

# TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

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Semester 1, Lecture 12

1 Nephi 8–11  
The Tree of Life

We were talking about that tree which is later explained as the Tree of Life. In 1 Nephi 8:10 he starts talking about the tree. We were pointing out the main shrine of the ancient synagogue at Dura-Europos the oldest Jewish remains in the world. Right above it is the Tree of Life, and it has Orpheus striking his lyre, bringing harmony into all things. This represents the love of God. The animals and birds are in the tree, and all are being fed from the fruit thereof. We will refer to that later. He goes on and talks about it here. In 1 Nephi 8:14 we read, “And I looked to behold from whence it came; and I saw the head thereof a little way off; and at the head thereof I beheld your mother Sariah, and Sam, and Nephi; and they stood as if they knew not whither they should go.”

We showed this before. Here’s a typical case of a river of water coming out of nowhere in the desert. Of course, the inevitable tree is growing there; you always find that. And springs come out miraculously, aquifers, etc. Needless to say they are greatly appreciated because they save your life. There are very few of them. When they entered the Empty Quarter, there were none. They crossed the largest desert in the world during their eight years. That was toil and they described what they had to go through. But here’s this typical stream of water with a fountain, the head thereof. The word *ra’s* is the word for *spring* and *head* in Arabic. Like an *‘ayin*, an *eye*. That’s where the stream originates, so when he says, “the head thereof,” he is using the proper idiom to designate the head, the beginning of the spring.

They didn’t know where they should go. Now this theme of “the crossroads” is classic in literature, the two ways. You have your pearls of great price. Notice, in the round Hypocephalus at the bottom are two lines designated sixteen and seventeen. (Shouldn’t I have brought this along? Yes, I should have, but I’m not going to get off the track too far.) Recently, Goedecke has written a very good study on those two lines. You see the top and the bottom. When you reach down here at the bottom, this represents not only the underworld but also the “place of turning” where you change your course. Three times it is mentioned, “Don’t *thi’* there. Don’t lose your way. Don’t choose the wrong way.” *Thi’*, as Goedecke has shown, means “to take the wrong course and lose your way.” When you get down here, this is the lowest course, and you are about to go up again. But don’t start up on the wrong course. *Nn thi’* is the expression that is used twice there. Be sure not to do that. It’s very emphatic, you see.

“Don’t take the wrong course” is a common thing. There is the story of Heracles at the crossroads from Xenophon, and True Thomas of Erceldoune in the twelfth century. He went to the netherworld and they said, “See ye not yon broad, fair road that is winding over yon, lily laden? That is the way of wickedness, though some say it is the road to heaven. See ye not yon narrow road so thick beset by thorns and briars? That is the road of *rihwisnes*, though after it but few aspire.” This is True Thomas. He is called True

Thomas because he had a vision and he never lied, so people thought he must have been taken away. In this vision he saw the two roads—the road of dalliance and the road of righteousness together. But this theme of the two roads you find all the time. When Heracles is at the two roads, on one of them is a fair dame beckoning him on. On the other road is a dame with a very stern countenance, “Dame Virtue.” Of course, that’s the road he is supposed to follow. This is a stock theme in ancient literature, following the right road. Remember, as we said before, Dante starts out saying, “In the midst of this black forest, I discovered I had lost my way.” Then his guide appears, who is Vergil. He was the writer who wrote about the gate of horn and the gate of ivory.

So Lehi beckoned to them and told them, This is the way, this is the way. Come over here [paraphrased]. They did, and he told them that they should partake of the fruit which was desirable above all fruit. He wanted Laman and Lemuel to come too, but they wouldn’t do it. Then he beheld the famous rod of iron in 1 Nephi 8:19. What is the rod of iron? It’s along the bank of the river, and it’s something to hold on to so you won’t fall in. There is a statement in the *Midrash* about this. The temple mountain in Jerusalem has been flattened off artificially to make a place for the Dome of the Rock that stands there today, the great mosque of the Moslems. Before then it was really quite steep where the temple was originally built in the time of David, and in the Jebusite city. The sacred way that went up to the temple was steep and narrow and went zigzag up the side. You can see this in Athens at the Acropolis. The sacred ways always go up that way. It was slippery and it was on the rock. When it would storm, you could fall off—with old, feeble people, etc. So there was a railing that went up, and you could follow it. It was iron, and it rusted away in time. It was replaced with a wooden railing. They had to cling to the iron rod to get up to the temple so they wouldn’t slip and fall on the rocks.

Another example is at Adam’s Mount in Ceylon, the most sacred place in the East. That’s where Adam is supposed to have landed when he descended from the other world and came here. They show a footprint there, etc. From there he went wandering, and didn’t find Eve until he got to Medina. But when he got to Mecca, he made an imitation of the original temple. The Angel Gabriel came and showed him how to build it out of sheets of light, etc. But here we have the sacred rod. There was originally a railing that went up, and it has been replaced by a brass chain that people pull themselves up by. It’s like the ship of Theseus on the Acropolis that was replaced bit by bit as it rotted away. But you can see pictures in *National Geographic* of people pulling themselves up. Sometimes it’s a chain, sometimes a rope, sometimes a cable—anything they can get to make it and pull themselves up to the top. It’s an *omphalos*. Every ancient temple, every ancient world shrine had an *omphalos*, which means an *umbilicus* and represented the center of the world—the birthplace of creation. You pull yourself up to the top of Adam’s Mount in Ceylon or Sri Lanka by means of this hand railing which has been replaced by various things as it has rotted away over thousands of years. So this idea of holding to the rod and pulling yourself up is a very common one. And also this idea: “And I also beheld a strait and narrow path.”

“See ye not yon narrow path so thick beset with thorns and briars to which few aspire? True Thomas sought by Furley bank, and fairly he beheld with his eye.” He fell asleep on Furley bank and beheld a vision, you see. The same story is told about Piers Plowman. In Middle English you always study *Piers Plowman*, a poem from the fourteenth century. He goes forth as a pilgrim and falls asleep by the Malvern Brook. He has a vision of the two ways to go. He is given the choice of the two ladies. This idea of being lost and wandering is very common. We are lost in this world. You have the great *Amduat* which is written

only in the tombs of the greatest kings in Egypt, “the way to find the way.” It’s quite a document, an amazing thing. And there’s the Book of Gates for more common people, and the Book of Breathings—the most important document in the Joseph Smith papyri that we have so far. That’s a handbook, a guide, and a map to the other world that will show you the way you should go, the right way. There’s also the *Stundenwache*, and in the tomb of Ramses III there are these elaborate maps to show how you are to go in the other world—which way you are supposed to take and which you are not supposed to take. It’s a guide; the Sensen Scroll was that. A handbook is necessary. Of course, they have the Liahona here and the divination arrows. You hold firm to the divining rod if you are supposed to be led to something. The idea that we are lost and need something to hold to is very important. There are various images used for this. This [in the Book of Mormon] is sort of an allegory, and he is going to explain it later on.

There was the strait and narrow path, and then the large and spacious building as if it had been a world, and everybody striving toward that. First there’s the wide and spacious field, the *maydan*. We mentioned the *maydan* before. That’s a Persian word, but it goes back everywhere to the idea of *maydan*, where the fortunes of men are settled in the world. Every battlefield, every field of jousting is a *maydan*, where you settle the affairs of the human race. You come together and counsel. There’s the great assembly. It’s described in the beginning of the Book of Abraham—the hill of Olishem by the plain where they all met for the sacrifice of Abraham.

Then there rose a mist of darkness. These mists of darkness, Doughty tells us, are very common and terrifying. It’s funny, the desert isn’t the place where you would expect to find a mist of darkness, but you do. A good example is the worst desert in the world, the Rub<sup>ʿ</sup> al-Khālī. But equally desolate is the coast of Peru, as some of you missionaries may know. The coast of Peru gets no water at all and yet it gets heavy mist. It’s drenched in these heavy mists all the time—a mixture of dust and fog that comes in from the sea, yet not a drop of water. It’s a terrifying thing. This phenomenon has been described by Cheesman and by others. Julius Euting described it very well. Many people have described this mist of darkness. This came and they got lost in it, “insomuch that they who had commenced in the path did lose their way, that they wandered off and were lost” (1 Nephi 8:23). That’s the scene of the first Psalm, isn’t it? The righteous man, as I mentioned before, is like a tree planted by a pool of water, which bears fruit in its time and its leaves never fall off. But that is not so with the wicked who are like dry, shriveled up vegetation that the wind blows away. Then it says, “For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish” (Psalms 1:3–4, 6).

*Ābad* means “to get lost in the sand.” I remember when I was with Professor Popper who was an Arabist. I had Hebrew from him, and I was his only student in this particular class long ago at Berkeley. One man was teaching all the Arabic and all the Hebrew at Berkeley when I took it as his only student. Today there are at least forty people teaching each language. That gives you an idea how the world has changed since my day. Those are exotic languages that nobody paid any attention to. But anyway *derekh reshāʿīm tōʿbēd* means “the way of the wicked shall get lost in the sand.” *Tōʿbēd*, *ābad* means “to wander, get lost, and not know where you are going.” That’s what happens. That’s what he is talking about here: “. . . did lose their way, that they wandered off and were lost.” I think the word *derekh* is interesting too. That’s the Arabic *ṭarîq*. That’s our words *track*, *trace*, *trek*, *trudge*, and *drag*. So many ancient Egyptian and Semitic words are related to

English that, you will find, are not shared with any other language. Only with English. It's a strange thing. English is an archaic language, and we speak it. It's monosyllabic. Almost everything we say is just one-syllable words. No other language has worn down that far. We have no more case endings; we ignore them completely. We don't even pay any attention to declensions. "He said it to my wife and I." You couldn't use worse English than that, but everybody says it. It's horrible, but we're not going to bother to say *me* anymore. We don't decline things anymore.

Anyway it's interesting, "The way of the wicked shall perish," and it does here. They lose their way. Then the others came and "caught hold of the end of the rod of iron; and they did press forward through the mist of darkness [they had to have a support, something to guide them; it guides them and it supports them at the same time; it tells you where to go] clinging to the rod of iron, even until they did come forth and partake of the fruit of the tree" (1 Nephi 8:24). We are told that it rotted away, as iron will rust, and was replaced by a wooden railing later on. Then he cast his eyes on the other side of the river, and there was the great and spacious building. What a picture! "And it stood as it were in the air, high above the earth [the top floors were filled with people partying—it was a highrise] . . . both old and young, both male and female; and their manner of dress was exceedingly fine; and they were in the attitude of mocking and pointing their fingers towards those . . ."

Well, this wasn't discovered until the 1920s at Shibam and other such places in Arabia. I was able to dig up an old *National Geographic* that will show you what we are talking about here. These really exist; they go back to Babylonian times. With all the space in the world why would people shoot up ten- and twelve-story skyscrapers? These are ancient. (You get a good view of it from there, I'm sure; as good a view as the pilot did here.) "These are the ancient skyscrapers of Shibam. Many of them centuries old hark back to the power of the Hadhramaut Kingdom." Here they are, and they are still occupied. All along the outside here, the windows don't begin until at least twenty or thirty feet above the ground. This is for safety, so they can't be raided. But they are high in the air, and at night, if it is lit, that's what you see—a great and spacious building shining in the air. We have some other examples here. With real estate so cheap and nothing but sand around there, why would they do that? Well, they are clinging together in a desert. See, just a few date palms grow here, and this is where the city of Shibam is. It wouldn't be there if it wasn't a trading center. It's on the caravan routes, the Hadhramaut, the incense route. In Europe they had to burn frankincense in the churches, so there was this unfailing market. There was only one place to get it, and that was southern Arabia. That's the only place it grew in the world, so they had this monopoly and grew very rich. Here they are traveling along with their stuff.

Here's a more modern city, but these towers aren't like it. Their idea was to go high up into the air. Here is an ancient city that is a ghost town now. These go way back. It's on a mound that goes clear back to 2,000 or 3,000 B.C. But all these great, towering houses you can see so clearly are all deserted today, yet they were these great and spacious buildings rising high into the air and full of important people. This is where they lived in the top. Of course, that's where it's cool, that's where it's breezy, and that's where it is safe. But you notice that the windows all begin high above the ground. When they are lit at night with their oil lamps, you get the idea that they are soaring in the air, as he says here: "And it stood as it were in the air, high above the earth." Well, these windows stand as it were in the air, high above the earth. They are not really suspended, but they are high above the earth. They look as if they were suspended by night.

They were having a party [in Lehi's vision] with exceedingly fine dresses and all the rest. They were making fun of the people who had partaken of the fruit. That wasn't the thing to do, but the people in the city were always doing that. They call them the *bayt al-sha'r*. Of course, our people felt bedraggled, and they were ashamed of that. But it's true that the distinction between the *bayt al-sha'r* and the *bayt al-hajar* is very great, between the people who live in the houses of stone and the people who live in the desert. They look on the people who live in the desert as the people in the American West looked upon the Indians. They were Bedouins and wanderers—living upon the face of the earth, picking up what they could. So they made fun of them here [in 1 Nephi], and they were ashamed of that. They didn't want to be mocked anymore, so they wandered off and were lost.

Continuing with 1 Nephi 8:30, "But, to be short in writing [very interesting], behold he saw other multitudes pressing forward; and they came and caught hold of the end of the rod of iron; and they did press their way forward, continually holding fast to the rod of iron, until they came forth and fell down and partook of the fruit of the tree [here are the two ways]. And he also saw other multitudes feeling their way towards that great and spacious building. [They came and couldn't cross the water and] were drowned in the depths of the fountain; and many were lost from his view, wandering in strange roads." Oh, that's another thing. When I got these, I would have had to spend at least ten years in the pen if I had revealed any of them because these were secret photographs made for an oil line across Arabia. My cousin Preston was the chief engineer for American-Arabian at that time. He sent me these but said, "Whatever you do don't tell anybody about it." This is the sort of terrain they had (we can pass them around). See how easily you could get lost among these things and wander around. If you have been in the Mohave, you know that's easy enough—or here. My father used to have a big share in the Elephant and Eagle Mine at Mohave. It was a very rich mine out there. But if you got lost going out there, people said, "We won't go look for you."

Here is a river of sand, not a river of water. The heat and the oppression are terrible. These were all taken just east of the Red Sea there going across Arabia, taking the shortest route they could find. You notice it's a military plane they are using, the rascals. Here it's utterly hopeless terrain to follow. (We'll pass these around. Postcards to send home, huh? Having a fine time; wish you were here. You'd be dead if you were.) Here is the main drag, as it tells us—the pass through the mountains east of Aqaba following the road to Ma'an. Ma'an was the only city up there. It was another of these trading centers, one of these tall cities. That was the only way you could get through. Sometimes it is flooded, and you can't get through at all. Here is an example following the more fertile places of the wilderness where you have these underground aquifers, where it has rained ten years before and there is still ground water so you find something. It is like the Denebito Wash, the sole support of the Hopis down there. Without that wash they wouldn't get anything. But these run, we are told, for hundreds of miles sometimes right across the continent of Arabia. It's a vast thing, half the size of the United States and nothing in it. Here they are going on, and they have their tents on their camels. They make big bundles, of course. Here they are crossing the terrible Rub' al-Khāli of desolation, and it is utterly desolate. It took them [Lehi's group] eight years to cross this, and it describes what they went through. We are not going to dwell on that. That's in *Lehi in the Desert*.

Incidentally, here's a better picture of the *Copper Scroll* as it was found in Cave 3. It's a big thing. Remember the idea that the most valuable document must be kept on bronze (or brass if you want to call it that), and here it is. That's Cave 3Q and this is Cave 4 where so many things were found. A whole library was found there. Here's one I wanted to show you. I stumbled across this yesterday looking through some photographs. This was made in Room 35 of the Cairo Museum, and it stands right next to the Rosetta Stone. (It has to be a model of the Rosetta Stone which is actually in Paris.) But this is a very interesting thing. Here is an inscription in Egyptian, and here is the same inscription in Greek. Here in the middle is a little strip about five inches wide. It's the same whole thing in Demotic, showing you how conservative, how short it is. (Here's the same thing in a darker photograph.) See, the top part is Egyptian, and all this bottom part is the same thing in Greek. This little strip in the middle takes care of the whole thing in Demotic. This is reformed Egyptian, which became official in the twenty-sixth dynasty. It only lasted for a short time because it was too hard to learn, but it was the thing in Lehi's day. Everybody was using it. There it is, and note the economy of that. You have a big book for the rest, and a little strip takes care of that. It's quite a thing! There are other things here. (Here are the Qara Mountains; we may have use for them).

This great and spacious building has to do with our religion, of course. We are all partying these days, and we want the expensive highrise and the rest of the things. So many were drowned (1 Nephi 8:32). "And great was the multitude that did enter into that strange building [that was the popular place] . . . and they did point the finger of scorn at me and those that were partaking of the fruit also; but we heeded them not. . . . Because of these things which he saw in a vision, he exceedingly feared for Laman and Lemuel."

Notice here in chapter nine he repeats it again: "And all these things did my father see, and hear, and speak, as he dwelt in a tent, in the valley of Lemuel." That was their base camp; they had been there a long time. They didn't intend to move until the Lord gave him a dream and told him to move. Notice, fourteen times in 1 Nephi it says, "My father dwelt in a tent." This makes it very specific that the style of their life was totally different. (There's a bigger one [picture] of this hell that you have to go through with almost no rain. It has been known to rain once in a hundred years, and they have long records of that, which isn't a very high precipitation.)

Then he talks about these plates, a summary of other plates. The Lord has commanded him to make these plates, and he doesn't know why. But the Lord has commanded him to make them, and he is making these plates to put his record on. There are others, but this is the special one for us. Chapters ten, twelve and thirteen go together, and they are very important. Chapter ten sounds like familiar stuff to begin with. Don't fool yourself. This puts it all together; from beginning to end it is one story. This is the account of the Jews, and chapter twelve is the account of the New World version—a summary of what is going to happen in the New World version. Chapter thirteen is the world-wide version, what's going to happen in all the rest of the world. So first we have the Jews. Then we have the people in the New World, including the Gentiles. Then we have the whole world embraced in this. Remember, we started with the Brass Plates as a little tiny speck. Even Lehi, who was an important man and a very religious man, didn't own a copy of the Bible. There was just this one copy he had to get from Laban, and it was worth "stealing" to get it. So it all starts out with this little tiny point of light, and it says that these plates shall never grow dim again, and they (the Old Testament) shall finally come to the entire world. As we said, it was the Tanakh. It had the Torah, the prophets, and the histories, and the literary writings (the Kethubim). But why aren't the literary writings there? Why isn't

Esther there? And Tobit and all those writings? Because they were not found in the [Old Testament]. They come long after the time of Lehi. Joseph Smith was very smart not to get sucked in on that one, wasn't he? No, there's none of that—just the histories, not the literary writings. There's lots of poetry. The Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiastes and the like are later, and they come from the schools.

Notice that this chapter [1 Nephi 10] is what happened to the Jews. “He spake unto them concerning the Jews,” it says in the second verse. [Nephi] puts it all together here, and the Dead Sea Scrolls certainly vindicate the necessity of this indispensable chapter. From the beginning to the ending it is all one history. This is the theme of chapter ten, and it's a grandiose prospect, the same as we find in those other two chapters. So we'll go through it. The next step was that they should be destroyed. After that they would be carried away captive to Babylon—which happened. And they would return—which they did, of course—“and possess again the land.” Then six hundred years later “a prophet would the Lord God raise up among the Jews—even a Messiah, or in other words, a Savior of the world [this is Jesus; John the Baptist is mentioned later]. . . . How great a number had testified of these things, concerning this Messiah . . . or this Redeemer of the world. Wherefore, all mankind were in a lost and in a fallen state, and ever would be save they should rely on this Redeemer.”

This is the peculiar situation. As I said, there was just this one point of light. The book came into the possession of Lehi, and then just one lone family was to carry the whole civilization, the whole culture, to the New World where it was to last for a thousand years. Notice, the Lord works with very small centers, and it's the same thing here. What about the rest of the human race? This [verse 6] is the rest of the human race. All mankind were in a lost and fallen state and would be forever if they didn't rely on the Redeemer—and how few people knew about the Redeemer. Without the Atonement we are not going anywhere, and nobody in the world knew about the Atonement. How few people know about it today. Isn't that a strange thing? The first words of the Lord to Joseph Smith when he spoke to him in the grove, after he had introduced himself were: “The world at this time lieth in sin, and there is none that doeth well, no not one. Mine anger is kindled against the inhabitants of the earth to visit them according to this ungodliness.” That sounds pretty grim, so it was swept under the rug. It dates from 1831 and was older by far than any other account we had of the First Vision. It was written from the dictation of the Prophet by Frederick G. Williams, and the Lord speaks in the first person. In the version we have from later on (the Wentworth Letter, etc.) it says, “He told me this and he told me that.” But this is what he actually said. Why shouldn't we have embraced that? Somebody doesn't like it. I don't know. The world doesn't like this story, and they reject it.

Then John the Baptist in verse 7: “And he spake also concerning a prophet who should come before the Messiah, to prepare the way of the Lord.” That was John the Baptist to prepare and make straight his way in the wilderness. He follows the Dead Sea Scrolls condition very closely, as you know. Why is he so important? He is the link, as we read in Luke, which begins with two righteous people—both direct descendants of Aaron—Elizabeth and Zachariah, doing their stint in the temple. He had to go just a few days a year to do his service in the temple. They lived in the country, out in the hills, and he came in to serve. He went into the Holy of Holies to get things ready, and there he saw an angel. No one had seen an angel in four hundred years. Of course, he was struck dumb; he was absolutely terrified. The same angel went to Mary. Then Zachariah announced that his son would come and turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, etc. He announced

the birth of John the Baptist. So the gospel began in the Meridian of Times with the Angel Gabriel introducing himself and coming to John the Baptist. It's good that Gabriel should come to John the Baptist because his work was to baptize and turn the hearts of the fathers to the children. The fathers were dead. Then it goes on that they who sat in darkness should see a great light there in the underworld. There was the chance to work for the dead. Of course, Gabriel is Noah, as Joseph Smith said. Who is better to administer the "water works" than Noah and John the Baptist? They are together in this operation. But the necessity and importance of baptism are being emphasized here. So he went forth in the wilderness to make straight the paths of the Lord. This is the link, you see.

Verse 9: "And my father said he should baptize in Bethabara [he is telling about John the Baptist here] and . . . that he should baptize the Messiah with water. [And the gospel would be preached among the Jews then.] . . . concerning the gospel which should be preached among the Jews. . . . And after they had slain the Messiah, who should come, and after he had been slain he should rise from the dead, and should make himself manifest, by the Holy Ghost, unto the Gentiles." Notice, the best people he could come to, his chosen, wouldn't accept him at all. What is the Lord throwing the gospel away on us for? Talk about pearls before swine. Nobody wants it, nobody accepts it, nobody understands it. It's a very puzzling thing that's going on here.

Then he talks about the olive tree on which the fifth chapter of Jacob goes into detail. The olive, as you know, is the immortal tree. There are olives in Athens and olives in Jerusalem which were growing in the time of Lehi. They live as long as redwoods or anything else because you can't kill them when you trim them down and cut everything off. When there was a raid and the city was destroyed and burned down, the olives would start growing again. So it was a miraculous tree of life. It had inextinguishable life in it. You find these two-thousand-year-old olive trees in the Garden of Gethsemane. They are immense because they just keep putting out shoots and growing. What's more they can always be grafted. We will talk about that when we come to Jacob, if we ever get to Jacob. He talks about that. We used to live in Rossmoyne in Glendale amidst eight hundred acres of olives which my father acquired somehow or other. But we knew all about the olives (they were the marvelous olives you could get up at Sunland) and the cultivation of the olives and how they have to be treated. They are amazing trees he is talking about here. They should be scattered. You can do this to an olive to improve the quality. I think there is a section in the book *Since Cumorah* that talks about the olive culture there. Verse 14: "The natural branches of the olive-tree, or the remnants of the house of Israel should be grafted in [you can graft anything onto an olive tree] or come to the knowledge of the true Messiah, their Lord and their Redeemer. And after this manner of language [using the olive tree as an image, etc.] . . . I have written as many of them [these things] as were expedient for me in mine other book." So if you want to find out about that, I recommend you go to the library and ask for Nephi's other book. They're as likely to have it as most of the stuff I have recommended which they do not have anymore, including the most important books; they disappear.

He saw in a vision "the things which he spake by the power of the Holy Ghost." You notice what he is talking about here: Time, place, and culture are no object, as experience has shown. The gospel is the same whether you introduce it to the Hopis, the Moslems, the Icelanders, or Nigerians, or whoever it is. You may preach to all of those and you will find the gospel has the same response in all of them. It's amazing that we don't have to adapt ourselves to their culture at all. Just preach the gospel to them and they embrace it. They can keep their culture too as far as that goes. I know devout Moslems who are equally

enthusiastic in embracing the gospel. There's no reason why they shouldn't be. Notice in verse 17 that this is universal: "I, Nephi, was desirous also that I might see, and hear, and know of these things, by the power of the Holy Ghost, which is the gift of God unto all those who diligently seek him, as well in times of old as in the time that he should manifest himself unto the children of men. For he is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever; and the way is prepared for all men" (1 Nephi 10:17-18). See, this universal now; he is not talking about only the Jews. He sees it breaking loose through the Jews and going to all the world. In Abraham it's the same thing: "All those who diligently seek him." Remember, that was Abraham's great merit. In Abraham 2:12 he says, "Thy servant has sought thee earnestly; now I have found thee." Abraham sought diligently first and then found. "The way is prepared for all men from the foundation of the world, if it so be that they repent and come unto him. For he that diligently seeketh shall find; and the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto them [making no distinction], by the power of the Holy Ghost [the Holy Ghost is free to minister to anybody who makes himself eligible no matter where you are], as well in these times as in times of old, and as well in times of old as in times to come; wherefore, the course of the Lord is one eternal round [this is a cosmic thing]. Then continuing with verse 21: "Wherefore, if ye have sought to do wickedly in the days of your probation [this is the first mention of the days of probation in the Book of Mormon, which is often mentioned, and it speaks volumes, of course], then ye are found unclean [and you can't possibly dwell with God]. . . . And the Holy Ghost giveth authority that I should speak these things, and deny them not."

The first verse of chapter 11 gives the steps by which you solve any problem. The solution to any great problem, whether it's nuclear power or anything you want to solve, is found through these steps in the first verse. First, you desire to know. In the Eyring Building they have how the TV was invented—the first steps by which you get something. The first and most important question was not asked. The first thing they asked was, "Is there a demand for it? Will it make a profit?" The first thing you should ask is, "Will it do more harm than good?" But how can you know? "For it came to pass after I had desired to know the things that my father had seen. . ." First you have to desire to know; then you have to believe that it can be done. People gave up on the atom because they didn't know it could be split, but once Rutherford had done it at least half the difficulty had been overcome. Then everybody jumped on the problem because they knew there was a solution. That was the greatest obstacle. It had never been done; it was theoretical and probably could never be done. But as soon as it was done, the biggest part of the problem was solved. So if you believe it can be solved, that's the most important step. "And believing that the Lord was able to make them known unto me . . ." Then what do you do? You sit pondering. You size the problem up from various situations. You research and do everything you can. You sit pondering, and if you keep pondering, suddenly (this is the only way you will get it; you can't ponder it into existence) you will have a flash of insight. Suddenly you will get the bright idea. It's something over which you have no control, according to all great scientists and inventors. It just comes to you as a flash after you have been working on the problem, maybe for years. Then it comes. So this is the way it comes to Nephi here. First you desire; then you are sure it can be done, the Lord can do it. Then you work it out in your own mind: ". . . pondering in mine heart."

Then "I was caught away in the Spirit of the Lord, yea, into an exceedingly high mountain." Here's the solution. We think of all sorts of high mountains of revelation: the Mount of Transfiguration, the Mount of Olives, the ancient Ziggurat on which the king went up to make contact with heaven, the pyramid which was the holy mountain in Egypt, and the mountain of the Lord's house in the Bible. The temple is on the mountain

of the Lord's house. There's the Acropolis, the capitol, the highest place. You go up to the top of a mountain because people [generally] don't go up on an exceedingly high mountain. The Mount of Transfiguration is the most notable because it is high. Nobody ever went up there. You're removed and aloof from the world; you're by yourself, etc. That's the place to have it. And this is an exceedingly high mountain he had never seen before. So he's caught up here. What we are talking about is another dimension. When you have a vision like this one here, you are in another dimension. All you can do is describe it. He says that this is going to be largely just metaphors to try to make you realize the sort of thing he is talking about. Notice he says, "upon which I never had before set my foot." Well, is it real or isn't it? "And the Spirit said unto me: Behold, what desirest thou? And I said: I desire to behold the things which my father saw. Then the next step, "Do you believe it?" He replied, "Yes, I believe it." Then "the Spirit cried with a loud voice, saying: Hosanna to the Lord." This is the most exciting experience anyone can have when suddenly there is a breakthrough, and this is it. The voice of the Spirit cried, Well, we've got somebody qualified here; hosanna, three cheers to the most high God, and you shall behold them [paraphrased]. You believe it, you are qualified, and this is the answer.

Verse 6: "Thou shalt behold the things which thou hast desired. And behold this thing shall be given unto thee for a sign. . . . Thou shalt also behold a man . . . and ye shall bear record that it is the Son of God. And it came to pass that the Spirit said unto me: Look! And I looked and beheld a tree [now he is being shown things; he sees a tree] . . . exceeding of all beauty; and the whiteness thereof did exceed the whiteness of the driven snow [this whiteness is mentioned throughout the Book of Mormon; we will see it right in this same chapter here]. Notice, this is another dimension. You would think the fruit would be at least orange, pink, rosy, or some tempting color. Nobody wants to eat snow—white fruit. Verse 10: "And he said unto me: What desirest thou?" As Nephi spoke to him, "he was in the form of a man; yet nevertheless, I knew that it was the Spirit of the Lord [now we are using some sort of double talk; as I said, we are in another dimension]; and he spake unto me as a man speaketh with another." And he says, "Look," and "I beheld a virgin, and she was exceedingly fair and white." Why do they use *white*? Well, I just went to the dictionary to consult *white*. I could think of a lot of [synonyms], but they think of a lot more here. In Arabic there's an expression that means, "may God cheer him," or "may God show him favor." Literally, it says, "*bayyaḍ Allāhu*, may God whiten his countenance." Another one is, "he is white of face," which simply means, "he is of good character," or "he is a good person." In the Book of Mormon it says the Nephites were "white and delightsome" and the others were "dark and loathsome." It means *white* in this sense, in the sense of *good character*. But it is the regular word for *white*. You ask for the *al-bayaḍ*, who is the *white man* of the place? That means the "foremost man, the most respected man." If he is *white*, he is most respected. What are *ayyām al-bayād*, "days of whiteness?" They are "happy days, days of prosperity." I guess it would be the *beliye nochi* in Moscow, "the white nights."

Then this is an interesting thing: Here is *yaḍ baydāʿ*? *Baydāʿ* is the regular feminine. (Colors are always a defective form.) It means "the white hand," which means *beneficence, power, favor, merit, glory*. And there are two kinds of men. The human race is divided into *al-sūdānu* and *al-bayḍānu*. The *sūdānu* are the black ones, and the *bayḍānu* are the white ones. Well, that wouldn't be natural in a culture where people are either outdoors or indoors. You know in Greek paintings, of which we have thousands, all the men, being

outdoors, are always painted a dark bronze; and all the women, staying indoors and keeping white lead on their faces, are always white. It's a cultural thing with members of the same race. So we get this idea of the contrast between the good guys and the bad guys, called *black* and *white*. This is important, this white business.

And here's a regular word for woman, *mar'a*. A *hijir* is a curtain indoors, the apartment for woman. A woman is one who does not go outdoors and get in the hot sun. But the regular word for woman is *mar'a*. As I said, the *hijir* is *the veil*, the *har'im*, "the inner part of the house." It could be the kitchen or anything else. It's just not going outdoors, with the two cultures. But it's a cultural thing whether you are black or white—the whole thing, cultural and moral. But "black and white" are the universal words to use for "good and bad."

So we go merrily on our way here: This virgin was "exceedingly fair and white." It doesn't mean she was leprous or anything like that; of course not. This is the expression it was using: "fair and white" would go together. Verse 15: "And I said unto him: A virgin most beautiful and fair above all other virgins." Again, you see the other dimensions. This "is the mother of the Son of God, after the manner of the flesh." That "Son of God" has been inserted. We used to use in this class Wilford Wood's printing of the first edition of the Book of Mormon, so everybody had a first edition. It was more helpful. We got rid of it because it is not divided into verses, so it is very hard to locate things in it. It's just a straight story, but it reads much better that way. You can still get it. It's called *Joseph Smith Begins His Work*, Volume I, the Wilford Wood series. It didn't say, "mother of the Son of God;" it said "mother of God." And, of course, throughout the Book of Mormon Jesus Christ is God. He is the Lord and the Creator. (There would be a quibble about this sort of thing.) When he came down to earth, he still had his status, but he was born of a mother. This became a great controversy between the sects of the Eastern and Western churches. The Eastern church asked, "Should we use that expression 'mother of God' or not?" The idea that God could have a mother is very offensive when you consider [believe] that God is like nothing you can possibly imagine. But God for us is not like nothing you can possibly imagine. He has been carried away in the Spirit, in the next verse, which means he is in this other dimension.

Verse 21: "And the angel said unto me: Behold the Lamb of God [of course, it wasn't a real lamb], yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father! Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw? [notice, 'do you know the meaning'—it's an allegory; this isn't a real tree, or is it?]. . . . It is the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men." That's what we have in this picture. The person is striking the lyre to bring harmony to all nature with the animals and the birds—showering its favor above the altar in the temple here. They didn't have an altar or a temple; they had the scroll of the law there. Yes, this is what the meaning of the tree is: "it is the love of God, . . . wherefore, it is the most desirable above all other things." That's why the fruit is so desirable; it is the love of God. But then he tells us in verse 25 that the waters also represent the love of God, . . . which waters are a representation of the love of God." This is another allegory.

Verse 26: "Behold the condescension of God!" Remember, the world is absolutely out of it. Nobody accepts this, and nobody understands it. What a strange thing to work in a vacuum like that! What's going on, one begins to ask. That's what we have the Book of Mormon for. "Behold the condescension of God" to work with such people. "And I looked and beheld the Redeemer of the world, of whom my father had spoken; and I also

beheld the prophet [John] who should prepare the way before him. . . . And I also beheld twelve others following him.” In 1 Nephi 1:9 Lehi had that dream too in his ascension vision. He saw the angels descending to minister to men and “beheld the Lamb of God going forth among the children of men.” And what happened to him? At last he visits the children of men, and he is completely rejected. He can’t get anywhere. Remember, even the apostles all fled and left him at this time. Verse 32: “He was taken by the people; yea, the Son of the everlasting God was judged of the world; and I saw and bear record.” It really happened. If his own people did this, He would have been wasted on the rest of the human world. That’s why an absolute atonement is necessary with no strings attached. Because if anybody could be disqualified for atonement for any reason, we would all be out in the cold. The Atonement is absolute; it covers everything—even whether you want it or not. We will get to that later. He was lifted up on the cross, and the multitudes of the earth were gathered together against the apostles. They were wiped out.

Verse 35: “And I beheld that they were in a large and spacious building. . . . Behold the world and the wisdom thereof [that’s what the building stands for]; yea, behold the house of Israel hath gathered together to fight against the twelve apostles of the Lamb.” Who has gathered together to fight against the twelve apostles? The house of Israel, of all things. Verse 36: “The great and spacious building was the pride of the world; and it fell, and the fall thereof was exceedingly great. And the angel of the Lord spake unto me again saying: Thus shall be the destruction of all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, that shall fight against the twelve apostles of the Lamb.”

I must tell you about the Castle of Ghumdan. There’s a great epic of the Arabs. Way back in the early days, in the beginnings of the world, there was a great castle that was high above the earth and was full of vanity and full of people. It fell and great was the fall. They still show the ruins. That was the great Castle of Ghumdan. So this becomes legendary. It is the house representing the vanity of the world. It fell and was destroyed completely. There have been such things. In Jericho the DiGianni owns the palace that someone took twenty-seven years to build. It was going to be the most gorgeous palace ever built. The ruins are still there, but they won’t take you to see them. Auni DiGianni and his brother are the cousins of King Hussein and heads of the archaeology and antiquities in Jordan. They were until they were both assassinated. That’s what goes on over there. At the last telling, that’s what happened. The ruins there are very extensive, and you never saw such elegance. They had everything, including a tepidarium and frigidarium. They had the hot, cold, and normal baths rights next to a sumptuous banquet room. Then they had booths for everybody. They even had special booths for the guards at the gate to meet their lady friends, etc. Everything was taken care of. It was the most sumptuous palace imaginable, and they took twenty-seven years building it. The night it was finished the builder was going to have a grand dedication. The lights were all lit, etc. There was an earthquake that completely demolished it that night. At the same time he (I’ll think of his name) had a heart attack and died that same night. After twenty-seven years this is what happened while they were getting ready. So this is Ghumdan, the vanity of man and what happens to the vanity of man. This becomes a lesson, of course. This really happened; the ruin is there. It’s an astonishing ruin—the luxury of that place! But it was wiped right out before its dedication.

The Titanic is another model of the same thing, isn’t it. Here was the vanity of the world—the greatest ship in the world, the unsinkable ship. The richest people in the world were on it. The Vanderbilts were on it and some others, and down they went. That sobered up the whole Western World. We are still sober when we think of what happened

in April 1912. So he [Nephi] is talking here about the vanity of the world and what happens. I see the time is up now. At this rate we are not going to finish the Book of Mormon this semester. But these things have a point; the Lord is putting them in there for us. They become more significant all the time—along with this little running commentary that we get throughout the Book of Mormon that gives us enough hints, enough footnotes, enough points of evidence that we can check on it. It isn't just as if somebody sat down and decided to make up a moral story. You try doing that yourself, and you won't get anywhere. Nobody will; it just doesn't happen that way. There's only one way to keep from recognizing the Book of Mormon; that's don't read it. I know a lot of people that succeed that way. Fawn Brodie, who wrote the classic against Joseph Smith, never read the Book of Mormon. In her copy of the Book of Mormon there are about two comments. When she says that the Liahona was a "an arrow spinning inside a crystal" and things like that, you know she hasn't read it.