

# TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

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Semester 2, Lecture 56  
Alma 36–41  
Alma Addresses His Sons

Now we have come to Alma's addresses to his three sons. Each is a very different character. This has very important things to say for us in chapter 36. In verse 8 he tells about when the angel appeared and said to him some peculiar Semitic [expressions]. This is the Semitic threat or warning to a child, "If thou wilt of thyself be destroyed, seek no more to destroy the church of God." Doesn't he mean "If you don't want to be destroyed, seek no more to destroy the church of God." No, in the Semitic language you have to say it this way, because he repeats the very same thing. In Hebrew you say to a child, "Don't do that if you want to get spanked." That's the way you say it. We would say, "Do that and you'll get spanked," but they say, "Don't do that if you want to get spanked." It sounds contradictory to us, but that is the normal way. That's how you have to put it. That's the way it is put here, and it catches you right off. It's a very proper Semitic warning here.

For three days and nights he couldn't open his mouth; he was utterly paralyzed. Then there's another contradiction in verse 11. "And the angel spake more things unto me, which were heard by my brethren, but I did not hear them." Well, why is the angel talking to him and he didn't hear him? The others heard him. Again, this is a common thing. He is going to find out about it anyway. Why to the unhearkening? Well, it happens. Teachers and first sergeants do this often. They bawl out some "airhead" that they know will pay no attention to them whatever, but it goes for the rest of the platoon. Everybody knows it's for them, and it's the same thing here. Alma is going to get a real working over here, but the rest of them have to have their share of it, and this is what they get. This is what is given to them here, the part he doesn't hear. But he is going to get the full treatment presently. So it is for their benefit because the others were doing it along with him. There was quite a crowd of them. It had to turn the tide. But he fell to the earth absolutely in a stroke and heard no more. He was "racked with eternal torment, . . . racked with all my sins. Yea, I did remember all my sins and iniquities." Well, we have heard this phenomenon—my whole life flashed before me. This happens; many people have told us that. With what he had been up to now, he knew why he was being hit. He had been brought up properly and knew what he should have done. He couldn't have suffered more.

Verse 14: "Yea, and I had murdered many of his children [remember, the Ammonites always talked of their battles as murders], or rather led them away unto destruction." This is the Mahan principle: "I am master of this great secret that I can murder and get gain." You notice it is the violation of life, the equivalence of murder. Life, like glory, has endless degrees. To curtail life, to warp life, to defile it, to despoil it, to confine it is to destroy it. If you lock a person up all his days for your own purpose, you keep him enslaved. This is very common to make yourself rich. You're murdering to get gain is what you're doing. You see, you are depriving people of life. You are curtailing it and shortening it; you've wrecked its quality, etc. This happens with almost any kind of gain. Any larger type of gain does require destruction of life. You must convert life into property—whether it is

the process of extracting the goods from nature (we don't want to get off the track here), or whether it is the process of manufacturing them, where we don't have sufficient inspection and sufficient care. We shorten life because of all sorts of poisonous substances in the air [and people] inhaling this, that, and the other. Then the product comes out, and it probably has preservatives and things like that in it. This sort of thing is very common. At every process you jeopardize life and destroy its quality, length and other things. We don't want to dwell on that right now.

Alma said, "The very thought of coming into the presence of my God did rack my soul with inexpressible horror. Oh, thought I, that I could be banished and become extinct, . . . that I might not be brought to stand in the presence of my God, to be judged of my deeds." Now isn't it interesting that the most desirable thing, the thing everybody wants more than anything else is finally to return to the presence of God and stand in his presence. And the thing we dread more than anything else is to return to the presence of God and stand in his presence. It's the worst thing that could possibly happen to you, to have to face God. As we were told earlier, you would rather have the rocks and the mountains fall on you—anything but that. Yet that's the thing we want to return to eventually and be worthy of. We have a long way to go between now and then. Don't even think about becoming gods and that sort of thing for a long time to come. That's way down the road, I assure you. But he wanted to become extinct. Here's your choice, and to this "favor" you must come. Remember, Hamlet says this: "Go tell my lady, let her paint an inch thick, to this favor she must come. Let her laugh at that." He is holding up the skull of Yorick, you know. You have your choice of coming to extinction, coming to nothing, just as dead as any insect, or having to stand in the presence of God. That's the choice we have. Most people prefer extinction. He would prefer extinction; he doesn't want to think or talk about the other, and yet it is so much wiser and so much better here.

These are the two possibilities. Which is the more likely? That we'll have to stand in the presence of God, or that we will dissolve into nothing. Well, from nothing comes nothing, but you are here. Which is the more terrifying? Is it the nihilism—this going into nothing, into the black darkness that the poet talks about? We can't get off that easily. He said he would like to be extinct; that's what he would choose after the way he had behaved. We can't get off that easily; we've got to face God. There's more to it—it's a big picture. We've just had a little tiny slice, and we know it. That's why we resent being taken away so soon. We haven't finished anything, or we never got started. If we have enjoyed it, the party is cut short much too soon. If we haven't enjoyed it, we haven't had a chance yet. Give us a better break. Any way you look at it we know we are going to have to face something more and there is much more to come. We'll find that out. He wanted to become extinct anyway, but which is the more terrifying? For three days he was racked with the pains of a damned soul. No more Freudian repressions. They emerge, and he knows everything he has done wrong. We are much more aware of our sins than we think we are. We repress them. We cover them over, and then they break out in these Freudian symptoms because we have been concealing them. We all do that thing. He was racked with torment because the veil was torn away there.

Then he said, "I remembered also to have heard my father prophesy unto the people." Now he was just on the side. He puts himself as just a very indifferent sort of person. He said he had heard it and hadn't paid any particular attention. But he remembered having heard him prophesy concerning the coming of one Jesus Christ." See, Jesus Christ means nothing to him, just "one Jesus Christ" here. This shows how little attention he paid; he preferred not to hear it, but he really did hear it. It comes back to him now.

The eye it cannot choose but see  
We cannot bid the ear be still  
Our senses feel where ere we be  
Against or with our will.

Or as Malabranche says, “Your mind is always working.” At various levels it’s true, but it’s always working. So that means you are taking in more than you know. And psychoanalysis will always reveal that. A good psychologist can dig out things that you would deny or never remember having experienced, the naughty things you would never remember having done. If he is skillful he can dig it all up and it is all there. The record is written. You don’t need to be confronted with books hereafter. All the Lord will have to do is look at you and you will wither. That’s why we don’t want to have to stand in his presence.

His mind caught upon this thought, and he cried out, “O Jesus.” Now that’s actually what he did cry. He wouldn’t have pronounced it that way but *Yehoshua* or something like that. *Jesus* simply means “the Savior;” whoever it is who is saving you is *Jesus*. That’s all he knew about him. Notice, he turned to “just one Jesus Christ,” a very impersonal thing. He had no close experience, no great feelings about him. There was just one Jesus. But now he is the Savior, and he calls upon him and says, “O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me.” Then he says, and this is quite literally as we saw before, that he is “encircled about by the everlasting chains of death.” This is what faces us; you can’t escape it. You are encircled around and trapped in on all sides, as Homer says, “caught like rats in a trap.” You are not going to escape the chains that bind you; you are not going to get out of it at all. So it’s true; he’s worried now. This is the bottom line, you notice—by the chains of death. That’s the bottom line that gets him now.

When he did this he could remember his pains no more. Well, is he suddenly born again? Is he getting off that easy? Don’t worry, he’s not getting off easy at all. We’ll see what he has to go through now. “Yea, I was harrowed up by the memory of my sins no more.” Well, he’s well out of it; that’s very nice. When Charles Colson became reborn after committing many grave crimes, he was asked whether he was sorry and felt he should make recompense to the people. He said, “Not at all. I’m reborn. I’m saved. Those things don’t worry me in the least.” No, you don’t get off that easy. Remember, “Ye shall not come forth hence until you have paid the last farthing.” He is talking about being in hell. You have to pay the full price to get out.

Here’s the contrast, a nice rhetorical turn. This is a *homoiooteleuton*. “There could be nothing so exquisite and so bitter as were my pains. . . . On the other hand there can be nothing so exquisite and sweet as was my joy.” Perfect parallelism. And incidentally, when he says, “O Jesus,” any Moslem or Jew would say, “Well, why not call on God directly? Why call on Jesus? Well, that’s the point of the whole thing. It was God he had offended. The last person in the world he wants to meet is God. He has offended God. What he wants is a kind person who will feel with him and know what he is going through. And, of course, that’s the Lord, that’s Christ. He descended below all things. He suffered all these things, so he knows. Alma appeals to the one he can appeal to. He’s scared; he doesn’t want to go to God. I’d sooner be extinct than have to face him [he feels]. But there is Jesus; he will get me out. He is the Savior—he knows. So he appeals to him, and then his work is really beginning. But just as nothing was so exquisite and bitter as that all was lost, you see, [so also] there’s the great discovery that nothing is lost. He can

be saved after all. Then like Lehi (this is actually quoted from Lehi) he has a very interesting vision at various levels. “Yea, methought I saw [because it was timeless here, he is going to tell us], even as our father Lehi saw, God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels, in the attitude of singing and praising their God.”

That is a standard, recurrent scenario. I have at least twenty very important, very early apocalyptic writings, like 3 Enoch, about a person who repents, is caught away, and sees God sitting on this throne surrounded by the concourses of angels singing their hymns. He comes back and then teaches his children. It’s a standard scenario, and it’s something that really happens. It happens here; it’s picked right up here. “I had been born of God [see, he is born again]. Yea, and from that time even until now, I have labored without ceasing, that I might bring souls unto repentance.” Now the labor begins, with some hopes that he might yet be saved. He says, he may still deliver me at the end of all this. He’s not getting off by saying, “Well, I found Jesus now; my troubles are over.” His work is beginning.

Verse 26: “For because of the word . . . many have been born of God, and have tasted as I have tasted, and have seen eye to eye as I have seen.” That *taste* is very interesting. That’s the Egyptian word meaning “to experience anything.” They use the same word *dp* to mean *experience* or *taste* anything. Then here is what he has had to go through since then. This was the beginning of his troubles, you might say. “And I have been supported under trials and troubles of every kind . . . afflictions . . . prison . . . bonds . . . death [all had faced him]; yea, and I do put my trust in him, and he will still deliver me.” He is not in the clear yet; he still hopes for it. He is going to have to pay the uttermost farthing here. “He has brought our fathers out of Egypt.” He has rescued other people. Notice, from time to time they have to be delivered and rescued. Then they go into captivity again, “out of bondage and captivity from time to time.” They keep repeating their follies and have to be rescued again and again. But the Lord’s mercy is extended to us as long as we are in the blessed vessel. As long as we are here, it is never too late to repent. He brought our fathers out, and he is going to bring me out, “delivered them out of bondage and captivity from time to time even down to the present day.” This is the pattern, and the dates are not decisive. And this isn’t all, he says. Always the basic rule is you are still on probation. “Inasmuch as ye shall keep the commandments of God ye shall prosper in the land [but if you don’t] . . . keep the commandments of God ye shall be cut off from his presence.” (Well, that’s all he wanted for now.) But this is the basic rule that he repeats over and over again.

Now he is still talking to Helaman about the great importance of [keeping] the records. “And I also command you that ye keep a record of this people . . . upon the plates of Nephi, . . . for it is for a wise purpose that they are kept.” He doesn’t know exactly what it is all about, but it’s a wise purpose. Remember the whole purpose of this: “This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.” The news has to be spread. The business of glory is to be spread abroad. You can’t keep it to yourself or it won’t be glory. This is what the record does. It makes it possible to spread it widely. You don’t have to be visited by an angel every time, because when the angel comes all he does is quote the scripture. That’s all Moroni did; that’s all Gabriel did. That’s all the angels did when they appeared to the shepherds in the fields. When an angel appears he’ll quote the scriptures being fulfilled with his visit, etc. He talks about the written word here, “these plates of brass,” or bronze. They didn’t have the word *bronze* in Joseph Smith’s day. They are the scriptures, and “they have the genealogy of our forefathers.” You have to include the past in this and the future. “Behold, it has been prophesied by our fathers [which are

things to come], that they should be kept and preserved by the hand of the Lord until they should go forth [these plates] unto every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, that they shall know of the mysteries contained thereon.”

So everybody has a claim on it. It's universal—not just one people or one tribe. There's no chosen people here. These records are for everybody, and the gospel is to be spread so widely. With this scripture, this writing, “by small and simple things are great things brought to pass; and small means in many instances doth confound the wise.” The great mysteries have the simple answers. He says in verse 7: “By very small means the Lord doth confound the wise and bringeth about the salvation of many souls.” You notice that writing is the greatest of inventions, without any doubt, and yet it's the simplest. But notice the others, such as recording or the telephone. They are awfully simple. The principles are absolutely basic; a child can understand them once they are made clear. If you list all the Nobel Prizes, every one is given for something supremely simple that everybody has overlooked. It turns out to be the same way almost inevitably, unless you get into economics. Then they don't deserve the prize because their prophecy is all fouled up anyway. They introduced economics later on, you know, but I'm talking about the prize in physics, etc. They are simple. The principle of the computer is shockingly simple; it's just the one-two. That's all it is. Once they realize that, things really begin to work. As Arthur Clarke says, writing is the only means we have of bridging time. Writing will bridge time and bring all things together. No matter when a thing is written, we can tell not only what happened and who said what, but the subtlest nuances of feeling, the subtlest thoughts of people can be conveyed for untold thousands of years. You'll find it all in Homer, for example. You can just live it all over again. You can't do that with any other media at all. You can record things, but you have to have expensive and special means of reproducing them then. But with anything that will scratch on anything else, you have writing. So things have come down to us. This is all communication; he is talking about communication.

“These things should be preserved; for behold, they have enlarged the memory of this people.” Their purpose is to overcome time; they are time binding. Years ago everybody was all excited about man as the “time binding animal.” We can bind time together. Now we talk of time in a different way though. Were it not for these records, you wouldn't have had the case of Ammon and his brethren, for example. The Lamanites learned of “the incorrect traditions of their fathers; yea, these records and their words brought them unto repentance.” So the records have great value, but, of course, you have to have the interpreter there, too. You have to have the spirit, too. When the Lord explained the scriptures to the apostles, then their eyes were opened, they began to understand things, and their breasts burned within them, because he was there to explain them. We find out later in the Book of Mormon, he turns over the pages and sees that they have every book here. When he isn't here you can read it, so the Christians and the Jews had the Bible after [the Savior's ministry], but they never could agree on it. It was never clear to them after that was withdrawn.

Verse 10: “And who knoweth but what they will be the means of bringing many thousands of them . . . to the knowledge of their Redeemer? Now these mysteries are not yet fully made known unto me; therefore I shall forbear.” He would say with Newton, “I don't make up hypotheses.” He says, there's something great behind them; we've got to keep them. While I can't explain, I don't invent various possible explanations, although that's what science is supposed to do and has been doing ever since. But they are preserved for a wise purpose. Notice that they are timeless; they are straight and correct. They don't

deviate to one side of the track or the other. And they are “one eternal round.” That means there’s no point at which you can say the record begins, or a point at which it ends. It’s an eternal round. Eternal doesn’t mean it just goes ‘round and ‘round and ‘round forever. But the circle is never completed; it never has a beginning or an end. It’s an eternal rounding. This conveys two different ideas. The one is that it hews to the mark, not moving to the one side or the other. It’s the best to keep accuracy. The other is that it doesn’t begin or end but just goes on forever in an eternal course. Then he gives the basic promise. They are entrusted to you and are to be kept sacred for a wise purpose for future generations. That’s their purpose. It’s always with this provision, that they will be taken away [if they don’t keep the commandments]. You are still on probation, he says. This is important here. They were taken away later. But if you behave yourself no power on earth or in hell can take them from you.

Then he gives this test case. He has already given us an example. Verse 18: “For he promised unto them that he would preserve these things for a wise purpose in him, that he might show forth his power unto future generations.” He has already done it. He has already fulfilled it to the Lamanites to bring them to a knowledge of the truth. He has shown forth his power with them, and he will also show his power in the future. Just as he has shown it in the case of the Lamanites, he will do it again. So that’s what he says. We are bridging time; we are putting it all together here. Verse 20: “Therefore I command you, my son Helaman . . . that ye be diligent in keeping the commandments of God as they are written.” You are responsible for that. This is what the living prophets go by.

Verse 21: “And now, I will speak unto you concerning those twenty-four plates.” These are the Jaredites. This is a very important thing, because the Jaredite history is a particularly morbid one, as you know. We get to that next time. “. . . that the mysteries and the works of darkness, and their secret works, or the secret works of those people who have been destroyed [notice this is all bad news], may be made manifest unto this people: [I want them to know all this bad news] yea, all their murders, and robbings, and their plunderings, and all their wickedness and abominations, may be made manifest unto this people; yea, and that ye preserve these interpreters.” Well, why is the Book of Mormon so negative? “For behold, the Lord saw that his people began to work in darkness [they have to be warned, he says, and it is going to begin again and again], yea, work secret murders and abominations.” He is talking about the Nephites and the Lamanites here. When they began to become wicked he gave them this Jaredite record as a warning.

Verse 23: “I will prepare unto my servant Gazelem, a stone, which shall shine forth in darkness unto light.” That’s a person he is talking about; Gazelem is not the stone. His servant Gazelem has the stone; he is preparing it for him. Incidentally, that word *Gazelem* is a very interesting one. It’s an Aramaic word, and it has definitely to do with the shining stone. “. . . yea, their secret works, their works of darkness, and their wickedness and abominations.” Now that’s what the story is going to be. That’s not very nice. These interpreters were prepared for that reason, the whole idea being this horrible story I’m telling you that “except they repent I will destroy them from off the face of the earth; and I will bring to light all their secrets [just as I did of the Jaredites] and abominations, unto every nation that shall hereafter possess the land.” All this will be highly relevant, in other words. Now the next verse is going to be highly relevant to future generations, whoever receives it here.

Verse 26: “And now, my son, we see that they did not repent; therefore they have been destroyed. . . . I command you that ye retain all their oaths.” You tell what they did but

not how they did it. This is a very important thing here. Do not give the formula. Warn them against harmful, mind altering substances, but don't give them the formula. Don't tell them how to make the stuff. Tell them to stay away from crack, but don't tell them how to make crack, in other words. That's what he is telling them here. Warn them about these things without giving them the secret oaths and combinations. "Yea, and all their signs and their wonders ye shall keep from this people, that they know them not, lest peradventure they should fall into darkness also and be destroyed." Now that's a real possibility. But in the next verse we get warning and assurance. "For behold, there is a curse upon all this land, that destruction shall come upon all those workers of darkness [no matter which generation or dispensation they come in], according to the power of God, when they are fully ripe; therefore [now this is what the Lord wants] I desire that this people might not be destroyed." That's why I'm giving this, so they won't be destroyed. My intention is this. Well, if God desires he can have anything he wants; then we are safe. Oh no, it's consoling, but it is also alarming. Remember, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!" (Luke 13:34). And the Lord said that just before he said, there is the temple and not one stone is going to be left upon another. Why not? I wanted to save them, he said. God wanted to save them, but they didn't want to be saved. He is not going to force their free agency, so they brought destruction on themselves.

It's the same theme that we have here. He said, "I desire that this people might not be destroyed." This is grim, but they have their agency. I desire it but you don't desire it; you'll see what's going to happen then. "Only their wickedness and their murders and their abominations shall ye make known unto them [which are relevant to us, but not how they did it], . . . and ye shall also teach them that these people were destroyed on account of their wickedness and abominations and their murders." So there is no guarantee here one way or the other, and there shouldn't be, of course. They murdered all the prophets. And here goes that curse again. Notice that this record is very negative. It's a horrendous record, isn't it?

Verse 31: "Yea, and cursed be the land forever and ever unto those workers of darkness and secret combinations [well, we certainly have them], even unto destruction, except they repent before they are fully ripe." Well, that's the promise on the promised land. "And now, my son, remember the words which I have spoken unto you; trust not those secret plans unto this people [don't start giving them any ideas—what you will teach them is this]; . . . teach them to humble themselves and to be meek and lowly in heart; teach them to withstand every temptation of the devil, with their faith on the Lord Jesus Christ." And how does the devil tempt? You can have anything in this world for money. You must withstand every temptation here. "Teach them to never be weary of good works, but to be meek and lowly in heart."

Why does he keep hitting that all the time? Why doesn't he talk about teaching them to be hard workers, to save money, to plan their careers, to dress for success, and to be independent? That's never mentioned in the Book of Mormon. It always cuts you down, whether it's Mosiah, or Benjamin, or Alma, or anybody else talking. These are the things we are after. These three verses here show that they apply to people in a very tight situation. It's not an easy-going situation. We are being tested. This is the final getting ready for the long pull now, and the test is a very severe one. A person is really in a very powerless condition, a tight spot here. It's a serious situation when you have to remember this all the time.

Verse 35: “O, remember, my son, and learn wisdom in thy youth; yea, learn in thy youth to keep the commandments of God. Yea, and cry unto God for all thy support; yea, let all thy doings be unto the Lord, and whithersoever thou goest let it be in the Lord; yea, let all thy thoughts be directed unto the Lord; yea, let the affections of thy heart be placed upon the Lord forever.” That’s the only way you can keep clear of it. Satan is abroad as a ravaging lion. His commission is to tempt and try us, and he is very skillful at it. “Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good; yea, when thou liest down at night lie down unto the Lord, that he may watch over you in your sleep; and when thou risest in the morning let thy heart be full of thanks unto God; and if ye do these things, ye shall be lifted up at the last day.”

Well, that’s the objective—not the happy life here. This is rather strict and severe, isn’t it? According to this we need help, we need it urgently, and we need it all the time. It’s rather severe, but he says you are going to rejoice if you do this. Then he says, I’ll tell you about the Liahona. That’s a type of this sort of thing. The Liahona isn’t magic. Magic is the thing that *Sophists work*. If you have the magic robe, or the book, or the staff, or the arrow, or the ring, anybody who gets it has power. There’s a great series of legends about Solomon and his magic implements that were stolen. The demons can get it. If they have it they have the power. This is the theme of *Star Wars* and things like that. In other words the power lies in the gadget itself, which is the very opposite of this. The Liahona did work for them only according to their faith in God. If they had faith that God could cause the spindles to point, they would point, but they didn’t point by themselves. They weren’t a magical gadget that you had to get. With a magic ring the wicked wizard tries to get the witch. Or the Wicked Witch of the West tries to get the ruby slippers so that she can get around. They will work for her just as well as anybody else because that’s magic. But these don’t work; these haven’t been working. The Liahona hasn’t worked for years, and it is not working anymore. It’s not functioning anymore, and neither is the Urim and Thummim they have. These things work when we need them to work, and they always work by faith, which is the opposite of magic, that somebody else is making them go. God could cause them to point, And, of course, the name *Liahona* is very interesting, “to God is the direction, to God is the leading.” It’s *recognition, praise, and direction*. It means all those things.

Since the 1940s a number of interesting studies have been written. Forty years ago I wrote a long article in a journal on the ancient divination arrows, belomancy. When the Arabs would travel in the desert, they would take two arrows with them. One was the arrow that said “go,” and the other was the arrow that said “stop.” The chief would balance them on his finger, and they would point the way they should go. They were kept in a special box or a special leather case. Sometimes the divination was by throwing, but there was always writing on them. The writing on the go arrow, “Follow this one; you should go.” The other one said, “Follow this one; you should stop.” Another one said, “Wait for later instructions.” But the thing is that they carried these arrows with them from the earliest times. They were called the *sahm*, and they would direct you in the way you were supposed to go. *Wasm* was the mark on the arrow, which is very important. I’ve written quite a number of articles on arrows, but we don’t want to linger with the Liahona. What they are following is a very ancient institution. He said it was a simple thing. It was so simple and worked so easily that they didn’t pay any attention to it. It wasn’t a great miraculous thing to impress you, because all the Arabs used them. It worked for them. The fact is that we become indifferent to the miraculous. We become indifferent to the miraculous nature of everything. Everything around us is a miracle if you try to explain it. Everything about you will defy analysis. Nobody has the slightest idea what the particles

are or anything else. He says, because they work for us, we take it for granted. We use our crude Euclidian geometry, and that answers everything. We don't realize that it's not the ultimate answer. So it made them slothful. They forgot to exercise their faith because the machine [worked] for them. When they forgot to exercise faith, it didn't work anymore. That's the point. They were not impressed by it, but then when their faith ceased the director ceased and they wandered around and got nowhere.

We have parallel things. "I would that ye should understand that these things are not without a shadow." Probably referring to radar there, isn't he? No, he is not referring to radar, but he is referring to other things. He says the words that direct are the same thing. See, we are missing the benefit of our own possessions today. We possess all sorts of skills and possibilities. Everything is out there. All the hints are around. Everything is there ready to be used if we only had the brains and inspiration to use them. But we are missing the benefit of our own best possessions here. It (the Liahona) would have led them in a straight course to the promised land. As it was they had to wander for years. Remember, eight years in the wilderness. Isn't there a type in this, the Liahona? Lehi and his family were in deadly danger. They needed to be guided. When they neglected it they suffered. It's the same way with the words of Christ. You can follow them, and they will lead you to the promised land, "... beyond this vale of sorrow into a far better land of promise." Notice that he is using figures of speech. This is a type; this is an image. It will take you out of the sand. Remember, they wandered in the Rub al Khali, the worst desert in the world. You are directed by the words of Christ. It doesn't have to be the pointer or the radar. It can be the words from somebody in a Piper Cub, either sighting artillery or directing a patrol or something like that. You can follow words, but you must have trust and faith.

Verse 46: "The way is prepared, and if we will look we may live forever." Well, we really don't look. We bang the door shut and then we say there is nothing there. We cut the wires and we complain that we are not getting any revelation; we are not getting any communication. Of course, if we're not going to do anything else because we don't get communication, why shouldn't we cut the wires?

Now he talks to his second son, Shiblon. The eldest son, Helaman, is charged with the records. They come next to Shiblon, and they finally come to Helaman's son rather than to Corianton, who is rather a wild kid at this time. There's a definite portrait here of him. This is interesting: "And if we will look we may live forever." Remember, this is 1830. He might have said, "If you look you will see all sorts of amazing things that you never even dreamed of." Of course, he was right. At that time they were thought to be absolutely impossible.

A very good friend of mine in San Francisco was a colonel in the war. He was [an aide] of the Adjutant General. The Germans started mowing us down with jet planes. They had jet planes all along the road between Augsburg and Munich. I drove along there and could see these little jets. They were hidden in the woods back there. When they announced that the Germans had a plane that could fly without propellers, they had all the best experts on aeronautics and everything else come and testify. Jimmy Doolittle testified too in the court. They said, "Look at this. All these experts testify that the Germans cannot have a plane that flies without a propeller. Jimmy Doolittle said, "There are five hundred graves in France that tell me they do have planes that fly without propellers." Five hundred people had been shot down. They just couldn't believe it. Even the experts couldn't

believe it as late as 1945, when they came out. If they had only known what an edge they had.

Then you notice that this Shiblón is something of a prig. He is very conscientious. He was good on his mission, etc. Alma 38: 7: “But behold, the Lord in his great mercy sent his angel to declare unto me that I must stop the work of destruction among his people [with himself and his people too]; yea, and I have seen an angel face to face.” So he testifies to his son Shiblón the same thing, but he gives him only a short blessing, just this short chapter 38. It’s mostly a warning against being too darn self-righteous. So you get the picture of him. He’s a good man here—conscientious, self-righteous, approved. It turns out that he did take the advice, as we read in chapter 63, and he was entrusted with the records after the death of Helaman. But he [Alma] says things like this in verse 11. “See that ye are not lifted up unto pride; yea, see that ye do not boast in your own wisdom, nor of your much strength.” He doesn’t say that to the others. “Use boldness, but not overbearance [it’s all right to be bold, but don’t be overbearing]; and also see that ye bridle all your passions, that ye may be filled with love. . . . Do not say: O God, I thank thee that we are better than our brethren; but rather say, O Lord, forgive my unworthiness.” See he is telling this guy to be humbler than he is. Don’t say that you are holier than your brethren, but say rather “forgive my unworthiness, and remember my brethren in mercy—yea, acknowledge your unworthiness before God at all times.”

His last word to him is “acknowledge your unworthiness before God,” and Shiblón evidently took his advice. There are self-righteous men like that. We’re told that Joseph Smith never made Hyrum an apostle. He never became an apostle because he was too inflexible. He was too righteous was the reason that Joseph gave for it. You had to have a more forgiving nature, something like Matthew Cowley. In this short blessing you get a good picture of Shiblón here, and an even better picture of Corianton.

He [Alma] has a sneaking love for Corianton because he had misbehaved himself. He was wild. Notice, “Have ye not observed the steadiness of thy brother, his faithfulness, and his diligence in keeping the commandments of God?” So he hasn’t been too reliable. Later on he was very independent. He opened a line of ships carrying goods to the north to make a lot of money in a hurry when there was lots of expansion up to the north and east. He took stuff on barges and came back for more, etc. In chapter 63 you read what Shiblón did later and what Corianton did later. Notice, “Thou didst go on unto boasting in thy strength and thy wisdom. [He was guilty of that, and worse than that] . . . for thou didst forsake the ministry, and did go over into the land of Siron among the borders of the Lamanites, after the harlot Isabel.”

Well, couldn’t he misbehave himself at home? Why did he have to do this? This is a very enlightening aspect of the thing. This was the situation: One of the aspects of ancient American religion that archaeology is bringing increasingly to the fore is the importance of the Mother Goddess and her ritual *hierodules* in Central America. The Book of Mormon brands all non-Nephite cults as idolatry and does not go on to describe them. Nephi says he does not want to run the risk of conveying the details of such enticing abominations to posterity. But there is one broad hint. When Alma’s youngest son wanted to misbehave with the harlot Isabel, he had to go into another country, or into the land Siron, to do it. Isabel was actually the name of the Patroness of Harlots for all of Palestine at the time. (Not Jezebel—that was the queen who misbehaved). If an Israelite wanted to indulge in unbridled license he would go over to the Phoenicians. The main cult of the Phoenician goddess was in Cyprus. She was the lady Isabel, and her cult was

given to great licentiousness. Remembering that this took place in a Mulekite setting, we have more than immoral behavior here—Corianton could have misbehaved anywhere. But we are also told that the lady Isabel had a large following. Others went over to join in the rites which Alma declared to be “most abominable above all sins” (Alma 39:5).

“Yes, she did steal away the hearts of many.” She had a cult following, this lady Isabel. No jealousy or anything like that. She wasn’t Corianton’s lady friend or anything. She stole away the hearts, and you have to go abroad to do it. This is the old cult, and, of course, the name *Isabel* is a dead giveaway. You don’t find her in the Bible, but you do find her in the inscriptions, especially the inscriptions from Cyprus. It was Isabel that had this cult that went on. Others went to join the rites which he declared to be most abominable. There’s quite a study that’s been made on this sort of thing. You’ll find it in *Chantipei de la Saussaye*. So this is another mark of authenticity that no one could ever have guessed. “Yea, she did steal away the hearts of many.”

Verse 5: “Know ye not, my son, that these things are an abomination in the sight of the Lord.” What is he talking about? He is talking about unbridled sex; it’s very clear what this verse 5 is talking about. This is the hierodule Mother, the great cult of the Classic Period in Central America, as well as in the Ancient World among both the Philistines and the Phoenicians. This is next to murder; once you start on this path look out! “. . . yea, most abominable above all sins save it be the shedding of innocent blood or denying the Holy Ghost.” This is a number one crime. This is not a thing that you do just because nature gives motivation for it. How far do you go is the point. Remember that appetites, desires, and passions are not to be denied, but they must be kept within the bounds the Lord has set. This is boundless. This is when you let yourself go—MTV sort of stuff. Verse 6: “If ye deny the Holy Ghost when it once has had place in you, . . . this is a sin which is unpardonable.” This tells why that is so.

This verse 9 is very interesting. Many people misunderstand this “cross yourself” as make the sign of the cross on yourself. “Oh, remember, and take it upon you, and cross yourself in these things.” Well, “to cross” means “to check” a thing. Remember we have the song “A poor wayfaring man of grief did often cross me on my way.” When I was going my way untroubled, this poor wayfaring man drew my attention, like the good Samaritan on the road to Jericho. So he had to change his course and stop and consider. In the end he had to make a great sacrifice. He crossed him on his way. That means to stop you or to check you on your way and make you consider where you are going and what you are doing. So that’s why you do—you cross yourself. You stop yourself dead still and say, “What am I doing here; this has got to stop and stop right now.” He tells his son, don’t commit one more sin like that whatever you do—it’s very dangerous. So “cross yourself in all these things.”

Verse 11: “Suffer not yourself to be led away by any vain or foolish things; [again he says] suffer not the devil to lead away your heart again after those wicked harlots.” That’s what he is talking about. It’s not just the lady Isabel, but it’s the whole cult going on there at Siron. They call it Siron, a very interesting name, too. “Command thy children to do good, lest they lead away the hearts of many people to destruction.” They are an example for others. Then we get this old routine. “Seek not after riches nor the vain things of this world; for behold, you cannot carry them with you.” But he did later on. He must have gotten quite rich in his shipping business. He was an important person.

Verse 17: "And now I will ease your mind somewhat on this subject." Time is not the issue here. You ask why it should be known so long before the Lord comes. Well, he is not coming yet. When he comes we will start talking about that. We'll cross that bridge when we get to it. Why are we bothering so long before? Today we say, "Why do we bother so long after?" He says it doesn't make any difference. It's all the same show; it's all the same party. "Is it not as easy at this time for the Lord to send his angel to declare these glad tidings?" Long before or long after it is just as easy. It's all one story. It's just as easy then or after this time. Before this time is what Corianton is worrying about. After this time is what worries people today. Above all your mind is worrying about this one problem that people use as an excuse. The hardest thing to take is the resurrection. What about the resurrection? You say there is no resurrection until after the coming of Christ. Why would that be? Well, he brings to pass the resurrection. Then it talks about the first resurrection, etc. Notice it's the idea of time. Don't worry about time. Verse 5: "Now whether there shall be one time, or a second time, or a third time, that men shall come forth from the dead, it mattereth not." Notice verse 8 where he says, "For all do not die at once, and this mattereth not; all is as one day with God, and time only is measured unto men."

So he is right in there with Stephen Hawking, isn't he, saying that time is just our fiction that we go by. But for us it is necessary; it's the essence of our existence. But only for us; it's not going to be in the next world at all. When you are dealing with resurrection you are on another level, he says. You are in a different league. Don't let time worry you about these things. The value of rising in the first resurrection is the quality of the resurrection, the greater glory that goes with it, and not the time. In verses 18, 19, and 20 he makes this very clear about the time. Verse 18: "Behold, I say unto you, Nay; but it meaneth the reuniting of the soul with body of those from the days of Adam down to the resurrection of Christ [that will be one resurrection]. Now, whether the souls and the bodies . . . shall all be reunited at once, the wicked as well as the righteous, I do not say [he says they didn't all die at once, so I won't say when it will be] let it suffice, that I say that they all come forth [forget about the time, he says, whether they shall be all at once]; or in other words, their resurrection cometh to pass before the resurrection of those who die after the resurrection of Christ. Now, my son, I do not say that their resurrection cometh at the resurrection of Christ; but behold, I give it as my opinion, that the souls and the bodies are reunited, of the righteous, at the resurrection of Christ."

Well, you can read this and analyze it here. There is a space between the two. Raymond Moody caused quite a thing a few years ago writing his books about it. He came and spoke here. My wife and I had a very pleasant afternoon with him and his wife. We discussed all these things, because both she and I have had afterlife experiences that were very vivid and clinically very well attested. So we compared notes, etc. He didn't want any sensationalism. At that time his books caused a great sensation. They wanted him to go on programs, to give TV series, and make movies. He refused all offers and went back to his medical practice. He said he satisfied himself on what he wanted to know. These people did go and did have these experiences, etc.

Verse 23 is the definition of the resurrection. "Every limb and joint shall be restored to its body [a good Egyptian formula]; yea, even a hair of the head shall not be lost [won't you have too much hair then? No] but all things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame." So you sure won't recognize me when we get back there. Their proper and perfect frame is the way we should be, proper stature. "And then shall the righteous shine forth in the kingdom of God," and the others be cast out to "drink the dregs of the bitter cup." But that time between death and the resurrection is the time that interests us. This is the

time that is reported in Moody's books, etc. This is a time for the righteous; it's a state of happiness. They are looking forward to resurrection; it's a state of rest. But you notice it's not a state of happy inactivity, as it tell us in verse 12.

Look at verse 10: "God knoweth all the times which are appointed unto man." Time is for us. It's appointed for us, and God knows those times. Don't worry. Here's what he wanted to know. Verse 11: "Now, concerning the state of the soul between death and the resurrection, . . . the spirits of all men, as soon as they are departed from the mortal body, yea, the spirits of all men, whether they be good or evil, are taken home to that God who gave them life." That's wonderful for [some] of them, but you are looking forward to the judgment, it's not going to be too happy a time. "The spirits of those who are righteous are received into a state of happiness, which is called paradise, a state of rest, a state of peace, where they shall rest." Not from all their happy activities. Remember, when people go over there they find their relatives very busy doing this and that? It's a state of rest from what? Rest from troubles, rest from care, rest from sorrow. You don't have any of that. That's what you rest from. But as far as activity is concerned, there can be plenty of that without the care, and sorrow, and trouble. But the wicked have an awful time. They have time to think it over, in other words. They are not going to like that at all. "There shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." That's not just a poetic expression at all. It's a good psychological expression. They are grinding their teeth in utter futility. If I had only done that. Why was I such a damn fool? The utter frustration! This is not the happy time it should be, but it is too late. Why did I blow it? That's the time that you're angry with yourself. You weep and wail and gnash your teeth, not at anybody but yourself. Then shall the righteous shine.

He continues to Corianton about the restoration—all things will be restored. Men will be judged according to their works and the desires of their hearts. Your works may include an awful lot of blundering. You may mess up everything, but on what grounds can you be safely judged? On the desire of your heart, not what you say you intend to do. You may say, "I did no wrong. I wanted to do the right thing." That isn't enough. The real desire of your heart is what you will be judged by. You never do as well as you expect to do. You muff and blunder everything. That's our nature. We make mistakes. As Voltaire said, "We are made to blunder." Every morning Memnon makes a solemn resolution that he will never make a mistake that day. Then all he does all day long is make a lot of mistakes. That's the way we do. The next morning he gets up and makes a solemn resolution, today I'm not going to make any mistakes. Every morning I make my solemn resolutions, and all I do is make dang fool mistakes all day long [paraphrased]. So that's the way we are. But you are not going to be judged by your works, except in the light of what the desire of your heart really was.

Verse 4: ". . . raised to endless happiness to inherit the kingdom of God, or to endless misery to inherit the kingdom of the devil." This is how fair it is. You will get exactly what you want, according to your desires for good or your desires for evil. Everybody gets what he wants. What could be more fair? For example, today we have Satanism, where people deliberately choose what they know is evil. If they choose that, they can have it. God is not going to hold it from them, because you judge yourself. If they have repented of their sins, they are redeemed of the Lord; "yea, these are they that are taken out, that are delivered, . . . for behold, they are their own judges whether to do good or do evil," it says in verse 7. They have complete agency. In the next world we guarantee maximum satisfaction; you will get exactly what you want. What you want and what pleases you may be horrendously shocking to somebody else, but if that's what you want you'll have

it. You dig yourself in deeper and deeper. Here is the psychological pretext that Corianton had been using. Alma said, "And now behold, my son, do not risk one more offense against your God upon those points of doctrine, which ye have hitherto risked to commit sin." He used the points of doctrine for a pretext, as many people do. I get them all the time. A confusion of doctrine, something that isn't clear, they take as an excuse for not committing themselves, for not resolving to do right, because I don't know yet about this, that, and the other. When people become hypercritical of doctrine, you know they are misbehaving. I've done it myself.

"Behold, I say unto you, wickedness never was happiness." Why has Corianton been tempted here? Don't be surprised. "All men that are in a state of nature, or I would say, in a carnal state, are in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity; they are without God in the world, . . . therefore, they are in a state contrary to the nature of happiness." The libertine is not happy; nothing is truer than that. He ends with this strong admonition to him. You will move into the house you have built for yourself. Verse 13: "Restoration is to bring back again evil for evil, or carnal for carnal." You've built the house, and you will move into it. That's what you wanted, so you are going to have it. There's not going to be any cruelty. Nobody is going to be forced to go to a world [where he doesn't belong]. If he went to the highest heaven it would be hell to him; he wouldn't know what anybody was talking about and wouldn't understand anything. It's like that nightmare you have when you find yourself in a class that is way ahead of you, and suddenly find that you have to have a test. You haven't been going, you don't know anything, and it scares the daylight out of you. It's the same thing. If you went to the wrong kingdom or the wrong society hereafter where you didn't belong, you would be the unhappiest person there. You want to go where you belong. That's your condemnation. If those are your people, all right; that's it. So he says this here. This is a surprising thing. "Therefore, my son, see that you are merciful unto your brethren; deal justly, judge righteously, and do good continually." This is the difference, you see.