

TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

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Semester 1, Lecture 3

Introduction

Geopolitics and the Rule of Tyrants, 600 B.C.

There is nothing more remarkable, in fact, more miraculous, about the Book of Mormon, than its *Kulturgeschichte*, culture history. It is just loaded with the details that give us an insight into the culture of a particular people. It describes three distinct cultures, and it describes them very vividly. We have been talking about the Near East (the Old World) at the time of Lehi. Remember, the first book of Nephi all takes place in the Old World (one of the most important books), and it describes the ancient civilization of the New World in great detail, a totally different civilization. It also describes the present culture, which is as far removed from Joseph Smith's day as the other cultures are. Who ever dreamed of the culture of the 1980s, which he has so vividly described. Well, that's all in the Book of Mormon.

He couldn't have chosen a better year to have things begin than the year 600 B.C. (a nice round number). Historians call this the pivotal year. There's a book on that by Karl Jaspers, the German historian philosopher, *The Pivotal Year*. H. G. Wells uses that in his once-celebrated *History of the World*, etc. Everybody noticed that around the year 600 B.C. everything pivoted, everything changed. The whole world turned on a pivot, and very suddenly there was an entirely new culture and civilization among nations throughout the entire world. We saw that this also happened in 1200 B.C. (600 years before the same sort of thing happened). What was it? Well it was the climate; it was the people of the sea being driven there—the Sicels, the Sardis, the Tyrrhenio, and the Philistines. As we saw from the Amarna Letters, the same time the Hebrews were moving in, the Philistines were moving in on the coast. All the early books of the history of Israel have to do with the conflicts, and agreements and friendships, between the Philistines and Israel because they were very close together. The Philistines were Greeks, and they settled there back in 1200. That's why it's called Palestine. It's named after the Philistines because they settled in Palestine. The lands were named after the places where they settled, not the places where they came from. The Tyrrhenio are those who settled in Tyrrhenium and became Etruscans; they came from Asia Minor. The Sicels are those who settled in Sicily. The Sardis are those who settled in Sardinia, finally. They tried to settle in Egypt, and in a tremendous battle Bicarinus drove them back on the east branch of the Nile. So they had to go farther up on the coast, and they settled in Palestine. But anyway, 600 B.C. was another of those big times when everything changed. In 600 was the passing of the old sacral kingship (that culture). Before that kings were sacred and so was the temple. The king was never crowned in the palace; he was always crowned in the temple. Kingship was sacred. The kingly line was sacred; it was the patriarchal line. This was so in almost all cities. There is a great deal on this subject. But all of a sudden the sacral kingship passed away, and the question arose, "Who's in charge around here?" Anybody who could grab the power, and so you have the age of tyrants, and you have the new and ambitious age of emperors, and things like that. But first, why? And all this is relative to the Book of Mormon because it's the same thing. You see, as the Book of Mormon starts up everything is in upheaval. Poor Lehi didn't know what to do; he prayed desperately. He went out about his business, and then he had a vision and came home. There was nothing

to do. He had to leave and get out (we'll talk about that the next time, his means of departure, etc.). But everything was in upheaval. His own family was split down the middle. We saw the last time that one side was for supporting Babylonia, and the other side was for Egypt. They had been otherwise; they had shifted positions. At this time, you see, no one had any particular loyalties. It was free enterprise everywhere, and money was behind everything here. We will see why this was literally the case. The twenty-sixth dynasty was the great last dynasty of Egypt and the dynasty under which Lehi lived. Israel was a protectorate of it, as a matter of fact.

How does the Book of Mormon start out? In the first year of King Zedekiah. Well, Zedekiah was put in by Necho II. His name wasn't Zedekiah; Necho II, the Pharaoh, gave him that name. The king of Egypt put him in, who is Necho II. How could Necho II do it? Because he had a lot of money. Where did he get it? He got it from Gyges. Who was Gyges? He was the big man in Sardis, which was the capital of Lydia where they had just invented money (it had been coined in the eighth century). Don't think that didn't make a difference. Money was necessary; the situation required it. That freed everybody to go in and do pretty much what they wanted to.

What happened to the sacral kingship in 600 B.C., what wiped them out? Now we have to go into a little Geopolitics here. This is important because it goes on all the time. Notice, it can only happen in Palestine which is the cockpit of the world. It is today, and it always was. It was in Lehi's time and before in 1200 B.C. Why? Because that is the only place in the world where the sea invades the land mass to a great extent. See, it goes right into the middle of the great European/African mass that comes together. We'll make just a little, dinky map here. Here's India here and Ceylon down here. Then here are the two rivers. Here is the ocean, and here's the Black Sea up here. Here are the oil fields, and the Greeks down here. This is Libya over here, and Abyssinia here.

This is called Geopolitics, and it's what pushed Hitler into World War II. We wouldn't have had World War II if it weren't for Geopolitics. Well, his idea was that it was behind everything—the doctrine of Geopolitics. It's good we have this here because this shows the role that Palestine plays—why this is so extremely important along here. Geopolitics was invented by Alfred MacKinder, a Scottish geographer, in the early twentieth century. It was taken up by Karl Haushofer who was Hitler's official geographer. The theory was very plain. It had already been expounded long ago (Henry Thomas Buckle, way back there in the early days). There's a good explanation of it by Buckminster Fuller. He talks a lot about the land pirates and the sea pirates, culminating in World War I. Well, it's this idea: Central Asia is controlled by the land people—the great land mass of Central Asia. It's called the Asiatic Shield. The shield is that part which is covered by snow about half the year, so you can see it from space. It's shaped like a shield too. Here are the great people of the plains. This is the clock, the driving force of history. Whenever there is trouble, it begins there. Why does it begin there? Because these are nomads in the vast, central part of Asia, living on grass. Their economy, therefore, is quite sensitive. It's a marginal economy. In a bad year they have to move, and they are able to move because they are nomads. They tour all the time. And where do they go? Naturally, they move to the richer and more prosperous civilizations on the periphery. All the world civilizations lie on the periphery—in India, in Egypt, and in Europe. Notice, in every case there is a literal wall; they build a literal wall to keep the nomads out. Here we have the Khyber, the pass in the wall. Then we have the those of Alexander, the iron gates, etc., the pass up here. Pharaohs always, from predynastic times, built the white wall of the North, the wall of the Amu—the wall to keep the Asiatics out. There was always a wall. Sinuhe, in the time of

Sesostris I, describes when he was escaping what a hard time he had getting past the guards there. This is the wall that kept them out. And you know the Cilician Gates that kept them out here. In Europe the Romans built a vast one, running clear from the Black Sea right over to the Rhine (following along the Danube). They are called the limes (always fortified, the whole length, from the Black Sea to the North Sea). Forts at a distance, walls in between to keep out various barbarians who were always pushing in. Whenever times got bad, these people were desperate. They moved and wanted to take over, and they usually succeeded. So there was wave after wave of them. There have been eleven waves that have moved in here and left eleven different languages in India like the skins of an onion. So you have the vast limes ending finally if you go clear up in northern England to Scotland where you find Hadrian's Wall, which still stands. Hadrian's Wall was built to keep the Picts and the Scots out of the empire.

Then there is the greatest wall of all. They had a big problem back here in China because China was wide open to the steppes, wasn't it? They built the Wall of China, which was 1500 miles long. They built that huge wall just to keep these people out of the center. Whenever things were bad, they always spread. As Buckminster Fuller says, "World War I was a contest between the sea pirates [the British Empire whose fleet was in the sea] and the land pirates who were the Central European powers, and Russia along with them. This is where the two really come together—the only place in the world where, for thousands of miles, the sea actually invades the main land mass. This is Africa, this is Asia, and this is Europe. They all come together right here, and the sea comes in and meets them all there. This is the place you have to control if you are going to control the world. This was the theory of Haushofer, and this was why Hitler had his Egyptian expedition—Rommel, and all that sort of thing.

In the time of Lehi, Necho II decided he couldn't stand up to the combined powers. His rule was from 605 (some say 609) to 595; he lived right at the time that Lehi left Jerusalem. Assyria was knocked out, you remember, by Persia and Babylonia getting together, and then they started knocking each other out. So Necho invested in a navy. It was a time of new inventions and new enterprises. A new invention revolutionized naval warfare; it was the trireme which was invented by the Corinthians. Necho bought several hundred of them, hired Corinthians to man them, and trained crews for them. Necho dominated the seas, and he died in 595 B.C., five years after Lehi left Jerusalem. Lehi left well before the fall; he got out in time. Necho sent an expedition clear around Africa (that's well attested) and built a canal from the Red Sea to one of the branches of the Nile (which we have so beautifully delineated here). He had his Carian navy (he was quite the person), and he was bankrolled by Gyges. Here is Asia Minor. Here is Lydia, with its capital at Sardis. This man Gyges was fabulously rich. He was so rich because they invented money in his time, and he took advantage of that. He was right on the scene, and this gave him an enormous advantage. Everybody wanted to trade like crazy in these days. They were getting around a lot, and they had to have some medium of exchange. They had money of various forms and sorts, but this was the first real money, less than a century before Lehi. So money got into the Book of Mormon and played an important part. We find out later that the Nephites designed their own monetary standards and set them up to suit their conditions from time to time. They ended up with an ideal monetary system which is described there. Professor Richard Smith of Harvard, who is a member of the Church, showed it was the most perfect monetary system that could possibly be devised—the most economical, requiring the least number of coins for the greatest number of exchanges and deals. It was a model; it was based on sevens and threes and things you would never expect of a monetary system. But it was a beautiful one.

(Joseph Smith invented it, you see—a twenty-three-year-old hick from the sticks; he figured it all out.) Well anyway, this money was very important, and Necho was bankrolled by Gyges. This tells the story of what was going on at this time; this would be typical. Gyges could do anything he wanted because he had money. There's the famous story of the "ring of Gyges." According to the Greek proverb, an honest man is a man who would be honest even though he had the ring of Gyges. The idea was that the ring of Gyges made you invisible so that you could do anything you wanted. If you had that much money, nobody would question you. But with a truly honest man it doesn't make any difference. Even if he had the ring of Gyges, he would still be honest. But who would be honest with the ring of Gyges when you can get away with anything?

Gyges was followed by a man who is better known to you as the richest man in the world (this is typical of what goes on). He was Croesus, who was also a tyrant of Sardis. You say, "Well, how do these men get to be in charge?" If the king was gone, as I said, everybody was asking, "Who is in charge around here?" Well, it would have to be somebody who was able to take charge—somebody with the personality and force, etc. These were the tyrants; everywhere you find tyrants taking over at this time. The name "tyrant" means something bad because he can do anything he wants to and get away with it. But tyrants were really a great necessity originally. The tyrant was a person of unusual skill and capacity who, with his friends, was able to take over. He would say, "Things are going bad, so we will take over now." He was able to hire soldiers, etc. So all these men are known as the tyrants. You have Polycrates, you have Peisistratus in Athens, and you have Dionysius in Syracuse. Wherever you go you find these tyrants ruling. The kings of Egypt were really just tyrants. They were just a rich family who put themselves in charge of the Saitic area of Egypt and then hired Carian troops, paid for by Gyges' money. They were in business, and they would trade things, etc. There was very active trade at this time. Remember, Lehi was a man who was exceedingly rich, and he traded a lot. He was involved in business. The most important river town in the Book of Mormon is Sidon. Well, Sidon was the great port through which Israel traded at that time. It was open to the Western World. But the tyrants were a remarkable group of men. Plato thought he could make Dionysius II of Syracuse the model king, the philosopher king. But unfortunately his father had been a tyrant too and had spoiled him. He wasn't competent, so Plato wasn't able to do it. Wherever you go, tyrants will turn up, but they can't last. There are democratic uprisings against them; people get together. Their main enemies, of course, are the important families, the rival tyrants. They say, "If you can be a tyrant, I can be a tyrant." So you always find assassinations, murders, great and bloody events. This becomes the theme of the Greek tragedies, you'll notice. They take us back to an earlier time, way back in 1200, when the people first settled down. As Aristotle says, their subject is *tragikoteros*. It's necessarily tragic and lofty. It deals with the rivalries and bitterness of the great houses fighting among themselves. Since anybody could claim the right to be king, the rivalries were relentless. Of course, there were the intermarriages and then the betrayals and then the plots—plotting with somebody outside and then accusing each other of treason. This goes on, and it is the theme of Greek tragedy, which is by nature tragic because it is what people do for power. This is the power of the great houses. It happens on a lofty level; that gives it its majesty—the sweep, the long robes, and stuff like that. But the tyrants are a very real factor. You notice these elements appear all through the Book of Mormon very vividly. There were several tyrants like Zeezrom, or especially Amlici, mortal rival of Alma, who wanted to be king. Then you have the heroes on the other side. Many a time a man, by intrigue and secrecy and bribery, got himself to be king. It happened again and again in the Book of Mormon. See, when you transplant a culture, you take the whole thing with you. Nobody invents a new culture; you have it

already built into you. There are hundreds of years behind it, etc. But this was changed; everything was being pulled up by the roots in this time, so these things were happening here.

There were migrations everywhere, colonies. As I say, these people were forced to move, and they moved in and made trouble. The other people who had lived there before were uprooted. They went looking for better homes. It becomes a promised land (we are looking for a promised land). They were led by a patriarch which means “father leader,” the leader of the colony or the group. They went out and looked for places to settle as colonies. Sometimes they had mother cities. The word “metropolis” means “metro polis,” your mother city that sends you out. The Greeks at this time were sending out colonies everywhere as feelers, “Could we settle here?” They would try to settle somewhere and be driven out and try again. It ended up with a whole network of colonies. Every one of the greater settlements were those that survived. The reason they made the colonies was so that they could survive themselves, so they would have some place to run when they were overrun. Athens’ Acropolis held out. Some of the Omegara held out, Sparta, etc. But very few of them did. They were overrun and scattered in all directions this way. But what was going on in one place was going on in another place. You would find one architecture at this time—the same civic, the same urban architecture and lifestyle. Whether you went to China or whether you went to Spain, you would find it. You would find the same language pretty much (we are talking about the Middle East now). It was Aramaic; now it has become Greek. You see, already in Lehi’s time, the Egyptian army and navy were both Greek. What’s more, the Babylonians and Assyrians were hiring Greek soldiers. Palestine was swarming, not with just Greeks, but with Jews, Libyans, Amu, Hittites, Celts, and Goths (people speaking our own language). They were all mixed up in this mess. It was a time of world upheaval, such as the time we live in today. They looked for their promised lands. And many people were out of any kind of work, and so they would become mercenaries. They would hire themselves out.

This little book here is a very nice one. This is a collection of all the lyric poetry of the Greeks from the sixth and seventh centuries B.C. These are the poets that were writing at this particular time, and they show us very clearly what it was like because they are very personal and intimate, often very bitter. Family histories, etc., tell us exactly what was going on. They are scattered everywhere. We start out in the eighth century, and we have Colinus who is a good example. Colinus was a poet in western Asia Minor, and the Sumerians were moving in. They were going to be Europeans later on, but great droves of them were moving in with their flocks and herds because there was no grass on the plains. They were moving through Asia Minor and coming in. These people had been luxurious and satisfied for quite a while; they were very wealthy. He couldn’t get the youth to do anything. He was trying to get them stirred up and excited because they were spoiled, and they were just sitting on their behinds and doing nothing:

“How long? [how many stirring orations start out with those words, *mechris teo?*] “How long, how long is this going to go on? [Cicero and the famous *Catiline Orations*, how long? etc.] How long are you going to sit on your behinds all the time, when you should be stirring yourselves up? [having a little guts for a change]. Oh youth of the land, aren’t you ashamed of yourself, to sit around here unable to make up your minds? [don’t you know what’s coming down on us?]. Most of you spend your time getting drunk. And you think you’re in peace, and everything is going to be all right. Well, you’re going to find out, because presently [overnight] war will overrun the whole country.”

They couldn't realize what was happening when these times happened. It's like a forest fire. We stand around for a while and think it can't spread much more. Before you know it, all sorts of things are happening. Then he goes into a routine appeal to patriotism—the old appeal for home, country, and that sort of thing. These appeals are found in the Book of Mormon too, as you know. This was written about a hundred years before Lehi. But now we come to his own century, and we get to Archilochus. This is a good example; we have a lot from Archilochus. He was a soldier and a merchant, but as he tells us in his first elegy:

“I am a servant to this *anax* [a prince, a chief, or someone who has taken authority; it's not the king; it's like your Central American generals and colonels that take over] I'm bound to service to him. Really I have this great gift, and I should be a poet. Even though I know the beloved gifts of the muses, I have to serve this heel.”

He goes on and talks about the antiballistic missiles, “these fancy new weapons.” He is very much against them. “I don't have any trust at all in these new far-shooting bows, special slings, war machines, and things like that. Give me the old-fashioned sword; it's the only way a soldier can fight.” They didn't want these new things. He was uprooted, and he was fighting. Here's a good one. He was serving Semiticus in Egypt, the one who was supporting Israel in Lehi's time. He was getting his money from Gyges, but he was getting Gyges' money back from Semiticus who was hiring Greek mercenaries. Remember, this twenty-sixth dynasty is called the Saitic Dynasty from Sais (he talks about it here). Sais is here, and Tanis is here. It's not exactly on this particular branch, but it's a little inland. That was Sais. He says, “My beautiful Saitic shield is lying in a bush somewhere, where I left it with great discretion—judiciously withdrawing from the battle which would have ended my days.” He says, “Why should I fight for that kind of pay? I left my weapon behind in perfectly good condition. I didn't leave it willingly, but I would have ended up dead if I hadn't. Well, I wish it good luck.” And this is so typical of the times: “I can buy myself another just as good.” No sense of loyalty because he is a hireling. There's a famous poem about one of the Prussian guard of Frederick II. You had to conquer the world for the king. These were the eighteenth century boys—purely personal, lots of gallantry, theater, etc. At the battle of whatever it was, Frederick was raging and storming and said, “This is treason; you are deserting.” The fire got too hot, so the soldiers turned and started to fall back. One of the guard said, “No, Fritzel [that's the affectionate name they called him], this is not a case of treason. I've done enough today for my fourteen cents.” The soldiers were paid fourteen cents a day. It's the same thing here, “I can buy myself another sword.” He's not worried. It's free enterprise; I'm for myself. If the business doesn't pay, I'll go over to another corporation. Nobody feels loyalty to anybody. These men were tyrants. They could hold the people only so long. That's why *tyrant* has come to have the meaning it has—a person who cracks down and uses force and violence and trickery to put over his deals, and will stop at nothing. That's tyrannical. Originally, as I said, they performed a necessary purpose.

At the same time Archilochus was serving in the Egyptian army, his brother was serving in the Babylonian army on the other side. This is typical. He had to hire himself out too. This is the way things went. Some of his army talk is really good here. This is certainly the spirit of the times now. What do you depend on in a case like this? Where are your loyalties now? Because of economic upset, everybody is uprooted. There is nothing you can count on. The market has collapsed and everything else. This is his friend Pericles he is

addressing here: “Anything you get, it happens to be by *tychē* or by *mora*, by chance or by fate. By fate or by accident, that’s all there is.”

At the battle of Chaeronea where the great Demosthenes threw away his shield when he ran from the field, on his shield was inscribed the substance of his faith *tē tychē*, “to Lady Luck.” That’s all you could hope for anymore when they had lost that sort of thing. Euripides had a favorite chorus, and he ended five plays that way. The great plays are tragic because of the tragic situation you are constantly finding yourself in in this world. And what is the essence of tragedy? It’s not the good guys against the bad guys. Never in the Book of Mormon will you find that. No good army fights a bad army ever. But what is it that brings these people together, and what causes this? How do you explain it? Well, you give up usually without the gospel. You say what Euripides said in his plays. At least five of his known plays end with this chorus, “The gods [fate] take many forms, and many unexpected things they bring to pass. The things we had been taught all our lives to expect were right don’t go into fulfillment at all [it doesn’t turn out that way]. But somehow or other, God finds a way to bring about the one thing we least expected [the things we have never been taught to expect].” He uses “God” in the singular; this is God he is talking about. He says, “Do you want to know how this happened? [he is just ending the tragedy]. That’s how this happened.” Because, as I say, the essence of tragedy is not black versus white, the good guys versus the bad guys (black hats and white hats). It’s the incompatibility of two good things. You have to decide, and they are both good. What can you do about it?

The first Greek tragedy is that of *The Hiketides*, *The Suppliants*. What are they supplicating about? Well, the fifty daughters of Danaus have fled from Egypt to the king of Argos as it begins. It’s always between Egypt and Greece (Egypt, Israel, and Greece are all right together here). They don’t want to marry their cousins. By Egyptian law they should marry their cousins, and by Arabic law they should too. You marry *bint al-‘ammi*, the daughter of your paternal uncle (you’re supposed to). But for a Greek that was a horror. That was almost a form of incest; they couldn’t do it. But if they didn’t marry their cousins, the king of Egypt promised to come and make war against Argos. So the king had his choice (should we make this choice?) No marriage and plunge the nation into a deadly war? Or should we let our daughters (the fifty daughters of Danaus) marry the sons of Egypt. It’s like Joseph and Asenath again, the same thing. Should Joseph have married Asenath, the daughter of the high priest of Heliopolis? Was that right? The rabbis talked and talked about that.

What was the choice? You had either war or breaking a high moral law, one or the other. They were both immoral. It’s immoral to plunge your nation into war. This is the typical situation. So the scene opens with the king, and his opening words are: “Children, we must think about these things; we must weigh the situation.” So we have the necessity of thinking about these things, putting them together, considering the issues. This is the sort of time that they were living in here, as we are today. It’s a different time today. You have no idea how different it is from when I was teaching fifty years ago (believe it or not, half a century ago I was teaching; isn’t that wild). So we go on here. He has something to say about various things, such as the homes they had. His family moved around and couldn’t settle anywhere; this was the trouble. He talks about Gyges here and his great wealth: “I have no desire to become as rich as Gyges [most people don’t, but there were plenty of ambitious people who did]. Such a zeal doesn’t seize me. I don’t rejoice in such things. I do not have any envy of the work of a tyrant [he uses that word]. I do not ask for the

work of a tyrant, and I do not ask for the wealth of Gyges.” They go together. If he has the wealth, he has the power. Of course, power and gain is one of the main themes in the Book of Mormon—seeking power and gain. Everybody does that, you see. Then he says, “Let such ambition be far from my eyes.” He wants to preserve his integrity, but he has a hard time. To show how hard it is are the famous lines on his spear.

Here’s careerism. This is a good example. “There are ambitious people,” he says. “At last Leophilus is in charge of everything [he is talking about his unit in the army]. Leophilus bosses everybody. Everybody has to come to him with their problems. And let everybody harken to anything Leophilus says. Good old Leophilus; he got where he wanted to be. Everything to Leophilus. If he wants it, he can have it.” Then there is the democratic ideal of the soldier. This is the officer, the climber (the important person, the careerist, the brass) that he is talking about here: “I don’t particularly love these tall, strutting, over-dressed generals—strutting around with their chins in the air, their hair carefully wind blown [in blown curls], and their lofty airs. Give me the short, underslung, tough, little guy who can stand in the ranks and really do some fighting. It’s not the same thing at all.” *Rhoikos* means tough, densely built. *Asphalios*, “can’t push him over;” *bebēkōs posi*, “firm on his feet;” *kradiēs pleōs*, “with a heart as tough as stone [you can’t move him].” Of course, that’s the sort of mercenaries these people wanted. But if you didn’t pay them enough, you were in trouble because they would take over. This is what happened elsewhere.

There are others like this. The first one, the oldest, is from Mertillus. Everybody rejoices because Mertillus is dead (we finally got rid of him). There are some good ones here, but you see what the situation was. Alcman of Sparta said, “We have come here looking for a promised land.” And there is also some marvelous nature poetry. This is surprising. It was an age of individualism. These people become individuals, and they see things. Lehi does; he has a beautiful *qaṣīda* when he recites that poem at the river of Lemuel in the valley of Laman. It’s a true *qaṣīda*, and Nephi gets quite ecstatic about nature images. This is the famous one about one night on the Saronic Gulf, absolutely gorgeous. “The purple mountain peaks are asleep, and the waterfalls coming down.” The Greek mountains are like the ones around here, and each aspect of the mountain has a description. It’s in the dusk with the waterfalls. “And all the little things around under the leaves, and rustling here and there. All the things which the black earth nourishes. And the prowling beasts of the mountains and the busy bees are all asleep now. [This is a nice part here.] There is a touch of deep sea life, the dolphins and the whales.” He sees them lying in suspension in the purple, luminescent water of the deep, the benthic waters. He goes into the Cousteau aspect. He follows nature from the mountains right down into the water. There’s this feeling of sympathy. We get great individualism here, and we also get the great geniuses with Greeks (very strong). We don’t want to get sidetracked on Greeks here because we want to get to the Book of Mormon. But there is a lot of this in the Book of Mormon; we will see that’s so.

Then we have these deals. Cyrus made a deal with the king of Babylon, and so they threw out Egypt. But Cyrus was a remarkable man. Remember Croesus, the king of Lydia who conquered Phrygia with all his money? He went to the Oracle at Delphi which was international. Everybody from any country went to the Oracle of Delphi. It was free and open; you could go there at any time. See, it was a worldwide, open society there. He asked what would happen if he went to war. The Oracle told him if he went to war he would overthrow a mighty empire. He was going to war against Cyrus of Persia, which

wasn't wise. Of course, the mighty empire he overthrew was his own. The Oracle didn't tell him that; that's the way Oracles talk. But he went to war with Cyrus, which was very foolish. Finally, Cyrus came to Sardis, and when he was taking the city Croesus had lost everything. This is typical of the times: you lose everything or you gain everything. It was an age of takeovers and losses. He took all his costly palace furniture and everything out in the marketplace, got on top of it, and made a big bonfire to sacrifice himself. He wasn't going to live if he couldn't live under those circumstances. As it started to burn merrily, Cyrus broke into the city, rushed to the marketplace, and saw the smoke ascending. He ordered his men to put out the fire as fast as they could. As one story tells it, he prayed and there was a miraculous rainstorm. So Croesus was delivered. Then Croesus became his best friend and adviser. This is typical. Croesus, having experience, traveled around with him and told him not to try to conquer the world. It wasn't the wise thing to do. But Cyrus wouldn't listen to him, although time and again he saved Cyrus' neck. Finally, there was one country that got under Cyrus' skin. It was the land of the Massagetae, way up in central Russia. He hadn't taken the land of the Massagetae which was north of his own. It was ruled by a woman, Tomiris, a great queen. Croesus said, "Nothing doing; don't do it," but Cyrus didn't listen to him. He went against the country. Then there's the story of the king and queen (like Solomon and the Queen of Sheba). Tomiris invited him to a banquet and had him murdered. She had his head chopped off and put into a bag of blood. She said, "You wanted blood; I'll give you blood." He had invited her son to a banquet and murdered him. Foolishly enough, he thought that because of his power he could protect himself. So that was the end of the mighty Cyrus.

Cyrus was followed by Darius, and he went into Egypt. What is a Persian from Central Asia doing in Egypt? He became one of the best Pharaohs. Out at Karga Oasis, he built a temple of Amon, one of the most magnificent structures, and there is the most beautiful hymn to Amon written by Darius I. Amon is the common name in the Book of Mormon; it dominates throughout the Book of Mormon. Darius' son Cambyses was a good man, but the Egyptians hated him. They accused him of madness and all sorts of things. But his son Xerxes, you remember, was the one who marched against the Greeks. The Greeks overcame him at Marathon. In the Battle of Marathon, the ones who won the Congressional Medal were Aeschylus and his brother. Aeschylus wrote a play called "The Persians." He gives a first-hand account of the Battle of Marathon. Remember what we are dealing with is Xerxes, who was the son of Darius and a Pharaoh in Egypt as well, and was very close to Israel. Cyrus became one of the saints of Israel (the second Cyrus) because he delivered Israel from Babylon (so it goes). But anyway, Aeschylus told about the great victory of the Greeks over the overwhelming Persian force at the Battle of Marathon in which he took a stellar role. In every play the ghost has to appear. It's a religious affair. Like the Hopi dance, you have to have the *Sipapuni* there. There's an altar in the center of the stage, and there's a *Canistra*, a sand patch where no mortal is supposed to set foot. This is the barren area, the neutral area, between this world and the other world where the play does not take place. The *Canistra* is just dust and sand where nothing grows. In the center is the altar. The Hopis arrange it the same way; they have the altar and then they have the two trees with the baho feathers on them, the spirit feathers. That's the *Sipapu*, the hole to the underworld from which the spirit appears.

You would think this Greek play is glory and patriotic flag waving, letting the eagles scream, etc. Not a bit of it. Xerxes is really the hero for Aeschylus. When he comes in, he is utterly bedraggled, beaten, (it's after the battle, you see) and covered with dust. He has been running for his life; his garments are torn—anything but the mightiest king in the world as he comes in. You pity him, and the play ends on an upbeat note. His mother tells

him, “Well, we’ve made idiots of ourselves; let’s go down and try to pick up the pieces.” And everybody feels much better. But in the middle of the play Darius appears, and he doesn’t rebuke Xerxes, his son, for hubris—for going too far (we’ll have to mention that). He rebukes the Athenians. He says, “Let this be a lesson to you, Athenians” [at this moment of patriotic triumph]. This was just right after the battle; they were right there. Of course, this was written years later; he was quite young at the time of the battle. In this patriotic fervor he just throws cold water on the whole thing. He says, “Look, when you get rich and powerful, this is going to happen to you, Athenians. This message comes to you.”

It’s the same thing in the Book of Mormon. The greatest patriotic celebration they had was the celebration of the triumphant rule of King Benjamin in which they had victory, triumph, and prosperity throughout. He held a great assembly of the nation, and all he did was tear them down, put them in mind of their nothingness. He said, “I would that ye should remember [keep in mind] . . . the greatness of God, and your own nothingness. . . . I say unto you that if ye do this ye shall always rejoice” (Mosiah 4:11). He had to teach them to rejoice. These four stages that the Greek tragedians repeat (they are repeated in quite a number of plays) are the four that we follow. We follow them in the Book of Mormon too. They are (1) *olbia* (2) *koros* (3) *hubris* (we all know what that is) and (4) *atē*. This is what you go through. *Olbia* is happiness and prosperity, having what you want (and not necessarily getting it dishonestly). Prospering in the best possible sense is *olbia*. But when you have that, then you get *koros*. That means full. When you’ve had all you can eat, and you insist on eating more, that’s bad—that’s *koros*, that’s overfilling, that’s force eating. You have eaten too much when you have *koros*. That leads to *hubris*, overconfidence. You think you are so important. You automatically feel that you are the good guy, and what you do is all right. You take advantage of others, and then you start playing the game pretty rough. That’s the way powerful people always do. The final stage is *atē*, the point at which you participate in ending the play as fast as possible. When you have reached the point of no return, there is no, *la commedia è finita* no point to continuing the play. Things will just get worse. As the Book of Mormon puts it often, you are either ripe in iniquity (if you get any riper than that you rot, as Shakespeare says), or the cup of iniquity is full. You cannot dilute it anymore; there is nothing you can do about it. If it’s full, you can’t add anything to it. Take something from it is what you’re going to have to do—tip it over. But when the cup is full and when the fruit is ripe, you can’t go anywhere after that. That is the point of *atē*. The other point is to end the play and not let the misery drag on. The person walks as if he were sort of hypnotized, and the things he says and does are destructive. He is subconsciously aware of what he is doing; he is trying to get rid of himself. It’s almost a death wish that you have there. You want to end the play as fast as you can, and that’s *atē*. You see, that will seize upon a people.

These great forces all came out among the contemporaries of Lehi in the year 600 B.C. This whole thing came to a head and got lost at that time. There was no better period in which to launch a new civilization than in the time of Lehi because he was a colonist, a patriarch, and a father leader. He was driven out of a city that collapsed. He was a victim of the great powers, etc. But we have another element in here, and this makes quite a bit of difference. This is so much like our own time and our own world, and the point is that he had the gospel. Remember, he went out and he prayed right at the beginning of the first chapter. He was absolutely sick; he couldn’t stand it. Then he went out and had a sun stroke (or whatever it was out in the desert). He ran home to his house in Jerusalem and threw himself on the bed. Then he thought he was carried away, and he saw what

happened. He saw the Council of the preexistence. He saw the plan, the Lord coming down, and the twelve apostles. He saw how it all worked out. From then on he was one happy man. He could do nothing but rejoice after that. He went out and tried to preach, ran into real trouble, and had to leave town. Well, this is another story which we will take up later. But this picture is a real one, and it includes ourselves. So many things are happening now that we thought would never happen before. As good old Euripides says, "We thought this would never happen." We thought there would be forest fires, but not wipe out a big part of Yellowstone (it's not finished yet) and things like that. We thought there would be a breakup of the ozone, but not five times as fast (as it's going now). We thought there would be a greenhouse effect, but we thought it would take three, four, or five hundred years. We didn't think it would take ten years. So everything is being hastened now. There's an acceleration. You notice throughout the Book of Mormon there's a great sense of urgency. This book was brought at a particular time for a particular place, addressed to a particular people. "This comes to you, oh ye Gentiles, that ye may be wiser than we have been." You don't have much time, but do what you should do, and don't do what you are doing. It keeps telling us that. So the Book of Mormon has a real message for us.