

# TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

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Semester 2, Lecture 47

Alma 5–10

Good and Evil

Foretelling Christ's Birth

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

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

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

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

change, and then they go completely back again. There's an interesting case about that, but we have to get on here.

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

Then he compares them with sheep. Sheep in the New World? Well, *sheep* is like *silk*, if you'll look it up in the dictionary. There are scores of varieties of sheep. Some no more resemble sheep than other [animals] do. The llamas and the vicunas, or anything like that, are all classified as sheep. They're grazing animals. The Egyptians had just one word for them *idr*—the short-horned as against the long-horned animals. They use one word for sheep, for rams, for goats—for all short-horned animals, wild or not; I guess a steenbok would be a sheep with them. But anyway, it's one of those generic terms.

Verse 60: "And he commandeth you that ye suffer no ravenous wolf to enter among you, that ye may not be destroyed." You notice the *ravenous wolf*, which means acquisitive, greedy, predatory, exploitative—the ravenous wolves. We talk a lot about greed today in the front pages of journals and everything else. *The Wall Street Journal*, *Time*, and the rest of them are always talking about the greed. Well, would you admit [to be] the wolf? "And now I, Alma, do command you . . ." He can command those who belong to the church; the others he simply invites, as he says here. The covenant people not only separate themselves from the world, they're necessarily bound. They're commanded here. "I speak by way of command unto you that belong to the church; and unto those who do not belong to the church I speak by way of invitation." Of course, we invite the world to enter the covenants which we are commanded to obey. Or do we follow the lead of the corporate world?

Now we come to the sixth chapter, which is a very short chapter and simply implements just what he has said. This is how he went about doing it, he says. Alma ordained priests and elders. He went about setting up the official structure of the church, the ordinances, the priesthood, and the rites. The people who repented were duly baptized. Notice there was a cleansing of the church, straightening things out. If people wanted to join and repented, then they were baptized. On the other hand there were members of the church, who had been members all their lives. If they didn't repent, they were cut off. See, he is straightening things out again. Alma's strict as ever.

Verse 3: "Whosoever did belong to the church [he was cut off and rejected] that did not repent of their wickedness and humble themselves before God—I mean those who were lifted up in the pride of their hearts—the same were rejected [they were not in the records then], and their names were blotted out, that their names were not numbered among those of the righteous." So they took the repenters in and they threw nonrepenters out.

Verse 4: "And thus they began to establish the order of the church in the city of Zarahemla." That's what it's about. That's how you set it up; you implement what you've done. And the usual routine was followed; the law of the gospel was followed here. Notice,

they're commanded to gather themselves together often and join in fasting and prayer "in behalf of the welfare of the souls of those who knew not God." So they held their meetings and their fasts as well as their ordinances. Then Alma, having set things up here, departed to the city of Gideon. He came to a neighboring city, and was going to do the same thing there. He started out by telling the people of Gideon in chapter 7, "I attempt to address you in my language," which shows that they were speaking dialects. Dialects very easily spring up, as I said. These people had been here hundreds of years, and these out-settlements had become quite aloof. You can be sure they had different dialects. As I said, there are the twelve Hopi villages. They are close together, within a range of sixty miles, and each one has a separate dialect. You can recognize one villager from another. That's the way it happens. So he said, "I attempt to address you in my language."

He said, I've given up everything else. I gave up the judgment seat; it has been given to another. I've done that deliberately so that I could come and preach to you. He had left Zarahemla, and he was pleased with them. Verse 5 "My joy cometh over them after wading through much affliction and sorrow." [Now I trust it's going as well with you, he says.] But behold, I trust that ye are not in a state of so much unbelief as were your brethren." Zarahemla he had to work with. What did he mean? What is the state of unbelief? What's the wickedness? Back to the old song again: "I trust that ye have not set your hearts on riches and the vain things of the world; yea, I trust that you do not worship idols, but that ye do worship the true and the living God, and that ye look forward for the remission of your sins, with an everlasting faith, which is to come." See, if you're saved, you're looking forward to a remission of your sins; you haven't got it yet. You have them remitted, but as long as we're here in this world, we're under the troubles of our proud and angry dust. They won't fail here. Unbelief necessarily leads to setting one's heart on riches, since you must put your trust in something. Satan's doctrine, of course, is that you put your trust in them. And these things all go together. But we're not in the clear here. One's sins have not yet been remitted, as we learn in 2 Nephi 2:21 where he tells us that right up to the last day of our life we must repent. And that's why our lives have been extended, so it gives a better opportunity.

Then he says an interesting thing. He talks about the Lord who's going to come. Verse 9: "Prepare the way of the Lord. . . . He shall be born of Mary, at Jerusalem which is the land of our forefathers, she being a virgin, a precious and chosen vessel." He talks familiarly, as if they already knew about Mary. Well, *imra'a* means a *human being*, but it also means a *woman*. The regular *Mary* and *Martha* are both the same word, and they both mean *woman*. He shall be born of a woman, of *Mary* or of *Miriam*, at Jerusalem. They are all just words for *woman*. She's a special woman, and her name is *Mary*. He gives them the benefit of that; but they shouldn't be surprised at that.

And again, "born of Mary, at Jerusalem" has been a great charge against the Book of Mormon. He was born in Bethlehem. He wasn't born in Jerusalem, was he? Just read the *Amarna Letters* from the much earlier period than this. The *Amarna Letters* were written by princes and by a king from Jerusalem to Pharaoh [Amenhotep III] asking for military aid. They constantly refer in the *Amarna Letters* to "the land of Jerusalem" and various towns—to Bethlehem, which is in the land of Jerusalem. They always refer to "the land of Jerusalem" as city/state. Attica is the land of Athens. When you say *Athens*, what do you mean? You mean *Attica*, Athens and all the land around it. When you say *Sparta* you mean the same thing. But it's interesting that it specifically states this in the *Amarna Letters*; that was the usage, to talk about "the land of Jerusalem," and then the various

towns in it. He doesn't say he shall be born in the city of Jerusalem, [but] in "the land of Jerusalem," which is where he was born. Bethlehem is just six miles south of Jerusalem. It's a suburb, and it's always been part of the land of Jerusalem, and the seat of David as well.

"... she being a virgin, a precious and chosen vessel, who shall be overshadowed and conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost, and bring forth a son, yea, even the Son of God. . . . He will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people [now, this is the mission, the atoning sacrifice]. And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities." This is his task. But notice here. He could have done all this spiritually. After all, anyone with a sufficiently vivid imagination could have such an experience and go through with it, but here he must descend below all things. He would know exactly what it would be like, but that wasn't it. He must perform the thing himself, he says—must go through it himself. "And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people."

I don't doubt that he has other people everywhere, but when he comes down to deal with us, he takes on human flesh and goes through what we go through. He descended below all things. He took on flesh that he might redeem us, and so go all the way and suffer more than we can, in the flesh. This is the point, so that we never can say, "Oh yes, you were a god, it was divine with you. You could just imagine it, and it was done, or you could just snap your fingers." No, it isn't that way; it doesn't go that way. It says "that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities," that he may be filled with mercy, go all the way and know exactly what we've been through.

Verse 13: "Now the Spirit knoweth all things [he didn't need to do that, he could have handled that easily]; nevertheless the Son of God suffereth according to the flesh that he might take upon him the sins of the people, that he might blot out their transgressions according to the power of his deliverance; and now behold, this is the testimony which is in me." This is the power. He [Jesus Christ] has the power given him to do this. Because of sin, everything goes wrong. It cannot be corrected, because we go right on sinning. You can't pull yourself up by your own bootstraps. We're in quicksand, as far as that goes. The more you struggle, the deeper you'll get. You're not going to get out of it.

We're not going to be able to redeem ourselves or anything like that. It's our nature to be carnal, sensual, and devilish, and that's all there is to it. This is [Alma's] testimony.

Now, what we do is repent. Remember how Benjamin describes repentance: knowing who you are and what you are. When you know what you are, you will repent, and you'll become humble enough. And [Alma's] going to talk about what goes right along with this, the two rules. The two rules from Delphi were "know thyself" and "nothing to the right, nothing to the left—nothing in excess." These two rules are given right in these verses here. Verses 14: "Repent and be born again. . . . Be baptized unto repentance, that ye may be washed from your sins, that ye may have faith on the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world [going through the same imagery again]. . . . Lay aside every sin . . . and show unto your God that ye are willing to repent of your sins and enter into a covenant with him to keep his commandments, and witness it unto him this day by going into the waters of baptism." Of course, they witness after that that they are willing to take upon them the name of the Son and keep his commandments which he has given

them. When we partake of the sacrament, we witness the same thing we witness at baptism. When we partake of it we renew it each time. You enter into a covenant and witness it and refresh it that way. They use almost the same words here: Witnessing unto him by water, but here it's by the sacrament.

Verse 16: "And whosoever doeth this, and keepeth the commandments of God . . . shall have eternal life." This is the object; this is what we're after. We're going to find out that everybody's going to have eternal life anyway. They cannot die, we learn later on. The resurrection has been taken care of. So why are we so worried about eternal life? Well, if it's going to be eternal, the quality's going to be rather important, isn't it? Where you spend it and how you spend it has a great deal to say if it's going to be eternal. The [point] is not to go on living in the sewer. That's the difference "And now my beloved brethren, do you believe these things?" he asks you. As I said before, there's never been any dispute about the atonement. It's a very interesting thing; even among the doctors of the church, that word has never been debated. "Do you believe these things?" I know them by the spirit, he says.

Verse 19: "I perceive that ye are in the path which leads to the kingdom of God." Now he comes to the other one. *Repent* is to know yourself, and the other is "nothing in excess." As I've said before, this is not just a rule for behavior—don't eat too much or drink too much or eat too little or drink too little. That's true, but the whole universe is sustained by a fine tuning. The physicists call it the Fifteen Constants that must be finely tuned. The earth cannot be too far from the sun nor too near to it. Just a little too much, and there would be no life. The sun cannot be too hot or too cold. It's raising the devil now, though, isn't it. We have records of sunspots for over four hundred years. Every sunspot has been recorded. When I was a little kid I made them all the time; it's very easy to do. The largest protrusions and the largest sunspots ever seen are occurring on the sun now, so keep your hat on when you go out. I wouldn't like to be on the shuttle right now. Strange things happening now. For four hundred years it never happened like that before. It always comes and goes, and what's more, there are more sunspots appearing at one time than have ever appeared at one time before. It's beginning to look serious. Maybe the sun will wipe out. Well, we'll have a congressional committee and consult about what we'll do with the sun then, won't we. That'll settle that [laughter].

But notice, here's this fine tuning. It can't be too dry, it can't be too wet. Parts of the earth are becoming desert now, and it's utter catastrophe. Other parts are becoming too wet. We know that utter catastrophe. As he says here (verse 20): "He cannot walk in crooked paths; neither doth he vary from that which he had said; neither hath he a shadow of turning from the right to the left [stay on the path; you don't go too far to the right, you don't go too far to the left], or from that which is right to that which is wrong; therefore, his course is one eternal round." It's one round, and it's eternal. How can it be straight and round at the same time? Well, *straight* meaning *strict*, staying on the course. "The time shall come, yea, and it shall be at the last day, that he who is filthy shall remain in his filthiness." We must break with it while we can, he says, because this offer is not permanent. This will be changed. You reach a point of no return. Then you have to settle for something lower, and you're going to have another kind of life after that. [People] do reach those crisis points. They either go to the right or left—go too far to one side or the other. They'll stay there and stick there.

Now the main thing: "I have said these things unto you that I might awaken you to a sense of your duty to God, that ye may walk blameless before him, that ye may walk after

the holy order of God, after which ye have been received.” Again, he talks about the specific sins and names them—we just had them. But what about these virtues? What does doing right consist of? Now he makes a specific list of them. This is helpful here in verse 23: “And now I would that ye should be humble, and be submissive and gentle.” Notice these aren’t acts; these are states of mind. What makes a sin a sin is not what you do; what may be a virtue one day can be a vice the next. It always amused me in Germany before the war, everybody would go to the city baths to bathe. There was this big bathhouse. Thursday was family day, and everybody would go in. Well, they had no swimming suits or anything—they’d just go in. On family day everybody would go in together, and that was fine. But any other day, if anybody of the opposite sex came in, they’d be arrested and taken to jail. That was terrible, it was obscene. But as long as it was Saturday, it was all right. It was the very same thing. Saturday is the ancient Scandinavian *laugardagr*. That’s wash day, bathing day. So all the families would bathe together on Thursday. But if you strayed into the wrong pool on a Friday or a Monday, there’d be a scream and an uproar, and you’d be hauled out of there. An amazing thing! It’s just custom that does it here. But see it’s the state of mind that makes the difference, and it is here, too. Well, of course, “to the pure all things are pure,” as Paul says. But to be humble is a condition, a state of mind. To “be submissive and gentle; easy to be entreated; full of patience and long-suffering; being temperate in all things; being diligent in keeping the commandments of God at all times.” Here is a thing you must do: you are commanded to ask. We hesitate to ask because we’re too proud to ask, as if you go as a beggar. It takes more pride to give than it does to ask. It takes more humility to ask. A proud man can give, but a proud man won’t ask. It makes a difference, “asking for whatsoever things ye stand in need, both spiritual and temporal.”

You have a perfect right to ask the Lord for what you need. Don’t hesitate. Of course, in doing so, you look into yourself and ask yourself whether you deserve it or not. It will make you feel guilty. It will bring you around to these other things, “always returning thanks unto God for whatsoever things ye do receive. And see that ye have faith, hope, and charity.” Now these are the big three. You say, “Well, here’s the Book of Mormon being lifted from the New Testament.” No, it isn’t. Richard Reitzenstein showed many years ago that the formula—faith, hope, and charity—is a very ancient one. It’s found in Hebrew writings, and it’s a formula found in the Hermetic writings quite commonly. It’s not limited to the New Testament at all. It’s very ancient. These three go together.

But notice what I notice here. I don’t see in this list of virtues hard work, thrift, drive, ambition, prudence, smarts. I don’t see any of that at all. You find the same thing in Isaiah. The sins Isaiah lists are the things we consider virtues. The virtues Isaiah lists are the things we consider weaknesses and wimpishness. Only a wimp would have all these things—being diligent and asking for whatever you want. Notice you’re always submissive. You do the asking of what you stand in need—always returning thanks, temperate. It sounds like Uriah Heap, except he was a hypocrite. Diligent in keeping the commandments, patient, gentle, etc. and so forth. This is what God demands of us, and what we don’t give. This is a very important theme in the Book of Mormon, always having faith and charity. Verse 27: “And now, may the peace of God rest upon you, and upon your houses and lands [all things are blessed where the Saints settle, as Brigham Young says] and upon your flocks and herds, and all that you possess, your women and your children.”

So he left them and went to another city. Next he went to the city of Melek. This was a very interesting mission he had in the city of Melek. What he was doing was going

around establishing the order of the church in all these places. It says here [Alma 8:1]: “having established the order of the church, according as he had before done in the land of Zarahemla.” Zarahemla is the model; it is just like the center stake of Zion. They’re all organized on the pattern of Zarahemla here. “Yea, he returned to his own house at Zarahemla to rest himself from the labors which he had performed.”

Then he decided to go to the land of Melek and look that one over, west of the river Sidon. We’re told that Sidon bounded Zarahemla on the east, so he went west to Melek on the Pacific Coast side, which was the wilderness side, too. It has always been the wilderness side, and still is. The wildest parts of Central America are all down the western side. The eastern side is where all the populations are, the cities, and this is so in the Book of Mormon. Verse 4: “And he began to teach the people in the land of Melek according to the holy order of God, by which he had been called.” [See, the west of the Sidon was by the wilderness side.] “And they were baptized throughout all the land; So that when he had finished his work at Melek he departed thence, and traveled three days’ journey on the north of the land of Melek.” He was getting up there now, and he came to Ammonihah, which was the wickedest city, perhaps, in the Book of Mormon. They were really wicked. They were worse than the Zoramites, and the people in Ammonihah were the ones that were utterly wiped out when the destruction came. They were Nephites, notice. Verse 7: “Now it was the custom of the people of Nephi to call their lands, and their cities, and their villages, yea, even all their small villages, after the name of him who first possessed them,” just as we have Brigham City, and we have Provo here. Etienne Provost, a French trapper, was the first man to settle and camp here. The man who settles it usually gets it named after him.

The people of Ammonihah were rough. Verse 9: “Now Satan had gotten great hold upon the hearts of the people of the city of Ammonihah; therefore they would not hearken unto the words of Alma. Nevertheless Alma labored much in the spirit, wrestling with God in mighty prayer.” Wrestling with God? Does God resist you? Do you have to resist him? No, you have to put yourself into position, in the right state of mind. Remember, in our daily walks of life as we go around doing things, we’re far removed. If you’re bowling, or if you’re in business, or if you’re jogging or something like that, doing the things you usually do, and then you have to go from there to prayer, it’s quite a transition. It’s like a culture shock if you really take it seriously. You have to get yourself in form, like a wrestler having to look around for a hold or get a grip, as Jacob did when he wrestled with the Lord. You have to size yourself up, take your stance, circle the ring, and try to find out how you’re going to deal with this particular problem. You’re not wrestling with the Lord; you’re wrestling with yourself. Remember, Enos is the one who really wrestled. And he told us what he meant when he was wrestling; he was wrestling with himself, his own inadequacies. How can I possibly face the Lord in my condition, is what he says. So this is what we’re doing.

In the world we operate on a different level. It takes great mental effort to confront the Lord in all seriousness. We do it at various shallow levels, by routine. We have a prayer here because we feel we should. If we’re going to make it really serious, we have to work on it harder. We couldn’t do it cold. In other words, you can’t just come in cold. It’s like an artist, a cellist, or a pianist. I have lots of relatives who are musicians. You can’t just come in cold and begin a concert. Or even a tenor has to warm up and get his voice ready. But you have to warm up your fingers. My wife plays the cello, and she has to warm up her fingers and her instrument. It takes at least 15 minutes to warm up. Then you’re in the mood. Then you have to take a while to think about it, and then you’re

ready to go. Now if it comes to confronting the Lord, you have to be very serious about that sort of thing. It's quite a preliminary exercise, which is called wrestling with the Lord, wrestling with yourself. He's at a distance. That's what he had to go through here, and very few people are willing to do it, but it really pays off because you know exactly what you want and where you stand.

But they wouldn't have anything to do with him. These weren't dissenters. See, these were people who had been living alone by themselves. They broke off at an early time, and they'd had their own religion for a long time. And what's more, there's evidence later in the Book of Mormon that they had been adopting some of the earlier religions that had been there, too. We know who you are, all right, they said, no matter how hard he worked. Verse 11: "Nevertheless, they hardened their hearts saying unto him: Behold, we know that thou art Alma; and we know that thou art high priest over the church which thou hast established in many parts of the land, according to your tradition; and we are not of thy church, and we do not believe in such foolish traditions." No thank you. They were very frank about it—very rude, as a matter of fact. [There is a saying that] nothing is worse than a great man who has lost his clout, and here he had. "Thou hast no power over us." They leaned over backwards to insult him because they knew he had no power, by the constitution he himself agreed on. He could not use any religious compulsion on anyone. "And thou hast delivered up the judgment seat unto Nephiah [and you're not chief of the army anymore]; therefore thou art not the chief judge over us." He had lost his clout, and what did they do? They reviled him. They spat on him "and caused that he should be cast out of their city." They threw him out. The same thing happened to Samson, King Alfred, Ammon, and King Lear after they lost their office. It wasn't that they were just retired to nothing—they were kicked around after that. [It's as if] the people have been waiting for the time when you would retire, and they could tell you what they think of you. And this is what happened here. He had a rough time.

He was very upset. His mission had failed. He had a "terrible anguish of soul," as he said in verse 14. He was weighed down, and his heart was broken. He was going to leave and go home. He was met by an angel, and the angel told him to rejoice. I'm the one from whom you received your first message, he said. Verse 15: "Behold, I am he that delivered it unto you." That's an interesting thing. Remember in Luke when the gospel was first being established, an angel went around and visited various people, namely Mary, the shepherds in the field, and Zacharias in the temple. It was the same angel; it was Gabriel. He said, I'm Gabriel. That was his particular mission, to introduce that dispensation of time. Obviously this angel was assigned to Alma. He said, I'm the same one who visited you before, and now here I am again. He was watching over Alma. We used to say much more about guardian angels in the Church. We used to teach much more of that doctrine, always taught it to our kids. We don't do it anymore. I don't know why not, because it's a very real thing, the presence of another world.

Well, anyway, the angel said, I'm the same one that visited you when you were a naughty boy—remember me? Now I'm visiting you in another condition. You're the one who's sorry now. It's their wickedness that afflicts you now. I brought the first message: "I am he that delivered it unto you." Now you just return to the city of Ammonihah, just go right back, and tell them they will repent or the Lord will destroy it—and he certainly did destroy it. He entered the city, and he was hungry, "and he said to a man: Will ye give an humble servant of God something to eat? And the man said unto him: I am a Nephite." Notice that they were mixed races, mixed blood all over the place. He introduced himself as a Nephite. Although Ammonihah was a Nephite city, they were not all Nephites in it.

Question: I'm just curious. I notice your pronunciation of the city is different from that in the pronouncing guide. I was curious as to who made up the pronouncing guide and does it claim to be correct?

Answer: Well, there are very strict rules to accenting Hebrew and Arabic; they're unbreakable. But this is an Egyptian name. The *-iah* part means "Ammon is God." Of course, Ammon was the god of the empire. Ammon is by far the most common name in the Book of Mormon. It also means "the great god, most high god, the hidden god," and all sorts of things. The name was used freely on both sides of the line. In classics the unbreakable rule is this: Always convert a Greek word into Latin, and then pronounce the Latin word as if it were English. But this doesn't necessarily apply to Semitic words necessarily, to Bible words. This would actually be Am-mo-NI-hah, if we were saying it in English. It couldn't be AM-mo-ni-hah in any Semitic language because the recessive accent doesn't go that far, if you have a double consonant in between. So Am-MO-ni-hah is good enough.

Question: Who made the pronouncing guide?

Answer: Oh, a committee up in Salt Lake. They sit around and make these things. I've been on it, and it was fun. It was a million laughs the way they go around and around about things. It's a matter of taste. But remember, it's English we speak, and it's perfectly correct. Now for example, when Professor Gregoire, who was a foremost authority on Byzantine history, gave a class in Byzantine history at Berkeley, he always said CON-stan-tine. He would never say CON-stan-teen. That would be considered bad taste. We say CON-stan-teen, and he said CON-stan-tine. Because it's *ine*, we pronounce it like English, but the English call it CON-stan-tine. They pronounce things quite differently there. You can call it Phelo or Philo if you want. We call him Philo. But we don't say Phi-la-delphia. There are people who do, though. So, take your choice. Nephi would be *Neb-hi*. You notice I don't spell it with an *f*, because it's not an *f*. It's two separate letters *b h*. It means "my Lord is God" actually, and it was an Egyptian name at the time of Lehi. Remember Nephites sometimes had Egyptian names.

Now for example, the Germans pronounce Book of Mormon names very differently from us. A-BIN-a-di, which is perfectly natural with us, is Ah-bee-NAD-ee with them. They wouldn't recognize A-BIN-a-di in a million years. It's Ah-bee-NAD-ee, which is probably closer to the original. It means "my father has vowed." *Abi* is "my father."

We'll get along here now, because an interesting thing is going to happen here in the city. This man said (verse 20): "I am a Nephite [which points out some racial difference here], and I know that thou art a holy prophet of God," because he's been visited by the same angel. Gabriel got around in the New Testament. This angel gets around here. Sorry he didn't leave his name. "Therefore go with me into my house and I will impart unto thee of my food." [Alma] told him about the situation, so he took him to his house. The man was called Amulek, and notice they go very strong for the *mulek* words. Its basic root meaning is *property* or *possession*. But it also means "king, to rule, to have power"—all sorts of things. Like the word *Alexander* and the word *Michael*, it means that you have power and force.

Verse 21: "And he brought forth bread and meat and set before Alma. . . . [And Alma introduced himself and said] I am Alma, and am the high priest over the church of God

throughout the land. And behold, I have been called to preach the word of God among this people.” And Alma tarried many days at Amulek’s house. And the people got worse and worse and didn’t repent. They [Alma and Amulek] went around preaching, but it didn’t do any good. In verse 30 Alma and Amulek joined forces: “And Alma went forth, and also Amulek, among the people to declare the words of God unto them, and they were filled with the Holy Ghost. And they had power given unto them, insomuch that they could not be confined in dungeons; neither was it possible that any man could slay them; nevertheless they did not exercise their power until they were bound in bands and cast into prison.”

They got away with all sorts of things, but you know this often happens. One thing after another happens to some people, and they get through all sorts of things—Alexander the Great, for example. It’s incredible what he went through until he got drunk at a party and got a fever. He was poisoned, some say. Or Prince Eugene. Some people have been through untold battles without any scars at all. Porter Rockwell was shot at more than a duck in a shooting gallery, but he was never harmed. There are such people, you know, that just walk right through. And this happens often. There are some stories about that, but there are guardian angels. There is such a thing; we are being watched. But they were able to put them in jail just the same. “They were bound in bands and cast into prison. Now, this was done that the Lord might show forth his power in them.” He let that happen.

Now, Alma preached to the people of Ammonihah. This is what he preached to them. But Amulek’s story is in the chapter after that; that’s the amusing story. But first Alma was preaching to them. Was it the same old thing here? Well, it was different because they put up a fight. They argued back. They shouted back and forth. It turned out to be a shouting match. Alma began to preach to the people, and he said (chapter 9, verse 1): “As I began to preach unto them, they began to contend with me, saying . . .” This is Alma’s own record here; before it was Moroni’s record. They said, you have no clout—we don’t know who you are.

Verse 2: “Who art thou? Suppose ye that we shall believe the testimony of one man, although he should preach unto us that the earth should pass away?” We can’t take it on your word alone. Now, here’s a nice touch of tragic irony. This is right out of *Oedipus*, isn’t it, when they said, “Suppose ye that we shall believe the testimony of one man, although he should preach unto us that the earth should pass away? Now they understood not the words which they spake; for they knew not that the earth should pass away.” They were pronouncing the doom on themselves. Their city was buried completely. As *Oedipus* says, even if it’s somebody in my own house, I’ll have revenge on him—even if he’s the one who killed the old king. Of course it was he himself he was pronouncing the curse on. And it’s the same thing here about accepting the testimony of one man that the earth should pass away. At the beginning of *Oedipus*, the prophet comes in and prophesies what’s going to happen. Then he [*Oedipus*] says, He’s only a single man; what’s his prophecies worth? See, he has to have a whole college of prophets.

They’ve just discovered a new Egyptian papyrus I’m working on, a fascinating thing in which the school of the prophets of Pharaoh do exactly as they did with Moses. There was a real prophet with great gifts, and they did everything they could to snow him under. They did everything they could to keep him from access to Pharaoh because he’d show them all up. [It tells] how they plotted against him. The main thing was to keep him low profile, keep him out in the country (he was very young), don’t let anybody notice him.

They did everything they could to dampen his career, in other words. It's an amusing story on how all the great prophets at court, the magicians, did that sort of thing.

Verse 5: "Now they knew not that God could do such marvelous works." For them, things just happened. If marvels do happen, are they without cause? When something remarkable happens, and everything is remarkable that happens, we should consult the causes and what is behind it. It does help us. Shouldn't we ask questions? Shouldn't we be curious about things? People aren't today. That's the thing—we're not curious in this school. I was talking to a faculty member yesterday, and he said that the majors he is teaching are not in the least bit curious about the subject they're supposed to be learning. It used to be that majors were completely absorbed in it [their subject] and wouldn't do anything else. They would go without eating and sleeping; they'd live on a dime a day. They were just so passionately involved in the subject. Today—it's career, something you go through with.

Verse 6: "And they said: Who is God, that sendeth no more authority than one man among this people, to declare unto them the truth of such great and marvelous things?" The lone dissenter is the main theme in the Book of Mormon, whether it's Lehi, Nephi, Alma, Ammon, or Enos or whoever it is. What they want is big authority, as if truth couldn't stand alone. He says, "Have ye forgotten the tradition of your fathers? . . . Do ye not remember that our father, Lehi, was brought out of Jerusalem by the hand of God?" If you want to know one man alone, [remember] what he did. This is in answer to that question: Why should we believe just one man? Well, he gives them the case of Lehi. Verse 12: "He [God] has commanded you to repent, or he will utterly destroy you from off the face of the earth." Now this was to be a test case and a model, this city here. And here is the rule that's given again. "Inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper in the land. . . . Inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord." Now all the promises are given with the curse in the Book of Mormon, as in the Dead Sea Scrolls. There's the *berākḏāh*, the blessing, but never without the *qelālāh*. The *qelālāh* is the cursing; the *berākḏāh* is the blessing. The two fit right together, and they do all through the Book of Mormon. It's the condition. You don't enter a very profitable contract without a penalty clause. If you flout the contract and break the rules, are you released then because you broke the contract? Oh, no, you have to pay a penalty for that. You go to jail for that or something else [happens].

Verse 14: "Inasmuch as the Lamanites have not kept the commandments of God, they have been cut off from the presence of the Lord." Then he talks about the Lamanites here. He says, there's still a chance for you. If there's a chance for the Lamanites, there'll be one for you, too. "For there are many promises which are extended to the Lamanites; for it is because of the traditions of their fathers that caused them to remain in their state of ignorance; therefore the Lord will be merciful unto them and prolong their existence in the land [they're not the same]. And at some period of time they will be brought to believe in his word, . . . and many of them will be saved." This is the prophecy for the Lamanites, because their fathers are to blame more than anything. But, not with you, he says in verse 18: "Your days shall not be prolonged in the land, for the Lamanites shall be sent upon you [he's going to turn the tables; these are supposedly the good Nephites he was talking to]; and if ye repent not, they shall come in a time when you know not, and ye shall be visited with utter destruction [because you've had the greater privilege]. . . . He would rather suffer that the Lamanites might destroy all his people who are called the people of Nephi [remember, this is just a designation], if it were possible that they could

fall into sins and transgressions, after having had so much light and so much knowledge.” He would prefer to have the Lamanites destroy them utterly if they don’t remain true and faithful. We should envy the Russians [in light of what] he says. “Yea, after having been such a highly favored people of the Lord; yea, after having been favored above every other nation, kindred, tongue, or people; after having had all things made known unto them . . .” If that happens, you’re much worse off than anybody else.

Verse 21: “Having been visited by the Spirit of God; having conversed with angels, and having been spoken unto by the voice of the Lord; and having the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and also many gifts, the gift of speaking with tongues, and the gift of preaching, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the gift of translation.” [He keeps repeating *after*. Notice how very powerful an orator is Alma.] Yea, and after having been delivered of God out of the land of Jerusalem [there it is again, the land of Jerusalem, not the city of Jerusalem; remember, their county house, the land of their inheritance, was in the land of Jerusalem, too], by the hand of the Lord; having been saved from famine, and from sickness, and all manner of diseases of every kind [all the things they have gone through]. . . . And now behold I say unto you, that if this people, who have received so many blessings from the hand of the Lord, should transgress contrary to the light and knowledge which they do have, I say unto you that if this be the case, that if they should fall into transgression, it would be far more tolerable for the Lamanites than for them.” The Book of Mormon rubs this in so much; it must have something for us. It must be saying something to us. I can’t get away from that.

Verse 24: “For behold, the promises of the Lord are extended to the Lamanites, but they are not unto you if ye transgress [notice they’re extended to the Lamanites unconditionally, but they’re not extended to you if you transgress]; for has not the Lord expressly promised and firmly decreed, that if ye will rebel against him that ye shall utterly be destroyed from off the face of the earth?” [He can’t make it strong enough. This is the promise on the land.] And now for this cause, that ye may not be destroyed, the Lord has sent his angel to visit many of his people [see here again, an angel always comes in a great crisis to turn things around; this city is in decay and out of control; the only thing that can turn things around is the appearance of an angel, just as he turned Alma around when he was a young man] declaring unto them that they must go forth and cry mightily unto this people, saying: Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is nigh at hand.”

This is a mighty angel flying. This is what the angel Moroni had to preach, was this. Moroni is the man who wrote this book. What is he doing? He’s warning us all over the place. He’s the one on the Salt Lake Temple, you know; you may have seen him. And they’re threatened with this. Well, would we welcome this?

Verses 26: “And not many days hence the Son of God shall come in his glory; and his glory shall be the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace, equity, and truth, full of patience, mercy, and long-suffering, quick to hear the cries of his people and to answer their prayers. And behold, he cometh to redeem those who will be baptized unto repentance, through faith on his name [and membership levels are not the decisive factors]. . . . The time is at hand that all men shall reap a reward of their works . . . [whether you belong to the church or not]. . . . If they have been righteous they shall reap the salvation of their souls, according to the power and deliverance of Jesus Christ.” Notice, there are just two conditions, and he told us what righteousness is. He just said, as the Lord: grace, equity, truth, patience, mercy, long-suffering. These are the characteristics the Lord has shown us, and if they’re righteous, they’ll reap salvation to their souls. But if

they've been evil—no. Verse 30: “. . . bring forth works which are meet for repentance [he says] ye are a lost and a fallen people.” This is the last call, and we don't like it either. Were the people satisfied with this? This made them mad as hornets, as the next verse tells us. When he tells them frankly, he ends up by saying, “ye are a lost and a fallen people. Now it came to pass that when I, Alma, had spoken these words, behold the people were wroth with me because I said unto them that they were a hard-hearted and a stiffnecked people.”

So then Amulek stood forth and began to preach to them. Amulek introduced himself, and he is a very striking character. These vignettes, these character sketches in the Book of Mormon, are very clearly marked. He was the most respected citizen you could possibly imagine. He was a blueblood. Alma 10:2: “I am Amulek, . . . a descendant of Aminadi, . . . and Aminadi was a descendant of Nephi, who was the son of Lehi.” He was proud of his genealogy. And here we have an extremely important genealogical note. Lehi was a descendant of Manasseh, who was half Egyptian. His mother was Asenath, who was of the blood of Ham, a pure Egyptian. She had to be—her father was a high priest of Heliopolis. [Lehi] was a descendant of Manasseh whose twin brother was Ephraim. We claim that we are descended from him. He was also a son of Asenath, the Egyptian woman. (I should be writing this on the board—I'm getting myself all mixed up here.) Verse 3: “. . . and who was the son of Joseph who was sold into Egypt by the hands of his brethren.”

They have the blood of Egypt in them, and they have the blood of all the Twelve Tribes from Joseph and Manasseh. And they have about everything you can imagine in the mixed blood of Egypt. We've seen that before. And notice he says, besides his distinguished birth and background, “I am also a man of no small reputation among all those who know me [he had a great reputation, was well known and highly respected]; . . . I have also acquired much riches by the hand of my industry.” He had been a successful businessman, and made himself very rich. He had been very successful and very respected. He was la creme de la creme.

Verses 5: “Nevertheless, after all this, I never have known much of the ways of the Lord.” He said he was born in the church and knew about the gospel. How come, what's happening here? Well, of course, here we have the parable of the sowers. The seed falls and the cares of the world make them so busy after they've accepted the gospel, they get lost and drop it. So he says, “I never have known much of the ways of the Lord, and his mysteries and marvelous power. . . . I have seen much of his mysteries and his marvelous power; yea, even in the preservation of the lives of this people. Nevertheless, I did harden my heart [he was too busy getting rich, apparently; he wouldn't listen to it], for I was called many times, and I would not hear [obviously, something was distracting him; he said he had gained much riches by his industry; well, his industry was distracting him]. . . . I knew concerning these things, yet I would not know [this is the case of so many people]; therefore, I went on rebelling against God in the wickedness of my heart,” until he was journeying along and this angel came and stopped him. See, he would have gone all the way, too. In the Book of Mormon the gap is crossed by the angel again. It's the angel that gets us off dead center when we're stuck that way, but only on great occasions.

Verse 9: “And the angel said unto me he is a holy man; wherefore I know he is a holy man because it was said by an angel of God” This is how he was introduced to Alma. Verse 12: “And now, when Amulek had spoken these words the people began to be astonished.” Well, we may ask, incidentally, about this role model. We'll see what they do. They all turn against him. Of course they do. They began to be astonished, seeing that he was such

a respectable person. The people turned against him as they had turned against Alma and insulted him. Notice that they're going to rough him up here. They try to trip him up with the cunning of their words, "that they might deliver them to their judges that they might be judged according to the law . . . cast into prison, according to the crime which they could make appear or witness against them." They're going to frame them and send them to jail. Everybody turned against him. But you say, "Ah, a rich man of good family—surely his relatives and family would not turn against him." Well, come again. If you turn to Alma 15:16, you'll read: "And it came to pass that Alma and Amulek, Amulek having forsaken all his gold [he's not rich any more—just as Alma wasn't powerful any more, so they said you've lost your clout and made fun of him], and silver, and his precious things, which were in the land of Ammonihah, for the word of God [as soon as he got rid of his money, what happened then? It's the story of Timon of Athens], he being rejected by those who were once his friends and also by his father and his kindred."

Not only his friends rejected him, but he lost his money and his own family. His father, and his kindred will have nothing to do with him, because he lost his money—not because he was preaching the gospel. There are some marvelous psychological insights in the Book of Mormon, but I see that time is up now, and we'll continue with this scandal. "Go hence and have more talk of these sad things."