

# TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

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Semester 2, Lecture 50

Alma 14–17

Alma, Amulek, and Zeezrom  
Ammon among the Lamanites

Alma and Amulek had witnessed that auto-da-fé, that horrible thing which I assure you is quite routine in religious history. Irony, isn't it? They are all religious, these auto-da-fés—the burning of women and children and books in big piles. It has happened not once but hundreds of times. It happened anciently, too. Anyway, they [Alma and Amulek] found themselves in the jail, and they got some rough treatment there. It was a sort of SS prison. The judge came to Alma and Amulek and kept hitting them in the face, which is the usual procedure to get a person to talk—they slap them, you know. Verse 14: “After what ye have seen, will ye preach again unto this people that they shall be cast into a lake of fire and brimstone?”

The hardest test of all is holding back. It's not blowing up or doing violence. This is the test to which they are being subjected now in any action. This is where the Latter-day Saints historically have been repeatedly tested and stood up to the test very well. The times they didn't go to war were the times they always won. Then the other times when they blew their tops, it was not so good. Alma is being tested here to the breaking point. The judge said, “Behold, ye see that ye had not power to save those who had been cast into the fire; neither has God saved them because they were of thy faith.” You saw what happened, etc. This judge was after the manner of Nehor. Notice, the [order of] Nehors is a permanent establishment which begins way back in the first chapter of Alma. But Alma and Amulek “answered them nothing.” That was a severe test. After they had been cast into prison three days, the lawyers and judges came to work on them in the manner of the SS. We do this in police states, etc. And they were all professors of Nehor, too. It was a religious persecution because the priests came along, “many lawyers, and judges, and priests, and teachers, who were of the profession of Nehor.” This is religious persecution by the establishment. The burning was an auto-da-fé. But they answered nothing, and that's infuriating. Then they came again on the morrow and still worked on them. “How shall we look when we are damned?” they say. They are losing control now and getting funny. This is *Galgenhumor* so to speak. This thing went on for many days.

Remember, they mocked Jesus for a long time. The New Testament tells us that they made mockery of him and the gospel. Well, you do not mock a figment of your imagination, a legend, or an abstraction. That's one of the proofs that Jesus really lived—the fact that mockery was what was left behind in the early Christian times. You may hold another person's view in contempt or something like that, but if the person never really lived you wouldn't mock him, of course, as an abstraction or as a spiritual essence or teaching. That mockery is an important part; it brings that element of reality into the New Testament, which the people often ignore.

Well, here's the old chestnut [in verse 24]: “If ye have the power of God deliver yourselves from these bands.” They asked Jesus to bring himself down from the cross if he could.

And, of course, they asked for a sign. They all went forth and smote them again, and this routine went on until Alma and Amulek had had about enough. Then they rose and stood on their feet. Verse 26: “And Alma cried, saying: How long shall we suffer these great afflictions, O Lord?” They broke the bonds, which they could not have done by their own strength. When the people saw that they were terrified and tried to put as much distance as they could between them and Alma and Amulek. So what did they do? They all made for the gate. There was a rush and there was an earthquake. You notice that miracles are in the timing, not in the event. This was earthquake country. It’s not surprising that there was an earthquake, but just at that moment was when it was helpful. They all made a rush for the gate, so naturally they crowded the exit. They jammed the exit, nobody could get out, the gate collapsed, and they were all killed there. The only safe people were Alma and Amulek who stayed behind. [The people] tried to get as far from them as they could.

That’s what happened in 1906 in Pelee. A city of 8,000 people was utterly destroyed. There was only one survivor of the great debacle at Pelee in 1906. That was a prisoner who was in the deepest dungeon in town. That was the only safe place, in the dungeon. And it was a safe place for Alma and Amulek. They weren’t touched because they stayed behind, it says. The people all rushed for the gate, jammed together, and got themselves killed the way they do when a crowd panics. They were panicky, you see. Verse 27: “So great was their fear that they fell to the earth, and did not obtain the outer door of the prison; and the earth shook mightily [you see what a time of panic it was], and the walls of the prison were rent in twain so that they fell to the earth; and the chief judge, and the lawyers, and priests, and teachers, who smote upon Alma and Amulek, were slain by the fall thereof.”

As I said, it’s the timing not the event. We can think of the thundering legion and the Red Sea, the flooding of the Jordan River, and the quail at Sugar Creek. All these miracles are ordinary events that happened, but at a very convenient time. That’s the way it goes. This was a very convenient one, too. Of course, the miraculous part is that the Lord can foresee it. He arranges our affairs and manages that we will be there when it happens. Verse 28: “And the prison had fallen to the earth, and every soul within the walls thereof, save it were Alma and Amulek, was slain,” because they were by themselves in the dungeon. They had been left there alone. Well, when there was a great crash and the prison came down, the people all came running together to see what was going on. When they saw Alma and Amulek emerging, they ran, too. They were terrified at the sight. So they [Alma and Amulek] proceeded calmly to the land of Sidom in the next chapter.

You notice we get these forced separations of people, which are very important, especially in religious history. Ammonihah was going to be completely destroyed, but all the people who wanted to follow Alma and Amulek were driven out. They were forced to go out and settle elsewhere, and they did. Alma 15:1: “And behold, there they found all the people who had departed out of the land of Ammonihah, who had been cast out and stoned, because they believed in the words of Alma.” They were in another city, the city of Sidom. They had settled there. This is one of these forced migrations, such as in 1492 when all the Jews were driven out of Spain, or when all the Saints were driven out of Missouri. It was the best thing that could have happened, because after that came the bloody soil, the bloody shirt, “Bloody Kansas,” etc. There was Lawrence of the Bullwhackers and the Jayhawkers—the great mobs destroying each other, the whole land torn by riots. There were more killings than there ever were when the Mormons were there. They just got out in time. It was a forced separation.

The best yet was in 1685 when Louis XIV drove all the Huguenots out of France. All the Protestant Huguenots had to leave France on a certain day following St. Bartholomew's Eve. Well, they went to the Netherlands and to Prussia especially, and to England. They made those countries very rich and prosperous because the Huguenots were the most intelligent and industrious people in Europe. It was a landfall for Prussia, of course, that just fell into their lap. That's what gave Frederick the Great his background. That's why you find so many French names in Berlin. And there are other [examples of forced migrations] like the driving out of the Waldenses and the Vaudois. They went and settled elsewhere, and they brought prosperity wherever they went. It's an interesting thing.

Well, Zeezrom was there in Sidom; it was a safe place for these people. Sidom was a tolerant city, apparently. Zeezrom was there sick of a burning fever. He was obsessed with guilt, which drove him out of his mind. His fever was actually an escape because he wanted to die. Verse 3: "And this great sin, and his many other sins, did harrow up his mind until it did become exceedingly sore, having no deliverance [he couldn't stand it]; therefore he began to be scorched with a burning heat." The fever was part of his sickness which he brought upon himself. The brethren went to the house of Zeezrom and found him on his bed. When he saw them he felt there was a chance for life, and he asked to be healed by them. "And his mind also was exceedingly sore because of his iniquities." See, he was out of his mind. He was having terrible mental anguish because of the things he had done. This was the cause of his sickness; this will bring it on every time. When he saw the brethren, he asked them to heal him.

Verse 6: "Alma said unto him, taking him by the hand: Believest thou in the power of Christ unto salvation?" And verse 8 says, "If thou believest in the redemption of Christ thou canst be healed." He is sick to the point of death and destruction, but *salvation* is *to be saved* from any dire condition you are in. From any desperate end to which you might come the power of Christ will save you. Here he is right in the depths, and [Alma] is saying, do you believe in the power of Christ to save you? "And he answered and said: Yea, I believe all the words that thou hast taught." This means if you believe it, you can come back, they say. Verse 8: "And Alma said: If thou believest in the redemption of Christ thou canst be healed." *Redemptio* means "to buy back, to let you in again, to take you back home again" like the prodigal son. He [the Savior] will do it as long as you repent. As long as you are here, you can do it. It's redemption, he says, according to the faith. Is faith the power that does that, or is it Jesus Christ or what? Well, faith is the power that plugs us in; it's not the power [that heals]. It plugs us into the circuit, so to speak. The power is always there; we are surrounded by an enormous amount of power all the time. By applying faith we make it accessible to us; we make it useful for us. We are able to plug in, to use a vulgar expression, but that's the sort of thing you do. You open your mind to faith, and then you are able to do it, remembering this.

Verse 11: "And when Alma had said these words, Zeezrom leaped upon his feet, and began to walk; and this was done to the great astonishment of all the people; and the knowledge of this went forth throughout all the land of Sidom." He arose on his feet and began to walk. But remember, Alma was just as guilty as Zeezrom was. Alma, who saved him, had been just as guilty. He had done just as dirty things, and he had less reason to, as a matter of fact, because his father was the head of the church. Zeezrom's father wasn't. So Zeezrom decided to walk.

But remember this tremendous power that surrounds us. There's that new thing they talk about, this boson that everybody is looking for. The two biggest atom machines are being

built to discover that one thing, that one power that envelopes everything else, from which all the other particles are derived. They call it the Higgs boson.

Verse 12: “And Alma baptized Zeezrom unto the Lord; and he began from that time forth to preach unto the people.” Then he established a church there “for they did flock in from all the region round about Sidom, and were baptized [they were very successful]. But as to the people that were in the land of Ammonihah [the city these people had left], they yet remained a hard-hearted and a stiffnecked people.” You couldn’t move them at all. They were rooted in the profession of Nehor. What was it that made this Nehor business so appealing anyway? Well, we saw it back there in Alma 1:3 and following. In the first chapter of Alma it tells us that it was ceremonial, it was soothing, it was undemanding, it was flattering. That’s the kind of religion you want. You can rationalize anything you want with that, and these people were also very pious like the Zoramites.

Here’s this very pointed passage in verse 16. Remember it telling what a rich, important man Amulek was, and how everybody envied him, like Oedipus? He was the blue blood of the city, a direct descendant of Nephi, highly respected for his labor. He had made himself rich, and everybody thought a lot of him. But to go out with Alma he got rid of all his swag, and this is what happened. “Amulek having forsaken all his gold, and silver, and his precious things, which were in the land of Ammonihah, for the word of God, he being rejected by those who were once his friends and also by his father and his kindred.” Not only his friends cut him off cold when he didn’t have any more money, his family cut him off cold when he didn’t have any more money. Well, he had gotten his money by hard work, etc. They were doing the right thing [in their eyes]. I guess they all clamored to get the dough. Then they all went to court.

My best friend Paul Springer was a chief reporter in San Francisco for many years. Then he was on the city council in San Francisco. He was in charge of the testating courts for wills, etc. And what people would do for money! They would become mortal enemies in a very rich family over a thing like a piano stool or something like that, because of greed and desire to possess. [He described] the greed in these courts where they claim the property. Who will get the most? Who will get the diamond ring? Even a pair of used shoes they would cut each others’ throats for. What people do when they go after material things is astounding, isn’t it? You see this is real psychology here. Amulek got rid of his money and nobody wanted to have anything to do with him anymore.

They established the church in Sidom. The people assembled themselves together to worship in sanctuaries before the altar. Notice, this is the kind of cult they have here. In the law of Moses the altar is not necessary for sacrifice, but it is necessary. It’s very interesting. Exodus 30, for example, tells us that the primary purpose of that altar isn’t for sacrifice. But, as we use it in the temple, it is a centering for activities. In the temple an altar is where you bring things and receive things. It is a table; a table is where you share things—a table to which you bring things and from which you take things. It’s around the table, and that’s what an altar is. They “began to assemble themselves together at their sanctuaries to worship God before the altar, watching and praying continually, that they might be delivered from Satan, and from death, and from destruction.” So the church was established and running in this place.

Then Alma took Amulek back home to his own house. They are going to take a rest now. You notice that they are not back very long when suddenly war comes. On the “fifth day of the second month in the eleventh year, there was a cry of war heard throughout the

land.” This is interesting because Clausewitz assures us that war can never start suddenly like this. This started all of a sudden, but what it was is a typical Lamanite war. It was a *ghāza*. Our word *raid* comes from the Arabic word *ghāza*. It’s a raid for slaves. This was a slave raid, so surprise was everything here. The whole purpose was that. Look, for example, in verse 5. “They went unto him and desired of him to know whither the Lord would that they should go into the wilderness in search of their brethren, who had been taken captive by the Lamanites.” They [the Lamanites] didn’t stay and fight. They went off with the brethren. Now Alma is going to pursue them in search of the captives to bring them back again.

Then in the next verse it says the same thing: “And there the Lord will deliver unto thee thy brethren who have been taken captive by the Lamanites.” So it was a slave raid, which is the main purpose of barbaric wars most of the time. And again when it is completed, we have here in verse 8: “And they came upon the armies of the Lamanites, and the Lamanites were scattered and driven into the wilderness; and they took their brethren who had been taken captive by the Lamanites, and there was not one soul of them had been lost that were taken captive.” So it was a slave raid. They got the slaves back, but they had the help of the Lord in doing it so it wouldn’t grow to a large, nasty war. The Lamanites swept down on the city of Ammonihah and wiped that out. Verse 3: “And now it came to pass, before the Nephites could raise a sufficient army to drive them out of the land, they had destroyed the people who were in the city of Ammonihah, and also some around the borders of Noah, and taken others captive into the wilderness. Now it came to pass that the Nephites were desirous to obtain those who had been carried away captive into the wilderness.” That was the issue; it was slaves.

They appointed a captain, and his name was Zoram. That name means “refreshing rain.” After a dry winter or drought when you have a strong rain, it is called a *zoram*. As you would expect, it’s a popular name with these people. And he had two sons, Lehi and Aha. There’s an interesting thing because that’s a Jaredite name, too, and *Aha* in Egyptian means *warrior*. They were warriors, too, Lehi and Aha. It was a very common name. The first king of Egypt was called *Aha*. That was one of his epithets; he was *Aha, the warrior*. It’s always written with a pair of arms, one holding a club and one holding a shield. That’s the name *Aha*, which means “a leader in war.”

Zoram went to Alma “to know whither the Lord would that they should go into the wilderness in search of their brethren.” In the Dead Sea Scrolls in section 23, column 15, it tells about that. The high priest is asked because he is the one who is inspired of the Lord. Before Israel goes to war they consult the high priest. It’s like casting the lots the way you have to do in other countries. You consult the Lord if you do, and he does that here. He consults the high priest to ask where they should go in search of their brethren. That’s what the operation is to be. It’s to be a search and rescue, not a search and destroy. That’s what they did. They inquired of the Lord and found where they were. He told them what the plan [of the Lamanites] was; they nipped the plan in the bud. “And Alma returned and said unto them: Behold, the Lamanites will cross the river Sidon in the south wilderness [where they were least expected], away up beyond the borders of the land of Manti. And behold there shall ye meet them, on the east of the river Sidon, and there the Lord will deliver unto thee thy brethren who have been taken captive by the Lamanites.”

In verse 9 we have the cursed town of the Ammonihah, where all the people were destroyed. “But behold, in one day it was left desolate.” Here’s an interesting thing. They

are going to give it a name; they are going to call it *desolation*. Verse 11: “Nevertheless, after many days their dead bodies were heaped up upon the face of the earth. . . . And now so great was the scent thereof that the people did not go in to possess the land of Ammonihah for many years. And it was called Desolation of Nehors; for they were of the profession of Nehor, who were slain; and their lands remained desolate.” As I told you before, Awatori, the greatest of all the Hopi villages, was burned, and nobody ever goes back there. It’s desolation. And you read another interesting thing in Numbers 21. King Arad raided Israel for slaves; he did the very same thing. He ran away with them, and the Lord justifies Israel in pursuing and catching him and then destroying the land. Arad’s kingdom was destroyed, and they changed the name to *Hormāh*, or *Desolation*. After you have desolated a country, you change the name to *Hormāh*. The Romans, the Arabs and the Hebrews had the same thing. The good land is the land *Bountiful*; it’s a fruitful land. But a land that has been destroyed is called *Hormāh* or *Hōreb*, either one. *Hōreb* means *desert*. *Harb* is the Arabic word for *war* or *desolation*. *Hormāh* means *desolation*, and *hōreb* means the same thing, *desolation* or *destruction*. A land that has been destroyed is dedicated to desolation, and usually the name is changed to *hōreb*. The Romans would sow it with salt, and then it was *ager hosticus*. It could not be planted again. It became unfertile, deserted, etc. This is a Book of Mormon custom—“the land desolation.” There is lots of *desolation* and lots of *land Bountiful* here. “And their lands remained desolate.”

Verse 13: “And Alma and Amulek went forth preaching repentance to the people in their temples, and in their sanctuaries, and also in their synagogues.” This is an interesting reference to synagogues. A Jew might ask you, “Well, isn’t that premature? The synagogue didn’t exist until after the fall of the temple. The temple is where the Jews met. After that they met in the synagogues. *Synagogē* is the Greek name for it, which simply means “the place where you assemble, a *qāhal*, a church.” No less a person than Soloman Zeitlin, who was editor of the *Jewish Quarterly Review* for many years, did his doctoral dissertation on this subject. He investigated and found that synagogues were just as common before the fall of the temple as after, because Jews living in distant places formed their own societies. They couldn’t call their buildings *temples*; there was only one temple for them to go to. They were all required to go up to Israel to the House of the Lord once a year to worship the Lord. That is at the end of Zachariah. If anyone didn’t go up there with his family and everybody else and bring his offerings, upon them would be no rain. That was the curse. But they had to have their meetings and assemblies. They elected their leaders, etc. This wasn’t just after the temple fell; they had these synagogues long before. Quite early they started calling them *synagogues*; that’s the name they went by. Where the Jews settled was in non-Jewish country. Remember, the Jewish Hellenistic culture. They adopted other cultures, but especially the Greek. In fact, the best and oldest text we have of the Old Testament is the Greek Septuagint. So don’t worry about [the mention of] synagogues; that’s not an anachronism.

Alma and Amulek went forth, and also many more went forth to preach. So they started a motion going. In verse 15 many went forth to preach after their example. So they established the church throughout all the land, and it “became general throughout the land, in all the region round about, among all the people of the Nephites [this is wonderful; this movement spread] And there was no inequality among [all the people].” Whoever thought it would end up that way? But there was still preparation, and we are still being prepared. “The Lord did pour out his Spirit on all the face of the land to prepare the minds of the children of men, or to prepare their hearts to receive the word which

should be taught among them at the time of his coming.” That was to be seventy-eight years later. (We are still being prepared; we haven’t gone all the way.) “. . . and as a branch be grafted into the true vine, that they might enter into the rest of the Lord their God. Now those priests who did go forth among the people did preach against all lyings, and deceivings, and envyings [What is wickedness? This sort of thing], and strifes, and malice.”

What one word would you use to cover all this? I would say *meanness* or *inhumanity*. Remember, the Lord told the Apostles that there are two commandments on which all the law and the prophets hang. If you keep them, you don’t need to worry about the others. The first is “thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (Matthew 22:37–39). If you do that you will have not the slightest desire or inclination to break any of the other commandments. You won’t commit murder or you won’t steal or you won’t lie if you love your neighbor as yourself. That goes for everybody. This is what they were preaching [against], this meanness. Notice that very few of these things are against the law. You can’t put a person in prison for these things, and yet these are the real sins. People lie all over the place; you can’t sell anything without lying, they tell me. And deceivings—if you try to buy a house or a car from some people. And envyings—did you ever hear about a competitive system? And strifes—that’s competition. And malice—you’re going to get even. There’s lots of getting even going on. Don’t get mad, get even [they say]. “And revilings, and stealing, robbing, plundering, murdering [it gets more serious as we go, doesn’t it?], committing adultery, and all manner of lasciviousness [we are experts in lasciviousness today], crying that these things ought not so to be [well, apparently they were so; they are straightening the people out now] . . . holding forth the coming of the Son of God, his sufferings and death, and also the resurrection of the dead.” Christians see this in the Old Testament prophets.

Verse 20: “And many of the people did inquire concerning the place where the Son of God should come.” They naturally wanted to know since the coming of Christ was the big thing. Where would he come and when would he come? Will we get to see him? “And they were taught that he would appear unto them after his resurrection.” Well, that satisfied them. He wouldn’t appear to them here, but after the resurrection he would, they were told. “And now after the church had been established throughout all the land—having got the victory over the devil [that’s the ideal], and the word of God being preached in its purity in all the land, and the Lord pouring out his blessings upon the people—thus ended the fourteenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi. This is a good time to send out missionaries to the Lamanites, so that’s what they are going to do. Everybody at home was sort of getting brought into line.

Alma was journeying in the wilderness and he found his missionary brethren out there. My, they had been gone a long time! How long has it been? No, not so terribly long. It was a typical travel event when you meet your old friends after all these years. Well, of all people, the three sons of Mosiah!

Question: In verse 13 of the last chapter, it mentions three things: temples, synagogues, and sanctuaries. Is there any difference in sanctuaries from temples and synagogues?

Answer: Yes, a sanctuary isn’t a full-scale temple and it’s not a meeting place either. It’s just a place where holy things might be held, something like a bishop’s storehouse. We have minor ones. A temple is a big church, and a synagogue is a place where the whole

society meets. Well, they are in between. As you know, it is very typical to have shrines. Do we have shrines in the Church today? What kind of shrines do we have? We have places we visit, like Nauvoo, the Hill Cumorah, the Sacred Grove, etc. Those aren't [exactly] shrines, but they are places that are treasured. They are not particularly magical, and they are not regular meeting places, as temples and churches are. They are places that are set aside as something special. We have them and keep them that way. If we want to put up a service station or a bank, we make short work of them. They could be dedicated buildings, like the Coalville Tabernacle which was torn down. Well, let's not get started on that. We had architectural gems throughout the state, some real beauties, that were torn down because they were not cost productive. There was the old Salt Lake Theatre. I was with President Grant and some of the members of the committee when they were discussing it. I was just a kid, but I was sitting on the side listening. President Grant said, "How sorry are you to see it go? I'm sorry enough to pay \$5,000 to restore it." They argued and argued and decided it should be torn down anyway. My grandfather got me into that session. But that's an interesting question. Do we have shrines? You could write a thesis or a paper on it at least. I don't think anybody has looked into it. How holy can a building be before it is immune from destruction?

Alma journeyed and met his old brethren. Notice what they were. Verse 2: "And they were men of a sound understanding and they had searched the scriptures diligently, that they might know the word of God." Notice that "sound understanding." They were not hysterical, theatrical, fanatical, or evangelical types at all. They were men of sound understanding, and they searched the scriptures. That's what you go by. And they fasted and prayed; "therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation. This does not supersede the scriptures, you notice. They searched the scriptures, and therefore had the spirit of revelation. The two always go together, as we mentioned last time. Here's how long they had been away. Verse 4: "And they had been teaching the word of God for the space of fourteen years among the Lamanites [they were really dedicated; when they went on their missions, they went]. . . . For they had many afflictions; they did suffer much, both in body and in mind." It was our missions that suggested the Peace Corps in Kennedy's day. Missionaries sometimes have to take a beating. We have it rather easy today, but I know some who had a pretty rough time.

They had refused the kingdom. Remember, they were the king's sons. They were eligible and in line for the throne, but it's a republic now. How did they support themselves? Well, they took spears and bows and provided food for themselves. They went without purse or script. Naturally, they visited towns and villages and were fed by the people because they made many contacts, etc. This happens, too. Verse 8: "And thus they departed into the wilderness with their numbers which they had selected, to go up to the land of Nephi, to preach the word of God unto the Lamanites." They departed and a troupe went up to the land of Nephi. Now they are going to convert the Lamanites, and this is going to be a hard thing. The people of Ammonihah were bad enough. "And they fasted much and prayed much that the Lord would grant unto them a portion of his Spirit to go with them . . . that they might be an instrument in the hands of God to bring, if it were possible, their brethren, the Lamanites, to the knowledge of the truth, to the knowledge of the baseness of the traditions of their fathers, which were not correct."

Now what are the chances of convincing them of that? In chapters 27 and 28 it talks about those traditions. The Lord visited them with his Spirit. What about these traditions? In Alma 18:4 it says, "And now, when the king heard these words, he said unto them: Now I know that it is the Great Spirit; and he has come down at this time to preserve your

lives, that I might not slay you as I did your brethren. Now this is the Great Spirit of whom our fathers have spoken.” They talk about the Great Spirit later on. We’ll see that there is going to be a lot of talk about the Great Spirit, which is very important for us today. Well, the Spirit of the Lord visited them, and they went to the Lamanites. They had some success, but it took a lot of patience and suffering and good example. It says in verse 12 that they “took courage to go forth unto the Lamanites to declare unto them the word of God.” Then they decided they could be more effective if they could spread out because they would cover more ground. So they separated themselves and went alone.

This is about as good a description of Lamanite civilization as you can get, here in verse 14, the combination of qualities. We have come to regard the acquisition of riches and finery as a mark of civilization. On the contrary, they are a mark of barbarism, as you read in *Beowulf*, etc. They are not a gauge of civilization, but the opposite. What a difference between an Egyptian and a Mayan procession! With the Egyptians everyone, including the king, was very simply dressed. A simple basic white slip would do for the nobility. But have you seen the way the Mayan and the Aztec nobility got themselves up? I mean a walking Christmas tree is no exaggeration. Some of you may have gone the other night and heard that very good talk by the Major on Lamanite and Nephite armor. And there were some good drawings from vases and murals, etc. showing the grandees—the great people, the priests and the nobility. Their dress was utterly absurd; it was so overdone. They were so heavily laden with feathers and jewels, especially jade, and things like that. It was absurd. That’s barbaric to load yourself down with all your junk. For one thing barbarians are on the march most of the time and have to carry their wealth with them, so they have to have it portable. They put it in gold and the women wear it around their necks. They wear as many as 10–13 strings of gold coins around their necks. That’s the way they have to do it if they are on the move all the time. They love gold and jewels because they are portable. The sedentary arts include architecture and literature. But they have their highly developed arts that require the use of the mind, because you can carry that with you. They get to be very good at mathematics and star-watching and very good at poetry. They memorize enormous poems. They are the authors of epic poetry. People who have to keep on the move all the time take their treasures with them where they can carry them, in their heads and their hearts. So there is something to be said for both civilizations. The sedentary civilization stews after a while and becomes rotten, soft and decayed like the Babylonian. Then the others overrun it, supplant it, and then start decaying the same way. It’s a routine that has been followed forever and ever.

It says here in verse 14: “For they had undertaken to preach the word of God to a wild and a hardened and a ferocious people; a people who delighted in murdering the Nephites, and robbing and plundering them; and their hearts were set upon riches [just like the Nephites themselves], or upon gold and silver, and precious stones [exactly what these people would covet, the wealthy display; elegance, you know]; yet they sought to obtain these things by murdering and plundering that they might not labor for them with their own hands.” What is the subject of murder and plunder if you flip through the TV channels? It’s jewels like emeralds or pearls, or whatever it is, because that’s the thing that you can put in your pocket and carry around with you. So they are always fighting and murdering to get hold of the royal jewels, etc. I didn’t tell you about my getting the Czar’s jewels, did I? No, that’s another story. Really and truly, that is something! Of course, I didn’t get them, but the person who was with me was the Czar.

Verse 15: “Thus they were a very indolent people, many of whom did worship idols, and the curse of God had fallen upon them because of the traditions of their fathers [they had

inherited it; they were barbarians and had a variety of cults who worshipped idols]; notwithstanding the promises of the Lord were extended unto them on the conditions of repentance.” Now the sons of Mosiah went to preach to these people, and that was going to be a job, “that they might bring them to know of the plan of redemption. Therefore, they separated themselves one from another, and went forth among them, every man alone.” Well, that’s a risky thing, but on my mission I never had a companion. I got President Tadge’s permission to go alone. Nobody else would go with a bicycle. Nobody would go to the Black Forest. Nobody would go to these places, so I had to go alone. It was very interesting. After I distributed the tracts and rented the beer hall, then I would bring in Brother Loscher, one of our high powered German orators. He would come in and preach at the meeting and convert them. I just got them out to the meeting. Brother Losher was a great speaker. He came to Salt Lake and became a photographer some years ago.

Being the chief among them, Ammon blessed them and sent them on their ways. Then Ammon went to the land of Ishmael. Here’s another nice little insight we have here. Remember that the daughters of Ishmael were the first to break away and join the Lamanites. That certainly indicates that they were of the tribe of Ishmael—the Ishmaelites were the Arab tribes. Lehi himself was half Manasseh, and Manasseh was the desert tribe. Half Egyptian and half Arab is what it amounts to. They were east of the Jordan River. They went out to pick up Ishmael and [his family] came down and joined them. When they were still in the desert, it was Laman and Lemuel and the daughters of Ishmael that revolted against Lehi. Now later on in the Book of Mormon we find that the Ishmaelites are a people separate by themselves; they have kept their identity. As I said, the race problem in the Book of Mormon is very complex. Verse 19: “And Ammon went to the land of Ishmael, the land being called after the sons of Ishmael, who also became Lamanites [they were the first to defect from Lehi and Nephi]. And as Ammon entered the land of Ishmael, the Lamanites took him and bound him.” Their established custom was to bind any Nephite who came along and to retain them in captivity. This is so with many Indian tribes, of course. Read the life of Jacob Hamblin; it’s very exciting on that subject—and some of the other brethren.

Verse 21: “And thus Ammon was carried before the king who was over the land of Ishmael; and his name was Lamoni; and he was a descendant of Ishmael.” So it was Ishmaelite blood that bonded them together here; it was a family thing. Probably he was the chief of the family because he was a literal descendant. They would have gathered many others. Remember, this is a very fluid society this way. He asked him what he wanted, and Ammon said, “Yea, I desire to dwell among this people for a time; yea, and perhaps until the day I die.” The king said, you are welcome to take one of my daughters to wife. But Ammon said unto him, “Nay, but I will be thy servant.” I want to watch the flocks of Lamoni.

Now we come to the story of the waters of Sebus, a very interesting thing. (I didn’t bring the book<sup>1</sup> along to tell about that. Well, that’s all right because it’s all perfectly clear here.) The idea is this. They have the funniest battle you can imagine. It’s absolutely crazy. Well, let’s see what happens here. He is going to watch the flocks at a place “which was called the water of Sebus, and all the Lamanites drive their flocks hither, that they may have water.” This must have been dry country. This was the main watering place, and they all drove

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<sup>1</sup> He is referring to his book, *The Prophetic Book of Mormon*, CWHN 8 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1989).

their flocks together there. Then they would do a funny thing; they would have the strangest sort of fight there. Verse 27: "A certain number of the Lamanites [it may have been a limited number that was required by the game because it's a game they are going to play], who had been with their flocks to water, stood and scattered the flocks of Ammon and the servants of the king." Well, that's a funny thing! They brought their flocks, and then they scattered the flocks of Ammon and the servants of the king. "Now the servants of the king began to murmur, saying: Now the king will slay us, as he has our brethren." This would happen. They would take the flocks away. Then the servants would go back and get executed for that. Then these people come out and it happens again. Doesn't the king have enough servants to protect his flocks? Do they have to do this and then have them [the servants] all killed? Verse 28: "Now the king will slay us, as he has our brethren because their flocks were scattered by the wickedness of these men. And they began to weep exceedingly [they didn't want to be executed because they had lost the game]. . . . Now they wept because of the fear of being slain. Now when Ammon saw this his heart was swollen within him with joy [he wasn't going to have this sort of thing]; for said he, I will show forth my power unto these my fellow-servants," which he did. He was going to restore the flocks.

He gave them a pep talk. He cheered them up and "flattered them by his words [come on, boys, let's get 'em], saying: My brethren, be of good cheer and let us go in search of the flocks, and we will gather them together and bring them back unto the place of water; and thus we will preserve the flocks unto the king," and he won't kill us after all. So he talked to them like the coach, you see. Then they had the contest, and they followed Ammon. Verse 32: "They rushed forth with much swiftness and did head the flocks of the king, and did gather them together again to the place of water. And then those men again stood to scatter their flocks [they lined up and were going to scatter the flocks again]; but Ammon said unto his brethren: [you take care of the flocks] Encircle the flocks round about that they flee not." They won't run away this time, and I'll go and take care of these people. So he does. He calls a new play. He has a new game plan now.

Verse 34: "Therefore, they did as Ammon commanded them, and he went forth and stood to contend with those who stood by the waters of Sebus." This is a separate game now. The sheep are out of it, and there's going to be a combat here. They liked to play this game, and they played it for fun. The next verse tells us that. "Neither did they know anything concerning the Lord; therefore they delighted in the destruction of their brethren; and for this cause they stood to scatter the flocks of the king." To have the fun of killing a lot of Lamanites. That was a fun game to play, wasn't it? They delighted in this; that's the reason they stood there to scatter the flocks. Now we are going to see that all of this is a perfectly legitimate game. You can find at least a hundred parallels to it if you look for them. This is the way it used to be done. (But don't get ahead of the game here.)

But Ammon isn't going to play fair. "But Ammon stood forth and began to cast stones at them with his sling," like Reuben Headlock. My mother's great uncle was Ed Sloan, and his missionary companion was Reuben Headlock. He was the man who made the engravings for the facsimiles in the Pearl of Great Price. They were Irish, and they went on a mission in Ireland. Of course, they were mobbed. I just stumbled across this letter the other day quite accidentally. It was in a genealogy wastebasket. Here was this letter written by Ed Sloan about him and Reuben Headlock and what they had done. It said they started chasing them down the street, throwing stones at them. Suddenly they stopped and said, "Now, just a minute. We're Irish, too, and we can throw a lot better

than those characters with all these nice cobblestones here.” So they started throwing back, and they sent three of them to the hospital. They chased the mob back and were picked up for riotous behavior. But some of our men got them released. They were able to drive off the mob because they could throw, too. It works both ways. I think [the members of the mob] were more surprised than anything else to find that these guys [could throw so well]. But they had both been herding sheep most of their lives and had a deadly aim—out doing nothing but throwing rocks all day. My great-great-uncle was from Manti.

This is what happened here. He went out and started throwing rocks at them, and he was deadly with his sling. Slingers are deadly people. Ammon spent about fourteen years on a mission, and they took the weapons with them to hunt game. Shepherds in Greece or Spain have nothing to do all day but practice with slings, so they become deadly accurate. The most effective troops in any ancient army were the slingers because they would sling pellets. These pellets are found by the thousands throughout the ancient world. They are lead pellets with very little air resistance, and they really go. They are more deadly than a .22, I think. They could hit anything. No wonder little David, who was not so little after all and had been tending flocks all his days, was awfully good with the sling and knew just where to knock Goliath out. So the same thing happened here; this man was deadly. He began to cast his stones at them, and “he slew a certain number of them [by slingery] insomuch that they began to be astonished at his power [this wasn’t according to the game; they hadn’t expected that]; . . . seeing that they could not hit him with their stones [he was out of range; he was a good slinger], they came forth with clubs to slay him.” It was a stone throwing contest, which was fair enough, because they had stones, too, it says here. But after the stone-throwing, they came after him with their clubs.

Verse 37: “But behold, every man that lifted his club to smite Ammon, he smote off their arms with his sword.” There’s only one way you can do damage with a club. You can’t poke with it and you can’t trip up with it. You have to lift your arm to hit with it; that’s all there is to it. So he had this trick blow, and he just cut off their arms—a very nice operation. As we’ll mention later, there’s an Aztec game that was done like this with prisoners of war. One person would have a club, and the other person would have a sword. The person with a club was tied by his ankle; he could have only limited range. He was a prisoner, and it was supposed to be a sacrificial thing anyway. He only had a club to defend himself; whereas, the other man was armed with a sword or with a club with very sharp obsidian blades on it. So the other person didn’t have a chance unless he was awfully good. It was the club against the sword. That was supposed to be done. The person was supposed to be killed because it was ritual sacrifice. You say, “Why do they do these bloody things?” It’s the sanest form of war there is—to limit the bloodshed. We don’t have that; we kill everybody. You’ve seen plenty of documentaries about wild animals in savage wars. You notice that they fight often, but they know when to stop. Elk will fight bloody fights, and hippopotamuses and sea lions. They fight like crazy to be head of the herd, etc. But when the time comes they stop and break it up.

It’s the same thing with savage war. The Indians have their “touch stick.” You touch so many people and that’s it. It’s settled when you have killed so many. A certain price and honor has to be paid. Of course, that’s what the duel is. You draw blood and the honor has been satisfied. I have a long list of such types here; we won’t get into them. But the point is that these are ways of keeping down the killing. That’s it. You know that since you are going to war and since your tempers are high, somebody must pay. But how much? Do you have to wipe out the whole nation? Do we have to get wiped out completely before our honor is satisfied? We have that absurd expression, “unconditional surrender.” Well, a

person doesn't surrender unless there is a condition that his life is spared. He is not going to surrender at all unless he surrenders on condition. When we say "unconditional surrender" that's an "Irish bull," an oxymoron. I have a more elaborate thing, but I'll talk about it next time. But first let's finish this chapter.

They began to be surprised and they began to run away from him. I don't blame them. Verse 37: "They were not few in number; and he caused them to flee by the strength of his arm. Now six of them had fallen by the sling, but he slew none save it were their leader with his sword." He only duelled with the leader with the sword. The whole point of these things is between the leaders. A duel is what it is. With David and Goliath as soon as Goliath was finished, the Philistines surrendered. There was no battle; that ended it. That's how it is in the Homeric wars, too. The heroes decide to fight, and the whole issue of the war depends on them. The one who wins takes over the army of the other without any trouble at all. That happened in modern European wars, the Austrian Succession, etc. The winner, the prince, took over the lands and everything else. That was their purpose, to take as many lands as they could. This idea of total warfare is, as Clausewitz says, an utter absurdity. It's just armies that are fighting, and when you have subjected the enemy to your will the war is over. What you are trying to do is get him to do what you want him to do. When he is willing to do that, there is no need for any more, he said. We don't do that though. We have a body count now. We just keep on counting as if that were a sign of victory. Clausewitz has a wonderful thing to say about that in his great warriors' bible [*War, Politics, and Power*]. It wasn't published until 1833. I gave a spiel on that on Friday night. That's not what got me onto this, but it is the thing.

I think I have worked at every level of intelligence from company right up to SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters of the Allied European Forces). I worked quite a while in the British War Office, Whitehall (very few people could get into Whitehall—oh, that's a joke; that's something), and Hyde Park Corners where all the intelligence was cooked up in London there. And I went down to Maidenhead to steal maps and things like that, because you had to steal information if you wanted it. The British wouldn't give it to you. I worked at other levels, and then naturally at the division level. That's where I was stuck for a whole year, but it was with the 101st. That means we had to be very accurate, and my business was to report everything that was going on from minute to minute, and to be very exposed. That meant that you had to go down and circulate, visit, go behind, go through the woods and do as much peeking as you could. All this sort of nonsense. But it was nice to observe war at every level, you see. Some of it was absolutely magnificent, huge, unspeakably dramatic—far more dramatic than Hollywood ever made it, as far as a spectacle is concerned. On the fourth of July to make an impression on the Germans we sent over 5,000 or 50,000 planes (I don't remember which) just in one bunch to show to them. Everybody looked [briefly] and nobody bothered about it again—so they have a lot of planes. You see, it isn't the size.

Like the Second Coming, it won't be the display. It's not the Stephen Spielberg or George Lucas effect that we are after. Those things fall flat. The special effects are not the thing at all; it's what we feel in ourselves about what goes on. That's where it is. I shouldn't have got off on this, but I had one great privilege to visit the same places militarily that I had visited as a missionary. It is infinitely harder to go through a hostile village as a missionary than it is to go through the same village with an M1, ducking from door to door. It takes far more courage because that's what the war is about, as Clausewitz says. It's a conflict between their mind and your mind. To look them in the eye is the thing. You are preaching the gospel, and you feel that opposition. This was very hostile territory, very

strong Catholic. They had announced before and warned the people against us, etc. And then you're not supposed to contend; you're not supposed to argue about tenets; you're simply supposed to bear your testimony and be on your way. But the tension, the resistance, and the power that was there, without any weapons or anything like that. That wasn't it at all. And I believe that in the War in Heaven they used no weapons at all—of course, they didn't. We are told that Satan was cast down in a twinkling. The Lord could squish Satan like a bug anytime he wanted to. That's not it. This all takes place in the realm of the mind and the spirit. We are eternal, spiritual beings and we have to go through this stuff. This is a very interesting process we are going through right now—a brief and temporary one. It's a great one. Well, I'll resume with this comedy tomorrow. It's quite a thing, what they do in this Sebus business.

[The students sang "Happy Birthday" to Brother Nibley for his seventy-ninth birthday.]

So from hour to hour we ripe and ripe,  
And then from hour to hour we rot and rot;  
And thereby hangs a tale.

Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, act II, scene 7

However, when you reach a certain age, you don't go numb. It's all gravy. I'm not living on borrowed time; it's a bonus. It's completely undeserved and it's wonderful. I have no claims on it at all, so I'm getting a free ride from this point on, and thoroughly enjoying it, too.