

TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

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Helaman 1–3

Geography and Ecology

Well, now, we'd better move along. After all, we're in the first chapter of Helaman, and we've just come to Coriantumr's exploit where he marched right into Zarahemla. The reason he could do it is because there was so much social unrest in Zarahemla. This Coriantumr was the leader, and he was appointed leader by the [son of] Ammoron who was the brother of that rascal Amalickiah. [Tubaloth] is a nephew of Amalickiah, and he was put in charge of things, but he put Coriantumr in charge. And here's an interesting distinction. Notice Helaman 1:15: ". . . And they were led by a man whose name was Coriantumr; and he was a descendant of Zarahemla [that means he wasn't a Nephite]; and he was a dissenter from among the Nephites." So Nephites is a political term here, as it has been telling us for a long time. He dissented from the Nephite society. They all call themselves Nephites. He dissented from among the Nephites. He was among the Nephites. ". . . and he was a large and mighty man." But he was a descendant of Zarahemla, who was a Mulekite, of course. He founded Zarahemla.

Verse 16: "Therefore, the king of the Lamanites, whose name was Tubaloth . . ." That's very interesting because in the twenty-second dynasty [of Egypt] just before Lehi's time, the names Tacalot and Tubaloth were common names. Tacalot was especially used, but it follows that same structure.

So Nephite was a political term here. He [Tubaloth] appointed Coriantumr leader for this enterprise. He marched smack down into Zarahemla, and the reason they were able to make such an easy break-in was like [what happened in] Singapore or Pearl Harbor. Their guard was down. They didn't expect anything at all. But wham! It hit them like everything. The British said the Japanese could never come through the Malay Peninsula to Singapore. It would always be safe. So their mighty guns—they had sixteen-inch guns—couldn't be pointed in that direction. They thought they were safe from that direction. That's where the Japanese came from, of course. But as the great General Suvarov said, "Where a deer can go, a man can go, and where a man can go, an army can go." So don't expect there's any terrain that can't be negotiated by an army if a deer can do it. And that's what the Japanese did on the Malay Peninsula. They just came down. The British had their big guns, but they couldn't point them at the Japanese. They were pointed out toward the sea.

But there was so much contention among them [the Nephites]. They hadn't kept sufficient guard, it says, over them. As I say, we all know about Pearl Harbor. We had all sorts of guards there, but it's the mental state. That's the all-important thing, you'll notice, in war or anything else. And they marched with great speed. It was a real blitz attack here, it says in verse 19.

Verse 20: "Therefore Coriantumr did cut down the watch by the entrance of the city, and did march forth with his whole army into the city, and they did slay every one who did

oppose them, insomuch that they did take possession of the whole city.” This was Zarahemla, right in the center of the land. Pacumeni, the chief judge, had to flee. He was killed trying to get away. Coriantumr then obtained possession of the strongest hold in all the land, which was the center, and then he went forth to expand his conquest toward the city of Bountiful and obtain the north parts of the land. That was the strongest part, as you know. And he was met by small bodies, which they cut down. They should have practiced guerilla warfare, as we’ve learned since then. He marched right through the center, but Moronihah had put all the defenses on the outside. Of course, they never expected anything like that. So Coriantumr had actually gotten himself surrounded, and he was taken care of.

In verse 27 he marched through the land, slaying the people with a great slaughter, like the Nazi carnival going into Poland in September 1938. Tyrtaeus and Callinus, the Greek poets, described how the barbarians marched. It was their way to just go through and slaughter everything indiscriminately. It’s the normal procedure for armies anyway. Moronihah had sent forth Lehi to stop him. When he met Lehi that was too much, because Lehi was a very tough guy. They began to fall back on Zarahemla, and Moronihah had them in retreat. There was an exceedingly bloody battle, and Coriantumr was killed in the center [of the land]. Nobody had their hearts in this thing. Notice, neither side was very worked up about it. They were both willing to call it quits then.

Verse 32: “. . . and the Lamanites did yield themselves into the hands of the Nephites.” [What did the Nephites do? They just let them go, that was all.] . . . Moronihah took possession of the city of Zarahemla again, and caused that the Lamanites who had been taken prisoners should depart out of the land in peace.” Notice, no reparations, no indemnities. Well, was that wise? Look what they’d done. Here was an army that had raided their country, sacked their capital, killed people right and left, slaughtered everything, and yet they were let off without any reparations or indemnities or anything like that. Well, that was wisdom, of course, because the reparations and indemnities always lay the foundation for the next war. Remember World War I when Clemenceau and Lloyd George insisted on making the Germans pay the last pound of flesh? Everybody had been guilty there. Woodrow Wilson was against it, but his plan was turned down both by the Senate and those countries [France and England], especially Clemenceau. They really cracked down on the Germans and forced the situation that brought about World War II—creating economic policies that wrecked the German economy.

On the other hand, the reason we’ve had peace since World War II, in spite of people always whipping up the Cold War and things like that, is the wisdom of two men, George Marshall and Douglas MacArthur. The one put Europe back on its feet with the Marshall Plan instead of reparations, you see. Germany got back on its feet very quickly, and now Germany and Japan are the leading economic powers because of the wisdom of George Marshall and his plan. And the conquering hero, the Caesar, Douglas MacArthur, played the role of a very wise man. He could have done anything he wanted; he was the conqueror. As far as the Japanese were concerned, he was it. And what he did was gave them their democratic government. He made it possible, a man like that. There’s no point to making vicious reparations. After all, I think bombing Nagasaki and Hiroshima was bad enough. But no, there was to be no punishment, and there were to be no reprisals against them at all. That’s the reason we’ve had a fairly sane world since then for a while. So that’s the way you do it. And it’s very wise.

Then what happens? The troubles go on among the Nephites though. Notice they fill the judgment seat. This judgment seat is most important. Who has more power than the chief justice of the Supreme Court today? Nobody does. He has as much power as anyone. The Supreme Court “makes” the laws. They make the final decisions—it rests with them. So we had all this fuss about Bork and people like that. It’s a very important office. The question is asked now, shouldn’t that man be elected? He’s someone who’s appointed according to the whim of this person or that person, this interest or that. He’s appointed without having to run for office at all. The power of judges is very great, as you know, and has led to a lot of questions recently.

But Helaman was appointed to fill the judgment seat, and Kishkumen, the hit man, prepared to destroy Helaman too. And he was upheld by his band. Now we have organized crime, you see. Helaman 2:3: “And he was upheld by his band, who had entered into a covenant that no one should know his wickedness.” See, we do not know what’s behind Noriega. It goes way back, for example. There’s this organized crime, as we said before. If you were in business with a person who had no principles—you knew he didn’t—who would kill anybody for money, betray anybody and break any promise, or shoot you in the back, how could you possibly do business with him and get along with him? Well, men like that gang themselves together because they know in unity there is strength. The only way you can bind them is with these fearful oaths and covenants, terrible things they take.

So you have the evil brotherhoods as well as the righteous brotherhoods. There are two sides to brotherhood, just as there are two sides to Babylon. There’s a good side, a cultural side. Athens was a great Babylon for a while, but only very briefly as in the Book of Mormon. There are also two sides to the warlords, as a matter of fact. We just mentioned those. They can be the great conquerors; they can also be the great peacemakers. The greatest of the warlords was Alexander, and he did more for civilization perhaps than any other man did. And so there are good sides to the warlords; there are also good sides to the primitives who can have their bad sides. There can be tribes governed by witch doctors who practice cannibalism. That’s not a good side. On the other side there can be the gentle savages, whom Columbus discovered. There are such people—the Pueblo Indians, the peaceful Indians, the Moqui, the Hopi, etc.

Now here comes an expert, this Gadianton. He was a pro. He was the new professional Capo. Verse 4: “For there was one Gadianton, who was exceedingly expert in many words [he was a fast talker, and that’s important—they always are, you’ll notice], and also in his craft.” Now this was his craft, and he was polished in it. He was proud of it. He was efficient; he did a thorough job of bumping off. He would take a contract, and he was good at it, which was “the secret work of murder” and he could crack a bank anytime. He was good at murder and robbery. And we have experts in that today. He was a professional. He was the leader of the band of Kishkumen.

And he worked on them and said, look if you’ll put me in charge of the whole operation I can take care of my boys. If they would place him in the judgment seat—that’s all he wanted—“he would grant unto those who belonged to his band that they should be placed in power and authority among the people.” They’d have the high office. Well, this is just the feudal system. The big bandit gets his supporters, those who support him most valiantly. He’s the ring giver, as the opening lines of *Beowulf* tell us, going back to the eighth century there, typical ancestors. So that’s the way we take care of our boys. We do that in corporations, etc.

And here's one of the servants of Helaman, “. . . having been out by night, and having obtained, through disguise, a knowledge of those plans . . .” Now what was his disguise? His disguise was that of a defector, of course. He'd come over as an insider who knew all about it, and defectors are quite common. He was a mole. He was actually an undercover man; he was a double agent for Helaman. He knew all the workings, and this is why they would come to him and why Gadianton said, lead me to him. Get me an audience with the judge so I can bump him off. So this was one of the servants of Helaman; otherwise, this looks rather confusing, but it isn't when you realize the nature of his disguise. He didn't wear a mask or a false moustache or anything like that. But his disguise was his persona. He was a [pretended] defector. He'd come over; he knew all about Helaman. And he had attained “a knowledge of those plans which had been laid by this band to destroy Helaman.” This is their regular police practice. He was put in there as an undercover man, a double agent.

Verse 7: “And it came to pass that he met Kishkumen [in the street—going about his business and probably waiting for him], and he gave unto him a sign [Kishkumen knew who he was then and decided he could trust him] . . . desiring that he would conduct him to the judgment seat that he might murder Helaman.” He knew where the judgment seat was, but, you see, this is what you would ask of an insider or a defector, someone who knew about it. He could get him into the presence of the judge without being suspect. As the notorious Gadianton—well, he wasn't notorious yet—he'd run a risk, but not with this man to take him there. So that's why he was very pleased.

Verse 8: “And when the servant of Helaman had known all the heart of Kishkumen [he found out all about it], and how that it was his object to murder, and also that it was the object of all those who belonged to his band to murder, and to rob, and to gain power, (and this was their secret plan . . .) . . . now this did please Kishkumen exceedingly [he's got an in to the judge now, and he knows what he's going to do. It's a big doublecross], for he did suppose that he should accomplish his design; but behold, the servant of Helaman, as they were going forth unto the judgment seat, did stab Kishkumen even to the heart.” He says, hey look here, bang, bang, bang. He let him have it. This is a typical episode from any evening of TV if you want to “edify” yourself. You'll find this happening. This is the doublecross that dominates the scene now and makes things more exciting. They've used up all the other good guy/bad guy ploys.

Notice previously that “the servant of Helaman said unto Kishkumen: Let us go forth unto the judgment-seat.” How do we know it pleased Kishkumen if Kishkumen was bumped off on the spot as they were going? Well, the servant reported it. Of course we get all this information from the one informed servant of Helaman. He tells us the story. And so the servant of Helaman stabbed Kishkumen.

Verse 10: “And it came to pass that Helaman did send forth to take this band of robbers and secret murderers.” He came back and reported, of course, and Helaman wasted no time. They were going to raid the headquarters and do a bust, but they were too late. They'd already flown. This happens too. “But behold, when Gadianton had found that Kishkumen did not return he feared lest that he should be destroyed.” Very shrewd and very suspicious, immediately he said, we've got to get out of here. There's something wrong. So his band followed him in flight out of the land. They wasted no time at all, so the bust was a bust. Verse 11: “And they took their flight out of the land, by a secret way, into the wilderness; and thus when Helaman sent forth to take them they could nowhere

be found.” So that was that. But now he says, I’m going to tell you this. Verse 13 is very important: “. . . ye shall see that this Gadianton did prove the overthrow, yea, almost the entire destruction of the people of Nephi.” It proved the overthrow and almost the destruction, just as World War II proved the overthrow of the German government, the Nazi regime. It was the overthrow and almost the destruction of the people—almost destroyed the nation. They’re not the same thing. But the Gadianton band did overthrow the government and did almost destroy everything too while they were at it, but not quite. Well, I didn’t mean the book of Helaman; I mean the next book, he says.

So, now we go on to happier times, or do we? The next year, the forty-third year, was a nice time. There was a little pride in the church, some little dissensions, but they were taken care of. There were no contentions in the forty-fourth year, and not much contention the next year. But then it started heating up. Four years after, all hell broke loose. How could that be, so soon? Why would they change so quickly? Well, we see these things happen. Verse 3: “. . . in the forty and sixth year there was much contention and many dissensions [they couldn’t stand prosperity very long, could they?]; in the which there were an exceedingly great many who departed out of the land of Zarahemla.” This is the movement north, and it was a regular one. There were good people in it too. It says here that the people of Ammon, the Ammonites, did it. Maybe it was to escape the general unrest. Verse 12: “. . . there were many of the people of Ammon, who were Lamanites by birth, did also go forth into this land.” So it was a general pioneering movement. They were opening up new lands in a time of prosperity. In this time of troubles, of political stress, of rivalry, and all sorts of things like that, they started this big movement toward the north.

“They did spread forth into all parts of the land.” Now here we get some geography. We try to avoid it, but there must be some here. A little later on we’re told that a certain place here was a day’s journey by a Nephite from one sea to the other, so it was still in a pretty narrow neck. Verse 4: “And they did travel to an exceeding great distance [that’s a long way] . . . to large bodies of water and many rivers.” Well, is that the Mississippi Valley or the Great Lakes? Is that central Mexico, which was full, as you know, of great lakes at that time. Mexico City was built on a swamp, on lakes.

Verse 5: “Yea, and even they did spread forth into all parts of the land, into whatever parts it had not been rendered desolate and without timber.” Now we get into a very interesting thing. This next section to verse 12 is the ecology and the environment. See, it’s only within the last ten years or so, just very recently, that people have been taking that seriously. Now we realize it’s one of the great threats. In 1830 when America was covered with woods and everything else, they regarded it just something to be cleared away. But whoever got interested in ecology and the environment? This is a wonderful passage on that. This whole story here brings out the importance of it. Up until very recently—well in most cases still—ecology and environment were dirty words in Utah. They were against business, they slowed it down and made it expensive. They set natural resources aside which could not be immediately exploited. Until as recently as five or six years ago, anyone who mentioned those things in the state of Utah was sick. You were interfering with business. But now, things are different, aren’t they? All of a sudden we realize [the importance of it]. This is what happened here. This third chapter is very valuable for other things too. It shows us that there had been other people in the land—not Jaredites. It had been inhabited before. Every time we discover a ruin or artifact you say well that’s Nephite or Lamanite. Well, that’s absurd. The Book of Mormon doesn’t require that at all. Just as it says more people can come after, more people came before.

And this is an example here.

So they spread into all parts of the land. I want to show you a small map and a large one. You see the general idea of the thing we get here is, which is it? Is it east/west or north/south? Notice it goes more east and west than north and south, so you have seas north and seas south. It talks about the sea north and south and the sea east and west. From the same vantage point, they could move toward the sea north, south, east and west. And that's so. There are places here where that can be done. We think of Central America as running north and south. It doesn't at all. It runs east and west mostly, as you see there. I have a big map, but there's nothing to stick it on. It's a pretty good one. It's from *National Geographic*, and it shows what the layout is on a larger scale. [He shows them things on the map.] Here's the Panama Canal. If you enter from the Pacific side, you go from east to west. Here are the lines of longitude here, you see. Panama City on the Pacific is definitely east of Colon on the west. It can be very confusing.

And so the Book of Mormon keeps telling us about seas on the east and the west and the north and the south. As I say, there's no point in getting all tangled up in this at all. But you get the general idea. And here is a land of many waters, Nicaragua, and many rivers too. The clutch on Nicaragua wasn't United Fruit. It was that we were going to build a canal. All through the twenties and thirties and as late as the forties, the big plan was to get rid of the Panama Canal, which was too dangerous and too exposed, and build a real canal right through Nicaragua, where it would have been easier. It's water all the way. See, you can go from the Indio River right over to this huge Lake Nicaragua and out that way. It actually would have been easier in Nicaragua.

Then there's the valley of Mexico, and that's all water. There are places like that, but how far is exceedingly far, I'd like to know. Here's another thing I was going to read from, and it's rather important, too, to realize this. It's written by a Peruvian anthropologist and archaeologist. Here it shows a picture of North and South America, and he shows the distance from one end of the Inca empire to the other end up here to be farther than from the entrance to the isthmus to New York City. The point he makes here is that this Inca empire is through the rugged Andes, and yet they had roads the whole length of it. They moved back and forth on a daily basis. They had a milk run from one end to the other, which is greater than the distance from here to New York, or from Mexico City to New York. You go right through. And it's much more rugged. This could be much more quickly negotiated than this, which was done quite often. So, is Cumorah too far? Is Cumorah a bridge too far? I don't think it is, not the way Indians move around.

Well anyway, we're not going to argue about those things. You can argue about that till the cows come home. So they went a great distance. But this is the point here. Helaman 3:5: ". . . into all parts of the land, into whatever parts it had not been rendered desolate and without timber, because of the many inhabitants who had before inherited the land." When we get to the history of the book of Ether, if we do [we'll see] they were nomads. They were very mobile in the manner of the Asiatics. They were destroyed in this north country. They were in the north areas and were a different people entirely. It was a different culture. But these people were obviously practicing what the Mayans still practice, the age-old slash and burn, and they had cut it all down. You cut down the jungles, and the ash deposits make the soil rich for a few years. But then it wears out. As you know, jungle soil is very poor soil, so you have to move on. What you do is cut some more jungle, and then get the ash for a while. So with slash and burn you keep progressively destroying the forest. That's what's worrying people today, of course. Now it's being done for the cattle raisers. This is being done systematically, not only there but

in other countries as well, but especially there.

Verse 6: “And now no part of the land was desolate, save it were for timber [they didn’t have that]; but because of the greatness of the destruction of the people who had before inhabited the land it was called desolate.” So they called that land desolate. There had been people there before, but there was not a trace of them left. And we know that lots of Jaredites escaped and went back into the woods. People with Jaredite names would turn up and intermarry with the Lamanites. But here the land was called desolate. It was absolutely cleaned of forest. All you see in a vast area of Oregon now, which was beautiful just after World War I, is stumps as far as you can see. They’ll never grow back again. You don’t realize that Provo Canyon was densely forested until a great forest fire in 1915, and it never came back again.

Verse 7: “And there being but little timber upon the face of the land, nevertheless the people who went forth became exceedingly expert in the working of cement [this is a thing they made quite an issue about in the Book of Mormon]; therefore they did build houses of cement, in the which they did dwell.” Well, cement can be any bonded building [material]. You use rocks with lime, adobe, or something between them. But this is real cement. In the *National Geographic* for August 1980 there’s something about that. Let me read you this section here from a talk I gave earlier down in Merida in Yucatan. S. Jeffrey K. Wilkerson says here: “In use of poured concrete, says my engineer colleague David Hyman, El Tajin’s builders excelled at techniques remarkably similar to today’s.” (*National Geographic*, August 1980, p. 216). It wasn’t just building with bonded masonry. It was pouring concrete. It was real cement houses, concrete just as we talk about it, which came as a surprise to me. I didn’t know they had it [to that extent].

It says here: Many Latter-day Saints are disturbed when they read of the remains that must be much older than Book of Mormon times. In their simplistic reading of the Book of Mormon, they assume that the only people permitted in the hemisphere before Columbus were either descendants of Lehi or Jared and his brother.¹ The Book of Mormon corrects this quite handily here. We learn in this passage here—we haven’t finished it yet—how the Nephites, pushed up from the south an exceeding great distance. It’s more than 1,200 miles air miles from Guatemala to Mexico City, you know. They didn’t have to go into North America, into the Ohio Valley, to go an exceeding great distance. In a major infiltration they settled a clearly defined territory. It tells us here, there was a sea to the north and to the south, as well as to the east and the west. And of course that can only be found in one region. That’s Central America, one we were just pointing out here. And the expressions referring to the seas were ancient. And in the *Codex Ramirez*, which was published in 1944, we are told how the first Montezuma conquered almost from sea to sea and ruled from the sea southward and in another direction to the limits of the great sea. So they thought of it as a sea southward, rather than a sea west. So it is in this territory here. This is the way it puts it. Montezuma ruled almost from sea to sea. That would be higher up. He ruled to the sea southward and in another direction the limits of the great sea, 300 leagues to the south.

The central highlands of Mexico are described in all early records as a land of many waters. Indeed Edward Seler wrote that the name usually translated as highlands really meant “land of many waters.” The complete deforestation of the land doesn’t suit the vast forests of the north—they wouldn’t completely lay them bare—but was a very serious problem in ancient Mesoamerica, because of the slash and burn economy.

So we can compare this passage in Helaman 3:5–10 with the condition in the valley of Oaxaca in the fifth to the ninth centuries [A.D.] So we're going back 1500 years there "when overpopulation created a growing shortage of timber for construction and firewood for cooking, apparently reaching such an alarming extent that the hills were completely stripped of forest." That's from a recent survey. So way back 1000 to 1500 years ago they were doing the same thing in Oaxaca, which is one of the most lush and beautiful places down in Coatepec Peninsula. They not only didn't have enough for building, but they didn't have enough for firewood. They didn't have enough for scraps to go out and gather firewood for cooking. That's an alarming extent. Completely barren. That's exactly what it tells us here. The land was bare. And it tells us that they were alarmed and took drastic measures here. Verse 8: "And it came to pass that they did multiply and spread, and did go forth from the land southward to the land northward, and did spread insomuch that they began to cover the face of the whole earth, from the sea south to the sea north, from the sea west to the sea east." See verse 8 shows us they were in an area where there were seas in all directions.

And this is a lesson in ecology. It shows how strict they were. There was to be no cutting of trees—any trees at all. Verse 9: "And the people who were in the land northward did dwell in tents, and in houses of cement, and they did suffer whatsoever tree should spring up upon the face of the land that it should grow up [they wouldn't let you touch a tree, a growing tree], that in time they might have timber to build their houses, yea, their cities, and their temples . . ." So until a tree grew up, all cutting was forbidden. So you're not going to get firewood out of that, are you? What were they going to burn? Coal? Verse 10: "And it came to pass as timber was exceedingly scarce [he keeps harping on that] in the land northward, they did send forth much by the way the way of shipping." What they did was ship timber.

Well now, if you go back to the earliest records of Egypt, the Old Kingdom, to the time of Seti or the time of Pepi II [you find a similar situation]. He left lots of inscriptions. Then there's that great account from the year 1085 B.C., the story of Wenamun who was an agent of one of the pharaohs in the north. He was sent up to buy timber for Egyptian buildings. Of course, Egypt is not rich in timber, to say the least, as you know. So they would bring it from Lebanon. And it is described in those texts way back before 2000 B.C., and then the other was 1085 B.C. He had letters of credit. [It told] how he was to buy them and the trouble he had in the business. At times he was robbed, etc. And then he described how the oxen pulled the great logs down from Lebanon, how they were lined up and classified on the beach all ready to be taken to Egypt. They were pulled by special ships. This was going on 4,000 years before Christ. The earliest tombs have these cedars of Lebanon in them.

At the same time [there are] records of Babylonia on the other side of the mountains from Lebanon. There were streams there, but there were no streams on this side. They would pull them down. It's very abrupt, as you know. You can see the pictures from there. Hills really pile up very high. They are terraced. There are very steep terraces all over Lebanon. But on the other side there were streams, and they would only work when there was heavy snow and in the springtime, during the spring floods. Then they would make rafts and float them down the river to the Euphrates. They would go right down to furnish the Babylonian civilization with their timber. The result is today the flag of Lebanon is red, white, and green with a green cedar tree—a cedar of Lebanon—in the middle. But you can find about half a dozen cedars of Lebanon today. In a few little pockets where they've

been preserved you'll find a cedar. They've sprung up, and there may be a hundred or two in the land. That's about all there are. You can't find [many] cedars of Lebanon. It has been bare ever since, but at one time [Lebanon] supplied the world with all the timber it needed for thousands of years. Plato described the same thing happening in the Peloponnesus and how barren it was. So ecology is more important than you think. Once those forests go, they don't come back. The French made a very extensive study of the Sahara Desert after World War II in which they concluded that it had been a mimosa plain as late as the Middle Kingdom of Egypt, full of sparkling streams and lakes, etc. Now it's a manmade desert. The Sahara? That's amazing. But deserts do spread. We're living in a day of spreading deserts. As you know you can stand on the cliffs on the west bank of the Nile and watch those huge dunes the way they move, swallowing up what little farmland is left now, while the population increases.

These are serious problems. And isn't this something here? Way back in the 1820s in upstate New York, which was all wooded country, you had to clear the woods by breaking your back, as Joseph Smith's family did to get enough land to cultivate. [It's amazing] that the destruction of timber can be alarming, can be serious, can damage a civilization and should be very strictly dealt with. And here we've got it in the Book of Mormon, so it keeps us up to date.

Verse 11: "And thus they did enable the people in the land northward that they might build many cities, both of wood and of cement." This was by transporting timber. In the ancient world transporting timber was a big business. It went by sea in the Mediterranean. The main business was cedar of Lebanon for many years at the east end of the Mediterranean.

And many people of Ammon joined [the migration] too. This was a peaceful migration, and "many records [were] kept of the proceedings of this people . . ." Now here's an interesting thing: Many records, very large, we can't give a hundredth part of them here. It tells about them. Now here's the list of themes and subjects that you might write on. Take your choice, here. Notice, there are accounts of wars. We've been talking too much about them. And contentions is another theme it's talking about now, social troubles, ". . . and dissensions, and their preaching, and their prophecies, and their shipping and their building of ships, and their building of temples, and of synagogues and their sanctuaries, and their righteousness, and their wickedness, and their murders, and their robbings, and their plundering, and all manner of abominations and whoredoms, cannot be contained in this work."

Well, what about these vast libraries? Are we going to find any? I remember when I was teaching at Claremont there was a girls' humanities class at Scripps College there. I taught it on Tuesdays, and Professor Goodspeed, who had retired from the University of Chicago (he was the big New Testament man in those times), taught it on the other day. The girls used to say, "But look, Professor Goodspeed said there was no Hebrew written in the time of Christ. Nobody wrote Hebrew. There's not a scrap of colloquial Hebrew or anything like that written from the time of Christ." And there wasn't at that time. But then along came 1948 and all of a sudden they started finding the Dead Sea Scrolls. Now we have thousands and thousands of documents and letters all written in cursive Hebrew by the Jews. To that time it was entirely unknown.

This is the way it is. These records are always discovered in an explosion when you get almost too many. For example, ancient studies began with the discovery by Langdon of

Nippur in the 1850s and the great library of Assurbanipal. It was a tremendous library. They didn't discover just a record here and there; they discovered a whole library. Then a little later, in 1887, they discovered the Amarna library, correspondence between Egypt and the princes of Palestine up to the time the Hebrews took over there. The Hebrews are in it and everything else—all these hundreds and hundreds of letters. It was too good to be true when they started shipping these letters. They were on tablets and they were written in cuneiform of all things, yet they were in Egypt. When they started arriving in Paris, they started destroying them, saying, "These are fakes, they're no good at all." Then suddenly they did a doubletake and realized they were genuine. What a difference this made! And so you have the Amarna letters.

Then in the 1930s all of a sudden [they discovered] in a totally new language, a north Semitic language, the libraries of Ugarit, which was a very rich city on the coast occupied by Phoenicians, people related to the Greeks. They spoke the Canaanite language. In Lehi's time there were all sorts of Greeks there. But this was earlier. The letters of Ugarit are from 1300 to 1200 B.C. And the Amarna is a huge library that [appeared] all of a sudden. As I said, just after Professor Goodspeed died all of a sudden they discovered Qumran and the great texts there with thousands of documents. Nobody paid any attention to Coptic, but now if you're going to study for the ministry it's as important as Greek. Why? Because at the same time they discovered the library at Qumran they discovered the Nag Hammadi library, which is all in Coptic. It's the earliest Christian texts and again, a huge library. We have shelves of it here. And so it goes.

And then finally in the 1970s near Aleppo the Italians were finishing a dig. It was the last day. They were closing out for the season, and somebody unearthed a corner of a tablet there. It was the first written tablet they had found. They got excited, made further diggings, and found a room in which there were 15,000 tablets stored. So you find these records all at once, and you find them at a particular time—late. They mostly come out late. I wouldn't be at all surprised that their records [mentioned in verse 13] are stowed somewhere, and sometime they'll turn up.

Well, after all, Father De Landa burned thousands of them. That may have been the big library that he destroyed. He did the same thing as the buyers of the Roman Sybilline documents. There were the seven Sybilline texts, and the Roman senate was going to buy them for a high price. The Sybil asked too high a price. They said, "Nothing doing," so she destroyed one tablet and doubled the price. When they wouldn't take it she destroyed another and doubled that price. Well, increasing exponentially, you can imagine the fabulous price she asked for the last tablet, and they were only too glad to get it then. So this is the way it went. And it the same thing with the Nag Hammadi texts and the Qumran texts and others. We paid no attention to them, and they come out all of a sudden. Father De Landa did a double take too. He bitterly regretted what he had done when it was too late. Don't lock the door. So we [should] be careful about these things, the preservation and so forth.

So their records are there. There's a big ball of wax here, and here's the subject. It says here [in Helaman 3:15]: "But behold, there are many books and many records of every kind, and they have been kept chiefly by the Nephites [but not only by them]. And they have been handed down from one generation to another by the Nephites . . ." The people were scattered on the face of the land and mixed with the Lamanites. The Nephites and mixed with the Lamanite, so don't call an Indian a pure Lamanite by any means. And the Nephites had become more wicked, and wild, and ferocious than the Lamanites. Here we

have a switch. This is another story now. As you notice, we're told that the unrighteous people become a dark and loathsome people and so forth, but there's no mention of skin change here or anything like that. That doesn't necessarily accompany a thing at all. We won't go into that. That's another story. We take it up the first semester.

Here [verse 17] there's still great contention in the land. How can they carry on this contention year after year? Well, the Book of Mormon came out in 1830, and up until then the country had been rather quiet. Then as you remember what happened in 1832. Then all through the 1830s, the 1840s, and 1850s there was nothing but ferocious, vicious contention in the country that led up to that terrible Civil War, the worse civil war we know about. And all through those years, that terrible contention never stopped over the issue of slavery and the new territories. So it's not impossible that they could carry on for six years here being nasty to each other.

Then came Helaman. He filled the judgment seat with justice and handed it over to his two sons, Nephi and Lehi. Then there was a letup. Things got better then all of a sudden. But at the same time, in verse 23, the mob was moving in. They were doing it very subtly, not advertising themselves. Verse 23: ". . . there was continual peace established in the land, all save it were the secret combinations which Gadianton the robber had established in the more settled parts of the land." In the urban districts, of course—that's the way they do it. But it certainly caught the government off guard. It was not known unto those who were heads of the government. See, they moved in very subtly. They'd learned. They had to run for their lives before. They cleared out and now they're going to be very shrewd about it, as they are today, of course. All this infiltration has been going on for years. They're not just the drug [lords] but the others, the capos of the Mafia. ". . . were not known unto those who were at the head of government; therefore they were not destroyed out of the land." Nobody knew they were there.

And the church enjoyed great prosperity. They were absolutely amazed at what's happening in the church. This is the forty-ninth year. Verse 25, ". . . and so many the blessings which were poured out upon the people, that even the high priests and the teachers were themselves astonished beyond measure" at this great progress. We're astonished at the progress of the church today. There's no real reason for it that you can explain, except that it's the work of the Lord. It's happening in the strangest places where you'd never expect it, very strange places. They were baptizing people "even tens of thousands." They never expected that. Now this is a very interesting thing here in verse 27. We've been talking about people who couldn't get along together. There was constant trouble and so forth. But who is to blame and what are we to do about it? Human nature is human nature. If you get a kennel full of dogs and you don't pen them up or anything, you just let them loose, and what happens? One dog is bound to start making trouble. There are dominants and submissives among all animals, and someone's going to fight back. There's going to be trouble, and then there'll be pandemonium in the kennel, as long as the master isn't there. But if the kennel master is there, everything will be all right. Men are the same way. They will not behave themselves if they're left to themselves. But the Lord, Jesus Christ, is the one around whom we can center our hopes for any kind of peace and cooperation here. We can't do it ourselves. We cannot, any more than dogs will behave. With statistical probability or anything else, they will not behave, and once they fight, there will be pandemonium. All the dogs will get into it. It has happened again and again in the world, and it's happening today, so these are very wise verses here.

Verse 27: "Thus we may see that the Lord is merciful unto all who will, in the sincerity of

their hearts, call upon his holy name.” You don’t trust in yourself, you see. You must call upon his name, because you don’t have the wisdom to carry it off. “Yea, thus we see that the gate of heaven is open to all, even to those who will believe on the name of Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God. [It’s perfectly open to anyone.] Yea, we see that whosoever [notice he’s talking about individuals—no matter how the world goes, the individual can be happy here] will may lay hold upon the word of God, which is quick and powerful, which shall divide asunder all the cunning and the snares [that surround us—everything is deception with us as far as we’re concerned] and the wiles of the devil, and lead the man of Christ in a strait and narrow course . . .” You can go through it all and won’t be affected.

There is nothing under our feet in our society. We have no solid ground. We’re just going on from day to day, like the stock market. We’re just carrying on and living, as I say, from one day to the next. That’s what you do. There’s nothing under our feet. As Shakespeare says, “To be imprisoned in the viewless winds and blown with restless violence round about the pendant world.” [*Measure for Measure*, Act III, Scene 1]

The earth is pendant; it just hangs there. We’re [blown] in restless violence and we have no place to put our foot. We have no security, no solidity, nothing you can rely on, except we rely on the darndest things. When the market cracks, then what happens? But notice: “. . . divide asunder all the cunning and the snares and the wiles of the devil, and lead the man of Christ in a strait and narrow course across that everlasting gulf [this isn’t just rhetoric he’s pulling off, at all—it’s a very strict instruction of our situation] of misery which is prepared to engulf the wicked—And land their souls, yea, their immortal souls, at the right hand of God . . . to sit down [notice, sit down] with Abraham, and Isaac, and with Jacob, and with all our holy fathers, to go no more out.” See, that’s solid security, to sit down and never have to go out again. This is very vivid imagery here. This is what atonement is. Home at last. At-one-ment. To be one, united with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. That’s what the gospel is for, and so they could have continual rejoicing with this assurance in Zarahemla.

Well, how can you rejoice continually? Don’t you get worn out? No, I’m told from many reliable sources that the pioneers rejoiced continually. They were happy all the time. In their worst sufferings they said, we just celebrated—we just thought it was a picnic. We were like people who had just been let out of jail. Sure we had hard work and so forth, but it was fun.

Well, it is possible to be that way, but we certainly have forgotten a few lessons, haven’t we? Here’s something to cling to.

1. Brother Nibley is reading from one of his own writings.