

TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

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Semester 1, Lecture 18

2 Nephi 3–8

Lehi's Family: Blessings and Conflict

Let's start with the third chapter of 2 Nephi. It's a genealogical chapter, and it has strange phenomena in it which occur in genealogy all the time. If you've done any work in genealogy, you know that certain names have a way of popping up all along, and certain relationships turn up where you don't expect them at all. Notice, in the first verse he compares Joseph as a lost child, the last-born in the wilderness. Well, Joseph was the "lost child." Remember, he was sold by his *brethren* into Egypt—dropped down a well, picked up by a caravan, and taken to Egypt. His *brethren* were all down on him, but he has a home. "And may the Lord consecrate also unto thee this land," he says in the second verse, so he will have a place to go. "And now, Joseph, my last-born, whom I have brought out of the wilderness of mine afflictions, may the Lord bless thee forever, for thy seed shall not utterly be destroyed." Always the survival of Nephites in the New World also. Then we have something of a survey here. He says, "I am a descendant of Joseph." Now it's this name *Joseph* that they play on, but this is a characteristic thing in genealogy, and Joseph is very special. But the fact that it should be the same Joseph, leading right down to Joseph Smith, should not surprise you.

In the first year of college we used to require everybody to read Henry Adams' *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres*, in which he shows how in 1066, the time of William the Conqueror, everybody was related—and they were. They had to be. With three million people living in France and England, within a few generations they would all be intermarried. This is the way it turns out. We have something like the *Assizes of Jerusalem*, that amazing document. When Jerusalem was taken in the First Crusade in 1095, they set up the kingdom of Jerusalem there. First it was Godfrey of Bouillon, who was the Duke of Lorraine. He died in 1100, and then his brother, Baldwin I, became the first king of Jerusalem. Then they had the line of Baldwins, etc. But the people you have at Jerusalem represent all the royal families of Europe. There in that crusade was Robert of Normandy, who was the son of William the Conqueror, to whom you are [probably] all related. All you have to do is just get one name in the nobility, and then you are related to all of them. That saves you a lot of work, you see. All you have to do is get one name; then you go down the line as if there was nobody but nobility living in Europe. But they are all related, and this is what happens with *Assizes of Jerusalem*. Anybody who got to be king of Jerusalem was king of all the world because he could relate himself to every royal family in the world. And it's very easy to hook up on that. My wife's genealogy has scads and scads of nobility around the Baltic. It is Estonian and Polish, and once you get into that you are into everything else. She's from the line of the Reverend Layton, and this we can trace back. Joseph Smith is from that line, Brigham Young is from that line, Heber C. Kimball is from that line, George Washington is from that line. They all come down. All of colonial America is related. Well, most of them came from certain parts of England, and they were very much intermarried. So you have this bedizening network of relationships—just a mesh that go together. That's a fascinating thing that happens here.

Then there was Raymond of Toulouse, who was the son of Philip I of France. The interesting thing is that all these people had very strange relationships with Jerusalem before. You may note that book that has caused such a sensation in Europe, called *Holy Grail, Holy Blood*, the Holy Grail meaning their genealogies. All these families are related. You notice that Toulouse was not Roman Catholic. Toulouse was the hotbed of the [Albigenses]. Then along with them there was the Sicilian family. Robert of Normandy also ruled in Sicily. So we get this Holy Grail stuff, but the *Assizes of Jerusalem* are supposed to be the constitution for the ruling of the world from Jerusalem. The court and kingdom would be there, so they set it up there. There was the most magnificent pageantry you can imagine. It was all show, but what a show! This was the Middle Ages at its peak. The pageantry, the processions, the gaudiness, the decorations—and all based around the temple. There were the Knights Templar and the Hospitalers, who gave hospitality to people coming to the temple. They were all mystically associated with the temple somehow or other. It was really something, but we won't get into that. I'm just showing you that this chapter here on genealogy might not be so cockeyed as it looks, the way these things keep coming out.

The spanning of time is a fascinating thing. I was just thinking about my grandchildren of whom I'm excessively fond. The last two, who are two and a half and three years old, are terribly smart. I like to go with these little nippers and walk along the canal. They see everything and talk about everything; it's wonderful. I hug them and kiss them and that's nice. I was treated the same way by my great grandfather, John Patrick Reed. He was born in 1825, and these children will probably be living in 2078, if they live as long as I have. So here I am intimately associating with people living over a span of 253 years. That's what our life spans cover. I have known people intimately 253 years apart. So you can jump over time in a very short period. You will find yourself related to all the Crusaders and everyone else. This family business is an amazing thing, but it isn't as exclusive and as snobbish as you think it is. We all have crooks in our families and everything else. Very interesting things turn up that you never expect. We had given up on the name *Nibley*, which turns up in odd places and times, until very recently. My cousin Preston was doing some serious work back in Scotland in a very favorite place of mine. For some reason I always felt fascinated by the name Elfinstone. It was the first place where the Norse landed when they came to northern Scotland. The whole lowlands of Scotland are Scandinavian, way back. Here is this town called Elfinstone, "the Stone of the Elfs." That sounds rather romantic. As it turns out, there were three mayors of Elfinstone in succession, all called *Hugh Nibley*. I had never seen my name anywhere before at all. Something was going on here; it gives you goose flesh.

When he talks about this *Joseph* business, you may well take it seriously. He talks about another Joseph and it goes on down the line. An important thing is that a great deal is said in this chapter about written records, a written connection. That's all you have. Notice here in verse 12: "Wherefore, the fruit of thy loins shall write; and the fruit of the loins of Judah shall write; and that which shall be written by the fruit of thy loins, and also that which shall be written by the fruit of the loins of Judah, shall grow together unto the confounding of false doctrines . . . in the latter days." That's the way it is turning out. Speaking of Moses, he says, "But I will write unto him my law, by the finger of mine own hand; and I will make a spokesman for him."

The primacy of writing is very interesting, but what do you find? Some of you may have seen that recent *National Geographic* on prehistoric man, tracing them back. There's not much in that, but the fact is that you will find writing is the oldest thing—the written

document, handing around the visible written document you find there. You will find these hand marks on caves, for example, which are individual marks of possession. A person would put his hands on the cave and then spray it with paint by blowing it from his mouth. You find the same thing in the caves of China, and in Spain, and in Australia. They did the same things on the walls there back to the most primitive times. But aside from that they put marks, definite symbols and marks. It's the *wasm* of the Arabs; you put your mark on something. It's your name and your identity. It identifies you with a cave or a piece of property, especially with an arrow. The first long anthropological article I published was on the arrow, hunting and the state. It's on the marking of arrows—the prehistoric way of establishing your identity, whatever you shot for the lands, etc. That's the crest you have in Scotland. Your crest is the pattern of colors and threads on your arrow so that you can identify it. Wherever you go it identifies you. It's the crest of your house, and you weave it opposite directions in your plaid. You wear it as a plaid and it identifies your house. They call it the crest, but it's your mark or identification. But this writing and marking of things is the oldest thing we have. It's very necessary. It establishes identity and it establishes control. So when we are talking about identity here and genealogy and passing over thousands of years, that is the written record which is very important.

Notice again in verse 18: "I will give unto him that he shall write the writing of the fruit of thy loins, unto the fruit of thy loins." It's as if it were coming from the dust, and, of course, the value of the Dead Sea Scrolls is that they are written documents. The minute they were dug up, the kids in the caves there in Nahal Hever could read them. Just like that, though they were at least two thousand years old. "And they shall cry from the dust; yea, even repentance unto their *brethren*, even after many generations have gone by them. . . . Wherefore, because of this covenant thou art blessed; for thy seed shall not be destroyed, for they shall hearken unto the words of the book." This has to do with the bridging of time and space and also of humanity. As Brother Packer was talking about last night, we are "the human family." That is something unique. We do come from one ancestor, from one common source. That's an idea that's coming back. The biologists are bringing that back a lot. I don't mean about Adam, but they gave up long ago the idea that we have multiple origins. That has been dropped now by most biologists. We do come from just one ancestor, but that's another thing. What we are dealing with here is the big picture. We get a scope, a span, and a sweep here that's quite remarkable.

Then we have Lehi summing up with a patriarchal blessing. He blessed his sons and daughters. He spoke concerning Joseph in 2 Nephi 4:2, "For behold, he truly prophesied concerning all his seed. And the prophecies which he wrote, there are not many greater. And he prophesied concerning us, and our future generations." Notice in verse 3 that he doesn't bless Laman and Lemuel. He doesn't give them a blessing. He blesses their children because it is their children who survive and who are blessed. He calls Laman his first-born. "Behold, my sons, and my daughters, who are the sons and the daughters of my first-born, I would that ye should give ear unto my words." But it's not the first-born he is blessing, you will notice. It's like the way Isaac crossed his hands when he blessed Jacob and Esau. He reversed the blessing on Esau and wouldn't give it to him. It's the same thing with the blessing on Manasseh in the *Ascension of Isaiah*, a very old text that has been discovered. "I should leave a blessing upon you [he's not going to leave them without a blessing]. . . . Wherefore, if ye are cursed, behold, I leave my blessing upon you, that the cursing may be taken from you and be answered upon the heads of your parents. Wherefore, because of my blessing the Lord God will not suffer that ye shall perish; wherefore, he will be merciful unto you and unto your seed forever. . . . [Then] he caused

the sons and daughters of Lemuel to be brought before him” and gave them the same blessing. He gave the sons and daughters of the second son the same blessing as the other. Then he gave the sons of Ishmael the same blessing. Then he blessed Sam: “Blessed art thou, and thy seed; for thou shalt inherit the land like unto thy brother Nephi.” He had always been Nephi’s strongest support. Then Lehi died. After his death the old feud burst out anew worse than ever, you notice in verse 13. “Not many days after his death, Laman and Lemuel and the sons of Ishmael were angry with me because of the admonitions of the Lord.” They had been holding off out of respect for their father, probably.

Then Nephi says, “And upon these I write the things of my soul.” Here we get a very interesting character analysis of Nephi. He really pours it on here and shows a complex and difficult character. “I write the things of my soul, and many of the scriptures. . . . For my soul delighteth in the scriptures, and my heart pondereth them, and writeth them for the learning and the profit of my children.” That sounds like a verse out of the *Talmud*, doesn’t it? Then he goes on, “Nevertheless, notwithstanding the great goodness of the Lord, in showing me his great and marvelous works, my heart exclaimeth: O wretched man that I am! Yea, my heart sorroweth because of my flesh; my soul grieveth because of mine iniquities.” Well, what is he up to that is so sinful? You notice he is always under this steady pressure from his brethren. Now it has burst out anew, and it is very bad after Lehi’s death. He is just about ready to give up here. He says, “I am encompassed about, because of the temptations and the sins which do so easily beset me.” What is he tempted to do? We soon find out here. To play a rough game is what he is tempted to do. He wants to hit back at Laman and Lemuel. He has a short temper; remember, he really lets fly at times. The dispatching of Laban wasn’t his idea, but he impulsively grabbed Zoram, held his mouth, and told him there was nothing to fear, instead of arguing with him properly. He said that he was large and strong. He could handle Zoram easily enough, and so he did. Then verse 19: “And when I desire to rejoice, my heart groaneth because of my sins; nevertheless, I know in whom I have trusted.”

What could his sins have been? What are sins? You can’t classify them. You can’t be like the sixteenth-century probabilists, like Molinos with the famous Catalog of Sins. They rated each sin according to a number with as much as three or four decimal places showing exactly which sin is worse than which other sin. You can’t do that, of course, because sin is a state of mind. Verse 23: “Behold, he hath heard my cry by day, and he hath given me knowledge by visions in the nighttime. And by day have I waxed bold in mighty prayer before him; yea, my voice have I sent up on high; and angels came down and ministered unto me.” Verse 25 is a very interesting ascension text here: “And upon the wings of his Spirit hath my body been carried away upon exceedingly high mountains [in the plural]. And mine eyes have beheld great things, yea, even too great for man; therefore, I was bidden that I should not write them.” What’s he talking about? Well, he says they are too great for us. What has been happening to him is out of our league. During eight years in the desert, he really had some experiences. “O then, if I have seen so great things, . . . why should my heart weep and my soul linger in the valley of sorrow [Why am I unhappy in that case? This is man’s condition he beautifully describes here], and my flesh waste away, and my strength slacken, because of mine afflictions?”

Well, he has had plenty of afflictions. After eight years he has had about more than he can stand, and they are about to break loose and go off by themselves. It’s because he has reached a peak here, as if he couldn’t take it any more. “And why should I yield to sin, because of my flesh? [Here is where the weakness comes.] Yea, why should I give way to temptations, that the evil one have place in my heart to destroy my peace and afflict my

soul?” This is a very nice thing. This is who you have to blame for your troubles. With eight years of tension, his passionate nature came out here. He was brooding and self-accusing. He hit back to the brethren. He was impulsive and also physical. So he came out with a confession here. His troubles affected his peace of mind. He just got mad and all upset. You can imagine losing sleep, tossing, and this sort of thing that happens to all of us. We shouldn’t be peeved about these things, but that’s the way we are. “Why am I angry because of mine enemy?” [Why blame him and get all upset because of my enemy? It’s all right to go my way if I have trouble, but why get mad at him?] Awake, my soul! No longer droop in sin.” He calls that sin because it is. Sin is waste, the scriptures tell us. You are wasting time and energy with anger because it is not going to get you anywhere. Maybe righteous anger, but this is a brooding anger against his brothers that has been going on and on. “Rejoice, O my heart, and give place no more for the enemy of my soul [there’s the enemy]. Do not anger again because of mine enemies. Do not slacken my strength because of mine afflictions.”

He was ready to let up and not follow it through. He had been losing his resolve or something. But [he tells himself] don’t slacken strength because of afflictions; expect your afflictions. Then he keeps telling himself that he should rejoice and see the positive side. “Rejoice, O my heart, and cry unto the Lord, and say: O Lord, I will praise thee forever; yea, my soul will rejoice in thee, my God, and the rock of my salvation.” Then we come to this marvelous desert image—this little vignette of a person fleeing through the desert from his enemies and wanting the Lord to block up the way of those who are chasing him, going in and bowing down to the lord of the tent and asking the lord to place his robe around him for protection and to say, “I am your protector now.” He’s a member of the tribe, and the sheikh is bound to protect him as a member of the family then. When he says *ahlan*, that means both *family* and *tent*. The tent is yours, and *marhaban* means “have place.” We discussed that “have place” business before.

Verse 32: “May the gates of hell be shut continually before me, because that my heart is broken and my spirit is contrite! O Lord, wilt thou not shut the gates of thy righteousness before me, that I may walk in the path of the low valley [that’s the way to get through, the shortcut], that I may be strict in the plain road [that’s the *derekh*!]! O Lord, wilt thou encircle me around in the robe of thy righteousness! that’s what atonement is; when the Lord opens the flap and takes you into his tent, *kappōret*, he forgives the people; we talked about that before]. O Lord, wilt thou make a way for mine escape before mine enemies! Wilt thou make my path straight before me! Wilt thou not place a stumbling block in my way [that’s a *kashal*]—but that thou wouldst clear my way before me, and hedge not up my way, but the ways of mine enemy.” That’s what you want; that’s what the Arab prays for.

This next verse is a confession. “O Lord, I have trusted in thee, and I will trust in thee forever. I will not put my trust in the arm of flesh; for I know that cursed is he that putteth his trust in the arm of flesh.” Remember, he was a very powerful guy. He was their best hunter. He was the toughest character of them all, a mighty man physically. I won’t trust in the arm of flesh anymore, he says, “for I know that cursed is he that putteth his trust in the arm of flesh.” This is sort of a confession, you see. And all force begets counterforce; you are not going to profit by that. “Yea, cursed is he that putteth his trust in man or maketh flesh his arm.” There’s your “peace through strength” sort of nonsense. “Yea, I will cry unto thee, my God, the rock of my righteousness [this is a rock in the desert; this is what David uses; he is quoting Psalms here when he flees from his enemies;

remember, David was in flight a good deal of the time, fleeing for his life with a small company and hiding out in the desert among the rocks]. Behold, my voice shall forever ascend up unto thee, my rock and mine everlasting God. Amen.” That’s a nice picture of Nephi there.

Then in chapter five comes the big break. “I, Nephi, did cry much unto the Lord my God, because of the anger of my brethren.” This is a cry to God, and what is the cause of it? The anger of his brothers. They just won’t let up; they are relentless and obsessed. Nephi is the enemy as far as they are concerned. They will never forgive him. “But behold, their anger did increase against me, insomuch that they did seek to take away my life.” When he called upon the Lord in this prayer that just went before, it didn’t cure them at all. Their anger only got worse until they finally sought to get rid of Nephi. Now, what’s he going to do? “Yea, they did murmur against me, saying: Our younger brother thinks to rule over us [when you have a small company together for years and years, you are always going to have short tempers and anger; there are many films and plays built on that particular theme; people just can’t abide each other after a while]; and we have had much trial because of him [he’s to blame]; wherefore, now let us slay him, that we may not be afflicted more because of his words [they are getting under our skin—we are not going to have any more]. For behold, we will not have him to be our ruler; for it belongs unto us, who are the elder brethren to rule over this people [naturally]. . . . And it came to pass that the Lord did warn me [it was time to get out now], that I, Nephi, should depart from them and flee into the wilderness, and all those who would go with me.”

Here we have another break; we have the Rechabites again. They are breaking off, and this is the beginning of the division between the Nephites and the Lamanites. He took his family, and he took Zoram and his family. So the Zoramites are Nephites henceforth. There are five families here. He took Sam, the elder brother and his family; and Jacob and Joseph, the two youngest brothers; and also his sisters and their families. That’s more than five families, isn’t it? They would be married to men from the outside. “And all those who would go with me.” That was another group. Anyone who was willing to go, regardless of family, etc. These little things escape you if you don’t notice them. You might say he went with just five families. No, there were five families, and some of his sisters’ families, too, and anybody else that wanted to join—any of those who believed in the warnings and revelations of God. They were out there on a warning anyway. Verse 7: “And we did take our tents and whatsoever things were possible for us, and did journey in the wilderness for the space of many days.” Well, this is where I came in, the old story again. “Nel mezzo del cammino di nostra vita.” Well, we’re in the middle of a journey all the time in the dark and dreary world, as Dante starts out.

They journeyed in the wilderness for many days. We don’t know how many *many* is. Book of Mormon geography is a waste of time. I wouldn’t touch it with a forty-foot pole. Never have; it’s not necessary. Some day we’ll get more information, I suppose. Everybody has tried their hand at it. I don’t know why; it doesn’t make any difference. So they journeyed in the wilderness for many days and pitched their tents. They had been doing this, and they set up a permanent camp and called the place Nephi after themselves. Well, we have a place in Utah called Nephi. We have a place called Brigham because who was the settler? Provo is named after Etienne Provost, a man who made his base here in the early days. But this was written [translated] before Provo ever was, back in the 1820s. “And all those who were with me did take upon them to call themselves the people of Nephi.” That’s natural enough—the Brighamites, the Josephites, the Smithites, etc. People always name themselves after the leaders, in Alexandria or anywhere else. The Platonists

and Aristotelians are ancient names which go back to their [leaders]. The followers of Plato called themselves Platonists.

They lived according to the law of Moses. The basic law is still the law of Moses. They are still living by the Old Testament. This really comes out in Alma. You will see more light cast on the Old Testament practices described in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy than anywhere else. But they are living by the law of Moses. We know that salvation doesn't come by it. It just points their minds forward. We were told a number of times earlier that they brought all manner of seed over here. We know that it's very hard to find where all the crops in the world originally came from because they were planted by other people who moved in. It's easy to carry seeds with you, and people do all over the place. Did emmer wheat really originate in Palestine, or was it in northern Egypt in an earlier time? Barley is a common Babylonian measure, but you find barley all over Asia and in the New World too from the very beginning. Any seed will grow; the soil is very impartial here. So they planted the seeds, and you have all sorts of crops here, as corn went back to the Old World. And they raised flocks. That's an interesting thing, too, because there are flocks of various kinds. What would it be? Vicuñas or llamas or something like that? They are all in the sheep family, and they herd them today.

Verse 12: "And I, Nephi, had also brought the records which were engraven upon the plates of brass." They had the national treasures with them. And he took the sword of Laban and used it as a pattern to make more swords "lest by any means the people who were now called Lamanites [they were calling them Lamanites for the record; whether they called themselves Lamanites or not we don't know] should come upon us and destroy us." And they went to work and built many buildings. One of the first things they did was build a temple and constructed it "after the manner of the temple of Solomon." This is one of those points for which the Book of Mormon was often criticized. There was only one temple, and that was the temple at Jerusalem. You wouldn't build another temple, but we know that's not so. In 1925 the Elephantine Records were discovered from upper Egypt. The people who left Jerusalem at the time of Lehi went up the Nile to Elephantine to the first cataract. There was a large settlement of Jewish mercenaries there working for the king of Ethiopia at that time. They asked for permission to build a temple. They wrote letters to the temple committee, the high priest and the scribes, back in Jerusalem. We have a number of those letters asking for permission to build a temple. The permission was granted, and it was built after the manner of Solomon's temple. They didn't have those materials. It was a much cheaper and smaller building, but they did build it. Then later on under the influence of the same dynasty up north, Hōni, who was very famous and called "the circle drawer," went and built a model of the temple again at Heliopolis where the Jews could worship in Egypt. That's where most of them went when Jerusalem fell. Alexandria became the biggest Jewish city in the world, just as New York is today.

So Nephi built this temple. Naturally, he would use the pattern of Solomon's temple. But it wasn't built of so many precious things. They couldn't afford that. Solomon's temple was really a show, as you know. "For they were not to be found upon the land; wherefore, it could not be built like unto Solomon's temple. But the manner of the construction was like unto the temple of Solomon; and the workmanship thereof was exceedingly fine." It was the best workmanship they could do.

They are building a temple in Portland, to my great surprise. A person from there who is on the building committee said that the workers are absolutely ecstatic. The workers who

are building it are not members of the Church. They are ecstatic because they are not only allowed, but they are instructed and ordered to use the costliest and best materials and the finest workmanship they possibly can. Now any other contractor in building is going to save money and cut corners. Look at the apartments springing up around Provo. They are tenements, firetraps. For a builder in this day and age to be told that he should use the best materials and, even though it's the costliest, the best workmanship you can possibly get—that's the sort thing any real craftsman or artisan dreams of but gets very few chances at today. Today, of course, you've got to save money and have minimal expense. It has to be cost-effective and all the rest of it. But Nephi says here that the workmanship was exceedingly fine. They make a point of that on the temple, and it should be.

Now naturally they wanted to make Nephi their chief. He had been running things all along anyway, so why shouldn't he be the chief? They were desirous to have him king, but that was too much of a title for him. "I did for them according to that which was in my power," he said. They looked up to him as their king and leader.

Now this cursing. There's a great deal said about this race business in the Book of Mormon. It's very clear what it is—it's a cultural thing. It tells us here in verse 21, "Wherefore, as they were white, and exceedingly fair and delightsome." That doesn't mean they had complexions of milk, that they were pale white and ghostly. That's not healthy anyway. Nor does it mean that the others were coal black. Black is much too strong a word to use here, if you are using it literally. But, as I've said before, it applies just as much in *shāḥōr* and *lābān* as it does in Hebrew and Aramaic, and also in Arabic. Anything that's *abyaḍ* is good, delightful, pleasant; and everything that's *aswad* isn't. In the paintings, whether it's Greek vase paintings or wall paintings in Egypt, the people who live in the *bayt al-sha'ir*, "the houses of hair, out in the desert are always painted with dark complexions. The people who live in the *bayt al-hajar*, "the houses of stone," are always depicted with light complexions. The women never went out; they would paint their faces with white lead, as a matter of fact. It's a cultural thing. Of course, if you live that way, you become dark. Also, the camps of natives, Asiatics or anything like that, become garbage dumps. They live by hunting and plunder. They are not cultivating the soil and are not bound to work too much. So they become slovenly and dark in their manner. They become dirty, different, smelly and all that sort of thing. That's what it means by loathsome—dirty, smelly, not very well groomed or anything like that. This is a cursing. When you see a person who is white and exceedingly fair and delightsome, you are not going to see a platinum blond necessarily. Though you do find them. This is the thing that always bowled me over among the Hopis. Every tenth child is a blond, not an albino at all. They will have red hair and blue eyes. I thought, well it's an oddity—some missionary, some Scandinavians have intermarried with them. That wasn't it at all. These were all native Hopi kids, and every tenth one was a perfectly good blond, as blond as anybody you ever saw. And yet it was quite normal. Nobody was upset by it or anything like that.

One was "exceedingly fair and delightsome," and the other was a skin of blackness. As I said, *shāḥōr* is a skin of blackness, which means dark. A good source for that would be Morris Jastrow's *Aramaic Dictionary*. For the word *black*, it gives dark, unpleasant—everything sort of uncomplimentary. We don't need to linger on that. Here it is [in verse 23]; it says it's a cultural affair. If you mixed your seed with them, you got the same cursing. If you intermarry with them, you are sharing their culture, and you become just like them. In other words, it is not a racial thing because you can get it

yourself. “And because of their cursing which was upon them, they did become an idle people, full of mischief and subtlety, and did seek in the wilderness for beasts of prey.” Well, there are lots of races like that. All you have to do is watch Channel 26 and you can be introduced to all sorts of tribes like that. With this National Geographic Studies you see tribes like that everywhere. Not that they don’t have their virtues, and the Lamanites certainly did. But racial change isn’t necessary for this at all. After all, they are members of the same family; we know that.

Then this is the point [in verse 25]. As the Lord tells them back in 1 Nephi 2:23, right at the beginning of the book, I want them breathing down your neck. I’m going to keep the Lamanites there to keep you in line that they may stir you up to remembrance. You are never going to solve the Lamanite problem by trying to beat them with any weapons or anything you can do. That’s not how you solve things. I want those people giving you trouble [paraphrased]. Verse 25: “And the Lord God said unto me: They shall be a scourge unto thy seed, to stir them up in remembrance of me; and inasmuch as they will not remember me, and hearken unto my words, they shall scourge them even unto destruction.” Here’s a promise: If your people do not obey me, the Lamanites are there to destroy you. They will scourge you until you are destroyed. That makes it very clear. Then Nephi consecrated Jacob to be a priest and teacher, so Jacob was not to be his successor in the government. They started appointing chiefs by the name of *Nephi*. They gave them that title, just as Julius Caesar’s successor was called *Caesar*, and ever after the person who held the title was called a *Caesar*, though it was a personal name originally.

Here’s an interesting thing: “And it came to pass that we lived after the manner of happiness.” Now, what on earth is the “manner of happiness”? There is a regime that assures happiness. And, of course, it’s a state of mind—that’s all it is. It’s a state of mind that goes with every way of life, whether you’re living in the desert or in the clouds. Wherever you are living, whether it’s in the city or in the country, there is a manner of happiness. If you are not happy, that means you are not living the right way. You are supposed to be happy. They were living after the manner of happiness. But you might say, “Egads, just these families living out in the sticks all by themselves. Weren’t they bored stiff? This is an interesting phenomenon—where you find boredom is not in such places but in the midst of the greatest civilizations. That’s where people get bored because they get replete. Look at the literature, particularly a lot of the novels of the French—Proust, for example. Or of the English, like the English murder mysteries. The nobility living in country houses and in London were absolutely bored stiff. But this is especially true of the Russian novels. Tolstoy has a novel called *Tverdiye Lyudi*, *Difficult People*. The classic situation is the rich Russian family before the Revolution. They had everything their way, and they just sat around and got bored until they started committing suicide and having duels and murders and everything else. This happens in the others, too. The French would always say, “Il n’y a rien de faire. There’s nothing to do.” The Russian slogan was “Chto delat’? Skuchnoi grustno! Boring, disgusting their life is.” They are the people that have everything, the rich land owners, etc. It’s the same thing with the Polish novels, though I haven’t read any of them for a long time. I used to read myself to sleep with Russian novels. They were good ones to put you to sleep because these people were so bored with their lives. In one story called “The Duel” by Lermontov, two house guests get so bored and disgusted they decide they will just have a duel and kill each other because there is nothing else to do. Boredom goes with civilization as much as anything. Just because these people are out there by themselves, they are not going to be bored insufferably, beyond endurance. Life in a monastery could be, but there again you have the idea of a few people shut up together. There’s no more enlightening and terrifying document than Robert

Browning's "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister." The last words are "Gr-r-r—you swine." They are jealous of each other and hate each other's guts. They are shut in together doing this pious routine all the time, year after year after year. That would really be boredom.

Well, what do you do not to be bored? What do you do to live after the manner of happiness? As Brother Packer told us, also from the Book of Mormon, "Wickedness never was happiness." You are not going to get it by kicking the gong around and indulging in this, that, and the other. That's a very interesting thing. My youngest son never graduated from high school. He was voted most likely to succeed, and he's a big wheel now, incidentally, but that's something else. For a while he danced with the San Francisco ballet, of all things. He tried everything. The boys in Haight Ashbury used to say, "Well, why don't you try the drugs? Why don't you try the sex?" He wouldn't do any of that. He had a simple answer to any of them. He would just look them in the eye and say, "Are you happy?" Usually, they would break out crying; they were utterly miserable. This is the point about going to these excesses. You are not going to find fun that way. You will quickly exhaust all the variety you can think of, and it becomes exceedingly depressing, as we know.

So we have a perfect right to the way of happiness. "Man is that he might have joy," and our whole idea here is a country where we can have "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." But it doesn't tell you how to pursue it. You are not supposed to tell me, and I'm not supposed to tell you. But there are ways of pursuing happiness until your joy becomes uncontrollable, just absolutely wild. It's the love of the Lord; it's when the Lord blesses you. You will know and feel that. But, you don't know what happiness is until that happens, and it will. Here's the key right here in verse 32: "And if my people are pleased with the things of God they will be pleased with mine engravings which are upon these plates." So they're pleased with the things of God. That's enough to keep you happy all the time. There are some very interesting things. We have lots of pioneer journals and things like that about things that went on. My mother was born in Manti, and we have various family journals and the like. There was amazingly little feuding and trouble. There is now.

If you read Miss Marple, you know what happens in a little English village where everything seems to be so peaceful and quiet. There's where the murders and the dirty plots take place. Little English villages are establishments of many, many years. They are very ancient and established. People have been living there [a long time], and they are living rather shallow lives. The gospel means nothing to them. Their lives are formality, very formal. Tea, for example, is the one thing around which everything centers—the nice cup of tea. This is a formality. If we didn't have these formalities, we'd go crazy and fall apart. We have to do these little things. Max Taylor was the commander of the Hundred and First Airborne. He insisted that everybody in the division, no matter what the operation was, no matter what the circumstances were, shave every day. You had to; you'd be court-martialed if you didn't shave. Why should you shave every day, of all things, especially if you were stuck in one muddy, hot foxhole for seventy-seven days, as I was once next to Arnhem. That's a long time. But it was a morale thing; it kept you going. It was the only thing that kept your sanity. You had to do these little things. You had to shave and brush your teeth and all this sort of thing. If you did that, that was fine. Then you'd duck back awfully quick. This "living after the manner of happiness" is a remarkable statement, I do believe. We should pay more attention to things like that.

Now we get on to the sixth chapter and the words of Jacob. Jacob gets a word in here, and we have a book of Jacob. He was consecrated to be a priest by Nephi "unto whom ye look

as a king or a protector.” Nephi wouldn’t be appointed. He refused the office, but they looked upon him as a king and a protector. Jacob says [in verse 3], “Yea, mine anxiety is great for you.” He is worried. Remember, he is their spiritual leader now, and he is as worried as Nephi was. He says he is going to give them a view of things to come, and he quotes Isaiah—as Nephi had been quoting Isaiah more than anything else, just like the Dead Sea Scrolls are Isaiah far before anything else. Verse 9: “And he also has shown unto me that the Lord God . . . should manifest himself unto them in the flesh.” He has the future of the Jews here. This is a thing that is gone over in the Book of Mormon a number of times. I’m going to skip over these chapters in Isaiah here, just pointing out some things. Verse 12: “And blessed are the Gentiles . . . if it so be that they shall repent, and fight not against Zion, and do not unite themselves to that great and abominable church, they shall be saved.” Well, that’s a strange condition. All you have to do is not belong to a particular church. That should be very easy. That includes atheists and everything else. “For the people of the Lord are they who wait for him; for they still wait for the coming of the Messiah [and very few did]. The Messiah will come a second time then “in power and great glory, unto the destruction of their enemies.” He is giving them a preview of the comings of the Lord, as in the Hebrew prophets. Then he says, “And they that believe not in Him shall be destroyed, both by fire and by tempest, and by earthquakes, and by bloodshed, and by pestilence, and by famine. . . . For the Mighty God shall deliver his covenant people. For thus saith the Lord: I will contend with them that contendeth with thee—And I will feed them that oppress thee, with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood as with sweet wine.” Well, he is quoting Isaiah here, and chapter 7 is just chapter 50 from Isaiah.

Incidentally, you compare these chapters with those in the King James Translation. They are not identical. There are various differences. I have a section in that book called *Since Cumorah* in which I compare various passages, and there are key differences—some rather important. The Book of Mormon follows the Septuagint rather than the Masoretic Text. The Masoretic Text is a thousand years later than the Septuagint, you see. The Septuagint is a thousand years earlier, and it isn’t Hebrew—it’s Greek. But it was translated by seventy-two (as the name shows) scholars from Jerusalem for the benefit of Ptolemy I of Egypt. They translated it at Alexandria. They knew a thousand years earlier what the Old Testament should sound like. Now, we have another text of Isaiah from the Dead Sea Scrolls which is a thousand years earlier than any Hebrew text of Isaiah. Now we can compare them and see what they are like. Again, the Isaiah in the Dead Sea Scrolls is closer to the Septuagint, and the Joseph Smith is closer to the Septuagint. So the King James Version is the one that strayed the farthest. It’s the latest actually. The differences are not drastic, but there are some important points in it. Well, that’s just in passing.

Let’s get to chapter 9 where he starts explaining it, then. Now we are really racing along here. “I have read these things that ye might know concerning the covenants of the Lord that he has covenanted with all the house of Israel—That he has spoken unto the Jews, by the mouth of his holy prophets, even from the beginning down . . . until the time comes that they shall be restored to the true church and fold of God; when they shall be gathered home to the lands [plural] of their inheritance, and shall be established in all their lands of promise [so it’s a wider movement than just the city of Jerusalem]. . . . I speak unto you these things that ye may rejoice, and lift up your heads forever, because of the blessings which the Lord God shall bestow upon your children. . . . I know that ye know that our flesh must waste away and die.” Now he comes to the subject of the Atonement and the Resurrection here. The important thing is not what happens to Jerusalem, or what happens to the nation or the church, for that matter—it’s what happens to you. I mean if the whole

thing is just going to pass away and go down into the dust and be forgotten forever. This is the one where he talks about the second law of thermodynamics, right here. He says, “Our flesh must waste away and die [well, it does do that]; nevertheless, in our bodies we shall see God.” Remember Job: “And though . . . worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.”

Luther translated that, because he didn’t like it, “Yet *without* the flesh I shall see God.” All you have to do is put another word in there—not *in the flesh*, change it to *without*. Well, you can do that if you want, but that’s not what the text said. Verse 5: Yes, I know that ye know that in the body he shall show himself unto those at Jerusalem, from whence we came [he promises the coming of Christ]. . . . For as death hath passed upon all men, to fulfill the merciful plan of the great Creator . . .” This word *plan* is used a lot. You can look up in Young’s Concordance or anywhere else and find that the word *plan* does not occur once in the Bible. It’s being used a great deal by preachers today, but it was never used in Joseph Smith’s day. But you see how it explains things; we can put up with an awful lot if we know it is according to plan. We can wait it out in that case. But the word *plan* is never found in the Bible. The rabbis didn’t like it, among other things. The idea of the plan is very important here, and this is the way things are supposed to be. But this requires a pre-existence and it requires a lot of other things. Atonement does. We talked about atonement, *teshûvāh* and *yeshûvāh*. *Yeshûvāh* is the “return to the place where you were before, return to God.” Well, if you weren’t there before, [you can’t go back]. That’s one word for *atonement* they use in the Old Testament. The other word means “going in and sitting down beside him.” It means “going in and sitting down with your Father in Heaven” when you are taken into the presence of the Most High. All those words have to do with going back home and being received again, and that’s what he is talking about here. This gives us great insight into the Atonement doctrine, especially later on when we get to Alma.

He says here in verse 6: “For as death hath passed upon all men [that’s true, but that’s part of the plan], to fulfil the merciful plan of the great Creator, there must needs be a power of resurrection.” There’s only one thing you can do if everything is going that way. That’s the natural course of things, so what can you do about it? There has to be a power. Somebody has to intervene. Well, is that conceivable? Of course, it’s conceivable with just the fact that we are here. Somebody intervened to get us here. We shouldn’t be here if we had just a mass of matter out there acting on itself this way and that way—accident, etc. It looks like Matthew’s work on the Newtonian apple, etc. There are some great studies done on that. The statistical probability of our not existing, of course, is a trillion to zero. I mean you’re not supposed to be here; we couldn’t be here by chance. A great biologist used to say, “There’s only one argument why we should be here. Everything is against us, and it’s absurd. We’re not here.” But it’s a fact we are here. That shows that somebody is spoiling the game. They are not playing the right scientific game. Well, this is the whole point here. There must be a power to intervene. Because he says that it is perfectly natural for things to die and stay dead. “And the resurrection must needs come unto man by reason of the fall [because we fell and spoiled everything]; and the fall came by reason of transgression; and because man became fallen they were cut off from the presence of the Lord.” That’s the opposite of *atonement*, at-one-ment. To be cut off, to be separated is not to be at one anymore. This is the opposite, and this is the penalty.

So what are you going to do about this being cut off? There must be an infinite atonement here, bringing together in one. Atonement is not just one in the presence of

the Father but the atonement of all things—the atonement of the flesh, bringing together things that were formally separated. That's what *at-one* is. *At-one* covers an awful lot of ground. Yesterday, I listed forty different words in the Bible that are the equivalent of *atonement*, and sometimes are translated as *atonement*. Forty different expressions all mean *atonement* in different ways. It all comes back to being at one. Good old *atonement* is the best word you can use. So it says here “an infinite atonement.” That is an unlimited capacity to recompose things that have broken down—to bring them back together as they were in their original state, restoring and integrating. There's what you get in oxidation/reduction. Everything in the room is not only being dragged down by gravity, but we're being oxidized. Everything is slowly being burned up. You can reverse that process by reduction—by adding your OH radical and taking care of that, but not all the way. But he is talking about a process of infinite capacity, an infinite at-one-ment, an infinite capacity to put things together again. It's going to have to be forever. He says without that “this corruption could not put on incorruption” because once a thing has rotted and crumbled and is corrupt, how is it possible you are going to put on incorruption unless there is an unlimited power to do that very thing.

Then this one really hits the gong: “Wherefore, the first judgment which came upon man must needs have remained to an endless duration. And if so, this flesh must have laid down to rot and to crumble to its mother earth, to rise no more.” Remember, you cannot reverse the process of entropy. It's the heat death. Things all wear down to a dead level, and you can't go anywhere after that because there's no place to go. That's the way it would be, he says, if somebody hadn't intervened and changed things. Then no wonder he breaks out and says how marvelous it is to know that there's something and that's not going to settle things. “O the wisdom of God, his mercy and grace! For behold, if the flesh should rise no more our spirits must become subject to that angel who fell from before the presence of the Eternal God, and became the devil, to rise no more.” Why? Because they have yielded. It's the spirits that yield to sin and went the way of the flesh. The spirit is guilty. The flesh is finished and passed away forever, but there's a guilty spirit. It's got itself into this jam; now, what's it going to do? Our spirits must be subject to the person who tempted them. It was the spirit that was tempted by Satan here. They become devils and angels to the devil. The time's up, so we will have to break it up now, but this ninth verse is another one of those remarkable concise summaries. It's shocking, but it's a good one. We'll continue the next time unless you would prefer a test. I don't know what we would be tested on. You can see that all we can do is write essays in this class, so let's make them good.