

THE BOOK OF MORMON

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Helaman 6–10

Great Rulers in History

Note how fast it happened. In the sixth chapter they've gotten wicked again. Remember, they [the Lamanites] wiped out the Gadiantons simply by preaching the gospel to them. That may seem extravagant to us. But the Nephites went on getting more and more wicked, and then see what happened. Why did they do this? Because they didn't work at it [being righteous]. You have to fast and pray and things like that. The Lord had blessed them, and this is the reason. They liked prosperity, so in Helaman 6:17, ". . . the Lord had blessed them so long with the riches of the world they had not been stirred up to anger, to wars, nor to bloodshed; therefore they began to set their hearts on their riches; yea, they began to seek to get gain that they might be lifted up one above another."

Does that necessarily follow? Well, how do you measure gain? How do you measure wealth and power? By numbers, of course. The whole thing is done by numbers. You don't even have to have the money anymore. It's just the numbers. It used to be the numbers in the bank, the number of gold coins. Now it's the number of blips, just something in a computer, and yet you can have this vast wealth, as the Chicago trading has shown, without doing a thing. But it's all in terms of numbers, and of course a number is nothing but a comparison. So you measure your greatness by number. ". . . [to] be lifted up one above another; therefore they began to commit secret murders, and to rob and to plunder, that they might get gain." Back on prime time again. And there was the gang. Now [the followers of] Kishkumen and Gadianton, those two geniuses, got together again, and "there were many, even among the Nephites, of Gadianton's band." This is the old gang, as we mentioned, the assassins, etc.

Verse 20: ". . . when the Lamanites found that there were robbers among them they were exceedingly sorrowful." If there is a giant crime exposé, what are you going to do about it? ". . . Satan did stir up the hearts of the more part of the Nephites, insomuch that they did unite with those bands of robbers . . ." They united with the bands. There was profit in it; there was business behind it. A giant brotherhood is what it turns out to be. But everybody's profiting in certain times. We all invest, and they invested. They bought in is what they did. ". . . the more part of the Nephites, insomuch that they did unite with those bands of robbers, and did enter into their covenants and their oaths, that they would protect and preserve one another in whatsoever difficult circumstances they should be placed, that they should not suffer for their murders, and their plunderings, and their stealings." Well, who are they going to plunder if it's the whole nation? Who are we plundering today, as far as that goes? And [they had] their secret signs.

Now, here, at this point, let's ask this question. Is the needle stuck, or something like that? Are we going to get the same routine over and over again? Does this lack of variety disturb you at all, what we have here? Well, look at the record. I just wrote down some things. You go through the historians—whether it's Herodotus, Thucydides, Polybius, Livy, Gellius, Ammianus. Then you get into the Middle Ages and read Gregory of Tours. You can check the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, or anything like that. You can save trouble by

reading Gibbon, all five volumes of it. In the Middle Ages you have Le Bel and all the chronicles there [such as] the *Peterborough Chronicles*. Fulcher was the chaplain to Baldwin of Boulogne, but he worked for everybody; Froissart, even more so. He was secretary for one king, and worked for another king. He spent a lot of time in Ireland and married two Irish wives. We don't realize that half the court of King Frederick II spoke Irish—it was the fashionable thing to speak Irish. Then [there were] the *Eddas*, Eroissart, and Percy's *Reliques*. We have them all collected here in one massive collection made by the Germans in the late nineteenth century called the *Monumenta Germanica*. We also have the *Patrologia*, thousands of volumes—Oriental, Greek, and Latin.

These stories are all written down, and they're all the same as the Book of Mormon. There's nothing but downbeat. It's all dirty; it's all nasty. Well, what goes on here? Well, I guess Voltaire was right when he said, "Happy the people whose annals are blank." If you have nothing to say, if you have nothing to report, then your history is happy. But what kind of history is that? Who's going to read that? I got up this morning and brushed my teeth. We had a picnic, etc. Well, well, isn't that great. That's not going to be prime-time TV. You've got to have the blood, murder, and intrigue and all that stuff.

But in all this writing there are a few flashes of light. They come in there. They are nearly always connected with these people that are called "the Great." Some one individual moved them that way, like the prophets of old. Who are called "the Great?" It's not historians who bestow the title "the Great." It's by popular acclaim that it happens. It happens almost unconsciously, and so we have Alfred the Great, Alexander the Great, and Karl the Great who is Charlemagne, and Peter the Great. They are the greats. They give us the happy moments. And what's so great about them? It's not their conquests, it's not their power, and it's not their ego. Nobody ever wanted to call Napoleon, "Napoleon the Great." They all admitted that he was the greatest of conquerors. Caesar, the same thing. They never called him "Caesar the Great." But why do we have Alfred the Great? Because we think of Alfred and the plowboy—Alfred who was determined that every plowboy in England would learn to read and write.

Then you have Charlemagne going to school as the emperor, sitting down on little seats with the little boys, and girls too, in the school to learn how to read and write, because he was illiterate. It wasn't beneath his dignity to do that. Well, they may have laughed at him in school, but he would do that. And the same thing with Alfred. And you think of Peter the Great working as a common day-laborer in the shipyards of Holland so he'd learn how to make ships for his people. He wanted Russia to have a navy. Peter the Great was the greatest conqueror of the East, and he worked just as a common laborer and expected no more. This sort of person we call "the great."

The one story we all know about Alexander is "Alexander and Diogenes." Diogenes, you know, had a lamp and went around looking for an honest man. He was a social philosopher and other things. He was in a barrel, which was in a public place there. He was permitted to do that. Everybody was so busy he would roll his barrel from one side to the other. [They would say,] "What are you doing, rolling your barrel?" He said, "Well, everybody has to be busy in this town. I've got to do something; you have to look busy." This is the main point. You're not doing anything, but rolling your barrel. Well, anyway, Alexander the Great came to see him. "What can I do for you?" said Alexander the Great. He [Diogenes] was sitting in the sun. The sun had just come up in the morning, and he was getting warm. Diogenes said, "Get out of the sun, please; that's what you can do for me."

And Alexander, as he walked away, said to the people with him, "If I were not Alexander, I would choose to be Diogenes." That was the greatness of Alexander. They were not uppity; they were not high and mighty. They realized that all others were equal to them. These would have been photo opportunities for our pseudo-greats today. These men were very sincere, and that's what made them the greats.

Now the Greeks don't have that title, "the Great," but they have "the Wise," you see, except for Alexander. The greatest of the Greeks was Solon the Wise, and Solomon was Solomon the Wise. We have the wisdom of Solomon, and we have the wisdom of Solon, too—for example his "Ode on the Seven Ages of Man." They're very sad, and, as you know, the Wisdom of Solomon in the book of Ecclesiastes is bleak and sad as ever a writing can be. We've seen everything; it's all the same routine. Nothing's going to get any better on this earth. Well, history tells us, no matter what happens, it never gets any better. But does it ever get any worse?

So this is the story we're getting in the Book of Mormon too, but there's going to be a difference here. Don't blame the Book of Mormon for being bleak. What about the ancient East, the real ancient East? There's an interesting thing, because you have all these inscriptions. You have a vast autobiographical literature. And Lehi's is another typical autobiography of the time. And you have the heroic inscriptions and doings of kings, etc. Well, they're idealized. The king is always victorious and glorious and this sort of thing. But everybody knew they weren't. They were ritualized, etc. The Old Testament chronicles are the only ones that are different. They tell it like it was. David and Solomon are not unmitigated heroes by any means. David is not going to make it out of hell without a lot of trouble because of the things he did. And Solomon was not wise—he was a fool. The Shulamite made a fool of him. In his wisdom he thought he was so wise, having all those wives. No, he was not wise. But we find those things in the Old Testament.

But they [the Eastern civilizations] had another side of the picture, which was very real, and they were aware of that. That is the great wisdom literature, the great lamentation literature. This counteracted the rest. You have the lamentation literature in Egyptian from the beginning and right through, "The Lamentations of Neferohu" and their prophets too, of Amenemhet, "The Prophecy of the Lamb." What are some of the others? "The Destruction of Mankind." There are some great works that deal with the other side of the picture, very realistic and very accurate descriptions of a world which is doomed.

It's the *ludlul* literature with the Babylonians and their epics, the Gilgamesh Epic, and the Adapa. They're very bleak. See, Gilgamesh is quest. Can we gain eternal life? And he flubs it. It just drives him wild because he can't have eternal life. He's not going to settle for just being a drop in the ocean of being.

So we have these things, and the Book of Mormon shows its authenticity at all points. The same gloomy, depressing routine of human folly runs through the whole thing. But then along with it is something unique. It's the upbeat nature of the Book of Mormon, which you don't get in the others, except some. Of course, there are some of the psalms of David. But once, years ago, I got a cheap edition of the Book of Mormon (you can get them for 50 cents) and colored all the upbeat verses green and all the downbeat verses red. They're about equal in number. It's half up and half down. It's a miserable world we're living in, but the news is all good. That's the nice thing about it. And the authenticity of

the one vouches for the other. It has given such a true picture of this world we live in that we can trust it all the way.

I turn to the Bible when I'm in distress. You get comfort from that, from sorrowing and from suffering. There are promises and passages about the Messiah. It has passed through many hands and many editors and been commentated many times. But the Book of Mormon is like grabbing the hand of God. It's like grabbing the iron rod. You've got something very solid there. It was brought by the angel, and you have the whole thing. It has never been explained. It is solid, not built up of any coincidences. It's like a hand reaching down to grab you, and it says we're not lost at all. The Book of Mormon is all good. So let's get to the good part as fast as we can. We need it now. Of course, having bad colds does not put one in a good temper, you know; I start looking for the bleak side of existence.

Helaman 6:29: "Yea, it is that same being who put it into the heart of Gadianton to still carry on the work of darkness . . . from the beginning of man even down to this time [he's the one who sows these nasty viruses]. And behold, it is he who is the author of all sin [well, that's a funny thing]. . . . and doth hand down their plots, and their oaths and their covenants, and their plans of awful wickedness." Now we've shown that before. We don't need to go into that—a subject that hasn't been properly treated this way. But in any century of the earth's history you want to name, these bands have been there, and they've dominated. They have not just been there, but have always insisted on secrecy. Naturally, you say we don't know about them. Ah, yes, but the mischief they perform is so great. There's so much evidence of their existence, and they keep popping out all the time. And some of them are practically indestructible. The old assassins are still going, for example. There are all these outfits, like Abu Nidal, in the East—not just in the East. The worst used to be in China; they may still be. Well, there's the Triad in Hong Kong; terrible things go on. And not only that, but these gangs in Southeast Asia—Vietnam, etc. They not only fight each other; they start wiping out merchants or anybody else. They are not limiting themselves to their own people; they're going everywhere. Now they're planting cells in towns in the Middle West. In the big cities, like Los Angeles and New York [it's expected], but now they are in the most unexpected places. They find Springville a particularly inviting place to operate. Well, it's very insidious. These things actually do go on like that, and the police can tell you some horrifying things about that even now. But why does this concern us?

The more part of the Nephites made idols of their gold and silver. Well, they were making too much money. Notice verse 31. It got so much hold on them. ". . . build up unto themselves idols of their gold and their silver." But why did it happen so fast, in the space of not so many years? Notice, this astonishes the Book of Mormon historians too as much as it does you. You say, well how can it happen so fast? It is strange. In not many years it happened just like that. And again, if you look at the record, that's exactly what happened. In the sixty and seventh year of the reign [of the judges] "they did grow in their iniquities." They reversed roles. The Nephites began to dwindle because of the hardness of their hearts, and the Lamanites began to grow.

We're getting behind here; let's go to chapter 7. We've already mentioned that the Gadiantons had been wiped out [among the Lamanites] just by preaching to them, as if that could be done. That has a lot to do with the nature of their covenants. But they [the Nephites] had a new administration here in verse 39: "And thus they did obtain the sole management of the government," so that anything they could do was all right. And they

did “turn their backs upon the poor [cut all benefits] and the meek, and the humble followers of God.” As Tolstoy said about the Russian baron who rules a large estate and sees his aged peasants suffering. He can’t bear the sight of seeing them suffering, so he sends them off to Siberia where he won’t have to see them. That was the solution. Well, it’s the same solution with us. We say we feel for the poor, but boy do we grind them down. Verse 40: “. . . they were in an awful state, and ripening for an everlasting destruction.”

Chapter 7 starts with a sad homecoming. This is a thoroughly sad story, isn’t it? Nephi, the son of Helaman, had been on a mission trying to make some headway among the Nephites, and he was a complete failure. Nobody would accept him at all in the land northward. Verse 3: “And they did reject all his words, insomuch that he could not stay among them . . .” He had to leave; he couldn’t stay. Well, at least I’m going home; things will be better there [he thought]. Forget it. They were worse when he got home: “And seeing the people in a state of such awful wickedness, and those Gadianton robbers filling the judgment-seats [they know where the keys of power are]—having usurped the power and authority of the land; laying aside the commandments of God, and not in the least aright before him; doing no justice unto the children of men [here is the routine; notice, it’s all personal friends]. Condemning the righteous because of their righteousness; letting the guilty and the wicked go unpunished [and you might know why] because of their money; and moreover to be held in office . . .” There’s only one purpose in politics today, all of a sudden, the last ten years or so. It’s to get elected. If you get elected, then that’s it. Eighty-five percent of the incumbents in the last election were re-elected. So if you’re once in, you’re in, and when you’re in you can do as you jolly well please. As Reston says, they’re not interested in governing; they’re just interested in campaigning. That’s what everybody does today. And so it says here: “. . . because of their money, and moreover to be held in office at the head of government, to rule and do according to their wills.” That’s exactly what the racket is. Once you’re in there, you’re in. Nothing can get you out. A cold steel chisel won’t get you out. So this is the bottom line here. And the thing is that they might gain in glory and popularity. Those in office are not answerable to anyone, and the main interest, of course, is to get elected and live happily ever after.

It goes on in the next verse: “Now this great iniquity had come upon the Nephites in the space of not many years; and when Nephi saw it,” he was in agony of soul. Well, not many years again. I recall when the Roaring Twenties came on us overnight, and they were “roaring twenties.” There were excesses. The market just blew up, and we got the great Depression, of course. But then the same thing happened in the Gilded Age in the 1870s, right after the Civil War. There was great exploitation and terrible things that happened. Then there were the awful strikes and social disruptions of the 1880s, what Mark Twain called “the Gilded Age.” It was gilded, and everybody was “living high on the hog.” Colonel Bariah Sellers said, “Two years ago I didn’t have a cent, and now I’m \$3 million in debt.” That was considered a big success, because he was doing big time. That’s the whole thing.

So in not many years [this happened], and when Nephi saw it, it just broke his heart. What could be going on? Is this a naive statement he makes here? “Oh, that I could have had my days in the days when my father Nephi first came out of the land of Jerusalem [out of that hell? Nephi didn’t have any fun at all] that I could have joyed with him in the promised land.” When he got to the promised land, he had to break off from his brethren, and he ends on a note of dire misgivings. “Then were his people easy to be entreated, firm to keep the commandments of God.” They weren’t at all. But this is a very realistic touch

in the Book of Mormon. We do look back to those happy times, not really knowing what they were like, reading their teachings rather. “They were quick to hearken unto the words of the Lord.” Actually, the early Nephi said they were very slow to hearken to the words of the Lord.

Now this is an interesting word he uses. Well, I can’t live in those happy times. Why don’t I get a better break? Why do I have to live in this time. “But behold, I am consigned [his use of the word consigned in verse 9] that these are my days, and that my soul shall be filled with sorrow because of this the wickedness of these my brethren.” I’m consigned to that. Everyone one has his days assigned him. Why are we consigned? Well, everything is scheduled. Then again, we ask that question, why? Well, we get a marvelous vignette here, and we’ll go into that. But the idea is that everything is assigned and consigned. That’s part of the Book of Mormon; it’s part of the doctrine we teach. How far do we accept that? You’re here because you must be here, now because it’s now.

Now we have a marvelous little cultural picture in verses 10, 11, and 12. He gives a picture of a Nephite city. It’s not like a European or ancient city at all—it’s very different. It’s a well-ordered town. We have Aristotle’s essay on the city, and many ruins still stand. Ancient cities, without being ruins, have the most tangled, narrow, tricky streets you can imagine. Well, they were supposed to. If an enemy broke in, it was to confuse him so that he couldn’t take the city once he got through the walls. They were easy to defend when every native knew every bend and crook and window. But if they didn’t [the enemy] could take advantage. As Aristotle said, it must be designed as a maze to trick an enemy. But that’s not so in the American cities at all. He describes them here. That *National Geographic* I mentioned the other day has pictures of cities, and they are all superbly laid out. (Here’s one. That gives us a picture of the crooked merchants coming to marketplace. That’s a good one. But here are some of their big markets. We mentioned that before.) Well, here’s Mexico City today. As you see, it’s on the lake, and it’s all on the checkerboard style. But here’s the ancient city as the Spaniards saw it when they discovered it. It’s all very neatly laid out, all planned with streets wide open, all at right angles to each other, etc. And notice here are the gardens. As you go up, these are garden plots. Here the road approaches the city and passes a garden plot here. You get in the city, and you see their towers here and there. Everything is laid out in a very proper manner. The interesting thing is the garden surrounds it, and they still do. This is one thing that has been discovered, archaeologically, down at Teotihuacan today at the big Pyramid of the Sun there. It was a large city, and moreover, the city was surrounded by garden patches, very systematically, and he describes it here.

Verse 10: “And behold, now it came to pass that it was upon a tower, which was in the garden of Nephi, which was by the highway which led to the chief market . . .” We know these people were great market people. We see some pictures here of their ancient markets going on. Yes, here’s a picture of a market, very bustling. But there’s a picture of a much more impressive market here, a big city market where they’re coming in. Here is a military marketplace where you get all sorts of fancy gear. You notice they talk about their fine, costly apparel. They’re always emphasizing that in the Book of Mormon. Well, you see why. These people overdressed outrageously. Of course these are Aztecs; they come much later. But another trend of the archaeology, which is very diligent now, is the sameness—the fact that these patterns are kept for thousands of years. They don’t change as much as you might think.

Now here’s a very impressive city. Note the towers all over the place, somebody yelling

from a tower, and the boats bringing in the stuff to the marketplaces with their awnings spread and the like. The people are out with their wares, and here's an outrageously overdressed soldier making an announcement. And the banners are there. It's a splendid thing. It's laid out. And this is the system we have in the Book of Mormon. Nobody knew anything about that. Well, we have the Spanish record and these pictures here. [The author] just puts it in sort of incidentally, "highway which led to the chief market, which was in the city of Zarahemla; therefore, Nephi had bowed himself upon the tower which was in his garden [as you know, these people were incurable tower people; they built towers at the drop of a hat], which tower was also near unto the garden gate by which led the highway." So [it mentions] the gardens and the highway going to the main marketplace. That's why you have the marketplace in the center of the city. The people pass to go to the market. It all fits the picture perfectly that we get in these old American cities.

"And . . . there were certain men passing by and saw Nephi as he was pouring out his soul unto God upon the tower." Now Nephi was a famous man, you see. They ran and told the people that Nephi was back. "The people came together in multitudes that they might know the cause of so great mourning for the wickedness of the people." This rushing together spontaneously and forming great multitudes is a phenomenon we're seeing in our own days, that we haven't seen since the days of the French Revolution. In almost every capital of Eastern Europe there are these spontaneous gatherings together of all the people now. It's the first time for years that they hadn't been laid on by the army for doing it. You find it even in Prague now, which is the hardest city of them all. In Prague, Sofia and Budapest, in East Berlin, even in Moscow, everybody comes together spontaneously for a cause. And they came together here.

Well, Nephi stood up, and the people were worried. The reason they gathered is they felt something was wrong, or he wouldn't be there. It tells us this later on. ". . . when Nephi arose he beheld the multitudes of people who had gathered together." In Helaman 8:7-10, it tells us, ". . . they did stir up the people to anger against Nephi, and raised contentions among them; for there were some who did cry out: Let this man alone, for he is a good man . . ." There is much disagreement among the people in the next chapter. Many of them feel that things are going wrong, that the Nephites are wicked and there is something they should do about it. So when they gathered here [Helaman 6:12], Nephi had his audience. He opened his mouth and began to speak to them and rebuke them for their wickedness, of course. Verse 15: ". . . ye are given away that the devil has got so great hold upon your hearts. Yea, how could you have given way to the enticings of him who is seeking to hurl away your souls down to everlasting misery and wo? . . . why has [the Lord] forsaken you?" They feel that God has forsaken them; he has a case here. It is because ye will not hearken unto his voice. "Why has he forsaken you?" God never forsakes anyone. You forsake him, he says, because you have hardened your hearts; you will not hearken. You won't listen, that's all. Instead of gathering you, he shall scatter you. "O, how could you have forgotten your God in the very day that he has delivered you?"

Here is the good old, routine answer again in verse 21: "But behold, it is to get gain, to be praised of men, yea, and that ye might get gold and silver. And ye have set your hearts upon the riches and vain things of the world, for the which ye do murder, and plunder, and steal, and bear false witness against your neighbor, and do all manner of iniquity. [This is what people do to get money; I wouldn't believe it] . . . For if ye will not repent, behold, this great city, and also all those great cities which are roundabout, which are in

the land of our possession shall be taken away. [This is how God's going to punish them; you have no strength at all; you just have to stand by yourself against your enemies] . . . it shall be better for the Lamanites than for you except ye shall repent. For behold, they are more righteous than you [verse 24], for they have not sinned against that great knowledge which ye have received [you have greater knowledge; their sins may be just as bad but their knowledge isn't as great, so that's a redeeming factor]; . . . he will lengthen out their days and increase their seed, even when thou shalt be utterly destroyed except thou shalt repent [this is what happened, of course]. . . . ye have united yourselves . . . to that secret band [crooks own the country]. Yea, wo shall come unto you because of that pride which ye have suffered to enter your hearts, which has lifted you up beyond that which is good because of your exceedingly great riches [the cause of it all]. . . . even your lands shall be taken from you, and ye shall be destroyed from off the face of the earth." Well, this is the standard call of the prophets of old. This is what Solon preached to the Athenians. He was so much like Lehi.

There were judges from the secret band in the crowd, of course, and they were angry. These dignified judges had been getting away with it for years, and they didn't like this at all. Everyone was getting payola. The judges were in on it, like everybody else, and here they are. They were in the [crowd]; there were so many of them. Why don't you grab the guy? Why don't you seize upon this man? they said. He's reviling against this people and against our law. They were going to make a case against him, but what they were really worried about was that he might expose them. [They felt] righteous indignation because he was talking about them, concerning the corruptness of their law. "And those judges were angry with him because he spake plainly unto them concerning their secret works of darkness." [Helaman 8:4] That's what they were afraid of—that he would give away the whole thing. Shut up, you'll give away everything, they said. Their defense is a counterattack, of course, the best defense. So they're crying unto the people saying [Helaman 8:5]: "Why do you suffer this man to revile against us? For behold he doth condemn all this people, even unto destruction."

It's you he's blaming [like saying], it's the American people he's accusing. We use this "American people" to death, as if they were a pool of wisdom or something. Well, there may be something there, but they're just like other people. Verse 5: ". . . they did cry unto the people, saying, . . . For behold he doth condemn all this people . . . and also that these our great cities shall be taken from us." It's impossible. We're powerful. Our cities are great. They can't possibly break in on us. ". . . thus they did stir up the people to anger against Nephi, and raised contentions among them." There was a lot of trouble already. People were worried, because some people pitched in and said, now wait a minute. He's right after all. Let him alone. He's a good man. ". . . all the judgments will come upon us . . . he has testified aright unto us concerning our iniquities."

It was no secret then. Is it a secret today? Verse 9: "Yea, and behold, if he had not been a prophet he could not have testified concerning those things." He had been out of town, you see. The others were compelled because of their fear that they could not attack Nephi, and that saved him. Verses 10: "They did not lay their hands on him; therefore, he began again to speak unto them . . . Therefore he was constrained to speak more unto them saying: Behold, my brethren, have ye not read that God gave power unto one man, even Moses [they have the scriptures, and they're being bound by the scriptures] . . . insomuch that the Israelites, who were our fathers, came through upon dry ground." He used the standard arguments, of course, especially the Red Sea. The Jews always refer to the Red Sea. The delivering of Israel through the Red Sea is the standard argument of God's

demonstration of power on earth, because it was a historical event, and they all had record of that.

This man, Moses, could bear record that the son of God should come [he told them]. Verse 16: “Moses did not only testify of these things, but also all the holy prophets, from his days even to the days of Abraham.” He goes backwards from Moses to Abraham, and then from Abraham backward too. Down to Abraham, they saw of his coming. “. . . but there were many before the days of Abraham who were called by the order of God; yea, even after the order of his Son.” We call them “the brotherhood,” which isn’t right, I suppose. It is the priesthood, or the order before Abraham’s day, but you belong to the one order or the other. Remember, we’ve just been told in explicit terms that Satan had organized and created these things and worked with them from the beginning. It’s his doing—the same being who did works of darkness from the beginning. He swore men into this, the great abominations of darkness. He handed down their plots, oaths, covenants, and plans. On the other hand, you had this other arrangement. “. . . but there were many before the days of Abraham who were called by the order of God; yea, even after the order of his Son; and this that it should be shown unto the people, a great many thousand years before his coming, that even redemption should come unto them.”

“A great many thousand” is a Semitic expression. A thousand is a lot, a great many. It doesn’t have to mean thousands of thousand. Two thousand is a great many thousand. A great many years, a thousand. “Zenos did testify boldly.” Now he’s naming the prophets down from Abraham—Zenos, and Zenock and Ezias, and Abraham in the middle. Verses 20: “O then why not the Son of God come, according to his prophecy? And now will you dispute that Jerusalem was destroyed? [We have the seed of Zedekiah, the Mulekites with us, who tell us that it was.] Our father Lehi was driven out of Jerusalem because he testified of these things. . . . he is God, and he is with them . . . ye have rejected all these things, notwithstanding so many evidences which ye have received.”

What evidences? Then he gives the standard evidences of the philosophers in verse 24: “. . . both things in heaven, and all things which are in the earth . . .” Nephi chooses the argument of the whole picture. When you look at the whole picture the question is, how does this happen in a world that is nothing but threatening? What unspeakable powers are loosed—all beyond control, everything happening just by chance and in a jumble, etc. How it be possible for us to live such a comfortable life? If we behaved ourselves, it would be even more comfortable. But how is it, with the solar wind on one side and with the ultraviolet and various rays on the other side, that we’re able to survive at all? Well, there are the fifteen constants that have to be adjusted. Something has made this world comfortable for us, you see, is the argument he uses. If the earth was just a little farther from the sun, we couldn’t be living on the earth. If it was a little closer to the sun, we couldn’t be living on it. If it revolved a little faster or a little slower, we couldn’t be living on it. If it was a little drier or a little wetter, life would be impossible for us. If it was a little hotter or a little colder, we couldn’t live on it. Everything is fine-tuned. There are these fifteen fine-tuned constants, as physicists call them, that have to be adjusted to each other in absolute perfection. The chance of it happening accidentally is a trillion to nothing—something like that—absolutely fabulous. Well, that’s the one he was talking about. He used the argument of the big picture, the whole picture: “. . . both things in heaven, and all things which are in the earth, as a witness that they are true.”

Today, we call that the anthropic principle—the fact that man not only fits into the thing, but he’s the only one who comprehends it. It’s not for any other person’s benefit.

Without him nothing's aware of it. It doesn't even exist; it's not there. Who cares when something happens? It is arranged for us, with us in mind. We're the only ones that can comprehend it, and we're the only ones who can enjoy it. Yet with all these things beyond our control utterly, here we are fitting into the picture so very nicely. There's something wrong there, and this is the argument he's using here. And don't discount the treasures. He said, ". . . instead of laying up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where nothing doth corrupt, and where nothing can come which is unclean, ye are heaping up for yourselves wrath against the day of judgment [this is the large you]. Yea, even at this time ye are ripening, because of your murders and your fornication and wickedness."

The band has its grip on everything now. Verse 27: Yea, behold it is now even at your doors; yea, go ye in unto the judgment-seat [now this is what the corruption is doing], and search; and behold, your judge is murdered, and he lieth in his blood; and he hath been murdered by his brother, who seeketh to sit in the judgment-seat." The only thing here that takes inspiration is timing. You can almost be sure it would happen. After all, I suppose about eighty percent of the Roman emperors were bumped off by their successors. You could always count on it happening; the only question is when. Well, he was inspired to say it had already happened; otherwise, it would have been a perfectly safe guess. He could have said, sooner or later you can go to the judgment-seat and [find] your judge lying in his blood, murdered by his brother. If you know the judge has a brother and if you know what the judge is after and what kind of people they are, you know what's going to happen.

I mentioned Gregory of Tours and the ten books of Frankish history written in the fifth and sixth centuries. Again, like the Nephites and Lamanites, it's between the Burgundians and the Franks. There's that story of Fredegunde and Brunhilda, the queen, and what they did for power. It's as horrendous as anything you can imagine in the Book of Mormon—the things they do to each other and the plots. It's inevitable that when somebody becomes king everybody is going to try and bump him off. And the tricks. Well, the king plays of Shakespeare, of which he wrote many, are nothing but that. They move in high-flown, marvelous language. "O for a muse of fire, that would ascend the very heaven of invention! A kingdom for a stage, princes to act, and monarchs to behold the swelling scene!" [*Henry V*, Chorus]. Well, it's a great show to see. But it's nothing but murder and intrigue.

So here we go. "Yea, behold it is now even at your doors." So the men ran to the judgment-seat, and sure enough [chapter 9:3], "behold, the chief judge had fallen to the earth, and did lie in his blood [and, of course, they were afraid]; therefore, they did quake and had fallen to the earth." Now this falling to the earth is a thing to notice in the Book of Mormon. Every time you're afraid do you fall flat on your face? Does fear have that effect on you? I've remained standing when I've been scared stiff. How come these people all fall down when they're afraid? Well, this is routine. They have to do this particular thing. This is a very interesting arrangement we have here—what the Egyptians call *sh t3*, your nose on the ground. Remember, [they lived] in a religious world, a sacral state. And it's true that we're surrounded with these powers, these marvelous things around us all the time. They're real. So if something unexpected absolutely bowls you over, what happens? You're in the presence of some great or divine influence. You don't know whether it's good or bad, but you know it's powerful. It's more powerful than you are, so what do you do? You play safe. You take the position of complete submission. You fall on your face, and it becomes quite automatic. Women, children—everybody does it, because in the

presence of someone who can smite you or anything else, that's a defensive position. You go flat on your face and you stay there until it's safe for you to move, until everything is in order.

Now, I read from that very ancient rite in the founding of the kingdom of Egypt, in the terrible times, Papyrus Salt 825A. It begins with all the powers of nature unleashed in such a degree that even the gods are frightened. It says all the gods covered their heads with their hands and then fell down and put their heads between their knees and held that position, because they were terrified to decide what would happen. These were gods doing this, you see. So this is a natural thing. We may all do it someday. Well, what's the natural thing to do in our society? If you hear a shooting, what happens? If you'll notice, everyone goes flat on the ground. That's the safest position to have. I suppose that today in El Salvador everybody spends most of the day flat on his face. What other position could you have that's safe? So here he says they fell right flat. . . . therefore they did quake, and had fallen to the earth. Now, immediately when the judge had been murdered—he being stabbed by his brother by a garb of secrecy, and he fled, and the servants ran and told the people, raising a cry of murder among them.” And the people went there and found these five men still in their positions of submission. In verse 14, right across the page, they tell their story: “We ran and came to the place of the judgment-seat, and when we saw all things even as Nephi had testified, we were astonished insomuch that we fell to the earth; and when we were recovered from our astonishment, behold they cast us into prison.” So they got over their astonishment. They weren't that way all the time. It says, “. . . they saw those five men who had fallen to the earth.” This other one tells us when they recovered from their astonishment, then they were cast into prison.

Well, these are the men who have murdered the judge because look, here they are and here he is [they said]. So they cast them into prison and “on the morrow the people did assemble themselves together to mourn and to fast, at the burial of the great chief judge . . . [a great state occasion]. And thus also those judges who were at the garden of Nephi, and heard his words, were also gathered together at the burial.” This is a very dramatic situation, which you get in a typical Greek tragic scene. Remember, we're talking about city-states, where tragedy is a practical thing. The people all do meet together. And remember, in the kingdoms and republics of Europe today, the people do meet together in the public square in the main capital. They do that from time to time, and they're doing it today spontaneously. With some of these, like the one in Prague, they said they had no leaders. They couldn't find any leaders. The people just came together spontaneously—in Tiannamen Square or wherever you go. And so it's the same thing here: They came for this big thing to happen, the burial of a great chief. The judges who were at the garden of Nephi were there. They were gathered at the burial, and the [judges] said, “Where are the five who were sent to inquire concerning the chief judge whether he was dead?” And the judges declared that they should be brought.

Verse 13: “. . . they told them all that they had done, saying . . . we were astonished insomuch that we fell to the earth. [Well of course the judges had a quick explanation for that.] The judges did expound the matter unto the people, and did cry out against Nephi, saying: Behold, we know that this Nephi must have agreed with some one to slay the judge [they had been set up by Nephi to tell this story; it was a typical public relations trick on the part of the judges] . . . that he might convert us unto his faith.” He was going to perform a fake miracle, and that would convert them [the judges claimed]. Everybody is overplaying everybody else. It's like the two Japanese merchants that met in a railroad station in Tokyo, and one said, “Where are you going?”

He said, "I'm going to Osaka."

He looked at him and said, "You're lying, you know; you **are** going to Osaka." So everybody was trying to overreach everybody else here. ". . . and then he might declare it unto us, that he might convert us unto his faith, that he might raise himself to be a great man, chosen of God, and a prophet." It was all a public relations trick by Nephi [they claimed]. Wouldn't you know that? [He was] out standing on his tower and all that sort of thing.

Verse 17: And now behold, we will detect this man, and he shall confess his fault and make known unto us the true murderer of this judge . . . the five were liberated on the day of the burial. Nevertheless, they did rebuke the judges . . . and did contend with them one by one, insomuch that they did confound them." Nevertheless, the fact that they had to be cleared didn't make any difference. You can't fight city hall; they were all thrown into jail anyway [see verse 38], and were sentenced to be executed. "Nevertheless, they caused that Nephi should be taken . . . that they might cross him, that they might accuse him to death." They passed a death sentence on him.

Verse 21: "But Nephi said unto them: O ye fools, ye uncircumsized of heart, . . . ye ought to begin to howl and mourn, because of the great destruction which at this time doth await you, except ye shall repent. Behold ye say that I have agreed with a man that he should murder Seezoram, our chief judge." The judge's name was Seezoram, and we had a Zeezrom before. That is the Egyptian word *zsr*, a very popular name, founded the third dynasty of Egypt. The name means holy, sacred. Our word Deseret comes from that. The land of Egypt, "the holy land, the red land" is called Deseret. And, of course, the symbol of the lowland is the bee. This is the Deseret name, the Zeezrom name. It pops up throughout the Book of Mormon.

Well, I'll show you another sign, he says: "Go to the house of Seantum, who is the brother of Seezoram, and say unto him . . ." He tells them what to say, so they do [verses 27–29]: Has Nephi, the pretended prophet, who doth prophesy so much evil concerning this people, agreed with thee, in the which ye have murdered Seezoram, who is your brother? And behold, he shall say unto you, Nay [no, no, no]. And ye shall say unto him: Have ye murdered your brother?" Then he'll be taken aback and know not what to say. And, of course, he'll deny it, "and he shall make as if he were astonished . . . But behold, ye shall examine him, and ye shall find blood upon on the skirts of his cloak . . . and then shall greater fear come upon him; and then shall he confess unto you [but he doesn't fall down]. And then shall ye know that I am an honest man [they did what Nephi said, and] . . ."he did deny; and also according to the words he did confess." Now by this time there were some people who said that Nephi was a prophet, moreover that he was a god. Anciently, they would have called him a sophist, a wise traveling man to whom divine power was attributed in the ancient world.

In chapter 10 ". . . there arose a division among the people, insomuch that they divided . . . leaving Nephi alone." This is a dramatic situation. They go in both ways and leave one hero standing alone. Where does that happen? In *Julius Caesar*. Remember after Antony's speech, the people go one way, the senators go another way, and leave Antony standing all alone with the bier there in the center of the Forum. He says [Act III, Scene 2], "Now let it work: Mischief, thou art afoot." It is very dramatic. They go off both ways and leave him standing alone there. It's the same thing we see here. This is quite a picturesque situation, "leaving Nephi alone as he was standing in the midst of them." He moves off

sorrowfully going home. Well there you are; he didn't get anywhere with them.

Verse 2: “. . . Nephi went his way towards his own house, pondering upon the things which the Lord had shown unto him.” It's time something happened, now. Of course, now you get the intervention of an angel. Angels don't just come because people want them or any old time, but always at a crucial time when nothing else can break the jam. “. . . as he was thus pondering in his heart, behold, a voice came unto him saying: Blessed art thou, Nephi, for those things which hast done . . . and thou has not feared them, and hast not sought thine own life. . . . I will bless thee forever; and I will make thee mighty in word and in deed, in faith and in works; yea, even that all things shall be done unto thee according to thy word . . .”

Now this is a very interesting condition. Anything you say will be done, because anything you say will be exactly what I want you to say. That's safe. He says here, “All things shall be done unto thee according to thy word, for thou shalt not ask that which is contrary to my will.” If you ask anything contrary it might happen, but I know I can trust you. You'll ask what I want you to ask, so that's all right. In Moses 1:25 the same thing happens again. [The Lord] says, I'll make you as strong as many waters. Your voice shall be as mine. You shall lead my people because I know whatever you say is what I want you to say, so we're safe. We have that kind of men. There's a single will here. Does Nephi have a free will? That's for philosophers to argue about.

Verse 6: “Behold, thou art Nephi, and I am God. Behold, I declare it unto thee in the presence of mine angels, that ye shall have power over this people, and shall smite the earth with famine [he gives him a broad hint, a suggestion—you'll have power to smite the earth], and with pestilence, and destruction, according to the wickedness of this people.” [So he planted the idea, obviously, with Nephi.] Behold, I give unto you power, that whatsoever ye shall seal on earth shall be sealed in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven; and thus shall ye have power among this people.”

Now, this goes beyond ordinances, you see. We talk about ordinances [Matthew 18:18]: “Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven . . .” Well, this goes beyond that. This is more than an ordinance. There is an understanding between the worlds, we're told, which is expressed by the priesthood and is expressed nowhere else. There is this understanding and coordination between the worlds, and that's what we have here. [Nephi would] have power, and whatsoever he sealed in this world will go over in heaven, and the other way around.

Verses 8: “And thus, if ye shall say unto this temple it shall be rent, it shall be done.” Notice, the temple is the connecting point between the worlds, the *markas shame u irstitim*, the point at which heaven and earth meet. (It doesn't say the veil of the temple.) “And if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou cast down and become smooth, it shall be done.” See, God trusts Nephi all the way not to do foolish things. He knows darn well Nephi is not going to go around casting mountains down just to show his power. He knows by now that he can trust Nephi to do only what he would do himself, so you can trust Nephi. But he's operating there. So here is the power of the other world being projected down here as with a beam—the focusing of mighty powers upon this little earth. As a famous German physicist says, it's simply staggering what it takes to make life on this earth possible. From the most distant points of outer space, the elements and the energies are being focused right here and operating there. That's the sort of thing we're talking about, I suppose.

Verse 10: “And behold, if ye shall say that God shall smite this people, it shall come to pass. And now behold, I command you, that ye shall go and declare unto this people . . . except ye repent ye shall be smitten, even unto destruction. . . . when the Lord had spoken these words unto Nephi, he did not stop and did not go unto his own house [didn’t even go home to change his clothes] but did returned unto the multitudes [plural] who were scattered about upon the face of the land.”

And characteristic of this, as of other cultures, is the hierocentric point—the great temple, the great shrine, the great mound, the great tower—which is the center of the land and marks the place at which people assemble whenever there’s any alarm or emergency, or when there is a great message to be given. There they were, and they were ready to listen to Nephi.

Well, we didn’t get through with Helaman, but we’ll do it the next time all right.