

TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

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Alma 30–31

Alma and Korihor

Now, if there ever were authentic and inspired passages in the Book of Mormon it's these [next] chapters we have come to in Alma. We really have something there. Nothing in the whole wide spectrum covered by the Book of Mormon is more significant than what is laid out in Alma 30–35. Wars are tactically territorial, as you know. They always are. That's absolutely basic—Clausewitz again. It's the taking and occupying of land that measures an army's success, but strategically wars are always ideological and they remain that way. The confused alarms and the horrible battles that we get in chapter 28 lead to Alma's passionate outcry in chapter 29, a very short declaration. Then in chapter 30 everybody is fed up with war for a time. It stops in chapter 30—everybody is exhausted. But how had it all begun? The issues are going to continue. The territorial issues have been settled for the time being, but the ideological issues are still there. Now we have the real conflicts here. Remember, [Ammon's] religious reforms were pushed by the king and rejected by the majority of his subjects, among whom the Nehor philosophy was the one that was dominant. So when the fighting stopped, the ideological controversy was taken up by the skillful spokesman for Nehor, who was Korihor. His name is very interesting, too, like the chief judge that follows him. We'll mention it in a minute.

It's hard to believe that this discourse of Korihor was printed in 1830. Imagine that! No such lucid statement of neo-Darwinism came forth until 1859. That was the time when everybody started getting together. There was Ricardo, who died in 1823, then Malthus around 1834. Then came the “big boys” in the latter part of the nineteenth century. In 1859 Darwin's *Origin of the Species* was published, and in the same year Marx's *Das Kapital* was published. Marx wanted to dedicate it to Darwin because they were right in the same line. It was dialectical materialism. This world accounts for everything, and that's the whole thing, religion being “the opiate of the people,” etc. Then Herbert Spencer, who was a little later, took it up. He lived into the early twentieth century. He invented the saying “survival of the fittest.” Very briefly, the idea with Malthus is that the food supply increases more slowly and mathematically, while the population increases geometrically. We will always be short of food, he says. If we are given a little food, we reproduce much too fast each time. That means there must always be competition. There will never be enough. That means in this competition only the fittest survive. That's what nature meant, that the most able and the fittest should survive. This is the neo-Darwinism we have today. Leave things alone, and let nature take its course—Milton Friedman, etc. The free play of the market will account for everything. This is what Korihor represents in a rather extreme party line actually. The *annus mirabilis* was in 1859. That's when Wagner first came out. This is the triumphant, conservative ideology of our time.

Korihor is like Ayn Rand, whose philosophy was absolutely identical. She was enormously popular at BYU a few years ago. She was antireligious, and he was antireligious, too. Well, that would never do. So his teachings were applied with a religious veneer and religious fervor by the Zoramites. They have the same philosophy, but they are very religious about it. They made a big thing of religion, we will soon find out. The religion of the Nehors

was very pious, respectable, and conventional. It was proper to go to the big churches, not too demanding but formalized. This ultra respectable, ultra rich was the ideal, as in American politics. The fashionable thing was to become high church Episcopalian. That's [like] what the Nehors were. We get this very clearly in the case of the Zoramites—wonderful, marvelous people, but they had these ideas. So there was the ideological tension between these two teachings. Remember, Alma was very strict on the other side. He was austere and had a passion for equality. Remember, he was very sorrowful, seeing the equality being broken up, etc.

The modest and austere ways of life of the Saints and all this that Alma went for was a subsistence economy, as against a market economy. They are the two kinds of economies that flourish in the world. Subsistence is when you subsist. That's stable and goes on from year to year. The Hopis and other Indians do that. People do that normally. Those are the ancient civilizations; they go on indefinitely. To subsist is all you expect. "Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content," said Paul. We have food storage for the sake of subsistence. We don't store our two-year supply to sell for the market. It's for subsistence so we can subsist over the bad years by taking advantage of the good years. This is what the ancients have done. It has always gone on; whereas with the market it is always going up and down. We consult the Dow-Jones everyday. Some days it's up, and some people are made rich and some made poor. Some days it's down, and some people get very rich and some get very poor. But it is always going up or down. It's unstable, it's brittle, and it leads to all sorts of tensions and competition. Of course, it's a great inducement to lying. There's all sorts of trickery because you are selling things and buying things. A profit is taking more than you gave, and you have to play pretty smart games with each other to do that sort of thing. So we have these two conflicting philosophies very, very clearly set forth in these chapters of Alma, which are so beautiful. We see the contrast then.

According to Alma 1–2 it was Nehor who introduced the first priestcraft. In Egypt it was Korihor who observed the first priestcraft in the twentieth dynasty. His name is being read differently today as *Hry-ḥr* (*Herihor*). When Baer was last here he settled for *Herihor*, but we don't know what the vowel was here. He was the high priest of Karnak in the twentieth dynasty under the last of the Rameses (X and XI). He was very ambitious, and he took to himself the title of "King's Son of the South—Ruler of the South." He had himself represented in various murals, inscriptions, etc., as equal, or even superior, to Pharaoh. He shows himself sacrificing in a superior place to Pharaoh. He even takes the title of Pharaoh, but he doesn't put the cartouche around it. He doesn't officially claim to be Pharaoh. But he puts that for his son, and his son was named Paanchi. You remember later on we get a judge who is very important, and his name is Paanchi. Spelled as it is in the Book of Mormon, his son was Paanchi. He [Herihor] established priestcraft, and Paanchi did become king. In the 1100s [B.C.] this happened, quite a while before Lehi. But it left great reverberations. It changed the whole order of things. From then on it was all the high priests of Thebes. The king had to reconcile himself to the high priest of Thebes, who usually got himself made king. This was the priestcraft, and it ruined Egypt, actually. Pharaoh lost his authority, and nobody knew who was in charge after that.

When Nehor comes before Alma right in the first chapter, Alma says, this is the first time we have had priestcraft here. Well if it was the first time, how would he know about priestcraft? Well, of course, the traditions were very great, and we have it right in the Book of Mormon here. This man Korihor had the same name as [the man in Egypt], and he introduced priestcraft in the time of Alma here. "But Alma said unto him: Behold, this

is the first time that priestcraft has been introduced among this people. And behold, thou art not only guilty of priestcraft, but hast endeavored to enforce it by the sword . . .” as the priests did later, because they were usually military commanders, too. They were sometimes Libyans that took over. The family of Sheshonk is the most famous of all the St. Nubians and the dynasty following that, the twenty-second dynasty. “And were priestcraft to be enforced among this people it would prove their entire destruction.” Alma knew his history. This hadn’t happened before there. It wasn’t Nephite history he was talking about; it was history from the Old World.

Question: Is it just coincidental that they have people with the same name that seem to play the same roles in the two different societies?

Answer: It can’t be accidental when you get a name like this. It ends in *i* in the Book of Mormon. That isn’t a Greek or Latin name. It’s not a Hebrew name or an English name. What is it? Where does it come from? Well, the name was only discovered in the latter part of the nineteenth century, around the 1870s or 1880s. Then there was quite a number of them. It’s a fairly popular name which means “he is my life,” meaning “Amon is my life.” Remember, *Amon* is the big thing [in Egypt]. But a name like that you wouldn’t invent in a million years. This is the one thing that Albright said you could not get around. This is definitely an Egyptian name and couldn’t be found anywhere else. Somebody had to know it, and there it is in the Book of Mormon. He was very much impressed. Albright’s own copy of the Book of Mormon was heavily marked and carefully read. He was very much impressed by it, and we had some very nice talks together. Anyway, the great Albright is dead now. He got an honorary doctorate from BYU. He came out here and spoke. He was so good and so famous that nobody could afford him. He didn’t charge a high price but was very much underpaid at Johns Hopkins. Nobody else could hire him because they couldn’t afford him. He was so much better than anybody else, and they couldn’t afford what they thought they should pay, not what he thought they should pay. He was willing to work for nothing. His wife had an independent income, and it all came from Kennicott Copper out here. The money that came from Kennicott Copper also built the big library in Dublin. The Chester Beatty Collection in Dublin is the greatest collection of ancient documents in the world—all paid for by Utah copper here.

Let’s get going. I don’t want to drag. We have some ground to cover, don’t we? I shouldn’t be talking about things like that. He [Nehor] is being a very reasonable person. He takes the position that many people take now in the Church and have always taken. They are the enlightened, the emancipated intellectuals. You can’t know of things you can’t see, he says in verse 15. That’s being very reasonable; he’s a positivist. You can only know what you can weigh and measure and be sure of. That’s scientific and fair enough. What’s the rest of it? Well, you’re just sick, he says. “But behold, it is the effect of a frenzied mind.” Now many of my friends think like this, that Mormons must be deranged. We have a professor from Hebrew University who is here now. He thinks that anybody must be crazy who can believe in an angel. That’s just impossible; there’s something wrong there. He just can’t get it through his head, although there it is. That’s why he is so interested in being here with people who actually believe it. “But behold, it is the effect of a frenzied mind; and this derangement of your minds comes because of the traditions of your fathers, which lead you away into a belief of things which are not so.” Remember the classic example of believing the old traditions and legends and going crazy? Don Quixote. You’re a lot of Don Quixotes. You’ve got these traditions of your

fathers. You've romanticized them, you're stuck with them, and you believe things which just are not so, he says.

Then he talks about the facts of life. "And many more such things did he say unto them . . ." Now here is the creed. This is the creed of individualism, dialectical materialism, etc.—Mill, Ricardo, and all the rest of them. We didn't mention John Stuart Mill; he was writing in the [1860s]. ". . . telling them that there could be no atonement made for the sins of men, but every man fared in this life according to the management of the creature." There's the word *management* being used in the Book of Mormon; *management* wasn't used at that time. When you talk about "the management of the creature," that's a perfect expression. It's the manipulation of people as if they were items or products. You can manipulate everything with the psychology of salesmanship. It is the manipulation, the management of the creature. Every man will fare according to how he manages himself; therefore, every man prospers according to his genius, and every man conquers according to his strength. The result is, of course, that you deserve what you get—the survival of the fittest, nature wants it that way, "and whatsoever a man did was no crime." On the founding of BYU, Brigham Young said that was the doctrine that BYU was founded to counteract. We won't go into that quotation, but I should find it here.

That is just what they [the Nehors] wanted to do, because if that is so God is dead and all is permitted. They enjoyed that because they weren't bound down. They were now emancipated (verse 18), "leading away the hearts of many [because they liked it], causing them to lift up their heads in their wickedness, yea, leading away many women, and also men, to commit whoredoms—telling them that when a man was dead, that was the end thereof." So, as I said, nobody has to be paid off. On the basis of this materialistic thing you are not going anywhere. If you are going to have your fun you must have it here. So it led to immorality. That's part of the picture of this positivism.

Now this man [Korihor] went over to the land of Jershon. This was now going to be occupied by the Ammonites to make a buffer state. They carried him before Ammon there; they didn't like him. These were the Ammonites who had followed Ammon and were settled in Jershon. They didn't like it, but what can you do about it? They took him to the high priest, and he was a hot potato. The high priest ordered him deported—that was all he could do. So they deported him to the land of Gideon, and he began to preach to them, too. The high priest there was also the chief judge over the land. He said, "Why do ye go about perverting the ways of the Lord?" The high priest's name was Giddonah, another good Egyptian name. Then Korihor gives them the reply here. This is what religion is [according to him]: ". . . foolish ordinances and performances which are laid down by ancient priests, to usurp power and authority over them." He has a point there because there are such foolish ordinances and performances laid down by ancient priests to gain power and authority. That's priestcraft. So you see how confused the issue can become and how the arguments can tighten up against each other here. It's the "opiate of the people" here. It keeps "them in ignorance, that they may not lift up their heads, but be brought down according to thy words." They must live by the old morality, be so strict, etc. This is the thing that everybody is laughing about now, our Victorian morals. They make fun of that. That's a lot of old superstition and nonsense. That's the way they talk today.

Verse 24: "Ye say that this people is a free people. Behold, I say they are in bondage." This is a crucial point. When are we free? This is what the Zoramites and the people of Zarahemla think. They think they are free. He goes on to explain that freedom must

include complete freedom from any government interference in anything we do, especially with our money. Remember, this was a sacral civilization. They lived by the law of Moses, and the judges were also priests. They had judges and they judged by the law of Moses, we are told. So that means we have a sacral or priestly society here. We have two priestcrafts colliding, you might say.

Verse 26: “Ye do not know that there shall be a Christ.” You say this is a fallen people. That’s one way to lose an election. You’ll never make yourself popular asking for repentance. “And thus ye lead away this people after the foolish traditions of your fathers, and according to your own desires; and ye keep them down, even as it were in bondage, that ye may glut yourselves with the labors of their hands, that they durst not look up with boldness [on what was their own], and that they durst not enjoy their rights and privileges.” This is total privatization is what he is out for. “Yea, they durst not make use of that which is their own lest they should offend their priests, who do yoke them according to their desires, and have brought them to believe, by their traditions and their dreams and their whims and their visions [he starts really pouring it on here] and their pretended mysteries, that they should, if they did not do according to their words, offend some unknown being, who they say is God—a being who never has been seen or known, who never was nor ever will be.”

So that’s the situation, and you use that to fleece the people and get everything they have. Well, what do they do with him? That was quite a speech he gave. He was a hot potato still. They couldn’t do anything against him; we will soon see why. So they “sent him to the land of Zarahemla, that he might be brought before Alma, and the chief judge who was governor over all the land.” Notice, judge and governor. It was a religious state. Under the law of Moses the judge is the governor and the high priest of the land, all at once. He went on in the same manner, raving when he got before Alma. Verse 31: “And he did rise up in great swelling words before Alma, and did revile against the priests and teachers, accusing them of leading away the people after the silly traditions of their fathers, for the sake of glutting [themselves] on the labors of the people.”

Alma said, I have labored with my own hands for my own support all my life. You know that. As a judge I got paid by my time, a flat rate, one senine for my labor for the day in the judgment seat. That’s the only pay I ever got for any work in the state or in the church. “Then why sayest thou that we preach unto this people to get gain, when thou, of thyself, knowest that we receive no gain? [Why do you go around deceiving the people this way?] And now, believest thou that we deceive this people, that causes such joy in their hearts? And Korihor answered him, Yea. And then Alma said unto him: Believest thou that there is a God?” And he said, no I don’t believe that. And in verse 40 Alma said, “And now what evidence have ye that there is no God, or that Christ cometh not?” See, you can never prove a negative. You can’t prove to me absolutely now as we are standing and sitting here that there is not a kangaroo behind that desk. There could very well be. I don’t know, but there could be. You can’t prove that there isn’t, as you go down there. You can’t prove a negative, in other words, but you can prove a positive. On the other hand we “have all things as a testimony that these things are true; and ye also have all things as a testimony unto you that they are true; and will ye deny them? . . . Behold, I know that thou believest, but thou art possessed with a lying spirit, and ye have put off the Spirit of God that it may have no place in you.”

Why are people so obsessed with rage, for example, against Joseph Smith, as if he had personally insulted them and ruined their lives? They have never seen him, but they really

take on. Korihor says, then “show me a sign.” That’s the usual thing. After all, he is positivist. Verse 44: “But Alma said unto him: Thou hast had signs enough; will ye tempt your God? Will ye say, Show unto me a sign, when ye have the testimony of all these thy brethren, and also all the holy prophets? The scriptures are laid before thee, yea, and all things denote there is a God; yea, even the earth, and all things that are upon the face of it.” Did they make themselves, in other words? Did they just come about accidentally? Well, Korihor would say they did. And that is what Darwin introduced here in this *annus mirabilis*. “. . . and also all the planets which move in their regular form do witness that there is a Supreme Creator.” These are the old classic arguments for deity which Aristotle used. “And he said: Yes, I will deny, except ye shall show me a sign.” These are signs actually, but he said, “Show me a sign.” What kind of a sign would it be if these aren’t signs?

So he said, if you want a sign God will smite you dumb. Then he started getting worried in verse 48: “Now Korihor said unto him: I do not deny the existence of a God [he just had], but I do not believe that there is a God, . . . and except ye show me a sign, I will not believe.”

Alma said, okay I will give you a sign “that thou shalt be struck dumb, according to my words; and I say, that in the name of God, ye shall be struck dumb.” And Korihor was struck dumb. Was it a stroke? Was he so wrought up? Would that be the effect of this sort of thing if he had actually been putting it on? He got himself in so deep that he had to put on this big show. We find out he really was scared here, and this was all it took to push him over. He was struck dumb, and deaf also because Alma had to write for him. “And now when the chief judge saw this, he put forth his hand and wrote unto Korihor.” [The chief judge] wrote to Korihor, so he was deaf and dumb. In reply Korihor wrote, in verse 52, “Yea, and I always knew that there was a God.” Here we have an interesting paradox. What happened? He said, “The devil hath deceived me; for he appeared unto me in the form of an angel.” Well, an angel comes and tells you there is no God, and that’s why you don’t believe in God? What would make you believe in God more than to have an angel come to you? Well, that’s a nice paradox, but it works that way. As Brigham Young said, “Pray that you’ll never see an angel.” All those that saw angels apostatized—like Oliver Cowdery, the Whitmers, and others. They didn’t deny the angels, but it made them very negative. How would they possibly turn against and deny the work? They did. Frederick G. Williams, W. W. Phelps, and others trotted off to the courthouse at Richmond and swore out these horrible accusations against Joseph Smith. Shortly afterward, they denied them. Joseph held nothing against them and took them back again. See the effect that has. They were momentarily seized by something, the men that should have had the firmest faith. They went and swore out depositions of the most terrible things against Joseph Smith. Then within a matter of weeks or months they came back, asked for his pardon, and wanted to be admitted into the Church again. That’s a strange state of things, isn’t it? No, it’s not strange. It shows that something unusual is going on here.

Korihor said, he said to me in the form of an angel “there is no God; yea, and he taught me that which I should say. And I have taught his words; and I taught them because they were pleasing unto the carnal mind.” And it tells us here why they were pleasing to the carnal mind. The carnal mind is that which caused men and women to lift up their heads and to commit whoredoms, “telling them that when a man was dead, that was the end thereof.” That’s what they wanted. They wanted a *carte blanche* for carnal behavior to do whatever they wanted. It appealed to the carnal mind. Carnal also means things of the

world, as indicated in Alma 30:17, “but every man fared in this life according to the management of the creature [that’s carnal], . . . prospered according to his genius, . . . conquered according to his strength.” That’s on the carnal level of the warfare in which you deal with objects and people, having no spirit at all. So he had been fooled into that, and the people liked to hear it for that reason.

Verse 53: “I taught them, even until I had much success.” It was easy to believe, an emancipating belief. I began to believe it myself. That’s a nice psychological touch. He was going on so strongly. When he started defying Alma, you could see he was backing up all the time until he said, “I do not deny the existence of a God.” You know he is weakening at that time. Now is the time for Alma to lower the beam, and he gets deaf and dumb. “I taught them, even until I had much success, insomuch that I verily believed that they were true.” Well, the curse was not taken off him, and he was cast out. This leads us over to the next people. He went around begging from door to door for his bread, a pitiful figure, until he finally came among the Zoramites, who were dissenters from the Nephites. They were living by themselves and were a very superior people actually. He was run over and put to death by a mob.

Did we start back at the beginning of this chapter the last time? The first part of the chapter is the most important part; I’d better take it on then. At the beginning of the chapter the war was over, and the dead were not numbered because of the great slaughter. Then there was continual peace at the end of verse 2. “And they were strict in observing the ordinances of God, according to the law of Moses.” So that’s the way they were living in verse 3. But the Nehors are still the more popular. Then in verse 6 “there came a man into the land of Zarahemla, and he was Anti-Christ . . .” We mentioned Anti-Christ the last time. His name was Korihor. *Anti-Christ* means putting yourself up and defying Christ. We put all those words on the boards. *Anti-Nephi-Lehi* means Nephi brought face to face, or joined together with the other descendants of Lehi. He didn’t name Lamanites and Lemuelites separately. Lehi covered all the Lamans and Lemuels. *Anti-Nephi-Lehi* means Nephi and Lehi brought together again, which they were. The Lamanites and Lemuelites became dominant and more numerous than the Nephites; they were more righteous, too. So it is very proper to call this event the bringing together of Nephi and Lehi, the *anti*. He [Korihor] was Anti-Christ in the same way. He confronted Christ face to face and claimed to be him. He claimed to replace him. He was the false Christ. There are lots of Anti-Christ. The Anti-Christ comes and says that he is Christ. This is what Satan does. Remember in the beginning of Moses, he said, “I am the Only Begotten, worship me,” and he ranted upon the ground.

Well, he [Korihor] came to Zarahemla. He preached against the religion and everything Alma stood for, and yet Alma had to let him do it. After all, Alma had been permitted by his father to go out and preach against the church, and the sons of Mosiah, the king, were out preaching against the church. Why were they allowed to do that? It was according to the law of Mosiah it tells us here. “Now there was no law against a man’s belief; for it was strictly contrary to the commands of God that there should be a law which should bring men on to unequal grounds.” If there was a favored religion, a state religion, then we would have social pressure and things could be more serious, too. Then you could start censorship and all sorts of things. But it was strictly contrary to the law of God that they should make laws controlling other people’s religion or judging them at all. They were perfectly free to believe anything they wanted to. That would make them unequal, because the Lord said, “Choose you this day whom ye will serve.” You have the right to choose it. “Now if a man desired to serve God, it was his privilege [so you can go to

church all you want and have school prayer all you want, as we do here]; but if he did not believe in him there was no law to punish him,” or to put him under restraint. What you do in a case like this is to bring social pressure. That leads to other things like censorship and being outcasts, pariahs, etc.

Verse 11: “For there was a law that men should be judged according to their crimes. Nevertheless, there was no law against a man’s belief.” That wasn’t a crime, whatever he believed. If it led him to commit a crime, he was punished for the crime—not for the belief, even though the belief might have led him to it. “Therefore, a man was punished only for the crimes which he had done; therefore all men were on equal grounds.” This means socially equal, politically equal, and religiously equal. So he was able to preach. The law could have no hold on this Anti-Christ whose name was Korihor. He said, “Behold, these things which ye call prophecies, . . . they are foolish traditions of your fathers.”

Elder Oaks gave a wonderful talk during conference on criticism and criticizing. Just criticize all you want. Write anything you want anywhere; just don’t expect the Church officially to endorse it. That would be foolish. We don’t have to endorse what you say. That’s what these people want to do. They think because they are members of the Church they can have influence. They can argue and be perfectly free. I have criticized as freely as anybody else. Should I tell you about this? Yes. When I first came to Provo I went up and asked Brother J. Reuben Clark, “Should I ‘keep my nose clean’? I’m sassy, shoot off my mouth, and become very critical down at BYU. Shouldn’t I shut up?”

He said, “That would be the worst thing you could possibly do. We have to have an adversary relationship if we are going to get at the truth in these things.” (He was a lawyer, of course.) So you have to have some forum for expression here, and nobody was freer in that than President Oaks when he was here.

Then Korihor goes on to say [the traditions] were the effect of a frenzied mind. We read that already. We have to see why Korihor had to be allowed to do anything he wanted to there. It was only when he came to these upright Zoramites that were so strict and so materialistic that he was mobbed and put to death. They were the intolerant ones, not Alma. Alma couldn’t afford to be intolerant. After all, his father had put up with him.

Now these Zoramites were “perverting the ways of the Lord.” Notice, they kept them but they perverted them. It wasn’t apostasy; it was perversion. That’s what happened in the second, third, and fourth centuries. They continued to claim the gospel, but now they started bowing down to dumb idols. We have lots of indication here that there were older traditions in the land, which they adopted. We won’t talk about that now, but there was a great culture here already. The evidence for that comes later in the book. But Alma began to sicken because of the iniquity he saw among this people, when he saw what was going on there. Alma is very much affected by these things. If he is sickened by them, the question arises then, why should he judge the iniquity of his people? Why should he be worried about the wickedness of other people? Well, we see a little later why that is so—not only because of its blatant way, but he has a definite reason for being sickened.

Verse 3: “Now the Zoramites had gathered themselves together in a land which they called Antionum [they were people who had left the Nephites] . . . which also bordered upon the wilderness south, which wilderness was full of the Lamanites.” The Lamanites were to the south, Antionum was in the middle, and the Nephites were on the north. [Brother Nibley shows their locations on the board.] He didn’t want the Zoramites to get together with the

Lamanites and make a squeeze-play on [the Ammonites]. This was Jershon; this was their buffer state in between. The Zoramites were on top. The Lamanites were on the bottom, and the Ammonites, the people of Jershon, were in between. (I should get things straight once in a while. They would throw me right out if I had to make an intelligence report today, wouldn't they? I get all mixed up. If you say the south is on the north, it is going to ruin a lot of action. You get your artillery going in the wrong places and wipe your own people out. That has happened.) The Zoramites gathered themselves together in the land Antionum. The land south was the land of Jershon. The Ammonites in Jershon were on the south, and south of them [notice] "upon the wilderness south, which wilderness was full of the Lamanites. Now the Nephites greatly feared that the Zoramites would enter into a correspondence with the Lamanites." See, if they got together with the Lamanites, then they could put the squeeze on the people of Ammon in between. That's what they were afraid of; tactically it was a very dangerous situation.

What do we do? What do we do to weaken them? Well, Alma thought, we have to strengthen our position among the Zoramites so that they won't link up with the Lamanites there. The preaching of the word was the way to do it, so he took his mission there. He had found that "had more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword," and that they should first give it a try—"try the virtue of the word of God" and see if that would work. So he got together his famous SWAT team of all the powerful missionaries: Ammon, Aaron, Omner, and Himni. Even Zeezrom now. Remember old Zeezrom, who had been converted and healed of a fever. He had been just as arrogant as Korihor, but he joined the brethren. Alma took Amulek and Zeezrom and also two of his sons. So that's quite a crowd. They had a missionary task force here that was going to go in and work on the Zoramites, but they didn't get to first base. Immediately they find among the Zoramites, very strongly marked, this ideological conflict. There are the poor Zoramites that live out by themselves, and there are the rich Zoramites. They have very little to do with each other, he is going to tell us here.

The eldest of Alma's sons was Helaman. That's a very interesting thing since they have changed the Egyptian *r*'s to *l*'s in so many cases in the last few years. Helaman is simply the well-known Egyptian word *Hr ʿImn*, the "countenance of Amon." Another son was called Shiblon, a very good Arab name. It means "a young lion," just like the Hebrew *Ari*. It's very common in Israel. Corianton is a borrowed name, a Jaredite name. We will see how it got there later on.

Verse 8: "Now the Zoramites were dissenters from the Nephites [they had been Nephites]; therefore they had had the word of God preached unto them." They had perverted it. They would not keep the law of Moses; they didn't like that part of it. And they wouldn't pray "that they might not enter into temptation." That's the best way to resist temptation, the social norms, etc. So they had their own religion and built synagogues. Remember, the Nephites had synagogues, too, and they built their own synagogues now. They were following the old pattern. The Jews had their synagogues, too. They were a very religious people, a church-building people. This was important with the Zoramites. They had built synagogues and gathered themselves together on one day of the week, which they did call the day of the Lord. They were doing it themselves. Following the old Nehor pattern, aren't they? They had a place for standing, high enough for one person to stand on.

There are some very interesting temples in South America. There's a temple, on the outskirts of Mexico City on the south side, with a stairway going up and just the stand for

one man at the top. There are lots of pictures from the conquistadors, etc. The usual thing for the temple was to go up on four sides. You still do in the kiva; the Hopis have the kiva. It's the stairways of the temples that dominate, as you know, in Central American architecture. At the top there is a stand, which is sometimes a very small place. We don't know what it was, but it was called a *Rameumptom*, he tells us. This is very interesting, because the word *ram* in all Semitic languages means *high*, whether it's Hebrew, Aramaic, Arabic, Babylonian, or anything else. So it's a high place. But *Kb* means curved or curling, like a serpent, winding 'round and 'round. So it could have been a winding stairway that went up to the top of the tower, winding up and winding down. But one person at a time would go up. The name is interesting; it suggests winding. You would think that they would be straight, following the usual pattern. But remember, this was long before the classical period. All of this is just a guess thrown out freely, but at least it's not a bad guess. If he (Joseph Smith) was making this up, he is awfully good at making things up. You have to give him credit for that.

This is the way they would go. They would go on the top and stretch forth their hands to heaven. That's the *hallal* gesture, which you find anciently everywhere. It gave us the Hebrew letter *h*. It's the little hallelujah mannequin here [Brother Nibley draws it on the board]. You see it on jars, vases, rocks, glyphs, etc. They would do that. It's the usual gesture, the *hallal* or *hallelujah*. *Hallal* means "to greet the new moon" and various things like that. They would recite this prayer.

Question: About the Egyptian *Amon*, is that a pagan god?

Answer: He's not pagan at all. In several of our hymns we use the word *Amon* for the name of God.

What, tho, if the favor of Ahman possessing,
This world's bitter hate you are called to endure?

"The Time is Far Spent," page 266 in the hymn book

We can't take time to reconstruct it [the song]; we must rush. Anyway, we use the word *Amon*, too, and it's used in the Doctrine and Covenants for the name of God. Of course, the Egyptian word *Amon* means lots and lots of things. The main thing it means is "the unknown one," the one the Egyptians don't know. They call him "the hidden one, the concealed one, the one whose name nobody knows." Of course, that's exactly what the Hebrews said about him. Only the high priest in Israel knew the name of God. He only whispered it once a year when he went behind the veil. Nobody else knew that name. The name of *Amon* is written in Egyptian with a man concealing himself behind a blind. That is always read as *'Imn*, "the one who is not seen, the one who is invisible, the one we don't know and who is above."

So they go through this sort of thing and say, "Holy, holy God; we believe that thou art God, and we believe that thou art holy, and that thou wast a spirit, and that thou art a spirit, and that thou wilt be a spirit forever. Holy God, we believe that thou hast separated us [now this self-righteousness] from our brethren, . . . but we believe that thou hast elected us to be thy holy children." This doctrine of election can be very flattering. There are people who have kept it. "But thou art the same yesterday, today, and forever; and thou hast elected us that we shall be saved, whilst all around us are elected to be cast by thy

wrath down to hell, . . . and we also thank thee that thou hast elected us, that we may not be led away after the foolish traditions of our brethren.”

At the core of Hermetic religions you find this secret, limited, aristocratic society. It reminds me of the Pythagoreans, who were among the more righteous people. They took this exclusive position. They alienated people, made enemies, and got themselves destroyed because they formed themselves into these societies and communities. They would go into rites like this. The Pythagoreans are not a particularly good example except for this one thing, their exclusiveness and their superiority. That’s what got them killed, because everybody said they were so snooty. They wouldn’t share their secrets or anything like that. They were diligent students and lived very uprightly. This is also a holdover from the Egyptian tradition, this idea of superiority. Remember, the texts we have are all very secret at the end. They say, “Don’t reveal this to anyone. This is secret and just for a particular group.” But they [the Zoramites] make this an instrument of pride and vanity. Then they think Christianity is too complicated. It’s a very interesting thing. As Lord Raglan showed, the more sophisticated religions become, not the more complicated, but the more simple they become. Islam is very simple, and Christian Science is so simple it’s nothing at all. This reads like Christian Science, which Joseph Smith didn’t copy from because Mary Baker Eddy didn’t live at this time. She came later.

So they said, “We thank God that we are chosen.” They were snooty, and the Christian Scientists were snooty, too. There was a time when they had a big push during the twenties and thirties. [It seemed that] everybody was a Christian Scientist, and they were too lofty to speak to anybody else. They talked of all this spiritual stuff, very much like this.

Verse 18: “And again we thank thee, O God, that we are a chosen and a holy people.” Now Alma was astonished at what he found. There had been big changes; they had picked up something somewhere. They talked about the Rameumptom and they gave this prayer to God and said “their hearts were not stolen away to believe in things to come, which they knew nothing about.” This was their positive position; they didn’t believe in the other things. Each man would give his thanks, bear his testimony, and then come down. Then they would never mention it again for the rest of the week. That was the Nehor element, very proper and very correct, but they weren’t really religious. They weren’t religious around the clock at all; they would just take care of it. Now this was silly, but was it wicked? It was extreme wickedness that worried Alma. We’ll see what the wickedness consisted in. The next week they “assembled themselves together again to the holy stand, to offer up thanks after their manner. Now when Alma saw this his heart was grieved; for he saw that they were a wicked and a perverse people” (Alma 31:24).

This is where the wickedness and perversity come in. If you want to be silly, that’s one thing. If they were charitable and good people and did this silly thing, that’s no sillier than lots of people do today. But this is it. “He saw that their hearts were set upon gold, and upon silver, and upon all manner of fine goods. Yea, and he also saw that their hearts were lifted up unto great boasting, in their pride [remember President Benson’s talk at conference]. . . . O Lord, wilt thou suffer that thy servants shall dwell here below in the flesh, to behold such gross wickedness among the children of men?” Behold, O God, they cry unto thee, and yet their hearts are swallowed up in their pride.” It’s the *and yet* that makes it wicked. There’s nothing wrong with crying unto God and praying to him in sincerity. “Behold, O God, they cry unto thee with their mouths, while they are puffed up, even to greatness, with the vain things of the world.”

That's what they were doing. These are the sort of corporate apologetics we hear so much of today: Things are what we say they are. We are doing a good job. We are leaning over backwards. Our response was prompt and thorough to the oil disaster. Well, it wasn't prompt and thorough at all, but the president of the company just said it was. The idea that by saying something it happens is becoming very strong now, thanks to the influence of Madison Avenue, TV, etc. You just talk to people and they will go for it. He said, they cry unto thee with their mouths, while their hearts are puffed up. Well, of course, the Lord told Joseph Smith that in the First Vision. "They draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me."

Verse 28: "Behold, O my God, their costly apparel, and their ringlets, and their bracelets [we think again of the vase paintings and murals that show this lavish overadornment of these people, at a much later period though] and their ornaments of gold, and all their precious things which they are ornamented with; and behold, their hearts are set upon them, and yet they cry unto thee [there's the hypocrisy; that's what made it a sin; there's nothing wrong with crying to God, but it's where your heart really is]. We thank thee, O God, for we are a chosen people unto thee, while others shall perish. Yea, and they say that thou hast made it known unto them that there shall be no Christ. O Lord God, how long wilt thou suffer that such wickedness and infidelity shall be among this people?"

Isn't he being rather judgmental here? No, he is not at all. Why is he so concerned? Well, in the first place they were so blatantly, so overtly [wicked], and Alma had wider experience than anybody else. He knew about people and characters, etc. He had seen more wickedness than anybody else, he being Alma the Younger. So he was able to judge them on that basis, and also because they were blatant. They put on quite a show. But the main thing is in verse 35. He loves them, and his heart is concerned about them. "Behold, O Lord, their souls are precious, and many of them are our brethren." So that's why he feels right to be saying that he is suffering terribly. He's not a hypocrite who is overwhelmed by other people's wickedness when it should be his own sins that concern him. It's that he's on a mission here, and he wants to do what he can. "O Lord God, how long wilt thou suffer that such wickedness and infidelity shall be among this people? O Lord, wilt thou give me strength, that I may bear with mine infirmities." Notice, good old Alma again. He must bear with his infirmities. Remember, Nephi says in his prayer right at the beginning, why am I angry at my enemies instead of at myself? He rebukes himself for that, and Alma does the same thing here. "Give me strength, that I may bear with mine infirmities" and face them. But meantime, the reason he is interested [is to have] success with them. Here's a refreshing definition of success, written without dollar signs. Verse 33: "Wilt thou grant unto them [his companions] that they may have strength, that they may bear their afflictions. . . . Behold, O Lord, their souls are precious." So he wants to save them. His concern is not mean, but generous for them. He doesn't want to damn them.

In verse 36 it says "that he *clapped* his hands upon all them who were with him." That's an interesting word there, isn't it? To *clap* means to put your hands firmly on something. The Old English word is *clippyon* and it [is related] to *grab*, *grobe*, and *gripe*, [German] *kleben*. They mean to grab firmly, and the Latin *carpo* is the same thing. You know the Greek Harpies. They were the damsels with the lunch hooks that came and grabbed your lunch before you could eat it; therefore, they were called *Harpies*. But this *harpo*, *carpo* is a good old English usage. In fact, the Egyptian word for "to embrace" is *hpt*. That means

to gain control, to grab a thing, to hold it firmly, etc. So it's proper. The old Anglo-Saxon use "to clap" his hands on his head doesn't mean he applauded this way. He put his hands firmly on their heads when he set them apart is what happened. And taking no thought for themselves, they were filled with the Holy Spirit.

The next chapter is an extremely important one, because this is such an accurate picture of Mesoamerican society, according to a recent collection of studies. It's about people building the sacred centers for the ruling class and the like. That can go quickly though. We should finish Alma, shouldn't we?