous power. ... I have seen much of his mysteries and his marvelous power; yea, even in the preservation of the lives of this people. Nevertheless, I did harden my heart [he was too busy getting rich, apparently; he wouldn’t listen to it], for I was called many times, and I would not hear [obviously, something was distracting him; he said he had gained much riches by his industry; well, his industry was distracting him]. ... I knew concerning these things, yet I would not know [this is the case of so many people]; therefore, I went on rebelling against God in the wickedness of my heart,” until he was journeying along and this angel came and stopped him. See, he would have gone all the way, too. In the Book of Mormon the gap is crossed by the angel again. It’s the angel that gets us off dead center when we’re stuck that way, but only on great occasions.

Verse 9: “And the angel said unto me he is a holy man; wherefore I know he is a holy man because it was said by an angel of God” This is how he was introduced to Alma. Verse 12: “And now, when Amulek had spoken these words the people began to be astonished.” Well, we may ask, incidentally, about this role model. We’ll see what they do. They all turn against him. Of course they do. They began to be astonished, seeing that he was such
a respectable person. The people turned against him as they had turned against Alma and insulted him. Notice that they’re going to rough him up here. They try to trip him up with the cunning of their words, “that they might deliver them to their judges that they might be judged according to the law . . . cast into prison, according to the crime which they could make appear or witness against them.” They’re going to frame them and send them to jail. Everybody turned against him. But you say, “Ah, a rich man of good family—surely his relatives and family would not turn against him.” Well, come again. If you turn to Alma 15:16, you’ll read: “And it came to pass that Alma and Amulek, Amulek having forsaken all his gold [he’s not rich any more—just as Alma wasn’t powerful any more, so they said you’ve lost your clout and made fun of him], and silver, and his precious things, which were in the land of Ammonihah, for the word of God [as soon as he got rid of his money, what happened then? It’s the story of Timon of Athens], he being rejected by those who were once his friends and also by his father and his kindred.”

Not only his friends rejected him, but he lost his money and his own family. His father, and his kindred will have nothing to do with him, because he lost his money—not because he was preaching the gospel. There are some marvelous psychological insights in the Book of Mormon, but I see that time is up now, and we’ll continue with this scandal. “Go hence and have more talk of these sad things.”
I trust that you have all read Alma to the end. It’s long, as you know. I’m just going to point out some things you may have overlooked. That isn’t being patronizing because I have overlooked them myself for years and years, and they are important, too. Alma 10 is the legalistic chapter. It’s on legalism and lawyers. It packs a real wallop and shows immense insight. This was [translated] in 1829 before Joseph Smith had had any of his experience with lawyers. He was hauled into court and went through the routine 42 times. They were always bringing him to court. Americans were just as legalistic [then] as they are today. But remember that this was written before he had any of that experience at all. He knew nothing about lawyers or anything else; he had just lived on the farm all his life. This chapter is really something, and we’re on verse 13 now. They began to question Amulek using “cunning devices [that] they might catch them in their words, that they might find witness against them, that they might deliver them to their judges that they might be judged according to the law, and that they might be slain or cast into prison, according to the crime [they would make it all legal] which they could make appear or witness against them.”

That’s the whole business of lawyers—to make your side appear whatever it is. And that’s the art of rhetoric, as Plato said, and that’s why he damned it. The Greeks were shocked by this new art, the art of the lawyer, which appeared with Protagoras and Gorgias in the time of Socrates and made the worse appear the better reason. That’s the skill of rhetoric. You can take either side and make it win. Whether it was good or bad had nothing to do with it; you won the case. That’s what you are supposed to do. To make the worse appear the better reason shocked everybody. That’s what we have here; this is way up in it. But, of course, it was very old. You are going to have the lawyers and the law’s delays forever. In the time of Lehi when they left the old country, this stuff reached its peak, in the days of Solon and after that.

Verse 14: “Now it was those men who sought to destroy them, who were lawyers.” It’s frightening because these people make the rules as they go. They’re the lawyers and they’re free to move the goal post anytime they want, so they always win. If anything makes my blood run cold, it’s to get a big envelope saying, “Williamson, Johnson, Cullen, McArthur, and Jump, Attorneys at Law.” I leave it unopened for weeks. It turns out to be a very innocent thing they’ve sent after all, but it’s terrifying because they have you in their power. This is what they were trying to do; they had him in their clutches. They were going to weave a tangled net to get him. “Now these lawyers were learned in all the arts and cunning of the people.” Well, that’s their business. You know that Salt Lake City leads the nation in percentage of lawyers. The Americans are the most legalistic people by far. Japan can get on with about 1500 lawyers; we turn out 15,000 a year here. It’s terrific the way we turn out lawyers, and Salt Lake City leads in lawyers. They’re the most litigious people, and that has something to do with the “fraud capital of the world” and all that sort of thing.
Verse 16: “They began to question Amulek, that thereby they might make him cross his words, or contradict the words which he should speak.” [That’s exactly what the lawyer is supposed to do, make you contradict yourself. But he was onto them, of course.] . . . “O ye wicked and perverse generation, ye lawyers and hypocrites, for ye are laying the foundations of the devil; for ye are laying traps and snares to catch the holy ones of God.” That’s what a lawyer does; he lays traps and snares. Remember that Mosiah gave them their constitution. “Yea, well did Mosiah say . . . if the time should come that the voice of this people should choose iniquity . . . they would be ripe for destruction.” In Mosiah’s constitution the people chose the local judges in local elections, and it was the local judges that decided everything, after all, because they chose the chief judge and could remove him if they wanted to. So the people were responsible, and they will be responsible; that’s the whole idea of it. Not that they will always do right. He says, the voice of the people does right more often than not, but if they don’t—if you should choose iniquity—then it’s your own fault. You’ve made your own choice. If that time should come, then you would be ripe for destruction. These are the ground rules of the promise in the land.

This is a very interesting thing, you’ll notice. He tells them in verse 27 that it is going to be destroyed “by the unrighteousness of your lawyers and your judges.” And notice in the next verse [verse 20] how he contrasts it here. The Lord is the judge. When the Lord judges, he judges “by the voice of his angels.” This is a different thing. The one is by the voice of the people, and the other is by the voice of angels when the Lord judges. You are going to be judged by that. “Well doth he cry unto this people, by the voice of his angels: Repent ye, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Yea, well doth he cry, by the voice of his angels that: I will come down among my people, with equity and justice in my hands.” That’s the theme of the whole chapter; everything is on the theme of “equity and justice,” a very good study for a law review or something like that.

This is a theme we find very often repeated in the Talmud, for example. “If it were not for the prayers of the righteous which are now in the land . . .” That’s the only thing that keeps us from sinking right now, a few righteous people. We are making increasingly heavy drafts on rapidly dwindling reserves of righteousness in the land, which is what happens. People always do, just as we do in nature. We improve our means of exploitation as the substance gets less and less. Within the last five years this has been done by the big fisheries. The North Sea has been famous all the time, all through the Middle Ages, for its tremendous amount of herring. Now they have these new electronic devices for finding the schools of herring and then these new floating fish factories for getting rid of them. They got more efficient at finding them and getting rid of them up until about two years ago when the last herring disappeared. They got rid of all of them. The more efficient they got the faster the [fish] went, and then the time came when there were no more herring in the North Sea. Don’t think they haven’t exploited it. There are a dozen nations surrounding it, and every nation was out doing it. It’s the same thing here. We are making increasing drafts on what we have left of virtue, and that was the one thing that was going to keep us going. Of course, in both cases it’s an exponential increase; the curve goes up like that.

“If it were not for the prayers of the righteous . . .” Then what would happen? He says, it would be as it was in the days of Noah. Remember, in the days of Noah the Lord says they bought and sold, married and gave in marriage, ate and drank. They did normal things—business as usual right up until the last minute. In one day it hit them like that. But he said this is different; this will be by “famine, and by pestilence, and the sword.” Of course, they all go together.
Should the warlike Harry himself assume the port of Mars,
While at his heels, leashed in light hounds
Should famine, sword, and fire crouch for employment.

The three go together—famine, sword, and fire, as Shakespeare puts it. So we have it here—famine, pestilence, and sword. They do go together. I remember after the last world war I moved a lot around Europe. The castle at Salzburg was just packed from top to bottom with refugees—Poles and others from all over Europe. Smallpox and cholera were everywhere; it’s a mess when these things go on.

What saves them? “But it is by the prayers of the righteous that ye are spared.” Remember that—there won’t be many of them around for long. This just made the people mad. Now the people were really angry with him.

What’s the best defense when you feel guilty as hell? Then you become offensive and indignant. Then you are self-righteous. How dare you say such things to us? Verse 24: “This man doth revile against our laws which are just, and our wise lawyers whom we have selected.” There’s your Oedipus irony again. They admit that it is their responsibility; they are taking it on themselves. Remember, at the trial of Jesus they said, “We have no other king but Caesar. Crucify him!” They brought it [the destruction] on themselves, and it’s the same thing here. We have selected the lawyers, and we’ll be responsible.

Then he came back to them, “O ye wicked and perverse generation, why hath Satan got such great hold upon your hearts?” Notice how he does it. Shakespeare called Satan “the fiend that lies like truth.” He’s the clever lawyer. Macbeth says,

I pull in resolution, and begin
To doubt th’ equivocation of the fiend,
That lies like truth. . . .

That keep the word of promise to our ear
And break it to our hope.

Shakespeare, Macbeth, act V, scenes 5 and 8

They [appear to] keep the promise. He says, “I’m willing to live up to my part of the agreement,” but actually he’s playing a trick when he says that. In this it’s the same way. It’s legal, as it says in the fine print. You should have read the fine print. “And break it to our hope.” They promise you this, but they don’t have to [deliver] because it’s not in the fine print. This had been going on for a long time, and Amulek was certainly on to them. How does Satan get that power? This is an interesting thing. Are the poor people just victimized by Satan? Satan is a ravening lion who goes along seeking those whom he may destroy, and they become his helpless victims. Don’t fool yourself; look at this verse here. “Why will ye yield yourselves unto him that he may have power over you, to blind your eyes, that ye will not understand the words which are spoken, according to their truth?” He won’t have power unless you yield yourself up to him, and that’s what they have done here. As Joseph Smith said, Satan cannot force us to sin, and God will not force our free will. So we are responsible. It is by deception that he blinds you. He uses all the correct
answers to make us blind by telling us lies—lies like truth. “... that ye will not understand the words which are spoken, according to their truth?” You’ll understand the words, but not according to their truth. You can twist them—twisting words, as he says, is the lawyer’s business. He has outraged their defense; they are the untouchables. Verse 26: “For behold, have I testified against your law?” They said he had. He said, no, you are breaking the law; that’s what we are testifying about. “I say unto you that the foundation of the destruction of this people is beginning to be laid by the unrighteousness of your lawyers and your judges.” This is exactly what Socrates said to his friend Gorgias long before this.

They [the experts] started making criticisms of Joseph Smith’s interpretation of the facsimiles from the Pearl of Great Price. There was a big fuss in 1912 about it, and Dr. Widtsoe had some very pointed questions. He said, in the first place none of you experts agree on it. In the second place, none of you have made the slightest attempt (they wouldn’t dare) to translate a word of this. You wouldn’t touch it yourselves. All you can agree on is that Joseph Smith must be wrong. So what did the New York Times say? A big scare headline all across the page of the New York Times: “MORMONS REVILE SCHOLARSHIP.” That was just because he asked some perfectly good questions. He was a better scholar than any of them, incidentally. Of course, he was in another field, but he could point out that they were trying to be so scientific about it and they had done nothing scientific about it. The reaction was that he was reviling scholarship. It was the most absurd thing you ever heard of—as if there was such a thing as Egyptian Wissenschaft [science].

Verse 28: “When Amulek had spoken these words the people cried out against him, saying: Now we know that this man is a child of the devil, for he hath lied unto us; for he hath spoken against our law. And now he says that he has not spoken against it.” This is the idea. This is typical legal sophistry here. He criticized the lawyers for their lawlessness, but to criticize the lawyers is to revile the law. They are the wise lawyers that [the people] had chosen. Amulek said he had not criticized the law but the lawyers. Ah, so he had lied when he said he didn’t criticize the law, because he did criticize the lawyers. So they had him in a trap now. This is typical. Verse 29: “And again, he has reviled against our lawyers, and our judges. And it came to pass that the lawyers put it into their hearts that they should remember these things against him.” Joseph Smith’s insight into lawyers is very good here. And verse 32 is the bottom line: “Now the object of these lawyers was to get gain [are you surprised? The bottom line was money, and here it is]; and they got gain according to their employ.” You may have followed The Paper Chase. The main object of all these people that go through all those shenanigans and all that dirty work is to get themselves connected with big corporations and make a lot of money. That’s the way it goes.

Brother Welch, who is in our Law School, has made a very good study on this next chapter about the payment of judges according the senine. It seems that in the ancient court the judge had to be paid before you were let out of prison. It says here that the judges’ pay was one senine a day. Later on it tells us in 3 Nephi 12:26 that you won’t come out of prison until you have paid the last senine. They won’t let you out until you have paid the judges. The judge is paid if nothing else. That’s exactly the system we have in the Book of Mormon, as Brother John Welch has pointed out. According to the law of Mosiah, judges would “receive wages according to the time which they labored.” It was a senine a day. Alma 11:3: “And the judge received for his wages according to his time—a senine of gold for a day, or a senum of silver, which is equal to a senine of gold.”
Then it breaks down the monetary system. (I certainly went off half cocked this morning.) I should have brought an article by Richard Smith who is a chemistry professor at Harvard. He analyzed this money system and came up with surprising things. It tells us here that “they altered their reckoning and their measure, according to the minds and the circumstances of the people.” They were not frozen, rigid, unyielding, or unrealistic in their monetary system. It says they changed their money to suit the circumstances and the times. Every nation has different monetary units. The exchange makes possible a lot of shenanigans for money making in the market. But here he says “they altered their reckoning and their measure according to the minds and circumstances of the people, in every generation [ah ha, it’s the Fed they’re fiddling around with now, isn’t it? They change the value and designation of the money as they go], until the reign of the judges, they having been established by king Mosiah.” This was the system established by King Mosiah. Since the new constitution this is what they had done; they had adjusted the money. They had a system which ran in sevens instead of fives and tens; or sixes and twelves, as the English [system] does; or the decimal system as we use it. It ran in sevens, and Richard Smith pointed out it was the best possible system that could be devised. It used the least coins for any necessary transaction. If you want to figure out a system that will use a minimum amount of coins and save you a lot of trouble, this is the system. It’s an almost perfect system which Joseph Smith devised for his Nephites here [laughter]. We won’t analyze it here, but I’ll try to bring that article next time.

This is a very interesting thing that hits you very hard here; it’s really something. Notice that the senum of silver was the basic [unit] of the money. Verse 7: “A senum of silver was equal to a senine of gold, and either for a measure of barley.” So they measured everything by [determining] how much silver it would take to buy a measure of barley. That was the market price of gold and silver. A senum of silver or a senine of gold, which is much smaller, would buy you a measure of barley. But it was barley. Then he says it again [in verse 15] with just silver this time: “A shiblon is half of a senum; therefore, a shiblon for half a measure of barley.” Notice that things were measured in terms of barley. This is very interesting because the first Babylonian and the first Egyptian money were always the amount of silver necessary to buy a measure of barley. It was always barley. It wasn’t emer wheat or the other grains they had. And it’s very interesting that barley doesn’t grow wild in Egypt as emer wheat and other things do. But barley was it. It was the word for money, and it was what they used. It started in Babylonia supposedly that barley was a silver standard, but the final decision was how much you could buy with it, of course. That was determined by how much you would have to pay for a measure of barley. The value of a measure of barley wouldn’t change, but the value of the silver would. So you could go into all sorts of speculation; it was just set up for the market. But the fact that it’s barley they refer to, I think, is very striking because nobody knew that in Joseph Smith’s day. It wasn’t until the 1850s that they discovered that. It first came out in the Babylonian [civilization], and then later was discovered in Egypt that barley was the standard.

Verse 20: “Now, it was for the sole purpose to get gain, because they received their wages according to their employ, therefore, they did stir up the people to riotings [a very profitable business]; . . . therefore they did stir up the people against Alma and Amulek. (I was so anxious to get to that last verse in chapter 10 that I forgot Brother Zeezrom here.) “Now he was the foremost to accuse Amulek and Alma [he was the leader], he being one of the most expert among them, having much business to do among the people.” There it is. He had associations, he had connections, he was making a lot of money, etc.—the
typical lawyer. Back in those days did they do it exactly as we are doing it today? If you keep up on the *Wall Street Journal*, you know it's the very same sort of thing. Yes, they did. I wrote a long article on this, and I taught a course in ancient rhetoric at Berkeley. That was the theme. Of course, ancient rhetoric was the training of lawyers for the law schools and the legislative courts. They worked right together, but you had to be a lawyer. It's a long story about ancient rhetoric. It was thoroughly corrupt, and it destroyed the ancient world. He says the same thing is going to destroy them here. But this Zeezrom was the most expert. Now we refer to him again here [in Alma 11:21].

The name *Zeezrom* is very interesting. We'll allow for the *mination* on the end. In the Book of Mormon names regularly end in *m* and *n*, just as they do in Semitic. In early Semitic they end in *n*; in later Semitic they end in *m*. That's the regular ending. *Rajulin* in Arabic is a *man*, and *îsh/ânâshîm* in Hebrew. In the later form we put an *m* on the end of it. But good old Zeezrom's name is the same as that of Djoser. The greatest king of Egypt probably was Djoser, the king of the Third Dynasty. It's pronounced Djoser and spelled Djoser. And it's the same word as *Deseret*. It means "holy land, red land, desert, honey." *Deseret* means all sorts of things. The *m* on the end is a feminine ending. But *Jezzer* is a very common word in Egypt. It means "holy, sacred, set apart," and other things as well. It also means "the red country of Egypt." But Zeezrom's name is probably based on the Egyptian word *Jezzer*, which was a popular name. But this Zeezrom was a character anyway, wherever he got his name.

He begins to argue here, and he puts up the best argument he can. "Now Zeezrom was a man who was expert in the devices of the devil, that he might destroy that which was good [he set him up perfectly]. . . . Will ye answer the questions which I shall put unto you?" He has it all set up. He asks a very crude question here. I mean if he is trying to be subtle, isn't this about as crude as you can get? He says, "Behold, here are six onties of silver, and all these will I give thee if thou wilt deny the existence of a Supreme Being?" In front of all those people there, you see. Would he accept a bribe as conspicuously as that after his moral tirades, etc.? Well, of course he wouldn't. What is the guy planning to do? It lets us know what he's planning to do. As Amulek tells him, I know you had no intention to pay. What he was going to do was to up the ante. This was just a like a typical TV game show crowd. They would say, "Take it, take it, take it," and get more and more excited. He was going to offer him a fabulous amount, so people would think the guy was crazy for not taking it, whatever he believed. It's the corruptibility of the times. But Amulek said, I know you weren't going to pay it anyway, but I'm not going to accept it whatever it is. It seems like a rather crude approach, but you can see what he was doing. He had these people in the palms of his hands. It said he had much business with the people, and he was the most skillful lawyer in the place. He was the top man.

Verse 23: "Now Amulek said: O thou child of hell, why tempt ye me? Knowest thou that the righteous yieldeth to no such temptations? [even in a prize show here] . . . Nay, thou knowest that there is a God, but thou lovest that lucre more than him [it's the money that has spoiled him, he says]. And now thou hast lied before God unto me. Thou saidst unto me—Behold these six onties, which are of great worth, I will give unto thee—when thou hadst it in thy heart to retain them from me." He said, of course you weren't going to pay me that. He knew he wasn't.

Then he starts setting forth the gospel plan. Chapters 11, 12, 13, and 14 are a very important part of the Book of Mormon. If you say the Book of Mormon contains the
fullness of the everlasting gospel, this is it. This is the gospel plan, and a perfect epitome of
the whole thing is given by Alma all through here. You’ll see that it goes back to the old
law of Moses. It has everything in it after verse 35, following this question/answer
episode. He starts cross examining, and Amulek is more than a match for him. Verse 34:
“Shall he save his people in their sins? And Amulek answered and said unto him: I say
unto you he shall not, for it is impossible for him to deny his word. Now Zeezrom said
unto the people: See that ye remember these things [watch that—we’ll catch him on that];
for he said there is but one God; yet he saith that the Son of God shall come, but he shall
not save his people—as though he had authority to command God.” Notice that he omits
the part, “in their sins.” He just leaves that out. He says don’t say “in their sins” is a typical
lawyer question. Answer yes or no; will he save his people? Well, he won’t save them in
their sins. I didn’t say “in their sins”; leave that out. I’m just asking you a question.
Answer me yes or no—will he save his people? Of course, it’s a conditioned answer. This is
a very favorite trick of lawyers. Their tricks are all easy, foolish, and transparent. They
always work though, more or less.

Then Amulek says you’re the one that lies “for thou sayest that I spake as though I had
authority to command God because I said he shall not save his people in their sins. And I
say unto you again that he cannot save them in their sins [that’s the thing he hadn’t
mentioned]; for I cannot deny his word. . . . Now Zeezrom saith again unto him: Is the
Son of God the very Eternal Father?” This is the crux of the Christological
controversy—how can he be the Son and the Father again? He tells us here in the next
verse what he is the father of. It doesn’t mention the Son here—just as Joseph Fielding
Smith used to teach that Jesus Christ is our father because he made possible our physical
bodies here and he made possible the Resurrection. It’s through him that the Resurrection
is possible. Who is it that begets a person’s body? Well, it’s your father. He doesn’t beget
your spirit, but he brings forth your body. Well, Jesus Christ by his work made the
Resurrection possible—the literal bringing forth of the flesh. Not flesh and blood, but of
the flesh to live eternally after the Resurrection. The one that makes that possible is your
real father. He is the father who makes the Resurrection possible. We are not resurrected
just as spirits or ghosts; we are resurrected with a real body. In that case he is truly the
father, but not of our spirits. He is never referred to as that.

Verse 39: “And Amulek said unto him: Yea, he is the very Eternal Father of heaven and of
earth, and all things which in them are.” He made the whole thing possible. And Hebrews
1:2 says the same thing. He made possible the physical resurrection. “And he shall come
into the world to redeem his people.” To redeem something, as we said before, is to bring
back somebody who had been there before—to bring him home again. Redemptio is to
buy back again. It’s to buy back something that was yours before and got lost; now you
buy it back again. Well, we were with Him in the eternities before this. Now we have been
separated, and then we go back again. “And he shall take upon him the transgressions of
those who believe on his name; and these are they that shall have eternal life, and
salvation cometh to none else.”

The Atonement is limited, you notice—but everybody is going to get resurrected. This is
an important thing, and he brings this out. “Therefore the wicked remain as though there
had been no redemption made, except it be the loosing of the bands of death.” He
couldn’t buy us back if we didn’t belong to him at some former time. But were we
damned here? Did we separate ourselves from him? Yes, by the Fall we were separated to
learn what we have to learn. How can we be brought back? Nevertheless, whether you
have been good or bad, “all shall rise from the dead and stand before God, and be judged
according to their works . . . and the death of Christ shall loose the bands of this temporal death, that all shall be raised from this temporal death.” That makes him truly the Father as well as the Son. The temporal death is the death here, so there will be a physical resurrection.

Verse 43: “The spirit and the body shall be reunited again,” as they were here during this life. Of course, this is the ultimate question—this is the big one. These two verses here are the best answer, the best definition you will get anywhere, of what resurrection is: “The spirit and the body shall be reunited again in its perfect form; both limb and joint shall be restored to its proper frame, even as we now are at this time.” Now there is a very striking thing, because in the last issue of Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache, the basic clearinghouse of Egyptological stuff, there’s a long article by Emma Brunner-Traut on this subject. This both limb and joint is an Egyptian expression. It’s an interesting thing that the Jews, the Arabs, and the Egyptians had no word for body. They just think of the body as a collection of members. The gûf of the body is just the trunk; the jism in Arabic is just the trunk, etc. It’s the same thing in Egyptian. The word it is simply members. They write it with members, and they write three members. But you are just an assemblage of arms, legs, joints and other members. They always refer to it that way. They would never use the expression “resurrection of the body.” They would say, “the resurrection of the body with its members added, and the joints that have to go with the members.” It’s a peculiar thing because you don’t find that in the Bible. This is the interesting thing where he says, “The spirit and the body shall be reunited again in its perfect form.” What does this mean by “perfect form”? They would say, “Yes, the body could be restored again, but it must have all its limbs and all its joints and all in working order.” That’s what he says here, “both limb and joint,” as if they didn’t belong to the body. Well, the Egyptians, the Hebrews, and the Greeks before Homer [didn’t have a word for body]. Homer had no word for body; he used guia, which means members. Then there’s the other word for torso, the söma, but the [Greek word for] body comes after Homer. It’s a very interesting thing that the ancients didn’t think of the body as one particular unit. Surprising isn’t it? They divided it up.

“Both limb and joint shall be restored to its proper frame, even as we now are at this time [notice he is making it very vivid what’s going to happen]; and we shall be brought to stand before God, knowing even as we know now, and have a bright recollection of all our guilt.” We will be right back to square one, right back where we are now. But we’ll have a bright recollection; it will all come back to us. We will take up exactly where we left off before, so nothing will be lost. [You’ll remember] everything you experienced here, in other words. No experience and no detail of this life is wasted here. It will always be either for you or against you, even if you are guilty of wasting time, etc. It will all be with you then. It will all return, so nothing is lost here—everything is recorded. A good psychologist can get most of it out of you now just by hypnotizing you or cross-examining you, etc. So it happens.

Verse 44: “Now, this restoration shall come to all.” To everybody. Well, doesn’t that solve the question? That’s the big one. What do the Buddhists and the Moslems, etc., have to worry about? They are going to get just as much resurrected as we are. They are going to have as much eternal life as we do. Ah yes, but it’s the level. The idea, as he tells us here, is whether we have gained anything while we were here. But they are good people, too. There are righteous people among them, just as there are wicked Christians and Jews, etc.
Being resurrected is the only thing that worries most people. Alma 12:9 puts them into the picture (the mysteries of God), but let’s go on and see what happens here.

“. . . and even there shall not so much as a hair of their heads be lost.” That’s the expression, but that doesn’t mean we’ll have all the hair that was ever cut off. That would be something. But you recognize how these expressions are—that everything will be as it should be in its proper and perfect form, which means we’ll be very different. I won’t suffer from malnutrition there, so I won’t be so short, or something like that. “But every thing shall be restored [restored again] to its perfect frame, as it is now, or in the body, and shall be brought and be arraigned before the bar of Christ the Son, and God the Father, and the Holy Spirit, which is one Eternal God [there you go again; this is what atonement is: when you are made at-one, you are one in that case], to be judged according to their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil.” They are going to be at-one. Not one person, but one office and calling, which requires one comprehension. They comprehend the same things, etc. As our knowledge becomes more perfect, the knowledge of all of us becomes more alike. As we become more perfect physically, we also become more alike. But the external is not what our true nature is; nevertheless, we have to have this to carry on at another level. “I say unto you that this mortal body is raised to an immortal body, that is from death, even from the first death unto life, that they can die no more.” This goes for everybody here. This is really at-one-ment, coming together. In at-one-ment of the body and spirit, you bring them together to be one again. They had been separated before. That’s redemption, bringing them back again. And they are at-one with each other.

Incidentally, Paul makes it very clear that he is following the old Greek tradition when he tells the famous Roman story [to] Agrippa about the argument between the head and the stomach. Or can the eye say to the hand, “I have no need of thee,” speaking of them as if they were separate members arguing with each other. Paul uses that expression: Is the head more important than the stomach? That’s the famous argument of Agrippa. No part of the body can say that the rest can get along without it; it’s all one and nothing is superior. They viewed it as separate members, but this is different. “. . . that they can die no more; their spirits uniting with their bodies, never to be divided.” You can divide spirit and body, and also the people can be divided from each other. [This includes] the spirit and the body, the members of the body themselves, and all the rest of us. “. . . never to be divided; thus the whole becoming spiritual and immortal, that they can no more see corruption.”

Well, that’s putting us on a different stage all right, and in that stage you are going to go on forever. So it’s of enormous importance that you get started on the right foot while you are here because this is where we choose our direction. This is where you get going. That’s why it pays to have the gospel. It makes all the difference in the world that people hear the gospel to know how to prepare for this. As he is going to tell us, this is the time to prepare. Now when Zeezrom heard this, he began to tremble because it was the question he thought couldn’t be answered.

Alma 12:1: “Now Alma, seeing that the words of Amulek had silenced Zeezrom, . . . He opened his mouth and began to speak unto him.” Alma gets into the picture now and goes to the heart of the matter, which Zeezrom had been avoiding. He wouldn’t touch that. “He began to tremble under a consciousness of his guilt.” It had all come back to him. The resurrection stops everybody cold after going through all the expository stuff. The clergy of the Catholics, Protestants, and Jews always talk around it and talk around it. They will never come right back to it and make a clear specific statement like this. You
can believe this or reject it, but if there is a resurrection this is what it is. So stop messing around about it. This being Easter week, they will talk a lot about the Resurrection. “Well, it’s a spiritual resurrection,” etc. St. Augustine said he believed in an afterlife, but the idea of a resurrection is utterly absurd—we couldn’t have flesh resurrected. Even Augustine said that.

He had an opening now, so Alma followed up “to explain things beyond, or to unfold the scriptures beyond that which Amulek had done. Now the words that Alma spake unto Zeezrom were heard by the people round about.” They were in on the discussion, too. Now as to the subtlety of the devil: “And thou seest that we know that thy plan was a very subtle plan, as to the subtlety of the devil, for to lie and to deceive this people that thou mightest set them against us, to revile us and to cast us out [not having the answers, the only excuse for religious people is to be very offended, and touchy, and dangerous]. Now this was a plan of thine adversary, and he hath exercised his power in thee.” Notice that the adversary is the adversary to Zeezrom as well as he is to us; he’s not the friend of those that follow him. It’s interesting that we “cozy up” to our adversary, the one who is really our enemy. He is our adversary, and yet we seek to make friends with him and follow him all over the place. He leads us around by the nose because we allow it.

Verse 6: “And behold I say unto you all that this was a snare of the adversary . . . that he might bring you into subjection unto him, that he might encircle you about with his chains, that he might chain you down to everlasting destruction, according to the power of his captivity.” His great ego asserts itself over others—he wants to get you in. Then Zeezrom began to tremble when Alma spoke, “for power was given unto them that they might know of these things according to the spirit of prophecy. And Zeezrom began to inquire of them diligently, that he might know more concerning the kingdom of God.” Well, now there’s been a turning point; he has changed his mind. They could see through him and he knew it. So now he is going to ask some interesting questions, and he becomes a different man. It’s very interesting that this top man, this most depraved person, is going to become a zealous missionary. It’s surprising what goes on, you see. “And Zeezrom began to inquire of them diligently.” Once they start asking the questions, that’s exactly what we want. The usual thing is to ask the question and then leave before they answer it. They always do that. They ask very shrewd and pointed questions about the Book of Mormon, etc., but do not wait for an answer. That’s the thing to do [they think]. Those are the questions we want, but we want to have a chance to answer them, and want to go into the mysteries of God. He calls them “the mysteries of God.” Verse 9: “It is given unto many to know the mysteries of God; nevertheless they are laid under a strict command that they shall not impart only according to the portion of his word which he doth grant unto the children of men, according to the heed and diligence which they give unto him.” That’s true of all learning. You learn your math, or whatever it is, only according to the heed and diligence you give to it. The Lord is not going to give you something that you haven’t paid attention to with heed and diligence. In section 10 of the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord “bawls out” Oliver Cowdery and tells him to think it out in his own mind. You solve the problem and then ask me if the answer is correct.

Verse 10: “And therefore, he that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word.” Now it keeps using the word harden all throughout here; it’s a very interesting thing. Notice, “harden his heart” in verse 10 and “harden their hearts” at the beginning of verse 11. Verse 13: “Then if our hearts have been hardened, yea, if we have hardened our hearts against the word.” What is this “hardening of the heart” that’s used even more in the rest of the chapter? Well, [it’s like] hardening of the arteries or the
joints, or the drawing up of tissue. I know at my age things start hardening, and that’s the point. They become less effective, less workable, etc. Intelligence is a quick, lively, mobile, fluid sort of thing. I have to wait two or three minutes sometimes to remember something, which ordinarily I would have remembered instantly. But it always comes, so it doesn’t worry me very much. There are the four elements that the ancients talk about, the four humors. They go from earth to water, air, and fire. They become more refined and more active, and it’s the fire that’s the spiritual. That’s the more vivid and the more active, as you know. The molecules move faster. You start out with heavy earth. It’s the same thing as Shakespeare says:

Sit, Jessica: look, how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold:
There’s not the smallest orb which thou behold’st

[See there, that’s what I’m telling you about—it’s hardened up. I should be able to remember that without any trouble. Ah, here we go. See, it comes.]

But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubims.
Such harmony is in immortal souls;
But, whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it. . . .

[That’s this hardening.]

The man that hath no music in himself,
Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,
Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils [of war];
The motions of his spirit are dull as night,
And his affections dark as Erebus:
Let no such man be trusted.

Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, act V, scene 1

See, it’s this thickening, densing, and darkening that goes on with the mind. And it’s the same sort of thing that he is talking about here [in Alma] when he talks about hardening. That’s why he uses this word *hardening*; it’s very effective. That is what happens when you get things hardened. You harden into a mold is what you do. If you’ve made up your mind and you won’t change it at all, that’s hardness of heart. You become doctrinaire; you become an idealogue, etc. This is an interesting thing to note here; notice the nice contrast between these verses: “And he that will not harden his heart, to him is given [progressively, you see] the greater portion of the word, until it is given unto him to know the mysteries of God until he know them in full.” That’s progressive knowledge, and notice that the next verse reverses that exactly: “And they that will harden their hearts, to them is given the lesser portion of the word until they know nothing concerning his mysteries.” In the first one, if they don’t harden their hearts, they will progress until they know the mysteries in full. In the next one, they will get harder and harder and know less and less until finally they know nothing at all. It works in the opposite direction. You can’t be static. You can’t just stay between them; you must make your choice. As Heraclitus says, the road upward and the road downward are the same. It depends entirely on the way you are facing. You can’t compromise between them; you take the up road or
the down road. You can’t go off at an angle, or anything like that. It’s the same thing here. You harden or you keep open. “Now this is what is meant by the chains of hell.” He has been using “chains of hell” just as an image here. They aren’t real chains, but this is what is meant by the “chains of hell.” It refers to them again in Alma 13:30; that’s a very common statement here.

Verse 13: “Then if our hearts have been hardened, yea, if we have hardened our hearts against the word, . . . then will our state be awful.” Then it happens. Notice in verse 14 the three things we can do that all condemn us if we harden our hearts. We have no idea of changing; we’ve made up our minds what it is. See, I may be completely wrong in everything I say. Well, all right, I’m still open. I’ll still change. I find that I’m way behind in certain things. “For our words will condemn us, yea, all our works will condemn us; . . . and our thoughts will also condemn us.” These are the three things we can produce: words, works, and thoughts. The others go back to thoughts. They are the three things that motivate us, and they can all become hardened and conventionalized and in a groove. In that case “we shall not dare to look up to our God.” You can see why. If you get in your cozy shell, anything outside will terrify you. It’s like being in your foxhole. You don’t want to get out, and yet you know it’s dangerous to stay in. What are you going to do? “And we would fain be glad if we could command the rocks and the mountains to fall upon us to hide us from his presence.” That’s how guilty we would feel. We don’t want to face up to it. We don’t want to get out and get mobile again. Once you have been frozen in the mold, once you change the custom, the thought of having to get out and move around in the open is terrifying. We have an awareness of our own responsibility and potential. When we haven’t taken advantage of it, we feel very guilty. We do not want to look upon Him; we would prefer the rocks and the mountains to fall on us.

But sorry! We are ongoing creatures. You are going to live forever, he says. You can die no more. Verse 15: “But this cannot be; we must come forth and stand before him [we are not going to get out of it, so we might as well get used to it now; that’s why we need to hear the gospel now] in his glory, and in his power . . . and acknowledge to our everlasting shame [we can’t avoid it; we can’t deny that it’s all true] that all his judgments are just. . . . He has all power to save every man that believeth on his name and bringeth forth fruit meet for repentance.” He wants to save us, and if we don’t take advantage of it we are going to be very much ashamed of ourselves. So therefore the subject is repentance; we preach nothing but repentance.

Then he talks about the second death. The second death is on a different level, just like the morning of the first resurrection is on another level of existence permanently hereafter. The second death is when you die as to things pertaining to righteousness. As Macbeth said,

I’ve stepped in blood so far,  
That should I wade no more  
Return would be as tedious as go o’er.

You reach a point when it’s easier just to go ahead with it than go back and try to reform and change things. You reach that point of no return. That’s what happens here. Then you are stuck with it. You are in the second death until you don’t want to change. It’s the sort of thing that paranoids get. You die as to things pertaining to righteousness. When you are paranoid you go on living, but you go on living at another level. It won’t be such a happy one. Eventually, you are going to have to come around anyway, so [we should]
get that into our thick heads. Verse 17: “Then is the time when their torments shall be as a lake of fire and brimstone [it doesn’t mean literally]; . . . they shall be chained down to an everlasting destruction, according to the power and captivity of Satan, he having subjected them according to his will.” He just told us what he meant by being “chained down.” That is what is meant by the “chains of hell,” when you go on until you know nothing. You become completely committed [to evil], and you can’t get out of the hole that you have dug yourself into. Notice how strongly he puts it in verse 18: “Then . . . they shall be as though there had been no redemption made.” That’s a terrible doom on you. There are people like that now, of course, as though there had been no redemption made. But they are stuck with it. In the same verse he says, “And they cannot die, seeing there is no more corruption.” This is the real stroke of doom here. It’s not death or destruction that’s the stroke of doom. It’s the fact that they can’t die, and yet they are living as if there had been no redemption. They are going to have to go through an awful hell before they can get out of that.

Verse 20: “But there was one Antionah, who was a chief ruler among them, came forth and said unto him . . .” He’s indignant. He’s had all he can take here, and he says, what is this stuff you are talking about here, “that the soul can never die?” Then he tells [Alma] about the cherubim and the flaming sword that guarded the tree of life. Adam was not supposed to touch the tree of life, lest he partake of it and live forever in his sins. So, [Antionah] said we can die—we are not supposed to eat of the tree of life; we are forbidden to touch it at all, so that settles that. “. . . lest our first parents should enter and partake of the fruit of the tree of life, and live forever? [no] And thus we see that there was no possible chance that we should live forever.” The tree was set up there, but we couldn’t eat from it. If we had eaten from it, then we would live forever. But he said, no, there’s to be no tree. He thought that was a good argument. Alma said, ah, that’s all right for now. “All mankind became a lost and fallen people.” They did; that’s true. They couldn’t go on living that way; that’s the whole point—living in the sewer.

Verse 24: “And we see that death comes upon mankind . . . which is the temporal death [that’s real]; nevertheless, there was a space granted unto man in which he might repent [that’s what we are here for; this is a very important verse here]; therefore this life became a probationary state.” We are being tested every minute of the day by the choices we make, by the reactions we have, by the things we say, by the things we think about. It’s like the ancient Christian doctrine of the two ways, the way to the right and the way to left, whichever they are. You must make the choice, and you may have made the wrong choice every day of your life up until now, but as long as you are here it is still not too late. You can still make the right choice—every minute you can make the right choice. It’s never too late to make the right one, but you can make the wrong one—that happens, too. We have a time to repent; “therefore this life became a probationary state.” Well, it can’t be anything else; it’s a time to prepare to meet God. That’s why we need the gospel here. We are assured of our resurrection. That’s all very well taken care of, but how do we prepare for the long stretch ahead? That’s what we are doing here. This is “a time to prepare to meet God; a time to prepare for that endless state which has been spoken of by us, which is after the resurrection of the dead.

Verse 25: “Now, if it had not been for the plan of redemption, which was laid from the foundation of the world, there could have been no resurrection of the dead.” This is the doctrine of the preexistence. (Oh, the time is up now.) I was going to talk about the Christian doctrine of predestination. The only alternative to preexistence is predestination. We will talk about that next time. [This verse] goes right back to the
preexistence. The plan was set for redemption and for resurrection. It was already arranged before the foundation of the world that we should come back again, that we should be redeemed and raised up again. Resurrection means raised up again. “But there was a plan of redemption laid, which shall bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, of which has been spoken.”

See, that whole thing was planned ahead of time. This is the picture. He says this whole life is nothing but a preparation for the next stage—for the long haul ahead. You did pretty well on the one before. This was the teaching of the ancient Christians. Origen was the best of ancient Christian theologians. He says they didn’t know what to make of these doctrines, but the brethren in the early church used to teach that before we came into this world we had to pass an examination, just as we do when we leave this world. In the hereafter we will be tested in the judgment. Well, there was a judgment before we came here. That’s why the various conditions in which we are born here, says Origen, are not unfair and unjust. Some people are born into a miserable condition; other people are born with great advantages and blessings. In the end we are all very much alike, though; nevertheless, this great difference has to do with what we did before. Some people are born, for example, in the Church. He said that means they had good marks before they came here. Others got pretty bad marks, so they start at a disadvantage. It’s going to be the same after this life. If you behave yourself here in this time of probation, then you will begin with an advantage in the next world. That’s why we preach the gospel.

Verse 26: “And now behold, if it were possible that our first parents could have gone forth and partaken of the tree of life they would have been forever miserable, having no preparatory state.” It’s too late now. You’ve partaken of the tree of life; you’re going to live forever now, whether you like it or not, in the state you are in now. They would have lived forever in their sins; they would have been stuck as we are now. Well, that was not to happen. They mustn’t touch the tree of life; it is too soon. We will come to that later when we get to the tree of life, but this has become a preparatory state. Well, it all makes very good sense, and it’s the only answer, the only scenario, that anyone has ever come up with. The Christians don’t have any. They say it’s a mystery and a contradiction they just don’t understand. They won’t accept the physical resurrection or the judgment that way. They say it’s a spiritual thing, etc. The great center of Easter for them is the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem; that’s where they all go at Easter. That’s where the Crusaders went and where everybody goes—to the Holy Sepulchre. Why go to the sepulchre? Remember, when the ladies went to the sepulchre with John there was an angel there. He said why are you looking for him here? “Why are you looking for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen.”

As John Chrysostom said, we go so we can view the bloody image of the Lord and see his sufferings, see him on the cross, and all that. Well, that’s all over with, he said. We’re told that in the scriptures where the angel says, “He is not here; he is risen.” We don’t talk about him dead. Christos anesthé is the way the Greeks put it. Everybody says Christos anesthé, as far as that goes. But now we are coming to Good Friday, and oh that’s black and terrible—that’s a terrible thing we have to go through. [This idea] is very ancient and goes back to prehistoric times. And the gospel plan was there, too.
This is the hardest chapter in the Book of Mormon. It’s the one that separates us farthest from the world. It’s the [twelfth] chapter of Alma, where the gospel plan is given. We are talking about free will, Adam’s fall, etc. We will start with verse 25: “Now, if it had not been for the plan of redemption, which was laid from the foundation, there could have been no resurrection of the dead.” So there was a plan to bring us back again. Well, why let us leave in the first place? This is the thing the Christians can’t understand—to go away and fall, and then have to go through all that routine and suffering to come back again. Well, this is the only explanation you will find of it. We have it, and it’s not only perfectly logical, but we can see that the ancient Christians were firmly converted to it, too. It was laid from the foundation of the world, so it goes back to the preexistence. The whole thing was planned. The word plan doesn’t appear in the Bible, but everybody is using it today. They never used it before, but you notice that all the TV ministers use plan. Even the pope uses the word plan now, though it had never been used before. Here it is here. The whole thing was planned ahead of time to prepare us for the long haul. If we are going to live through another phase of existence that goes on and on and on beyond imagination, there must be something big, some general shakeup, a big preparation, and something very new now. We come to it here. “If it were possible that our first parents could have gone forth and partaken of the tree of life they would have been forever miserable, having no preparatory state.” Remember, he [Antionah] was arguing about the tree of life being kept from us. [Alma] said yes, the tree of life was kept from us for this purpose. They would have been utterly miserable because they hadn’t had a chance to prepare yet. They would have been lost forever because they had sinned, etc.

Verse 27: “But behold, it was not so; but it was appointed unto men that they must die [they must pass through that]; and after death, they must come to judgment, even that same judgment of which we have spoken, which is the end.” He said that men should know these things. “Therefore he sent angels to converse with them, who caused men to behold of his glory.” Without this we would never know. The angels have to intervene; you’d never [figure] this out yourself. You see where this is going to take us. Verse 30: “And they began from that time forth to call on his name; therefore God conversed with men [there have been these contacts with angels; they don’t happen all the time; they are rare, but at the great turning points they always take place] and made known unto them the plan of redemption, which had been prepared from the foundation of the world.” As we mentioned before, Origen was teaching the same thing—that we prepared to come here, just as we are preparing now to go there. That’s why we have our different ratings here, as we will have there.

Now the first transgression. The Lord said to Adam, I don’t want you to do this. Adam later said, but I want to do it. He had to do that to assert his will. He had a good reason to do it because he had to keep his first commandment, which was not to get away from Eve. She had been commanded to stick with him like glue. He had to do that. Eve had [partaken], so he willingly said, well, I want to do it this way. So he did it that way. Had he
sinned greatly? No, at this time we are told here that he didn’t know anything about the plan. He was just doing the best he could, so to speak. After many days an angel came and explained it to him, and then Eve said, wasn’t it a good thing after all? Then the Lord said to him, your transgression in the Garden of Eden has been forgiven you. We don’t hold that against you at all, but you had to make that independent step. That’s a very important thing, you see.

We were very strictly brought up. When I was a little kid, we would sooner be dead than go to a movie on Sunday. That was absolutely unthinkable; we were petrified. But once a year, my mother would take my brother and me, and we would go to a show on Sunday. Well, I thought the lightning would strike us. I would go in tears. It was to [make this point] perfectly clear. If we didn’t, we’d be perfectly helpless. We’d be automatons; we’d get no merit for not going. Of course, the lightning didn’t strike or anything like that. But it was to show us that we were free to act. We could go if we wanted; therefore, if we didn’t go, we got credit for that. Otherwise, we were just paralyzed; we were just automatons. We were just acting automatically.

This is the ancient law of liberty. I don’t know whether I should refer to that. What’s the alternative to going through this? Well, it’s that men are either damned from the beginning by the will of God or blessed from the beginning. That’s predestination, and this is the basic doctrine of Catholics, Protestants, Moslems, and everybody else. [Writes predestination on the board.] You can leave the n off if you want. St. Augustine in the fifth century gave it its official form praedestinatio ad damnationem or praedestinatio ad salvationem. You are predestined to be saved or to be damned, and there is nothing you can do about it. That sounds rather rigorous, and Gottschalk of Fulda in the eighth century tried to soften it. Many attempts were made. For example, St. Augustine didn’t like it. Nobody liked this doctrine of predestination. It was too hard, but there was no alternative. If they hadn’t been baptized, they would be damned. If they didn’t know the doctrine, they hadn’t been saved. That means infant damnation, because babies haven’t accepted the gospel—or been baptized is what they really mean. He tried to get around it by a very amusing doctrine that he called “a mild damnation.” Yes, he said, they will be damned and damned to hell, but with a mild damnation. That reminds me, of course, of Bottom in A Midsummer Night’s Dream. The ladies say if he is a lion and roars, he will scare the ladies. He says, no, I won’t scare the ladies. “I will roar as gently as any sucking dove.” He would roar gently, and they are damned gently. No, you can’t be, of course.

Then there was a great debate between Raban Maurus and Hincmar, which was decided on the side of a rigorous predestination—that you are absolutely damned. Then Luther and Melanchthon issued a joint statement which was rigorous predestinationism. Zwingli tried to soften it some. He said because God has infinite power to forgive, we shouldn’t worry about that. But no [they decided] that wasn’t so. They held the great council at Geneva in 1552, which was called “The Consensus of Geneva.” [The conclusion of] that was very strict predestinationism. In fact, it was superlapsarianism, which means that God from all eternity, before you even existed, already damned or blessed every human being to eternity. Before you even existed, your damnation had been assured, or your salvation had been assured, and there is nothing you can do about it. That became the official doctrine of the church with the Council of Geneva in 1552. It’s called “the consensus” because they did concede it.

This strictness was taken up in the Arminian controversy in Holland. It ended with the beginning of the Thirty Years War. That had something to do with its rigors because
Arminianism was very strict presdestinationism. The Council of Dordrecht declared it in 1619, the second year of the Thirty Years War. That rigorous absolutely damned or absolutely saved [doctrine] has a lot to do with the Dutch temperament—the unyielding, intrinsgent Afrikaners, for example. They know how to be cruel and they know how to be absolute, because “righteousness is righteousness.” What they are is absolutely right [in their eyes] because of this rigorous Arminianism of the Arminian Controversy in 1619. It’s very important because it influenced all Europe. They got into the Thirty Years War right after it. It made them absolutely unyielding because God is absolutely unyielding. [According to this doctrine] he made us that way. We are absolutely damned, and there is nothing we can do about it. The Methodists and the mild John Wesley accepted it. Whitefield opposed it; he wanted to soften it some. They had some famous debates in 1741, and Whitefield came to America and preached here. It’s still going on. In the 1870s all the Protestant churches in America were rent by the Walther Predestination Controversy. So they’ve always had to accept it, but they never liked it because it is a very unpleasant and mean sort of thing. But they couldn’t think of any way to get around it, so they were stuck.

We get away from predestination this way, and we don’t find any contradictions here [in Alma] either. But notice this paradox. It looks as if we had a Catch [22] too, doesn’t it? Having first transgressed, they placed “themselves in a state to act.” That’s why he transgressed. Why can’t you act without transgressing? Well, in the presence of God are you going to sin? Are you going to misbehave yourself with God looking on? Remember when the heavenly visitors say, “We will leave you now, but we will return later on.” Then Satan steps onto the stage and says, “Now, is the great day of my power. Adam is on his own now.” It’s the same in the opening lines of the book of Moses. Remember, Moses is smitten and helpless on the ground. He can’t stir his bones for many hours, and he finally begins to move. When he is in this weakest, most helpless condition, then Satan strikes, because Moses is absolutely alone. But [Moses] can remember something of his former existence, and he begins to taunt Satan about being short on glory. He is not the real thing, and Moses recognizes him as a fake.

We had to be made independent this way with this act of defiance, didn’t we? But it wasn’t an act of defiance; Adam chose to go his way was all. He was independent, and he was willing to pay the price for it, too. He did, too—death was the price. That’s the wages he paid. Death came into the world. Remember: “In the day ye eat thereof, ye shall surely die.” He had been told that much, so he was willing to take the chance in that case. We have to give Adam credit for that. He went out on his own, but he had to do that. He had to be cut loose that way.

Verse 32: Therefore God gave unto them commandments, after having made known unto them the plan of redemption, that they should not do evil, the penalty thereof being a second death.” The price [for that] is a second death. Once you’ve known the plan, the price is the second death. Adam didn’t know the plan when he sinned, we are told here; therefore, he was eligible for redemption. He was innocent. He was not defiant; he was being independent. But, as it says in verse 32, after you’ve known the plan then it’s the second death, which is on a different level. “For on such the plan of redemption could have no power.” They sinned in ignorance the first time, but you are not sinning in ignorance this time.

Then we get the word harden again; every verse for the rest of the chapter has a harden in it. Remember [the lines from Shakespeare] about the clay: “But, whilst this muddy vesture
of decay / Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.” The muddy vesture proceeds to harden on us; that’s what we do here. Verse 33: “If ye will repent and harden not your hearts, then will I have mercy upon you, through mine Only Begotten Son [every verse now has mounting severity in it here; once you know the plan, you are in the game]. Therefore, whosoever repenteth and hardeneth not his heart, he shall have claim on mercy through mine Only Begotten Son, unto a remission of his sins [it’s a law of nature]. . . . And now, my brethren, behold I say unto you, that if ye will harden your hearts ye shall not enter into the rest of the Lord. . . . He sendeth down his wrath upon you as in the first provocation . . . to the everlasting destruction of your souls.”

Well, is this too strong: “the everlasting destruction of your souls” just for this? Notice how beautifully it’s put in Jacob 6:8. This is how the Lord treats us here, which means that we deserve what we get. "Behold, will ye reject these words? Will ye reject the words of the prophets; and will ye reject all the words which have been spoken concerning Christ, after so many have spoken concerning him; and deny the good word of Christ, and the power of God, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, and quench the Holy Spirit, and make a mock of the great plan of redemption, which hath been laid for you?” You’ve had all these chances, you see. The Lord appeals to you when he calls on you at different times. Here it is again in verse 6–7: “Yea, today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts; for why will ye die? For behold, after ye have been nourished by the good word of God all the day long, will ye bring forth evil fruit, that ye must be hewn down and cast into the fire?” So you reject, you despise, you deny, you quench, you mock. You’ll have nothing to do with it, and it’s entirely up to you. The power of redemption, of course, can have no power upon you because you don’t want it.

We’re back here [in Alma], and he is saying the same thing. Verse 37: “And now, my brethren, seeing we know these things, and they are true, let us repent, and harden not our hearts.” He keeps repeating that theme—don’t get hardened in your ways. That means be changeable, break the mold, get back where you should be. Alma 13:1: “And again, my brethren, I would cite your minds forward to the time when the Lord God gave these commandments unto his children [this goes way back to the preexistence, the whole plan having been made there] . . . The Lord God ordained priests . . . to teach these things unto the people. And those priests were ordained after the order of his Son, in a manner that thereby the people might know in what manner to look forward to his Son for redemption.” Now concerning this ordaining of priests, notice that the next verse says “in the first place.” Then it says in verse 5 again “in the first place they were on the same standing with their brethren.” What is “in the first place”? Is this in the preexistent state here? These priests were ordained in the first place for that particular purpose. And what does it mean “after the order”? Notice in verse 7 it says, “This high priesthood being after the order of his Son, which order was from the foundation of the world; or in other words [we are not talking about a time sequence at all], being without beginning of days or end of years, being prepared [for how long?] from eternity to all eternity, according to his foreknowledge of all things.”

This is the timeless, ongoing plan of which the priesthood is a conductor of power or energy. But “after the order of something” is to share in its nature, to share in its basic qualities, etc. Aristotle and the Gospel of Philip said, a flea is after the order of a flea, a dog is after the order of a dog, a horse is after the order of a horse, etc. What is it that makes a person eternally, indivisibly, uniquely himself after the order of something? We’re all after the particular order of man, as Aristotle would say, but we are all individuals, too. What is it that makes you individual? John Eccles is the great authority on the brain, and
He gave some talks here. He said it’s that great mystery, the ultimate awareness of self, the ultimate consciousness. It’s the absolute mystery of consciousness. If you could share that with somebody, then there would be a real atonement. Then you would be at-one, wouldn’t you? Then you would be one. To all effects and purposes, you would be one person because you would be of one mind. Well, we are told that the people in Zion are “of one heart and one mind.” Well, your mind is what you are; it’s all you are. If you were of one mind with somebody else, [you would be one]. You have to read 3 Nephi 19 and the Gospel of John, chapters 13–17. He devotes all those chapters just to show how the Father and Son are one, how we become one with them in time, and what it means by “becoming one.” That’s it. If you become of one heart and one mind, how can you become more one than that, as the Father and the Son are? You can be separate persons at the same time. He is talking about that here in verse 2: “. . . thereby the people might know in what manner to look forward to his Son for redemption [the priesthood represents the Son here]. And this is the manner after which they were ordained—being called and prepared from the foundation of the world [eternity to eternity—this is the way it has always been] according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of their exceeding faith and good works; in the first place being left to choose good or evil.”

They had earned a place in the priesthood here because of something righteous they had done in the first place. That’s very interesting because sp tpy is a very favorite expression with the Egyptians—at the time of the pshawt or the sptpy. It means “the first place, in the preexistence, at the time of the Great Council of the p$t. Verse 3: “. . . in the first place being left to choose good or evil.” Notice “being left.” When God leaves you, then you can choose good or evil. Leave me alone if I’m going to choose [between] good and evil. These people way back there were left to choose good or evil, and they chose good. You are the one that makes the decision. When you are pulled equally in two directions, who decides which direction you go? You receive countless impulses and impressions all day long, but you can only focus on one at a time. Which do you choose to focus on, to make all the others just side issues or something behind you? The other becomes incidental, just a framework for that. You’ll concentrate on the thing that you want to. That decides what you will do. Your mind flits around with tremendous speed, like your eyes, and decides what you like to look at and what you are going to do. That’s why anything like drugs [are so harmful]. That’s why the Word of Wisdom is so important—that we be absolutely cold sober. That’s why in the temple we have no kind of narcotics—I mean no music, no colored lights, no processions, no gorgeous costumes, no incense. John Chrysostom wrote on that in the fifth century when he opposed introducing images and big pictures into the churches, etc. He said that people in church start getting interested in the arts and so forth. It was the same thing with the antiphon (anthem) in the Roman mass, which was originally the mass of Aix-la-Chapelle. It was the Gallican mass of Charlemagne that was imported into Rome. But then they started the antiphon. That’s the anthem that begins it, which means “the trying out of the voice.” The tenor would try out his voice. He would go up and down [the scales], as only an Italian tenor can. People would be so fascinated by that—that was the whole meeting. People would just come to hear the tenor. Being very Italian, it became an opera, as it was in the baroque. When they started the Counter Reformation, they attracted people away from the Protestants by putting on a tremendous show. All the art work in great St. Peters was designed by Michelangelo, but Bernini was the one who decorated it. He said, this is the theatrum Dei; this is God’s theater. People will come here for a show. And it has been that. (I don’t know how we got off onto that, but we did.)
Verse 4: “And thus they have been called to this holy calling on account of their faith [they had faith at that time], while others would reject the Spirit of God on account of the hardness of their hearts and blindness of their minds.” Well, why were they hard and blind? I don’t know; ask them. It’s the mystery of iniquity. Why do we choose good or bad? You have it in yourself—you know.

It’s like the New England farmer. The government agent came around and said, “I can teach you how to farm twice as well as you are doing now.” He said, “Shucks, I’m farming half as well as I could right now.” That’s true. If you want to know why somebody is greater than you are—why we’re so small and God is so great—you don’t have to ask any questions. You know why—you don’t make half an effort. I mean I have no right complaining about anything. I want to see people run circles around me, in my field or anywhere else. It gives me a thrill to know it can be done. But you know why you are not greater at this or that than you are. An athlete [should] try to excel himself, nobody else. There will always be somebody who is faster than you are. At the beginning of the great Panathenaic oration by Isocrates, given to all the Greeks met together, he said if every man in Greece could run twice as fast as he does, or lift twice as much, or jump twice as high, or throw twice as far, we would be no better off. Animals do those things better than we do anyway. But if just one man could think twice as well as anybody else, the whole world would be blessed forever after [paraphrased]. That’s where it really counts, and that’s where the Lord comes in. Remember the marvelous testimony that Oliver Cowdery gave. He said when that angel came, that electrifying intelligence just wiped everything else out. He never knew there was anything like that before. Men are just fools, and he saw what they are. Should we read it? Well, that’s what Alma is talking about anyway, so this is relevant, believe me. [He looks for the testimony.] I believe it’s right at the end of the Pearl of Great Price. They put it in different places. It’s such an impressive thing he says. It’s right after Joseph Smith’s history. There it is! It is the last thing in the book [except the Articles of Faith]. Look at the size of the print—it’s invisible! [See Oliver Cowdery’s description in the note to Joseph Smith–History 1:71.]

Oliver Cowdery said, “The Lord, who is rich in mercy, and ever willing to answer the consistent prayer of the humble, after we had called upon Him in a fervent manner, aside from the abodes of men, condescended to manifest to us His will.” Remember, the return of the gospel in every dispensation has always come as a surprise because men have been so far off. There has been a great cultural shock. The angel always has to say, “Don’t be afraid—this is all right. I’ve come to give a message.” It’s a great culture shock; they were not used to anything like this. This is what Joseph Smith went through, and Oliver Cowdery had a taste of it here where he said, “On a sudden, as from the midst of eternity, the voice of the Redeemer spake peace to us, while the veil was parted and the angel of God came down clothed with glory, and delivered the anxiously looked for message, and the keys of the Gospel of repentance. What joy! what wonder! what amazement! While the world was racked and distracted—while millions were groping as the blind for the wall, and while all men were resting upon uncertainty, as a general mass, our eyes beheld, our ears heard, as in the ‘blaze of day’; yes, more—above the glitter of the May sunbeam, which then shed its brilliancy over the face of nature! Then his voice, though mild, pierced to the center, and his words, ‘I am thy fellow-servant,’ dispelled every fear [there’s always that, you see]. We listened, we gazed, we admired! ’Twas the voice of an angel from glory, ’twas a message from the Most High! And as we heard we rejoiced, while His love enkindled upon our souls, and we were wrapped in the vision of the Almighty! Where was room for doubt? Nowhere; uncertainty had fled, doubt had sunk no more to rise, while
fiction and deception had fled forever! [He apostatized later, but he came back and always testified to this.]

“But, dear brother, think, further think for a moment, what joy filled our hearts, and with what surprise we must have bowed, (for who would not have bowed the knee for such a blessing?) when we received under his hand the Holy Priesthood as he said, ‘Upon you my fellow-servants, in the name of Messiah, I confer this Priesthood and this authority, which shall remain upon earth, that the Sons of Levi may yet offer an offering unto the Lord in righteousness!

“I shall not attempt to paint to you the feelings of this heart, nor the majestic beauty and glory which surrounded us on this occasion; but you will believe me when I say, that earth, nor men, with the eloquence of time, cannot begin to clothe language in as interesting and sublime a manner as this holy personage [notice that he calls it ‘interesting:’ the angel had something interesting to say; that’s refreshing, isn’t it?]. No; nor has this earth power to give the joy, to bestow the peace, or comprehend the wisdom which was contained in each sentence as they were delivered by the power of the Holy Spirit! Man may deceive his fellow-men, deception may follow deception, and the children of the wicked one may have power to seduce the foolish and untaught, till naught but fiction feeds the many, and the fruit of falsehood carries in its current the giddy to the grave; but one touch with the finger of his love, yes, one ray of glory from the upper world or one word from the mouth of the Savior, from the bosom of eternity, strikes it all into insignificance, and blots it forever from the mind. The assurance that we were in the presence of an angel, the certainty that we heard the voice of Jesus, and the truth unsullied as it flowed from a pure personage, dictated by the will of God, is to me past description, and I shall ever look upon this expression of the Savior’s goodness with wonder and thanksgiving while I am permitted to tarry; and in those mansions where perfection dwells and sin never comes, I hope to adore in that day which shall never cease.” This is the way it hits you. He is introducing us to something very strange that the Christian world finds very difficult to accept. It gets around predestination very nicely. Christians and Moslems have never been able to shake off predestination, because for some reason we are just made this way.

Now he’s going to tell about Melchizedek here. Alma 13:10: “. . . they choosing to repent and work righteousness rather than to perish.” You must make this choice, you see. So they were “washed white through the blood of the Lamb [that’s the Atonement we were talking about]. Now they, after being sanctified by the Holy Ghost, having their garments made white, being pure and spotless before God, could not look upon sin save it were with abhorrence.”

[The Lord said], “I shall place enmity between thee and the serpent.” Of course, at the sight of a serpent you jump, and you jump high, because you don’t know how deadly it is going to be. But that enmity is your first line of defense. You can overcome it, of course. You can yield to it [temptation], and then get in deeper and deeper. That enmity hits you in the solar plexus. It hits you directly. You don’t have to argue about it. You are walking along, and there’s a big bull snake. You jump like that, you see. But really, the snake is rather nice. There was a rattler with which I used to commune on one of the trails up here. We’d get together all the time; he was always there. There was another one with which I used to go swimming down in Hurricane. In one of those washes in Hurricane, there’s a nice clean pool. Rattlesnakes love water. I would go swimming, and they would go swimming. They were just as nice as they could be in the hot sun, etc. You don’t play around with them, grab them by the tail, or anything like that. But they are pretty nice if
you can get along with them. The first line of defense is that it’s dangerous. Don’t fool around; you don’t do that sort of thing. Like this man who had been bitten 148 times, up in Salt Lake City. Now he has been bitten 149 times, and he is recovering from the bite of an African viper. Wow! Don’t try it.

This is what you must do, he says in verse 14: “Yea, humble yourselves even as the people in the days of Melchizedek.” Then he tells about Melchizedek and his people. These people were as bad as they could be, yet they were saved. What this shows us is that it is possible, making all eligible for judgment. If it is possible for the most wicked to become righteous, as Jeremiah says, then we are all responsible for not becoming righteous. Don’t say you “have stepped in too far, that wade no more would be as tedious as go o’er.”

Verse 17: “And his people had waxed strong in iniquity and abomination; yea, they had all gone astray; they were full of all manner of wickedness; But Melchizedek having exercised mighty faith, and received the office of the high priesthood according to the holy order of God, did preach repentance unto his people. And behold, they did repent.” Notice that this world doesn’t have to be an evil place. It certainly is that, but it doesn’t have to be. We are capable of much better things, all of us all the time. It took Abraham and Melchizedek to get the world off dead center, because once you get in your habits, once you get rooted in, these things become institutionalized, etc. What can shake them? They had to make the first move though, and then God spoke to them. Remember, there must be a stirring below before there can be a stirring above. Abraham prayed for a long time, as we read in [Abraham 2:12], “Thy servant has sought thee diligently; now I have found thee.” You seek before you find, you knock before it is opened, and you ask before you receive. But you make the first move; the miracle of Abraham was that he did. Melchizedek did the same thing. One person makes a difference. That’s a very strong theme in the Book of Mormon—the lone man against the system—whether it’s Alma, or Lehi, or Nephi, or the brother of Jared, or Ammon. It’s all what one man can do.

Verse 19: “Now, there were many before him, and also there were many afterwards, but none were greater.” That’s an interesting thing. Isn’t that rather a vague term? What do they mean by great? Who are the people who are called great? It’s a very interesting thing that the title is never bestowed officially. It’s never bestowed by any rank, with any office, or anything like that. It doesn’t go with [an office]. It is bestowed historically by popular consent. It is associated with people who combine certain qualities in rare combinations. You think of people like Alfred the Great, Alexander the Great, Peter the Great, and Charlemagne—meaning “Charles the Great.” They all had certain things in common. We have Asser’s life of Alfred, for example. We have very good [biographies] of Charlemagne and the rest of them. We have Arrian’s life of Alexander. In every case these men recognized their human weakness and recognized that other people were human, too—as great men didn’t in those days. They were very human and actually very humble. They were very humane; they always played fair. Very few men did, so these men became “the great.” The second thing about them is that they were always of a passionate nature. I was thinking of a different case. The Koran says of Ali that when he smote, he smote; when he loved, he loved; what he did, he did. “Man do your thing.” Whatever you do, do it all the way. They did that. That stretched themselves out, exhausted themselves, did all the work, etc. These men worked themselves to death just for the people, and they had these high ideals for everybody else—Charlemagne, Peter, Alfred, and the rest did. They had this obligation to act. Success is not the test. They were generous, liberal, and noble characters. Yet they were able to accomplish great things that other people weren’t able to [accomplish] because they wouldn’t make the concessions.
He [Mormon] talks about this greatness. There were none greater than Melchizedek. What did he do? He saved his people; he worked his head off for them. He preached repentance and they repented. With the wickedest people on earth, he must have done an awfully good job. It was the same thing with Enoch. The Lord told Enoch that there is no end to the workmanship of His hands; He has created worlds without end. “And among all the workmanship of mine hands there has not been so great wickedness as among thy brethren (Moses 7:36).” This is the wickedest world that ever came out of the mill, and you can see that’s so today. There’s only a glimmer of decency anywhere anymore. Of course, there are people that mean well, etc., but as far as the world as a whole goes, “darkness covereth the earth and gross darkness the minds of the people” (D&C 112:23).

Verse 20: “Behold, the scriptures are before you; if ye will wrest them it shall be to your own destruction.” It can be done, just as it can be done with the Constitution or anything else—you can wrest them. How can you avoid that natural tendency to wrest them in your own interest? Of course, take them in their full context and with prayer. Prayer doesn’t give me a franchise to give my personal interpretation and impose it on anybody else. As Karl Popper said, it has to be the method of discussion. We have to discuss these things among ourselves.

Verse 22: “Yea, and the voice of the Lord, by the mouth of angels, doth declare it unto all nations; yea, doth declare it, that they may have glad tidings of great joy.” Well, that is what the angels declare in Luke 2:10. This is a case of biblical parallelism; this is not taken out of the New Testament. Biblical parallelism requires that you reinforce every verb. The Arabs must do it with a maṣdar; it’s a rule. You wouldn’t say, “He rejoiced greatly.” You would say, “He rejoiced a great rejoicing.” You wouldn’t say, “He brought very joyful tidings.” You would say, “He brought tidings of great joy.” This is in form, as I said. He is not lifting anything from Luke. “Yea, and he doth sound these glad tidings among all his people, yea, even to them that are scattered abroad upon the face of the earth; wherefore they have come unto us [the Book of Mormon is not provincial, you notice]. And they are made known unto us in plain terms [this gospel he has been talking about is not so difficult], that we may understand, that we cannot err; and this because of our being wanderers in a strange land.” After five hundred years are they still wanderers in a strange land? They could still be nomads. The two civilizations mix all the time; they are both nomadic. They have their flocks, and we will read a lot about flocks pretty soon.

“Therefore, we are thus highly favored, for we have these glad tidings declared unto us in all parts of our vineyard. For behold, angels are declaring it unto many at this time in our land.” They are preparing the people for his [the Savior’s] coming. You see that angels are always for special events. Alma refers often to angels because he has seen them and conversed with them. “And it shall be made known unto just and holy men, by the mouth of angels [only just men who can be trusted], at the time of his coming. . . . I wish from the inmost part of my heart . . . that ye would hearken unto my words, and cast off your sins, and not procrastinate the day of your repentance.” Of course, it’s important that you never procrastinate when you are given a commandment. Should Nephi have waited before going back to Jerusalem? He might have said, well, I’ll wait until things calm down and the coast is clear. Then it will be safer to go back to Jerusalem. No, he said, if the Lord commanded me to do that, he will give me a way of doing it, so I’ll do it—and he did it. That’s the way we should do. We must not procrastinate keeping the
commandments, whether they are the covenants we have made or anything else. St. Augustine did that with the law of chastity. He said in the *Confessions* when he was seventy years old, he used to pray, “God give me chastity and continence, but not yet.” We say the same thing. Yes, I’ll observe that when the time is right or there’s a more fit condition. And expect to get a reward for that. No, don’t expect it.

Verse 28: “... becoming humble, meek, submissive, patient, full of love and all long-suffering.” Here are these traits again that we regard as so wimpish. Is that the way you claw your way to the top? No, you don’t. “Having faith on the Lord” and hope and love. Notice he uses *love* in the place of *charity* here, which is the way they now translate it in the New Testament. In the new Revised Translation they say, “faith, hope and *caritas*, which is love. He has it here as “faith, hope, and love,” showing the words can be used interchangeably. (We finally got to the end of chapter 13; I thought it would take us the rest of the year.) Then he talks about being “bound down by the chains of hell” and suffering the second death. This is the ultimate condition of being immobilized, petrified, mummified, hardened, institutionalized, and all those things. That’s the alternative.

Then he told them to search the scriptures, and many of them began to search the scriptures because that’s where they would find the word of the Lord. When the prophet speaks what does he say? He says, “Read the Book of Mormon; it will convey the truth to you.” Now that is a very important thing. In the last part of Luke 24, the Lord appears. Certain people had come to the tomb, and he rebuked them and said, “O fools [ἀνωτέρους means ‘fools, empty headed, unconsidering ignoramuses’], and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken [about Christ] ... And beginning at Moses and all the prophets,” he explained all the scriptures to them from the beginning, wherever they concerned him. Now here is the Lord himself coming in person. But what is he doing? He is giving his message from the scriptures. Why doesn’t he say, forget the Bible, I dictated all that. I’ll give it to you straight now. [We might say], we have a prophet; we don’t need to study the scriptures anymore. No [that’s not true]; the Lord himself was there. After he left them, the brethren were conversing later and said, “Did not our heart burn within us? They finally recognized it, and then their eyes were opened for the first time after he explained from the scriptures what would happen to him. They said to each other after he had left, “Did not our heart [singular] burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?” (Luke 24:32). The scriptures made their hearts burn.

Oliver Cowdery [in Doctrine and Covenants, section 9] wanted to see the plates and wanted to engage in translation. That’s what he had been asking for. In sections 6, 7, and 8, Oliver Cowdery insisted on getting in on the act of translating; it rather excited him. The Lord told him he had made a mistake—you think that all you have to do is ask me and I will give it to you. The Lord said that’s wrong. You must think it out in your own mind. You must have your own theory and your own conclusion and then ask Him if it is right. If it is right you will have a burning in your bosom. The apostles said, did we not have a burning in our bosom as the Lord explained the scriptures to us? So the Lord told Oliver Cowdery, when you read the scriptures ask me if it is right. First you make up your own mind about it and ask me if it is right. Then if it is right, you will have this burning. If it isn’t, you will have a dullness of spirit, and it will be wiped out. That’s the control we have. Here we have the word of the Lord. When the prophet speaks to us today, we say, “All right, what am I going to have for breakfast, prophet?” It’s not that way at all. His word is “read the Book of Mormon.” There you will find it all. The Lord refers them to the
scriptures. Repeatedly, the Lord, who was there personally, says, “Ye err not knowing the scriptures.” Search the scriptures if you want an answer. Remember where he said, “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.” Well, you think you have eternal life. We just leave it there, which shows we haven’t searched the scriptures at all. He says there is one that testifies, and the scriptures testify, too. He says if you don’t believe in the Spirit, the best thing you can do is search the scriptures because you say they have the words of eternal life. It’s your opinion—you, yourself, say they have the words of eternal life, so if you want to find out about me read them. They testify of me, he says—you’ll learn of me from there. So the scriptures testify of the Lord, but you have to read them. You have to search them first. He tells them that. Of course, we slide over that because we are puzzled by that “you think you have.” Do you just think you have? Are you mistaken? That’s not it at all. You claim to have eternal life in the scriptures, so search them. You’ll learn my [the Savior’s] story there. The scriptures are very important [as it indicates] here.

Some of them began to search the scriptures, but, of course, the more part of them didn’t like Alma at all. That’s not what they were looking for—not in the least. They said he “had reviled against their lawyers and judges. And they were also angry with Alma and Amulek; and because they had testified so plainly against their wickedness, they sought to put them away privily”—with as little trouble as possible. That’s the stock solution, without any fuss—just get rid of them privily, you see. So they took them before the chief judge and said they “had reviled against the law,” etc. They said what he [Alma] had been teaching: “that there was but one God, and that he should send his Son among the people, but he should not save them.” They misunderstood, but Zeezrom knew what was going on. He had already had the discussion, and he knew how the brethren were being framed here. Verse 6: “And he also knew concerning the blindness of the minds, which he had caused among the people by his lying words; and his soul began to be harrowed up under a consciousness of his own guilt.” He said, “Behold, I am guilty, and these men are spotless before God [as Judas did]. And he began to plead for them from that time forth; but they reviled him, saying: Art thou also possessed with the devil?” If they admit he was wrong, they would admit they were wrong because he was their leader. They were following him all the way. So they stoned him, and he got out of the place.

Now we have the most painful episode from the Book of Mormon. You think this is painful, inhuman, and unnatural. Well, look at it! Verse 8: “And they brought their wives and children together, and whosoever believed . . . in the word of God they caused that they should be cast into the fire; and they also brought forth their records which contained the holy scriptures, and cast them into the fire also, that they might be burned and destroyed by fire.” They had a typical auto-da-fé. That’s happened a hundred times in history. Our enlightened race has done that sort of thing. This reads like some of the events of the Conquistadors when they would pile them all together in the fire. That’s what happened to the Waldenses. They [the persecutors] would get the whole town—men, women, and children—especially the women and children. (The men were out fighting in the hills; they were the Vaudois.) They would burn them all with all their scriptures and everything else, because you weren’t supposed to read the Bible.

And Richelieu said during the seige of a place when he ordered the burning of all the people in the town, “Get them together and burn them. God will know his own.”

They said, “But most of them are Catholics anyway.”
He said, “Don’t worry, God will know his own, so go ahead and burn them.”

They were doing a thing that has been done all the time. What about Auschwitz and Belsen? I was in Dachau just the week after it was liberated. They had pretty well cleaned it up, but it was awfully sickening. The mayor of Pforzheim told me that in a town of 80,000 people, 30,000 burned to death in the last air raid. So it goes. Coventry was the same way.

The vast extent of child abuse in our society today has stunned everybody now—the utter indifference to the children. Remember, the Lord said that’s the worst. “And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.” We are offending the little ones everywhere now, and it’s pretty awful. It [this kind of behavior] is disturbing. Verse 10: “How can we witness this awful scene? [is this as disturbing as the killing of Laban?] Therefore let us stretch forth our hands, and exercise the power of God which is in us, and save them from the flames. But Alma said unto him: The Spirit constraineth me that I must not stretch forth mine hand.” How could he see such a thing? Remember, Nephi shrank from beheading Laban; he didn’t want to do it. The Lord had to argue with him for half an hour before he finally did. He didn’t want to; it was not in his nature. Alma could have saved them, and he wanted to, but he said, Don’t do it, “for behold the Lord receiveth them up unto himself in glory; and he doth suffer that they may do this thing . . . according to the hardness of their hearts, that the judgments which he shall exercise upon them in his wrath may be just.”

I went on a mission quite shortly after World War I, of all times, in German towns, and everybody had the same story. Nobody would believe anything. They wouldn’t accept religion because God would not allow that [the atrocities of war] to happen. Their sons were in the war. Where I stayed first, Mrs. Bauer had a seventeen-year-old boy who was killed in the war. She said, “Why? What was he guilty of? Why should God [punish him]?” They said, “There is no God; he would never allow that sort of thing.” Would he allow the holocaust? Would he allow the fire raids and things like that of World War II? Well, it is not God who is being tested here. It is men who are being tested here. We say he has failed to pass our test. We are not giving tests to him. That’s after we have refused again and again all his pleas. He has pleaded with us to do this, but we wouldn’t have anything to do with it. Now we say, “Look, he is bad—he has done what’s wrong.” But we must be left alone on our own. (I could read this passage from Irenaeus; I like it very much.) He [Alma] should not save them, but he is certainly wrestling here.

God has always permitted the great religious persecutions. Religion has been the main cause of persecution. Well, look what they are doing in Iran now; they just wipe them out. It’s even more ferocious in Iraq. In these persecutions why does God allow the innocent to suffer like this? That’s the old theme that we get from that. He lets our nature go all the way against each other and everything. He intervenes at times. He [isn’t] going to intervene here. But he explains why this is. Verse 11: But Alma said unto him [this is why] . . . and he doth suffer that they may do this thing, or that the people may do this thing unto them, according to the hardness of their hearts, that the judgments which he shall exercise upon them in his wrath may be just; and the blood of the innocent shall stand as a witness against them, yea, and cry mightily against them at the last day.” If it had been their intention to do that and they hadn’t been able to carry it out, it would have been the same thing. Then they put them [Alma and Amulek] in jail.
I’m going to read a short passage from Irenaeus who was the bishop of Lyons in the year A.D. 170, which is quite early. He lived in Asia Minor and he knew people who had known the apostles. He was one of the last true lights in the church. He has a writing on what he called “The Ancient Law of Liberty.” In his refutation of the Gnostics, Irenaeus in the middle of the second century set forth what he called the “Ancient Law of Liberty.”

He said, the law is illustrated by the scripture “How often would I have gathered thy children together, . . . and ye would not!” (Matthew 23:37). The Lord wanted to save Jerusalem. He wanted to gather them together often, but they wouldn’t so he wasn’t going to force them. This was where they were mourning, and he said, you are not going to see one stone upon another before long. The whole thing is going to fall. Irenaeus said, “For God made man free from the beginning. . . . For God never uses force. . . . He placed in man the power of election even as in the angels. . . . Glory and honor, he says, to all who do good, and it is due them because they could have done evil. . . . Now if God made some men good and some bad [which is the essence of predestination] simply by nature, there would be nothing praiseworthy in their virtue or blameworthy in their vice, for that being their nature they could not do otherwise. But since to all is given equally the power of doing good or bad exactly as they choose, they are rightly praised or blamed for what they do.”

That is why the prophets appeal to men to do good and eschew evil. Irenaeus further explains, “God wants me to do good, but even the Gospel allows anyone who does not want to do good to do evil. To obey or disobey is in every man’s power. . . . God forcing no man. . . . There is a godlike power of judgment in all men, making them envied by angels”—because they can’t sin.

As Beatrice says to Dante, “God made me this way. That’s why you’re in heaven and other people are in hell. I can’t do anything about it. God just made me that way.” That’s predestinationism, but it doesn’t work in the early church. This is way back, and we go even earlier further on here. “The ancient law of liberty is that God trusts men while on this earth to make their own choices, while they trust him alone to judge whether those choices have been good or bad.”

The second aspect of the law is that God alone shall judge. I’ve mentioned before this argument between Peter and Simon Magus: Peter begins the discussion by invoking peace on the whole assembly and expressing the desire that everything be peaceably and amicably discussed. This signal for the self-righteous Simon Magus to explode with the indignant declaration that champions of truth don’t ask for peace, since they are determined to “kick the stuffing” out of error and will only call it peace when the opposition lies helpless before them. It is weakness and cowardice in Peter, he says, to ask for peace for the wrong as well as for the right side. In reply Peter says we must imagine this world as a vast plain in which two cities strive for mastery (that’s the doctrine of the maidan), each claiming the whole land as its own. The king of one city sends to the other proposing a peaceful discussion in which the matter might be decided without killing anybody. In this he is not weak; he has no intention of giving the other king a single blade of grass that does not belong to him. Now the other king can think of no other course than to take what is his by force, and that, says Peter, shows that his cause is really a weak one. Simon Magus then applies his argument against Peter to Peter’s God, bringing out the favorite old chestnut of the schools (this is the one they always talk about): either God is vicious because he does not want to prevent evil or weak because he cannot.
“Could not God have made us all good,” he asks, “so that we could not be anything else but virtuous?”

This is exactly what Augustine asked, “Oh miserable necessity, not to be able not to sin. If God had made us only so we couldn’t sin, we would be so much happier,” he said. The miserable necessity is being able to sin. Well, that is just the opposite. You would miss the whole point, according to Alma.

To which Peter replies with a statement of the ancient law of liberty: “A foolish question,” he says, “for if he made us unchangeably and immovably inclined to good, we would not really be good at all, since we couldn’t be anything else [we would be programmed for just one act]; and it would be no merit on our part that we were good, nor could we be given credit for doing what we did by necessity of nature. How can you call any act good that is not performed intentionally?”

Now he is giving the plan of the gospel. This is given way back there. This is from the *Clementine Recognitions*, the earliest Christian writing known after the New Testament. It is very closely related, to everyone’s surprise, to the Dead Sea Scrolls. This is very early Christian doctrine. “For this reason the world has existed through the ages, so that the spirits destined to come here might fulfill their number, and here make their choice between the upper and the lower worlds, both of which are represented here, so that when their bodies are resurrected the blessed might go to eternal light and the unrighteous for their impure acts be wrapped in a spiritual flame.” In this work, says Peter, “every man is given a fair chance to show his real desires.”

To the question put to him in a later discussion, “Did not the Creator know that those he created would do evil?” Peter replied, “Certainly, he considered all the evil that would be among those whom he created; but as one who knew there was no other way to achieve the purpose for which they were created, he went ahead. He did not draw back or hesitate, nor was he afraid of what would happen.” Evil is forced on no one, he explains, it is only there for those who want it (there’s a Book of Mormon teaching again). No one comes under its sway “save he who of his own free will deliberately subjects himself to it.” You must deliberately of your own free will subject yourself to Satan, or he will have no power over you.

This is the ancient doctrine that we have here. It is not so mysterious or baffling or contradictory that we have to accept predestination or the philosopher’s argument. Here it is again:

O thou that do with pitfall and with gin
Beset the way I was to wander in
Wilt thou then with predestination round
Enmesh me and impute my fall to sin?

God lays traps for us. It is our nature to sin [according to the poet]. When we fall into the trap, he says, “Hah, you sinned.” You can’t do anything else; he set the trap for you. So no wonder the man is cynical about that. What is another verse to the same effect? Oh yes,

O thou who didst man of baser metal make
And who with Eden didst create the snake.
For all the sin wherewith the face of man is blackened,
Man’s forgiveness give and take.

He [the poet] says contemptuously that God created Eden and the serpent and then blamed us for what happened. This is the dilemma. This is a very pious Moslem who wrote the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*. He was one of the *sufis*. They are teaching the same predestinationism, and it makes them very cynical, you see. You [God] created the garden and the snake and surrounded us with predestination by our very natures. When we sin we are damned, and that’s not fair. Well, that’s not what the early Christians taught, and its not what the Book of Mormon teaches. It’s strange that the world has never been able to break loose from it.
Alma and Amulek had witnessed that auto-da-fé, that horrible thing which I assure you is quite routine in religious history. Irony, isn’t it? They are all religious, these auto-da-fés—the burning of women and children and books in big piles. It has happened not once but hundreds of times. It happened anciently, too. Anyway, they [Alma and Amulek] found themselves in the jail, and they got some rough treatment there. It was a sort of SS prison. The judge came to Alma and Amulek and kept hitting them in the face, which is the usual procedure to get a person to talk—they slap them, you know. Verse 14: “After what ye have seen, will ye preach again unto this people that they shall be cast into a lake of fire and brimstone?”

The hardest test of all is holding back. It’s not blowing up or doing violence. This is the test to which they are being subjected now in any action. This is where the Latter-day Saints historically have been repeatedly tested and stood up to the test very well. The times they didn’t go to war were the times they always won. Then the other times when they blew their tops, it was not so good. Alma is being tested here to the breaking point. The judge said, “Behold, ye see that ye had not power to save those who had been cast into the fire; neither has God saved them because they were of thy faith.” You saw what happened, etc. This judge was after the manner of Nehor. Notice, the [order of] Nehors is a permanent establishment which begins way back in the first chapter of Alma. But Alma and Amulek “answered them nothing.” That was a severe test. After they had been cast into prison three days, the lawyers and judges came to work on them in the manner of the SS. We do this in police states, etc. And they were all professors of Nehor, too. It was a religious persecution because the priests came along, “many lawyers, and judges, and priests, and teachers, who were of the profession of Nehor.” This is religious persecution by the establishment. The burning was an auto-da-fé. But they answered nothing, and that’s infuriating. Then they came again on the morrow and still worked on them. “How shall we look when we are damned?” they say. They are losing control now and getting funny. This is Galgenhumor so to speak. This thing went on for many days.

Remember, they mocked Jesus for a long time. The New Testament tells us that they made mockery of him and the gospel. Well, you do not mock a figment of your imagination, a legend, or an abstraction. That’s one of the proofs that Jesus really lived—the fact that mockery was what was left behind in the early Christian times. You may hold another person’s view in contempt or something like that, but if the person never really lived you wouldn’t mock him, of course, as an abstraction or as a spiritual essence or teaching. That mockery is an important part; it brings that element of reality into the New Testament, which the people often ignore.

Well, here’s the old chestnut [in verse 24]: “If ye have the power of God deliver yourselves from these bands.” They asked Jesus to bring himself down from the cross if he could.
And, of course, they asked for a sign. They all went forth and smote them again, and this routine went on until Alma and Amulek had had about enough. Then they rose and stood on their feet. Verse 26: “And Alma cried, saying: How long shall we suffer these great afflictions, O Lord?” They broke the bonds, which they could not have done by their own strength. When the people saw that they were terrified and tried to put as much distance as they could between them and Alma and Amulek. So what did they do? They all made for the gate. There was a rush and there was an earthquake. You notice that miracles are in the timing, not in the event. This was earthquake country. It’s not surprising that there was an earthquake, but just at that moment was when it was helpful. They all made a rush for the gate, so naturally they crowded the exit. They jammed the exit, nobody could get out, the gate collapsed, and they were all killed there. The only safe people were Alma and Amulek who stayed behind. [The people] tried to get as far from them as they could.

That’s what happened in 1906 in Pelee. A city of 8,000 people was utterly destroyed. There was only one survivor of the great debacle at Pelee in 1906. That was a prisoner who was in the deepest dungeon in town. That was the only safe place, in the dungeon. And it was a safe place for Alma and Amulek. They weren’t touched because they stayed behind, it says. The people all rushed for the gate, jammed together, and got themselves killed the way they do when a crowd panics. They were panicky, you see. Verse 27: “So great was their fear that they fell to the earth, and did not obtain the outer door of the prison; and the earth shook mightily [you see what a time of panic it was], and the walls of the prison were rent in twain so that they fell to the earth; and the chief judge, and the lawyers, and priests, and teachers, who smote upon Alma and Amulek, were slain by the fall thereof.”

As I said, it’s the timing not the event. We can think of the thundering legion and the Red Sea, the flooding of the Jordan River, and the quail at Sugar Creek. All these miracles are ordinary events that happened, but at a very convenient time. That’s the way it goes. This was a very convenient one, too. Of course, the miraculous part is that the Lord can foresee it. He arranges our affairs and manages that we will be there when it happens. Verse 28: “And the prison had fallen to the earth, and every soul within the walls thereof, save it were Alma and Amulek, was slain,” because they were by themselves in the dungeon. They had been left there alone. Well, when there was a great crash and the prison came down, the people all came running together to see what was going on. When they saw Alma and Amulek emerging, they ran, too. They were terrified at the sight. So they [Alma and Amulek] proceeded calmly to the land of Sidom in the next chapter.

You notice we get these forced separations of people, which are very important, especially in religious history. Ammonihah was going to be completely destroyed, but all the people who wanted to follow Alma and Amulek were driven out. They were forced to go out and settle elsewhere, and they did. Alma 15:1: “And behold, there they found all the people who had departed out of the land of Ammonihah, who had been cast out and stoned, because they believed in the words of Alma.” They were in another city, the city of Sidom. They had settled there. This is one of these forced migrations, such as in 1492 when all the Jews were driven out of Spain, or when all the Saints were driven out of Missouri. It was the best thing that could have happened, because after that came the bloody soil, the bloody shirt, “Bloody Kansas,” etc. There was Lawrence of the Bullwhackers and the Jayhawkers—the great mobs destroying each other, the whole land torn by riots. There were more killings than there ever were when the Mormons were there. They just got out in time. It was a forced separation.
The best yet was in 1685 when Louis XIV drove all the Huguenots out of France. All the Protestant Huguenots had to leave France on a certain day following St. Bartholomew’s Eve. Well, they went to the Netherlands and to Prussia especially, and to England. They made those countries very rich and prosperous because the Huguenots were the most intelligent and industrious people in Europe. It was a landfall for Prussia, of course, that just fell into their lap. That’s what gave Frederick the Great his background. That’s why you find so many French names in Berlin. And there are other [examples of forced migrations] like the driving out of the Waldenses and the Vaudois. They went and settled elsewhere, and they brought prosperity wherever they went. It’s an interesting thing.

Well, Zeezrom was there in Sidom; it was a safe place for these people. Sidom was a tolerant city, apparently. Zeezrom was there sick of a burning fever. He was obsessed with guilt, which drove him out of his mind. His fever was actually an escape because he wanted to die. Verse 3: “And this great sin, and his many other sins, did harrow up his mind until it did become exceedingly sore, having no deliverance [he couldn’t stand it]; therefore he began to be scorched with a burning heat.” The fever was part of his sickness which he brought upon himself. The brethren went to the house of Zeezrom and found him on his bed. When he saw them he felt there was a chance for life, and he asked to be healed by them. “And his mind also was exceedingly sore because of his iniquities.” See, he was out of his mind. He was having terrible mental anguish because of the things he had done. This was the cause of his sickness; this will bring it on every time. When he saw the brethren, he asked them to heal him.

Verse 6: “Alma said unto him, taking him by the hand: Believest thou in the power of Christ unto salvation?” And verse 8 says, “If thou believest in the redemption of Christ thou canst be healed.” He is sick to the point of death and destruction, but salvation is to be saved from any dire condition you are in. From any desperate end to which you might come the power of Christ will save you. Here he is right in the depths, and [Alma] is saying, do you believe in the power of Christ to save you? “And he answered and said: Yea, I believe all the words that thou hast taught.” This means if you believe it, you can come back, they say. Verse 8: “And Alma said: If thou believest in the redemption of Christ thou canst be healed.” Redemptio means “to buy back, to let you in again, to take you back home again” like the prodigal son. He [the Savior] will do it as long as you repent. As long as you are here, you can do it. It’s redemption, he says, according to the faith. Is faith the power that does that, or is it Jesus Christ or what? Well, faith is the power that plugs us in; it’s not the power [that heals]. It plugs us into the circuit, so to speak. The power is always there; we are surrounded by an enormous amount of power all the time. By applying faith we make it accessible to us; we make it useful for us. We are able to plug in, to use a vulgar expression, but that’s the sort of thing you do. You open your mind to faith, and then you are able to do it, remembering this.

Verse 11: “And when Alma had said these words, Zeezrom leaped upon his feet, and began to walk; and this was done to the great astonishment of all the people; and the knowledge of this went forth throughout all the land of Sidom.” He arose on his feet and began to walk. But remember, Alma was just as guilty as Zeezrom was. Alma, who saved him, had been just as guilty. He had done just as dirty things, and he had less reason to, as a matter of fact, because his father was the head of the church. Zeezrom’s father wasn’t. So Zeezrom decided to walk.

But remember this tremendous power that surrounds us. There’s that new thing they talk about, this boson that everybody is looking for. The two biggest atom machines are being
built to discover that one thing, that one power that envelopes everything else, from which all the other particles are derived. They call it the Higgs boson.

Verse 12: “And Alma baptized Zeezrom unto the Lord; and he began from that time forth to preach unto the people.” Then he established a church there “for they did flock in from all the region round about Sidom, and were baptized [they were very successful]. But as to the people that were in the land of Ammoniah [the city these people had left], they yet remained a hard-hearted and a stiffnecked people.” You couldn’t move them at all. They were rooted in the profession of Nehor. What was it that made this Nehor business so appealing anyway? Well, we saw it back there in Alma 1:3 and following. In the first chapter of Alma it tells us that it was ceremonial, it was soothing, it was undemanding, it was flattering. That’s the kind of religion you want. You can rationalize anything you want with that, and these people were also very pious like the Zoramites.

Here’s this very pointed passage in verse 16. Remember it telling what a rich, important man Amulek was, and how everybody envied him, like Oedipus? He was the blue blood of the city, a direct descendant of Nephi, highly respected for his labor. He had made himself rich, and everybody thought a lot of him. But to go out with Alma he got rid of all his swag, and this is what happened. “Amulek having forsaken all his gold, and silver, and his precious things, which were in the land of Ammoniah, for the word of God, he being rejected by those who were once his friends and also by his father and his kindred.” Not only his friends cut him off cold when he didn’t have any more money, his family cut him off cold when he didn’t have any more money. Well, he had gotten his money by hard work, etc. They were doing the right thing [in their eyes]. I guess they all clamored to get the dough. Then they all went to court.

My best friend Paul Springer was a chief reporter in San Francisco for many years. Then he was on the city council in San Francisco. He was in charge of the testating courts for wills, etc. And what people would do for money! They would become mortal enemies in a very rich family over a thing like a piano stool or something like that, because of greed and desire to possess. [He described] the greed in these courts where they claim the property. Who will get the most? Who will get the diamond ring? Even a pair of used shoes they would cut each others’ throats for. What people do when they go after material things is astounding, isn’t it? You see this is real psychology here. Amulek got rid of his money and nobody wanted to have anything to do with him anymore.

They established the church in Sidom. The people assembled themselves together to worship in sanctuaries before the altar. Notice, this is the kind of cult they have here. In the law of Moses the altar is not necessary for sacrifice, but it is necessary. It’s very interesting. Exodus 30, for example, tells us that the primary purpose of that altar isn’t for sacrifice. But, as we use it in the temple, it is a centering for activities. In the temple an altar is where you bring things and receive things. It is a table; a table is where you share things—a table to which you bring things and from which you take things. It’s around the table, and that’s what an altar is. They “began to assemble themselves together at their sanctuaries to worship God before the altar, watching and praying continually, that they might be delivered from Satan, and from death, and from destruction.” So the church was established and running in this place.

Then Alma took Amulek back home to his own house. They are going to take a rest now. You notice that they are not back very long when suddenly war comes. On the “fifth day of the second month in the eleventh year, there was a cry of war heard throughout the
land.” This is interesting because Clausewitz assures us that war can never start suddenly like this. This started all of a sudden, but what it was is a typical Lamanite war. It was a ghāza. Our word raid comes from the Arabic word ghāza. It’s a raid for slaves. This was a slave raid, so surprise was everything here. The whole purpose was that. Look, for example, in verse 5. “They went unto him and desired of him to know whither the Lord would that they should go into the wilderness in search of their brethren, who had been taken captive by the Lamanites.” They [the Lamanites] didn’t stay and fight. They went off with the brethren. Now Alma is going to pursue them in search of the captives to bring them back again.

Then in the next verse it says the same thing: “And there the Lord will deliver unto thee thy brethren who have been taken captive by the Lamanites.” So it was a slave raid, which is the main purpose of barbaric wars most of the time. And again when it is completed, we have here in verse 8: “And they came upon the armies of the Lamanites, and the Lamanites were scattered and driven into the wilderness; and they took their brethren who had been taken captive by the Lamanites, and there was not one soul of them had been lost that were taken captive.” So it was a slave raid. They got the slaves back, but they had the help of the Lord in doing it so it wouldn’t grow to a large, nasty war. The Lamanites swept down on the city of Ammonihah and wiped that out. Verse 3: “And now it came to pass, before the Nephites could raise a sufficient army to drive them out of the land, they had destroyed the people who were in the city of Ammonihah, and also some around the borders of Noah, and taken others captive into the wilderness. Now it came to pass that the Nephites were desirous to obtain those who had been carried away captive into the wilderness.” That was the issue; it was slaves.

They appointed a captain, and his name was Zoram. That name means “refreshing rain.” After a dry winter or drought when you have a strong rain, it is called a zoram. As you would expect, it’s a popular name with these people. And he had two sons, Lehi and Aha. There’s an interesting thing because that’s a Jaredite name, too, and Aha in Egyptian means warrior. They were warriors, too, Lehi and Aha. It was a very common name. The first king of Egypt was called Aha. That was one of his epithets; he was Aha, the warrior. It’s always written with a pair of arms, one holding a club and one holding a shield. That’s the name Aha, which means “a leader in war.”

Zoram went to Alma “to know whither the Lord would that they should go into the wilderness in search of their brethren.” In the Dead Sea Scrolls in section 23, column 15, it tells about that. The high priest is asked because he is the one who is inspired of the Lord. Before Israel goes to war they consult the high priest. It’s like casting the lots the way you have to do in other countries. You consult the Lord if you do, and he does that here. He consults the high priest to ask where they should go in search of their brethren. That’s what the operation is to be. It’s to be a search and rescue, not a search and destroy. That’s what they did. They inquired of the Lord and found where they were. He told them what the plan [of the Lamanites] was; they nipped the plan in the bud. “And Alma returned and said unto them: Behold, the Lamanites will cross the river Sidon in the south wilderness [where they were least expected], away up beyond the borders of the land of Manti. And behold there shall ye meet them, on the east of the river Sidon, and there the Lord will deliver unto thee thy brethren who have been taken captive by the Lamanites.”

In verse 9 we have the cursed town of the Ammonihah, where all the people were destroyed. “But behold, in one day it was left desolate.” Here’s an interesting thing. They
are going to give it a name; they are going to call it desolation. Verse 11: “Nevertheless, after many days their dead bodies were heaped up upon the face of the earth. . . . And now so great was the scent thereof that the people did not go in to possess the land of Ammonihah for many years. And it was called Desolation of Nehors; for they were of the profession of Nehor, who were slain; and their lands remained desolate.” As I told you before, Awatori, the greatest of all the Hopi villages, was burned, and nobody ever goes back there. It’s desolation. And you read another interesting thing in Numbers 21. King Arad raided Israel for slaves; he did the very same thing. He ran away with them, and the Lord justifies Israel in pursuing and catching him and then destroying the land. Arad’s kingdom was destroyed, and they changed the name to Hormâh, or Desolation. After you have desolated a country, you change the name to Hormâh. The Romans, the Arabs and the Hebrews had the same thing. The good land is the land Bountiful; it’s a fruitful land. But a land that has been destroyed is called Hormâh or Hôreb, either one. Hôreb means desert. Harb is the Arabic word for war or desolation. Hormâh means desolation, and hôreb means the same thing, desolation or destruction. A land that has been destroyed is dedicated to desolation, and usually the name is changed to hôreb. The Romans would sow it with salt, and then it was ager hosticus. It could not be planted again. It became unfertile, deserted, etc. This is a Book of Mormon custom—“the land desolation.” There is lots of desolation and lots of land Bountiful here. “And their lands remained desolate.”

Verse 13: “And Alma and Amulek went forth preaching repentance to the people in their temples, and in their sanctuaries, and also in their synagogues.” This is an interesting reference to synagogues. A Jew might ask you, “Well, isn’t that premature? The synagogue didn’t exist until after the fall of the temple. The temple is where the Jews met. After that they met in the synagogues. Synagogê is the Greek name for it, which simply means “the place where you assemble, a qâhal, a church.” No less a person than Soloman Zeitlin, who was editor of the Jewish Quarterly Review for many years, did his doctoral dissertation on this subject. He investigated and found that synagogues were just as common before the fall of the temple as after, because Jews living in distant places formed their own societies. They couldn’t call their buildings temples; there was only one temple for them to go to. They were all required to go up to Israel to the House of the Lord once a year to worship the Lord. That is at the end of Zachariah. If anyone didn’t go up there with his family and everybody else and bring his offerings, upon them would be no rain. That was the curse. But they had to have their meetings and assemblies. They elected their leaders, etc. This wasn’t just after the temple fell; they had these synagogues long before. Quite early they started calling them synagogues; that’s the name they went by. Where the Jews settled was in non-Jewish country. Remember, the Jewish Hellenistic culture. They adopted other cultures, but especially the Greek. In fact, the best and oldest text we have of the Old Testament is the Greek Septuagint. So don’t worry about [the mention of] synagogues; that’s not an anachronism.

Alma and Amulek went forth, and also many more went forth to preach. So they started a motion going. In verse 15 many went forth to preach after their example. So they established the church throughout all the land, and it “became general throughout the land, in all the region round about, among all the people of the Nephites [this is wonderful; this movement spread] And there was no inequality among [all the people].” Whoever thought it would end up that way? But there was still preparation, and we are still being prepared. “The Lord did pour out his Spirit on all the face of the land to prepare the minds of the children of men, or to prepare their hearts to receive the word which
should be taught among them at the time of his coming." That was to be seventy-eight years later. (We are still being prepared; we haven’t gone all the way.) “... and as a branch be grafted into the true vine, that they might enter into the rest of the Lord their God. Now those priests who did go forth among the people did preach against all lyings, and deceivings, and envyings [What is wickedness? This sort of thing], and strifes, and malice.”

What one word would you use to cover all this? I would say meanness or inhumanity. Remember, the Lord told the Apostles that there are two commandments on which all the law and the prophets hang. If you keep them, you don’t need to worry about the others. The first is “thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (Matthew 22:37–39). If you do that you will have not the slightest desire or inclination to break any of the other commandments. You won’t commit murder or you won’t steal or you won’t lie if you love your neighbor as yourself. That goes for everybody. This is what they were preaching [against], this meanness. Notice that very few of these things are against the law. You can’t put a person in prison for these things, and yet these are the real sins. People lie all over the place; you can’t sell anything without lying, they tell me. And deceivings—if you try to buy a house or a car from some people. And envyings—did you ever hear about a competitive system? And strifes—that’s competition. And malice—you’re going to get even. There’s lots of getting even going on. Don’t get mad, get even [they say]. “And revilings, and stealing, robbing, plundering, murdering [it gets more serious as we go, doesn’t it?], committing adultery, and all manner of lasciviousness [we are experts in lasciviousness today], crying that these things ought not so to be [well, apparently they were so; they are straightening the people out now]... holding forth the coming of the Son of God, his sufferings and death, and also the resurrection of the dead.” Christians see this in the Old Testament prophets.

Verse 20: “And many of the people did inquire concerning the place where the Son of God should come.” They naturally wanted to know since the coming of Christ was the big thing. Where would he come and when would he come? Will we get to see him? “And they were taught that he would appear unto them after his resurrection.” Well, that satisfied them. He wouldn’t appear to them here, but after the resurrection he would, they were told. “And now after the church had been established throughout all the land—having got the victory over the devil [that’s the ideal], and the word of God being preached in its purity in all the land, and the Lord pouring out his blessings upon the people—thus ended the fourteenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi. This is a good time to send out missionaries to the Lamanites, so that’s what they are going to do. Everybody at home was sort of getting brought into line.

Alma was journeying in the wilderness and he found his missionary brethren out there. My, they had been gone a long time! How long has it been? No, not so terribly long. It was a typical travel event when you meet your old friends after all these years. Well, of all people, the three sons of Mosiah!

Question: In verse 13 of the last chapter, it mentions three things: temples, synagogues, and sanctuaries. Is there any difference in sanctuaries from temples and synagogues?

Answer: Yes, a sanctuary isn’t a full-scale temple and it’s not a meeting place either. It’s just a place where holy things might be held, something like a bishop’s storehouse. We have minor ones. A temple is a big church, and a synagogue is a place where the whole
society meets. Well, they are in between. As you know, it is very typical to have shrines. Do we have shrines in the Church today? What kind of shrines do we have? We have places we visit, like Nauvoo, the Hill Cumorah, the Sacred Grove, etc. Those aren’t [exactly] shrines, but they are places that are treasured. They are not particularly magical, and they are not regular meeting places, as temples and churches are. They are places that are set aside as something special. We have them and keep them that way. If we want to put up a service station or a bank, we make short work of them. They could be dedicated buildings, like the Coalville Tabernacle which was torn down. Well, let’s not get started on that. We had architectural gems throughout the state, some real beauties, that were torn down because they were not cost productive. There was the old Salt Lake Theatre. I was with President Grant and some of the members of the committee when they were discussing it. I was just a kid, but I was sitting on the side listening. President Grant said, “How sorry are you to see it go? I’m sorry enough to pay $5,000 to restore it.” They argued and argued and decided it should be torn down anyway. My grandfather got me into that session. But that’s an interesting question. Do we have shrines? You could write a thesis or a paper on it at least. I don’t think anybody has looked into it. How holy can a building be before it is immune from destruction?

Alma journeyed and met his old brethren. Notice what they were. Verse 2: “And they were men of a sound understanding and they had searched the scriptures diligently, that they might know the word of God.” Notice that “sound understanding.” They were not hysterical, theatrical, fanatical, or evangelical types at all. They were men of sound understanding, and they searched the scriptures. That’s what you go by. And they fasted and prayed; “therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation. This does not supersede the scriptures, you notice. They searched the scriptures, and therefore had the spirit of revelation. The two always go together, as we mentioned last time. Here’s how long they had been away. Verse 4: “And they had been teaching the word of God for the space of fourteen years among the Lamanites [they were really dedicated; when they went on their missions, they went]. . . . For they had many afflictions; they did suffer much, both in body and in mind.” It was our missions that suggested the Peace Corps in Kennedy’s day. Missionaries sometimes have to take a beating. We have it rather easy today, but I know some who had a pretty rough time.

They had refused the kingdom. Remember, they were the king’s sons. They were eligible and in line for the throne, but it’s a republic now. How did they support themselves? Well, they took spears and bows and provided food for themselves. They went without purse or script. Naturally, they visited towns and villages and were fed by the people because they made many contacts, etc. This happens, too. Verse 8: “And thus they departed into the wilderness with their numbers which they had selected, to go up to the land of Nephi, to preach the word of God unto the Lamanites.” They departed and a troupe went up to the land of Nephi. Now they are going to convert the Lamanites, and this is going to be a hard thing. The people of Ammonihah were bad enough. “And they fasted much and prayed much that the Lord would grant unto them a portion of his Spirit to go with them . . . that they might be an instrument in the hands of God to bring, if it were possible, their brethren, the Lamanites, to the knowledge of the truth, to the knowledge of the baseness of the traditions of their fathers, which were not correct.”

Now what are the chances of convincing them of that? In chapters 27 and 28 it talks about those traditions. The Lord visited them with his Spirit. What about these traditions? In Alma 18:4 it says, “And now, when the king heard these words, he said unto them: Now I know that it is the Great Spirit; and he has come down at this time to preserve your
lives, that I might not slay you as I did your brethren. Now this is the Great Spirit of whom our fathers have spoken.” They talk about the Great Spirit later on. We’ll see that there is going to be a lot of talk about the Great Spirit, which is very important for us today. Well, the Spirit of the Lord visited them, and they went to the Lamanites. They had some success, but it took a lot of patience and suffering and good example. It says in verse 12 that they “took courage to go forth unto the Lamanites to declare unto them the word of God.” Then they decided they could be more effective if they could spread out because they would cover more ground. So they separated themselves and went alone.

This is about as good a description of Lamanite civilization as you can get, here in verse 14, the combination of qualities. We have come to regard the acquisition of riches and finery as a mark of civilization. On the contrary, they are a mark of barbarism, as you read in Beowulf, etc. They are not a gauge of civilization, but the opposite. What a difference between an Egyptian and a Mayan procession! With the Egyptians everyone, including the king, was very simply dressed. A simple basic white slip would do for the nobility. But have you seen the way the Mayan and the Aztec nobility got themselves up? I mean a walking Christmas tree is no exaggeration. Some of you may have gone the other night and heard that very good talk by the Major on Lamanite and Nephite armor. And there were some good drawings from vases and murals, etc. showing the grandees—the great people, the priests and the nobility. Their dress was utterly absurd; it was so overdone. They were so heavily laden with feathers and jewels, especially jade, and things like that. It was absurd. That’s barbaric to load yourself down with all your junk. For one thing barbarians are on the march most of the time and have to carry their wealth with them, so they have to have it portable. They put it in gold and the women wear it around their necks. They wear as many as 10–13 strings of gold coins around their necks. That’s the way they have to do it if they are on the move all the time. They love gold and jewels because they are portable. The sedentary arts include architecture and literature. But they have their highly developed arts that require the use of the mind, because you can carry that with you. They get to be very good at mathematics and star-watching and very good at poetry. They memorize enormous poems. They are the authors of epic poetry. People who have to keep on the move all the time take their treasures with them where they can carry them, in their heads and their hearts. So there is something to be said for both civilizations. The sedentary civilization stews after a while and becomes rotten, soft and decayed like the Babylonian. Then the others overrun it, supplant it, and then start decaying the same way. It’s a routine that has been followed forever and ever.

It says here in verse 14: “For they had undertaken to preach the word of God to a wild and a hardened and a ferocious people; a people who delighted in murdering the Nephites, and robbing and plundering them; and their hearts were set upon riches [just like the Nephites themselves], or upon gold and silver, and precious stones [exactly what these people would covet, the wealthy display; elegance, you know]; yet they sought to obtain these things by murdering and plundering that they might not labor for them with their own hands.” What is the subject of murder and plunder if you flip through the TV channels? It’s jewels like emeralds or pearls, or whatever it is, because that’s the thing that you can put in your pocket and carry around with you. So they are always fighting and murdering to get hold of the royal jewels, etc. I didn’t tell you about my getting the Czar’s jewels, did I? No, that’s another story. Really and truly, that is something! Of course, I didn’t get them, but the person who was with me was the Czar.

Verse 15: “Thus they were a very indolent people, many of whom did worship idols, and the curse of God had fallen upon them because of the traditions of their fathers [they had
inherited it; they were barbarians and had a variety of cults who worshipped idols]; notwithstanding the promises of the Lord were extended unto them on the conditions of repentance.” Now the sons of Mosiah went to preach to these people, and that was going to be a job, “that they might bring them to know of the plan of redemption. Therefore, they separated themselves one from another, and went forth among them, every man alone.” Well, that’s a risky thing, but on my mission I never had a companion. I got President Tadje’s permission to go alone. Nobody else would go with a bicycle. Nobody would go to these places, so I had to go alone. It was very interesting. After I distributed the tracts and rented the beer hall, then I would bring in Brother Loscher, one of our high powered German orators. He would come in and preach at the meeting and convert them. I just got them out to the meeting. Brother Losher was a great speaker. He came to Salt Lake and became a photographer some years ago.

Being the chief among them, Ammon blessed them and sent them on their ways. Then Ammon went to the land of Ishmael. Here’s another nice little insight we have here. Remember that the daughters of Ishmael were the first to break away and join the Lamanites. That certainly indicates that they were of the tribe of Ishmael—the Ishmaelites were the Arab tribes. Lehi himself was half Manasseh, and Manasseh was the desert tribe. Half Egyptian and half Arab is what it amounts to. They were east of the Jordan River. They went out to pick up Ishmael and [his family] came down and joined them. When they were still in the desert, it was Laman and Lemuel and the daughters of Ishmael that revolted against Lehi. Now later on in the Book of Mormon we find that the Ishmaelites are a people separate by themselves; they have kept their identity. As I said, the race problem in the Book of Mormon is very complex. Verse 19: “And Ammon went to the land of Ishmael, the land being called after the sons of Ishmael, who also became Lamanites [they were the first to defect from Lehi and Nephi]. And as Ammon entered the land of Ishmael, the Lamanites took him and bound him.” Their established custom was to bind any Nephite who came along and to retain them in captivity. This is so with many Indian tribes, of course. Read the life of Jacob Hamblin; it’s very exciting on that subject—and some of the other brethren.

Verse 21: “And thus Ammon was carried before the king who was over the land of Ishmael; and his name was Lamoni; and he was a descendant of Ishmael.” So it was Ishmaelite blood that bonded them together here; it was a family thing. Probably he was the chief of the family because he was a literal descendant. They would have gathered many others. Remember, this is a very fluid society this way. He asked him what he wanted, and Ammon said, “Yea, I desire to dwell among this people for a time; yea, and perhaps until the day I die.” The king said, you are welcome to take one of my daughters to wife. But Ammon said unto him, “Nay, but I will be thy servant.” I want to watch the flocks of Lamoni.

Now we come to the story of the waters of Sebus, a very interesting thing. (I didn’t bring the book along to tell about that. Well, that’s all right because it’s all perfectly clear here.) The idea is this. They have the funniest battle you can imagine. It’s absolutely crazy. Well, let’s see what happens here. He is going to watch the flocks at a place “which was called the water of Sebus, and all the Lamanites drive their flocks hither, that they may have water.” This must have been dry country. This was the main watering place, and they all drove

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1 He is referring to his book, *The Prophetic Book of Mormon, CWHN* 8 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1989).
their flocks together there. Then they would do a funny thing; they would have the strangest sort of fight there. Verse 27: “A certain number of the Lamanites [it may have been a limited number that was required by the game because it’s a game they are going to play], who had been with their flocks to water, stood and scattered the flocks of Ammon and the servants of the king.” Well, that’s a funny thing! They brought their flocks, and then they scattered the flocks of Ammon and the servants of the king. “Now the servants of the king began to murmur, saying: Now the king will slay us, as he has our brethren.” This would happen. They would take the flocks away. Then the servants would go back and get executed for that. Then these people come out and it happens again. Doesn’t the king have enough servants to protect his flocks? Do they have to do this and then have them [the servants] all killed? Verse 28: “Now the king will slay us, as he has our brethren because their flocks were scattered by the wickedness of these men. And they began to weep exceedingly [they didn’t want to be executed because they had lost the game] . . . Now they wept because of the fear of being slain. Now when Ammon saw this his heart was swollen within him with joy [he wasn’t going to have this sort of thing]; for said he, I will show forth my power unto these my fellow-servants,” which he did. He was going to restore the flocks.

He gave them a pep talk. He cheered them up and “flattered them by his words [come on, boys, let’s get ‘em], saying: My brethren, be of good cheer and let us go in search of the flocks, and we will gather them together and bring them back unto the place of water; and thus we will preserve the flocks unto the king,” and he won’t kill us after all. So he talked to them like the coach, you see. Then they had the contest, and they followed Ammon. Verse 32: “They rushed forth with much swiftness and did head the flocks of the king, and did gather them together again to the place of water. And then those men again stood to scatter their flocks [they lined up and were going to scatter the flocks again]; but Ammon said unto his brethren: [you take care of the flocks] Encircle the flocks round about that they flee not.” They won’t run away this time, and I’ll go and take care of these people. So he does. He calls a new play. He has a new game plan now.

Verse 34: “Therefore, they did as Ammon commanded them, and he went forth and stood to contend with those who stood by the waters of Sebus.” This is a separate game now. The sheep are out of it, and there’s going to be a combat here. They liked to play this game, and they played it for fun. The next verse tells us that. “Neither did they know anything concerning the Lord; therefore they delighted in the destruction of their brethren; and for this cause they stood to scatter the flocks of the king.” To have the fun of killing a lot of Lamanites. That was a fun game to play, wasn’t it? They delighted in this; that’s the reason they stood there to scatter the flocks. Now we are going to see that all of this is a perfectly legitimate game. You can find at least a hundred parallels to it if you look for them. This is the way it used to be done. (But don’t get ahead of the game here.)

But Ammon isn’t going to play fair. “But Ammon stood forth and began to cast stones at them with his sling,” like Reuben Headlock. My mother’s great uncle was Ed Sloan, and his missionary companion was Reuben Headlock. He was the man who made the engravings for the facsimiles in the Pearl of Great Price. They were Irish, and they went on a mission in Ireland. Of course, they were mobbed. I just stumbled across this letter the other day quite accidentally. It was in a genealogy wastebasket. Here was this letter written by Éd Sloan about him and Reuben Headlock and what they had done. It said they started chasing them down the street, throwing stones at them. Suddenly they stopped and said, “Now, just a minute. We’re Irish, too, and we can throw a lot better
than those characters with all these nice cobblestones here.” So they started throwing back, and they sent three of them to the hospital. They chased the mob back and were picked up for riotous behavior. But some of our men got them released. They were able to drive off the mob because they could throw, too. It works both ways. I think [the members of the mob] were more surprised than anything else to find that these guys [could throw so well]. But they had both been herding sheep most of their lives and had a deadly aim—out doing nothing but throwing rocks all day. My great-great-uncle was from Manti.

This is what happened here. He went out and started throwing rocks at them, and he was deadly with his sling. Slingers are deadly people. Ammon spent about fourteen years on a mission, and they took the weapons with them to hunt game. Shepherds in Greece or Spain have nothing to do all day but practice with slings, so they become deadly accurate. The most effective troops in any ancient army were the slingers because they would sling pellets. These pellets are found by the thousands throughout the ancient world. They are lead pellets with very little air resistance, and they really go. They are more deadly than a .22, I think. They could hit anything. No wonder little David, who was not so little after all and had been tending flocks all his days, was awfully good with the sling and knew just where to knock Goliath out. So the same thing happened here; this man was deadly. He began to cast his stones at them, and “he slew a certain number of them [by slingery] insomuch that they began to be astonished at his power [this wasn’t according to the game; they hadn’t expected that]; . . . seeing that they could not hit him with their stones [he was out of range; he was a good slinger], they came forth with clubs to slay him.” It was a stone throwing contest, which was fair enough, because they had stones, too, it says here. But after the stone-throwing, they came after him with their clubs.

Verse 37: “But behold, every man that lifted his club to smite Ammon, he smote off their arms with his sword.” There’s only one way you can do damage with a club. You can’t poke with it and you can’t trip up with it. You have to lift your arm to hit with it; that’s all there is to it. So he had this trick blow, and he just cut off their arms—a very nice operation. As we’ll mention later, there’s an Aztec game that was done like this with prisoners of war. One person would have a club, and the other person would have a sword. The person with a club was tied by his ankle; he could have only limited range. He was a prisoner, and it was supposed to be a sacrificial thing anyway. He only had a club to defend himself; whereas, the other man was armed with a sword or with a club with very sharp obsidian blades on it. So the other person didn’t have a chance unless he was awfully good. It was the club against the sword. That was supposed to be done. The person was supposed to be killed because it was ritual sacrifice. You say, “Why do they do these bloody things?” It’s the sanest form of war there is—to limit the bloodshed. We don’t have that; we kill everybody. You’ve seen plenty of documentaries about wild animals in savage wars. You notice that they fight often, but they know when to stop. Elk will fight bloody fights, and hippopotamuses and sea lions. They fight like crazy to be head of the herd, etc. But when the time comes they stop and break it up.

It’s the same thing with savage war. The Indians have their “touch stick.” You touch so many people and that’s it. It’s settled when you have killed so many. A certain price and honor has to be paid. Of course, that’s what the duel is. You draw blood and the honor has been satisfied. I have a long list of such types here; we won’t get into them. But the point is that these are ways of keeping down the killing. That’s it. You know that since you are going to war and since your tempers are high, somebody must pay. But how much? Do you have to wipe out the whole nation? Do we have to get wiped out completely before our honor is satisfied? We have that absurd expression, “unconditional surrender.” Well, a
person doesn’t surrender unless there is a condition that his life is spared. He is not going to surrender at all unless he surrenders on condition. When we say “unconditional surrender” that’s an “Irish bull,” an oxymoron. I have a more elaborate thing, but I’ll talk about it next time. But first let’s finish this chapter.

They began to be surprised and they began to run away from him. I don’t blame them. Verse 37: “They were not few in number; and he caused them to flee by the strength of his arm. Now six of them had fallen by the sling, but he slew none save it were their leader with his sword.” He only dueled with the leader with the sword. The whole point of these things is between the leaders. A duel is what it is. With David and Goliath as soon as Goliath was finished, the Philistines surrendered. There was no battle; that ended it. That’s how it is in the Homeric wars, too. The heroes decide to fight, and the whole issue of the war depends on them. The one who wins takes over the army of the other without any trouble at all. That happened in modern European wars, the Austrian Succession, etc. The winner, the prince, took over the lands and everything else. That was their purpose, to take as many lands as they could. This idea of total warfare is, as Clausewitz says, an utter absurdity. It’s just armies that are fighting, and when you have subjected the enemy to your will the war is over. What you are trying to do is get him to do what you want him to do. When he is willing to do that, there is no need for any more, he said. We don’t do that though. We have a body count now. We just keep on counting as if that were a sign of victory. Clausewitz has a wonderful thing to say about that in his great warriors’ bible [War, Politics, and Power]. It wasn’t published until 1833. I gave a spiel on that on Friday night. That’s not what got me onto this, but it is the thing.

I think I have worked at every level of intelligence from company right up to SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters of the Allied European Forces). I worked quite a while in the British War Office, Whitehall (very few people could get into Whitehall—oh, that’s a joke; that’s something), and Hyde Park Corners where all the intelligence was cooked up in London there. And I went down to Maidenhead to steal maps and things like that, because you had to steal information if you wanted it. The British wouldn’t give it to you. I worked at other levels, and then naturally at the division level. That’s where I was stuck for a whole year, but it was with the 101st. That means we had to be very accurate, and my business was to report everything that was going on from minute to minute, and to be very exposed. That meant that you had to go down and circulate, visit, go behind, go through the woods and do as much peeping as you could. All this sort of nonsense. But it was nice to observe war at every level, you see. Some of it was absolutely magnificent, huge, unspeakably dramatic—far more dramatic than Hollywood ever made it, as far as a spectacle is concerned. On the fourth of July to make an impression on the Germans we sent over 5,000 or 50,000 planes (I don’t remember which) just in one bunch to show to them. Everybody looked [briefly] and nobody bothered about it again—so they have a lot of planes. You see, it isn’t the size.

Like the Second Coming, it won’t be the display. It’s not the Stephen Spielberg or George Lucas effect that we are after. Those things fall flat. The special effects are not the thing at all; it’s what we feel in ourselves about what goes on. That’s where it is. I shouldn’t have got off on this, but I had one great privilege to visit the same places militarily that I had visited as a missionary. It is infinitely harder to go through a hostile village as a missionary than it is to go through the same village with an M1, ducking from door to door. It takes far more courage because that’s what the war is about, as Clausewitz says. It’s a conflict between their mind and your mind. To look them in the eye is the thing. You are preaching the gospel, and you feel that opposition. This was very hostile territory, very
strong Catholic. They had announced before and warned the people against us, etc. And then you're not supposed to contend; you're not supposed to argue about tenets; you're simply supposed to bear your testimony and be on your way. But the tension, the resistance, and the power that was there, without any weapons or anything like that. That wasn’t it at all. And I believe that in the War in Heaven they used no weapons at all—of course, they didn’t. We are told that Satan was cast down in a twinkling. The Lord could squish Satan like a bug anytime he wanted to. That’s not it. This all takes place in the realm of the mind and the spirit. We are eternal, spiritual beings and we have to go through this stuff. This is a very interesting process we are going through right now—a brief and temporary one. It’s a great one. Well, I’ll resume with this comedy tomorrow. It’s quite a thing, what they do in this Sebus business.

[The students sang “Happy Birthday” to Brother Nibley for his seventy-ninth birthday.]

So from hour to hour we ripe and ripe,
And then from hour to hour we rot and rot;
And thereby hangs a tale.

Shakespeare, As You Like It, act II, scene 7

However, when you reach a certain age, you don’t go numb. It’s all gravy. I’m not living on borrowed time; it’s a bonus. It’s completely undeserved and it’s wonderful. I have no claims on it at all, so I’m getting a free ride from this point on, and thoroughly enjoying it, too.
TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

HUGH NIBLEY

Semester 2, Lecture 51
Alma 17–19
War
Ammon and King Lamoni

With only four sessions to go, we have not yet finished the Book of Mormon. You may ask why we are getting stuck on this trivial episode about the waters of Sebus, but it’s a very important part of the Book of Mormon, and a very important part of warfare. You don’t get into the big wars until later on, but we must mention Karl von Clausewitz (1783–1831). He wrote a great two-volume work, which for 150 years has been the bible of the military.¹ It wasn’t published until 1833, so Joseph Smith is “saved by the bell” there, isn’t he? He couldn’t have used it, although the Book of Mormon reads exactly as if it had been written by someone who had been a diligent student of Clausewitz. The main thesis is a thesis of the Book of Mormon. It begins this way. His first famous dictum is that “war is a continuation of politics by other means.” That’s the way he puts it—war is just a continuation of politics. And what is politics after? It’s after power and gain. Whether it’s the princes, or whether it’s the industrial barons, they want power and they want gain. Of course, they get it that way. He goes into various wars. He was very active in the Napoleonic Wars.

The second rule is that “war is absolute.” When you have decided to fight, cedunt leges. As the Romans say, “Forget about the laws.” If you are going to follow a civilized discussion, you discuss. But when you decide to kick and scratch and gouge and shoot each other, it’s silly to talk about laws. He says it’s absurd to talk about laws of war or anything like that. War is absolute. When you are into it, you are into it all the way. You can’t just go partly. If you’re going to go partly, why don’t you continue discussion in that case? No, you throw the rule book aside. That’s important with him. He says, as in the world of mules, there are no rules for battle. There are no rules, he says; throw away the book.

The third point of Clausewitz: What is the object? It is the total destruction of the other side’s capacity to do anything at all—their total submission. So it’s total destruction. That’s what we have in the Book of Mormon. They begin with setting their hearts on riches, and they are already on the high road to destruction. That’s what the Book of Mormon tells us again and again. They set their hearts on riches; therefore, one thing was going to happen. We get more of this later. It builds up climactically until you get those terrible, terrible chapters in Mormon that are so modern, so frightening, and so relevant.

But how about this business at the waters of Sebus? It’s best to read very quickly a summary,² and then we’ll see what it is. This is in Alma 17, as you know: All the Lamanites would drive their flocks to a particular watering place (Alma 17:26). And when

they got there, “a certain number of Lamanites, who had been with their flocks to water, stood and scattered the . . . [king’s] flocks.” That was a fine thing to do, and this was routine. This had been done many times. After the [flocks] of the king “scattered . . . and fled many ways,” the servants lamented that as a matter of course, “now the king will slay us, as he has our brethren” (Alma 17:28). And they began to weep. Is everybody crazy here? What insanity is this, the king kills his own servants for losing a contest that had been acted out before? In fact, we are told in Alma 18:7 that “it was the practice of these Lamanites to stand by the waters of Sebus to scatter the flocks of the people,” keeping what they could for themselves, “it being a practice of plunder among them” (Alma 18:7). It looks like it was a regular custom. So it was no secret to anyone; this was not an ambush but something to be expected. But the king’s own flocks? How could they get away with that? Didn’t he have enough men to protect them if this happened regularly? Well, for one thing the Lamanites played the game for sport; it was more than meat that they were after, for “they delighted in the destruction of their brethren; and for this cause they stood to scatter the flocks of the king” (Alma 17:35). They thought it was great sport. The Arabs have a saying, “If we cease ghâza, we will cease to live. A ghâza is a raid; our word raid is from the Arabic ghâza. They must raid or life isn’t worth living. “Life is raiding.”

The fun of it was their main interest, but Ammon spoiled the fun when he “stood forth and began to cast stones at them with his sling.” They were outraged: “They began to be astonished . . . [and] angry” (Alma 27:36)—he wasn’t playing the game fair. So they came after him with clubs. Why only clubs? He had a sword. There is only one way you can wield a club; you cannot cut or thrust with it but have to raise it up over your head and thus expose your arms. (With both arms the strongest blow is possible.) Ammon took full advantage of the situation, slicing away at the arms raised against him. And yet, with his overwhelming advantage, Ammon “slew none save it were their leader with his sword” (Alma 17:38). He knocked six of them out with his sling and cut off the arms of others as they raised their clubs, but he only contended with the leader to death. After that, the winning party or team brought back the trophies to the king, “bearing the arms which had been smitten off by the sword of Ammon” (Alma 17:39). By now it should be clear that we are dealing with a sort of game; a regular practice, following certain rules. This becomes apparent when a few days later, the very men “who had stood at the waters of Sebus and scattered the flocks” (Alma 19:21) mingled freely and openly with the crowd of people [Lamanites] gathered at the palace. They were the ones that scattered the king’s flocks and got the king’s followers executed by law, according to the game. They gathered at the palace at a report that strange things were going on. Ammon was causing some stir inside the palace.

Some of the people said these things were happening because the king “slew his servants.” The king began to regret it now. That’s an interesting thing. The king saw nothing wrong whatever with killing his servants who lost flocks. He’s stunned later on when it suddenly occurs to him that this might have been a sin. Already people began to say that these things were happening because the king “slew his servants who had had their flocks scattered at the waters of Sebus” (Alma 19:20); and the very men who had scattered the king’s flocks loudly announced their presence by shouting abuses at Ammon when he came out for what he had done “to their brethren at the waters of Sebus” (Alma 19:21).

They were there to get revenge on Ammon right at the king’s palace. The brother of the head man (whom Ammon had killed with his sword) drew his own sword on the spot (he had a sword, too, you see) and made at Ammon (Alma 19:22). He attacked Ammon and
was going to finish him off on the spot. So the men had swords but only used clubs. Isn’t that odd, and isn’t it odd that those same wicked Lamanites [not only] walked around right in front of the king’s palace where everybody recognized them, but nobody did anything about it? They were perfectly free to come and go. And no one held it against the winning team that they had stolen their flocks back (nothing wrong with that), but the losers were only angry with Ammon because he had thrown rocks at them and used his sword against men bearing only ceremonial clubs.

Why ceremonial? All this reminds us of those many ritual, ceremonial games in which the loser also lost his life, beginning with an Aztec duel in which one of the contestants was tethered by the ankle and bore only a wooden mace, while his heavily armored opponent wielded a weapon with sharp obsidian edges. Then there were the age-old chariot races of the princes in which one was to be killed by the Taraxippus. In the chariot races the purpose was sacrifice. The Taraxippus was the place where the ghost of the prince in whose honor this was held was buried. He demanded a human sacrifice, and a chariot had to wreck there. Somebody had to be killed; it was planned that way. Maybe two or three, but there had to be slaughter at the Taraxippus, the sharp curve. Then there were the equally ancient games at Olympia. It was the spirit of . . . I can’t remember his name.

Add to these such vicious doings as the Platanista, the Krypteia, the old Norse brain-ball, the hanging games of the Celts, and so on. And the Glima. The Glima was still celebrated down here at Spanish Fork recently. That’s an ancient game that has to be played. You see the same game being played in Egypt; it’s very well drawn in Egypt. Two people are bound together by a rather loose belt, and each person has a short dagger. One grabs the other person’s hand, and one of them has to get killed. What kind of fun is that? That’s the Glima, and it’s the national sport of Iceland.

Then there were the Philistine games, the Homeric duels, David and Goliath, etc. The point is that this is not to increase slaughter but to place a limit on it. When the hero is killed, then the war is over. Everybody else doesn’t have to die. It sacrifices a few for the whole nation—kings that must die for the people. Mary Renault wrote a very good novel on that particular subject, the kings that die. That’s the idea of the pharmakos, the scapegoat. He goes out and perishes; one person dies for all of them. Then at Easter time it’s Barabbas and one person is released. The kings must die for the people. It’s one who dies for the others, but that saves all the rest of them. They have these rules. A certain number are slain. Sometimes it is equal numbers on each side. But when a certain number had fallen that was it; they would call it off. As I said, wild animals and savages do fight, but they know when to stop. They don’t want to exterminate each other. This is one thing on which Clausewitz goes wrong: He says it’s unthinkable that there would ever be a war in which you could find complete extermination. But there the Book of Mormon takes us right through—Nephites and Lamanites, Shiz and Coriantumr—both sides complete. Now with both having “nukes” there is no doubt at all about it.

The Minotaur required the sacrifice of seven youths and maidens once a year in the bull rings. Those who escaped [were free], but there had to be a certain number and that was it. But that was all; you stopped at that number. And there are bullfights today. Blood has to be shed in a bullfight or it’s not an official bullfight. It’s a sacral or ceremonial thing with all the tooting of the trumpets, all the bowing, and all the formalities, etc. But this obligatory bloodshed is to limit it, so that everybody won’t have to go through with it.
But the closest are those known to many of us here, namely the bloody fun of the famous basketball games played in the great ballcourts of the ceremonial complexes of Mesoamerica. Anyone who has been there (and a lot of you have, I'm sure) has visited the big basketball courts there. In these games either the captain of the losing team or the whole team lost their heads. Everybody didn’t get killed. One or two people did—sometimes the team and sometimes just the captain. But somebody got bumped off. You might say, “Why did they do those things?” Well, it’s better than the way we do it when we go out and clean out everybody—civilians and everybody else. Surviving into the present century among the Pueblos was the race between the Coyote and the Swallow. They would have the race across the plain toward the mesa, and the one who arrived first killed the other as he crossed the finishing line. Equally horrendous was the Wa-Wa rite of the Hopis and some of the other pueblos. It is still celebrated in Guatemala at the spring equinox. There is a tall pole, and they swing [people] around it head down. When the Hopis did it, up until 1900, the pole protruded over the edge of the mesa and the drop was 300–400 feet. The pole was cut half-way through and was supposed to break. Human sacrifice was expected, and that satisfied the necessary killing for the year.

The purpose of such games was to make a human sacrifice, but as at Olympia or in the Roman arena, the religious nature of the thing could be lost in the fun and excitement of the brutal contests. Granted that the Lamanites at Sebus were depraved barbarians and real Yahoos, what is the logical or ritual explanation, the aesthetic appeal, or sporting spirit of [the way we do it] the tag-team wrestling, demolition- or roller-derbies, or laser-tag of our own enlightened age? Nothing could be closer psychologically than that. That has something to do with the bloodshed, etc.

What’s this getting at? It’s a very important side of psychological warfare, and the Book of Mormon treats all sides of it. This is one that applies to our side, too, for reasons that will be presently explained. The games of chivalry were just as rough and deadly as the Sebus sport, and far more ancient. Sinuhe is a thousand years older than Achilles or David, and monuments from prehistoric Egypt show the first “pharaohs” bashing the heads of rival rulers with the ceremonial mace. The famous scenes of the battles of Megiddo and Carchemish display the piles of severed hands and arms brought as trophies to the king. That’s how you would prove that you had slain them; you would bring the right arms to the king and pile them up. This is Bible stuff, too, as well as Babylonian, and the Egyptians were in it, too. At Carchemish and Megiddo the king sat there with big piles of arms in front of him. Well, Ammon brought piles of arms to show his prowess to King Lamoni.

From the days of the Jaredites to the final battle at Cumorah, we find our Book of Mormon warriors observing the correct chivalric rules of battle—enemies agreeing to the time and place of the slaughter, chiefs challenging each other to single combat for the kingdom, and so on. I have written elsewhere of the martial formalities of the Battle Scroll observed in the Book of Mormon.

Clausewitz said you only go through those formalities just to fool a guy. You pretend to stop so you can catch him off guard, as Zerahemnah tried to catch Moroni off guard. We say it is human nature to fight and enjoy violence. As I said, animals and savages fight regularly, especially at mating seasons. But as we have learned from nature documentaries, they know how to stop. There’s no point in killing everybody. We still do this in maneuvers today. One round in ten or one round in fifty will have live ammunition in it. That will pay the price if anybody is too careless. Or decimation still happens in armies. In
the Roman army when a unit had misbehaved and deserved court martial and execution, they couldn’t execute the unit. They would be weakening the forces. They would use decimation—take out every tenth person. That would pay the price that the whole unit was supposed to pay. Duels stopped with the drawing of blood. The Indians had a better way. They would go around in a battle and say, “I touch you with a stick and you’re dead.” Or they had maneuvers where they spattered them with paint to say “you have been hit.”

It’s common for warriors to rest during the noonday heat. The Crusaders had the European idea. At the battle of Morocco, they wanted to go in and slaughter the Moslems. But the Moslems wisely took off for lunch and rested. In that particular battle, the one that St. Louis was in, they all died of the heat. They all had heavy armor and underclothes on. They sat on their horses waiting for the charge of the Moslems. The Moslems sat inside the walls and said, “What are those crazy people doing? It’s lunch time.” Then the heat started to take its toll and they started dropping one by one. It was a very hot day, and Morocco isn’t a cool place. It was about 120 degrees, and they were sitting there in armor with heavy wool under it to pad the armor. They were sweating and sat very stiff, rigidly awaiting the oncoming enemy. The whole army was wiped out by the heat. It’s quite a story.

And opponents still make it up after a lusty brawl. The first week in Normandy our object was to take the town of Carentan, and the commander put up a very good defense of it. General Max Taylor wanted to invite the colonel from Carentan over to tea. I was supposed to dress up in my “bib and tucker” and go invite him to tea because I spoke German. Then he changed his mind and thought it would be better if an officer invited him to tea. So an officer went, but the colonel refused. After that Max Taylor was known to all the German generals as “the last gentleman.” While the battle was going on, he wanted to have tea with the colonel over on the other side.

We have this aspect now. There is one phrase that’s used repeatedly in the Book of Mormon, a very disturbing one. They talk about people “who delighted in the shedding of blood.” We are repeatedly told, for example, that Moroni did not “delight in the shedding of blood.” We delight in the shedding of blood today, and that’s a very bad sign, the Book of Mormon tells us. To say that I enjoy the ballet or football doesn’t necessarily mean that I enjoy dancing or playing football. I enjoy them as a spectator. The ancient Romans greatly enjoyed the bloody games of the arena. They delighted in the shedding of blood. It was one of their big things. So do we. If you flip through the TV channels any evening between ten and fifteen minutes [before the beginning of] the hour, you are bound to come up with two or three murders in progress to get the evening going. It’s the one sure selling item on prime time. The murder has to be there. Do the same thing in the last quarter hour, and then you see the vengeance catching up—with the mandatory explosion as the car, boat, or house disintegrates in a glorious burst of boiling flame and flying debris so that everything has been settled. These people seem to have an insatiable appetite for violence. We forgot the car chase. You’ve got to get that in before the blowing up. This happens over and over and over again. We can’t get enough. It’s the standard plot. It doesn’t have to have any plot anymore, just the finishing off, the shootout at the end. Of course, it’s purely accidental who gets hit and who doesn’t, but the hero is not going to get hit. It’s so silly and it goes on and on. This insatiable desire expresses itself in many ways. Of all things, everybody wants to own an automatic military assault rifle now, which you need for all sorts of things, of course—a very necessary item [laughter].
“It’s not sufficient to have murder,” the man notes here. “We must see the slashes, the
gashes, the gaping mouths, the spurting blood. For the gentler side of life there’s the
obligatory couple in bed.” Now this is routine everywhere. I saw it three months ago, but
if you turn it on tonight this is what you will see. “And all this, sitting safe and cozy with
our popcorn and drinks—it’s fun to watch others suffer.” This has become a main
obsession with the youth of the land. They feel sort of immune to this as if it wouldn’t
hurt you—these things weren’t really hurting these people. “They have brought forth this
new kind of entertainment—the totally explicit display of unlimited cruelty and pain,
careful dismemberment of the human anatomy, and howling agony. There’s real big fun
and money in that sort of thing.” Now when the civilization has gone this far, and quite
recently, there’s something to worry about. Well, we won’t go on to the horrid details
here. But what is the alternative? We are immediately taken to the alternative—what
Ammon did. He led those known as the people of Ammon, who were complete pacifists.

Chapter 17 is the one about the waters of Sebus. Notice that they delighted in playing the
game. Then the king is impressed. He said, “Surely, this is more than a man. Behold, is
not this the Great Spirit [the words Great Spirit are going to be repeated many times, and
that will turn out to be very significant for us] who doth send such great punishments
upon this people, because of their murders” (Alma 18:2). The people were beginning to
think that what they had done was murder. The people of Ammon later on always
described their killing in battle as murder. Why did he [the king] go on murdering? It
could have been ritual murders, etc.

Verse 3: “He cannot be slain by the enemies of the king.” He was a superman. Was the
king so weak? And what about his expertness? “And now, when the king heard these
words, he said unto them: Now I know that it is the Great Spirit; and he has come down at
this time to preserve your lives, that I might not slay you as I did your brethren.” See, he
was about to slay them; he had every intention of putting them to death. It occurs to him
for the first time with rather a shock that it must be wrong to kill the way he had been
doing. In other words it was an established custom; it was the thing to do. Nobody
thought of it as particularly wrong. “Now this is the Great Spirit of whom our fathers have
spoken [there’s something required and deliberate about it]. Now this was the tradition of
Lamoni, which he had received from his father, that there was a Great Spirit; . . . they
supposed that whatsoever they did was right.” The Lamanites were following their customs
and their rites. So King Lamoni says he “supposed that whatsoever they did was right [so
do we; we suppose that whatsoever we do is right]; nevertheless, Lamoni began to fear
exceedingly [now he had doubts], with fear lest he had done wrong in slaying his
servants.” It is perfectly clear that he was doing it as a custom, as a required gesture, and
now it suddenly occurs to him that it might be wrong to slay his servants. You would
think anybody was crazy who didn’t know that was wrong. But he didn’t. It was
 customary, and people do these things.

Verse 6: “For he had slain many of them [it had been the custom all along] because their
brethren had scattered their flocks at the place of water.” That was the established pattern.
He didn’t send an army out to defend the flocks; he just let this go on. It was the custom;
the next verse makes this clear. “Now it was the practice of these Lamanites to stand by
the waters of Sebus to scatter the flocks of the people, that thereby they might drive away
many that were scattered unto their own land, it being a practice of plunder among
them.” We have these practices carried out. That’s what a raid is, and it was perfectly
legitimate. It was carried right down to the Middle Ages. If you read Jean Froissart, you
will see it all through there. The right thing for a great lord to do was to raid his rival’s
camp at night and cut the tent poles. When the tent fell down, they cried, “A Douglas, a Douglas,” and made a splendid exit. That was considered a thing to boast about; that was an accomplishment. Read Froissart, the great fourteenth-century writer. He was secretary to King Richard II and lived for years in Ireland also. He wrote a marvelous story about everything that went on then. It was this sort of thing. Not only the Arabs do that; a gentleman must raid. There’s that famous letter to the Pope Stephen III. When he suggested that the Frankish nobles stop plundering each others’ land, they wrote back in amazement. “What else is a gentleman to do? Isn’t that what we are made to do? Isn’t that God’s purpose that we raid each others’ land and prove ourselves heroes in defense.” It was routine, so we can get used to all sorts of practices. It says this was their practice. See how many times the word practice is repeated there.

Lamoni asked, “Where is this man that has such great power? . . . He is feeding thy horses.” Now this is very important—feeding the king’s horses. You never find in the Book of Mormon anybody riding a horse. You never find any horse but the king’s horses. In Egypt after the eighteenth dynasty you find lots of pictures with horses in them. You know the [movie] *Ten Commandments* and that sort of thing. The kings of the eighteenth dynasty, because they were Asiatics, adopted the light chariot. And, of course, we have the chariot of King Tut. But you never find anybody riding a horse. No, this riding custom is very set in the world. For example, would you or I go ride a giant water buffalo in Southeast Asia? No, it might cost your life, but little eight- and ten-year-old boys do. These little naked kids sit around all day long on these buffaloes, push them around, and lead them everywhere. Isn’t that a strange thing? We don’t ride bovines; we don’t ride horned creatures. Other people wouldn’t dream of riding [a horse]. I had a very good Arabic friend; I traveled with him a lot. Well, he wasn’t Arabic; he was a Druze—a very learned, mystic Druze. But he would not ride in a wheeled vehicle. He said when bicycles were introduced into Lebanon, Duma, Zahle, and places like that, nobody would ride them. They said, “You make the back wheel go, but the devil makes the *dūlāb* go. The *dūlāb* is the front wheel. “Satan makes the front wheel go, but you make the back wheel go—that’s all right.” Isn’t it an interesting thing that these people who live in flat lands on the plains and deserts of the Near East never rode wheeled vehicles? You may think they might help them a great deal.

On the other hand, these brethren in the Book of Mormon who make their long missionary journeys that go for years all over the country. Wouldn’t you think that they would be riding horses too if the king had horses? Why aren’t they riding horses the way the Indians do later? Well, this is an interesting thing. Where do we first find horses being used? They were being used in Mesopotamia. In 4000 B.C. horses and mules were pulling these heavy old wagons, but never is any of them ridden. They were not ridden; they were to pull wagons. These customs are a funny thing, and so we find it here. It’s just the king’s horses that are mentioned.

My friend Woodrow Bora is a specialist in Latin American history at Berkeley. We shared an office together and were very good friends. He made a study of the horse and pointed out some very interesting things about the horse in Central America. When the horse first appears in America, it appears all of a sudden on the plains. And the Indians who ride horses are absolute accomplished experts; they ride better than any people on earth. As I said, these customs are extremely conservative. For thousands of years you ride or you don’t ride; it’s a tradition or it isn’t. When white men first saw horses on the plains, they saw Indians riding them with consummate skill. The big place for trading horses, as you
notice, was Santa Fe. The horse trading between Mexico and the continental United States was there, but the horses were not traded from Mexico up to the plains. They were all traded from the plains down to Mexico, through Santa Fe to the south. The horses didn’t come from the Spaniards up this way; they came from the Indians down south. There were plainsmen up there who rode and were awfully good and accomplished riders. He [Bora] said some other things: The big horse market at Santa Fe was all for getting the horses there from the Midwest and selling them south into Mexico to the Spanish.

In Homer they have the chariots and are great charioteers, as you know. But nobody ever rides a horse in Homer. In [the story of] David and Goliath nobody rides a horse. And you find the same thing in the Battle of Marathon, for example. The fellow ran himself to death to go to Athens to announce the victory at Marathon. Why did he do that? Why didn’t he ride a horse? It’s a funny thing. People use horses or they don’t, and they use animals in very specialized ways—just as we don’t ride cows. Yet we used oxen. They were much more valuable than horses in crossing the plains.

So Ammon was making the king’s horses and chariots ready. As in Egypt just the king used them only for special ceremonial occasions. Only the king, nobody else used them. Well, the custom still applies. Only the British royalty can have a coach and eight white horses. Only an emperor could have a quadriga, four horses, in Rome. These horse and riding rules are very strict. The Germans eat horses, and I ate horses all the time when I was on a mission. Other people wouldn’t think of eating horses. And so it goes. Notice that Ammon is feeding the king’s horses and getting his horses and chariots ready for a ceremony because he is going to a big affair, a big “general conference.”

Verse 9: “For there had been a great feast appointed at the land of Nephi, by the father of Lamoni, who was king over all the land.” Of course, that’s the great assembly. That’s the great feast which has to be held once a year. The king and everybody must come. If you don’t come, you will be cut off from the kingdom for three years. You receive another touch stick, the king’s arrow. If the heror touches you, then you must come to the presence of the king as quickly as possible, and you must bring something with you for the feast. No one comes up to the presence of the king empty handed. This is universal. I wrote two very long studies about that years ago.3 I wrote another one on this war stuff, that was published in the Western Political Quarterly. It was called “Tenting, Toll, and Taxing”4 and was about the chivalric rites of waging duels and wars for the land, etc. You had to do this. A tent is a toll. You had to pay toll on another person’s land. If you didn’t pay toll you had to fight him. If you won you didn’t have to pay toll; he had to pay toll to you, etc. But tent, toll, and tax are all the same word. Taxing is the privilege you pay to live on the king’s land. It’s not the land you are paying for, but it’s in recognition and submission. If you refuse the coin, which could be just a mere token, then you are in a state of defiance. Then you don’t recognize his ownership of the land. That’s what the tax is. Tax means touch. When you come into another person’s land, you put up your tent and then you put your shield in front of it. If he comes up and taps the shield, then you have to come out and fight him, or get off his land, or pay a tax. If you don’t want to fight him, you pay the touch or tax, and then you don’t have to fight him. It was quite a system they had. They have it in the Book of Mormon, too.

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These horses are an interesting thing. The point is that they made a great thing about horses being an anachronism and this, that, and the other. That’s not necessarily so; the horses come and go. They do in Europe, too. Various types of horses appear, like the little Polish horse that appeared and then disappeared entirely. Then there are the great horses, like these enormous Belgian horses with hooves like kegs that were used by the Crusaders. There are all sorts of horses. Then the Arab horses are something very special, and the Arabs never ride their horses when they migrate, only for races and displays. I had a special engraved invitation (I think I still have it) from King Hussein’s secretary to attend the horse and camel races by the Dead Sea way back in 1964. The place is completely destroyed now; there is nothing left of it. They lead their horses and carry their horses, but they never would ride them across the desert. They ride the camels and lead the horses. The horse is a family pet, and the races are to show off. They are short races that only last a little while. They must be very violent because the horses usually bleed [profusely] from the nose in these races. I don’t know why that is. They are hypersensitive, very intelligent, lovable beasts. Considering this treatment of animals, we don’t know what they may have had in the way of horses [in the New World]. The Egyptians had horses in the royal establishment, and King Solomon had a huge stable, as you know. But they haven’t found any horse bones, so don’t expect to find very many horse bones here. Anyway, Ammon got the king’s horses ready. (I mustn’t slow down too much here.)

Verse 12: “And it came to pass that when Ammon had made ready the horses and the chariots for the king . . . he saw that the countenance of the king was changed; therefore he was about to return out of his presence. And one of the king’s servants said unto him, Rabbanah, which is . . . powerful or great king . . .” Do you think that is Hebrew? It is not Hebrew. Remember where these people came from? (I have the note I took from the big Aramaic lexicon.)

Question: When the Nephites and the Lamanites went to battle against each other, did they go on foot?

Answer: Yes, they were usually on their feet. Well, that usually happens when you go to battle anyway. It was the Assyrians and the Romans who introduced the cavalry. The cavalry is Asiatic, as you can see from people like Genghis Khan and the Persians. As Xenophon said, the three things required of every Persian youth were “to shoot the bow, ride the horse, and speak the truth.” They used to say that a man was considered less than a man—he had come down and was not human as soon as he got off a horse. You could spend your whole life on them. There are people in Central Asia who do—like the Kingiz who spend all their days on horses and never get off. They sleep and eat on them and everything else. In other words you either do or you don’t [use horses]. These people [in the Book of Mormon] had them, but only for rare occasions; they were just ceremonial beasts. Lions are used the same way.

Verse 13: They called him “Rabbanah . . . or great king . . .” Isn’t this absolutely perfect? I took a very interesting note on that [from Jastrow], and I can remember what it says. Rabannah is not Hebrew, as I said; it’s Aramaic. It means “a great one, a great king, a great person, a great wise man.” But it means “a person of utter preeminence” with the nah ending. With the nah, it means “our lord.” Rab is great, and Rabannah would be “our great one.” Notice that these people were Ishmaelites, which is important. That’s why they didn’t use the Hebrew term for “great king,” which would be Melek. You get Meleks (kings) all through the Book of the Mormon—Amalickiah, Mulek, etc. But here it’s Rabannah, which is what the Ishmaelites would say. We are told that these people are
descendants of Ishmael in this particular community, so they would say Rabannah, “great
king.” They are rather removed here.

Verse 14: “What wilt thou that I should do for thee, O king? And the king answered him
not for the space of an hour.” The king just sat there and stared at him. He was stunned at
the sight of him. Could he be the Great Spirit? It is true that the Indians all expect this
Great Spirit that came down to visit them. The Hopis do, the Navajos do, they all do.
They ask, “Is this the Great Spirit? Verse 17: “I say unto you, what is it, that thy
marvelings are so great? Behold, I am a man, and am thy servant.” He still stares at him
and says, “Who art thou? Art thou that Great Spirit, who knows all things?”

Now here’s Ammon’s big chance to take advantage, as Cortez did. The king is going to
believe anything he tells him now. How easily he could have done what we have done
with the Indians and tricked him. What are some of the stories we know about? Mark
Twain wrote one, Tom Sawyer Abroad. In Kipling’s story The Man Who Would Be King
they were expecting a Great Spirit to come in India, and these rascals [took advantage of
them]. Jules Verne wrote another one. There are a number of stories of men who have
come among the savages. Because of their supernatural power, the savages are ready to
worship them. They take advantage of that and are waited on hand and foot until their
fatal flaw is discovered. It’s the same [opportunity] here, but “Ammon answered and said
unto him: I am not.” Here was Ammon’s chance to tell a big, fat lie and convert the king.
But [he wouldn’t do it].

Verse 20: “Tell me by what power ye slew and smote off the arms of my brethren that
scattered my flocks. . . . Now, Ammon being wise, yet harmless . . .” He’s not going to lie,
but now he plays a trick [by saying], will you believe everything I tell you? The king said,
I will believe everything you tell me because he was ready to take it. “And thus he was
cought with guile.” Ammon said, now I can preach to him and he will believe me. So he
began, “Believest thou that there is a God?” God is an epithet, you see. [Ammon] would
have used Eloah or Eli. He said, “I do not know what that meaneth.” It was an unfamiliar
word. “And then Ammon said: Believest thou that there is a Great Spirit?” Now, that’s the
epithet they all used, the Great Spirit. “And he said, Yea. And Ammon said: “This is God,”
[like saying], “This is Allah.” Do I believe in the Great Spirit? Yes. We are going to have
this repeated a number of times in the rest of the book here, where the Great Spirit which
they believed in is made absolutely identical with the God we believe in. So if an Indian
asked me, “do you believe in the Great Spirit?” I would say, “yes, I do believe in the Great
Spirit.” It’s the same thing. If an Arab asked me, “Do you believe in Allah?” there’s no
other word [he could use] for God. So I would say, “Of course, I believe in Allah. I think I
know more about him than you do.” “I know more about the Great Spirit than you do.
Do you want to hear more?” That’s the approach that Ammon is using here. He gets him
to say, yes, I believe in the Great Spirit. Then he says, well, so do I; now I’ll tell you who
he is. He said, “This is God.”

I wonder whether I should read you something here. It’s rather distasteful, but it will
illustrate what I have in mind. This is a news item from January 1986. The president of
the Customs Clearing House, a Denver-based firm, wrote a letter to the Navajo Tribal
Council protesting favored treatment in hiring practices of Navajos on the reservation.
Well, shouldn’t Navajos have a favored position when they are being hired to work in the
oil fields on the Navajo Reservation? He didn’t like that at all, and this is the letter he
wrote. “Given the historical facts, we consider ourselves to be members of the conquering
and superior race and you to be members of the vanquished and inferior race. We hold
your land and property to be spoils of war, ours by right of conquest. Through the
generosity of our people, you have been given a reservation where you may prance and
dance as you please, obeying your kings and worshipping your false gods." Now, I'm
wondering if this man is a Latter-day Saint because I've heard them talk just like that. His
name is Ronald Ventris and he is president of the company that supplies the oil fields with
their equipment. "Contacted Monday, Ventris said he had no regrets about the sending of
the letter," and there was no outrage or anything else. This is the position we have
taken—this idea that they worship false gods and they have no rights at all because we
worship the only true God. That's not so. The Book of Mormon tells us a very different
story.

Verse 26: “And then Ammon said: Believest thou that there is a Great Spirit? And he said,
Yea. And Ammon said: This is God. And Ammon said unto him again: Believest thou
that this Great Spirit, who is God, created all things which are in heaven and in the earth?”
Well, the Indian believed that already. These are all the basic questions. “And he said: Yea,
I believe that he created all things which are in the earth; but I do not know the heavens.”
Well, who does? This is the cosmological aspect of it. Then Ammon explains to him more;
he is going to teach him more about it. “The heavens is a place where God dwells and all
his holy angels.” And King Lamoni, speaking with the innocence of a child, said, “Is it
above the earth? And Ammon said: Yea, and he looketh down upon all the children of
men; and he knows all the thoughts and intents of the heart; for by his hand were they all
created from the beginning.” Most people think this is a primitive superstition—that
heaven is a place where God dwells with all his angels. We smile at the expression.

Verse 33: “And king Lamoni said: I believe all these things which thou hast spoken. Art
thou sent from God?” It’s very interesting that he doesn’t give him a direct answer. He’s
still careful not to give a false impression or to take advantage of Lamoni’s gullibility. He
could have exploited that a lot. Lamoni is willing to believe anything he will tell him, but
he wants to tell him only the truth. He could have made great capital out of his gullibility
and trustworthiness. “And king Lamoni said: I believe all these things which thou hast
spoken. Art thou sent from God? Ammon said unto him: I am a man [so don’t get any
ideas that I am superhuman or an angel or anything like that]; and man in the beginning
was created after the image of God, and I am called by his Holy Spirit [he hasn’t talked to
God face to face] to teach these things unto this people, that they may be brought to a
knowledge of that which is just and true; [Then he meets him halfway here:] And a
portion of that Spirit dwelleth in me, which giveth me knowledge, and also power
according to my faith and desires which are in God.” As we said before, faith is not the
power; it plugs into the power. It gives you access to the power. My faith gets me the
power, but it is not the power. It amounts to it, if it comes to that. He began with the
story of the [creation] and the fall “and rehearsed and laid before him the records and the
holy scriptures [the project to follow this through would have been impossible without the
scriptures] of the people, which had been spoken by the prophets, even down to the time
that their father, Lehi, left Jerusalem, . . . the journeyings of their fathers in the wilderness
. . . and he expounded unto them all the records and scriptures from the time that Lehi left
Jerusalem down to the present time [verse 38]. . . . For he expounded unto them the plan
of redemption, which was prepared from the foundation of the world [see, he takes the
gospel back to the preexistence, and he calls it the plan, you notice]; and he also made
known unto them concerning the coming of Christ.”

Verse 41: “And he began to cry unto the Lord, saying: O Lord, have mercy. . . . And now,
when he had said this, he fell unto the earth, as if he were dead. And it came to pass that
his servants took him and carried him in unto his wife, and laid him upon a bed; and he lay as if he were dead for the space of two days and two nights; and his wife, and his sons, and his daughters mourned over him, after the manner of the Lamanites, greatly lamenting his loss."

A work called The Ascension of Isaiah was discovered in 1832 in Ethiopia, but not translated. It wasn’t published until 1877. In The Ascension of Isaiah the same thing happened. Two events like this happened in the Book of Mormon, but this one from The Ascension of Isaiah is very interesting. The work is called The Testament of Hezekiah, which is still lost and being looked for. But this part of it came forth. “When Somnas the scribe [he is the scribe of King Hezekiah] and Assur the record-keeper [like Zoram in the Book of Mormon; they are in the court] heard that the great prophet Isaiah was coming up from Gilgal [near Jericho and about ten miles from Qumran] to Jerusalem, and with him 40 sons of the prophets [because they were collegiate] and his own son Jasum, they announced his approach to King Hezekiah. When he heard this King Hezekiah rejoiced exceedingly and went forth to meet the blessed Isaiah, taking him by the hand and conducting him into his royal dwelling, and ordered that a chair be brought for him.”

This reminds us very much of Ammon visiting King Lamoni. Then the king brought in his son Manasseh and besought the prophet to give him a blessing. Isaiah said he didn’t have a blessing because he foresaw the great sin that Manasseh would commit. It was Manasseh who martyred Isaiah. Isaiah, however, told the king that such behavior would profit him nothing, since Satan would have his way with Manasseh. (This is Isaiah in this case; later it’s the king.) Later while he was sitting on the king’s bed conversing, the prophet was overcome by the Spirit, “and his consciousness was carried away from this world, so that Somnas the record-keeper began to say that Isaiah was dead. But when Hezekiah the King came in and took him by the hand, he knew that he was not dead; but they thought he had died . . . And thus he lay upon the bed of the King in his transported state [of ekstasis, which means your spirit having left your body; ek/ex is out, and stasia means standing up. So ecstasy is when your spirit leaves your body.] for three days and three nights. Then his spirit returned to his body, [and Isaiah] summoned Jasum his son and Somnas the scribe [the whole court, you see] and Hezekiah the King and all those who stood about such as were worthy to hear those things he had seen.” To them he delivered an ecstatic discourse on the “surpassing, indescribable, and marvelous works of God who is merciful to men, and of the glory of the Father and of his Beloved Son and of the Spirit, and of the ranks of the holy angels standing in their places.”

Now this is the same sort of thing that happens here. He saw the gospel plan. He was transported to heaven and saw God and his mercy, etc. In the same way when Isaiah comes to, he is going to say the same thing. Later on with the king and the queen this happens again. This is a very interesting passage here because it says, “And now, when he had said this, he fell unto the earth, as if he were dead. And it came to pass that his servants took him and carried him in unto his wife, and laid him upon a bed [well, Isaiah is laid upon the king’s bed here] and he lay as if he were dead for the space of two days and two nights [with Isaiah it was three days and three nights]; and his wife, and his sons.” All the family were there mourning for him when he rose up again, which he did. It carried on a long time, and then he finally came to in verse 13: “He stretched forth his hand unto the woman, and said: Blessed be the name of God, and blessed art thou. For as sure as thou

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livest, behold, I have seen my Redeemer; and he shall come forth, and be born of a
woman, and he shall redeem all mankind who believe on his name. . . . He sunk again
with joy; and the queen also sunk down, being overpowered by the Spirit.”

Here when Isaiah comes to he says the same thing, “surpassing, indescribably, and
marvelous works of God,” because he has seen the Father and his Beloved Son and the
Spirit and the ranks of the holy angels in their places. So we get these interesting parallels
in the Book of Mormon, with Joseph Smith always getting in just under the wire. This was
discovered in 1832, just too late. Of course, he wouldn’t have read Ethiopian anyway. It
wasn’t translated until 1877. So we have these stunning parallels all strung along in the
Book of Mormon, which oblige me to take some things seriously and make me
uncomfortable in some regards. I mean, what position is this putting us in anyway? This
is getting awfully close to home if you ask me.
We’re on Alma 19. These chapters that follow have a number of unusual things happening in them. But in other ages these things were not so unusual; they were sort of routine. These things sound quite fantastic in the Book of Mormon. You may have heard Brother Packer during conference. He compared our time with just forty years ago. Well, I had already been teaching twenty years, forty years ago. But it’s a different world, he said. Compared with that world, our world today is just a pastiche of crimes and excesses. You wouldn’t recognize it. Unfortunately, I don’t think its reversible either; it just goes more and more. This is the Book of Mormon; that’s where it comes in. It keeps hitting back at us all the time. This was once thought to be utterly fantastic and out of this world—these excessive things, like civilizations destroying each other completely. Such a thing was utterly unheard of. Well, it isn’t unheard of anymore. The Book of Mormon is for our time.

In chapter 19 we were talking about these [situations where people pass out]. Well, they are routine, too. And we were talking about the lost Testament of Hezekiah, [part of] which has turned up in a writing called The Ascension of Isaiah. Isaiah goes to the king’s court and passes out on the king’s bed. The people say he is dead. He’s gone for two days and comes back again. When he comes back he says, I have seen the Messiah, O blessed Jesus, etc. That’s the very thing that happens when the king and queen come to, here. The whole family passes out. This passing out is fairly common—it does happen. There’s a very famous writing that’s four hundred years older than Lehi, The Journey of Wenamon. It’s a historical account of his journey from Egypt. He was on business for the king, and he was a high priest. He went to the palace in Tyre, and Zakar-Baal was the king there. He [Wenamun] would have lost everything if one of the chief courtiers hadn’t passed out in this same way. When he came to he had had a vision. It was his vision that released Wenamun so that he was able to get away and go back to Egypt. There were some pirates waiting—it’s quite a story.

The point is that this passing out is almost routine. And for some occasions in religions it’s an important thing. It’s so important and so basic as a religious experience that it is very commonly faked and imitated. Once you have had it you try to control it. What about all these drugs, all this peyote? The dancing has that effect. In the first volume of Chantepie de la Saussaye there’s a great work on this subject. The main point of religion was to be bedizened and half out of your head. You get your nerves all whipped up to the point of breaking and then go into an ecstatic condition. This is produced by dancing, by choral singing, by drugs, by incense, and by dervishes. You know about whirling dervishes; they dance themselves into a drunken state where they pass out. In the Indian sun dance it’s the same way (such as the Mandans). You were supposed to exhaust yourself by dancing. Then you passed out and had the visions, and then you came to. [There have been] whole groups of people passing out and then coming back and reporting visions. You couldn’t be a member of some of the plains Indians unless you had done that. A young man had to go up into a mountain and fast and pray until he became so weak that
he passed out. Then he would have his private vision, receive his own totem (his own animal), and then come back and report. That would be a test to him. The animal might be a bear or a beaver. There were various customs in various tribes.

Well, this business of passing out that seems so strange in these chapters that follow is the routine. You are supposed to do this when you’ve had a real inspiration. Writers like Abraham of Santa Clara [have written about this]. And you know what the Tantra is, the Sheva cult of Tantra. The revivalists pass out, and the VooDoo still do it in the West Indies. In Haiti they do this. You may have seen documentaries where they dance themselves into a fit. A woman or a man will pass out; their eyes will go glazed with VooDoo. This is part of it, and this passing out is quite a routine. It’s faking the real thing. If you can’t have a vision, you can at least fake it. People do this all the time. Well, we don’t have to do that sort of thing. Revelation appears on various levels. This is nowhere clearer than in the Book of Mormon, where Lehi starts out saying, “Behold, I have dreamed a dream; or, in other words, I have seen a vision” (1 Nephi 8:2). Well, at what level can you have it (a dream, a vision)? They are all communication beyond your control.

Let’s go on here with chapter 19. The king passed out, and Ammon went to the queen. Verse 5: “I would that ye should go in and see my husband, for . . . some say that he is not dead, [it’s the same story as Isaiah and King Hezekiah and the prophecy about Mannaseh] but others say that he is dead and that he stinketh . . . but as for myself, to me he doth not stink. Now, this was what Ammon desired . . . and the light which did light up his mind, which was the light of the glory of God . . .” Notice the imagery that’s used here and how often the word light is used: “. . . and the light which did light up his mind, which was the light of the glory of God . . .” Notice the imagery that’s used here and how often the word light is used: “. . . and the light which did light up his mind, which was the light of the glory of God, which was a marvelous light of his goodness—yea, this light had infused such joy into his soul, the cloud of darkness having been dispelled, and that the light of everlasting life was lit up in his soul.” There are six lights in this sentence. Notice that this is imagery, and yet is it imagery? We are still faced with the basic question, what is light? Nobody knows. Protons don’t have any weight or any mass. But what are they? “Yea, he knew that this had overcome his natural frame, and he was carried away in God—” This is ekstasis; ek means out, and stasis means stepping. So you step out of your body when you are in a state of ekstasis. In Revelation John says that on the Lord’s day he was in a state of ekstasis. He left his body. We are told the same about Abraham. In the Hebrew it’s the tardëmhâh of Old Testament when you pass out. In Genesis 15 the same thing happens. Abraham passes out the same way. His soul is carried aloft and then he comes back and reports.

Verse 8: “He is not dead, but he sleepeth in God [in other words God is taking care of him]. . . . And Ammon said unto her: Believest thou this? And she said unto him: I have had no witness save thy word [but I believe]. And Ammon said unto her: Blessed art thou because of thy exceeding faith; I say unto thee, woman [here’s another one], there has not been such great faith among all the people of the Nephites.” Now this isn’t a paraphrase of the New Testament. After all, Ammon had been a missionary to more Nephites than anyone else; he knew the Nephites by heart. He said we don’t find such faith among all the Nephites as we find here, and these are Lamanites. An interesting thing is about to happen here. He [the king] arose and said, “I have seen my Redeemer.” In the Isaiah text first the king passes out and then Isaiah. Isaiah comes to and says, “I have seen the Messiah.” He has been taken aloft. So we have a sort of standard vision here. Then “he sunk again with joy; and the queen also sunk down, being overpowered by the Spirit.”
They were all passing out. This is the way you do when you are completely overwhelmed this way. Verse 14: “He fell upon his knees, and began to pour out his soul in prayer and thanksgiving to God for what he had done for his brethren [Ammon did this because his message has gotten over]; and he was also overpowered with joy [and he fell down, too]; and thus they all three had sunk to the earth.”

Of course, the hardest thing to contain is joy. Anybody can contain all sorts of pain. It’s amazing what you can put up with when you have to put up with pain. How astonishing it is—there’s just no limit. But joy is a thing that scares the daylights out of you. You can’t contain it and don’t know what to do with it. In the Moscow Art Theatre they say, “Suffer, suffer, suffer; that’s the way you become an artist.” Well, we love to suffer; there’s no limit to how much we can suffer. But joy is so much harder to take. You don’t know what to do with it, do you? And yet that’s the purpose of our existence—we “are that we might have joy.” So we are learning to control joy and control ourselves when we have it. We can’t contain it, you see. It’s a hard thing to contain. What do you do? Do you shout and holler and run around? Do you make a fool of yourself, etc.? How can you contain that in yourself? Well, they are all sinking down here and passing out, and that’s the best thing. After all, when pain becomes too great you black out automatically. So that takes care of that. It’s the same thing with joy if you can’t contain it. When you don’t know how to handle a problem psychologically, what do you do? You black out. This is your defense. It’s a form of Pentecost here and very special. It’s a part of initiation times. They are one-time experiences which people attempt to repeat, as in the Sioux sun dance and the Sufis. The Sufis are the most important branch of mystics among the Moslems; they have to pass out. So you have your various dances and dervishes and things like that.

People wondered what was going on; they didn’t understand. Verse 16: “They did call on the name of the Lord, in their might, even until they had all fallen to the earth.” Then this Abish comes along. That’s a very interesting name because that’s the name on a very famous Egyptian mural from a tomb in the Middle Kingdom. It shows a family coming from Palestine to Egypt. It’s a family of bedouins very vividly portrayed, and the leader is Abish. They [in verse 16] had all fallen to the earth. This was Abish “having been converted to the Lord, and never having made it known” to anyone before. When she saw this opportunity she ran forth from house to house making it known, and they began to assemble themselves. It was a great display, “and they all lay there as though they were dead. . . . And now the people began to murmur among themselves.” Something is wrong here. They say, the king has brought this evil upon himself. The central theme of this particular story goes back to the waters of Sebus. “The king hath brought this evil upon his house, because he slew his servants who had had their flocks scattered at the waters of Sebus.” This king has done wrong in doing this.

Now this is the interesting thing that happens. What about the men at Sebus who had scattered the flocks? They were there. Verse 21: “And they were also rebuked by those men who had stood at the waters of Sebus and scattered the flocks which belonged to the king, for they were angry with Ammon.” They were in the crowd. It was part of the game; they were accepted here. A strange crime against the king. They announced their presence here; they shouted out at him. “They were angry with Ammon because of the number which he had slain of their brethren at the waters of Sebus, while defending the flocks of the king.” One of them was the brother of the one that Ammon had killed in the single combat, the only one killed with the sword. He drew his sword and made at Ammon, and he fell dead. So they did have swords after all. Strange goings on here. But it only occurs to them now that what they had been doing there was wrong. Verse 24: “When the
multitude beheld that the man had fallen dead . . . fear came upon them all, and they
durst not put forth their hands to touch him or any of those who had fallen.” Strange
goings on here, aren’t they? Verse 25: “There were many among them who said that
Ammon was the Great Spirit, and others said he was sent by the Great Spirit.”

I refer to an article of mine here in *The World and the Prophets*. Shamanism is very
important. The basic priest throughout the ancient world is the shaman, as you know. The
shaman absolutely must pass out, and he must nearly die or he is not a true shaman.
Sometimes they really do; they don’t come back. They have to be taken abroad. They
have to be taken up to heaven by a bird, and they have to be brought back again after
many trials. All the way from the tip of Tierra del Fuego, especially across northern Asia,
the shamans existed. And you find the pictures from Altamira in Spain of shamans in
action in prehistoric drawings. Throughout the ancient world the shaman was the central
religious figure. But in order to gain his calling he had to pass out and he had to be taken
to heaven in his mind. It was a real experience. He had to fast until he was unconscious
and then he went through this experience. As I said, it not uncommonly happens that he
doesn’t come back again. So it’s quite a risky thing this Shamanism. It’s very desirable
and, therefore, artificially induced. They must have seen something to be real shamans,
and they risk possession by evil spirits in the rite.

Notice some said that Ammon “was sent by the Great Spirit; But others rebuked them all,
saying that he was a monster, who had been sent from the Nephites to torment them . . .
And they said that it was this Great Spirit who had destroyed so many of their brethren,
the Lamanites.” The Great Spirit is on the side of the Nephites. It turned into hysteria.
Verse 28: “And thus the contention began to be exceedingly sharp among them. And
while they were thus contending, the woman servant . . . came” and told them about it.
Then they said it was her fault. When she saw the contention that she had caused, she
declared she was to blame and “was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto tears [what have I
done here?] . . . She went and took the queen by the hand” and she arose. This is a critical
situation here, isn’t it? “And when she had said this, she clasped her hands, being filled
with joy, speaking many words which were not understood.”

This is typical. When the shaman comes out, he talks in riddles and rhymes. Again, the
ancient world was governed by the oracles. What was the oracle? The oracle was a woman
who was made to pass out. Usually she snuffed bay leaf, which is very powerful. If you live
on the bay around the coast, you can go down to Stinson Beach or Half Moon Bay and
get the laurel. If you rub it like this and take a good sniff, you’ll pass out. Well, the
Delphic Oracle was the woman who governed the ancient world for centuries. Everybody
went to Delphi to consult that oracle. She was a woman who sat on a tripod over a pot of
bay leaf and passed out. When she was out of her mind, she would utter things. It was
uttered in rhyme and sometimes in strange tongues. Sometimes it was in gibberish. So
this is a type of institution which we are not familiar with today, but it has ruled the world
until very recently. Until very recently we have had these things—these strange gifts and
perversions. You’ll find them among the Druzes in Lebanon. For years I went around
with an old Druze, and he taught me various things about that, too. Very strange things
going on here. So she carried on like this, and then she took King Lamoni’s hand and he
arose. “And he, immediately, seeing the contention among his people, went forth and
began to rebuke them” for behaving the way they were. “But there were many among
them who would not hear his words; therefore they went their way.”
“If they believe not Moses and the prophets, they will believe not the one that rose from the dead,” the Lord said. This was an anti-climax as far as they were concerned. Verse 33: “When Ammon arose he also administered unto them.” But you notice he didn’t convince everyone; many among them didn’t believe it at all. He went among all his servants, and “their hearts had been changed; . . . many did declare unto the people that they had seen angels and had conversed with them.” You notice that angels must get things moving because the point is this. Here we reach a critical point in Book of Mormon history. From this time on the Lamanites start going up in virtue, and the Nephites start going down. The Lamanites become the virtuous people now. It’s a very strong trend we see from here on. This critical moment in history is the turning point. It had to be, and the only way such a thing could happen would have to be by another Pentecost, by an eruption of the spirit, a breaking in or intrusion of the other world. Theologians are talking a lot about this today. They never talked about it before, but they say what you have in the New Testament is an intrusion of the other world into this one—a breakthrough, something that people never could have arranged or suspected, a note of surprise. With the restoration of the gospel then as now, the main theme was surprise. Everybody was surprised because things were happening completely beyond their control. Utter amazement seizes them, and the angels have to say, “Don’t be afraid; we are messengers from God.” So this is not a normal occurrence. The big shift begins here in the Book of Mormon where the Lamanites begin to get a break. We talked about mixing races; from now on you’re not going to be able to distinguish them at all. Many said “they had seen angels and had conversed with them . . . and as many as did believe were baptized; and they became a righteous people, and they did establish a church among them. And thus the work of the Lord did commence among the Lamanites.” That’s why this thing is so sensational, so very striking. The work of the Lord begins among the Lamanites. The moral of that, says Mormon, is “that his arm is extended to all people who will repent and believe on his name.”

We have to move right along now, don’t we? Lamoni desired that Ammon should go with him on a trip to see his father. Lamoni said, won’t you come and see my father? His father was the high king of the whole country. It was just like the Sachem, the five nations of Indians on the eastern coast when the first pilgrims came here. They had a system of nations in which there was a high king and then the lower kings below him. But the Lord said, “Thou shalt not go up to the land of Nephi, for behold, the king will seek thy life; but thou shalt go to the land of Middoni; for behold, thy brother Aaron, and also Muloki and Ammah are in prison.” The name Middoni is a very interesting one. It wasn’t until the end of the nineteenth century that we discovered the Mittani. Who are the Mittani? They are the nation just to the north and east of Manasseh. There is half Manasseh there in the desert east of the Jordan. Just to the north and east of them is the next nation, which is Madani, or Midian, or Mittani. It’s usually written Mittani. It’s amply testified in the Hittite and especially in the Egyptian records. This is Mittani obviously, and it changes with $d$.

One of our boys has gone to Berkeley to study Egyptian. They are telling him now that they have completely changed the sound of $r$, which used to be so dominant in Egyptian. It has suddenly changed to $l$. They used to say there was no $l$ in Egyptian. Well, within the last two years you have to say $l$ where you used to say $r$. That’s the way they change things. It’s the same with Mittani and Middoni. You find these changes. This is Middoni it’s talking about, the land next to Lehi country, half Manasseh there in the desert east. Remember Lehi was of Manasseh and Egyptian and all this sort of thing. And, of course, it’s Arabic because they had the Ishmaelites here. They brought Ishmael along with them. The Ishmaelites kept their separate identity. The Moslems still preach that Ishmael was a
descendant of Abraham. He was the elder son of Abraham, and he became the father of the Arabs. You have people going by the name of Ishmaelite because there was this feud between Ishmael and Isaac. They fight each other. You remember the Ishmaelites had separated themselves here. They came along, too. It's a complicated picture. *Middoni* was only discovered in the 1880s, and Petrie decided it must be related to the Midian of Moses.

Ammon said, “Behold, my brother and brethren are in prison at Middoni, and I go that I may deliver them.” The king said, I have some clout; I'll go with you and help you get them out. So they made ready his chariots and horses. As I've said before, with the exhausting treks of the brethren from land to land that we've been reading about in this part of the Book of Mormon, why didn't they ride horses like cowboys and Indians do? The horse appears in the Book of Mormon as a rare and exotic animal, exactly as the Arab steed appears in ancient, medieval, and modern times. In 1964 I went with somebody, and one of his purposes was to buy Arab horses. Real Arabs are very hard to get. You find them popping up, but they are only for kings. They're rare and royal animals. They say they aren't like other horses at all. They are special beasts. They are highly sensitive—too sensitive as a matter of fact. They are nervous, but they are extremely intelligent. There is something strange and eerie about them, the Arabs will tell you. People say so. They raise lots of [Arabian horses] here in the valley up toward Pleasant Grove, but they are mixed. They are a rare, exotic, imported animal, and only for kings. Maybe a great duke might have one. The riding horse was very limited throughout the Middle Ages. In England by the forest laws of the Normans no Saxon was allowed to ride a horse. Only a noble could ride a horse. Well, what is the common word for *knight* on the continent? It's Ritter, a rider. Only someone of noble blood could ride a horse, the noble knights. That's from the Equestrian Order of Rome. The Equestrian Order were only those of noble blood. They were equestrians. They could ride a horse, and nobody else was permitted to ride a horse. You had to have a particular blood line. They were very special animals, usually limited just to kings until they became useful in war, etc. But we find the same thing [with other animals]. Throughout Europe you will find, where you never expect to find them, peacocks and elephants and camels. Frederick II, king of Sicily, had those, but they were rare and exotic things that always caused excitement. You would find them clear up in England sometimes. It's the idea of these strange beasts appearing and being taken care of. This is the picture you get in the Book of Mormon. Only kings have them, and he is taking care of the king's horses for his chariots. Nobody rides horses in the Book of Mormon. As we said before, nobody rides horses in the Near East, just as nobody rides bicycles—just as we don't ride water buffaloes here. We would be scared to death to do it, but they do it in southeastern Asia.

Lamoni said to Ammon, “I will go with thee to the land of Middoni.” There Ammon is making ready the king’s horses and chariots. That’s a thing for only a noble person to do. The equestrian, the one who takes care of the king’s stables, is the constable. Who is the constable of France? He is the one next to the king. The constable is the one who takes care of the king’s stables, and that’s as high as you can get. Remember the great speech the constable of France gives in *Henry V*? He was the one that settled the peace between England and France; he was the king’s highest representative. So horses are a strange, exotic thing. You can’t generalize about horses too much, as I’m doing here. But in the Book of Mormon they were imported from the plains to the north. As my friend Woodrow Bora found out, all the trade in horses between the continental United States and Mexico was not in taking Spanish horses up to the continent. They brought them down from the plains through Santa Fe to Mexico. They were brought to Mexico, not
from Mexico. He finds that significant, along with other things. Well, we won't bother with horses too much.

Now here is a very dramatic situation right out of *Oedipus*. Verse 8: “They met the father of Lamoni, who was king over all the land.” He was the *sachem*, the high king. He gave a real speech, and this shows you that the Lamanites had a case. They really believed this, and this is the point at which the Lamanites turn. They now start to become the righteous people. They were justified in their own eyes in what they did because here was the king, and he couldn’t stand Nephites. He said they have betrayed us, tricked us, and outsmarted us all the time. This was the point because the Nephites did outsmart them. They would have a great resentment against that.

Verse 9: “Why did ye not come to the feast on that great day when I made a feast unto my sons, and unto my people?” Well, the feast of the king is compulsory wherever you go. In the last chapter of *Zachariah* it’s the same thing. From year to year everyone shall come up to Jerusalem to the feast—the feast of the Passover, the feast of the booths this was, the feast of the *sukkot*. You must come to the feast, and you must bring something with you. No one shall come empty handed. You had to bring your offerings of lamb or doves, etc. You had to bring food with you, and they had the great feast. Well, it’s like the coronation in the book of Mosiah, where Benjamin gave his great speech. That’s the strict and correct description of the rite that took place at the feast. It was feasting that they engaged in. If you didn’t come, you were an *âillage*, outlaw. You were outlawed from the kingdom for three years. You had no citizenship and no rights. You had to come and report and have your name put in the Book of Life, the list of the *incisi*. I wrote a long article years ago for the centennial lecture up at the University of Utah when they were celebrating. It was on this very thing. It was published in the *Western Political Quarterly* back in 1951.¹ They haven’t reprinted it yet.

After his father asked why he didn’t come to the feast, “he also said: Whither art thou going with this Nephite, who is one of the children of a liar?” Now this is the case the Lamanites make out for themselves. This is a skillful history, too. It’s like the telling of a saga. The language is, too. “Lamoni rehearsed unto him whither he was going” and what he was going to do because he had to tell him. “And he also told him all the cause of his tarrying in his own kingdom [why he didn’t go to the feast, etc.]. And now when Lamoni had rehearsed unto him all these things, behold, to his astonishment, his father was” not impressed but he was furious. He said, “Lamoni, thou art going to deliver these Nephites, who are sons of a liar [get them out of jail; this is the Lamanite party line]. Behold, he robbed our fathers; and now his children are also come amongst us that they may, by their cunning and their lyings, deceive us.” Here we have these Nephites circulating and spreading missionary news, and Lamoni had given them a free hand. He had given them a carte blanche to do anything they wanted. He goes too far; in fact it causes a revolution a little later on. They robbed our fathers, and you are letting them do anything they want among us—infiltrate us “that they may, by their cunning and their lyings, deceive us, that they again may rob us of our property.” We haven’t been the robbers; they have been the robbers [the king claimed]. The Nephites (men like Alma and Amulek) had consistently outsmarted the Lamanites. The Lamanites had a real grievance. They were not bad as Lamanites anymore than the Russians are bad as Russians. This is an important insight

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into Lamanite mentality. And we still treat the Indians this way. After all, they still get the dirty end of the stick, you might say. He [the king] ordered him to “slay Ammon with the sword.” He wouldn’t put up with it at all. He was very serious and “mad as a hatter.”

Verse 15: “But Lamoni said unto him: I will not slay Ammon, neither will I return to the land of Ishmael.” He defied his father openly, and to defy the king openly is treason.

Verse 16: “Now when his father had heard these words, he was angry with him, and he drew his sword that he might smite him to the earth.” After all, he had openly defied the high king, his father. This was treason, and he should be smitten. But Ammon stood forth against him, to his surprise. He said, “If thou shouldst fall at this time, in thine anger, thy soul could not be saved.” No one dies well who dies in a battle. Remember those great speeches of the soldier from Henry V where he says, because we die in our anger, because we die in wrath, that’s no way to die. It’s a terrible thing [paraphrased]. It’s the same thing here, “If thou shouldst fall at this time, in thine anger, thy soul could not be saved.” Moreover, “he being an innocent man, his blood would cry from the ground.”

What is the rationale of this saying we have again and again in the Pearl of Great Price especially—“his blood shall cry from the ground” or “from the earth.” There’s a rationale for this very ancient formula. The earth is the mother of life and is the womb of the resurrection also. From the earth we are resurrected and out from the earth we are born. She is Mother Earth. She is the mother of life and the womb of the resurrection. The destruction of life in any form is the reversal and perversion of existence itself, as we learn in Ether 8:19 in the Book of Mormon. “For the Lord worketh not in secret combinations, neither doth he will that man should shed blood, but in all things hath forbidden it, from the beginning of man.” It’s an unspeakably horrendous calamity deliberately to reverse the process for which the earth was created. If the earth accepts their blood, it will cry from the ground and demand vengeance, as it does in the book of Moses.

Verse 19: “I know that if I should slay my son, that I should shed innocent blood; for it is thou that hast sought to destroy him. And he stretched forth his hand to slay Ammon. But Ammon withstood his blows, and also smote his arm . . . [good old Ammon; he knew how to hit people’s arms, didn’t he?]. Now when the king saw that Ammon could slay him, he began to plead with Ammon that he would spare his life.” The “gun” is in the other guy’s hand now. Remember how quickly they change around in our endless police shows, etc. The person who has the gun has all power. One moment he is insufferably arrogant and the next he is cringing. This happens with the king here because Ammon has the “gun” now and is holding it on him. The king said, I will give you anything, even half the kingdom [paraphrased]. Again, why this old formula “half the kingdom.” Well, you know the game of chess. In English we call it chess, but that’s just the first word šah which means “the king.” The game is šah mät, as they call it in other languages everywhere, whether it’s Russian, German, French, or anything else. Šah mät means “the king is dead,” and the whole thing in chess is to checkmate the king. Checkmate means “the king is dead.” Mät in all Semitic languages means “dead.” When he is checkmated, he may have a whole board full of pieces, but he is beaten if he is checkmated. It doesn’t make any difference how many kings, queens, and bishops he has, he has lost. And it’s the same thing here; it’s to beat the king. If the king has lost then he must lose all. Then his kingdom and his whole army (another article I wrote)² go over to the other side, and they belong to the other king. But to save his life he may compromise. He may not give away

his kingdom because he has been anointed and appointed to it as a sacred office. He must keep it. But he must save his life, so he’ll have to give you the kingdom. How does he do it? He splits it exactly in half—the halving of the kingdom. He gives you half, and he keeps half. He spares his life, he keeps his office, and he gives you legitimate claim to your half. This settles everything. This is the idea of the half. How can the king possibly share it? Well, he can share it only if he halves it. There is a lot of Egyptian lore connected with this—the halving of the kingdom, the red and the white kingdom, and all this sort of thing.

Verse 24: “If thou wilt grant that my brethren may be cast out of prison . . . [so they spare him] . . . And when he saw that Ammon had no desire to destroy him, and when he also saw the great love he had for his son Lamoni, he was astonished exceedingly [by his behavior] and said: Because this is all that thou hast desired, that I would release thy brethren, and suffer that my son Lamoni should retain his kingdom [so that was all right], behold, I will grant unto you that my son may retain his kingdom from this time and forever; and I will govern him no more [he gave him a free hand.] And I will also grant unto thee that thy brethren may be cast out of prison, and thou and thy brethren may come unto me, in my kingdom; for I shall greatly desire to see thee.” Come and see me as soon as you can, he says.

Then there’s another minor king. Notice that they went to the land of Middoni, and the king of Middoni was another one of those minor kings. Lamoni was a fellow king, so they got along very nicely. It says, “And Lamoni found favor in the eyes of the king of the land; therefore the brethren of Ammon were brought forth out of prison.” If he and Lamoni hadn’t got along they never would have got out; he had influence. But they were really in a terrible condition when they came out because they had had a rough time. Then in chapter 21 it gives a flashback and shows how they happened to get into the prison and what they went through first. They separated themselves, and “Aaron took his journey towards the land which was called by the Lamanites Jerusalem, calling it after the land of their fathers’ nativity [which is a common practice, of course]. . . Now the Lamanites and the Amalekites and the people of Amulon had built a great city, which was called Jerusalem.” There were three different elements in it. We can’t call them races, but there were three different cultures joined together in it. It tells us here that the “Amalekites and the Amulonites were still harder.” Of the three the Lamanites were the nicest, but it was the Amalekites and the Amulonites [who were the hardest]. One was Nephite and the other was Mulekite. It tells us that apostates are the worst enemies of the church; they always are. They are much worse than any outsiders. They “were still harder; therefore they did cause the Lamanites that they should harden their hearts.” And the Amalekites “had built synagogues after the order of the Nehors.” The good old Nehor church; you are going to find it everywhere. It was the popular church, the popular religion. And it was a religion. Most of these wicked people in the Book of Mormon are very religious, and they were here. And there “arose an Amalekite,” who challenged them and started preaching to them. “Why do not angels appear unto us?” We are as good as you are. That’s a good question actually. “How knowest thou that we have cause to repent?” That’s not such a good question—everybody does. President Benson’s opening talk at the conference was refreshing, wasn’t it? It was the nearest to a talk on repentance I’ve heard for ages. As you know, it was on pride. And whose pride? The wickedness of the Book of Mormon. Whose wickedness? Ours. That’s what he was talking about; it was a call to repentance. He wasn’t accusing other people [non-LDS] at all when he gave that wonderful talk about pride.
So “there arose an Amalekite” who said, how do you know we have cause to repent. As soon as people say they are a righteous people, of course, you know they are not. That’s automatic; it’s self-righteousness. “Behold, we have built sanctuaries [we’ve built churches; aren’t we good people? We’ve done that], and we do assemble ourselves together to worship God [we go to meeting]. We do believe that God will save all men.” This is the routine. Incidentally, it’s an interesting thing that repentance is missing from all the ancient religions except the Old Testament. The word repentance doesn’t exist for the Egyptians and the others. I have been reading a lot of Egyptian wisdom literature, and the idea that you should repent [doesn’t exist there]. What you want is luck. They never connect what you have done in the past with your moral behavior. You’ve done what you’ve done, and that’s that. It’s an interesting thing that there is no word in Egyptian for sin. And in America today sin is having the wrong ideology. It’s being on the wrong side. The Ten Commandments are only fifty percent binding. They bind us but they don’t control our behavior toward bad people. We shall not kill, we shall not lie, we shall not steal from good people. But you can do it with bad people all you want [according to this philosophy]. And they do it everywhere else. We call that revenge because they have been bad. Well, notice that we are having a shift at this point. The good and bad are shifting between the Nephites and the Lamanites. We get it here.

Verse 7: “Now Aaron said unto him: Believest thou that the Son of God shall come to redeem mankind from their sins?” How do you know that? “We do not believe in these foolish traditions.” We don’t need them at all—this idea of the Atonement. “Now Aaron began to open the scriptures unto them concerning the coming of Christ,” and the resurrection and the redemption. This summarizes the main points of the gospel. The coming of the Christ brings about the resurrection, which brings about the redemption “through the death and sufferings of Christ, and the atonement of his blood.” He gave them the whole package, and this made them madder than ever. He gave them the straight gospel. Then “they were angry with him, and began to mock him.” They wouldn’t hear it. It sounded utterly ridiculous. So he just left them—that was all he could do—and went over to Ani-Anti. The people there were hard in their hearts just as bad, so he left there and came over to the land of Middoni. The Lord said, if they don’t receive you in one city go to another. This is how they got to the land of Middoni, and this is where they were put into jail. This has been a flashback telling us how they got into jail. Aaron and his brethren were cast into prison, and the remainder of them fled. Verse 14: “And those who were cast into prison suffered many things, and they were delivered by the hand of Lamoni and Ammon.” So this is where we were in the story.

And they went forth led by the Spirit after they were out of jail “preaching the word of God in every synagogue of the Amalekites, or in every assembly of the Lamanites where they could be admitted. . . . The Lord began to bless them, insomuch that they brought many to the knowledge of the truth.” King Lamoni has a rather extreme program. He hasn’t converted his people yet, but he really pushes the church. You might say he overdoes it because it is very soon going to bring about a revolution against him. They are going to get rid of him. He had “synagogues built in the land of Ishmael; and he caused that his people should assemble themselves together. . . . And he did teach them many things.” And any that fled from oppression by the king, his father, went to them. “And he also declared unto them that they might have the liberty of worshiping the Lord. . . . Ammon was thus teaching the people of Lamoni continually.” Then Aaron “was led by the Spirit to the land of Nephi, even to the house of the king which was over all the land save it were the land of Ishmael [these Ishmaelites are a different stock, too]; and he was the father of Lamoni.” The king of the land of [Nephi] was the father of Ishmael, and
Lamoni was an Ishmaelite. He “bowed himself before the king, and said, . . . we are the brethren of Ammon; . . . we will be thy servants.”

The king said, “I have been somewhat troubled in mind because of the generosity and the greatness of the words of thy brother Ammon; and I desire to know the cause why he has not come up out of Middoni with thee.” Aaron said he had gone to the land of Ishmael. Then he asked Aaron questions about the Spirit of the Lord, is there a God, etc. Remember, they are trying to establish a bridge with the Lamanites, who for hundreds of years had been going their own way and had their own version of the gospel. They had kept the Great Spirit, and they still have. They still believe all these things. It’s a complex picture we have here. Verse 7: “And the king said: I know that the Amalekites say that there is a God, and I have granted unto them that they should build sanctuaries [this is the high king]. . . . Behold, assuredly as thou livest, O king [said Aaron], there is a God. And the king said: Is God that Great Spirit that brought our fathers out of the land of Jerusalem?”

If an Indian says, “We believe in the Great Spirit. Do you believe in the Great Spirit?” That’s a legitimate title. Verse 10: “And Aaron said unto him: Yea, he is that Great Spirit, and he created all things both in heaven and in earth.” So we both worship the same Great Spirit after all. Verse 12: “When Aaron saw that the king would believe his words, he began from the creation of Adam.” That’s the starting point, and it’s an on-going history through verse 18—the creation of Adam and the plan of redemption. “And since man had fallen he could not merit anything of himself.” How could that happen? What does that mean? Why do you disqualify yourself once you fall? If you just fall once why do you disqualify yourself? Because you will never again be as pure and as strong as you were before you fell just that once—unless you undergo a complete renovation again. So we have to have the atonement and baptism and all that. But it’s true that if you have yielded once you will never be as strong and as certain as you were before. You may think, “Well, I found out now; I had to learn about sin.” But it doesn’t work that way. Nevertheless, we do have to learn about it, so here we go. That’s what the gospel is. It brings this very powerful medicine in after we’ve got ourselves good and sick here.

Verse 15: “What shall I do that I may have this eternal life of which thou hast spoken?” He being a king, this is a very interesting thing. I’ve been reading accounts of Nectanebus and Alexander, and a brand new, just discovered papyrus of Sesebek, a king. They are all about the same thing. It’s called the Vandier papyrus, and there are others. It’s the story of the king who has one great worry. Alexander the Great ruled the world, as you know. In the story that we read in the Pseudo Callisthenes he had just one obsession. Everywhere he went, every oracle he visited, every land he conquered, he had just one purpose. “Why do I have to have such a short life?” he said. “Why do I have to give it up? Can’t I last longer? How long will I live?” In this story of Sesebek the king is told that he can only live seven days. Oh boy, that really gets things going when Merere, the wise scribe, is the only one that can prolong his days. There’s a terrific thing where the wisemen all fail, etc. It’s quite a papyrus, and just in the last year it has already come in for some very important commentaries, etc. But the point is that these great kings, whether it’s Sesebek or whoever it is, have everything. But what’s the good of having everything if you can’t keep it—if you can only keep it for a very little while? This worries kings more than it worries other people. What does he say here? If I can only be king for a little while it’s nothing. (I’ll think of the quotation in a minute; let’s not slow down for it though.)
What shall I do that I may have this eternal life? . . . Yea, what shall I do that I may be born of God, having this wicked spirit rooted out of my breast [the guilty king, you see; the king can do anything he wants, so he has done some pretty awful things] . . . that I may not be cast off at the last day? Behold . . . I will forsake my kingdom, that I may receive this great joy" (Alma 22:15).

At the end of the Pseudo Callisthenes, Alexander climbed a Himalayan peak that nobody had climbed before. Trust Alexander to do that! Using pitons he got up and then he consulted with Brahmins, with the wise sages of India. This was the one question. He said he would give up his kingdom or anything else if they would assure him of eternal joy. They said, "Well, you’re the king; you can do what you want." He said, "No, that’s one thing I can’t do. What can you promise me?" Well, they can’t promise him anything. So the king is desperate here, and he starts out like St. Augustine begins the Confessions. “O God . . . if there is a God, and if thou art God, wilt thou make thyself known unto me” (Alma 22:18). Is this a fair prayer to say, “O God, if there is a God?” How can you pray to him if you are not sure? And if you pray to him, you are assuming that he assists. Aren’t you cheating that way? You ask him to reveal himself. This puzzled St. Augustine. He said, I pray to God to reveal himself, but in praying to him I’m assuming that he has already revealed himself. That’s not right. I’m supposed to be completely rational and completely logical here. I can’t cheat by assuming that God exists before I prove that he exists. How can I do it? He gets all tied up in that. Fides quaerens intellectum he calls it—“faith looking for an intellectual justification for it.”

Verse 18: “. . . that I may be raised from the dead.” See, that’s what he wants; he wants to be raised from the dead. His kingdom doesn’t count for anything if it’s just going to go down the drain. Well, there are so many stories, like the great story of Hisham, the king whose end draws near. It’s a tragic story. It’s the very essence of tragedy—the king who has it all. “And now when the king had said these words, he was struck as if he were dead.” Here it happened again—he was struck as if he were dead. Here we go again. This is just a short one. The queen was angry. The servants didn’t lay their hands on Aaron and his brethren. When the queen saw that the servants were scared stiff, she began to be frightened. She called the people in so they could slay Aaron and his brethren. Aaron saw that things were getting bad, so he put forth his hand and raised the king. This is a much shorter episode than the other one, and the “whole household were converted unto the Lord.”

“Now there was a multitude gathered” and because of the great murmurings “the king stood forth among them and administered unto them.” It parallels the other missionary occurrence; it follows a formula almost. Then “the king sent a proclamation throughout all the land.” Then in verse 28 we have a nice summary of Lamanite culture. The Lamanites are changing their ways now, and these had been their customs for centuries. “Now, the more idle part of the Lamanites lived in the wilderness, and dwelt in tents [or tepees]; and they were spread throughout the wilderness on the west, in the land of Nephi; yea, and also on the west of the land of Zarahemla [they are always on the west along the Pacific coast there] in the borders by the seashore, and on the west in the land of Nephi, in the place of their fathers’ first inheritance [because they landed from the Pacific] and thus bordering along by the seashore.”

They could complain about Nephite aggression because the Nephites had practically bottled them up here. “And also there were many Lamanites on the east by the seashore, whither the Nephites had driven them.” They wouldn’t allow the east and the west to
make contact. As the Generalstab says, “The one thing to avoid is a war on two fronts.” So they kept them separated; they kept the Lamanites off balance because they were greatly outnumbered by the Lamanites. You can see why the Lamanites would resent that—being always kept off balance, and things always being stirred up. In the far north it was called Desolation. You would get up into the desert country in the far north. I suppose it was Sonora or something like that, the desert up there. “... it being so far northward that it came into the land which had been peopled and been destroyed.” There had been other people in the land, and not too far away. These weren’t the first people. When you find bones, it doesn’t mean they are Nephite, Lamanite, or Jaredite necessarily. I think the Jaredites were much farther up at this time.

Verse 31: “And they came from there up into the south wilderness.” From the north they came up. It’s just like the Nile when you go upstream to the south wilderness. Of course, it’s much higher elevation than the coastlands. The land northward was Desolation, and the land southward was Bountiful. Now we are told in the Millhāmāh Scroll, the Battle Scroll of the Dead Sea Scrolls that before the battle the priest would go out before the Lord of Hosts and formally dedicate all the land of the enemy as Hormāh, as Desolation. And then he would dedicate all the land of Israel as Blessed, as the land Bountiful, as “blessed of the Lord and fruitful.” So there were the two lands, and they were supposed to expand the land. It’s like expanding into the Dār al-Ḥarb and the Dār al-Islām in Islam. The Dār al-Islām is all the pacified land, and the Dār al-Ḥarb is the other. Dār al-Ḥarb is the same thing as Hormāh. It means “war, desolation, destruction.” So everything that hasn’t been conquered by Islam is Dār al-Ḥarb. That’s the desolate part. And the other is Dār al-Islām, the “land that was submitted to God.” It was the same thing with the Romans, the ager pacatus and the ager hosticus, the pacified land and the hostile land. Anything you haven’t conquered is refusing you submission and, therefore, is in a state of rebellion and must be conquered. So the Romans had to conquer the world or they didn’t feel safe. They always felt unsafe if there were enemies on their borders. By enemies, they meant any unconquered people. They misused everybody, so they expected people wouldn’t like them too much. So we get this crazy imperialism that goes on. Well, they [the Lamanites] sort of have a case against the Nephites here, don’t they?

Verse 32: “And now, it was only the distance of a day and a half’s journey for a Nephite, on the line Bountiful and the land Desolation, from the east to the west sea.” We are told in Deuteronomy that the king Arad tried to conquer some of the Israelite tribes, and they counterattacked and laid the land waste. In Numbers 21:1–3 it tells us that all the land was called Desolation after because it was destroyed and they wouldn’t allow anything to grow in it again. So they called the kingdom of Arad the land desolation, as against the land of Israel.

Verse 32: “And thus the land of Nephi and the land of Zarahemla were nearly surrounded by water.” That certainly places them in Central America, doesn’t it? Notice that the Nephites “had hemmed in the Lamanites on the south.” They wouldn’t like that, you see. The wisdom of the Nephite was “that they might have a country whither they might flee.” They were outnumbered and they looked forward to a time when they might have to withdraw. To have something to fall back on they kept the land up in the North. This was their military policy through the years, and you can see it would always bring pressure on the Lamanites. The Lamanites were always making their slave raids, etc.
Wow, the time is up now. This is just what you might call historical stuff, etc. But the Book of Mormon simply shines through this. It’s so much like the stuff I’ve been reading now that it’s just right in the same library. People don’t recognize this because they don’t read the other stuff. We certainly should finish Alma this semester. Sixty-two chapters to Alma! We are now on chapter 23 and we have been four or five weeks on it. We are really going to have to speed things up.

It’s in chapter 23 when the king goes too far. I mean he practically turns the kingdom over to the missionaries and lets them do what they want. A lot of people resent it, and they stage a revolution. There’s a big war as a result of it. You shouldn’t go too far in your piety.
We have a long way to go, but there are some things that are much too important to miss. What we want to get now, just to begin with, is this general situation that seems so confused—this confused situation of battles, etc., in these chapters following Alma 22. In Alma 22:28–34 it makes a very important statement. It’s hard to believe that this was written in 1829 because it wasn’t until the beginning of the twentieth century that Alfred MacKinder, a Scotch geographer, invented geopolitics, which is the basic theory of two main types of culture that occupy the world and are in constant conflict. All world wars have been based on that, and here it is set forth here. We get the picture that the Lamanites are in the Southwest and scattered off toward the East. They are pushed in this direction and that direction, and they are being contained by the Nephites who are in the Northeast in general. So you have two general land masses, the one surrounding the other. In the Southwest all along here are Lamanites. The main body are Nephites, but there are Lamanites over here. They want to keep their way open in case they can retreat there. These are the two cultures. The one is the culture of the steppes, the heartland, or the bedu.

In the Old World all around central Asia is all marginal, grass-raising country with nomadic tribes of great antiquity that have always been on the move. Along all the northern shore of Africa and all of Arabia are the desert tribes. They are the bedu, and they live as described here. They all live in tents, whether it’s the yurts of Central Asia or the bayt al-sha’ar of the Arabs. They are on the move all the time, and they are in a state of perpetual war. They are always bringing pressure to bear on the peripheral civilizations, which are the settled civilizations. Of course, you can be the one or the other. They are not doomed to be the one or the other. The Arabs, all of a sudden, in the eighth century became the greatest city builders of them all, just for a very short time. They have preserved this marvelous culture in Spain with the sūqs, the bazaars, the universities, and the libraries. It’s a marvelous sort of thing these people can do. The other culture, of course, is the sedentary; it’s the city one. We still have it in the United States, for example.

The plains Indians, who happened to be to the north and east, and the Navajos, who came down from the north very late, were always pushing on the Pueblos, the people in settled cities. Beginning with the Anasazi, then the Hopi and the Navajo came in. Much older are the Taos and the Acoma. There were settlements of great antiquity under pressure from [other tribes]. This is exactly what we have in the Book of Mormon. Nobody pointed this out until anthropologists of the twentieth century did. Especially geographers pointed out that this is the basic pattern that we are going to have in our history. We are going to have [people like] the Lamanites who are essentially mobile. They move around, but they can have settlements—they always do. Of course, the Nephites can also move around. There are the sedentary and the mobile [people]; those are the two that divide the world and
always have. The battle is between them; they keep the pressure on all the time. Verse 28 describes it very well. They dwelt in tents, and they were idle. To us they don’t work; they don’t cultivate the soil or anything like that, whereas the others work very hard.

Then in Alma 23 the Lamanite king pushes the church; he backs it up. He rules a very large area, you notice. As we find out at the beginning of the next chapter, he rules the Amalekites, the Amulonites, the Lamanites, and the people of Anti-Lehi-Nephi who were his own people. The key to this whole thing is that those who were converted at this time were a relatively small group, but very influential. Alma 23:1: “The king of the Lamanites sent a proclamation among all his people that they should not lay their hands on Ammon [or his people]” or make any trouble, but let them do anything they wanted. The brethren were given a carte blanche here to go forth and preach in whatsoever place they wanted to. They should have free access to their houses, temples, and sanctuaries—everything wide open to the missionaries “that they might be convinced concerning the wicked traditions of their fathers.” Well, some aren’t going to take that very well; [all people are] proud of the traditions of their fathers. He wants to convince them. This is a “glasnost.” He wants these people to believe that they are all one people; they have to bury their differences, etc. Notice he says in verse 3: “. . . that they might be convinced that they were all brethren, and that they ought not to murder, nor to plunder, nor to steal, nor to commit adultery . . .” They were all his subjects.

Aaron, Ammon, and the brethren got busy “consecrating priests and teachers throughout the land among the Lamanites” who began accepting the gospel. Verse 5: “And thousands were brought to the knowledge of the Lord, . . . and they were taught the records and prophecies.” And the Lamanites proved the most faithful of them all. We are told in verse 6 that many who joined at that time were rock firm and never again did fall away. “For they became a righteous people; they did lay down the weapons of their rebellion [they started doing this before Ammon’s people buried theirs, which is what righteousness means. What is righteousness?] that they did not fight against God any more, neither against any of their brethren.” This, as I said, was before [Ammon’s people], so this is an interesting thing the way things are being pushed here.

Here’s a list of the good Lamanites, you notice. It’s quite a complicated thing here. They include the people of Middoni, and those in the city of Nephi, and Lamanites in the land of Shilom and Shemlon, and those in the city of Lemuel, and in the city of Shimnilom, etc. It sounds like the Hopi villages; their names all sound alike, you know. They sound just like that. Verse 13: “And these are they that laid down the weapons of their rebellion, yea, all their weapons of war; and they were all Lamanites.” So the tide has turned now; these have been very important events that have happened.

So then what happens? Then the question arises with verses 16: Do we have a state within a state here? It looks awfully good for the church, but most of the people were out of it. They didn’t like it at all, as we shall soon see. “And now it came to pass that the king and those who were converted were desirous that they might have a name.” Not only were they going to be a distinct people, they were going to have a name to set themselves off from the rest of the nation. Well, again was that a tactful thing to do? Was that a wise thing? Well, you have to have the name anyway. As we read in Doctrine and Covenants 115, the name of the Church was a very important thing. You have to have a name to distinguish yourself—nomen est omen. Without a name you can’t be identified. We know that in this age of computers identification is everything. You have to have a name to distinguish you from all others. But would this be disruptive in the state? On the contrary
it was a removal of barriers. It wasn’t a setting up of barriers by giving themselves a special name, Anti-Nephi-Lehi. It’s an interesting name, incidentally; we will get to that. They were doing the very opposite.

This is what he says here in verse 18: “And they began to be a very industrious people; yea, and they were friendly with the Nephites; therefore, they did open a correspondence with them, and the curse of God did no more follow them.” He tells us again right across the page here that what they did was to remove all the barriers; they opened trade to everybody. That’s what we call “glasnost” today, I suppose. They were named Anti-Nephi-Lehies. You know that Nephi-Lehi means a combination of Nephi and Lehi, and anti means “combination, face-to-face, meeting.” You have Adam-ondi-Ahman. That’s one of the richest prepositions we have. This anti means so many things. We get it in the Book of Mormon a good deal—Antiommo and things like that. There’s anti in the Book of Mormon. The Latin ante means “standing in front of a person and facing him.” Of course, that’s the Greek anti and the Arabic inda. The Old English is *and-. The word answer, for example, is answerian—swear back at a person. This means “face to face confrontation” whether it’s in Old Norse, Old English, Semitic, Arabic, Greek, Latin, or in the Book of Mormon. It means “a face-to-face meeting, a joining together with somebody.” We are going to find later on about an Anti-Christ, who is a person who pretends to be Christ, who matches Christ, who pretends to take the place of Christ. It’s not somebody who opposes Christ, but somebody who pretends to be Christ. We get that a little later when we get to Korihor. But first they gave themselves this name of Anti-Nephi-Lehies. “And they were called by this name and were no more called Lamanites.” So they were set apart, but they began to be an industrious people—getting to work at last. They did open a correspondence with the Nephites, “and the curse of God did no more follow them.”

Question: With the gathering of the people under Lamoni and their receiving a new name, would that be similar to the year festival that you described when we talked about Benjamin?

Answer: Yes, remember it is going to tell very clearly in the next chapter that when they all returned, it was to the law of Moses which they observed strictly. Of course, that all centers around the rites and ordinances of the temple, the bringing of the people together, and the renewing of the covenants. They all enter into the covenant again, and they have to come up to Jerusalem to worship the king, the Lord of Hosts. You read that at the end of Zechariah.

Do we have a state within a state? Well, some people thought so. They didn’t like it. In chapter 24 there’s going to be real trouble. This chapter 24 is one of the most significant in the Book of Mormon. We never quote it, of course. We like to talk about Captain Moroni and the two thousand. We don’t like to talk about these pacifist “wimps” here, but these are the best people in the Book of Mormon. They are doing what the Lord wants them to do. But they [the unconverted] didn’t like it at all. They were stirred up, and when [the converts] formed this Anti-Nephi-Lehi group, that was just too much for them. They were stirred up by the Amalekites and the Amulonites to get anybody who wasn’t in the combination, and they began to rebel against their king. It was open revolution now; they took up arms against him. So they were rebelling and having a revolution against the king and the whole thing. They are much more numerous than the other people, too. How are they going to handle that, especially since these people aren’t inclined to fight
back? This is the backlash. Armed rebellion is what it leads to, as you would expect it to considering that with only a [small] number of the people the king went so far. They were just reveling in this religion, the new name, and everything else they had given themselves. It causes the inevitable backlash. But, on the other hand, they are faced with a policy of nonresistance. This is a strange thing. Remember that Ammon’s people were a relatively small group. But that’s what the Hopis practice; they practice nonresistance. Hopi means a peaceful people, and anybody can take advantage of them, from anthropologists to oil companies to uranium companies, etc. They are just pushovers for anybody, and you would think they would have been wiped out long ago. But as the Book of Mormon tells us later on, those that take up arms and oppose are the ones who are going to be destroyed. The Hopis are still there and going strong after everybody has been perfectly free to take advantage of them, and don’t think people haven’t tried to do it.

There actually are people who would refuse to fight. So how are you going to fight these people? This is an important thing to remember here. From verse 22 on there is no contest. This is the reason for it, and this is the most interesting thing. That’s why I say this is not a popular chapter. Notice how often they repeat the word murders here. Verse 8: “And behold, I thank my great God that he has given us a portion of his Spirit to soften our hearts, that we have opened a correspondence with these brethren, the Nephites.” Notice they are opening correspondence with everybody. They are not raising barriers; they are lowering them. Verse 9: “We have been convinced of our sins, and of the many murders which we have committed.” In the next verse it talks about the murders, and in verse 11 “the many murders.” They keep talking about the murders here. They refer to killing on the battlefield. Is that murder? Well, you bet it is. During the recent operation we have adopted the amazing doctrine, which certainly doesn’t agree with Clausewitz, that you measure your success in war by body count. You can gain nothing at all [by that]. One of the basic principles of Clausewitz is that until the war is over nobody knows who is going to win because chance plays a greater part in war than anywhere else. As he says, nobody knows. It’s your game of chess again. You can have all the pieces on the board, your opponent can have only two left, and he can win. This happens in time of war. Strange things happen this way. They feel guilty; they think what they have been doing is murdering.

Verse 11: “... for it was all we could do to repent sufficiently before God [they can’t repent enough] since God hath taken away our stains, and our swords have become bright, then let us stain our swords no more with the blood of our brethren; ... if we should stain our swords again” we couldn’t have a claim on the atonement if we went on doing this sort of killing. It won’t do. These are mostly Lamanites talking now, you see. Verse 14: “And the great God has had mercy on us, and made these things known unto us that we might not perish; yea, and he has made these things known unto us beforehand, because he loveth our souls [they realized the enormity of what they had been doing] as well as he loveth our children; therefore, in his mercy he doth visit us by his angels [that’s what it takes to turn them around] ... since it has been as much as we could do to get our stains taken away from us, and our swords are made bright, let us hide them away that they may be kept bright, as a testimony to our God.”

“As a testimony to God.” It’s interesting—they tell me a slogan you often found in Korea and Vietnam was “Kill a gook for God.” Now the gooks have come over here and shown us that they are not gooks at all. Most of them are a lot smarter than we are as students, and we’ve got a lot of them. But we thought that was virtuous. These chapters of the Book of Mormon are very necessary—actually they are. Verse 16: “And now, my brethren, if
our brethren seek to destroy us, behold, we will hide away our swords.” The rest of the chapter is on the theme of not offering resistance. From verse 22 on there is no contest. This is a change of Lamanite policy, and it was most effective among the pure Lamanites. The others didn’t go for it, we are told here [in verse 29]: “Now among those who joined the people of the Lord, there were none who were Amalekites [they were an important part of the kingdom] or Amulonites,” who were mostly the other ethnic group, the Mulekites. And none of the order of Nehor were persuaded—the whole church had been Nehor before, “but they were [only the] actual descendants of Laman and Lemuel,” the blood of Israel. This certainly implies that the others—the Ishmaelites, the Amulonites, and the Amalekites—were of another stock actually. But they are so closely related, just as they are among the Indians and as we are. After a people have once been enlightened (they had been enlightened; remember they came out of Zarahemla) and then have fallen away it’s worse than ever before.

There’s an interesting thing about this refusing to fight back. The same thing happens in the fourth book of Maccabees. There are these terrible, bloody stories that Josephus tells. He was an eyewitness to the sort of thing that went on. But in 4 Maccabees Jews are fighting Jews there. The Greeks and then the Romans torture. They start persecuting the Jews on a massive scale, and the Jews are nonresistant. They are willing to be martyred. It immediately dampens all the ardor because you can’t be heroic if the enemy doesn’t fight back. You just give up; you are not going to carry on at all. This is no contest; this is no fun at all. This is what happens here. “And thus without meeting any resistance, they did slay a thousand and five of them.” Well, no contest, no game. People started losing interest there. This is what happens in 4 Maccabees when they start with aged martyrs and then the seven sons of the widow. They offer no opposition. It begins to hurt the consciences of the leaders on the other side and make them sick. As a result they get mad at these people, “Won’t you resist? Dammit, why don’t you fight?” They get mad enough to slaughter them. It’s a paradox here because they didn’t want to slaughter them; they forced them to do it. “Why do you force us to do this dirty thing?” This happens at the beginning of the next chapter. “Those Lamanites were more angry because they had slain their brethren.” The Lamanites stopped fighting then because the others weren’t putting up a fight. In various cases war tribes have dropped their ferocity. That’s a characteristic of the Indians. They can change very quickly from being enemies to being friends, and the other way around. So the Lamanites stopped killing them then.

Verse 24: “There were many whose hearts had swollen in them for those of their brethren who had fallen under the sword, for they repented of the things which they had done.” As I say, it takes all the heroics and passion out of it. Clausewitz says there is no hatred in war at all because you don’t know any of the enemy to hate them. It has to be artificially induced. It’s used very skillfully in the Book of Mormon by Amalickiah when he sets up towers and has regular speakers going around. You have to whip up this hatred. You have to make an issue, as Clausewitz tells us, and build it up. It’s artificially produced. Why would they stop fighting so readily? For a very good reason. These were their own people they were fighting; they weren’t fighting a traditional enemy. Just a month or so before they had all been one nation and one people; moreover, the bonds had been lowered. They had been visiting each other and knew each other. There’s a wonderful passage in the [writings] of the fourth or fifth century ambassador to the court of Attila. It goes back to Asia and talks about the same sort of thing. These people knew each other on both sides of the line; they didn’t want to fight each other. They had been a single nation; they were not a traditional enemy. Since the “glasnost” I suppose they had known each other. It’s not surprising at all that they stopped the slaughter. If it had been a traditional enemy, if
it had been somebody else [they might have gone on]. But they were all under the same king in the same kingdom. These people were in a state of open rebellion; they were the rebels. Yet even with rebels what a bloody thing it can become, as we have seen in the case of our Civil War—the nastiest thing that ever happened. They just went on killing as if they were hypnotized, a horrible thing, and gaining nothing by it.

So they threw down their weapons. They wouldn’t fight anymore, “for they were stung for the murders which they had committed.” This was murder they were doing. I mean when you take life it’s murder no matter what you call it. Then more of them were joining the church than those who were slain. “Now, among those who joined the people of the Lord, there were none who were Amalekites or Amulonites.” They still remained outside and they still remained hostile, so there would be more war. None of the Nehor people [joined the church], and that was the main church among them. Only the actual descendants of Laman and Lemuel were converted.

In chapter 25 the Lamanites were angry because they had slain their brethren. That may be puzzling because it gets mixed up here. The Lamanites transferred the action to Ammonihah now. That was Ishmael’s group. Here’s another thing. You remember what the blessing on Ishmael was. Ammonihah was the city they were going to wipe out completely. This was a group of Lamanites [that would do it]—not the Lamanites that had pledged not to fight again because these were fighting. These were the other Lamanites, their brothers, who were so mad to see the way their brethren had been treated. They started taking it out on the Amalekites and the Amulonites, and they made an example of Ammonihah. When Abraham gave his blessing to Isaac and Ishmael, his two sons, the blessing on Ishmael was that his hand should be against all men and all men’s hands should be against him. Of course, that’s the ghâza, that’s the raid. You’re fighting everybody. There’s a perpetual state of tribal war among them. They make agreements in tribes and then somebody breaks them. Somebody kills somebody and there must be vengeance. Honor requires that you seek vengeance. So you revenge him, and they have to revenge the one you killed. So this goes on and away you go back and forth. Later on the Book of Mormon lays immense importance on not avenging anything because once you start that there is no end—as you see in Ireland, in Lebanon, in the Philippines, etc. There are factions that have to get even with each other, and each one has a legitimate offence. They have both been wronged, etc.

So the Lamanites were angry, and they took it out. They “went over into the borders of the land of Zarahemla, and fell upon the people who were in the land of Ammonihah and destroyed them.” The lands were divided up into lesser sections. This was Ammonihah, and they wiped them out. This led to general fighting all along the front here. What we find here is the Nephites versus the Lamanites, and the fighting goes on. In verse 4 Amulon takes a beating. [His people] were Mulekites. Amulon was the leader of the priests who were led out by Noah. Noah was the son of Zeniff, who was a direct descendant of Zarahemla, a Mulekite. This is another stock here. They were slain by the hands of the Nephites. It’s a free for all now. Everybody is fighting everybody else, just like the wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth century—the point being that you would be on one side one day and another side the next. This is the way you would shift back and forth. Here the remainder of the people of Amulon fled into the wilderness—they were old hands at that. They got there by themselves. Then they usurped power over the Lamanites they found there and had an auto-da-fé and caused many of the Lamanites to perish because of their belief. See, they moved to the only safe place. They moved into the territory of the
recently converted, nonresistant Lamanites so they wouldn’t have any trouble. The Amulonites just went in there, took over and became their usual brutal selves.

Verse 6: “For many of them, after having suffered much loss and so many afflictions, began to be stirred up in remembrance of the words which Aaron and his brethren had preached to them in their land; therefore they began to disbelieve the traditions of their fathers, and to believe in the Lord.” This is talking about the Lamanites. On a broad front around the east side you find them also. These general movements take place. You know how that happens. After Amulon took a beating he moved into Lamanite country and oppressed the Lamanite nonresisters who had been converted by this general pacifistic trend. These general movements have their trends. There are times in this country when we feel very warlike, very proud, and all this sort of thing. Then there are other times when we are much more critical of ourselves, more inclined to be sober. So the pendulum swings back and forth. The Lamanites in general reacted against the arrogant Amulonites because of the way they had treated the non-resistant, gentle Lamanites. The other Lamanites got mad at the Amulonites and lit into them. So we find a perennial feud going on here, a terrible mess. Verse 8: “Now this martyrdom caused that many of their brethren should be stirred up to anger; and there began to be contention in the wilderness; and the Lamanites began to hunt the seed of Amulon and his brethren [who had done so much mischief to their more faithful brethren] and began to slay them . . . And behold they are hunted at this day by the Lamanites.” So it was going on at the time this was written.

They saw it was going to be a no-win situation. Verse 13: “When the Lamanites saw that they could not overpower the Nephites they returned again to their own land [the conversions were steadily increasing among them, and it says they did accept and follow the law of Moses]; and many of them came over to dwell in the land of Ishmael and the land of Nephi [this was a very mobile period], and did join themselves to the people of God, who were the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi. And they did also bury their weapons of war, according as their brethren had, and they began to be a righteous people. . . . Yea, and they did keep the law of Moses . . . [and] did look forward to the coming of Christ. The law of Moses was the type, the outward performances, but they had to perform them to keep them in mind, to keep them informed, relying upon the spirit of prophecy that the Messiah would come.

Now we come to this wonderful speech, Ammon’s mission report. It’s a very good one here. It’s a most singular document. The Book of Mormon is so full of things like this one here. This is Ammon [writing] to his brethren. Remember, this was the same Ammon who was more than a match for the people at the waters of Sebus. He was a one-man platoon; he could wipe out anything you wanted. He was the most ferocious and effective fighter in the Book of Mormon. Yet see what kind of a mission he went on here. Verse 3: “Behold, I answer for you; for our brethren, the Lamanites, were in darkness, . . . but behold, how many of them are brought to behold the marvelous light of God! . . . Behold, the field was ripe.” This is what happened, a miraculous turn. There’s one key figure in all this change, all this going on. The whole movement comes back to this one man, Ammon, so it is very important that he gives a report on his behavior, his motivation, and how he was able to do it. It’s very interesting how one person will start a movement, like Martin Luther, for example. He makes the first move, and everything starts rolling. That’s what happened here. It was just the time to do it; they thrust in their sickles and did reap. Verse 5: “. . . but when the storm cometh they shall be gathered together in their place, that the storm cannot penetrate to them.”
Verse 9: “For if we had not come up out of the land of Zarahemla, these our dearly beloved brethren, who have so dearly loved us, would still have been racked with hatred against us, yea, and they would also have been strangers to God.” How can you break down the barrier of hatred? This is the big problem. How can we do it? Well, not by making a virtue of hatred and cultivating your traditional hatred, as they do in certain countries. His brother Aaron rebuked him, saying: Ammon, I fear that thy joy doth carry thee away unto boasting.” Are you responsible for the whole thing? Did you turn the tide? Oh, no, no, “my joy is full.” Notice he says here that he knows he is nothing. “Yea, I know that I am nothing.” As a result of that he says his joy is full. As Mosiah tells us in Mosiah 4:11, do this and you will always be happy; you will always feel to rejoice, because that removes the great burden of ego so we can turn our attention away from this image of invidiousness, conspicuous consumption, and competitiveness. This frees you to deal with and enjoy reality because all that other stuff is phoney—to say, “What is my rank? What is my position? How do I look? etc. That has nothing to do with it; that’s ridiculous. When you free yourself from all that and realize that you are nothing, then you can afford the luxury of being happy, which is very nice.

Verse 13: “Behold, how many thousands of our brethren has he loosed from the pains of hell; and they are brought to sing redeeming love.” We are told that they went back to the law of Moses, and the song of redeeming love was a very important part in the cult of Moses. When the people all came together, they would sing the song of redeeming love. It was part of their ritual; I have an article coming out on that: “. . . and this because of the power of his word which is in us, therefore have we not great reason to rejoice? . . . Yea, they were encircled about with everlasting darkness and destruction.” True, it was everlasting darkness. We all are until we accept the gospel. What have you to look forward to here? Remember the most famous ode on the subject? Catullus’s Fifth Ode is on that subject. “Let’s make love and live, my Lesbia,” says Catullus.

“The criticism, the traditions, the strict moral laws of our strict elders don’t take seriously. Consider them worth one penny,” he says. “The sun goes down and the sun comes up again. But once our brief candle has gone out, nothing remains but a perpetual night of eternal blackness.”

That’s what you have. If you don’t accept the gospel and believe it, what do you have to await but a night of eternal blackness? As Shakespeare said, “We are the stuff that dreams are made of, and our little life is surrounded with a sleep.” It’s like sleep before we came—blackness, no memory, no nothing—sleep after we get here, and after we leave, no nothing. We are surrounded by darkness, complete blackness on all sides. So Catullus expresses it very beautifully. What’s his solution? He says, wild sex is the only thing, while you can get it. “Give me a thousand kisses; then give me a hundred more,” and we will really get at it. This is the only answer [according to this philosophy] because it is a desperate situation. “Once our brief flight has gone down, it’s just one night of perpetual sleep.” This is literally true what he says. People do live in that condition if they don’t have the gospel. He says, “they were encircled about with everlasting darkness,” and on both sides of us there’s the darkness.

Verse 16: “Therefore, let us glory, yea, we will glory in the Lord; yea, we will rejoice, for our joy is full [because you have done away with that]. . . . I cannot say the smallest part which I feel.” This is pure joy. This is what you call charity. Our word cheer is the same as charity, the Greek charis, Latin gratia, etc. It’s no mental reservations, no gnawing
discontent, no vaulting ambition. These are the seeds of tragedy, you see. If you have to
have your success here in the world and this is the only place you can get it, then you have
the making of a tragedy. In the first place because you are going to have to do some
immoral things to get there, and in the second place because you are going to be
disappointed. Every tragedy ends in death. Well, sooner or later it will. Remember the
terrible fix that Oedipus finds himself in. Well, the chorus in Oedipus at Colonus, the
second play, says, you think Oedipus has it bad. It’s just the same punishment you’re
going to get. You’re just going to be nothing after all. Oedipus, for his crime, is being
punished no more than you are being punished, because we are all going to same place.
But it turns out that Oedipus does go into the next world. He goes through the
ordinances. He goes into the temple, etc. The last we hear of him is when the messenger
reports how he sees him go into the distance. He says he wasn’t allowed to go beyond the
veil. If he had gone beyond the veil he would have seen many more things. But he said,
“Oh, there are great things!” Sophocles was a priest himself and a very devout man, as well
as the greatest playwright who ever lived. He has given that picture of the hope to come
hereafter. Well, we have it here. He [Ammon] says, “Behold, I say unto you, I cannot say
the smallest part which I feel,” because he is liberated from all the things that make us
afraid and make us do the things that always lead to tragedy.

Verse 20: “Oh, my soul, almost as it were, fleeth at the thought. Behold, he did not
exercise his justice upon us [we didn’t suffer the way we deserved to suffer], but in his
great mercy hath brought us over that everlasting gulf of death.” That’s the big one, you
see. This is the only thing men really fear. That’s why they live in quiet desperation,
because that’s what they are looking toward at the end of their careers. Their careers are
going to take a downturn before long. Present dangers and inconveniences can be dealt
with very easily because they are merely temporary. We can get along with them very
nicely. But that’s not the big unpleasantness. Remember T. S. Eliot’s immortal lines, “I
have seen the immortal footman hold my coat and snicker, and in short, I was afraid.”
Here’s the footman holding his coat and saying, “It’s time to go now, Buster.” He was
afraid, and we are all scared to death. Don’t think you can face it down because nobody
has ever done it. There are the defiant characters, like Macbeth, but theirs are the cruelest
ends of all.

Then he says in verse 21: “I say unto you, there is none that knoweth these things, save it
be the penitent.” Am I talking over your heads? he says. Do you think I’m crazy because
I’m rejoicing in all this? No, only the penitent know these things. You’ll never rejoice
unless you are penitent, because, as Freud says, it’s the guilt feelings that keep you from
being happy after all. They’re suppressed; you have to bring them out to get them out into
the open. (It’s not a very good cure actually.) But they are the things that give you the
skin rashes, the ulcers, and things like that. You know the guilt is there, but you try to
keep it down. You think you have forgotten, but you haven’t. It’s going to haunt you all
the time. He said we get rid of all this. We haven’t been punished as we deserve to be
punished, but it’s wonderful, he says. But you’ll never know these things unless you
repent, completely aware of how wrong they are. Here they believe a thing that makes
them desperately sorrowful, that makes them absolutely miserable. The funny thing is if
you only knew how wrong you are. You don’t have to be miserable because you are not
right. That’s not what comes after at all. It’s not darkness. You wouldn’t have come out of
nothing in the first place.

Verse 22: “Yea, he that repenteth and exerciseth faith, and bringeth forth good works, and
prayeth continually without ceasing—unto such it is given to know the mysteries of God;
yea, unto such it shall be given to reveal things which never have been revealed.” What is a mystery here? Now he starts telling about his mission here. He had a plan to go out and convert these people. “Now do ye remember, my brethren, that we said unto our brethren in the land of Zarahemla, we go up to the land of Nephi, to preach unto our brethren, the Lamanites, and they laughed us to scorn?” They laughed their heads off; it was the funniest thing they ever heard of. Convert those characters? This is what they said. “For they said unto us: Do ye suppose that ye can bring the Lamanites to the knowledge of the truth? Do ye suppose that ye can convince the Lamanites of the incorrectness of the traditions of their fathers [in which they firmly believed], as stiffnecked a people as they are; whose hearts delight in the shedding of blood; whose days have been spent in the grossest iniquity; whose ways have been the ways of a transgressor from the beginning? Now my brethren, ye remember that this was their language.” They’re worse than Communists. These people are unthinkably vile. They just laughed at the idea of going up to preach to them. You are not going to get anywhere, is what they said. There’s only one way to deal with those people; we have to get them before they get us. That’s the only thing to do.

Verse 25: “And moreover they did say: Let us take up arms against them, that we destroy them and their iniquity out of the land, lest they overrun us and destroy us.” This is the unanswerable argument for war. With a gun it’s kill or be killed. If you put yourself in that position, then you must do it. We must defend ourselves. We have about 2200 “nukes” now because they have only 1800 and we have to have more—knowing perfectly well that if we use as many as six it will all be over with everybody. Yet we have hundreds and we are accumulating thousands of them. They say we are getting eight new warheads every day. They have a mass production going, and none of them can be used, of course. The military absolutely hate them because they make a hash of any strategy or tactic. They can’t do anything against that sort of weapon. You can’t control it. There’s a marvelous chapter in Clausewitz on the uncertainty of war; you can’t control anything. I have seen this lots of times. As soon as the battle starts, the general can do nothing but walk back and forth in his tent. He tries to get somebody on the wire and gets nobody. All the connections are broken. Nobody knows what going on anywhere. As soon as the shooting starts everything dissolves. Our modern technology does not overcome that difficulty; it only makes it worse. You know how easily a computer can go out, and how easily it can be misinterpreted, and how easily you can hit the wrong key. A little while ago Pat hit the wrong key on the computer and we lost a whole week’s work of dictating. This can happen. And, of course, in the fluster, hurry, and excitement of war, it is going to happen. It happens all the time. Everybody makes wrong [decisions]. I had to make reports every day. I had to go out and interview prisoners of war, try to find out what was going on, and make a sensible report out of it. It was a garbled mess all the time. Once in a while it would work though, but oh boy! This is what he [Ammon] is talking about here, this absurdity. But this is the answer they gave: we must destroy them before they destroy us. That’s unanswerable, we say, because they are dangerous—they’re a threat.

Ah, but Ammon has the answer to that in verse 26: “But behold, my beloved brethren, we came into the wilderness not with the intent to destroy our brethren, but with the intent that perhaps we might save some few of their souls.” Notice this; it’s a gamble as far as he’s concerned. Of course, all war is a gamble, too. It’s a gamble, but he says it’s worth it, “that perhaps we might save some few of their souls.” He doesn’t have great hopes in going; it’s not a sure deal at all. It’s just possible that they might save a few of them. It’s worth all this trouble just to save a few of them. That’s quite an exchange when you start figuring out the chances, the expense, and all this sort of thing.
Verse 27: “Now when our hearts were depressed, and we were about to turn back, behold . . .” They weren’t getting anywhere at all; they met what they thought they would. Things looked very bleak when they got there. “And now behold, we have come, and been forth amongst them; and we have been patient in our sufferings . . .” They went back again because “the Lord comforted us, and said: Go amongst thy brethren, the Lamanites, and bear with patience thine afflictions, and I will give unto you success.” And this is what the mightiest warrior in the Book of Mormon had to put up with: “And we have been patient in our sufferings, and we have suffered every privation; yea, we have traveled from house to house [and let the people kick us around], relying upon the mercies of the world—not upon the mercies of the world alone but upon the mercies of God. President Benson’s speech was on pride. This man had no pride at all—the mighty Ammon going around begging, as it were, from door to door, relying on the mercies of the world and the people. “And we have been cast out, and mocked, and spit upon, and smote upon our cheeks.” I wouldn’t take a chance spitting on Ammon. But he allowed it. Why? He goes on: “And we have been stoned, and taken and bound with strong cords, and cast into prison.” Why did he allow all this to happen? Verse 30: “And we have suffered all manner of afflictions, and all this, that perhaps we might be the means of saving some soul.” That was a gamble right there, but it was worth it. Is it worth the chance? “And we supposed that our joy would be full if perhaps we could be the means of saving some.”

There’s Pascal’s famous proposition. Is it worth practicing self-control and Christian virtues just on the chance that there might be a hereafter, that you might live forever and have eternal life? It’s not proven at all [according to him]; it’s just a chance, just a gamble. Is it worth making the trouble? He says, of course, it’s worth making the trouble. If you win you win everything, and if you lose you don’t lose anything because nobody is expecting anything anyway. You can’t lose, so bet on it by all means. Go that way, because when you win you stand to win it all. If you go the other way, you know you will lose, and you have already lost [paraphrased]. So Pascal’s famous proposition is put forth here to the brethren that perhaps we might save some soul—there might be a chance, and it is worth everything. But it really did work, he says. Verse 32: “For behold, they had rather sacrifice their lives than even to take the life of their enemy [this is what he regards as his reward, the great triumph of this great warrior]; and they have buried their weapons of war deep in the earth, because of their love towards their brethren. And now, behold I say unto you, has there been so great love in all the land? Behold, I say unto you, Nay, there has not, even among the Nephites. For behold, they would take up arms against their brethren; they would not suffer themselves to be slain. But behold how many of these have laid down their lives; and we know that they have gone to their God, because of their love and of their hatred to sin.” Regarding that as the ultimate sin, they keep calling it murder, and they don’t want to do that.

Verse 36: “Now if this is boasting, even so will I boast.” I don’t make any excuses. They are a branch of the tree of Israel that has been lost from its body. This is how they thought of themselves; they knew that they were isolated, etc. There have been enclaves. People never forget their homes that they have come from originally. There are some enclaves in Europe, Asia, etc., the Jews being the isolated ones that never forget. During the time that I was growing up and the generation before me, all the Saints in the West here felt we were just marking time until we could return to Jackson County, which was the real place where we should be. We should go back to Missouri. Everybody thought we would be
doing that. “This people, who are a branch of the tree of Israel, and has been lost from its body in a strange land, . . . wanderers in a strange land.” These are enclaves, etc.

Now he gets into a universal theme in verse 37, which is very important. “Now my brethren, we see that God is mindful of every people, whatsoever land they may be in; yea, he numbereth his people, and his bowels of mercy are over all the earth.” You can’t divide the earth into the godly and the godless, can you?

In this next chapter the Amalekites were still strong and still dangerous. They began a movement against the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi, who were with the government that had taken over more or less. “The Amalekites, because of their loss, were exceedingly angry. And when they saw that they could not seek revenge from the Nephites, they began to stir up the people in anger against their brethren, the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi; therefore they began again to destroy them.” Remember, these various people who were members of the nation had their districts, states, or provinces they lived in, which were fairly uniform. They were going to make trouble for the king. They did rebel, but they were reduced. They began to destroy the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi, and the people still refused to take up arms. Well, that was a pushover for them now, but they were really mad about the Anti-Lehi-Nephi people. Verse 4: “When Ammon and his brethren saw this great work of destruction, they were moved with compassion.” They had to do something about it. Ammon said, well, let’s get the people together and clear out and go to the land of Zarahemla. This evacuation of villages is very common in the history of the Pueblos, the Southwest Indians, whose villages are very ancient and stable. Nevertheless, again and again they evacuate a village and move to another place because of hard feelings, or war, or dangers from something else. There’s constant movement between the villages and the tribes. There are plenty of them in the Book of Mormon. We call that the Rechabite principle. Jonadab ben Rechab [see Jeremiah 35] led the people out away from the wicked world they were in so they could be in the desert by themselves and worship the Lord as they pleased. That’s what we have in the Dead Sea Scrolls, and that’s what we have here.

Verse 5: “Let us go down to the land of Zarahemla to our brethren the Nephites, and flee out of the hands of our enemies, that we be not destroyed.” Since we won’t fight them we had better run away from them. “But the king said unto them: Behold, the Nephites will destroy us [we deserve what we are getting], because of the many murders and sins which we have committed against them [there you are again—war is murder]. We will be their slaves [boy, he has it bad] until we repair unto them the many murders and sins which we have committed against them.” Notice regardless of the fact that they were killing mutually and reciprocally on the battlefield, it was a murder against the enemy.

Verse 9: “But Ammon said unto him: It is against the law of our brethren . . . that there should be any slaves [at all] among them.” We can’t be their slaves. Our only alternative is to submit to them. Then we would be their slaves, but Ammon says it’s against the law of Moses that Israelites should be made slaves—they can’t be. We can’t do it, but we’ve got to get out. So the voice of the Lord came to Ammon and said, “Get this people out of this land, that they perish not.” This is another one of those migrations.

Verse 12: “. . . for Satan has great hold on the hearts of the Amalekites, who do stir up the Lamanites to anger against their brethren to slay them.” So they gathered the people together. It’s the usual procedure in verse 14. “And they gathered together all their people, yea, all the people of the Lord, and did gather together all their flocks and herds.” You may say this is extravagant. Remember, this was [translated] in 1828–29 before the
Church was founded, but this is exactly what the Mormons did. From New York they went to Ohio, from Ohio to Missouri and Jackson County, from Jackson County [to Nauvoo, from Nauvoo] to Salt Lake Valley. They were always gathering everything they had and getting out. They had to take everything with them and move, and that’s what they did. Some of the wagon trains crossing the plains must have been enormously impressive, when you would see hundreds of wagons. Ten wagons look like something big in the movies, but when you get hundreds of them strung along it must be a terrific thing. That’s what some of the big companies had, one company following another. So they went “into the wilderness which divided the land of Nephi from the land of Zarahemla, and came over near the borders of the land.”

But where are they going to settle? All the good land was taken already. They were relieved fortunately because, as they were making the journey, Ammon was going to Zarahemla to ask for permission to do something. He met Alma and the missionaries returning from their labors. There was a great rejoicing. The joy of Ammon was full “even to the exhausting of his strength.” He fell to earth he was so overcome. This Ammon was a passionate person. Of course, this is proskynésis, this falling to the earth. This is another ancient custom that we don’t have today. In a salām the knees bend over. When you fall on your knees and bend over, that’s a common salute to a person in certain countries. This is what happened. He fell to the earth again, which is what you do when you are overwhelmed in the presence of God or a great man like Alma, “but behold their joy was not that to exceed their strength. . . . Alma conducted his brethren back to the land of Zarahemla, even to his own house.”

The brethren stayed at his house, but meantime they were going to make negotiations to see if they couldn’t get these people of Ammon who wouldn’t fight, the Anti-Nephi-Lehi people, settled somewhere. They found a place for them; they formed a buffer state in the land Jershon. Some of you may have been to Jerash, which is on the border between Jordan and Syria. I was there many years ago. It is a magnificently preserved city, a perfectly preserved Roman city with all its splendor. There’s the long, long main street, the shop fronts, the pillars, and the fountain. There’s a beautifully preserved amphitheater, and it was neglected completely. Nobody was out there; it was just in the desert. Now it has been made a son et lumière affair—one of these where they put on a show and the tourists go out in busses. Jerash it’s called, which is the same as Jershon, the border town. They put them in a border country called Jershon, and it made a buffer state. They didn’t have to fight, but they were a buffer. They supplied grain and other necessities to the Nephites, and the Nephites gave them protection there. It was a good arrangement for both of them. They fixed it up very nicely. Verse 22: “Behold, we will give up the land of Jershon . . . for an inheritance. And behold, we will set our armies between the land Jershon and the land Nephi, that we may protect our brethren in the land Jershon.”

You know the Jews have had settlements out here in the West, too. Have any of you ever heard of Clarion? Back in the beginning of the twentieth century they were going to found a new Jerusalem at a place called Clarion on the border between Utah and Nevada out there by Baker. Of course, it disappeared completely, but there were many attempts like that by the Jews and others to settle (Hume Stilling and some very famous cases of Quaker settlements, Massachusetts Bay, Pennsylvania). Jerash was that sort of thing. So they said we will protect them there while they give us supplies. “And this their great fear came because of their sore repentance which they had, on account of their many murders and their awful wickedness [it isn’t all fair in war] . . . that they may inherit the land.
Jershon; and we will guard them [and] they will give us a portion of their substance to assist us that we may maintain our armies.” Well, that was a fair operation then. So they settled down and took to that. These people that settled there were absolutely ideal—I guess something like the Amish that you find in Pennsylvania or the Doukhobors, perfectly honest and upright. “And they did look upon shedding the blood of their brethren with the greatest abhorrence [it didn’t depend on whose blood either] . . . and they never did look upon death with any degree of terror” for themselves.

So we get to the next chapter, and time is up. Well, at least we got that far. We need to get to this very important chapter 30. With 62 chapters to Alma, we are going to have to move right along. We’ll probably be able to do it if it gets into sort of a uniformity here. In chapter 28 the Lamanites keep up the pressure at a high price to themselves. There’s a general confrontation and lots of bloodshed. Then we get a picture of confused war, you see.

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Matthew Arnold, “Dover Beach”

That was the situation of the world before World War I when he wrote that poem. But it’s still the situation “where ignorant armies clash by night.” And, believe me, they are ignorant.
TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

HUGH NIBLEY

Semester 2, Lecture 54
Alma 30–31
Alma and Korihor

Now, if there ever were authentic and inspired passages in the Book of Mormon it’s these [next] chapters we have come to in Alma. We really have something there. Nothing in the whole wide spectrum covered by the Book of Mormon is more significant than what is laid out in Alma 30–35. Wars are tactically territorial, as you know. They always are. That’s absolutely basic—Clausewitz again. It’s the taking and occupying of land that measures an army’s success, but strategically wars are always ideological and they remain that way. The confused alarms and the horrible battles that we get in chapter 28 lead to Alma’s passionate outcry in chapter 29, a very short declaration. Then in chapter 30 everybody is fed up with war for a time. It stops in chapter 30—everybody is exhausted. But how had it all begun? The issues are going to continue. The territorial issues have been settled for the time being, but the ideological issues are still there. Now we have the real conflicts here. Remember, [Ammon’s] religious reforms were pushed by the king and rejected by the majority of his subjects, among whom the Nehor philosophy was the one that was dominant. So when the fighting stopped, the ideological controversy was taken up by the skillful spokesman for Nehor, who was Korihor. His name is very interesting, too, like the chief judge that follows him. We’ll mention it in a minute.

It’s hard to believe that this discourse of Korihor was printed in 1830. Imagine that! No such lucid statement of neo-Darwinism came forth until 1859. That was the time when everybody started getting together. There was Ricardo, who died in 1823, then Malthus around 1834. Then came the “big boys” in the latter part of the nineteenth century. In 1859 Darwin’s Origin of the Species was published, and in the same year Marx’s Das Kapital was published. Marx wanted to dedicate it to Darwin because they were right in the same line. It was dialectical materialism. This world accounts for everything, and that’s the whole thing, religion being “the opiate of the people,” etc. Then Herbert Spencer, who was a little later, took it up. He lived into the early twentieth century. He invented the saying “survival of the fittest.” Very briefly, the idea with Malthus is that the food supply increases more slowly and mathematically, while the population increases geometrically. We will always be short of food, he says. If we are given a little food, we reproduce much too fast each time. That means there must always be competition. There will never be enough. That means in this competition only the fittest survive. That’s what nature meant, that the most able and the fittest should survive. This is the neo-Darwinism we have today. Leave things alone, and let nature take its course—Milton Friedman, etc. The free play of the market will account for everything. This is what Korihor represents in a rather extreme party line actually. The annus mirabilis was in 1859. That’s when Wagner first came out. This is the triumphant, conservative ideology of our time.

Korihor is like Ayn Rand, whose philosophy was absolutely identical. She was enormously popular at BYU a few years ago. She was antireligious, and he was antireligious, too. Well, that would never do. So his teachings were applied with a religious veneer and religious fervor by the Zoramites. They have the same philosophy, but they are very religious about it. They made a big thing of religion, we will soon find out. The religion of the Nehors
was very pious, respectable, and conventional. It was proper to go to the big churches, not too demanding but formalized. This ultra respectable, ultra rich was the ideal, as in American politics. The fashionable thing was to become high church Episcopalian. That’s what the Nehors were. We get this very clearly in the case of the Zoramites—wonderful, marvelous people, but they had these ideas. So there was the ideological tension between these two teachings. Remember, Alma was very strict on the other side. He was austere and had a passion for equality. Remember, he was very sorrowful, seeing the equality being broken up, etc.

The modest and austere ways of life of the Saints and all this that Alma went for was a subsistence economy, as against a market economy. They are the two kinds of economies that flourish in the world. Subsistence is when you subsist. That’s stable and goes on from year to year. The Hopis and other Indians do that. People do that normally. Those are the ancient civilizations; they go on indefinitely. To subsist is all you expect. “Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content,” said Paul. We have food storage for the sake of subsistence. We don’t store our two-year supply to sell for the market. It’s for subsistence so we can subsist over the bad years by taking advantage of the good years. This is what the ancients have done. It has always gone on; whereas with the market it is always going up and down. We consult the Dow-Jones everyday. Some days it’s up, and some people are made rich and some made poor. Some days it’s down, and some people get very rich and some get very poor. But it is always going up or down. It’s unstable, it’s brittle, and it leads to all sorts of tensions and competition. Of course, it’s a great inducement to lying. There’s all sorts of trickery because you are selling things and buying things. A profit is taking more than you gave, and you have to play pretty smart games with each other to do that sort of thing. So we have these two conflicting philosophies very, very clearly set forth in these chapters of Alma, which are so beautiful. We see the contrast then.

According to Alma 1–2 it was Nehor who introduced the first priestcraft. In Egypt it was Korihor who observed the first priestcraft in the twentieth dynasty. His name is being read differently today as Hry-hr (Herihor). When Baer was last here he settled for Herihor, but we don’t know what the vowel was here. He was the high priest of Karnak in the twentieth dynasty under the last of the Rameses (X and XI). He was very ambitious, and he took to himself the title of “King’s Son of the South—Ruler of the South.” He had himself represented in various murals, inscriptions, etc., as equal, or even superior, to Pharaoh. He shows himself sacrificing in a superior place to Pharaoh. He even takes the title of Pharaoh, but he doesn’t put the cartouche around it. He doesn’t officially claim to be Pharaoh. But he puts that for his son, and his son was named Paanchi. You remember later on we get a judge who is very important, and his name is Paanchi. Spelled as it is in the Book of Mormon, his son was Paanchi. He [Herihor] established priestcraft, and Paanchi did become king. In the 1100s [B.C.] this happened, quite a while before Lehi. But it left great reverberations. It changed the whole order of things. From then on it was all the high priests of Thebes. The king had to reconcile himself to the high priest of Thebes, who usually got himself made king. This was the priestcraft, and it ruined Egypt, actually. Pharaoh lost his authority, and nobody knew who was in charge after that.

When Nehor comes before Alma right in the first chapter, Alma says, this is the first time we have had priestcraft here. Well if it was the first time, how would he know about priestcraft? Well, of course, the traditions were very great, and we have it right in the Book of Mormon here. This man Korihor had the same name as [the man in Egypt], and he introduced priestcraft in the time of Alma here. "But Alma said unto him: Behold, this
is the first time that priestcraft has been introduced among this people. And behold, thou art not only guilty of priestcraft, but hast endeavored to enforce it by the sword..." as the priests did later, because they were usually military commanders, too. They were sometimes Libyans that took over. The family of Sheshonk is the most famous of all the St. Nubians and the dynasty following that, the twenty-second dynasty. “And were priestcraft to be enforced among this people it would prove their entire destruction.” Alma knew his history. This hadn’t happened before there. It wasn’t Nephite history he was talking about; it was history from the Old World.

Question: Is it just coincidental that they have people with the same name that seem to play the same roles in the two different societies?

Answer: It can’t be accidental when you get a name like this. It ends in i in the Book of Mormon. That isn’t a Greek or Latin name. It’s not a Hebrew name or an English name. What is it? Where does it come from? Well, the name was only discovered in the latter part of the nineteenth century, around the 1870s or 1880s. Then there was quite a number of them. It’s a fairly popular name which means “he is my life,” meaning “Amon is my life.” Remember, Amón is the big thing [in Egypt]. But a name like that you wouldn’t invent in a million years. This is the one thing that Albright said you could not get around. This is definitely an Egyptian name and couldn’t be found anywhere else. Somebody had to know it, and there it is in the Book of Mormon. He was very much impressed. Albright’s own copy of the Book of Mormon was heavily marked and carefully read. He was very much impressed by it, and we had some very nice talks together. Anyway, the great Albright is dead now. He got an honorary doctorate from BYU. He came out here and spoke. He was so good and so famous that nobody could afford him. He didn’t charge a high price but was very much underpaid at Johns Hopkins. Nobody else could hire him because they couldn’t afford him. He was so much better than anybody else, and they couldn’t afford what they thought they should pay, not what he thought they should pay. He was willing to work for nothing. His wife had an independent income, and it all came from Kennicott Copper out here. The money that came from Kennicott Copper also built the big library in Dublin. The Chester Beatty Collection in Dublin is the greatest collection of ancient documents in the world—all paid for by Utah copper here.

Let’s get going. I don’t want to drag. We have some ground to cover, don’t we? I shouldn’t be talking about things like that. He [Nehor] is being a very reasonable person. He takes the position that many people take now in the Church and have always taken. They are the enlightened, the emancipated intellectuals. You can’t know of things you can’t see, he says in verse 15. That’s being very reasonable; he’s a positivist. You can only know what you can weigh and measure and be sure of. That’s scientific and fair enough. What’s the rest of it? Well, you’re just sick, he says. “But behold, it is the effect of a frenzied mind.” Now many of my friends think like this, that Mormons must be deranged. We have a professor from Hebrew University who is here now. He thinks that anybody must be crazy who can believe in an angel. That’s just impossible; there’s something wrong there. He just can’t get it through his head, although there it is. That’s why he is so interested in being here with people who actually believe it. “But behold, it is the effect of a frenzied mind; and this derangement of your minds comes because of the traditions of your fathers, which lead you away into a belief of things which are not so.” Remember the classic example of believing the old traditions and legends and going crazy? Don Quixote. You’re a lot of Don Quixotes. You’ve got these traditions of your
fathers. You've romanticized them, you're stuck with them, and you believe things which just are not so, he says.

Then he talks about the facts of life. “And many more such things did he say unto them . . .” Now here is the creed. This is the creed of individualism, dialectical materialism, etc.—Mill, Ricardo, and all the rest of them. We didn’t mention John Stuart Mill; he was writing in the [1860s]. “. . . telling them that there could be no atonement made for the sins of men, but every man fared in this life according to the management of the creature.” There’s the word management being used in the Book of Mormon; management wasn’t used at that time. When you talk about “the management of the creature,” that’s a perfect expression. It’s the manipulation of people as if they were items or products. You can manipulate everything with the psychology of salesmanship. It is the manipulation, the management of the creature. Every man will fare according to how he manages himself; therefore, every man prospers according to his genius, and every man conquers according to his strength. The result is, of course, that you deserve what you get—the survival of the fittest, nature wants it that way, “and whatsoever a man did was no crime.” On the founding of BYU, Brigham Young said that was the doctrine that BYU was founded to counteract. We won’t go into that quotation, but I should find it here.

That is just what they [the Nehors] wanted to do, because if that is so God is dead and all is permitted. They enjoyed that because they weren’t bound down. They were now emancipated (verse 18), “leading away the hearts of many [because they liked it], causing them to lift up their heads in their wickedness, yea, leading away many women, and also men, to commit whoredoms—telling them that when a man was dead, that was the end thereof.” So, as I said, nobody has to be paid off. On the basis of this materialistic thing you are not going anywhere. If you are going to have your fun you must have it here. So it led to immorality. That’s part of the picture of this positivism.

Now this man [Korihor] went over to the land of Jershon. This was now going to be occupied by the Ammonites to make a buffer state. They carried him before Ammon there; they didn’t like him. These were the Ammonites who had followed Ammon and were settled in Jershon. They didn’t like it, but what can you do about it? They took him to the high priest, and he was a hot potato. The high priest ordered him deported—that was all he could do. So they deported him to the land of Gideon, and he began to preach to them, too. The high priest there was also the chief judge over the land. He said, “Why do ye go about perverting the ways of the Lord?” The high priest’s name was Giddonah, another good Egyptian name. Then Korihor gives them the reply here. This is what religion is [according to him]: “. . . foolish ordinances and performances which are laid down by ancient priests, to usurp power and authority over them.” He has a point there because there are such foolish ordinances and performances laid down by ancient priests to gain power and authority. That’s priestcraft. So you see how confused the issue can become and how the arguments can tighten up against each other here. It’s the “opiate of the people” here. It keeps “them in ignorance, that they may not lift up their heads, but be brought down according to thy words.” They must live by the old morality, be so strict, etc. This is the thing that everybody is laughing about now, our Victorian morals. They make fun of that. That’s a lot of old superstition and nonsense. That’s the way they talk today.

Verse 24: “Ye say that this people is a free people. Behold, I say they are in bondage.” This is a crucial point. When are we free? This is what the Zoramites and the people of Zarahemla think. They think they are free. He goes on to explain that freedom must
include complete freedom from any government interference in anything we do, especially with our money. Remember, this was a sacral civilization. They lived by the law of Moses, and the judges were also priests. They had judges and they judged by the law of Moses, we are told. So that means we have a sacral or priestly society here. We have two priestcrafts colliding, you might say.

Verse 26: “Ye do not know that there shall be a Christ.” You say this is a fallen people. That’s one way to lose an election. You’ll never make yourself popular asking for repentance. “And thus ye lead away this people after the foolish traditions of your fathers, and according to your own desires; and ye keep them down, even as it were in bondage, that ye may glut yourselves with the labors of their hands, that they durst not look up with boldness [on what was their own], and that they durst not enjoy their rights and privileges.” This is total privatization is what he is out for. “Yea, they durst not make use of that which is their own lest they should offend their priests, who do yoke them according to their desires, and have brought them to believe, by their traditions and their dreams and their whims and their visions [he starts really pouring it on here] and their pretended mysteries, that they should, if they did not do according to their words, offend some unknown being, who they say is God—a being who never has been seen or known, who never was nor ever will be.”

So that’s the situation, and you use that to fleece the people and get everything they have. Well, what do they do with him? That was quite a speech he gave. He was a hot potato still. They couldn’t do anything against him; we will soon see why. So they “sent him to the land of Zarahemla, that he might be brought before Alma, and the chief judge who was governor over all the land.” Notice, judge and governor. It was a religious state. Under the law of Moses the judge is the governor and the high priest of the land, all at once. He went on in the same manner, raving when he got before Alma. Verse 31: “And he did rise up in great swelling words before Alma, and did revile against the priests and teachers, accusing them of leading away the people after the silly traditions of their fathers, for the sake of glutting [themselves] on the labors of the people.”

Alma said, I have labored with my own hands for my own support all my life. You know that. As a judge I got paid by my time, a flat rate, one senine for my labor for the day in the judgment seat. That’s the only pay I ever got for any work in the state or in the church. “Then why sayest thou that we preach unto this people to get gain, when thou, of thyself, knowest that we receive no gain? [Why do you go around deceiving the people this way?] And now, believest thou that we deceive this people, that causes such joy in their hearts? And Korihor answered him, Yea. And then Alma said unto him: Believest thou that there is a God?” And he said, no I don’t believe that. And in verse 40 Alma said, “And now what evidence have ye that there is no God, or that Christ cometh not?” See, you can never prove a negative. You can’t prove to me absolutely now as we are standing and sitting here that there is not a kangaroo behind that desk. There could very well be. I don’t know, but there could be. You can’t prove that there isn’t, as you go down there. You can’t prove a negative, in other words, but you can prove a positive. On the other hand we “have all things as a testimony that these things are true; and ye also have all things as a testimony unto you that they are true; and will ye deny them? . . . Behold, I know that thou believest, but thou art possessed with a lying spirit, and ye have put off the Spirit of God that it may have no place in you.”

Why are people so obsessed with rage, for example, against Joseph Smith, as if he had personally insulted them and ruined their lives? They have never seen him, but they really
take on. Korihor says, then “show me a sign.” That’s the usual thing. After all, he is positivist. Verse 44: “But Alma said unto him: Thou hast had signs enough; will ye tempt your God? Will ye say, Show unto me a sign, when ye have the testimony of all these thy brethren, and also all the holy prophets? The scriptures are laid before thee, yea, and all things denote there is a God; yea, even the earth, and all things that are upon the face of it.” Did they make themselves, in other words? Did they just come about accidentally? Well, Korihor would say they did. And that is what Darwin introduced here in this *annus mirabilis*. “. . . and also all the planets which move in their regular form do witness that there is a Supreme Creator.” These are the old classic arguments for deity which Aristotle used. “And he said: I will deny, except ye shall show me a sign.” These are signs actually, but he said, “Show me a sign.” What kind of a sign would it be if these aren’t signs?

So he said, if you want a sign God will smite you dumb. Then he started getting worried in verse 48: “Now Korihor said unto him: I do not deny the existence of a God [he just had], but I do not believe that there is a God, . . . and except ye show me a sign, I will not believe.”

Alma said, okay I will give you a sign “that thou shalt be struck dumb, according to my words; and I say, that in the name of God, ye shall be struck dumb.” And Korihor was struck dumb. Was it a stroke? Was he so wrought up? Would that be the effect of this sort of thing if he had actually been putting it on? He got himself in so deep that he had to put on this big show. We find out he really was scared here, and this was all it took to push him over. He was struck dumb, and deaf also because Alma had to write for him. “And now when the chief judge saw this, he put forth his hand and wrote unto Korihor.” [The chief judge] wrote to Korihor, so he was deaf and dumb. In reply Korihor wrote, in verse 52, “Yea, and I always knew that there was a God.” Here we have an interesting paradox. What happened? He said, “The devil hath deceived me; for he appeared unto me in the form of an angel.” Well, an angel comes and tells you there is no God, and that’s why you don’t believe in God? What would make you believe in God more than to have an angel come to you? Well, that’s a nice paradox, but it works that way. As Brigham Young said, “Pray that you’ll never see an angel.” All those that saw angels apostatized—like Oliver Cowdery, the Whitmers, and others. They didn’t deny the angels, but it made them very negative. How would they possibly turn against and deny the work? They did. Frederick G. Williams, W. W. Phelps, and others trotted off to the courthouse at Richmond and swore out these horrible accusations against Joseph Smith. Shortly afterward, they denied them. Joseph held nothing against them and took them back again. See the effect that has. They were momentarily seized by something, the men that should have had the firmest faith. They went and swore out depositions of the most terrible things against Joseph Smith. Then within a matter of weeks or months they came back, asked for his pardon, and wanted to be admitted into the Church again. That’s a strange state of things, isn’t it? No, it’s not strange. It shows that something unusual is going on here.

Korihor said, he said to me in the form of an angel “there is no God; yea, and he taught me that which I should say. And I have taught his words; and I taught them because they were pleasing unto the carnal mind.” And it tells us here why they were pleasing to the carnal mind: The carnal mind is that which caused men and women to lift up their heads and to commit whoredoms, “telling them that when a man was dead, that was the end thereof.” That’s what they wanted. They wanted a carte blanche for carnal behavior to do whatever they wanted. It appealed to the carnal mind. Carnal also means things of the
world, as indicated in Alma 30:17, “but every man fared in this life according to the management of the creature [that’s carnal], . . . prospered according to his genius, . . . conquered according to his strength.” That’s on the carnal level of the warfare in which you deal with objects and people, having no spirit at all. So he had been fooled into that, and the people liked to hear it for that reason.

Verse 53: “I taught them, even until I had much success.” It was easy to believe, an emancipating belief. I began to believe it myself. That’s a nice psychological touch. He was going on so strongly. When he started defying Alma, you could see he was backing up all the time until he said, “I do not deny the existence of a God.” You know he is weakening at that time. Now is the time for Alma to lower the beam, and he gets deaf and dumb. “I taught them, even until I had much success, insomuch that I verily believed that they were true.” Well, the curse was not taken off him, and he was cast out. This leads us over to the next people. He went around begging from door to door for his bread, a pitiful figure, until he finally came among the Zoramites, who were dissenters from the Nephites. They were living by themselves and were a very superior people actually. He was run over and put to death by a mob.

Did we start back at the beginning of this chapter the last time? The first part of the chapter is the most important part; I’d better take it on then. At the beginning of the chapter the war was over, and the dead were not numbered because of the great slaughter. Then there was continual peace at the end of verse 2. “And they were strict in observing the ordinances of God, according to the law of Moses.” So that’s the way they were living in verse 3. But the Nehors are still the more popular. Then in verse 6 “there came a man into the land of Zarahemla, and he was Anti-Christ . . .” We mentioned Anti-Christ the last time. His name was Korihor. Anti-Christ means putting yourself up and defying Christ. We put all those words on the boards. Anti-Nephi-Lehi means Nephi brought face to face, or joined together with the other descendants of Lehi. He didn’t name Lamanites and Lemuelites separately. Lehi covered all the Lamans and Lemuels. Anti-Nephi-Lehi means Nephi and Lehi brought together again, which they were. The Lamanites and Lemuelites became dominant and more numerous than the Nephites; they were more righteous, too. So it is very proper to call this event the bringing together of Nephi and Lehi, the anti. He [Korihor] was Anti-Christ in the same way. He confronted Christ face to face and claimed to be him. He claimed to replace him. He was the false Christ. There are lots of Anti-Christs. The Anti-Christ comes and says that he is Christ. This is what Satan does. Remember in the beginning of Moses, he said, “I am the Only Begotten, worship me,” and he ranted upon the ground.

Well, he [Korihor] came to Zarahemla. He preached against the religion and everything Alma stood for, and yet Alma had to let him do it. After all, Alma had been permitted by his father to go out and preach against the church, and the sons of Mosiah, the king, were out preaching against the church. Why were they allowed to do that? It was according to the law of Mosiah it tells us here. “Now there was no law against a man’s belief; for it was strictly contrary to the commands of God that there should be a law which should bring men on to unequal grounds.” If there was a favored religion, a state religion, then we would have social pressure and things could be more serious, too. Then you could start censorship and all sorts of things. But it was strictly contrary to the law of God that they should make laws controlling other people’s religion or judging them at all. They were perfectly free to believe anything they wanted to. That would make them unequal, because the Lord said, “Choose you this day whom ye will serve.” You have the right to choose it. “Now if a man desired to serve God, it was his privilege [so you can go to
church all you want and have school prayer all you want, as we do here; but if he did not believe in him there was no law to punish him,” or to put him under restraint. What you do in a case like this is to bring social pressure. That leads to other things like censorship and being outcasts, pariahs, etc.

Verse 11: “For there was a law that men should be judged according to their crimes. Nevertheless, there was no law against a man’s belief.” That wasn’t a crime, whatever he believed. If it led him to commit a crime, he was punished for the crime—not for the belief, even though the belief might have led him to it. “Therefore, a man was punished only for the crimes which he had done; therefore all men were on equal grounds.” This means socially equal, politically equal, and religiously equal. So he was able to preach. The law could have no hold on this Anti-Christ whose name was Korihor. He said, “Behold, these things which ye call prophecies, . . . they are foolish traditions of your fathers.”

Elder Oaks gave a wonderful talk during conference on criticism and criticizing. Just criticize all you want. Write anything you want anywhere; just don’t expect the Church officially to endorse it. That would be foolish. We don’t have to endorse what you say. That’s what these people want to do. They think because they are members of the Church they can have influence. They can argue and be perfectly free. I have criticized as freely as anybody else. Should I tell you about this? Yes. When I first came to Provo I went up and asked Brother J. Reuben Clark, “Should I ‘keep my nose clean’? I’m sassy, shoot off my mouth, and become very critical down at BYU. Shouldn’t I shut up?” He said, “That would be the worst thing you could possibly do. We have to have an adversary relationship if we are going to get at the truth in these things.” (He was a lawyer, of course.) So you have to have some forum for expression here, and nobody was freer in that than President Oaks when he was here.

Then Korihor goes on to say [the traditions] were the effect of a frenzied mind. We read that already. We have to see why Korihor had to be allowed to do anything he wanted to there. It was only when he came to these upright Zoramites that were so strict and so materialistic that he was mobbed and put to death. They were the intolerant ones, not Alma. Alma couldn’t afford to be intolerant. After all, his father had put up with him.

Now these Zoramites were “perverting the ways of the Lord.” Notice, they kept them but they perverted them. It wasn’t apostasy; it was perversion. That’s what happened in the second, third, and fourth centuries. They continued to claim the gospel, but now they started bowing down to dumb idols. We have lots of indication here that there were older traditions in the land, which they adopted. We won’t talk about that now, but there was a great culture here already. The evidence for that comes later in the book. But Alma began to sicken because of the iniquity he saw among this people, when he saw what was going on there. Alma is very much affected by these things. If he is sickened by them, the question arises then, why should he judge the iniquity of his people? Why should he be worried about the wickedness of other people? Well, we see a little later why that is so—not only because of its blatant way, but he has a definite reason for being sickened.

Verse 3: “Now the Zoramites had gathered themselves together in a land which they called Antionum [they were people who had left the Nephites] . . . which also bordered upon the wilderness south, which wilderness was full of the Lamanites.” The Lamanites were to the south, Antionum was in the middle, and the Nephites were on the north. [Brother Nibley shows their locations on the board.] He didn’t want the Zoramites to get together with the
Lamanites and make a squeeze-play on [the Ammonites]. This was Jershon; this was their buffer state in between. The Zoramites were on top. The Lamanites were on the bottom, and the Ammonites, the people of Jershon, were in between. (I should get things straight once in a while. They would throw me right out if I had to make an intelligence report today, wouldn’t they? I get all mixed up. If you say the south is on the north, it is going to ruin a lot of action. You get your artillery going in the wrong places and wipe your own people out. That has happened.) The Zoramites gathered themselves together in the land Antionum. The land south was the land of Jershon. The Ammonites in Jershon were on the south, and south of them [notice] “upon the wilderness south, which wilderness was full of the Lamanites. Now the Nephites greatly feared that the Zoramites would enter into a correspondence with the Lamanites.” See, if they got together with the Lamanites, then they could put the squeeze on the people of Ammon in between. That’s what they were afraid of; tactically it was a very dangerous situation.

What do we do? What do we do to weaken them? Well, Alma thought, we have to strengthen our position among the Zoramites so that they won’t link up with the Lamanites there. The preaching of the word was the way to do it, so he took his mission there. He had found that “had more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword,” and that they should first give it a try—“try the virtue of the word of God” and see if that would work. So he got together his famous SWAT team of all the powerful missionaries: Ammon, Aaron, Omner, and Himni. Even Zeezrom now. Remember old Zeezrom, who had been converted and healed of a fever. He had been just as arrogant as Korihor, but he joined the brethren. Alma took Amulek and Zeezrom and also two of his sons. So that’s quite a crowd. They had a missionary task force here that was going to go in and work on the Zoramites, but they didn’t get to first base. Immediately they find among the Zoramites, very strongly marked, this ideological conflict. There are the poor Zoramites that live out by themselves, and there are the rich Zoramites. They have very little to do with each other, he is going to tell us here.

The eldest of Alma’s sons was Helaman. That’s a very interesting thing since they have changed the Egyptian r’s to l’s in so many cases in the last few years. Helaman is simply the well-known Egyptian word ḫr ḫmn, the “countenance of Amon.” Another son was called Shiblon, a very good Arab name. It means “a young lion,” just like the Hebrew Ari. It’s very common in Israel. Corianton is a borrowed name, a Jaredite name. We will see how it got there later on.

Verse 8: “Now the Zoramites were dissenters from the Nephites [they had been Nephites]; therefore they had had the word of God preached unto them.” They had perverted it. They would not keep the law of Moses; they didn’t like that part of it. And they wouldn’t pray “that they might not enter into temptation.” That’s the best way to resist temptation, the social norms, etc. So they had their own religion and built synagogues. Remember, the Nephites had synagogues, too, and they built their own synagogues now. They were following the old pattern. The Jews had their synagogues, too. They were a very religious people, a church-building people. This was important with the Zoramites. They had built synagogues and gathered themselves together on one day of the week, which they did call the day of the Lord. They were doing it themselves. Following the old Nehor pattern, aren’t they? They had a place for standing, high enough for one person to stand on.

There are some very interesting temples in South America. There’s a temple, on the outskirts of Mexico City on the south side, with a stairway going up and just the stand for
one man at the top. There are lots of pictures from the conquistadors, etc. The usual thing for the temple was to go up on four sides. You still do in the kiva; the Hopis have the kiva. It's the stairways of the temples that dominate, as you know, in Central American architecture. At the top there is a stand, which is sometimes a very small place. We don't know what it was, but it was called a *Rameumptom*, he tells us. This is very interesting, because the word *ram* in all Semitic languages means *high*, whether it's Hebrew, Aramaic, Arabic, Babylonian, or anything else. So it's a high place. But * Kb* means curved or curling, like a serpent, winding 'round and 'round. So it could have been a winding stairway that went up to the top of the tower, winding up and winding down. But one person at a time would go up. The name is interesting; it suggests winding. You would think that they would be straight, following the usual pattern. But remember, this was long before the classical period. All of this is just a guess thrown out freely, but at least it's not a bad guess. If he (Joseph Smith) was making this up, he is awfully good at making things up. You have to give him credit for that.

This is the way they would go. They would go on the top and stretch forth their hands to heaven. That's the *hall l* gesture, which you find anciently everywhere. It gave us the Hebrew letter *h*. It's the little hallelujah mannequin here [Brother Nibley draws it on the board]. You see it on jars, vases, rocks, glyphs, etc. They would do that. It's the usual gesture, the *hall l* or *hallelujah*. *Hall l* means “to greet the new moon” and various things like that. They would recite this prayer.

Question: About the Egyptian *Amon*, is that a pagan god?

Answer: He’s not pagan at all. In several of our hymns we use the word *Amon* for the name of God.

> What, tho, if the favor of Ahman possessing,  
> This world's bitter hate you are called to endure?  
> 
> "The Time is Far Spent," page 266 in the hymn book

We can’t take time to reconstruct it [the song]; we must rush. Anyway, we use the word *Amon*, too, and it’s used in the Doctrine and Covenants for the name of God. Of course, the Egyptian word *Amon* means lots and lots of things. The main thing it means is “the unknown one,” the one the Egyptians don’t know. They call him “the hidden one, the concealed one, the one whose name nobody knows.” Of course, that’s exactly what the Hebrews said about him. Only the high priest in Israel knew the name of God. He only whispered it once a year when he went behind the veil. Nobody else knew that name. The name of *Amon* is written in Egyptian with a man concealing himself behind a blind. That is always read as *Imn*, “the one who is not seen, the one who is invisible, the one we don’t know and who is above.”

So they go through this sort of thing and say, “Holy, holy God; we believe that thou art God, and we believe that thou art holy, and that thou wast a spirit, and that thou art a spirit, and that thou wilt be a spirit forever. Holy God, we believe that thou hast separated us [now this self-righteousness] from our brethren, . . . but we believe that thou hast elected us to be thy holy children.” This doctrine of election can be very flattering. There are people who have kept it. “But thou art the same yesterday, today, and forever; 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, . . . and we also thank thee that thou hast elected us, that we may not be led away after the foolish traditions of our brethren.”

At the core of Hermetic religions you find this secret, limited, aristocratic society. It reminds me of the Pythagoreans, who were among the more righteous people. They took this exclusive position. They alienated people, made enemies, and got themselves destroyed because they formed themselves into these societies and communities. They would go into rites like this. The Pythagoreans are not a particularly good example except for this one thing, their exclusiveness and their superiority. That’s what got them killed, because everybody said they were so snooty. They wouldn’t share their secrets or anything like that. They were diligent students and lived very uprightly. This is also a holdover from the Egyptian tradition, this idea of superiority. Remember, the texts we have are all very secret at the end. They say, “Don’t reveal this to anyone. This is secret and just for a particular group.” But they [the Zoramites] make this an instrument of pride and vanity. Then they think Christianity is too complicated. It’s a very interesting thing. As Lord Raglan showed, the more sophisticated religions become, not the more complicated, but the more simple they become. Islam is very simple, and Christian Science is so simple it’s nothing at all. This reads like Christian Science, which Joseph Smith didn’t copy from because Mary Baker Eddy didn’t live at this time. She came later.

So they said, “We thank God that we are chosen.” They were snooty, and the Christian Scientists were snooty, too. There was a time when they had a big push during the twenties and thirties. [It seemed that] everybody was a Christian Scientist, and they were too lofty to speak to anybody else. They talked of all this spiritual stuff, very much like this.

Verse 18: “And again we thank thee, O God, that we are a chosen and a holy people.” Now Alma was astonished at what he found. There had been big changes; they had picked up something somewhere. They talked about the Rameumptom and they gave this prayer to God and said “their hearts were not stolen away to believe in things to come, which they knew nothing about.” This was their positive position; they didn’t believe in the other things. Each man would give his thanks, bear his testimony, and then come down. Then they would never mention it again for the rest of the week. That was the Nehor element, very proper and very correct, but they weren’t really religious. They weren’t religious around the clock at all; they would just take care of it. Now this was silly, but was it wicked? It was extreme wickedness that worried Alma. We’ll see what the wickedness consisted in. The next week they “assembled themselves together again to the holy stand, to offer up thanks after their manner. Now when Alma saw this his heart was grieved; for he saw that they were a wicked and a perverse people” (Alma 31:24).

This is where the wickedness and perversity come in. If you want to be silly, that’s one thing. If they were charitable and good people and did this silly thing, that’s no sillier than lots of people do today. But this is it. “He saw that their hearts were set upon gold, and upon silver, and upon all manner of fine goods. Yea, and he also saw that their hearts were lifted up unto great boasting, in their pride [remember President Benson’s talk at conference]. . . . O Lord, wilt thou suffer that thy servants shall dwell here below in the flesh, to behold such gross wickedness among the children of men?” Behold, O God, they cry unto thee, and yet their hearts are swallowed up in their pride.” It’s the and yet that makes it wicked. There’s nothing wrong with crying unto God and praying to him in sincerity. “Behold, O God, they cry unto thee with their mouths, while they are puffed up, even to greatness, with the vain things of the world.”
That’s what they were doing. These are the sort of corporate apologetics we hear so much of today: Things are what we say they are. We are doing a good job. We are leaning over backwards. Our response was prompt and thorough to the oil disaster. Well, it wasn’t prompt and thorough at all, but the president of the company just said it was. The idea that by saying something it happens is becoming very strong now, thanks to the influence of Madison Avenue, TV, etc. You just talk to people and they will go for it. He said, they cry unto thee with their mouths, while their hearts are puffed up. Well, of course, the Lord told Joseph Smith that in the First Vision. “They draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.”

Verse 28: “Behold, O my God, their costly apparel, and their ringlets, and their bracelets [we think again of the vase paintings and murals that show this lavish overdainment of these people, at a much later period though] and their ornaments of gold, and all their precious things which they are ornamented with; and behold, their hearts are set upon them, and yet they cry unto thee [there’s the hypocrisy; that’s what made it a sin; there’s nothing wrong with crying to God, but it’s where your heart really is]. We thank thee, O God, for we are a chosen people unto thee, while others shall perish. Yea, and they say that thou hast made it known unto them that there shall be no Christ. O Lord God, how long wilt thou suffer that such wickedness and infidelity shall be among this people?”

Isn’t he being rather judgmental here? No, he is not at all. Why is he so concerned? Well, in the first place they were so blatantly, so overtly [wicked], and Alma had wider experience than anybody else. He knew about people and characters, etc. He had seen more wickedness than anybody else, he being Alma the Younger. So he was able to judge them on that basis, and also because they were blatant. They put on quite a show. But the main thing is in verse 35. He loves them, and his heart is concerned about them. “Behold, O Lord, their souls are precious, and many of them are our brethren.” So that’s why he feels right to be saying that he is suffering terribly. He’s not a hypocrite who is overwhelmed by other people’s wickedness when it should be his own sins that concern him. It’s that he’s on a mission here, and he wants to do what he can. “O Lord God, how long wilt thou suffer that such wickedness and infidelity shall be among this people? O Lord, wilt thou give me strength, that I may bear with mine infirmities.” Notice, good old Alma again. He must bear with his infirmities. Remember, Nephi says in his prayer right at the beginning, why am I angry at my enemies instead of at myself? He rebukes himself for that, and Alma does the same thing here. “Give me strength, that I may bear with mine infirmities” and face them. But meantime, the reason he is interested [is to have] success with them. Here’s a refreshing definition of success, written without dollar signs. Verse 33: “Wilt thou grant unto them [his companions] that they may have strength. . . . Behold, O Lord, their souls are precious.” So he wants to save them. His concern is not mean, but generous for them. He doesn’t want to damn them.

In verse 36 it says “that he clapped his hands upon all them who were with him.” That’s an interesting word there, isn’t it? To clap means to put your hands firmly on something. The Old English word is clippyon and it [is related] to grab, grope, and gripe, [German] kleben. They mean to grab firmly, and the Latin carpo is the same thing. You know the Greek Harpies. They were the damsels with the lunch hooks that came and grabbed your lunch before you could eat it; therefore, they were called Harpies. But this harpo, carpo is a good old English usage. In fact, the Egyptian word for “to embrace” is hpt. That means
to gain control, to grab a thing, to hold it firmly, etc. So it’s proper. The old Anglo-Saxon use “to clap” his hands on his head doesn’t mean he applauded this way. He put his hands firmly on their heads when he set them apart is what happened. And taking no thought for themselves, they were filled with the Holy Spirit.

The next chapter is an extremely important one, because this is such an accurate picture of Mesoamerican society, according to a recent collection of studies. It’s about people building the sacred centers for the ruling class and the like. That can go quickly though. We should finish Alma, shouldn’t we?
The Book of Mormon doesn’t dabble around, as historical romances and things like that do. It’s really to the “nitty gritty.” In this chapter 34, Alma is speaking to the other Zoramites. Alma has two missions, you’ll notice, with this people. The first one was a complete failure with the Zoramites proper. There are the excluded ones that are not included in this. They are another society entirely. They’re not even allowed to go to these temples. You remember, he talks about the temples, their riches, their homes, and all this sort of thing. But this is where the other society doesn’t even come near; they are shut out of town after dark. It’s expressed here a little further on in Alma 35:3 where he says, “And it came to pass that after the more popular part of the Zoramites had consulted together concerning the words which had been preached unto them, they were angry because . . . it did destroy their craft.” The more popular parts wouldn’t accept it at all. Their craft, of course, was priestcraft. But these [people] are the less popular parts. In fact, they don’t even have citizen’s rights or anything else, as we soon find out. They met on the hill Onidah and “began to have great success among the poor class of people; for behold, they were cast out of the synagogues because of the coarseness of their apparel. . . . They were esteemed by their brethren as dross.”

You see we have two different societies, the quality and the nothings—the riff-raff, the great unwashed. Of course, because of that condition “they were poor in heart.” Alma spoke to a large throng of them who met on the hill Onidah. They had these general mass meetings then as now; in fact, mass meetings were much more common in ancient times than today. “Upon the hill Onidah, there came a great multitude unto him who were . . . poor in heart, because of their poverty as to the things of the world. They came to Alma, and this was their complaint. Their leader said, “Behold, what shall these my brethren do, for they are despised of all men because of their poverty, yea, and more especially by our priests; for they have cast us out of our synagogues which we have labored abundantly to build with our own hands; and they have cast us out because of our exceeding poverty, and we have no place to worship our God; and behold, what shall we do?”

The centers were everything. Recently a very important book by T. P. Culbert has come out called The Classic Maya Collapse. There is a series of Mesoamerican societies. Nobody knows where they came from. Some of them are spread quite far apart. They didn’t just disappear by dwindling away. They suddenly collapsed and disappeared, each one of them. It’s a very strange thing why this happened. It all seems to follow the same pattern, what we referred to before as a “recurrent scenario.” This is the way it is described in one of these essays. This book is a large collection of essays, all discussing the reason for the collapse of various Central American civilizations. This is the one by G. R. Willey and D. B. Shimkin on the subject.¹ This gives us the general situation. In the Late Classical, the Classical, and the Pre-Classical periods this is what happened. We can assume going way

back to Nephite and Lamanite times it happened, too. “There are indications that Late Classic society was more sharply differentiated into elite and commoner strata than had been the case in Early Classic times.” This is a process that goes on every time they go through this, and this is our Book of Mormon story. In Early Classic times as this process of an elite consolidation went on, “there was a related development of a class of bureaucrats and craft specialists” in the sixth and seventh centuries. 3 Nephi is going to tell us that people began to be distinguished by ranks, according to their riches and their chances for learning. This says they began to be distinguished as a class of bureaucrats and craft specialists. In the seventh and eighth centuries Maya civilization was integrated at the elite level in a more impressive fashion than ever before as signs of regionalism appeared.

It’s a growing process once it starts, and it has started in our own time, as you notice in the latest reports. It was amazing in the paper this morning, the division between the rich and the poor. It’s being more sharply marked everyday: “intensified competition among cities, intercity fighting, crop loss and destruction, malnutrition and disease . . . reduced population greatly.” Alma tells us the contentions did increase, that there were wars throughout all the land among them. They [the authors] say later on, the most vital aspects of the collapse are first, the roles of the elite class; second, the widening of the social gulf between the elite and the commoners (which is exactly what we are finding here); third, the competition between the various cities and centers. These sacred centers were also the markets, as you know. You notice, the people who built them weren’t allowed to go into them. This is the division of classes that is so sharply marked.

It’s mentioned here too in the same connection—“Such is an inevitable accompaniment of the evolution of ranked, and probably kin-based, society to a class structured one. . . . In some areas, it is quite possible that by the end of the Late Classic the numbers of commoners were being maintained only by recruitment and capture from other centers.” To build their centers they had to enslave people from other centers, and there was great competition to do that. “Yet the upper class continued to grow, to expand its demands for luxury and funerary splendor, [boy, do we get a Book of Mormon picture here] and to strive to compete with rival centers and aristocracies.” There were other centers the same way. They named these Book of Mormon cities and their cultural centers, and they had their towers. They had their sacred assemblies, etc., and the Zoramites had their own. This system is shown in its model form; this is state of the art here.

“The priestly leaders of these great centers [remember, Alma said, ‘and especially by their priests’] in their efforts to outdo each other, to draw more wealth and prestige to themselves, and to bring more worshippers and taxpayers into their particular orbits, must have diverted all possible labor and capital to their aggrandizement. . . . Add to all this the competition for trade, . . . and we can see the situation brought to a fighting pitch, . . . all leading to a rapid down-spiraling to extinction.” This is where it culminates in the Book of Mormon. We are approaching the long war, the great fourteen-year war. We are not going to be able to go into it this semester, if ever. They (the Maya) didn’t get anywhere. They didn’t collapse and then build up again. It was extinction in every case. The ruins of the cities were never rebuilt. That was just it; they were finished. It’s an amazing picture, and, of course, this is the amazing picture that we find in the Book of Mormon. You don’t find it in Europe; that’s not the way things go there. People go on suffering in Europe and Asia, etc. The same old cities are still there, the same old mobs, troubles, murders, etc. They continue with starvation and all the rest of it. But it’s a different pattern in the promised land here.
When he saw these people were humble, Alma was filled with great joy. “For he beheld that their afflictions had truly humbled them, and that they were in a preparation to hear the word [he had a new clientele now]. Therefore he did say no more to the other multitude.” See, there were two multitudes, two Zoramite communities. His mission was to the first. Why did he go to the first? Because they were the ones that made the trouble. Remember, the idea was he didn’t want the Zoramites to join in with the Lamanites on the other side of the Ammonites so they would have a “squeeze play.” They would break down the value of their buffer state. In order to discourage them from going away and joining the enemy, he decided, we will go and preach to them. That’s the best way he could think of. So these dangerous people were the ones he wanted to preach to—the influential ones. But he couldn’t get anywhere with them, so then he turned to what he calls “the other multitude,” making it clear that we do have two societies here. He stretched forth his hand and cried unto them and said, “Behold I say unto you, do ye suppose that ye cannot worship God save it be in your synagogues only?” Well, they certainly had that ingrained into them. The building of the holy places was of prime consideration. That’s where everything went on; that was the center of holiness. (Every Sunday we thank the Lord for our beautiful meeting houses, etc. We talked about the fashionable religion, where they met only once a week and did the right thing.)

Verse 12: “I say unto you, it is well that ye are cast out of your synagogues, that ye may be humble, and that ye may learn wisdom.” Of course, they couldn’t go in because they didn’t observe dress standards. Remember, they were cast out because of the coarseness of their apparel. The dress standards were very strict. Notice some things about the Zoramites. A lot is said from here on about the Zoramites in the Book of Mormon. Someone mentioned last time after class that Zoram was a servant of Laban. He was drafted by Lehi’s family, by Nephi especially. Being a servant of Laban, the military governor of Jerusalem, he would not be an Israelite because you can’t enslave or make a servant of an Israelite. The name Zoram is again one of those desert names. It’s from the eastern half of Manasseh. It means a welcome, refreshing, powerful rain. A lot of this stuff has come out of Genesis 13–14, but the people of the Near East are noted for their genealogical awareness. It’s Ibn so-and-so. You identify yourself as a son of so-and-so, or Abi so-and-so, or the father of so-and-so, or Ibn Abi (the son of the father). But you always trace back your relationships. They could do it many generations by memory, if not in writing. But along with that, even more easy to keep alive, are old grudges and feuds, the times you were wronged, because you had to take revenge when you were wronged. That’s the ghāza, revenge, the raid. So you would make your raid to get your revenge. They were honor bound to get revenge. You have the chivalric system of honor, revenge, etc. These things are endless. They have gone on how many hundreds of years in Ireland, in the Philippines, and in Lebanon.

So it is very possible that these Zoramites would keep a sort of aloofness or distinction among themselves. They were proud of their blood, etc. It was not a hundred percent [Zoramite]. They had joined with Lehi’s family and were good friends. The Zoramites were Nephites. They went along, but still they were aware of their ancestry, traditions, etc. Then the tendency comes to break up. After all, Alma started it when he moved out. Nephi started it when he moved out. That was the thing if you had a group with particular aspirations. We’ve seen numerous records of the fact that they had their own dialects, their own manner of speech. They could understand each other, but they were forming [other] languages. These Zoramites were people with their own traditions, and they were
remarkable people—you must give them that. Notice down here some of the qualities they
had. Well, first they were church builders. They went to regular religious service and gave
fervent testimony and thanksgiving. They were very enterprising, very sophisticated,
elegant in their dress, insisted on dress standards. They were independent and went off by
themselves. The best military officers were always found [among them], we are told.
That’s the one thing that threatened the Nephites when the Zoramites joined with the
Lamanites, because the best military officers who knew all the Nephite tricks were with
them. This greatly endangered the Nephite cause in the long war that followed. They were
the best fighters. They certainly were proud and brave. They were hard working and made
other people work hard, too, and they were highly successful. They had strict censorship
and were very proper. They were ultra conservative, imposing a rule of righteousness on
all, we find in chapter 35. They were determined, free enterprising, and had a perfectly
beautiful self-image.

Well, what’s wrong with these people? Just that contradiction. There’s nothing wrong
with praying and thanking the Lord for what you have. The pride they had was not wholly
wrong. But to say one thing when your heart is really somewhere else. It was all on this
vulgar display and how much they could pile up, this invidious comparison. This was what
was wrong, and this is what sickened Alma. He said it made him sick. Anyway, he is
talking to the other side, which he calls the other multitude. He said, you should be glad
you are cast out of the synagogues; I have a surprise for you. You don’t have to go to the
sacred centers in order to worship. You are compelled to be humble, and that’s good. If
you’re compelled to be humble you seek repentance. This verse 16 looks like an exception:
“Therefore, blessed are they who humble themselves without being compelled to be
humble.” Is that a franchise for riches after all? It does tell us you can be humble without
being poor. But remember, to seek riches is to seek power, prestige, influence and luxury,
and you are not humble when you are looking for those things—if they are the things that
interest you. So I must assert that I am humble if I want to feel right. If I’m too rich I
have to make a big shout about being humble. I’ve heard a lot of that from rich friends.
“Blessed are they who humble themselves without being compelled to be humble”—that’s
nice, and without talking about it, of course. _Humus_ is the earth, and _humility_ means
“down to the earth.” _Dhn t_ the Egyptians call it—grinding your forehead in the dirt. You
are lowering yourself as low as you can get in the dust.

Verse 17: “Yea, there are many who do say: If thou wilt show unto us a sign from heaven,
then we shall know of a surety.” Notice, he’s beginning with the fundamentals with these
people. These people are practically slaves. They want to know about the gospel. They
don’t know anything. There are things they don’t understand. All the hints they’ve been
taking, they’ve been taking from the other Zoramites. They were Zoramites, too, you see.
This is a sermon on faith that comes here, and it’s a very important sermon on faith. He
begins working from the ground up with these people. He has a new audience, his second
audience, the other multitude. He says, shouldn’t we begin by showing you a sign?
Because that’s the way it always begins in the Golden Legend and the early Christian
legends of the fourth and fifth centuries. The apostles go about, and the only way they
convert people is by signs—making a dead fish sign and things like that. They do this and
it immediately converts everybody, and everybody becomes good Christians. This is
routine. He says, “Now I ask, is this faith? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; for if a man
knoweth a thing he hath no cause to believe, for he knoweth it.”
Well, are knowledge and faith enemies then? If I have something, I don’t have to believe and I don’t have to have faith. There are some people who would tell us that knowledge is the enemy of faith. Will study weaken faith? That’s thought to be so in some quarters. If you know, it’s not the same thing as only believing. “And it shall be unto every man according to this work. And now as I said concerning faith—faith is not to have a perfect knowledge of things; therefore if ye have faith ye hope for things which are not seen, which are true.” You hope it is true. Peter in his argument with Simon Magus says [something like this]. You can imagine an island. It’s an imaginary island; you have never been there. It’s a real island though. Well, you can imagine visiting Mirror Lake, what it would be like up there. It’s imaginary for you. You have faith that it’s there. You are imagining something that’s real, but for you is only imagination. Peter says the same thing: Before I came to Caesaria I didn’t know what it was like. I had an image of what it was like, which was not correct. But it was reality, and here I am [paraphrased].

Verse 22: “God is merciful unto all who believe on his name; therefore he desireth, in the first place, that ye should believe, yea, even on his word.” First you believe on his name. His name is the only tie you have with him. The name is going to identify. The name is the way you “hitch in.” You can start in on this with the name and with the word. “He imparteth his word by angels unto men” and women also and “little children do have words given unto them many times, which confound the wise and the learned.”

In the old Joseph Smith Lectures on Faith the question comes, “What proof do we have in the first instance that there is a God?” The answer is, human testimony and human testimony only. It’s not actually by looking at the flowers, the bees, the clouds, etc. They testify that somebody’s in charge. But what we have is people who have witnessed, the people who have been in the presence. This is a very important thing.

Orson F. Whitney at Eliza R. Snow’s funeral mentioned an interesting thing. You know that passage in Abraham where it says, “Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones. And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers.” This was before the creation. He [Whitney] said there were just as many women in that group as there were men. He was speaking about Eliza R. Snow and why she should be one of the most gifted prophets and poets in the school—not just prophetess, but most gifted prophet. She had tremendous gifts and powers.

It comes down to this witnessing thing—how can you witness this and how do you know it? This is what you do. “For I do not mean that ye all of you have been compelled to humble yourselves.” Some would be humble under any circumstances at all, which means you should be humble all the time. In Alma 34:38 and Ether 12:27, humble really means what it says—humilis “in the dust,” as low as that.

Faith is not a perfect knowledge, we know that. But it’s not authoritarian here. You can’t command somebody to believe something; you can’t twist a person’s arm. Verse 27: “But behold, if ye will awake and arouse your faculties . . .” This is a famous passage. All I’m asking for you to do is to make an experiment. I’m not asking you to believe me. We talked about the kangaroo behind the desk there. If I come down and say, “I just saw a polar bear in Rock Canyon,” what are you supposed to say? “If you say you saw a polar bear in Rock Canyon, Brother Nibley, I believe you.” Well, that’s terrible. I don’t want to hear that. That takes all the wind out of my sails. I want you to go up and see for yourself.
Or you might say, “Of course, there’s no polar bear. You didn’t see anything of the sort. No polar bears are found below a certain latitude. Polar bears just aren’t found in these regions, so you didn’t see any polar bear.” Well, I might have; there might have been one that escaped from the zoo. But you don’t know. The thing for you to do is not just take it because I say so, or not to reject it because you are being scientific and you don’t think it can be possible. Find out for yourself.

That’s what he is telling us here. It turns out that faith is intellectual honesty. That’s what it is. He makes this very clear a little later. He says, first you arouse your faculties, use your brains, and be willing to make an experiment. You don’t accept it when you make an experiment. You’re going to try it out to see if it is so. Do we have [cold] fusion or not? Some people have faith in it, and some people don’t have faith. The only thing to do is to try it out and see. If you can exercise even a particle of faith, just start out with that. That’s all you need. But “let this desire work in you.” Then you say, “Oh, you believe it because you want to believe it.” Of course, you’re not going to do anything if you don’t have that inducement, to want to believe in something. You say it’s wishful thinking. Of course, everything you want to believe in is wishful thinking. Of course, everything you want to believe in is wishful thinking. You never discover anything unless you hope it is there or wish it is there. Here he talks about your faith being dormant, but he says don’t fight it. If you have a desire to believe, don’t fight it, “that ye can give place for a portion of my words.” Notice that it comes by degrees; it comes by steps here. There’s more and more reason why you should believe, but no reason why you should believe it completely ever. This is the interesting thing here. It’s like planting a seed in your heart. If it’s a true seed this is what will happen. Don’t cast it out in your unbelief. Give it a chance; let it grow. It will begin to swell within your breast. Then you will feel the swelling motions. You will think something is happening here. Don’t throw it away at all. If it is growing it must be good “for it beginneth to enlarge my soul [this is recognition]; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding, yea, it beginneth to be delicious to me.”

Each success leads to another try; it gets better and better. What do you know when you are entirely certain? (We’ll look in Klein’s book here; I brought it along.) You haven’t got the answers, and it’s not one way or the other. As long as you are in the flesh, you can always doubt it. He goes on here, if the seed grows it’s good; don’t cast it away. Because you have tried the experiment and planted the seed and it “swelleth, and sprouteth, and beginneth to grow, then you must needs say that the seed is good.” It’s not dead yet. If it doesn’t work just forget it. This is the whole thing. It will cause a dullness in your breast, a stupor of thought will come over you. Remember, the Lord says if you have worked out a good plan about your fusion or something else, you ask him about it. If it is right he will cause a burning in your bosom. If it is not he will cause a dullness of spirit. This is what happens. But even though you know it’s good and you are wide open for impressions, you are awaiting the next operation. It’s still always on hold, “and your faith is dormant; and this because you know, for ye know that the word hath swelled your souls.” That’s what you do know, that something is happening, but it is still dormant. You keep it on hold. You have to take further steps than that. “Your understanding doth begin to be enlightened [notice, that faith and intelligence go together here], and your mind doth begin to expand.”

Then you begin to see possibilities of other things. You ask the question, what will we be doing for the next thousand years? Well, until you get there you won’t know. Until your mind has expanded to a certain degree, you don’t even know what’s beyond. It’s
nonexistence. The Egyptians say *nt ëwtt*, “that which is and that which is not.” I live on the “that which is” side. The “that which is not” side is just as big, except I haven’t moved into it yet. You are always pushing out the borders of your knowledge. They will retreat before you. Heraclitus reminds us that they are like dogs. They will retreat before you if you walk toward them, but if you walk away from them they will chase you. If you shrink in and limit your knowledge and understanding and are willing to settle within certain bounds, then the borders will shrink to accommodate your way of life and your self-satisfaction. But as long as you continue to push the boundaries, the boundaries will retreat before you, and you find there are no boundaries. That’s what the horizon is, you see. With the Egyptians it’s the *aakhut*, the great mystery. What’s beyond the horizon? Well, there is something. The horizon is a funny thing. It doesn’t appear to us as a mist or a vague land of nothing. There’s a sharp line against the horizon, especially in the desert. It’s just drawn with a razor. You say, well, that ends it. I can see nothing beyond that line; that’s it. You go up to it and lo and behold there’s more. There’s another nice sharp line beyond, and this goes on forever. He’s talking about this, and he says, isn’t this real, what you see? With every one of these steps, you know that this is real “for ye know that the word hath swelled your souls, and . . . that your understanding doth begin to be enlightened, and your mind doth begin to expand.”

Well, if this isn’t real, nothing is real. It is something that’s discernible, this knowledge. But he says it’s not a perfect knowledge yet, of course. Verse 35: “Behold, after ye have tasted this light is your knowledge perfect? . . . Nay; neither must ye lay aside your faith [you keep exercising it all the time; you never stop] for ye have only exercised your faith to plant the seed that ye might try the experiment to know if the seed was good.” You don’t know whether it will grow or not yet. That’s what you do. We spend millions of dollars on laboratories, projects, etc. We don’t know whether they’ll work or not. If you knew whether they worked or not, you couldn’t get the money. They’d say, “Well, that’s already done; that’s no problem.” It’s the problems we are working on. “Let us nourish it with great care”—exercise control, discipline, etc., awaiting the next operation. “With much care it will get root, and grow up, and bring forth fruit.”

You must keep it up. If you neglect it, it will shrink to accommodate your own program. It’s not because the seed wasn’t good if that happens, but because your ground was barren and you would not nourish the tree. You have to create intelligence; you have to create faith. It’s a funny thing. You pull yourself up by your own bootstraps, so to speak. You must look forward with an eye of faith. As long as it hasn’t happened yet, you still have to look forward always with faith if you can ever pluck the fruit of the tree of life. You look forward to it with patience, and this goes on. The idea is to pluck the fruit which is most precious. It is worth the try. What else is there? There’s nothing else to look for. It is most precious and sweet, “and ye shall feast upon this fruit even until ye are filled, that ye hunger not, neither shall ye thirst.”

There’s a recent book by the most eminent American mathematician of our time, Morris Kline, called *Mathematics and the Search for Knowledge*. It has just been published recently by Oxford. I’m just going to read a couple of passages. (Show us a miracle; show us a sign.) He is citing Hume here: “The existence of an external world with fixed properties is really an unwarranted inference. There is no evidence that anything exists beyond the impressions and ideas that belong to nothing and represent nothing.” Then he says, experience cannot prove reality; experience is personal. You may have your experience, and I may have mine. We don’t know how they match up at all. He quotes
Einstein a lot: “The belief in an external world independent of the percipient subject is the foundation of all science [we have to assume that such a world is, but it is only assumption]. But since our sense-perceptions inform us only indirectly of this world or Physical Reality it is only by speculation that it can become comprehensible to us.” We can only know it by speculation.

There are a lot of interesting passages here. “The abandonment of physical mechanism in favor of mathematical description shocked even the great scientists. Contrary to popular belief no one has ever explained the physical reality of the force of gravitation. What science has done is to sacrifice physical intelligibility for the sake of mathematical description and mathematical prediction.” It’s just mathematics we have; we do not have physical intelligibility. You can’t describe it to me or experience it. “One cannot [no one can] visualize a four-dimensional non-Euclidian world with which they work so much today. Almost since the beginning of the work with numbers, mathematicians have carried on algebraic reasoning that is independent of any sense experience whatever.” You can’t visualize them when they talk about these things, and they can’t visualize them either. “Our models of atomic structure are not physical; they are entirely mathematical.” They are not physical, so we don’t argue on this basis. “Newton provided a theory of gravitation whose physical nature neither he nor his successors for three hundred years have explained. Sense perception in this case has proved useless. [You might say, ‘Well, anybody sees there’s gravitation.’] Modern science is gradually removing the intuitive and physical content, both of which appeal to the senses. It is eliminating matter.” This is taking us down more and more on faith all the time, isn’t it? It is utilizing concepts which we all know are mathematical laws and nothing else. Science remains only a small, though vital, contact with sense perceptions after long chains of mathematical deductions. It’s like the god that lies at the end of a chain of syllogisms is not a very convincing god; it gets very thin by that time. Well, it’s the same thing with the reality of science—the sense perceptions after long chains of mathematical deduction. “Science is rationalized fiction, rationalized by mathematics.” He defines science as “rationalized fiction,” just as I would define faith here as “intellectual honesty,” which it is.

“Today the laws of physics concern our knowledge rather than what may be true in the physical world.” That’s what your faith is. It isn’t knowledge yet. “Mathematics no longer describes the behavior of the elementary particles, but our knowledge of this behavior. The real world is not what our unchallenged senses tell us, or our unlimited perceptions, but rather what man’s major mathematical theories tell us.” It’s mathematical theories that tell us what reality is, not the sign that I give you. “A mathematical theory of the physical world is not a description of the phenomenon as we perceive it, but a bold symbolic construction.” Einstein said he will never be able to compare his picture with the real mechanism, and he cannot even imagine the possibility of the meaning of such a comparison. So if you try to imagine what heaven is like, or what something else is like, you have your own construction. He’s talking about the cosmos, just as local as our solar system, when he says he would never be able to compare his picture with the real mechanism. He can’t even imagine the possibility of the meaning of such a comparison. It’s just strictly his own.

Well, we have to move along here because Alma is going to get into a very interesting debate on some of these subjects. “They sent forth unto him desiring to know whether they should believe in one God.” They asked him questions, you see. Should they believe in one God? How should they plant the seed he talked about? They didn’t know anything. He was building from ground up, “or in what manner they should begin to
exercise their faith." They want practical instructions here. Well, in the first place don’t worry about being cast out of your synagogues; that’s a good thing. Do you remember the words of Zenos concerning the prayer of worship? We are going to have to pass this by. This is a delightful passage from verse 4 to the end of the chapter. It’s the story of Zenos and how he was cast out. The Hodayoth text of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Thanksgiving Scroll, is the testimony, witness, and thanksgiving of a man who went through exactly the same experience. He was cast out in the same way in the wilderness by his enemies, and they were turned to him. He did cry [to the Lord] in his fields and turned to his house again, to his closet “to be heard of thee and not of men.” He tried to preach in the midst of the congregations, and they threw him out. He was despised by his enemies, and his enemies sought to destroy him. This was the writer of the Hodayoth Scroll, the Thanksgiving Scroll, of the Dead Sea Scrolls. We could go through it verse by verse. Well, why would the same thing exactly happen to two men like this? We talked about that before. It is the recurrent scenario that happens. Under certain circumstances certain things are going to happen. They happen this way in the Church many times, “for thou hast turned thy judgments away from me, because of thy Son.”

He reads them that story because he was the outcast, and they were the outcasts. So he reads them the story of the outcast Zenos. Zenos was an outcast prophet who lived between Moses and Elijah. About 1906 in a work called the Pseudo-Philo the writings of this Zenos were discovered. I wrote quite a bit about them in Since Cumorah. There was a prophet called Zenos. He was cast out and he wrote a long allegory on the olive tree. When Jacob gave his long story of the olive tree, he said he was quoting Zenos. He was a real person, a prophet who was lost and was found again in the early twentieth century.

Verse 17: “And now, my brethren, ye see that a second prophet of old has testified of the Son of God.” He refers to him as a second prophet. Zenos was never popular with the doctors of the schools. That’s why he was thrown out. They weren’t going to preserve that sort of thing.

“These are not the only ones who have spoken concerning the Son of God. Behold, he was spoken of by Moses; yea, and behold a type was raised up in the wilderness, that whosoever would look upon it might live. . . . If ye could be healed by merely casting about your eyes [why] would ye rather harden your hearts in unbelief” and slothfulness—too lazy to exercise a little faith?

Now this looks like the Essene community here, and this is a very good [summary] of the gospel in a nutshell in verse 22: “begin to believe in the Son of God, that he will come to redeem his people, and that he shall suffer and die to atone for their sins; and that he shall rise again from the dead, which shall bring to pass the resurrection [for the rest of us], that all men shall stand before him, to be judged at the last and judgment day, according to their works.” The emphasis is on the works. There we have the gospel in a nutshell, which he is giving to these people. They have to be caught up in a hurry because they have gotten way behind. He says, if you plant this word in your heart you will find it begins to swell.

Then Amulek starts and he gives the testimony. He says, “My brethren, I think that it is impossible that ye should be ignorant of the things which have been spoken concerning the coming of Christ . . . [which were] taught unto you bountifully before your dissension from among us.” He is talking about the fashionable group of Zoramites who adopted their own religion. They got very smart and made improvements on it, and they adopted
some of the neighboring cults. I’m sure that’s what they did because Alma and his friends were completely astounded when they saw the changes that had taken place, yet they were the changes that prevailed among the other people around there. There were other people around. So he says, it is impossible that ye should be ignorant of these things after you have been taught them before. You had them taught to you before you came out here with the other Zoramites, before your dissension from among us. The Zoramites had dissented from the Nephites, and before the dissension they were taught these things, as well as the other people they built the temples for.

“Plant the word in your hearts, that ye may try the experiment of its goodness. And we have beheld that the great question which is in your minds is whether the word be in the Son of God, or whether there shall be no Christ. . . . My brother has called upon the words of Zenos, that redemption cometh through the Son of God [and Zenock and Moses] . . . . For it is expedient that an atonement should be made . . . or else all mankind must unavoidably perish; yea, all are hardened; yea, all are fallen and are lost.”

This idea of the atonement you find everywhere because it’s a basic theme. It’s a theme of Greek tragedy, and it’s the theme of the year rites everywhere in the world. I have been catching up on periodical literature the last few weeks. It’s very interesting to see how the formulas of the year rites and the great assemblies are really being emphasized more and more today. What a great part they played, a greater part than anyone ever supposed, in the ancient societies. It was this. In a tragedy when the play begins, things have gone wrong. There is a plague or a war, something very wrong in the society, and destruction threatens. So what do you do? The king gives an opening speech, and someone must be to blame. They must explain it. They cannot stand by and see mischief wrecking things with impunity. Something must be done. Things must be set right. A price must be paid, but who is guilty? Well, we are all guilty. We cannot be probabilists because we cannot ever make payment, and we don’t know how to distribute the guilt. We all share some of it. How do you distribute guilt like that? Well, you don’t unless you are one of Molina’s probabilists of the sixteenth century. They had quite a system of doing it to the fourth and fifth decimal place—just who had sinned how much, etc. We can’t do that, so what do you do? You have to have someone pay the price. The price is demanded, and nothing short of an infinite atonement will suffice for the sins of the world. Of course, no individual or people themselves can pay that. What’s going to happen? Fixing everyone’s guilt won’t do.

We said that faith is intellectual honesty. What is that? Know thyself. Remember, that’s the creed of Delphi. Complete intellectual honesty is to know where you stand in the problem, to know your ignorance. The only way you can solve the problem is step by step unbearing and exploring your ignorance. Not what you know, but what you don’t know is what you’ve got to get after. There’s the flaw, and this is a humiliating process—a progressive unbearing of your ignorance—and most people won’t stand it. They want to get a terminal degree, and from then on they’re not going to be reminded of their ignorance. And knowing thyself is repentance. That’s the hardest part of all. You can’t separate faith and repentance. It’s self-knowledge and intellectual honesty. If you are going to solve the problem, if you really want to know whether it’s so or not, you’ll go about the right way trying to find whether it’s so or not. And you won’t draw premature conclusions the way everybody does. That’s the trouble with people who argue about the Book of Mormon. They’ll ask very good questions, and then they’ll leave the room. They don’t wait for an answer. They don’t want to risk an answer every time. The harder and better the question, the better the chance there is to show that the Book of Mormon is
true, that it will stand up. They don’t wait for that; they walk out on it. That’s a good line to leave the stage with.

Verse 16: “He that exercises no faith unto repentance is exposed to the whole law [this is showing that faith is repentance, and the same are intelligence] of the demands of justice; therefore only unto him that has faith unto repentance is brought about the great and eternal plan of redemption.” He’ll only have the knowledge if he has faith, and the faith must be unto repentance. He must lower himself down. He must be humble and start with the hard part of the problem.

The interesting thing about Newton, for example—he didn’t like his great works he was doing. They bored and annoyed him. He was looking for proof of the gospel. I have some interesting statements from Cline about that. It was his faith that carried him on. So you cry unto him [the Savior]; this is what you do. This repeats chapter 33. This famous passage here is an important thing: “Yea, cry unto him for mercy; for he is mighty to save. Yea, humble yourselves, and continue in prayer unto him. Cry unto him when ye are in your fields, yea, over all your flocks. Cry unto him in your houses, yea, over all your household, both morning, mid-day, and evening. Yea, cry unto him against the power of your enemies. Yea, cry unto him against the devil, who is an enemy to all righteousness. Cry unto him over the crops of your fields, that ye may prosper in them.” Don’t be afraid of it; don’t be afraid to ask God for anything. “Cry over the flocks of your fields that they may increase, . . . in your closets, and your secret places, and in your wilderness” and also in public. You would spend a long day crying unto the Lord all day long, wouldn’t you? As I say, it’s like the fatra of the Arabs; everything they say is Allah. “yea, and when you do not cry unto the Lord, let your hearts be full, drawn out in prayer unto him continually for your welfare, and also for the welfare of those who are around you.” That’s what the Arabs call the fatra. It’s a set; it’s a state of mind. You can have that state of mind. Say that you are in particularly great peril. You are in very great danger and don’t know if you’ll be alive three minutes from now. What do you do? Well, you’re praying all the time, but you don’t have time to compose proper words or anything like that. You just have that feeling that’s very strong; “let your hearts be full, drawn out in prayer unto him continually for your welfare.” That will draw you on.

When you have done all these things, this is very important. Remember, he is talking to the selfish Zoramites. “For after ye have done all these things, if ye turn away the needy, and the naked, and visit not the sick and afflicted, and impart of your substance, if ye do not any of these things, behold, your prayer is vain . . . [all these spiritual exercises aren’t going to get you anywhere without charity]. Therefore, if ye do not remember to be charitable, ye are as dross [you are as nothing], which the refiners do cast out.” So don’t harden your hearts any longer. They had been doing that.

Now here are these great lines about life as a preparation: “For behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God.” That’s why we don’t have all the answers here. There are only two things we can do, as we said before. You can repent and you can forgive. “Yea, behold the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors.” This is a kairos, as the New Testament says. That’s a special block of time set aside for some special purpose or activity. “I beseech of you that ye do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end.” There’s this urgency not to procrastinate; this is an interesting thing. “If we do not improve our time while in this life, then cometh the night of darkness wherein there can be no labor performed.” The poets talk about the “black night of darkness,” etc. But
does that mean we can’t ever repent, forever after? No, it doesn’t mean that, but he is going to tell us when that day comes. “Nay, ye cannot say this; for that same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world.”

It’s as if it were being set in concrete. Make up your mind now which plane you will take, because the plane you take makes a lot of difference where you are going to end. The idea is that once you get on you are stuck. Well, I thought we were going to have eternal progression, eternal chances, and all that sort of thing. Well, that is so, but there is great emphasis on the particular purpose this short, dirty life has to perform. Unless we take it at its main purpose, there’s not much point of doing it because it is not long enough for much else but just these things. We are launched fully equipped into the next phase of our existence, and we are stuck with it apparently for a long time. Notice verse 35: “Ye have become subjected to the spirit of the devil, and he doth seal you his.” You are going to be sealed for a long time; you are going to be in a sealed cabin. You might be able to change later on; that’s something, but for a long haul ahead we have to prepare here. We do not know what the conditions will be after this, but we do know that for some reason repentance is the one thing we are here for—to set our course for this long time ahead. It’s absolutely vital. When you get there you might say, “Well, I’m a totally different person now; we can forget all that.” No, that won’t do. What you do [on earth] is to establish your attitude, your framework, and your aim for a long time to come.

This is what I was thinking of the other time: “The Spirit of the Lord hath withdrawn from you, and hath no place in you, and the devil hath all power over you; and this is the final state of the wicked.” When the devil has all power over you, the point is, that’s as far as wickedness will get you. That’s the final state. The wickedness will get you only as far as Vegas, we’ll say, and nowhere else. That’s where it will dump you forever unless you want to get out. It doesn’t necessarily mean you will have to stay there forever and ever, but it does mean that being wicked can only take you so far.

We had a wonderful statement back there which I overlooked, where it tells what happened to Korihor. In Alma 30:60 Korihor was killed by a Zoramite mob. Verse 58: “And Korihor did go about from house to house, begging food for his support.” Notice it tells us the Zoramites had separated themselves from the Nephites, being led by a man whose name was Zoram. So you see, they were a separatist group anyway. But here it says he was killed by the Zoramite mob. Verse 60: “And thus we see that the devil will not support his children at the last day.” The libertine is the most lonesome, deserted person in the world, a pathetic, let-down person. In his life he is selfish, licentious, and self-indulgent, but he is a pitiable figure. “The devil will not support his children at the last day.” We have Septimius Severus, Don Juan, Citizen Kane, and people like that, who end up not very happy people.

He [Alma] is preaching to them to establish something. Remember, what they are trying to do is lessen the danger of a major conflict between the Nephites and the Lamanites. We have an interesting and very important development here. In chapter 35 the more popular part of the Zoramites wouldn’t have anything to do with him, but the others did. So they are split now. What do they do? The people who are converted of the Zoramites go over and want to join Alma and Ammon’s people. They want to join the Ammonites in Jershon. But they are Zoramites, and if they go over and join the Ammonites they will be the other party. This causes great alarm, so a real cold war begins now.
Small nations drag great nations into it—like Serbia, Belgium, and Poland. Two great nations have an interest in small nations. The small nations divide into parties. The Russians support one party in this country and that country. The CIA supports the other party, and that’s the way the cold wars get started. This is the way they get dragged into the war here, you see. You have the Nephites being willing to support these renegade Zoramites who had left and joined the Ammonites. The Ammonites were renegade enough; that shocked them. The Lamanites called those Ammonites traitors, we find out a little later on. On the other hand, the Nephites were giving them support, while the Lamanites were supporting the Zoramites, who were Nephite dissenters. They had gone over from the Nephites, and the Lamanites were supporting them. Then more Zoramites break off and go back to the Nephites, and the Nephites support them. You have two factions fighting each other; Nephites support one and [Lamanites] support the other. They tear everything apart, and this leads unto into fourteen years of gory war, which we are lucky to avoid this semester, aren’t we?

What could they do about it? Notice it goes on here in Alma 35:13: “And the people of Ammon departed out of the land of Jershon [that was the buffer state; they were to leave it as a field of fire in case real war began], and came over into the land of Melek, and gave place in the land of Jershon for the armies of the Nephites,” to give them room to maneuver. So that’s what it was, a field of fire, that they might contend—the killing fields being opened up with the armies of the Lamanites and the armies of the Zoramites on the field, “and thus commenced a war betwixt the Lamanites and the Nephites, in the eighteenth year of the reign of the judges.” It began with this cold war and lasted for years and years. It was a horrendous war, a great study for strategy and tactics though.

Alma and Ammon and the brethren had to pack up and go back to Zarahemla. Their mission was over; it had been frustrated. The Zoramites whom they had brought to repentance were driven out of the land. The Zoramites threw all the converts out of the land that hadn’t already gone over to Ammon. Then they attacked the Ammonites for receiving them after they had driven them out. The Germans did the very same thing. They drove Jews out by the thousands. The Jews went to Holland, and then Hitler threatened the Dutch. You have taken our enemies over. That was his excuse for invading Holland, because they had given shelter to Hitler’s enemies. They were German citizens who had been driven out. The same thing happened here. They drove them out of [their land], and they made a casus belli for their offence. The Zoramites were driven out of their land, and they went to Jershon. They took it up there. Remember, the Ammonites had vacated because they wouldn’t fight, so they left it empty as a field of fire. But the Zoramites were driven out. They weren’t Ammonites, so they took up arms there and were ready to defend it. Now things are being lined up, and this is what happened.

Alma was grieved about the contentions. Is this going to be the good guys against the bad guys again? Don’t fool yourself; they are equally bad. They are ready for war when that happens, he says here. “Now Alma, being grieved for the iniquity of his people, yea for the wars, and the bloodshed, and the contentions which were among them; and having been to declare the word, among all the people in every city [he made a survey of the whole nation]; and seeing that the hearts of the people began to wax hard, and that they began to be offended because of the strictness of the word [remember Alma was always very strict], his heart was exceedingly sorrowful.” The people were spoiling for war, too.

The time is definitely up now. There’s a complete change of pace in the next chapters. We have Alma to his sons, which are marvelous discourses preceding the war. They are really
great things. What character sketches of each type of boy! Helaman was a great guy. Shiblon was a prig; he didn’t like him very much. Corianton was a wild guy, but his father had a sneaking likeness for his youngest son because he was the same sort of playboy that he had been. [There are] interesting character studies in these next three chapters.
TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

HUGH NIBLEY

Semester 2, Lecture 56
Alma 36–41
Alma Addresses His Sons

Now we have come to Alma’s addresses to his three sons. Each is a very different character. This has very important things to say for us in chapter 36. In verse 8 he tells about when the angel appeared and said to him some peculiar Semitic [expressions]. This is the Semitic threat or warning to a child, “If thou wilt of thyself be destroyed, seek no more to destroy the church of God.” Doesn’t he mean “If you don’t want to be destroyed, seek no more to destroy the church of God.” No, in the Semitic language you have to say it this way, because he repeats the very same thing. In Hebrew you say to a child, “Don’t do that if you want to get spanked.” That’s the way you say it. We would say, “Do that and you’ll get spanked,” but they say, “Don’t do that if you want to get spanked.” It sounds contradictory to us, but that is the normal way. That’s how you have to put it. That’s the way it is put here, and it catches you right off. It’s a very proper Semitic warning here.

For three days and nights he couldn’t open his mouth; he was utterly paralyzed. Then there’s another contradiction in verse 11. “And the angel spake more things unto me, which were heard by my brethren, but I did not hear them.” Well, why is the angel talking to him and he didn’t hear him? The others heard him. Again, this is a common thing. He is going to find out about it anyway. Why to the unhearkening? Well, it happens. Teachers and first sergeants do this often. They bawl out some “airhead” that they know will pay no attention to them whatever, but it goes for the rest of the platoon. Everybody knows it’s for them, and it’s the same thing here. Alma is going to get a real working over here, but the rest of them have to have their share of it, and this is what they get. This is what is given to them here, the part he doesn’t hear. But he is going to get the full treatment presently. So it is for their benefit because the others were doing it along with him. There was quite a crowd of them. It had to turn the tide. But he fell to the earth absolutely in a stroke and heard no more. He was “racked with eternal torment, . . . racked with all my sins. Yea, I did remember all my sins and iniquities.” Well, we have heard this phenomenon—my whole life flashed before me. This happens; many people have told us that. With what he had been up to now, he knew why he was being hit. He had been brought up properly and knew what he should have done. He couldn’t have suffered more.

Verse 14: “Yea, and I had murdered many of his children [remember, the Ammonites always talked of their battles as murders], or rather led them away unto destruction.” This is the Mahan principle: “I am master of this great secret that I can murder and get gain.” You notice it is the violation of life, the equivalence of murder. Life, like glory, has endless degrees. To curtail life, to warp life, to defile it, to despoil it, to confine it is to destroy it. If you lock a person up all his days for your own purpose, you keep him enslaved. This is very common to make yourself rich. You’re murdering to get gain is what you’re doing. You see, you are depriving people of life. You are curtailing it and shortening it; you’ve wrecked its quality, etc. This happens with almost any kind of gain. Any larger type of gain does require destruction of life. You must convert life into property—whether it is
the process of extracting the goods from nature (we don’t want to get off the track here),
or whether it is the process of manufacturing them, where we don’t have sufficient
inspection and sufficient care. We shorten life because of all sorts of poisonous substances
in the air [and people] inhaling this, that, and the other. Then the product comes out, and
it probably has preservatives and things like that in it. This sort of thing is very common.
At every process you jeopardize life and destroy its quality, length and other things. We
don’t want to dwell on that right now.

Alma said, “The very thought of coming into the presence of my God did rack my soul
with inexpressible horror. Oh, thought I, that I could be banished and become extinct, . . .
that I might not be brought to stand in the presence of my God, to be judged of my
deeds.” Now isn’t it interesting that the most desirable thing, the thing everybody wants
more than anything else is finally to return to the presence of God and stand in his
presence. And the thing we dread more than anything else is to return to the presence of
God and stand in his presence. It’s the worst thing that could possibly happen to you, to
have to face God. As we were told earlier, you would rather have the rocks and the
mountains fall on you—anything but that. Yet that’s the thing we want to return to
eventually and be worthy of. We have a long way to go between now and then. Don’t
even think about becoming gods and that sort of thing for a long time to come. That’s
way down the road, I assure you. But he wanted to become extinct. Here’s your choice,
and to this “favor” you must come. Remember, Hamlet says this: “Go tell my lady, let her
paint an inch thick, to this favor she must come. Let her laugh at that.” He is holding up
the skull of Yorick, you know. You have your choice of coming to extinction, coming to
nothing, just as dead as any insect, or having to stand in the presence of God. That’s the
choice we have. Most people prefer extinction. He would prefer extinction; he doesn’t
want to think or talk about the other, and yet it is so much wiser and so much better here.

These are the two possibilities. Which is the more likely? That we’ll have to stand in the
presence of God, or that we will dissolve into nothing. Well, from nothing comes
nothing, but you are here. Which is the more terrifying? Is it the nihilism—this going
into nothing, into the black darkness that the poet talks about? We can’t get off that
easily. He said he would like to be extinct; that’s what he would choose after the way he
had behaved. We can’t get off that easily; we’ve got to face God. There’s more to it—it’s a
big picture. We’ve just had a little tiny slice, and we know it. That’s why we resent being
taken away so soon. We haven’t finished anything, or we never got started. If we have
enjoyed it, the party is cut short much too soon. If we haven’t enjoyed it, we haven’t had
a chance yet. Give us a better break. Any way you look at it we know we are going to
have to face something more and there is much more to come. We’ll find that out. He
wanted to become extinct anyway, but which is the more terrifying? For three days he was
racked with the pains of a damned soul. No more Freudian repressions. They emerge, and
he knows everything he has done wrong. We are much more aware of our sins than we
think we are. We repress them. We cover them over, and then they break out in these
Freudian symptoms because we have been concealing them. We all do that thing. He was
racked with torment because the veil was torn away there.

Then he said, “I remembered also to have heard my father prophesy unto the people.”
Now he was just on the side. He puts himself as just a very indifferent sort of person. He
said he had heard it and hadn’t paid any particular attention. But he remembered having
heard him prophesy concerning the coming of one Jesus Christ.” See, Jesus Christ means
nothing to him, just “one Jesus Christ” here. This shows how little attention he paid; he
preferred not to hear it, but he really did hear it. It comes back to him now.
The eye it cannot choose but see
We cannot bid the ear be still
Our senses feel where ere we be
Against or with our will.

Or as Malabranche says, “Your mind is always working.” At various levels it’s true, but it’s always working. So that means you are taking in more than you know. And psychoanalysis will always reveal that. A good psychologist can dig out things that you would deny or never remember having experienced, the naughty things you would never remember having done. If he is skillful he can dig it all up and it is all there. The record is written. You don’t need to be confronted with books hereafter. All the Lord will have to do is look at you and you will wither. That’s why we don’t want to have to stand in his presence.

His mind caught upon this thought, and he cried out, “O Jesus.” Now that’s actually what he did cry. He wouldn’t have pronounced it that way but Yehoshua or something like that. Jesus simply means “the Savior;” whoever it is who is saving you is Jesus. That’s all he knew about him. Notice, he turned to “just one Jesus Christ,” a very impersonal thing. He had no close experience, no great feelings about him. There was just one Jesus. But now he is the Savior, and he calls upon him and says, “O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me.” Then he says, and this is quite literally as we saw before, that he is “encircled about by the everlasting chains of death.” This is what faces us; you can’t escape it. You are encircled around and trapped in on all sides, as Homer says, “caught like rats in a trap.” You are not going to escape the chains that bind you; you are not going to get out of it at all. So it’s true; he’s worried now. This is the bottom line, you notice—by the chains of death. That’s the bottom line that gets him now.

When he did this he could remember his pains no more. Well, is he suddenly born again? Is he getting off that easy? Don’t worry, he’s not getting off easy at all. We’ll see what he has to go through now. “Yea, I was harrowed up by the memory of my sins no more.” Well, he’s well out of it; that’s very nice. When Charles Colson became reborn after committing many grave crimes, he was asked whether he was sorry and felt he should make recompense to the people. He said, “Not at all. I’m reborn. I’m saved. Those things don’t worry me in the least.” No, you don’t get off that easy. Remember, “Ye shall not come forth hence until you have paid the last farthing.” He is talking about being in hell. You have to pay the full price to get out.

Here’s the contrast, a nice rhetorical turn. This is a homoioileuteuton. “There could be nothing so exquisite and so bitter as were my pains. . . . On the other hand there can be nothing so exquisite and sweet as was my joy.” Perfect parallelism. And incidentally, when he says, “O Jesus,” any Moslem or Jew would say, “Well, why not call on God directly? Why call on Jesus? Well, that’s the point of the whole thing. It was God he had offended. The last person in the world he wants to meet is God. He has offended God. What he wants is a kind person who will feel with him and know what he is going through. And, of course, that’s the Lord, that’s Christ. He descended below all things. He suffered all these things, so he knows. Alma appeals to the one he can appeal to. He’s scared; he doesn’t want to go to God. I’d sooner be extinct than have to face him [he feels]. But there is Jesus; he will get me out. He is the Savior—he knows. So he appeals to him, and then his work is really beginning. But just as nothing was so exquisite and bitter as that all was lost, you see, [so also] there’s the great discovery that nothing is lost. He can
be saved after all. Then like Lehi (this is actually quoted from Lehi) he has a very interesting vision at various levels. “Yea, methought I saw [because it was timeless here, he is going to tell us], even as our father Lehi saw, God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels, in the attitude of singing and praising their God.”

That is a standard, recurrent scenario. I have at least twenty very important, very early apocalyptic writings, like 3 Enoch, about a person who repents, is caught away, and sees God sitting on this throne surrounded by the concourses of angels singing their hymns. He comes back and then teaches his children. It’s a standard scenario, and it’s something that really happens. It happens here; it’s picked right up here. “I had been born of God [see, he is born again]. Yea, and from that time even until now, I have labored without ceasing, that I might bring souls unto repentance.” Now the labor begins, with some hopes that he might yet be saved. He says, he may still deliver me at the end of all this. He’s not getting off by saying, “Well, I found Jesus now; my troubles are over.” His work is beginning.

Verse 26: “For because of the word . . . many have been born of God, and have tasted as I have tasted, and have seen eye to eye as I have seen.” That taste is very interesting. That’s the Egyptian word meaning “to experience anything.” They use the same word dp to mean experience or taste anything. Then here is what he has had to go through since then. This was the beginning of his troubles, you might say. “And I have been supported under trials and troubles of every kind . . . afflictions . . . prison . . . bonds . . . death [all had faced him]; yea, and I do put my trust in him, and he will still deliver me.” He is not in the clear yet; he still hopes for it. He is going to have to pay the uttermost farthing here. “He has brought our fathers out of Egypt.” He has rescued other people. Notice, from time to time they have to be delivered and rescued. Then they go into captivity again, “out of bondage and captivity from time to time.” They keep repeating their follies and have to be rescued again and again. But the Lord’s mercy is extended to us as long as we are in the blessed vessel. As long as we are here, it is never too late to repent. He brought our fathers out, and he is going to bring me out, “delivered them out of bondage and captivity from time to time even down to the present day.” This is the pattern, and the dates are not decisive. And this isn’t all, he says. Always the basic rule is you are still on probation. “Inasmuch as ye shall keep the commandments of God ye shall prosper in the land [but if you don’t] . . . keep the commandments of God ye shall be cut off from his presence.” (Well, that’s all he wanted for now.) But this is the basic rule that he repeats over and over again.

Now he is still talking to Helaman about the great importance of [keeping] the records. “And I also command you that ye keep a record of this people . . . upon the plates of Nephi . . . for it is for a wise purpose that they are kept.” He doesn’t know exactly what it is all about, but it’s a wise purpose. Remember the whole purpose of this: “This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.” The news has to be spread. The business of glory is to be spread abroad. You can’t keep it to yourself or it won’t be glory. This is what the record does. It makes it possible to spread it widely. You don’t have to be visited by an angel every time, because when the angel comes all he does is quote the scripture. That’s all Moroni did; that’s all Gabriel did. That’s all the angels did when they appeared to the shepherds in the fields. When an angel appears he’ll quote the scriptures being fulfilled with his visit, etc. He talks about the written word here, “these plates of brass,” or bronze. They didn’t have the word bronze in Joseph Smith’s day. They are the scriptures, and “they have the genealogy of our forefathers.” You have to include the past in this and the future. “Behold, it has been prophesied by our fathers [which are
things to come], that they should be kept and preserved by the hand of the Lord until they
should go forth [these plates] unto every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, that they
shall know of the mysteries contained thereon."

So everybody has a claim on it. It’s universal—not just one people or one tribe. There’s no
chosen people here. These records are for everybody, and the gospel is to be spread so
widely. With this scripture, this writing, “by small and simple things are great things
brought to pass; and small means in many instances doth confound the wise.” The great
mysteries have the simple answers. He says in verse 7: “By very small means the Lord doth
confound the wise and bringeth about the salvation of many souls.” You notice that
writing is the greatest of inventions, without any doubt, and yet it’s the simplest. But
notice the others, such as recording or the telephone. They are awfully simple. The
principles are absolutely basic; a child can understand them once they are made clear. If
you list all the Nobel Prizes, every one is given for something supremely simple that
everybody has overlooked. It turns out to be the same way almost inevitably, unless you
get into economics. Then they don’t deserve the prize because their prophecy is all fouled
up anyway. They introduced economics later on, you know, but I’m talking about the
prize in physics, etc. They are simple. The principle of the computer is shockingly simple;
it’s just the one-two. That’s all it is. Once they realize that, things really begin to work. As
Arthur Clarke says, writing is the only means we have of bridging time. Writing will
bridge time and bring all things together. No matter when a thing is written, we can tell
not only what happened and who said what, but the subtest nuances of feeling, the
subtest thoughts of people can be conveyed for untold thousands of years. You’ll find it
all in Homer, for example. You can just live it all over again. You can’t do that with any
other media at all. You can record things, but you have to have expensive and special
means of reproducing them then. But with anything that will scratch on anything else,
you have writing. So things have come down to us. This is all communication; he is
talking about communication.

“These things should be preserved; for behold, they have enlarged the memory of this
people.” Their purpose is to overcome time; they are time binding. Years ago everybody
was all excited about man as the “time binding animal.” We can bind time together. Now
we talk of time in a different way though. Were it not for these records, you wouldn’t
have had the case of Ammon and his brethren, for example. The Lamanites learned of
the incorrect traditions of their fathers; yea, these records and their words brought them
unto repentance.” So the records have great value, but, of course, you have to have the
interpreter there, too. You have to have the spirit, too. When the Lord explained the
scriptures to the apostles, then their eyes were opened, they began to understand things,
and their breasts burned within them, because he was there to explain them. We find out
later in the Book of Mormon, he turns over the pages and sees that they have every book
here. When he isn’t here you can read it, so the Christians and the Jews had the Bible after
the Savior’s ministry], but they never could agree on it. It was never clear to them after
that was withdrawn.

Verse 10: “And who knoweth but what they will be the means of bringing many
thousands of them . . . to the knowledge of their Redeemer? Now these mysteries are not
yet fully made known unto me; therefore I shall forbear.” He would say with Newton, “I
don’t make up hypotheses.” He says, there’s something great behind them; we’ve got to
keep them. While I can’t explain, I don’t invent various possible explanations, although
that’s what science is supposed to do and has been doing ever since. But they are preserved
for a wise purpose. Notice that they are timeless; they are straight and correct. They don’t
deviate to one side of the track or the other. And they are “one eternal round.” That means there’s no point at which you can say the record begins, or a point at which it ends. It’s an eternal round. Eternal doesn’t mean it just goes ‘round and ‘round and ‘round forever. But the circle is never completed; it never has a beginning or an end. It’s an eternal rounding. This conveys two different ideas. The one is that it hews to the mark, not moving to the one side or the other. It’s the best to keep accuracy. The other is that it doesn’t begin or end but just goes on forever in an eternal course. Then he gives the basic promise. They are entrusted to you and are to be kept sacred for a wise purpose for future generations. That’s their purpose. It’s always with this provision, that they will be taken away [if they don’t keep the commandments]. You are still on probation, he says. This is important here. They were taken away later. But if you behave yourself no power on earth or in hell can take them from you.

Then he gives this test case. He has already given us an example. Verse 18: “For he promised unto them that he would preserve these things for a wise purpose in him, that he might show forth his power unto future generations.” He has already done it. He has already fulfilled it to the Lamanites to bring them to a knowledge of the truth. He has shown forth his power with them, and he will also show his power in the future. Just as he has shown it in the case of the Lamanites, he will do it again. So that’s what he says. We are bridging time; we are putting it all together here. Verse 20: “Therefore I command you, my son Helaman . . . that ye be diligent in keeping the commandments of God as they are written.” You are responsible for that. This is what the living prophets go by.

Verse 21: “And now, I will speak unto you concerning those twenty-four plates.” These are the Jaredites. This is a very important thing, because the Jaredite history is a particularly morbid one, as you know. We get to that next time. “. . . that the mysteries and the works of darkness, and their secret works, or the secret works of those people who have been destroyed [notice this is all bad news], may be made manifest unto this people: [I want them to know all this bad news] yea, all their murders, and robbings, and their plunderings, and all their wickedness and abominations, may be made manifest unto this people; yea, and that ye preserve these interpreters.” Well, why is the Book of Mormon so negative? “For behold, the Lord saw that his people began to work in darkness [they have to be warned, he says, and it is going to begin again and again], yea, work secret murders and abominations.” He is talking about the Nephites and the Lamanites here. When they began to become wicked he gave them this Jaredite record as a warning.

Verse 23: “I will prepare unto my servant Gazelem, a stone, which shall shine forth in darkness unto light.” That’s a person he is talking about; Gazelem is not the stone. His servant Gazelem has the stone; he is preparing it for him. Incidentally, that word Gazelem is a very interesting one. It’s an Aramaic word, and it has definitely to do with the shining stone. “. . . yea, their secret works, their works of darkness, and their wickedness and abominations.” Now that’s what the story is going to be. That’s not very nice. These interpreters were prepared for that reason, the whole idea being this horrible story I’m telling you that “except they repent I will destroy them from off the face of the earth; and I will bring to light all their secrets [just as I did of the Jaredites] and abominations, unto every nation that shall hereafter possess the land.” All this will be highly relevant, in other words. Now the next verse is going to be highly relevant to future generations, whoever receives it here.

Verse 26: “And now, my son, we see that they did not repent; therefore they have been destroyed. . . . I command you that ye retain all their oaths.” You tell what they did but
not how they did it. This is a very important thing here. Do not give the formula. Warn them against harmful, mind altering substances, but don't give them the formula. Don't tell them how to make the stuff. Tell them to stay away from crack, but don't tell them how to make crack, in other words. That's what he is telling them here. Warn them about these things without giving them the secret oaths and combinations. “Yea, and all their signs and their wonders ye shall keep from this people, that they know them not, lest peradventure they should fall into darkness also and be destroyed.” Now that's a real possibility. But in the next verse we get warning and assurance. “For behold, there is a curse upon all this land, that destruction shall come upon all those workers of darkness [no matter which generation or dispensation they come in], according to the power of God, when they are fully ripe; therefore [now this is what the Lord wants] I desire that this people might not be destroyed.” That’s why I’m giving this, so they won’t be destroyed. My intention is this. Well, if God desires he can have anything he wants; then we are safe. Oh no, it’s consoling, but it is also alarming. Remember, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!” (Luke 13:34). And the Lord said that just before he said, there is the temple and not one stone is going to be left upon another. Why not? I wanted to save them, he said. God wanted to save them, but they didn’t want to be saved. He is not going to force their free agency, so they brought destruction on themselves.

It’s the same theme that we have here. He said, “I desire that this people might not be destroyed.” This is grim, but they have their agency. I desire it but you don’t desire it; you’ll see what’s going to happen then. “Only their wickedness and their murders and their abominations shall ye make known unto them [which are relevant to us, but not how they did it], . . . and ye shall also teach them that these people were destroyed on account of their wickedness and abominations and their murders.” So there is no guarantee here one way or the other, and there shouldn’t be, of course. They murdered all the prophets. And here goes that curse again. Notice that this record is very negative. It’s a horrendous record, isn’t it?

Verse 31: “Yea, and cursed be the land forever and ever unto those workers of darkness and secret combinations [well, we certainly have them], even unto destruction, except they repent before they are fully ripe.” Well, that’s the promise on the promised land. “And now, my son, remember the words which I have spoken unto you; trust not those secret plans unto this people [don’t start giving them any ideas—what you will teach them is this]; . . . teach them to humble themselves and to be meek and lowly in heart; teach them to withstand every temptation of the devil, with their faith on the Lord Jesus Christ.” And how does the devil tempt? You can have anything in this world for money. You must withstand every temptation here. “Teach them to never be weary of good works, but to be meek and lowly in heart.”

Why does he keep hitting that all the time? Why doesn’t he talk about teaching them to be hard workers, to save money, to plan their careers, to dress for success, and to be independent? That’s never mentioned in the Book of Mormon. It always cuts you down, whether it’s Mosiah, or Benjamin, or Alma, or anybody else talking. These are the things we are after. These three verses here show that they apply to people in a very tight situation. It’s not an easy-going situation. We are being tested. This is the final getting ready for the long pull now, and the test is a very severe one. A person is really in a very powerless condition, a tight spot here. It’s a serious situation when you have to remember this all the time.
Verse 35: “O, remember, my son, and learn wisdom in thy youth; yea, learn in thy youth to keep the commandments of God. Yea, and cry unto God for all thy support; yea, let all thy doings be unto the Lord, and whithersoever thou goest let it be in the Lord; yea, let all thy thoughts be directed unto the Lord; yea, let the affections of thy heart be placed upon the Lord forever.” That’s the only way you can keep clear of it. Satan is abroad as a ravening lion. His commission is to tempt and try us, and he is very skillful at it. “Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good; yea, when thou liest down at night lie down unto the Lord, that he may watch over you in your sleep; and when thou risest in the morning let thy heart be full of thanks unto God; and if ye do these things, ye shall be lifted up at the last day.”

Well, that’s the objective—not the happy life here. This is rather strict and severe, isn’t it? According to this we need help, we need it urgently, and we need it all the time. It’s rather severe, but he says you are going to rejoice if you do this. Then he says, I’ll tell you about the Liahona. That’s a type of this sort of thing. The Liahona isn’t magic. Magic is the thing that Sophists work. If you have the magic robe, or the book, or the staff, or the arrow, or the ring, anybody who gets it has power. There’s a great series of legends about Solomon and his magic implements that were stolen. The demons can get it. If they have it they have the power. This is the theme of Star Wars and things like that. In other words the power lies in the gadget itself, which is the very opposite of this. The Liahona did work for them only according to their faith in God. If they had faith that God could cause the spindles to point, they would point, but they didn’t point by themselves. They weren’t a magical gadget that you had to get. With a magic ring the wicked wizard tries to get the witch. Or the Wicked Witch of the West tries to get the ruby slippers so that she can get around. They will work for her just as well as anybody else because that’s magic. But these don’t work; these haven’t been working. The Liahona hasn’t worked for years, and it is not working anymore. It’s not functioning anymore, and neither is the Urim and Thummim they have. These things work when we need them to work, and they always work by faith, which is the opposite of magic, that somebody else is making them go. God could cause them to point, And, of course, the name Liahona is very interesting, “to God is the direction, to God is the leading.” It’s recognition, praise, and direction. It means all those things.

Since the 1940s a number of interesting studies have been written. Forty years ago I wrote a long article in a journal on the ancient divination arrows, belomancy. When the Arabs would travel in the desert, they would take two arrows with them. One was the arrow that said “go,” and the other was the arrow that said “stop.” The chief would balance them on his finger, and they would point the way they should go. They were kept in a special box or a special leather case. Sometimes the divination was by throwing, but there was always writing on them. The writing on the go arrow, “Follow this one; you should go.” The other one said, “Follow this one; you should stop.” Another one said, “Wait for later instructions.” But the thing is that they carried these arrows with them from the earliest times. They were called the sahm, and they would direct you in the way you were supposed to go. Wasm was the mark on the arrow, which is very important. I’ve written quite a number of articles on arrows, but we don’t want to linger with the Liahona. What they are following is a very ancient institution. He said it was a simple thing. It was so simple and worked so easily that they didn’t pay any attention to it. It wasn’t a great miraculous thing to impress you, because all the Arabs used them. It worked for them. The fact is that we become indifferent to the miraculous. We become indifferent to the miraculous nature of everything. Everything around us is a miracle if you try to explain it. Everything about you will defy analysis. Nobody has the slightest idea what the particles
are or anything else. He says, because they work for us, we take it for granted. We use our crude Euclidian geometry, and that answers everything. We don’t realize that it’s not the ultimate answer. So it made them slothful. They forgot to exercise their faith because the machine [worked] for them. When they forgot to exercise faith, it didn’t work anymore. That’s the point. They were not impressed by it, but then when their faith ceased the director ceased and they wandered around and got nowhere.

We have parallel things. “I would that ye should understand that these things are not without a shadow.” Probably referring to radar there, isn’t he? No, he is not referring to radar, but he is referring to other things. He says the words that direct are the same thing. See, we are missing the benefit of our own possessions today. We possess all sorts of skills and possibilities. Everything is out there. All the hints are around. Everything is there ready to be used if we only had the brains and inspiration to use them. But we are missing the benefit of our own best possessions here. It (the Liahona) would have led them in a straight course to the promised land. As it was they had to wander for years. Remember, eight years in the wilderness. Isn’t there a type in this, the Liahona? Lehi and his family were in deadly danger. They needed to be guided. When they neglected it they suffered. It’s the same way with the words of Christ. You can follow them, and they will lead you to the promised land, “. . . beyond this vale of sorrow into a far better land of promise.” Notice that he is using figures of speech. This is a type; this is an image. It will take you out of the sand. Remember, they wandered in the Rub al Khali, the worst desert in the world. You are directed by the words of Christ. It doesn’t have to be the pointer or the radar. It can be the words from somebody in a Piper Cub, either sighting artillery or directing a patrol or something like that. You can follow words, but you must have trust and faith.

Verse 46: “The way is prepared, and if we will look we may live forever.” Well, we really don’t look. We bang the door shut and then we say there is nothing there. We cut the wires and we complain that we are not getting any revelation; we are not getting any communication. Of course, if we’re not going to do anything else because we don’t get communication, why shouldn’t we cut the wires?

Now he talks to his second son, Shiblon. The eldest son, Helaman, is charged with the records. They come next to Shiblon, and they finally come to Helaman’s son rather than to Corianton, who is rather a wild kid at this time. There’s a definite portrait here of him. This is interesting: “And if we will look we may live forever.” Remember, this is 1830. He might have said, “If you look you will see all sorts of amazing things that you never even dreamed of.” Of course, he was right. At that time they were thought to be absolutely impossible.

A very good friend of mine in San Francisco was a colonel in the war. He was [an aide] of the Adjutant General. The Germans started mowing us down with jet planes. They had jet planes all along the road between Augsburg and Munich. I drove along there and could see these little jets. They were hidden in the woods back there. When they announced that the Germans had a plane that could fly without propellers, they had all the best experts on aeronautics and everything else come and testify. Jimmy Doolittle testified too in the court. They said, “Look at this. All these experts testify that the Germans cannot have a plane that flies without a propeller. Jimmy Doolittle said, “There are five hundred graves in France that tell me they do have planes that fly without propellers.” Five hundred people had been shot down. They just couldn’t believe it. Even the experts couldn’t
believe it as late as 1945, when they came out. If they had only known what an edge they had.

Then you notice that this Shiblon is something of a prig. He is very conscientious. He was good on his mission, etc. Alma 38: 7: “But behold, the Lord in his great mercy sent his angel to declare unto me that I must stop the work of destruction among his people [with himself and his people too]; yea, and I have seen an angel face to face.” So he testifies to his son Shiblon the same thing, but he gives him only a short blessing, just this short chapter 38. It’s mostly a warning against being too darn self-righteous. So you get the picture of him. He’s a good man here—conscientious, self-righteous, approved. It turns out that he did take the advice, as we read in chapter 63, and he was entrusted with the records after the death of Helaman. But he [Alma] says things like this in verse 11. “See that ye are not lifted up unto pride; yea, see that ye do not boast in your own wisdom, nor of your much strength.” He doesn’t say that to the others. “Use boldness, but not overbearance [it’s all right to be bold, but don’t be overbearing]; and also see that ye bridle all your passions, that ye may be filled with love. . . . Do not say: O God, I thank thee that we are better than our brethren; but rather say, O Lord, forgive my unworthiness.” See he is telling this guy to be humbler than he is. Don’t say that you are holier than your brethren, but say rather “forgive my unworthiness, and remember my brethren in mercy—yea, acknowledge your unworthiness before God at all times.”

His last word to him is “acknowledge your unworthiness before God,” and Shiblon evidently took his advice. There are self-righteous men like that. We’re told that Joseph Smith never made Hyrum an apostle. He never became an apostle because he was too inflexible. He was too righteous was the reason that Joseph gave for it. You had to have a more forgiving nature, something like Matthew Cowley. In this short blessing you get a good picture of Shiblon here, and an even better picture of Corianton.

He [Alma] has a sneaking love for Corianton because he had misbehaved himself. He was wild. Notice, “Have ye not observed the steadiness of thy brother, his faithfulness, and his diligence in keeping the commandments of God?” So he hasn’t been too reliable. Later on he was very independent. He opened a line of ships carrying goods to the north to make a lot of money in a hurry when there was lots of expansion up to the north and east. He took stuff on barges and came back for more, etc. In chapter 63 you read what Shiblon did later and what Corianton did later. Notice, “Thou didst go on unto boasting in thy strength and thy wisdom. [He was guilty of that, and worse than that] . . . for thou didst forsake the ministry, and did go over into the land of Siron among the borders of the Lamanites, after the harlot Isabel.”

Well, couldn’t he misbehave himself at home? Why did he have to do this? This is a very enlightening aspect of the thing. This was the situation: One of the aspects of ancient American religion that archaeology is bringing increasingly to the fore is the importance of the Mother Goddess and her ritual hierodules in Central America. The Book of Mormon brands all non-Nephite cults as idolatry and does not go on to describe them. Nephi says he does not want to run the risk of conveying the details of such enticing abominations to posterity. But there is one broad hint. When Alma’s youngest son wanted to misbehave with the harlot Isabel, he had to go into another country, or into the land Siron, to do it. Isabel was actually the name of the Patroness of Harlots for all of Palestine at the time. (Not Jezebel—that was the queen who misbehaved). If an Israelite wanted to indulge in unbridled license he would go over to the Phoenicians. The main cult of the Phoenician goddess was in Cyprus. She was the lady Isabel, and her cult was
given to great licentiousness. Remembering that this took place in a Mulekite setting, we have more than immoral behavior here—Corianton could have misbehaved anywhere. But we are also told that the lady Isabel had a large following. Others went over to join in the rites which Alma declared to be “most abominable above all sins” (Alma 39:5).

“Yes, she did steal away the hearts of many.” She had a cult following, this lady Isabel. No jealousy or anything like that. She wasn’t Corianton’s lady friend or anything. She stole away the hearts, and you have to go abroad to do it. This is the old cult, and, of course, the name Isabel is a dead giveaway. You don’t find her in the Bible, but you do find her in the inscriptions, especially the inscriptions from Cyprus. It was Isabel that had this cult that went on. Others went to join the rites which he declared to be most abominable. There’s quite a study that’s been made on this sort of thing. You’ll find it in Chantipei de la Saussaye. So this is another mark of authenticity that no one could ever have guessed. “Yea, she did steal away the hearts of many.”

Verse 5: “Know ye not, my son, that these things are an abomination in the sight of the Lord.” What is he talking about? He is talking about unbridled sex; it’s very clear what this verse 5 is talking about. This is the hierodule Mother, the great cult of the Classic Period in Central America, as well as in the Ancient World among both the Philistines and the Phoenicians. This is next to murder; once you start on this path look out! “… yea, most abominable above all sins save it be the shedding of innocent blood or denying the Holy Ghost.” This is a number one crime. This is not a thing that you do just because nature gives motivation for it. How far do you go is the point. Remember that appetites, desires, and passions are not to be denied, but they must be kept within the bounds the Lord has set. This is boundless. This is when you let yourself go—MTV sort of stuff. Verse 6: “If ye deny the Holy Ghost when it once has had place in you, … this is a sin which is unpardonable.” This tells why that is so.

This verse 9 is very interesting. Many people misunderstand this “cross yourself” as make the sign of the cross on yourself. “Oh, remember, and take it upon you, and cross yourself in these things.” Well, “to cross” means “to check” a thing. Remember we have the song “A poor wayfaring man of grief did often cross me on my way.” When I was going my way untroubled, this poor wayfaring man drew my attention, like the good Samaritan on the road to Jericho. So he had to change his course and stop and consider. In the end he had to make a great sacrifice. He crossed him on his way. That means to stop you or to check you on your way and make you consider where you are going and what you are doing. So that’s why you do—you cross yourself. You stop yourself dead still and say, “What am I doing here; this has got to stop and stop right now.” He tells his son, don’t commit one more sin like that whatever you do—it’s very dangerous. So “cross yourself in all these things.”

Verse 11: “Suffer not yourself to be led away by any vain or foolish things; [again he says] suffer not the devil to lead away your heart again after those wicked harlots.” That’s what he is talking about. It’s not just the lady Isabel, but it’s the whole cult going on there at Siron. They call it Siron, a very interesting name, too. “Command thy children to do good, lest they lead away the hearts of many people to destruction.” They are an example for others. Then we get this old routine. “Seek not after riches nor the vain things of this world; for behold, you cannot carry them with you.” But he did later on. He must have gotten quite rich in his shipping business. He was an important person.
Verse 17: “And now I will ease your mind somewhat on this subject.” Time is not the issue here. You ask why it should be known so long before the Lord comes. Well, he is not coming yet. When he comes we will start talking about that. We'll cross that bridge when we get to it. Why are we bothering so long before? Today we say, “Why do we bother so long after?” He says it doesn't make any difference. It's all the same show; it's all the same party. “Is it not as easy at this time for the Lord to send his angel to declare these glad tidings?” Long before or long after it is just as easy. It's all one story. It's just as easy then or after this time. Before this time is what Corianton is worrying about. After this time is what worries people today. Above all your mind is worrying about this one problem that people use as an excuse. The hardest thing to take is the resurrection. What about the resurrection? You say there is no resurrection until after the coming of Christ. Why would that be? Well, he brings to pass the resurrection. Then it talks about the first resurrection, etc. Notice it’s the idea of time. Don’t worry about time. Verse 5: “Now whether there shall be one time, or a second time, or a third time, that men shall come forth from the dead, it mattereth not.” Notice verse 8 where he says, “For all do not die at once, and this mattereth not; all is as one day with God, and time only is measured unto men.”

So he is right in there with Stephen Hawking, isn’t he, saying that time is just our fiction that we go by. But for us it is necessary; it’s the essence of our existence. But only for us; it’s not going to be in the next world at all. When you are dealing with resurrection you are on another level, he says. You are in a different league. Don’t let time worry you about these things. The value of rising in the first resurrection is the quality of the resurrection, the greater glory that goes with it, and not the time. In verses 18, 19, and 20 he makes this very clear about the time. Verse 18: “Behold, I say unto you, Nay; but it meaneth the reuniting of the soul with body of those from the days of Adam down to the resurrection of Christ [that will be one resurrection]. Now, whether the souls and the bodies . . . shall all be reunited at once, the wicked as well as the righteous, I do not say [he says they didn’t all die at once, so I won’t say when it will be] let it suffice, that I say that they all come forth [forget about the time, he says, whether they shall be all at once]; or in other words, their resurrection cometh to pass before the resurrection of those who die after the resurrection of Christ. Now, my son, I do not say that their resurrection cometh at the resurrection of Christ; but behold, I give it as my opinion, that the souls and the bodies are reunited, of the righteous, at the resurrection of Christ.”

Well, you can read this and analyze it here. There is a space between the two. Raymond Moody caused quite a thing a few years ago writing his books about it. He came and spoke here. My wife and I had a very pleasant afternoon with him and his wife. We discussed all these things, because both she and I have had afterlife experiences that were very vivid and clinically very well attested. So we compared notes, etc. He didn’t want any sensationalism. At that time his books caused a great sensation. They wanted him to go on programs, to give TV series, and make movies. He refused all offers and went back to his medical practice. He said he satisfied himself on what he wanted to know. These people did go and did have these experiences, etc.

Verse 23 is the definition of the resurrection. “Every limb and joint shall be restored to its body [a good Egyptian formula]; yea, even a hair of the head shall not be lost [won’t you have too much hair then? No] but all things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame.” So you sure won’t recognize me when we get back there. Their proper and perfect frame is the way we should be, proper stature. “And then shall the righteous shine forth in the kingdom of God,” and the others be cast out to “drink the dregs of the bitter cup.” But that time between death and the resurrection is the time that interests us. This is the
time that is reported in Moody’s books, etc. This is a time for the righteous; it’s a state of happiness. They are looking forward to resurrection; it’s a state of rest. But you notice it’s not a state of happy inactivity, as it tell us in verse 12.

Look at verse 10: “God knoweth all the times which are appointed unto man.” Time is for us. It’s appointed for us, and God knows those times. Don’t worry. Here’s what he wanted to know. Verse 11: “Now, concerning the state of the soul between death and the resurrection, . . . the spirits of all men, as soon as they are departed from the mortal body, yea, the spirits of all men, whether they be good or evil, are taken home to that God who gave them life.” That’s wonderful for [some] of them, but you are looking forward to the judgment, it’s not going to be too happy a time. “The spirits of those who are righteous are received into a state of happiness, which is called paradise, a state of rest, a state of peace, where they shall rest.” Not from all their happy activities. Remember, when people go over there they find their relatives very busy doing this and that? It’s a state of rest from what? Rest from troubles, rest from care, rest from sorrow. You don’t have any of that. That’s what you rest from. But as far as activity is concerned, there can be plenty of that without the care, and sorrow, and trouble. But the wicked have an awful time. They have time to think it over, in other words. They are not going to like that at all. “There shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.” That’s not just a poetic expression at all. It’s a good psychological expression. They are grinding their teeth in utter futility. If I had only done that. Why was I such a damn fool? The utter frustration! This is not the happy time it should be, but it is too late. Why did I blow it? That’s the time that you’re angry with yourself. You weep and wail and gnash your teeth, not at anybody but yourself. Then shall the righteous shine.

He continues to Corianton about the restoration—all things will be restored. Men will be judged according to their works and the desires of their hearts. Your works may include an awful lot of blundering. You may mess up everything, but on what grounds can you be safely judged? On the desire of your heart, not what you say you intend to do. You may say, “I did no wrong. I wanted to do the right thing.” That isn’t enough. The real desire of your heart is what you will be judged by. You never do as well as you expect to do. You muffle and blunder everything. That’s our nature. We make mistakes. As Voltaire said, “We are made to blunder.” Every morning Memnon makes a solemn resolution that he will never make a mistake that day. Then all he does all day long is make a lot of mistakes. That’s the way we do. The next morning he gets up and makes a solemn resolution, today I’m not going to make any mistakes. Every morning I make my solemn resolutions, and all I do is make dang fool mistakes all day long [paraphrased]. So that’s the way we are. But you are not going to be judged by your works, except in the light of what the desire of your heart really was.

Verse 4: “. . . raised to endless happiness to inherit the kingdom of God, or to endless misery to inherit the kingdom of the devil.” This is how fair it is. You will get exactly what you want, according to your desires for good or your desires for evil. Everybody gets what he wants. What could be more fair? For example, today we have Satanism, where people deliberately choose what they know is evil. If they choose that, they can have it. God is not going to hold it from them, because you judge yourself. If they have repented of their sins, they are redeemed of the Lord; “yea, these are they that are taken out, that are delivered, . . . for behold, they are their own judges whether to do good or do evil,” it says in verse 7. They have complete agency. In the next world we guarantee maximum satisfaction; you will get exactly what you want. What you want and what pleases you may be horrendously shocking to somebody else, but if that’s what you want you’ll have
it. You dig yourself in deeper and deeper. Here is the psychological pretext that Corianton had been using. Alma said, “And now behold, my son, do not risk one more offense against your God upon those points of doctrine, which ye have hitherto risked to commit sin.” He used the points of doctrine for a pretext, as many people do. I get them all the time. A confusion of doctrine, something that isn’t clear, they take as an excuse for not committing themselves, for not resolving to do right, because I don’t know yet about this, that, and the other. When people become hypercritical of doctrine, you know they are misbehaving. I’ve done it myself.

“Behold, I say unto you, wickedness never was happiness.” Why has Corianton been tempted here? Don’t be surprised. “All men that are in a state of nature, or I would say, in a carnal state, are in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity; they are without God in the world, ... therefore, they are in a state contrary to the nature of happiness.” The libertine is not happy; nothing is truer than that. He ends with this strong admonition to him. You will move into the house you have built for yourself. Verse 13: “Restoration is to bring back again evil for evil, or carnal for carnal.” You’ve built the house, and you will move into it. That’s what you wanted, so you are going to have it. There’s not going to be any cruelty. Nobody is going to be forced to go to a world [where he doesn’t belong]. If he went to the highest heaven it would be hell to him; he wouldn’t know what anybody was talking about and wouldn’t understand anything. It’s like that nightmare you have when you find yourself in a class that is way ahead of you, and suddenly find that you have to have a test. You haven’t been going, you don’t know anything, and it scares the daylights out of you. It’s the same thing. If you went to the wrong kingdom or the wrong society hereafter where you didn’t belong, you would be the unhappiest person there. You want to go where you belong. That’s your condemnation. If those are your people, all right; that’s it. So he says this here. This is a surprising thing. “Therefore, my son, see that you are merciful unto your brethren; deal justly, judge righteously, and do good continually.” This is the difference, you see.