

TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

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4 Nephi 1
Zion Society

Every book [in the Book of Mormon] is the most marvelous in the world, but this is really something. If we get stalled in it for the rest of the semester it would be worth it. They're all like this, but this is a particularly important book. Of course, I'm referring to that miraculous work, 4 Nephi. It's an epitome; it's a digest. The whole Book of Mormon is there. You don't have to read anything but this one book. You've got the roll so I can't ask you questions. How many chapters does it have? One. Does it get it all in there? Yes, it does. It contains the best case and the worst case. It describes them, and it explains them all in one chapter, in one book. It's a marvelous thing.

For us, the worst case is easy to imagine, easy to describe. We could all sit down and write very good compositions on the worst possible case in our [society]. But if it came to the best case, we'd all be stumped. We wouldn't know what to do or what to say. And what does that signify about our place on the scale of excellence in the universe? What does that mean? I could imagine most vividly, in fact, from personal experience. All the time I can think about the worst possible case and see all sorts of things. But then you ask me, what's the best possible case that could happen in the fate of the nation here that we're talking about, the Nephites. Well, of course this describes it. But for ourselves, we can't imagine it. Of course, we're so close to the other. If you put it on a scale, say like the Doomsday Clock or something like that, we put the worst case down here and the best case up here. We're somewhere down here right now, aren't we? We have a long way to go. So here we have this marvelous book.

It's very, very short, for the reason that Voltaire explains: "Happy are the people whose annals are a blank." If people live happy lives, what are you going to write about them? We've mentioned this before. Without your crime, murder, rape, etc., you're not going to have any prime TV. We just have to leave that out. Is their life empty and boring? This is the question we have to [consider].

We were out digging among Egyptian villages [recently]. Life in an Egyptian village and life in a Hopi village are very much alike—very stable, no change at all in thousands of years. When people go away, they come back. They get bored with life anywhere else, and they come back because it's much more exciting—all sorts of pleasant things going on, a very interesting situation. There's is another side to it, too. But it's stable and unchanging, and it's unchanging because they're the happiest societies. They don't want to change. But there's a big problem here, you see. Why wouldn't you live in a Hopi village or an Egyptian village, which are exactly like the villages in the models for 5,000, 6,000, and 7,000 years ago? Same village, same people, same donkeys, same crops, same palm trees, same geese, same mud houses built on exactly the same pattern—thousands of years, in and out, go on and on with perfectly happy people. They're very happy people, and yet they go to the city still—and the city is hell. There is no more hideous and marvelous city in the world than Cairo, but they go. Why would you go there? What's lacking in that life? Well, of course, the problem is one of boredom. There's more than boredom—it's guilt, you see. What about your capacities? You can go out to the field and work in the day and make a living. You can have enough. The soil is extremely rich, and they can go on living. The problem now is population; they're getting so overpopulated. There's not enough to go around. It's getting rather desperate everywhere in the world. But, aside from that which has only happened

very recently, you'd feel guilty staying in the village. Why would you feel guilty staying in the village. Why would I feel guilty? Remember what Hamlet says,

What is a man,
If his chief good and market of his time
Be but to sleep and feed? a beast, no more.
Sure he that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and godlike reason
To fust in us unused.

William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, act IV, scene 4

We must use our capacities, but we're not going to have a chance to use them all out there. We're going to see what happens here.

The Greeks cut loose and the Egyptians, too. The Greeks came to learn from Egypt; this is another story. But the fact is that the greatness of Greece and the Egyptians, too . . . But remember when Odysseus is talking to the Phaeacians, he introduces himself. Then he says, "I live in Ithaca." He was the king of a little rocky island and nothing else. Why didn't he stay home and rule? Why was he traveling all the time? Remember how *The Odyssey* begins. He goes everywhere and sees everything and suffers everything. He's willing to do it for his curiosity. But he explains. It is a rough and a rocky land with poor soil, but it's great for raising young people. I cannot imagine a more happy land for that sort of thing, he says. But then they have to get out and go find out something. There's more. After all, if you live in a rocky unproductive soil, the sea is all around you, and you see other lands, you're going to get moving. This natural curiosity is what makes the Greeks uniquely great; their situation called for it.

This was what would happen. Yet, should we be bored now, as if there were only a limited number of things that we could think about, only a limited number of things that we could combine or do? We'll see what the solution is here in the Book of Mormon.

The most remarkable document on this is a Mandaean document. I've decided to read from it this morning because it's very good. In all the things I have ever read, this is the only description of heaven that [is convincing]. The [attempts of the] doctors of the church are pitiful. They have no idea how to describe heaven. There's the choir who will sing forever and the beatific view of God. You look at God for a million years and that's all you'd want. You'd be completely absorbed in it. Well, it might as well be the heaven of the Buddhists. It might be like a drop of water absorbed in the ocean. They don't know what heaven is going to be like. They're awfully good on hell. Well, it's the same thing, you notice, with Dante in *The Inferno*. He can give you a detailed, blow-by-blow account of everything that goes on there, but when he gets to heaven, you get the ultimate singularity of God as an infinitely tiny point of light with everything revolving around it. But with an infinitely tiny point of light, you don't feel particular love or devotion to that as your Father. That is a singularity. But anyway, the Christian fathers couldn't handle it; the Christian churches can't; nobody else can.

But this document does. It's the only thing I've ever read [that does], and it comes from those remarkable people, the Mandaeans. The Mandaeans turn up; they still survive, about 6,000 [of them], almost like the Hopis. They're now living in the marshes and in the Shatt al-Arab where the Tigris and Euphrates come together. The last hundred miles [the rivers] run together in vast marshes, and they live in these houses (you may have seen them in the *National Geographic*) made entirely of reeds. They build temples and everything of reeds. They live there, and they have these old records. They call themselves the Church of St. John, because they're followers of John the Baptist, who left the Jordan, they say. When John the Baptist was preaching by the

Jordan, they were part of his community. You get this in the Dead Sea Scrolls. When the others were driven out, they went, too. They went north, east, and then south down the river, and this is where they finally ended up, these Mandaeans. They have a *Gospel of Truth*, which they call the *Manda de Hayya* (*manda* is the teaching, you see, *manda* of life). Mandaean is an eastern Aramaic dialect. We have their records on plates, very much like the Book of Mormon. They fled and came way off here and settled there. What else do they call themselves? Oh, yes, they're the Sabaeans. That means *baptists*. They're the followers of John the Baptist. They're best known as the Sabaeans. You can spell it with an *i* or an *ae*, either one. They're the baptists, and they follow John the Baptist. They do very remarkable work in silver. etc. But their preachings depend very much on the ordinances. They have lots of important writings and the ordinance of the 1,012 questions.

Lady Drower was responsible for getting some of the plates from them. They are lead plates. You can imagine why lead. Gold is rather expensive, they are poor people, and any other thing they write on is going to rot. They live with their feet in the water. After all, they live in the marshes. They live on floating villages, like Titicaca, of reeds, marsh. Everything is wet and muggy, and so they keep their records on these lead plates. Well, anyway, we have this remarkable writing.

Remember, Paul says, I'm not going to try to tell you about these things. 1 Corinthians 2:9: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." We can't talk about it because we haven't experienced it. But this I'd like to read to you now because I think it's a wonderful thing. They must have had some knowledge to put this down like this. As it starts out, it gives God enthroned in absolute stability in the beautiful city, the city of Zion, where there are no earthly trades. All wear robes of glory. We get a picture now, but it does get more realistic as you go, though. "Robes of glory, girdles of splendor, radiant crowns. All are happy, wise, and gentle, free of any malice or spite or rancor. There is no lying or deceit. There is no fraud. They're clothed upon in glory, dwelling together in perfect oneness with each other. They visit each other, and yet they do not intrude on each other. Nor do they agree in social deceptions, in the tricks of society."

Hans Vaihinger in the early twentieth century wrote a famous work in its time called *The Philosophy of "As If."* Everything we do in our society, the way we get along with each other, the way we grease the wheels that make things go is an assumption that things are what they aren't. The person signs a letter "your obedient and humble servant," and he's nothing of the sort. That's the *as if* which governs everything. We talk as if politicians were honest. If we didn't act as if, then we would get nothing done at all. They're as crooked as a dog's hind leg, but we must have an *as if* here, you see, in all things we do. We're here as if we were studying zealously and learning all the things we should. We're not, but if we didn't act as if we were, we'd never be here. We'd never make a beginning at it. He [the Mandaean writer] says there's no *as if* here; everything is the real thing.

[Translating from the document again:] "They're brilliant in their various firmaments, their galaxies. Every one has its particular glory. They exchange scientific knowledge with each other, and they understand their systems mutually." This is the picture we get in the book of Moses, too, when he talks about worlds without number. "And though they are millions and untold millions of parsecs apart, yet they shine with a common luster. And they breathe a common atmosphere," you might say.

Well, that helps things out in solving some of the problems, I suppose, in "Star Trek." When you land on another planet or moon or something, you can always breathe the air, for some reason. This says that's the way it is. "They breathe a common atmosphere and inhale a common odor," it says, "and they share the same common truth and understand the same laws of science and of living." Of course, we teach that all the time—"as has been done in other worlds which we have

hitherto formed.” It’s all on the same plan using the same elements, and this goes on the same way here.

What do they do though? “They communicate mutually their true sentiments, their true feelings as well as their doctrines and their logic. [You do not conceal your true feelings and emotions from each other, and honest people don’t.] Death and corruption have no power over them. [Of course, that’s an important thing.] They are ageless and never lose strength. They know no sorrow and suffering. Their flight never wearies, and their garments never spot. Their population is optimum and constant. [If it’s necessary to change, it will change—up or down as they need.] They’re not the victims of fuzzy thinking [vagueness of thinking], nor are they doubt-ridden in their dealings or in their calculations. Ageless and without physical defects. No conflict, no competition [why should there be?], no slavery, no jealousy, no harmful creatures, no plants or animals that weaken and harm.”

Of course, it’s possible to find islands that don’t have them. They don’t have snakes in Hawaii or in Ireland for that reason. Various lands are blessed with happy situations like that on this earth. We have patterns for this. We have examples of this all over the earth. You can find that such a thing is possible; it is conceivable. They bring them all together here, you see. There are no harmful creatures [in this description]. For example, it always amazes me in Utah that we have no poison oak. You can go out and lie down on the ground and sleep somewhere. I used to take my kids out. But you can’t do that in the South. There are chiggers and fire ants and burrs wherever you put down; you can’t do it. It’s the same way with the other harmful creatures here, and poison oak especially. I could never go out anywhere in California without getting poison oak; I was extremely susceptible to it. It’s not like you would be out all the time, but I was always getting it. In Utah, no poison oak—that’s marvelous! Is it possible to have no poison oak? We had a house in Berkeley when I was teaching there that was completely surrounded [with it]. It was a beautiful house, but it was completely surrounded with vast, lush growths of poison oak. It was perfectly natural, but it’s worse in the East. All the hedges in the Harvard yard, and especially at Princeton, are loaded with poison ivy, and the students all get poison ivy in the spring. When things start getting warm in April and May, everybody blossoms out with rashes and water blisters and everything. It’s horrible. When it says there are worlds in which these things don’t exist, you can believe it. There are places here where they don’t exist. It’s rather nice.

It’s very interesting that we’re getting ideas of this today. It’s going to place great emphasis on the environment here because that’s important. Heaven is a surrounding, it’s a state of mind, it’s an environment. You create your environment and it creates you. It says, “All their environments are beautiful and unspoiled. And yet their unobtrusive dwellings have magnificent views. Their seas are calm and tranquil [no pirates there]. Everything throbs with joy. Their wants are few. They can fly through the air and even visit other worlds. They are so pure that power flows through them without burning them.”

In any conveyor of power, what will burn it up and cause trouble is impurities. And when you’re so impure [you have problems, too]. It says that power flows through them without burning them up, but we can’t risk it. “It thrills them and supports them,” this power that they can take. What do they do? We’re going to get the same thing in 4 Nephi here. “Prayer, study and meditation [rigid mental exercises] and praise are their basic exercises. Their company is calm, gay, and utterly delightful, radiating their happiness in common with every form of life.” See, that every form of life may fill the measure of its existence and have joy therein. So he says they have joy along with all the other forms of life in nature. They don’t intrude on it at all.

They’re completely individual, you’ll notice. It’s not just a lot of ciphers here turned out from the same mode. We’re the ones that are that way. This is a common expression. You understand what it means, but if you analyze it, it’s absurd. This is one of those things you get in language, you see. How can you [explain] “here there were twenty damsels, each more beautiful than the other.”

Well, how could each be more beautiful than the other? It's impossible. But you know exactly what he means when he says that, you see. When you view this one, you gasp, and with the next one you gasp, too, etc. This says the same thing. "They're completely individual. Each is more remarkable than the other, each more illustrious than the other. They lack nothing. Their dwellings are magnificent. All around them is beauty. They can move as fast as thought or as fast as gravity." You can do that. That's what thought can do. That's why you can pray and get instant contact without any trouble. "When they walk it is with a brisk and easy motion like a ray of light. They live on the treasures of the Jordan [see, they say they came from the Jordan at the time of John the Baptist] and the fruits of the trees [it seems they're vegetarians—back to Eden again].

Then it talks about how the air and confusion of this world make such things seem impossible. He says when I describe these you won't believe them because it's so alien to anything we experience here. "But there we recognize our own potential," he says. We could do it here if we would, you see. Then he talks about the creation. "It was from such a world that the most high God appointed a deputy to come to this world for the creation." This was Hivil Ziwa, who was always called Gabriel. See, they can't give the credit to Jesus because they're disciples of John the Baptist. They left before [Jesus began his mission].

When we say, "Come to Jesus, come to Christ," what do we mean? It's not just a sentimental expression. Come to the mourner's bench, come to Jesus. It's come to him to be taught. Come to him for instruction. It says here the most high God appointed a deputy to this world, calling Gabriel to go down to teach. He is going down to the creation here, but the point is, you don't make direct contact with God, as we are here, God being what he is. We must be instructed first; we must be prepared for it. We must be told what the situation is. We must receive the proper briefings before we can go into the presence of God, and that's what the Lord is for. He is the intercessor. "Come and learn of me," he says. He is the great teacher. He is there to teach us and prepare us to go into the presence of God. We hear these things all the time, but we don't realize how actually true they are. You can't graduate into another world with one step. The culture shock would wipe you out just like that. You can't do that, so the Lord prepares the way. There are many mansions, he told us in all those passages we read from John and 3 Nephi—"I go to prepare a place for you." I'll come back and get you when the time is ready, when the place is ready. He comes and he goes; he visits and talks with them. He goes to one group. He goes with another group. It's rather a complicated thing, but it's all being arranged on a very matter-of-fact basis here.

So the most high God appointed a deputy to this world, and that was Hivil Ziwa. That's just the word *Abel*, the son of Adam who was Hivil Ziwa, the eternally living Abel, who is also called Gabriel. "He said to him, go down to the world of darkness [he's going down to the chaos]. There is matter there, he says. Go down to the world of darkness where everything is in a process of slow combustion [of entropy, you see]. A totally false and counterfeit world until it has been organized in its present state, a world where everything is wrong. Go down there and check the darkness and get to the bottom of the mysteries of material existence so that we can construct something better of it. Then form and condense an earth from these things. Unroll the firmament above it and fix it there in its proper situation in the midst of the other stars and systems. Give them a sun in its splendor. Give them a moon with its pale beauty. [I've left something out there. I'd better go back and fill it in, I guess.] Cause the earth to bring forth all sorts of plant and animal life to give variety and beauty to the scene. [There again] mountains and hills, great rivers and small streams to give variety and beauty." The first concern of God was to give variety and beauty to the earth, you see, when he started forming it. It's meant that way on purpose. We're not supposed to destroy it. It comes first. And the same thing with the tree, that man might look upon the beauty thereof. "And create the animals and the beasts and the fishes and all manner of flying things, male and female, each after its kind, to serve Adam and all his race."

Actually, the ecosystem with all its animals, wild and otherwise, we now know fit together indispensably in a controlled system which serves man. If we start breaking that system down and destroying creatures, saying they have nothing to do with us, we're going to get ourselves into trouble. So they are all created to serve man and to serve each other, too. They are there for our purpose. The Lord has told us already the basic principle of ecology. These things are there to serve us. Don't destroy them; use them wisely as we should.

"Then finally, when this was done, create a man and a woman. Accordingly, the angel Gabriel came down, spread out the heavens, and condensed the earth. Adam and Eve were created, and then their spirits came to animate their bodies. Then the Lord says to him, go down again to the earth and take your two companions with you [so the three are sent down to teach Adam] and instruct Adam in all things. Teach him [this is very interesting, what he's supposed to do in being here] that his heart must expand, that his intelligence must grow, that his mind must be illuminated."

See, he's out here to have an experience, to be aware of things. He's not here to eat and sleep and exercise and all that sort of thing. That's necessary in its way, but it's not the object, you see. We move beyond this. We come down here for this greatest of all exercises, which will give us plenty to do. "Instruct him along with the two angels that accompany you. Converse familiarly with him on a perfectly equal footing—that he will understand what you are talking about, and you'll understand him. Warn Adam and Eve to be on guard against the tricks of Satan. He has a plan, too. Teach them prayers and hymns [again 4 Nephi] for their defense. Command them to marry and be fruitful. Give them the law of chastity. Teach them to be peaceful and faithful. Above all, they must avoid Satan's big pitch. They must not desire gold nor silver nor the riches of this world. They are not to worship idols or images of anything in this world."

This is a long thing; I should copy it further. I'll go down and complete it. I think that's a remarkable document coming from very early, probably from the first or second centuries A.D. These people must really have thought things out to get it as good as that. They got your best science fiction in there. Well, now let's go on with the first verse of 4 Nephi here.

"Brother Nibley, did that originate with these people?"

No, they brought it with them. They didn't originate it there. They said this is what John the Baptist taught them. He was Hivil Ziwa on earth, John the Baptist. They take the places of each other.

Now let's see what we have here. Civilization consists of the things that surround us, we know here. Now we are going to see something else here. This is a very interesting thing—as it advances these things become more and more expendable, not more and more necessary or more and more numerous. If you go back to the 1840s in America, people were surrounded by an unbelievable clutter of things that were not needed. They have disappeared now, but if you go through the ads of old papers you'll find that they had all sorts of toilet articles and items of dress, etc., that turned out to be of no worth whatever. You notice, as a machine becomes more and more perfect, it becomes more and more expendable. It used to be to get across the ocean you had to have an enormous 80,000-ton ocean liner. It used to be you had a massive railroad system. We reduced that to planes, and they get smaller and smaller, less and less necessary. It used to be that we had these enormous Victorian meals, the Edwardian meals. The board was groaning with every kind of [food]. It was as bad as McDonald's for the cholesterol. They ate themselves to death, and all these things were unnecessary. As they become more civilized, they become more simple and more austere. As we mentioned before, in the great civilizations you have one standard dress—as you do in heaven or the Pythagorean society. The brotherhoods, remember, live that kind of life, and it's a very austere and simple life. Fourth Nephi actually is a utopia. I've

written a bit on utopias, but this is the perfect state, how it would be. Is it possible? These utopias were speculative writings. You know the great ones, the four great utopias.

This is another question. Do you find when you're engaged in a fascinating project that it helps to be quarreling or have threats or plots or danger or rivalry or bitter competition? Does that help your work at all? Why can't we do away with those? It's unthinkable for us to do away with those. That's a strange thing. Then why do we find life boring without an adversary? Who or what puts into our minds that we have to spoil things, that we have to contend and all that sort of thing? The business must be a rat race, a dog-eat-dog world. It subsides into that inevitably every time we start doing things our way. Should it be that way?

Let's get to the second verse now. "And every man did deal justly one with another." Well, this covers a lot of ground, you see. The people were all converted, both Nephites and Lamanites, no contentions or disputations, "every man did deal justly one with another." Isn't that being a bit idealistic? Is that utopian yet? Of the four Platonic virtues, the first is justice, which is *timē*. That is to give everything that is due from you and to take what is due to you. If you give less than you should, then you're *mikropsychos*, you're small-minded. Aristotle in the fourth book of the *Nichomachean Ethics* talks about this. Then you're small-minded and petty. You're confining yourself if you give less than you should. If you take less than you should, you're also being small, petty, and cautious. You think you're being virtuous, like Scrooge, in being abstemious—the billionaire who goes to work taking his lunch in a brown paper bag, things like that. We admire that man's abstemiousness. Well, what is all his money [for]? He's a very mean-spirited person. That's what Scrooge does. But it says there "every man did deal justly one with another." Is this more satisfying to deal justly? That means they had relationships, they had deals, they had bargains, etc., but you didn't try to take the advantage if you dealt justly.

Is this more emotionally satisfying, though, than charity? If everything is just charity, you give the charity and that's all. Charity is the higher law. As the Arabs say, "The brave man never asks the odds, the generous man never asks the price, the good man never asks questions." You just go along with that. But what about this bargaining business? Well, that's all right in its realm. Willard Marriott gave an interview on the four secrets of success. The first one he said is drive a hard bargain. Well, now, is that a good thing? Yes, it is, if you're playing with a person who also drives a hard bargain. He says that himself, you see. He says if you drive a hard bargain, the other guy will respect you because you're playing a game. It's done in the approved spirit of gamesmanship. He's an able opponent. He understands how you're playing, and you understand his motives. But you mustn't force others to play that game, who aren't as well equipped for that. Can you do that? See, what Satan wants to do is to force everybody to play that game, as Isaiah said. "He who turneth away from evil maketh himself a prey." If you won't play the game, you'll become a victim. And, of course, they'll pluck you if you don't. This is what happens; this is the way we do it. You're forced to play the game by your rules. Must you do that? Or a game fitted for your physique? Should I be forced to play basketball? I've never been very good at it. It's the idea that we must all play the same game—rich or poor, weak or strong—everybody out playing the same game to benefit those who play it more efficiently than the others, etc. The starving peasant, the mill hand, or the mine worker coughing his lungs out—it's no game for them or young people who are forced to accept substandard wages. A 300-pounder is fighting a 100-pounder, and he says, "You do these things my way, don't you? Aren't you sporting about these things." So, the stock market is all right as a casino if you accept these blue chips for what they're worth—nothing, just as chips, just as tokens, and this sort of thing.

Well, let's take the third verse here. "And they had all things in common among them [this is the stinger, you see]; therefore, there were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift." The late Malcolm Forbes, you may have noticed, had a \$2 million birthday party a few months ago, and now he's dead. He used to say, "Nothing makes

free like bucks in the bank.” He was careful not to invite anyone to his birthday party who wasn’t either very rich or very famous. That’s *mikropsychos*, small-minded. And in the same way Cain said “I am free; his flocks fall into my hands.” He wasn’t ashamed of what he had done. God said, well, what about Abel? [Cain replied] well, he wouldn’t play the game. He says he was perfectly free. I’m not his keeper.

Everyone is healthy and happy. What do they have to do now? “There still continued to be peace in the land.” See, they’re neither rich nor poor. Today we are compounding both poverty and wealth. Today they’re moving farther apart, as you know, and each is becoming greater. Poverty is increasing as wealth is increasing, so we’re going to have some very helpful hints here. “The thirty and seventh year passed away also, and there still continued to be peace in the land.” And this is what happened. Now this is an interesting thing here, because it’s referred to a number of times. “And there were great and marvelous works wrought by the disciples of Jesus.” Now always throughout this whole book, one whole chapter, there are the disciples of Jesus as special people. The whole society accepts the gospel, but there are certain ones who have very special powers, marvelous powers of doing miracles, etc. They are the ones who are progressing. They are the ones who have got beyond this. It just gives us a hint and tells us they were there and doing certain things. They remind us of the ancient brotherhoods. Notice what it says here: “. . . wrought by the disciples of Jesus, insomuch that they did heal the sick, and raise the dead, and cause the lame to walk, and the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear; and all manner of miracles did they work among the children of men; and in nothing did they work miracles save it were in the name of Jesus.”

These gifts are all for solving problems, you know. And all for solving problems beyond our skill. These brethren went beyond that, because later on in the whole society they stand apart as a different group. We’ve always had them, this particular group of saints.

And so the years pass away in verse 6, and the Lord prospers them, and (verse 7) “they did build cities again.” Now, here we have another interesting question. Well, *prosper* is a good word here. *Prosper* is a favorite word of the rich. John D. Rockefeller always used to use that word. When one of his crooked deals was successful, he said “we were prospered.” The Lord prospered us. He gave the Lord credit for it, but [said] we were prospered. But here the word prosper is used for a society in which there are no rich. Apparently you can prosper as a society, as a group. Brigham Young used to say that, you know. I could make this people the richest people on earth, but we have to be rich as a people. As soon as we start being rich as individuals that way, then that will spoil everything.

Then in the next verse we read that it was an urban civilization. Now, wait a minute. What about the Garden of Eden? They caused Zarahemla to be built again, and many cities had been sunk, etc. They rebuilt their cities, and it was an urban civilization. So the question arises, which do you prefer. The Garden of Eden, you see, is the way things should be. That’s paradise. That’s the paradisiacal order to which the earth is to return. The tenth article of faith says we’re going back to that. “The earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory.” We’ll live in an Eden. But what about the city? It’s the city of Zion. Zion is very much a city, very much a community; they’re all of one heart and one mind. They have no poor among them. He called his people *Zion*. They were a city, a walled city, a city for protection, a city of light, etc. How do you have the two? Well, of course, you combine them both. This way the Lord came and talked with Adam in the Garden, but he also visits [in the city]. He’s in the center. You can always call on him in his office in Zion. But here we have the urban civilization, which is a heavenly city. We talk about the heavenly city, the heavenly Jerusalem, etc., and yet we have the other one. Well, you know we can combine the two very nicely.

The lords of the earth, after they’ve made their great deals in real estate, what do they do? They go out by themselves as far away as they can get from the city life they have created, because our city

life is becoming pretty vile, with our inner cities being what they are. Everybody's trying to escape, and now they're trying to capitalize and, of course, make profit on the wilderness. Wilderness is the thing that's a premium now, if you can get that. They realize the only happy life is there and so they are never content with those things. Yes, the lords of the earth choose some isolated, fair part of the world for discussing their problems, whether you have a think tank or a convention. They'll go up to the Sierras or they'll go to Alaska or somewhere for the oil business to hold a conclave and discuss their great matters. Even the military will meet in the most pleasant of surroundings, to get near to nature—a strange thing.

Well, now we come to this very interesting verse, the tenth verse. They “became an exceedingly fair and delightsome people.” That's important, too. Does it mean that they had to have perfect bodies, and we're always aware of that fact? Not a bit of it. When a thing is *fair*, it is as it should be. You talk about fair play, a fair game, a fair proposition, a fairly good way of doing it, a properly good way of doing it, a fairly good job, etc. A damsel is fair if her features are in the right place and she has the right measurements, we say. That's not necessarily the same measurements we accept today. But to be fair is the way we imagine it should be. This is the way St. Augustine picks it up from Plato, for example. Plato himself says the fair is the *kalos k'agathos*. *Kalos* is *right, proper*, every way it should be. *Agathos* is *good*. To be fair and good. Of course, it's aesthetically pleasing as well. In the *Euthydemus* he says a golden bowl can be as ugly as a dung basket is beautiful. The dung basket is simply designed, functional, etc. It can be a beautiful object, where a golden bowl with all sorts of fancy Victorian frills and geegaws on it can be absolutely hideous. It's the function and the rightness of it. When you look at a thing, you know that's right. Of course, this is the platonic doctrine of anamnesis, which we will not pursue here.

To be “fair and delightsome.” *Delight* is enjoyment without lust. That's the difference, a great thing here. Again, it's a platonic idea, isn't it. In your feeling toward nature, you are drawn toward what is lovable, what is endearing, what is rightly proportioned, what is pleasing, what is beautiful, what you've been looking for, what delights you. And with no desire to ravage and exploit with lust, vandalism, power, gain. Notice the four things [emphasized] in the Book of Mormon—power, gain, praise or recognition, and lusts of the flesh. They have nothing to do with *delightsome* and nothing to do with *fair*. *Fair* means things are as they should be, and *delightsome* means causing and giving enjoyment without lust of any kind. In our society you must control and possess and master a thing; that's what Satan wants. This is what Satan does. Why do we do it? It's very interesting. A popular theme today, even with little children, is Master of the Universe. I guess we pick it up from some of the space TV shows—these subtle powers, the master, the one who wants to master the universe. He is always turning up at various places. The “good” and the “bad” of this power are equally vicious because each one's after the same thing. Each is out to destroy the other. The other is wicked because he is trying to destroy me. I'm good because I'm trying to destroy him, and he takes the same point of view. These are toys they sell at the ZCMI, etc. You get these two monsters with names. One is red, white, and blue, and the other is black or something like that. They slug it out for the rule of the universe. Well, for such a morbid scenario to be taken seriously by five- and six-year-olds is quite something. I hear they stopped those toys at ZCMI, but I don't know. They still play Dungeons and Dragons, Robber Barons, etc. Sheer power, you see, the glory of power. As the great Henry Kissinger said, “Power is the best aphrodisiac.” That's what he wanted it for, and he wanted plenty.

So we fulfill the law of entropy with a vengeance. Modern civilization is working on it. A vast landfill is what we're producing. The city of Cairo is a vast landfill. At all times in all weather, no matter where you are (you can stand on the balcony of a hotel 25 [stories] high), you smell burning garbage. It's just constant. That's what we're doing. We're producing garbage. In Cairo burning garbage is the characteristic smell of the city. That's the question. We haven't decided what to do with ours yet.

What about the next verse? Verse 11 says, “And they were married, and given in marriage, and were blessed according to the multitude of the promises which the Lord had made unto them.” These things had been promised. God knows what will really make us happy. He would promise us that. There’s a famous Arabic cycle of stories called the Khadir legends. Khadir was the green man. He was the angel. He was a water sprite, and quite a figure. But people go around wishing for things that they shouldn’t have, and terrible things happen to people. They say, “Why is this, why is this?” Then Khadir comes around and explains, “If this hadn’t been so, it would have been worse for you.” You don’t know what you really need after all, so Khadir is always telling you. In this case, the Lord knows what would make us happy and what’s good for us, but we have the three-wish motifs, as Solon said. Remember, we have our wishes, but we never wish for the right thing. It is a famous folktale. You get it in all folktales, where the man is given three wishes by the fairy. He says, “Well, I wish I had a nice sausage.” This is a Dutch story. He had his sausage, and his wife said, “I wish it was on the end of your nose.” So it was on the end of his nose. The third wish was just to get it off, and he had no wishes left. This is what we do. We wish for the wrong things, and we end up holding nothing at all. Solon has some very nice verses on that.

Now the Nephites trusted God to know what was good for them. Ill-gotten gain is not gain at all. It [the important thing] is what we should have, not what we want. You all know the story of the “Pardoner’s Tale” from Chaucer. Everybody overreaches everybody else. The three thieves pulled off a job, and they were going to celebrate under a tree. They sent the youngest one off to get some wine from the village that was nearby, and while he was away they plotted to kill him so they could share the treasure among themselves and not bother about him. So when he came back they killed him and then they drank the wine to celebrate. But in the meantime he had poisoned the wine, so that was the end of the story, you see. They were all out. Chaucer tells us that one in the “Pardoner’s Tale.”

Well, then what do we have here? Verse 12: “And they did not walk any more after the performances and ordinances of the law of Moses.” Now here’s what they were doing. They were actually engaged in this. They had to work at it, but their life wasn’t dull here. They [were] “continuing in fasting and prayer, and in meeting together oft both to pray and to hear the word of the Lord.” Again, we must get an idea of what this word *fasting* means. It’s a very old English word. I wrote down the dictionary meaning on the back of one of these. I can tell you easily enough what it is. *Fast* is the same word as *feast* and *fest* and *festival*, and *fasti* in Latin. It means to hold fast to something, to observe something carefully. But it means to exercise self-control. Fasting means to hold yourself back. That’s what it really is. Fasting is to correct excesses. It’s to hold firm. It’s self-control. That’s the dictionary definition of it, and then it branches off into other things. Fasting is self-restraint. They forewent the pleasures of eating when they weren’t hungry. They gave up the pleasure of drinking when they weren’t thirsty. That’s fasting, you see. We don’t do that. America is all overweight. You know the great curse of our time is overweight. The main thing we’re suffering from [is that] everybody’s overweight. We’ve been eating when we weren’t really hungry, or we may have been still hungry, but we didn’t stop when we should. When you fast, it’s self-control. It isn’t to starve yourself to death and become so weak you topple over. That’s not fasting. That’s excess, too, as far as that goes. Then you are losing control just as well.

What are the advantages of fasting? Well, it’s more pleasurable. Our number one problem, I say, is being overweight. Brigham Young had something to say on that. He said we all eat too much, we wear too much, we work too much. And that was in those times when they did. If we all ate less, wore less, and worked less, we’d be a better, happier, and wiser people. When I said that to Ernest Wilkinson, he “went through the ceiling.” He thought we couldn’t work enough or become too rich or anything like that. We used to have some nice go-to’s with each other. He put up with me because I knew he was a lawyer, and he believed in adversarial things. Most people were intimidated by him, but he was one of the few men around who was smaller than I, and so we got along fine.

The child cannot resist all the candy. If you give him more, he wants to go on eating it. But at a certain point we have to tell the child he's got to start fasting. Well, the ninth candy bar is going to make him sick, but he'll eat it just as sure as anything. Wouldn't fasting be better for him? Wouldn't restraint be better for him? See, fasting is to keep yourself within bounds. Remember what the Lord tells us—appetites, desires, and passions must be kept within the bounds the Lord has set. It means any kind of appetites like that. In other words, the only way you'll keep them in bounds is by fasting. The Book of Mormon tells us later on, you must withhold yourself from certain activities which you might find pleasurable for the time being, and perfectly natural as far as that goes. But you must deny yourselves. It's perfectly natural to want to eat until you bust, but you must deny yourself. We must fast. So this was necessary to preserving this order of society and to bringing it about.

“. . . continuing in fasting and prayer.” Prayer of both kinds. There are the two kinds. The one is when you put what you really want and what you really feel into words. That's your very personal prayer. To be sincere it must avoid mechanical repetition like a prayer wheel. Yet if your wants are few, you'll naturally have to do a lot of repeating there. You just want a few things, so we have the Lord's Prayer. “Give us this day our daily bread,” and this is in the Book of Mormon, too. And then the very next thing is “thy kingdom come.” People have commented on the absurdity of that, such as the famous author, Joseph Conrad. This is what he says. “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Great things. Great thoughts, and then suddenly it starts coming down to the economy. “Give us this day our daily bread.” Well, that's the big obstacle to this, you see. The big obstacle is as soon as you have to depend on somebody else for your daily bread, that's not the kingdom of God. That's not the way things are done equitably. That's where the stumbling block is. And forgive our debts—and the Book of Mormon says *debts* using the business term, as we forgive those who owe us—as we forgive our debtors. Now that's the obstacle to the kingdom of heaven, so that comes next. The Lord's going to take that out, and it's the same thing here. Our wants are few. What are we going to ask for? It requires intense introspection, you see. “Where do I go from here” is what you ask every time you pray to the Lord personally. Where do I go from here? Is there anything I need or that I haven't done? You find out there's plenty to do. You can't stand still.

And the other is the continuing prayer. He says they prayed continuously. Schleiermacher talks about that. That's the mutual awareness. Well, they prayed together, both meeting together to pray and hear the word of the Lord. Fasting and prayer, personal prayer, and you meet together, and that's the continuing prayer. Well, we haven't got that here. Of course, we can't get stuck on the shortest book in the Book of Mormon, but it covers so much ground and has so much of the other in it.