

TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

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Semester 1, Lecture 23
2 Nephi 32–33; Jacob 1–2
Rejecting the Word of God

Do you all know about FARMS, the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies? It's a clearinghouse that has been going for some years now. If you have any question you want to ask about the gospel, you just call FARMS and they will give you all the literature you want on the subject. That's what they are for. Somebody just called me last night and asked a question. He gave me a lot of trouble, so I just said, "See FARMS about it." That's what you do. It was about the problem of Jehovah—is Jehovah God? and that sort of thing. So all I did was just go to FARMS. They have more stuff on file than you can shake a stick at. We'll pass around this thing that tells you what FARMS is. It will save you a lot of questions. For example, if I ask you an essay question, all you have to do is go ask FARMS, and they will supply you with all the information you need on it. They really will; they've got everything. Stephen Ricks is the new head of it, and he is "one smart cookie." It's down on the corner of Eighth North and University on the top floor of the old dorms. They have all this stuff on file, hundreds and hundreds of essays, books, and anything you want to deal with these subjects. They have archaeological and statistical information and everything else. You will find it quite useful to go to FARMS for information.

It's about time to begin now. We are on 2 Nephi 32, and are things going downhill fast. Here's the first generation that has already gone bad, and Nephi is just terribly depressed. He ends on a down note, and then his brother Jacob takes it up. From then on he makes a real plunge. Year before last, I asked for the final examination: "If you were to be funded for the rest of your life and your life was to be extended for a thousand years with everything you needed, what would you do? What would your plan of operation be? How would you spend a thousand years?" You talk about eternity but don't know what to do for the next thousand years. They were just nonplussed and didn't know what they would do, so why do we need eternal life? We don't know what it is. This chapter deals with that question. It's a very good answer. Actually, the question is an academic one, as this will show here in chapter 32: "And now, behold, my beloved brethren, I suppose that ye ponder somewhat in your hearts concerning that which ye should do after ye have entered in by the way." Notice we don't ponder anymore; pondering is against the rules. After you've got on the path of salvation, what do you do next? What are you going to do for a thousand years? One person said, "Well, I'd drive my Porsche." Another one said, "Well, I'd live it up for a thousand years." They couldn't think of anything to do; it was very interesting. That is a very provocative question because you are going to be stuck with eternity whether you want it or not. We cannot die, the Book of Mormon tells us, and it's true. "Do ye not remember that I said unto you that after ye had received the Holy Ghost ye [for one thing] could speak with the tongue of angels?"

Well, that means you are out of your present league. When you start speaking with the tongue of angels, it's something else. It's like going to a new math. When you are in grade school, you think as you get more advanced in math you will just be adding bigger and bigger figures, subtracting and multiplying bigger and bigger figures. That's all math

does. But then you suddenly discover that there is a totally different kind of math you'd never heard of before, where you don't have big figures at all. You just have letters some of the time, and sometimes you have figures so small you can't even think of them. So it goes. Then you go to another type. It's the same thing here. When you start talking with the tongue of angels, you will be in another league. We'll talk about that when we get to it, he says. Meanwhile we've got to fulfill our capacities here. So this is the answer, he says. "Wherefore, I said unto you, feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do." You can't anticipate. As Paul says, "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him [1 Corinthians 2:9]." You can't even imagine it or guess what it is like for those who love God and are going to go on.

He says here that the words of Christ will tell you all things that you have to do. You can't anticipate until you get there, and we haven't got there at all. Then it tells us in verse 5: "I say unto you that if ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost [if you go about it the right way], it will show unto you all things what ye should do." Then there won't be anything to worry about. But there's always more to come. But what is the trouble? Why is a question like that a poser? We should ask this question, incidentally. He says in verse 4: "Wherefore, now after I have spoken these words, if ye cannot understand them it will be because ye ask not, neither do ye knock." You don't ask and you don't knock. "Ask and you will receive; knock and it will be opened unto you," but you have to ask first. You have to make the first move, as Abraham did. It tells us in the book of Abraham, "Thy servant hath sought thee diligently; now he hath found thee." You have to get off dead center because that is your responsibility. That's why you are here [on earth] now.

Then enter by the right way. You have been given the commandments; you know what to do if you follow them, he says. If you receive the Holy Ghost, "it will show unto you all things what ye should do." But there is always more to come. Notice he tells us in verse 6 that there will be no more doctrine given until after the Lord comes. So there's enough for you to live by now. They were living by the law of Moses. But when we speak by the tongue of angels, we will no longer be limited by the ambience in which we find ourselves. As I said, we will go on to a higher math then. But, of course, we should ask questions, and that's one thing we don't do. People say, "Don't ask questions; don't rock the boat." There are questions we should ask. Verse 6: "And when he shall manifest himself unto you in the flesh, the things which he shall say unto you shall ye observe to do." You will cross that bridge when you get to it.

Now, what's wrong? Notice verse 7 here: "And now I, Nephi, cannot say more; the Spirit stoppeth mine utterance, and I am left to mourn [he says, 'People can't take any more than this; I'd not only be wasting my time, but I would be putting them in jeopardy'] because of the unbelief, and the wickedness, and the ignorance, and the stiffneckedness of men [this is wisdom literature; Nephi is distressed]; for they will not search knowledge, nor understand great knowledge, when it is given unto them in plainness, even as plain as word can be." This is all very true, you know. The most difficult scientific problems are really elementary. It's their simplicity that stops people cold. It's always something extremely simple and naive that gets the Nobel Prize—it's a surprising thing. Once it's given to people they say, "Well, we knew that all along." No they didn't. You know the story of Columbus and the egg, don't you? Well, when Columbus got back they were giving a dinner in his honor. They said, "Well, anybody could have done that. All you had to do was just go sailing. It was quite possible, no problem at all. So he said, "Can any of

you make an egg stand on end?” They passed it around and tried it, but nobody could do it. Columbus took the egg and gave it a slight tap; then it stood on its end. They said, “Oh yes, anybody can do that.”

He said, “Yes, anybody can do that after you have been shown what to do.” It’s the same way with discovering America; anybody can do it once it has been done.

This is the same thing. They won’t search knowledge, not even “when it is given unto them in plainness, even as plain as word can [possibly] be. And it grieveth me that I must speak concerning this thing.”

And we blame God for this. Maybe I should ask some questions here. Let’s do this; here’s a question. How would you answer this question? In my day, which was many years ago, it was very popular for everybody to be atheists. It was considered very smart, like H. L. Mencken, etc. The foundation of atheism is this argument: It’s only reasonable to judge the character of God by the type of world he created. Well, that’s fair enough. So we have this nature red in tooth and claw. What kind of a God would do that?

Oh Thou, who Man of baser Earth didst make
And ev’n with Paradise devise the Snake:
For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man
Is blacken’d—Man’s Forgiveness give—and take!
O Thou, who didst with pitfall and with gin
Beset the Road I was to wander in.
Wilt thou not with Predestined Evil round
Enmesh, and then impute my Fall to sin!

Fitzgerald, *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

God put all these stumbling blocks and temptations in my way, and when I trip up he says, “Ha, you sinned.” He set the trap, and then he said I sinned. These arguments were considered unanswerable, and they are without the gospel, of course. One of Tom Ingersoll’s favorite arguments (he was a famous atheist) was, “Why does God permit it to rain on the ocean? Just waste all that good water. Would God do that? A wise God?” In ancient times Horace wrote a famous ode on this particular subject, called “The Mensamoria.” It is poem in which you find all the fault you possibly can with this world and say, “Who is responsible for this mess?” You can take it in a cynical, smart aleck way, like Woody Allen. They say, “Well, God is just an underachiever, that’s all. He’s not bad.” So we get “the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.” Hamlet talks about it, and everybody talks about it.

When I was on a mission in Germany, it was less than ten years after World War I. I started out in a dismal manufacturing town where a year before they’d had the worst explosion in history that wiped out the town. It was a terrible thing. That’s where they made all the powder during World War I. They were secretly making it already, less than ten years after World War I, against all the laws. They had a terrible explosion and wiped everything out. Every door we went to everyone had just one answer, “There is no God! He would never allow these things to happen.” I roomed with an old woman called Mrs. Bauer, and she said, “No, there can be no God.” She had a boy seventeen years old. He went to war and was killed. “Would God permit that to happen? *Nur ein Bursch!* How could that happen?” she said. Does anybody have an answer to that? All Europe was

disillusioned, you see, and they still are disillusioned. In the Second World War, where I was more active, there were hundreds and hundreds of prisoners of war coming in. We picked them up with all their stuff on them. They would come in and gladly surrender, right in the field there. That's where you are supposed to catch them, and they will tell you anything. In the First World War they all carried Bibles with them. The Kaiser handed out Bibles to everybody and a tract called "Talks with Jesus," etc. He was a very religious man. Everybody on both sides was quite religious. But in the Second World War, hardly a Bible. There were all sorts of lucky charms (the swastika was a charm) and rabbits' feet. They had those by the hundreds. Once in a while you might find a Bible from some peasant kid, but that was it. Nobody took Bibles anymore. They took lucky charms and things like that. Well, what about this? Why would God ever allow these things to happen?

Well, we are being told here, and the Bible tells us what kind of a world it is. Do we need to be told? Think of some of the passages from there. This world is a place of evil; it is supposed to be. But without the gospel there is no answer. See, it's not God who is being tested here; it is men who are being tested here. That's the kind of world it is, but men alone make it a cruel world. They invent the "work ethic" and the "iron law of wages" and things like that to oppress their fellowmen. It's all their doing, and life is unfair. They say that's a proper answer. When you've robbed somebody you say, "Well that's true, you got a dirty deal, but life is unfair." You're supposed to take that as a proper answer. Or they can quote Ecclesiastes. But we just read in 2 Nephi 9:18, "They who have endured the crosses of the world, and despised the shame of it, they shall inherit the kingdom of God which was prepared for them from the foundation of the world, and their joy shall be full forever." This is a place of crosses and shame. Have no illusions. The world is a shameful place; it is to be despised. It's a rotten world. So you say, "Why go on living then?" This is the question. Well, why do you go on living? We should ask somebody that. Well, for the best possible reason—for eternal life. This is the big chance. You are really getting a chance here for atonement, getting back to the *one* again. God has lengthened the days of our probation, so don't throw away this precious gift. Of course, it's got to be a rough test—the tougher the better, as far as that goes. Do we have nothing to live for down here? We have everything to live for. All our hopes and everything is centered here because here is the trial, and as Paul says, and there is the crown. You fight the good fight, and you run the good race. Look what he had been through. He talks about his stripes and his imprisonments. That's what it's like. His life was hell here. If there is no resurrection from the dead, "we are of all men most miserable"; we have been the biggest suckers in the world, he said, if there isn't. He went through all that, but everybody has to have dirty deals anyway. Why not make the best of it? he said. If there is no resurrection—"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Corinthians 15:19). But as it is, he said, I know there is a crown laid up for me. I know the real world is hereafter [paraphrased]. This is not the real world; this is a fake. Everybody knows it's a fraud. It's as phoney as it can be, and it's getting more that way all the time. We are living in a TV world now where everything is imagination and make-believe.

We get this very strong with Nephi on this downbeat here. He's distressed and feeling the same way about it. Then he tells you what to do. They will not search knowledge; now what are you supposed to do? Verse 8: "I perceive that ye ponder still in your hearts; and it grieveth me that I must speak concerning this thing. For if ye would hearken unto the Spirit which teacheth a man to pray ye would know that ye must pray." There's nothing more destructive, as you know, than a mental block—a block of any kind in which you grind to a halt. [It could be] caused by drugs. It's guilt feelings that cause those mental blocks, and that's what keeps you from praying. It's a block just like the heavens are brass.

As good old Freud has shown us, all these mental blocks come from feelings, conscious or unconscious. There are subconscious feelings of guilt when sin is catching up with you, and you feel unworthy to pray. Satan doesn't want you to pray, and it mounts up. The more you need it, the more inclined you are not to do it, not to suffer it. "For if ye would hearken unto the Spirit which teacheth a man to pray ye would know that ye must pray; for the evil spirit teacheth not a man to pray, but teacheth him that he must not pray." There is that evil spirit. It's the guilt that is in you, and it says, "Don't pray." It's not only embarrassing, it humiliating because in prayer, of course, you face reality. You are alone, and you are not going to put anything over on the Lord. There's nothing more destructive than these mental blocks because of the guilt that's in us. By praying, this frees us up. This frees the mind and thaws it out. Jacob uses the word *hardened* a lot. But this causes a thaw and causes things to flow again when you once start praying, maybe with a flow of tears. In public prayer, congregational prayer, we concentrate our minds on a single object. We are all thinking together there, and this concentration is a very important thing. But in private prayer when you are alone, that frees the mind and lets you go. You're not putting anything over on the Lord. Verse 9: "I say unto you that ye must pray always, and not faint; that ye must not perform any thing unto the Lord save in the first place ye shall pray unto the Father in the name of Christ, that he will consecrate thy performance unto thee, that thy performance may be for the welfare of thy soul [which is the optimum voice]." If you don't do these things, what do you do? If you are not interested in this, there are comfortable cliches and platitudes, routine sermons, and superficial research. We can have those things.

In the next chapter he says, "Neither am I mighty in writing, like unto speaking; for when a man speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost, the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth it unto the hearts of the children of men." Should we have speech writers if we claim to be inspired? Brigham Young never wrote a note, nothing. It was all strictly "from the cuff." He just swung from the shoulder and delivered. Although he'd had only had eleven days of school, he delivered in this marvelous, vigorous, forthright, direct, and powerful prose. He was a great master of prose style, but he never took a note or anticipated what he was going to say.

Verse 2: "They cast many things away which are written and esteem them as things of naught." People aren't going to take them seriously. These things are written, but people don't really pay much attention to them. We read fast. We go through and we're not very careful about it. Notice verse 3: You may not think it is important, "but I, Nephi, have written what I have written, and I esteem it as of great worth, and especially unto my people, For I pray continually for them by day, and mine eyes water my pillow by night, because of them." These idiots—they won't pay any attention at all. He can't sleep. The poor man is sick about it. This is his farewell, and it's not a happy one. "And the words which I have written in weakness will be made strong unto them." Notice he lists five things he wishes to achieve in his writings in verses 4 and 5: "For it persuadeth them to do good; it maketh known unto them of their fathers; and it speaketh of Jesus, and persuadeth them to believe in him, and to endure to the end, which is life eternal." That's what we want, you see. You wouldn't have anything to endure at all if this was the kind of world people wanted God to make it, the perfect world—a thing that upset St. Augustine so much. "And it speaketh harshly against sin, according to the plainness of the truth; wherefore, no man [who's against sin] will be angry at the words which I have written save he shall be of the spirit of the devil."

Then he ends on a charitable note. He wants to end on an upbeat here, but he is having an awfully hard time doing it. Verse 7: “I have charity for my people, and great faith in Christ that I shall meet many souls spotless at his judgment-seat. [Secondly] I have charity for the Jew [because I am a Jew, too]. . . . I mean them from whence I came. I also have charity for the Gentiles. But behold, for none of these can I hope except they shall be reconciled unto Christ, and enter into the narrow gate, and walk in the strait path which leads to life” and endure to the end. This is one of the objections people always have: It’s always so narrow-minded and so demeaning. Why is it so narrow? Why do so few get through the door? Why is it so limited? Well, to be on target. Here in this world we are on a vast, wide, almost endless plain. We can wander anywhere we want here, and we are prone to wander and go into all sorts of things. With this field to wander in, we can show whether [or not] we have the sense to go in the right direction. You will choose what your heart desires when it’s left entirely up to you. You will gravitate in the direction in which you really want to go. It will expose you as you really are.

So here we are, and he says you must keep on the strait and narrow; you must go that way. This will answer all your questions. Of course they are terrible; we tell you that all the time. You can get out of it by going straight ahead. Keep in mind, as Mosiah says . . . (We haven’t come to Mosiah yet, so we won’t quote that—that’s illegal). But Nephi says in verse 11: “and you and I shall stand face to face before his bar [and I think that is true—I have reason for believing that’s literally so]. . . . I speak unto you as the voice of one crying from the dust: Farewell until that great day shall come. And you that will not partake of the goodness of God [he ends on a negative note after all], and respect the words of the Jews [the scriptures], and also my words, and the words which shall proceed forth out of the mouth of the Lamb of God, behold, I bid you an everlasting farewell [these words are all joined into one], for these words shall condemn you at the last day. For what I seal on earth, shall be brought against you at the judgment bar; for thus hath the Lord commanded me, and I must obey.” Can you imagine a sadder ending than that? He was of a cheerful disposition—terribly optimistic, as you know. He was always dragging the family through dirty situations. But here he says, “For thus hath the Lord commanded me, and I must obey. Amen.”

His brother Jacob carries on at this point, and then proceeds to take a real plunge. He goes down [in his warnings]. Jacob doesn’t have very much hope for what is going on here. This is very sad. This is an important point in verse 2: “And he [Nephi] gave me, Jacob, a commandment that I should write upon these plates [the small plates] a few of the things which I considered to be most precious,” and touch just lightly on historical things. So the Book of Mormon is not a history. Don’t expect the book to explain the New World in ancient times; that’s not its purpose. It’s no handbook of archaeology. You can find out an immense lot reading between the lines when we get to the battles and migrations. Meanwhile, this is what you look for. He says he is just supposed to write these things. The history is in other books which are to be had, but not at this time. This is what he’s supposed to put in. This is a tractate; he is not going to write a history, but a tractate.

Verse 4: “And if there were preaching which was sacred, or revelation which was great, or prophesying, that I should engraven the heads [just the principle parts; *heads* is the right word—the *rā’ shîm*, the *kephalaia*; that means the ‘main points’ of a chapter; in Hebrew, Greek, and other languages, the word for that was *head*; it’s the principal themes of preaching, revelation, and prophecy—just the most important things] of them upon these plates . . . for Christ’s sake, and for the sake of our people. For because of faith and great

anxiety, it truly had been made manifest unto us concerning our people, what things should happen unto them [so it is prophetic too, but he is full of anxiety]. And we also had many revelations, and the spirit of much prophecy [the authors are also directed] . . . we labored diligently among our people, that we might persuade them to come unto Christ.” This is his writing. It’s *protreptic*; it’s a *suasoria*. That’s a type of writing that’s devoted to persuading somebody to do something. *Protreptic* is to enjoin somebody; a *suasoria* is to change your way of life, your behavior. It’s an appeal, and that’s what Jacob is here. He said, Our situation is the same as the children of Israel in the wilderness; we are always that way too. Notice: “. . . as in the provocation in the days of temptation while the children of Israel were in the wilderness.” It’s admonitory, it’s warning—and we are still in the wilderness. We are not out of the woods, so to speak. “Wherefore, we would to God that we could persuade all men not to rebel against God [that’s the least you can ask for; that’s the dominant theme; so why so negative?] . . . but that all men would believe in Christ, and view his death, and suffer his cross and bear the shame of the world.”

There it is. You say this is a lousy world. Well, somebody beat you to that. You didn’t discover that. They [the atheists] regarded it as something rather brilliant to discover that the world which God created was not a perfect world. They said, “Ah ha, there’s no God, after all.” Everybody was talking that up when I was a kid, as I said. “Suffer his cross and bear the shame of the world.” That’s what we are supposed to do. Is this what we are here for, suffering and shame? Well, look around you. You have a marvelous chance for going through that program, and I can’t think of any other you’re going to have to go through. It’s rather bad, isn’t it? [But the important thing] is how we take it, and you can have nothing but fun, as Mosiah says. I was going to quote him: I would that ye should always keep in remembrance the greatness and goodness of God and your own nothingness. If you do this you shall always feel to rejoice [paraphrased] (Mosiah 4:11–12.) Now, I’m gladly willing to accept my nothingness. That helps a great deal, you know. As for rejoicing, I find it’s rather fun. I think it’s rather pleasant to rejoice. Think of yourself as nothing. You’ll have no problems then, will you?

That son I was talking about who was in the San Francisco Ballet is now managing a huge enterprise in Guam, a Japanese consortium of hotels and things. All of a sudden he is the top dog there, and he says it is hell. He never wanted to do that; he wanted to be on the stage. He said that eighty-five percent of the trouble he has with managing is just smoothing out troubles between people—feuds, lies, plots, and jealousies. Everybody is doing it. He said, “When things go smoothly just seventy percent of the time is spent taking care of those things, but the rest of the time that’s all management is.” My daughter and son-in-law are going to China next week for a week. They have a very interesting project there. They suggested it to Harvard, and within two days it was not only approved but funded. So they are going to Peking for just a week and then come back here again. The project is neat—it’s set up beautifully. There’s a mainland Chinese who is a member of the Church and runs a large factory there. He has divided the work force into three equal parts. One is directed by a Japanese, one by a Maoist Chinese, and one by our own culture. They have totally different philosophies, totally different approaches. How does the management work? How do they compare? Well, John has done a great deal of work on that. His thesis was on management in Japan, what they have there. So he was just the man for the job. But the whole problem is that people are making a hell for themselves wherever you go. There are all these feudings and fights that go on in the office. No matter what office you go to, you’re going to find the trouble—church offices or any other. I mentioned that before; it’s not as bad as some places. Maybe I’m stone blind (can you be stone blind?), but the place I find this least of

all is at BYU. I find no feuding at all here. Maybe I'm just absolutely dense and don't notice it or something like that. It may be going on all the time. But at a place like Berkeley, or Claremont, or Scripps College, or Pomona College—those little colleges—ooh, the nasty sniping. It's like a novel by Agatha Christie. You go to an innocent little village and this is where you find the hatreds and the boiling revenge and all these plots and plans going on. What a world we live in! So we must bear the crosses and shame, but you'll have fun while you are here and much better things after.

Nephi anointed a man to be king and ruler over them. They wanted a monarchy. The people "loved Nephi exceedingly;" he was their great protector, their defense, and their welfare. That's what a king is supposed to do—to provide victory and prosperity—and Nephi did that. "Wherefore, the people were desirous to retain in remembrance his name." So they started choosing kings, and his brother was not his successor. Jacob was not the next king; the next king bore the name "second Nephi" and then "third Nephi," etc. It was the same thing with Caesar. Julius Caesar founded the empire, and everyone after him was a Caesar, including the Kaiser of Germany and the Czar of Russia. Those are just the word *Caesar*. The personal name of one man becomes a title. It was the same thing in ancient Libya; it was the Battus and Arcesilas. They became kings. Also, it runs in royal families to preserve certain names as great favorites, if a king is very popular. For hundreds of years it's very easy to remember the kings of Denmark because it was always Christian Frederick. That just goes on and on and there's nobody else. That helps. Who was king then? "It was either Christian or Frederick," you say and you are safe. So they had a second Nephi and a third Nephi, and that was the custom anciently.

Now notice in verses 13 and 14 that the difference between Lamanites and Nephites is a purely political one, purely political. "Now the people which were not Lamanites were Nephites; nevertheless, they were called Nephites." That's what they really were. Notice the seven tribes; anciently, the pattern of seven tribes is a very well established one. I think you will find it in Sombart and others where they talk about the seven tribes and why they are. You can see various connections, seven planets and things like that. Anciently, the established pattern was seven tribes. Here they had seven tribes really within the Nephites. "They were called Nephites, Jacobites, Josephites, Zoramites, Lamanites, Lemuelites, and Ishmaelites." They kept some of their ethnic marks, I suppose. This is a very complicated racial picture, you see. Who was called a "Nephite" or a "Lamanite" depended entirely on his politics. Now he says, "But I, Jacob, shall not hereafter distinguish them by these names, but I shall call them Lamanites that seek to destroy the people of Nephi [whose policy was anti-Nephite—they were Lamanites. There was plenty of Nephite blood among them, but they were the same family, after all. What do we mean by "Nephite blood?" They were brothers], and those who are friendly to Nephi I shall call Nephites, or the people of Nephi [those reigning in his stead] according to the reigns of the kings." That's what they were. Those who are friendly to Nephi are Nephites and vice versa; it's a complicated picture from here on.

Already in the reign of the second Nephi people began to grow hard in their hearts. Well, according to the first Nephi, they were hard in their hearts already. But here [in verse 15] he says they began to grow hard in their hearts. Now see what the situation is. Here we have people rattling around like peas in a bag. We have histories of people who went into vast, empty spaces, but they weren't necessarily empty. There are continual hints of the former inhabitants of the land and other people around. But as Jacob told us, My brother told me to pay no attention to that sort of thing; that's not the history we are interested in [paraphrased]. And in the same way, he is not interested in political issues; he just

grouped them all under two names and let it go at that, Nephites and Lamanites, not making any distinctions. It's the same way here. He doesn't go into any of the political or military complications of the wandering. He closes his book with a very eloquent statement: "We being a lonesome and a solemn people . . . we did mourn out our days." Of course, there have been plenty of lonesome and solemn peoples in the past that are being discovered. This was like Eldad ha-Dani, the Danite Jew of the ninth century. He traveled all over looking for lost colonies of Jews. In Asia and Africa he would find lost colonies wandering, etc. You do find them. Remember, it's only today that the earth is so jam-packed full of people. Back in those days, there was plenty of room to move around in. You weren't running into people everywhere you went. Just imagine a community living very much to itself. As I said, is it boring to live by yourself? Well, it's in the big city where you really get bored, isn't it? People get bored to distraction. But you can be happy wherever you are.

The people were having a hard time, but aah, they discovered gold and silver and they went crazy. They had a gold rush here. [back to verse 15] "The people of Nephi . . . began to grow hard in their hearts, and indulge themselves somewhat in wicked practices." We know about pioneer communities, like the first settlers of Australia. Well, we think of frontier community as a rough, primitive society. The regular fixtures in the saloon were the ladies of the evening, and the morals were very loose. This is part of the frontier picture. Everybody kicking the gong around and wild. Life is cheap, and the liquor flows. There are no great moral standards here. He said that they were already desiring many wives and concubines. They felt like kids out of school, I suppose; they can do anything they want now. Verse 16: "Yea, and they also began to search much gold and silver, and began to be lifted up somewhat in pride. Wherefore I, Jacob, gave unto them these words as I taught them in the temple, having first obtained mine errand from the Lord. For I, Jacob, and my brother Joseph had been consecrated priests and teachers of this people, by the hand of Nephi [so they weren't to be the kings. Second Nephi was the king, but they were priests and teachers and had been consecrated by their brother Nephi]. And we did magnify our office unto the Lord, taking upon us the responsibility [that's what the priests had to do to rid themselves of the blood on their garments; we are getting back to the Atonement rites of ancient Israel], answering the sins of the people upon our own heads if we did not teach them the word of God with all diligence; wherefore, by laboring with our might their blood might not come upon our garments; otherwise . . . we would not be found spotless at the last day." (On the great day of Yom Kippur when everybody's garments were to turn white.)

These are teachings in terms of the rite of the Atonement which was familiar to these people. He talks about it in the next chapter: "I, Jacob, according to the responsibility which I am under to God, to magnify mine office with soberness, and that I might rid my garments of your sins, I come up into the temple." Well, in the temple on Yom Kippur that's what the priest did. You had to rid your garments. Now here he is feeling terrible, he says. Verse 3: "I have hitherto been diligent in the office of my calling; but I this day am weighed down with much more desire and anxiety for the welfare of your souls than I have hitherto been [things are getting worse than they have been]. For behold, as yet, ye have been obedient unto the word of the Lord, which I have given unto you." But your thoughts "are beginning to labor in sins. [And this] causeth me to shrink with shame before the presence of my Maker, that I must testify unto you concerning the wickedness of your hearts. And also it grieveth me that I must use so much boldness of speech concerning you, before your wives and your children, many of whose feelings are exceedingly tender and chaste and delicate before God [the word we would use today is

sensitive; in Joseph Smith's day they'd say *delicate*; they are very sensitive to these things]; . . . they have come up hither to hear the pleasing word of God, yea, the word which healeth the wounded soul."

A *consolatio*, a *consolation*; they wanted to be cheered up. We find out pretty soon that the women were overworked. They were practically captives and were under strain while their husbands gallivanted around collecting the gold, etc. Their children suffered accordingly, and they came to the temple to hear the consoling word of God and to be comforted. But what do they have to hear? he says. They have to hear this talk that is terrible. He said that it made him ashamed of himself. But he said that he had received from God a "strict commandment." It was not his idea. This meant that things were very bad. It's more than mere folly that's going on here. He received a strict commandment from God "to admonish you according to your crimes [he doesn't call them *sins* and *follies*; he says 'your *crimes*'], to enlarge the wounds of those who are already wounded, instead of consoling and healing their wounds . . . to pierce their souls and wound their delicate [sensitive] minds. But, notwithstanding the greatness of the task, I must do according to the strict commands of God, and tell you concerning your wickedness and abominations." I must tell you what God commanded me to tell you; I have no choice, he says, because I am "under the glance of the piercing eye of the Almighty God." I can't get away from it; I must carry this out.

This is like pulling teeth; he hates it. Boy, does he hate it, but he has to go through with it here. He must declare the word. Verse 12: "And now behold, my brethren, this is the word which I declare unto you [he starts out with the number one sin in the Book of Mormon], that many of you have begun to search for gold [there has been a gold rush], and for silver . . . in the which this land, which is a land of promise unto you and to your seed, doth abound most plentifully [they found rich mineral deposits, and when that happens the community goes mad; that's what happened here]. And the hand of providence hath smiled upon you most pleasingly, that you have obtained many riches." Incidentally, twice yesterday I came across that expression. I hadn't seen it for a long time. "The hand of providence" is used quite often. This mixing of metaphors is very interesting. Do you know the word *hand* occurs over 1,600 times in the Bible? The *hand* is used in every possible connection—the power, the authority, the way a thing is done, etc. It's the most used word in the Bible probably. Anyway, this is the word. "And because some of you have obtained more abundantly than that of your brethren ye are lifted up in the pride of your hearts, and wear stiff necks and high heads because of the costliness of your apparel, and persecute your brethren because ye suppose that ye are better than they [this is a strange thing. God doesn't justify that; he condemns you]. . . . He can pierce you, and with one glance of his eye he can smite you to the dust! O that he would rid you from this iniquity and abomination. Think of your brethren like unto yourselves, and be familiar with all and free with your substance, that they may be rich like unto you." To be rich is all right; you can all be rich together. But the rich don't like that, you see.

I have a quotation from R. L. Heilbroner, and I'm going to read it to you here. This is relevant. R. L. Heilbroner is perhaps the most eminent economic historian writing today. This is what he said in 1976 about our business civilization. He said, "No other civilization has permitted the calculus of self-interest so to dominate its culture. It has transmogrified greed and Philistinism into social virtue and subordinated all values to commercial values. Thus the business civilization combines liberty and selfishness, egalitarianism and extremes of wealth and poverty, vulgarity and democracy, creativity and waste, respect for the unique and autonomous individual and wage slavery, the

conquest of space and the destruction of the environment.” So what the Book of Mormon says here is relevant to our condition, according to Brother Heilbronner in an interesting book published in New York in 1967 by Norton.

Then Jacob goes on here in verse 18. This is a favorite passage. Latter-day Saints love this, because this gives you a hand. This frees you up to seek for riches all you want to: “But before ye seek for riches, seek ye for the kingdom of God.” [People say,] “Well, I’ve gone on my mission that takes care of that; now I can seek for riches.” I’ve heard that plenty of times. It’s idealistic at first but not after. “And after ye have obtained a hope in Christ ye shall obtain riches if ye seek them [you’re not supposed to seek them, but if you insist on doing it you can seek them under one condition]; and ye will seek them for the intent to do good—to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry, and to liberate the captive, and administer relief to the sick and the afflicted.” That’s the justification. Is this the profit motive? Either stop with verses 13–16 or do it this way. The others are unacceptable. But he says if you must seek [for riches] this is the way you do it. It’s a very interesting thing here. As I said, this is a favorite. Notice he says it shall be “for the intent to do good.” A person might say, “Yes, I intend when I get my second million to do that.” There was something in here about a doctor whose brother is fabulously rich. He asked him, “When do think you’ll have enough? Do you think you have enough?”

“No, no I’ll never have enough. The more I get the more I want,” he said. “I have to have more. Someday I’ll start doing good with it, but I must get more.” This was the way it was going, you see. So they like that passage, “with the intent to do good.” [They say], “I’ll seek riches but I intend to do good with it, so that’s all right. Maybe I won’t live that long, but I have a good intention.” That’s a favorite. It’s like raising money for charity. A recent piece came out in the *Wall Street Journal* that showed those who contribute to the poor. Over ninety percent are [those with] middle and lower-middle class incomes. They are the ones who contribute. The rich contribute almost nothing at all. Once in a while it will be a library or a gymnasium because it’s a monument to his name. If I’ve made a lot of “dough” and the time comes for me to “cash in,” I can’t take it with me. Is my life wasted? No, not if it will be remembered forever in the John Doe Library. So that’s the only gift you are going to get out of them. This article is a very interesting one, incidentally. It’s surprising how very little the rich do give to the poor. That’s why they are rich, after all. We have Nibley Park in Salt Lake City, because my grandfather liked to play golf. We have Nibley Park in Glendale [California], which my father gave to the city. All the oak trees have died there, withered by smog in southern California. They rob with one hand and give with the other; there are plenty of sharp deals, believe me! This is talking about those people, so I’m justified in talking about them. Verse 20: “Ye were proud in your hearts, of the things which God hath given you.” Isn’t it a funny thing that people become proud of getting gold? That’s a surprising thing. Why is finding metal something to make you proud? Or something to make you rich? It’s not useful for many things. Gold is used industrially, and silver is used in a number of things. But they are not by any means as valuable as copper and aluminum and things like that. It’s a very interesting thing with gold throughout the world at all times. And, as you know, nowhere did they load it on and regard it as more sacred than in ancient Middle America. The Indians in all the Americas regarded gold as sacred. The greatest of all lyric poets was Pindar. In his first and greatest ode he asks himself, “With what shall I compare the Olympic games? The Corinthian games or the Isthmian games? Which are the best?” Then he compares all the best things in the world, and his opening lines are, “The best thing on earth is water, but gold is a glowing, flashing fire to which all hearts turn.” It’s gold which is irresistible—there’s a spiritual quality in shining, glorious gold, the mere

color of gold itself. The words *glory* and *gold* are connected very closely. The *gl* sound means “to glitter, the gleam, to glow, to glisten”—all those *gl* words. There’s the golden city and Jerusalem, the golden. See, they’re sacred whether you’re religious or anything else. The savages love gold more than anything else, and you can see why. Not just because it’s the most enduring. It won’t react to anything. The best plates you can get are gold plates. But it has this fascination. It’s the golden glory, so we associate it with heaven—the glorious throne, the golden cities, the golden gates, the golden rule, and things like that. Gold is our thing, so if you get a lot of gold you’re really in there. You can’t do anything with it. But you have it and that’s great.

Then he goes on speaking of this greed in verse 20: “Ye were proud in your hearts, of the things which God hath given you, what say ye of it?” Incidentally, he gave them this advice: If you seek wealth, you shall do it for this purpose. Does anybody in the Book of Mormon seek it for that purpose at all? Amulek, a very good man, didn’t—not for a minute. So that’s the way this goes. Did anybody take this advice? They did not. I see all these passages in the Book of Mormon I marked where the people couldn’t do it. They immediately turned to the other way. They would hang on so long. Verse 21: “Do ye not suppose that such things are abominable unto him who created all flesh? [he hasn’t mentioned chastity yet; he’s going to get to that now]. And the one being is as precious in his sight as the other [this is impossible for us to get through our heads; it’s hard to take that any other person is just as important to God as you are. That’s one of the hardest things in the world to swallow, especially when you have an authoritarian structure; it’s harder to swallow, isn’t it?] . . . and for the selfsame end hath he created them, that they should keep his commandments and glorify him forever.” To glorify him is to share in his glory. Remember Moses 1:39: “For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.” To get us in it with him. That’s the atonement to bring us back to him. That is his work and his glory and what he gives to others. The Son glories with him the same way. So you are able to glorify him forever. How can you glorify God? By doing what he tells you and sharing the glory with him. He wants you there.

Now he must speak unto them concerning “a grosser crime.” *Gross* is a good word because it is gross. You see, he is talking about sex here. Verse 23: “For they seek to excuse themselves in committing whoredoms, because of the things which were written concerning David and Solomon his son.” The scriptures give people excuses for all sorts of things. These are the two most legendary characters, not only in religious history, but in any history. David is the great romantic hero of legend. Solomon is the most voluptuous and the most luxurious of all rulers. They built him up to be that. So we get Solomon, the voluptuary, and David, the romantic. It’s in that sense in which they were taken by the Jews, rather than in their priestly and sacred callings. Remember, Solomon went astray—he got off the track. In the same way, the best David could say was, “Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell,” because he did things he shouldn’t have done. Remember the story of Bathsheba and what he did to Uriah, the Hittite soldier. He killed him so he could marry his wife. That was David’s doing, so don’t try to justify yourself by David and Solomon, he says. Verse 24: “Behold, David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines, which thing was abominable before me, saith the Lord.” He doesn’t like the concubine system at all. Then the Lord says that he hasn’t led them out of Jerusalem to go on with that same sort of thing. Verse 25: “Wherefore, thus saith the Lord, I have led this people forth out of the land of Jerusalem, by the power of mine arm, that I might raise up unto me a righteous branch from the fruit of the loins of Joseph.” I took you away from all that, and “I the Lord God will not suffer that this people shall do like unto them of

old.” Being taken off that track is one of the blessings of the promised land. Now what’s going to happen because of these whoredoms and abominations he talks about? The Lord will curse the land [verse 29]; the promised land will be cursed for their sakes. Immorality cancels all promises here. Notice the male chauvinism in verses 30 and 31. “For behold, I, the Lord, have seen the sorrow, and heard the mourning of the daughters of [Israel] . . . because of the wickedness and abominations of their husbands. . . . For they shall not lead away captive the daughters of my people [the women are practically prisoners; they have a very male oriented, chauvinistic society; the women have to do all the cooking and set up the tepee and everything else] . . . for they shall not commit whoredoms, like unto them of old, saith the Lord of Hosts.”

Custom will not make it mandatory. And there are places where people say, “It has always been the custom, so we do it.” Like *Fastnachten* up and down the whole length of the Rhine. During that one night you can do anything you want; that’s *Fastnacht*. You dress up and disguise yourself so you won’t be responsible. You won’t be recognized the next day. It goes back to Roman times. They say, “Well, that’s what we have always done.” They do it, and it’s a wild time. (I see the time is up for this grim tale.)

The gloomy piece this morning with it brings,
The sun for sorrow will not show his head
Go hence and have more talk of these sad things
Some shall be pardoned and some punished.

(Source unknown)

That’s a verse I like. It’s very appropriate this morning, so I can use it. Verse 35: “Behold, ye have done greater iniquities than the Lamanites, our brethren. Ye have broken the hearts of your tender wives, and lost the confidence of your children [they had wrecked the family], because of your bad examples before them; . . . And because of the strictness of the word of God, which cometh down against you, many hearts died, pierced with deep wounds.” Notice that the word of God had specifically forbidden it, and because of that it was even more painful on the women and the children. The gospel had always taught them that you shouldn’t do those things. The disruption of LDS families is doubly tragic, and it does happen too. “Many hearts died, pierced with deep wounds” knowing of these lusts. The word of God is strict, and breaking it compounds the disaster. The time is up now. Are we going to get anything cheerful out of Jacob? We shall see what we have to expect here. But I wish it wasn’t so close to home. It’s beginning to make me uncomfortable. I think it’s time we changed to the Doctrine and Covenants, isn’t it? So we can get out of these things and feel better.