

TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

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Semester 1, Lecture 15
1 Nephi 17–19, 22
Toward a Promised Land

Now, we've got the seventeenth chapter, the seventh verse, when the Lord says, you will make a boat—"Thou shalt construct a ship." He didn't have time to scout around for the necessary metals. The Lord told him, I can tell you where to get them. We said they were adept in ores—where to find ores, and how to make the bellows.

We were talking about Lynn and Hope Hilton's book,¹ where they followed the supposed trail of Lehi down here, and they came to Jiddah which is on the coast, halfway down. That's the port of Mecca, where you go to Mecca, and he tells us that there is a branch of the Church of about 75 members in Jiddah (on the coast of Arabia) today—I didn't know that. And they make ships there and they make them at other places. There's one at Yenbu, one at Jiddah, and one at Salalah down in the south in the Qara Mountains—that's where they make ships. It's most marvelous the way they do it, as Brother Hilton tells us here (pp. 85–86):

We saw men carving planks by hand, shaping the keel and the bow with hand-operated drills in the same fashion as their fathers and grandfathers had done. There was no electric power nor any modern tools. Such machinery as power saws, band saws, electric drills, and pneumatic hammers were conspicuously absent; all we saw were hand-operated woodworking, and iron-working tools, and they all looked handmade as well. We saw an adz, a sharpened iron blade used to hew lumber to specific shapes. We observed local shipwrights using this tool to carve huge logs to the desired shapes for keels and ribs. We noted wooden and iron hammers and chisels used to skin off bark, clean up the tree limbs, and notch the ends so the logs would fit perpendicular to the keel. We observed axes used to rough out basic shapes from tree trunks or limbs before the adz finished each job to the exact shape desired.

He describes the hand-operated drill:

[It] was the most interesting tool. . . . A hardwood spindle had been turned on a hand-powered lathe, and a hardwood cap, or handle, was carved to fit over the spindle so the spindle would rotate freely inside the hammer. A wrought-iron bit or point . . . had been carefully hammered out with a blacksmith's forge [these things were just hammered out over the forge, and the tools were all made on the spot; they were made from native iron and they banged them out and made marvelous ships] (p. 86).

See, the Arab dhows sailed thousands of miles and can sail around the world without any trouble. Well, he says: "All of these tools described plus others we saw . . . were mentioned in the Old Testament long before Lehi's day" (p. 86). Then he lists the various passages in the Old Testament.

From other sources we learn of shipbuilding in this area at least a thousand years before Lehi's time. Drawings and sculptures convince us the style, shape, and size of present Arab dhows are [exactly like those they used to make. After thousands of years why should you change it if you have a good form that's efficient. They could make these things with their eyes closed]. . . . We marveled at the shipbuilder's skill. When they shaped each rib of their ship, they carefully chose a tree limb that bent naturally to the curve they wished and outlined the exact shape, chipping away with a small hand ax or adz. They preserved the natural bent of the wood, using their feet and toes to hold it as they worked. As we gazed out at the Red Sea, we wished that Nephi had included a few more details in his account [well, he doesn't need to] (p. 87).

As far as making the trip, we'll get to the journey here in a second. We talked about not making fire, etc. Now when his brothers saw he was going to build a ship, this was it. They thought, we really have him now; he'll make a complete fool of himself. Verse 18: "They did not believe that I could build a ship." Now you'll notice this. This is where all their pent-up frustrations came out. They rejoiced and they said, We knew you could not construct a ship, ha, ha, ha [paraphrased]. But notice, Nephi himself was bowled over. He first of all said, I don't know how to make ship. [The Lord said], I'll show thee. Verse 9: "And I said: Lord, whither shall I go that I may find ore to molten that I may make tools?" He didn't expect to make this journey—nobody did. They weren't going to cross the water. They hadn't dreamed of that, as we saw in the other verses on the preceding page. They thought they were going out into some strange wilderness where they would establish a community and Nephi would make himself king and ruler over them in the manner of the companions of the cave or of the various sectaries. This had been going on as we saw in the Nahal Hever for thousands of years, doing the usual things. They thought he was going to be another "the Star" or "the Teacher of Righteousness,"—the kinds of various teachers that lead these communities. The Teacher of Righteousness was the one up in Qumran. The Star was the name for the leader at Damascus, etc. So they never dreamed they would have to cross the water. This was something that really bowled them over.

So they rejoiced over him and thought, we have him now. You're just as bad as our father, they say in verse 20. Laman and Lemuel are interesting types, you notice—they're complicated characters. If you could find all the references to them, you would find that they have a case going for them, and they are typical. I was just reading something before I came here (I should have brought it along)—the famous Eldad ha-Dani and his search for the Ten Tribes of the ninth century, because he comes across this area and he talks about these people here in a very interesting way, about their temperament, etc.

"Thou art like unto our father. . . . [verse 21] Behold, these many years we have suffered in the wilderness." Now, would you say that they had a legitimate gripe? Well, from their point of view I think they certainly did. They said, And the worst of it is, we didn't leave a wicked Jerusalem. Those people were keeping the laws; they were religious. They were the official church. The people of Jerusalem were a righteous people; "they kept the statutes and judgments of the Lord and all of his commandments, according to the law of Moses; wherefore we know they are a righteous people; and our father hath judged them, and hath led us away" into this wilderness when we might have been enjoying ourselves all this time. What's the point of having all that wealth if we can't use it?

Then Nephi gives them a lecture on the past, of what happened and the necessity of being Rechabites—that they should be brought into bondage. Israel, if they didn't move, would be brought into bondage. And they hardened their hearts and blinded their minds. He [the Lord] would destroy them and He did lead them as the case may be. Now this is a very important statement he makes here, speaking in verse 33 of chapter 17: "Do ye suppose that the children of this land, who were in the land of promise [see, the whole land had been occupied by Arabs, Amorites, etc.—all related and all speaking closely related languages; closely related to Hebrew, too—the Ebla Tablets show that], who were driven out by our fathers, do you suppose that they were righteous?" If they were righteous, they would have been the chosen people, he says. Our fathers were chosen for that time, but they weren't righteous very long, he says. "Do you suppose that our fathers would have been more choice than they if they had been righteous? I say unto you, Nay." Then in the verse 35, "Behold, the Lord esteemeth all flesh in one [they could have been the chosen people—blood has nothing to do with it]; he that is righteous is favored of God." And who is righteous in the Book of Mormon? There's a very simple definition of righteousness in the Book of Mormon, as in the book of Ezekiel. He was righteous because he was repentant, and a person who is not repenting is a person who is not righteous. That's all there is to it, because we're all wicked and we all need to repent all the time. "Say nothing but repentance to this generation [See D&C 6:0]." The first word of the Lord to the Nephites was, This is my gospel that the Father calleth upon all men everywhere to repent [See 3 Nephi 11:32]. You have to do that. And as Ezekiel tells us, if a person has been righteous all his life but he's not repenting any more, he's wicked. Of course, he may have been wicked all of his life, and if he's repenting now, he's righteous. It makes no difference. So, always repent, always keep repenting. We'll see what repentance is later on; that's easy enough to get to.

And now we come to that very important doctrine of the promised land—the curse and the blessing. In the Dead Sea Scrolls, the *berākāh* is never mentioned without the *qelālāh*. The *berākāh* (the blessing) always goes with the *qelālāh* (the cursing). That is the penalty clause that goes with it. If you sign a contract, it gives you a big advantage. You're not free to break the contract. There's a penalty if you break it commensurate with the gain you would get if you kept it. There has to be a balance there. You have to be willing to run a risk in the same thing. If you're going to get the promised land and you're going to enjoy the benefits of it, you'd better watch out because if you don't live up to the terms of the contract, you're going to be "in the soup." And this is the doctrine here. The earth is adapted to man's pleasure and convenience. Verse 36: "Behold, the Lord hath created the earth that it should be inhabited; and he hath created his children that they should possess it [we're supposed to be here]. And he raiseth up a righteous nation, and destroyeth the nations of the wicked [he's not going to tolerate the abuse of the earth very long.] And he leadeth away the righteous into precious lands [gives them the best possible land and the wicked he gets rid of] . . . and curseth the land [the same land] unto them for their sakes." The land is precious—it is not to be abused. And he says he curses the land for their sake. The earth is his footstool, and there is a connection between heaven and earth. He rules "high in the heavens . . . and this earth is his footstool," he says in verse 39 here. So, this is the basic and fundamental principle of the promised land. They're going to a promised land, you see. This is the understanding on what they are going there for.

He [the Lord] brought them out of the land of Egypt, which wasn't their land, and they hardened their hearts (they always did), as 1 Nephi 17:42 notes also, "And they did harden

their hearts from time to time, and they did revile against Moses, and also against God,” and he led them forth to a land of promise. You notice, the environment does make a difference. I mean, the ambience we live in is conditioned by our own behavior. You’ll always find that. When a vile, greedy gang of people move into a place or settlement, it can become hideous. All the beauty of the frontier [was affected by this as you can see] in something like Mark Twain’s *Roughing It* (the descriptions of crossing the plains, etc.), or Orson Pratt’s [writings], or James Fenimore Cooper’s novel called *Home as Found*. The frontier villages of America within just a year or two became garbage dumps. It is shocking what they became. Mark Twain described all the stopping stations along the way when he crossed the country in a stagecoach. There were just accumulations of filth. It’s amazing—the environment reflects the people. So heaven is an ambience. It’s an environment as well as a state of mind as far as that goes, and so is hell. They’re going to create an environment, and this environment is very important. It reflects on us.

Verse 42: “They were led forth by his matchless power into the land of promise. And now, after all these things, the time has come that they have become wicked [the Jews—after all these things] nearly unto ripeness.” How much longer did they have to last? Three more years, wasn’t it. They [Nephi’s family] had been wandering for eight years, Nephi says, and Jerusalem was destroyed eleven years after they left. So they had three more years to go at Jerusalem—a winding up. And he tells them about Laman and Lemuel. He says, “Ye are murderers in your hearts and ye are like unto them” because you thought of murdering your father, and that’s not very good. And then he tells them, if you don’t hear one voice, you’ll have to hear the other. Notice, he tells us the same thing in the nineteenth chapter. He says, “Ye have seen an angel . . . and he hath spoken unto you in a still small voice, but you were past feeling [notice you feel the voice]; wherefore [for that reason], he has spoken unto you like unto the voice of thunder.” If they wouldn’t hear the gentle voice, they would get the thunder, and it knocked them out. It scared the daylight out of them. The same thing happens in the 1 Nephi 19:11: “For thus spake the prophet: The Lord God surely shall visit all the house of Israel at that day, some with his voice, because of their righteousness, unto their great joy and salvation, and others with the thunderings and the lightnings of his power” because they’re not righteous. You have your choice of the voice you’re going to hear. Will it be a good one, or will it be the other one? The voice of thunder will get you moving all right. And so you have the two voices here. Remember, the angel spoke with a voice of thunder, and the earth shook too at the same time.

Oh, Nephi’s passion here! He is really worked up in verse 47: “Behold, my soul is rent with anguish because of you. My frame has no strength [and then he’s filled with strength]. Touch me not, for I am filled with the power of God [now he really gets going, and he frightens them] . . . for God had commanded me that I should build a ship. And I said unto them: If God had commanded me to do all things I could do them.” And you know that people under stress do marvelous things. Once there was a giant bully of the frontier, the best wrestler there was going. He came and started making trouble in Nauvoo when Joseph Smith was walking in the street with Lyman Wight. Joseph said to Lyman, “You throw that man.” Well, Lyman Wight was an ordinary guy, and Joseph Smith said to him, “Just throw that man.” So Lyman Wight took him and threw him clear over his head. When he landed he nearly broke his neck. So if you have to do something, you can do it if you’re filled with the Spirit. And you know cases of women who have lifted cars when they’ve fallen on children and things like that—phenomenal strength under certain stress. Nephi felt that way. You’ve had that feeling when you could do almost anything. Besides that, Nephi was an overpowering person. Remember, he had a lot of practice with these

fellows, and they were confounded. They durst not do this lest he should wither them. They didn't know what would happen, "so powerful was the spirit of God."

Verse 53: "And . . . the Lord said unto me: Stretch forth thine hand again unto thy brethren, and they shall not wither before thee, but I will shock them, saith the Lord." So there's an electric force here. What is it? St. Elmo's Fire—something like that. He gives them a shock, and that's all; it's enough to give them a jolt. Well, we're talking about natural phenomena, but remember, in the 1820s when this was written, who knew anything about shocks of an electrical nature, etc.? They had Leyden jars, but that wasn't enough to shock you much. "It is the power of the Lord that has shaken us," they felt, and so they yielded to him. They go to the other extreme—they were about to worship him. (Now wait a minute—make sense here.) They've done that before; remember, when he was unbound when they were coming back from Jerusalem. They bowed down to him and begged his pardon—and here they're about to worship him. You notice, weak people always go to extremes. This is characteristic, but it's also characteristic of the Arabic nature to go to extremes. And this is so characteristic. Years ago, at the little Philadelphia Hotel down the hill in a ditch below Amman there, they were doing some digging and excavating around there. It was at the time Nasser was controlling things. We were staying upstairs with two other people, and we were the only Americans in Amman—or the only foreigners at all. At 3:00 o'clock in the morning came this howling mob. Well, I thought it was a Mohammedan festival, so I came out and congratulated them, etc., and went back to bed and went to sleep. In the morning they told me it was really a riot that was stirred up by the agents, and they had to send two tanks down from the palace to get rid of them. But the thing is the next morning I went out and the same guys were all digging on the excavations out there. We laughed and joked together, and I asked them if I could take a picture. They said, "Sure you can take a picture." They told me about their families, and we were the best of friends, just like that. They were going to tear down the hotel and burn us and everything else. Well, these things happen quite often, you know.

Another interesting thing happened at Amman. Mrs. Vestor's son had been a very close friend of Lawrence of Arabia. They were in charge of the American colony there at Jerusalem—which was in Jordan at that time—and he was getting along in years. But his brother was in charge of the water works at Amman, and of course there is no water in Amman. But after the war they got a big loan and they put some fancy apartment houses all over with toilets—high rises and everything in Amman. Then a mob went through the city and smashed every toilet in the city. He said, "It was a good thing because we didn't have a drop of water." This modern innovation was too much; they just wanted to smash them. So we went to Musa Bey Allaby farm. We had to stay there a week. That's the main reason we were there, to visit. It is right down on the Jordan, right at the mouth where it enters the Dead Sea. And just a week before a mob had come down from Jericho and killed 3,000 chickens—tore them all to bits. Why they did it, I don't know. But the people were very friendly there after that, though there were armed guards around everywhere. So these people do go to extremes. And remember the Zoramites in the Book of Mormon who were so wicked that they turned Alma's stomach? He couldn't stand them. Yet they were [appeared to be] the most righteous people; they were the most saintly people you could possibly imagine. They said, "We thank thee that we are not like other people. We thank thee that we are a blessed people." And yet he said he never in his life had seen such wickedness. Well, these things go together. Weak people go to extremes both of righteousness and of wickedness at the same time. That's the way they balance the books, you see. Well, we are neither one. We are neither righteous nor wicked all the way, so we

go between. So, they were about to worship him, and he said, Don't bother about me; "honor thy father and thy mother."

And then he showed them how to make the ship—how to work the timbers, etc., as we saw. It's very interesting. It's the natural way; they've been doing it for thousands of years. Of course, they knew about that much. He had seen it done, but doing it was something else. You have to be an expert. It's inherited, etc. After the manner which the Lord showed him, he made this ship. Then he went often to the mount to pray for instructions, and the Lord showed him great things. And when the brethren saw the ship was finished, they were really impressed. This first-class piece of work had more effect on them, I'm sure, than any sermons by Nephi. He had actually made a ship, and it was a functional ship. It must have been a beauty, and it must have been nice to look at, too. He said [in verse 4] "My brethren beheld that it was good, and that the workmanship thereof was exceedingly fine [it was a beautifully built ship]; wherefore, they did humble themselves again before the Lord." That would convince them if nothing else would—that he produced this ship. And so they all went into the ship, everyone according to age (Jacob and Joseph having been born in the wilderness), and they were driven by the wind "for the space of many days."

Incidentally, they also traced the sea routes, and this is an important thing too. How would they get across? They had an awful lot of water to cross. Remember, they go from the coast here [explains locations on map]. This is the Qatar peninsula here. But this is where they go from. These are the Qara Mountains, you see, and this is Jiddah down here. This is the nineteenth parallel. They come down here, they go across here, and this is called Salalah today. And it's the place where you get the best ship-making wood. They tell us about this. In Salalah is where it grows wild. He [Hilton] described the Qara Mountains here as the place where they would have come out, if Joseph Smith was right about it. He says here, "In Salalah we confirmed the fact that the monsoons, which fill the Qara Mountains with life-giving moisture during the summer, also provide Salalah with a trade wind that could have taken the ship toward the Pacific" (p. 114), the trade winds which the Arabs discovered and used in ancient times in the sixth century. They go from the Northeast in the fall and winter, and then they come from the Southwest. This is the one they would follow in the spring and summer. And when they discovered the trades, they could go one way. They were prevailing winds; they kept going. All during the season they would take you this way from Malibar, from India, etc., and from the other half of the world they take you back again. So they could import the treasures of the Orient, and this is what Columbus was after, among other things.

The Hiltons tell us here the "Arab entrepreneurs were sailing their dhows all the way from the Arabian peninsula to China. Arab ships rode the monsoons to the Malibar Coast of India, then on to Ceylon in time to catch the summer monsoon (June to September) and speed across the often treacherous Bay of Bengal, past the Nicobar Islands, through the Malacca Straits, and into the South China Sea. From here they were able to make a quick, if risky, thirty-day run up the main trading station at Canton in China. The trip from the Arabian peninsula to China took approximately 120 days." Now once they emerged from the Malacca Straits into the open, they could go the southern route or they could go the northern route. The Jaredites went the northern route, and they [Lehi's family] probably went the southern. Sometimes blown completely off course, they "would end up in the Pacific 'where, the Chinese believed, the drain spout of the world's ocean sucked the unwary sailor into oblivion'" (pp. 114–15).

Cleland and Chapman, in their old classic history of California, listed quite a number of incidences in which oriental Chinese dhows were wrecked. On the Santa Barbara Islands many Chinese artifacts have been found from dhows that were wrecked. When you get caught in the Japan current, you get carried right along the great circle there, inside of land almost all the way. But they didn't go that way; they crossed the Pacific the other way, and then the reverse. It depends on which stream you get into. So, he says, all of these records date from at least 500 years after Lehi's party left Arabia (the records of the journeys), but he [Hilton] concludes here: "On the coast of Salalah, we believe that we found the end of Lehi's trail from Jerusalem to Bountiful. We discovered no contradictions, no absurdities in the record Lehi had left behind him. Nothing that we discovered in the volumes on geography and history contradicted that ancient prophet" (p. 115).

So they could get caught up and taken across, and that was that. You remember that they got caught in a typhoon or a hurricane. It lasted for days, and the ship nearly sank. They got caught in a hurricane, but I don't know what they would name it. Hurricane Sarah, or something like that. But it nearly wrecked the ship, and they had a terrible time. That was on the South Pacific, going across, where they have some beauties. And also touching at the islands is another thing, but we won't go into that. That's another record. So they sailed for the space of many days.

Now this is a character sketch. They liked to have parties; they were great party people, Laman and Lemuel, you know. Well, they say that. They enjoyed the rich things of Jerusalem, their friends, etc. They began "to make themselves merry, insomuch as they began to dance, and to sing, and to speak with much rudeness, yea, even that they did forget by what power they had been brought thither." Now, Joseph Smith says that rudeness is a sin. *Reverentia* (reverence) is reverence for anything—there is no reason for being rude. We must hold nobody or nothing in contempt. We must never do that because we don't know the values of things; we don't know how to evaluate at all. As the Romans say, "Everything must be *rite, recte, parem solemniter*—done ritually, rightly, and with proper solemnity." In Joseph Smith's famous address to the brethren he said, "You've been acting like a lot of children. We must be more serious minded about this thing. The things of God are of great import. O man, your mind must be stretched as far as eternity, and you must ponder these things in great seriousness and think about them [paraphrased]. It doesn't mean you have to be solemn all the time—nobody laughed more than Joseph Smith. But that's a different thing from vain and empty laughter. As we're told in the Dead Sea Scrolls, the hollow, silly laughter doesn't mean anything. Brigham Young gave a talk on that at the dedication of the Salt Lake Theatre. [That kind of laughter] is not good. Rudeness is a sinful sort of thing. It is treating the world disrespectfully."

Verse 10: "And I, Nephi, began to fear exceedingly lest the Lord should be angry with us [for the way we were behaving]. . . . Wherefore, I, Nephi, began to speak to them with much soberness [now this would make them just madder, wouldn't it?]; but behold they were angry with me." What do you expect by now, after all the lecturing they'd been getting from him? This is the last straw as far as they're concerned: "We will not that our younger brother shall be a ruler over us." So they tied him up with cords, and tight, so much that he couldn't move. And the compass ceased to work. Then came the typhoon, and they were driven back for three days. On the fourth day it looked as if they're going to founder, and were about to be "swallowed up in the depths of the sea," so they loosed

his hands. His wrists and ankles were terribly swollen. But you notice the sons of Ishmael had joined them.

As I said, I was just reading in Nathan Ha-Babli. In the ninth century he went to look for the Ten Tribes. They often did that, you know. The Jews sent out expeditions, and his was the most famous one. He talks about going down this coast here, and he says all up here is a mixture of Manasseh and Ephraim. He says the most notable thing about them is their ill nature and their dangerous short tempers. You stay away from them, he says. But they're mixed with the children of Ishmael, meaning the Arabs, the same mixture you get in the Book of Mormon. You get Ephraim, Manasseh, and Ishmael all mixed up around here. He says they're marvelous at tracking and finding things in the desert, and he says they also cultivate the Arabian horses. He says they're remarkable people. What they're doing down there, he doesn't know. Then he goes into various parts, into Africa and Central Asia—he gets around looking for the Ten Tribes. But down here he's got Book of Mormon people he's dealing with—that generic mixture. The sons of Ishmael breathed out threatenings against Nephi's parents. Then "they were brought down, yea, even on their sick beds." I imagine with a typhoon in any kind of a boat you'd be on your sick bed most of the time; I know I would. It was a sad journey, though, as far as this goes. I love this mixture of metaphors here—it's very Oriental too. In verse 18 he says they were about "to lie low in the dust; yea, even they were near to be cast with sorrow into a watery grave." That would be what Hamlet calls "muddy death," wouldn't it? "Dragged the poor wretch and her melodious song down to muddy death." (If you mix the water, the dust, and the watery grave, you're going to get mud—that's a joke.) The point is, we would not think of going down into the dust and a watery grave at the same time, but that's eloquent poetry. The contrast is a strong, skillful literary device—to put dust and water into contrast that way.

Verse 19: "My children did not soften the hearts of my brethren that they would loose me [that didn't work—then]. When they saw that they were about to be swallowed up in the depths of the sea they repented of the thing which they had done, insomuch that they loosed me." Then he took the compass, and it worked, and he steered them back. And they landed with all these seeds and their preparations, etc. Remember, most of the plants in most of the countries of the world had been transplanted there in prehistoric (other) times. It's very interesting, of course, the geography of plants—where you find them and where you don't. Verse 23: "And it came to pass that . . . we did arrive at the promised land." And they set out there. They were certainly seasoned explorers and survivors by this time. They could go through anything. He says here that as they journeyed in the wilderness they noticed all sorts of things. They knew what they could use and what they couldn't use. They were prepared for this sort of thing. They were literary people, but after eight years of practice they knew a good deal about surviving and didn't waste any time exploiting and exploring the land.

In chapter 19 he's talking about his writing on the plates, etc. In verse 10 he talks about the prophets Zenock and Neum, and the prophet Zenos. It's a very interesting thing. "He spake concerning the three days of darkness . . . unto those who should inhabit the isles of the sea, more especially given unto those who are of the house of Israel." Notice, he's much taken with the isles of the sea here. Notice right across the page in verse 16, "Yea, then will he remember the isles of the sea" again and "all the people who are of the house of Israel," the same phrase. Verse 11: "The Lord God surely shall visit all the house of Israel at that day, some with his voice [again you see, either the thunderings or with his gentler voice]. . . . And all these things must surely come, saith the prophet Zenos." Now, who

was Zenos, the prophet? We have a discourse on Zenos here which we won't spend much time with, but he's an interesting character, Zenos or Zenez. His name appears in both forms. Zenos looks like a Greek name, doesn't it? But it isn't; with an x it would be. Twelve times the Book of Mormon names the prophet Zenos. There's no mention of him in the Bible—we have no record of him anywhere, not until around 1906 when he was found. The people of Lehi had brought his writings from Jerusalem, and they were popular, for preachers living hundreds of years after expected people to remember passages of his words—Jacob and Alma. Now how could an important prophet like Zenos, if he ever existed, simply drop out of sight?

Well, in 1893, M. R. James published Greek and Latin versions of an ancient text² entitled "The Vision of Zenez, the Father of Gothoniel." It says that the father of Gothoniel, the Othniel of the Bible, is Kenaz, or Zenez. James translates the title, "The Vision of Kenaz," though the name which appears in the text is always Zenez. "Thus the Vision of Kenaz would help to attest the existence of prophetic spirit," quoting M. R. James here, "in the times of the Judges." So Zenos goes back to the time of the Judges; between the time of Moses and the time of Elijah was the time of the Judges. That's a very early time, and this was a prophet from the time of the Judges, and so naturally they would have him here—the things he inspired and talked about. Today this can be taken as definitely indicating that the Vision of Zenez is old and Jewish, and not, as James suggests among other possibilities, "merely a medieval attempt at imitating Old Testament prophecy." We know that's different today. The Zenos fragment begins telling how "once when the elders were seated together the holy indwelling spirit came to Zenez, and he took leave of his senses and began to prophesy." And then we go into the Book of Mormon Zenos who prophesies "in the midst of the congregations." That's the expression used here in the Book of Mormon, "in the midst of the congregations." Like the Old World Zenez, the Book of Mormon Zenos is conscious of being one of the line of prophets, all of whom have testified of the Messiah. Helaman tells us that in chapter 8, verse 19. "And after Zenez had spoken these things he awoke and his spirit returned to him [remember that we are talking about the newly discovered book of Zenez, 1893] and he remembered not what he had said and seen. Then Zenez went forth and preached to the people, saying: 'If such is to be the rest of the righteous after they have left this life [this shows that much of the vision is missing], it behooves them to die to the things of this corruptible world, that they may not behold its sins.' And after he had said these things, Zenez died and slept with his fathers."

But notice, he gave them a regular Book of Mormon sermon. It sounds like New Testament or Dead Sea Scrolls. He said, "If such is to be the rest of the righteous after they have left this life, it behooves them to die unto things of this corruptible world, that they may not behold its sins" before he died. So this Zenos is a real person. And the interesting thing about it, which comes in later, he prophesies about the vineyard. He compares Israel with a vineyard, which of course the fifth chapter of Jacob does. And Jacob says he's quoting Zenos when he tells it, so here we have a beautiful connection between Zenos and Zenez. This one is from *Since Cumorah*.

This is a marvelous thing. Look at this twelfth verse here. "And all these things must surely come, saith the prophet Zenos [way back there in the time of the Judges]. And the rocks of the earth must rend; and because of the groanings of the earth, many of the kings of the isles [that's an odd thing to say] of the sea shall be wrought upon by the spirit of God, to exclaim: The God of nature suffers." Who were the kings of the isles of the sea? Well, that's what the Egyptians refer to as the kings of the Cyclades or the islands of the

Aegean. They have a regular title (I've got it written down here). Well, it means "those who live around behind the islands." They use the same word for *island* that we do—the Old English word for island is *Bēeg*, and the Egyptian word is *ꜥw*, too. This is a phonetic sign, then three is the plural for anything. This is a picture of an island, beautifully drawn. It means "those who live behind the islands," and you could say the chiefs or the kings of the islands. Now these are the kings of the Mediterranean islands of Greece, the famous ones: Santorin, Thera, Crete, etc. And these were shaken by periodic earthquakes of great severity, as you know. The greatest catastrophe, for example, in historic times was around 1600 [B.C.] when the island of Thera just blew up—eight times as great an explosion as Krakatoa. They were absolutely immense. Was it in the time of Abraham? It may have been. But anyway, when this happens, what do the kings of the earth say?

Well, Plutarch tells us the story that on one occasion the king was sailing by. Well, this is a very important one in his writing called "On the cessation of the Oracles." Plutarch's trying to show that the ancient oracles have ceased. A famous sailor was sailing by one of the islands, and he heard a voice coming from the Temple of Pan. Pan is the great god of nature, as you know—Pan pipes and all this sort of thing. He heard this voice crying out with great lamentation, and all the air was filled with lamentation. "Great Pan is dead. The god of nature is dead." When these terrible things happen, this voice comes from the shrine of the island, "The god of nature is dead; the great Pan is dead."

And here: "The kings of the isles of the sea shall be wrought upon . . . to exclaim: The God of nature suffers." Now you won't find the god of nature in the Bible. You'll find it in the eighteenth century—it was very popular—and you'll find it in the Age of Reason. But in the Bible they don't talk about the god of nature. But who's talking about the god of nature? The kings of the isles of the sea. They're the ones that say, "The god of nature is dead" because of the upheaval. So here's a very interesting insight. And who says it? Not Lehi, not Nephi. It's Zenos who says it. They have the book, and so it goes way back to the times when the kings ruled around the islands—Cypress and the others. This had such a classical ring to it. It's characteristically Mediterranean, of course—one of those little vignettes that are just thrown in for no extra charge, but really reminds you to check on things. In fact, you see, if this had been put in the mouth of Lehi, you could raise an eyebrow and say, "Not of that time; it must have been much earlier." Ah, yes, Zenos said it. He [Lehi] didn't say it.

Verse 13: "And as for those who are at Jerusalem, saith the prophet, they shall be scourged by all people because they crucify the God of Israel." They "have despised the Holy One of Israel." They will be hated among all nations as a result, despised for despising Him. "Yea, then will he remember the isles of the sea; yea, and all the [scattered] people who are of the house of Israel, will I gather in, saith the Lord, according to the words of the prophet Zenos, from the four quarters of the earth. Yea, and all the earth shall see the salvation of the Lord. . . . I speak unto all the House of Israel." Again, Nephi's great fervor and passion—notice his empathy here in verse 20: "I have great workings of the spirit, which doth weary me even that all my joints are weak, for those who are at Jerusalem; for had not the Lord been merciful, to show unto me concerning them, even as he had the prophets of old, I should have perished also."

And they knew these things concerning this because they were written on the Brass Plates. "I did read many things unto them" that they might know what had happened in the past. And then this important statement in verse 23: "And I did read many things

unto them that were written in the book of Moses; but that I might more fully persuade them to believe in the Lord their Redeemer I did read unto them that which was written by the prophet Isaiah; for I did liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning.” And then what follows are two chapters quoted right from Isaiah, but not word for word. In this book I just read from we have a section on Isaiah. We won’t need to linger on it now.

Toward the close of his book, Nephi quotes two chapters (48 and 49) of Isaiah in full. This would indeed be a daring thing for a forger to do. Imagine, to include two whole pages, two whole chapters of the Bible in an attempt to fool the Bible-reading public. Well, you’re not going to get away with that. Everybody would recognize that for what it was, wouldn’t they, right off? If the author of the Book of Mormon was an imposter, his attempts to deceive are prodigiously artless here. But the Book of Mormon follows the language of the King James Bible only as far as the latter conveys the correct meaning of the original. So far is Nephi’s translation from being a slavish repetition of our Bible that there is hardly a single verse that is identical in the two translations. Most of the changes are minor, but they are there and they are important because we have the Septuagint to check them. And so we’ve given a number of sections the way they’re quoted in the Book of Mormon in Isaiah and in the Septuagint, and the Book of Mormon is closest to the Septuagint, which is actually over a thousand years older than the Hebrew text, the Masoretic text. That was until the first discovery came along with the Serek Scroll at Qumran was a complete text of Isaiah, a thousand years older than any Hebrew text of Isaiah known before. Then we could compare it and see how well it had survived and how well it has been copied. Miraculously well. There are 3,000 different readings, but they’re small readings—different punctuation, ways of expressing things, endings, etc., They are there; it’s not the same thing. It’s the same as the way it’s quoted here. Almost every verse has little changes in it. There are some verses that have some important changes, and they’re significant ones.

Notice: “I did liken all scriptures unto us that it might be for our profit and learning” because Isaiah’s talking to them as well as he’s talking to us. Remember, we talked about the recurrent scenario, and that’s what we have here—the key to the Book of Mormon. Their history is really our history. We are all taking the same standard test, talking the same terms, etc. The props change, the scene changes, the background changes, the sets and the technology change—but the issues are always the same. It’s a test. We’re all trying to qualify for the same job, the same future employment—to rule and reign in the House of Israel. So it applies to us just as much as it does to them. That’s why Isaiah is so alive today. He said he knew they were very treacherous. He just bawls Israel out, etc.

I’m going to skip these two chapters of Isaiah. Let’s come to chapter 22, when the brethren ask him what these things mean that Isaiah talks about. Notice they say in 1 Nephi 22:1, “What meaneth these things which ye have read?” Aren’t they just spiritual? We’re not going to be bound by them; these are just spiritual. This is always the way to weasel out of a situation. This is just spiritual. I’ll just pay a spiritual tithe; that’s the important thing. He says, No, they’re both. In the second verse he says, “by the spirit are all things made known unto the prophets, which shall come upon the children of men according to the flesh [it will be literal]. Wherefore, the things of which I have [spoken and] read are things pertaining to things both temporal and spiritual; for it appears that the house of Israel, sooner or later, will be scattered upon all the face of the earth, and also among all nations [notice a complicated ethnic picture too]. . . . And they are scattered to and fro on the islands of the sea.” As I was saying about Eldad ha-Dani, that includes the

Ten Tribes, you see. Well, they had already been scattered. They were scattered in the earlier times, 720 [B.C.] when Israel fell to the Assyrians. But then the rest of them are all scattered. They continue.

Verse 5: “And also concerning all those who shall hereafter be scattered and be confounded [confounded means mixed up together with other people], because of the Holy One of Israel; for against him will they harden their hearts; wherefore they shall be scattered with all nations and shall be hated of all men.” Well, you know what happened. You know about the Holocaust and how many times that sort of thing has happened. Two thousand years of that—no people ever had to suffer like that. Then they will be nursed by the Gentiles [verse 6] “Their daughters have been carried upon their shoulders” and given their support. It’s a very interesting thing. When it speaks of their daughters, he says they’re speaking of temporal things. Now the interesting thing is that these Jewish girls married princes, kings, and dukes all over. They’re such fascinating women, as you know. They’re marvelous. There’s something about not just a Jewish mama, but a Jewish girl. They have such intelligence, such verve, such dash, such industry. Well, you know the story of Sarah and the King of Persia, etc. It’s a story that’s widespread. You find this everywhere. There’s the story of Judith and Holofernes, a great classic on that subject. And you find in *The Merchant of Venice* that the beautiful daughter, Jessica, marries (what’s his name) one of the heroes of the play. He says “Jessica, look how the floor of heaven is paved over.” But she was a marvelous gal, you see. And Shylock goes through the streets saying, “Oh my daughter, my ducats, my daughter, my ducats.” Which does he miss the most? But their daughters had a great appeal, and so I think that maybe slipped in here.

Verse 6: “It meaneth us in the days to come [so there are specific references here], and also all our *brethren* who are of the house of Israel.” And there shall be “a mighty nation among the Gentiles upon the face of this land; and by them shall our seed be scattered. And after our seed is scattered the Lord God will proceed to do a marvelous work among the Gentiles [it’s likened unto their being nourished by the Gentiles]. And [the Lord] is going to keep the promise to Abraham that “in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.” And they can’t be blessed [without help] because they can’t save themselves. You remember, they’re supposed to be reduced to almost nothing at all. They will not survive at all, chapter 25 of Matthew says, “unless the time is cut short in righteousness.” There would be none of them left. They didn’t have a chance if the Lord didn’t intervene, and so he says they “cannot be blessed unless he shall make bare his arm in the eyes of the nations [He shall intervene with force in the eyes of the nations]. Wherefore, the Lord God will proceed to make bare his arm in the eyes of all the nations.” This is what’s going on here. When everything is going downhill, men do not have control. They cannot reverse the trend—God must show his arm then. And then “he will bring them again out of captivity [no one knows who they are, notice] and they shall be gathered together to the lands of their inheritance [plural—not just Israel, the lands of their inheritance]; and they shall be brought out of obscurity and out of darkness.” Who knows where they are? So don’t argue about where the Ten Tribes are.

As to the abominable church which has rule over the whole earth: Elsewhere it says that, and here it says, “the whore of all the earth.” Now no one church beguiles the whole world, the whole earth. This, as we’ve seen, is the collective, as far as that goes. Verse 14: “And every nation which shall war against thee, O house of Israel, shall be turned one against another [well, of course the Arabs fight each other, the European nations fight each other, everybody fights each other]. . . . All that fight against Zion shall be destroyed.” Now the point is, Zion is not an achievement. Zion is a project here, and there is no Zion. Zion is

not on the earth now. We do not have one heart and one mind and no poor among us. That's far from the case. And, there are those who oppose it. There are those who use the name of *Zion* as a sales gimmick, very commonly. Then there are those who are the most dedicated enemies of the Church—those who have kept the real literature going—from E. D. Howe and Chandler down to Fawn Brodie. They've not been Romanists, members of the Roman [Catholic] Church. The great opposition to the Church, the Missouri mobs etc., were all fundamentalists. Verse 14: "And all that fight against Zion shall be destroyed," the great and abominable and this raging hostility against the Church.

And then comes the first vision. Verse 16: "For the time soon cometh [after that] that the fulness of the wrath of God shall be poured out upon all the children of men; for he will not suffer that the wicked shall destroy the righteous. Wherefore, he will preserve the righteous by his power [and we don't know why, but here he talks about something], even if it so be that the fullness of his wrath must come, and the righteous be preserved, even unto the destruction of their enemies by fire." He doesn't refer to the sword at all in the Book of Mormon. How many times? About twenty—eight times he refers to the destruction, and it is always by fire, and in these terms. "Wherefore, the righteous need not fear; for thus saith the prophet, they shall be saved, even if it so be as by fire." What's that? A counter fire. What is it? Will the wicked destroy each other by fire and thus save the righteous? "Behold, my brethren, I say unto you these things must shortly come." Shortly after Nephi speaking? No. Shortly after the thing described in the verse 8 above here, where he says, "And after our seed is scattered, the Lord God will proceed to do a marvelous work among the Gentiles." Then, you see. Shortly after that time will come "fire, and a vapor of smoke must come; and it must needs be upon the face of this earth [see, we find no mention of the sword here; it's covered with a vapor of smoke]; and it cometh unto men according to the flesh [I'm not talking about a spiritual fire]. If it so be that they will harden their hearts against the Holy One of Israel."

This is an unimaginable situation. How could any smoke cover the whole earth? What kind of a thing would that be? Wars were very well contained up until now; this is something else. And now the whole seas incarnadine are polluted. Verse 19: "For behold, the righteous shall not perish." Now this is the only possible defense. The righteous shall not perish. Repent! That's the guarantee. We don't know how it's going to be done, but the Lord says he will manage it. You just trust him and trust righteousness, and don't put your trust in the arm of flesh. Notice verse 22: "And the righteous need not fear, for they are those who shall not be confounded. But it is the kingdom of the devil." And then he talks about the four things that make our world, our day. The great abomination is a composite here, you see, when he talks about the church itself. "For the time speedily shall come that all churches." Notice the destruction includes not just one church but all churches. The great and abominable includes all churches that have this, the four things that we all set our hearts on today. Notice what they are: Gain and power and popularity and the lusts of the flesh. Those are the four things. That's your prime-time mix. These are our role models today, because they have these things, the things we like to watch. We like to see the wealth and the corruption and the crime and the violence, etc., because the things we covet are gain, first of all, and then power. The power gives the money, and the money gives the power. Then you have to be popular—that's an important thing, if you're going to go into business. Then, of course, you do it all, and you have your private life, which is not so private. It's terribly public, I guess. So, the kingdom of the devil. "They are those who must be consumed as stubble." There you are, that burning of stubble again. That makes me nervous.

Well, let's finish the book now. Verse 24: "The Holy One of Israel must reign in dominion, and might, and power, and great glory. And he gathered his children from the four quarters of the earth; and he numbereth his sheep, and they know him . . . and because of the righteousness of his people [the only thing that will save them—the righteousness of his people], Satan has no power; wherefore he cannot be loosed for the space of many years, for he hath no power over the hearts of the people [this is Satan's battleground, their hearts, and the one effective weapon against the forces of evil we talk about is righteousness; you don't go back and fight them, etc.]. . . . But, behold, all nations [this phrase occurs ninety times in the Book of Mormon, the importance of bringing all nations into play; it isn't just for one limited group, or one special tribe, or a chosen people, or church, or anything like that—or church] kindreds, tongues, and people shall dwell safely in the Holy One of Israel if it so be that they will repent." It doesn't say necessarily they are members of the church or anything like that, but they shall dwell and they shall be safe in the Holy One of Israel if they will repent—all nations. So the Church is not provincial and it's not ethnic.

Here also all the churches [are mentioned], and this has become very characteristic of all churches, hasn't it? This doesn't sound like a respectful way to talk about churches. But they're certainly after gain, they're certainly after power, and they certainly want to become popular because you don't get gain unless you're popular. That's your numbers, you see—people. And what do they do when they get rich? Invariably they become corrupt. We've seen that—not just the Bakkers but a lot of other people.

Well, I see the time is up now. We do the second book now, and he really breaks loose. The great book is the second book of Nephi. That is where we really get something, and so we don't want to rush these things.

1. Lynn M. and Hope Hilton, *In Search of Lehi's Trail* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976). Page numbers in parentheses refer to this book.
2. Hugh W. Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, CWHN 7 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 286–90.