

TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

HUGH NIBLEY

Semester 1, Lecture 28
Mosiah 1–2
King Benjamin’s Speech

What we have today is a very good lesson on the subject [of fear and trembling], so let’s get started here. Now we have that most marvelous book of Mosiah. We can’t spend any more time talking about the setup of the meeting, the protocol etc., which is so thoroughly accurate. I was going to bring a book of as many as eight articles of mine on the subject of the great assembly, the national assembly, in ancient times. It’s loaded with evidence of all kinds, but the time is far spent. But notice certain things. Every ancient people held their yearly assembly, they held it in the new year, and the king presided. When they had the new king, it was the New Age, and they brought their first-fruits and all the rest. This was not only in Israel, but in at least every other major ancient civilization. Notice he brings them together; we are in the first chapter here. He has to send out the proclamation; that’s the *heror*. When you get the proclamation, you must come or be banished from the kingdom for three [years]. Then you have to go on to give the people the name. It’s very important on this occasion to have a new name because he says later on, “This day has he spiritually begotten you.” This is the *genethlia*, the *natale*, the day of birth. Not only nature is born anew, but all things are born anew. That’s why sometimes it’s held in the spring equinox. (I can talk faster than this, and I may have to because we have to cover a lot of ground. Be sure you get everything down. No, watch your Book of Mormon very closely here.) In Mosiah 1 he is going to give them a new name and a new identity. See, every time you get a new life or a new advancement, a new step or initiation, you get a new identity, a new persona. When a person is born he gets christened. He is not christened until he joins the church. This is the theory in the Christian world. With us it used to be always on the eighth day, circumcision, etc. You have a new name, and when you get married you get another new name. If you get any office, you also get another new name. Then at your funeral you get another identity, etc. They go through the same ritual every time. And, of course, when you reach maturity there’s a very important thing—the rites of initiation that come with maturity. In the Christian churches it’s when you are confirmed, around the age of fifteen. In all primitive tribes and [other societies] when a person becomes mature—reaches manhood or womanhood—there is that rite. Then they get a new name; they are identified with another group entirely. Boys are no longer with the women, etc. They now belong to a man’s *phratry*. These are the rites of puberty. So each time you get a new name, a new identity, a new appearance, new marks, and a new title or degree.

Then he hands over the national treasures to his successor. They always have the national treasures. For example, in Japan the sword and the mirror. In the book here it’s the scepter. In the national treasures you will often find the mace and the ball, or the *mekht* in Egypt, or the mirror and sword, or the jewel and the *gnobis*. There are a certain three or four things. The Hopis still have a very sacred, secret box that they call the *tipony* that keeps their most secret things—the records of their wandering and certain very valuable objects. Just as in the Ark of Covenant were kept not only the rolls but the *lûlâb*, the *hyssop* and various very important things as symbols of the time when they were in the

desert. There was a sample of the manna. All these national treasures were handed over. They had their *tipony* here, their national treasure. It included the plates of brass, the sword of Laban, and the ball or director of the Liahona. The ball or director isn't working anymore. That's not the point; it's a national treasure now. But he tells them in verse 17: "Therefore, as they were unfaithful they did not prosper nor progress in their journey." It didn't work by magic; it worked by faith. This still applies to the Book of Mormon today. It's the book, the plates themselves. If you are faithful you will prosper on your journey, and if you are not you will be smitten with sore afflictions.

I told you last time about my home teacher, Brother Amosa, a giant Samoan whose father is a chief and just arrived here. I said, "How are things going in the Church there?"

"Not so well; people are indifferent. We need another 1966." In 1966 there was a great typhoon that hit them. After that the people in the Church were very active and faithful. Now they have slowed down again, as native people do and as we do. So they need another shakeup. As he says here, "Therefore they were smitten with famine and sore afflictions, to stir them up in remembrance of their duty."

This is the new king putting out the proclamation because the old king is usually dead before this happens. The new king is the successor. Now we come to a great nation holding its national celebration. They are celebrating their brilliant victories and their long peace. Thanks to King Benjamin there is a great upbeat time of looking back with pride and achievement. Oh, don't fool yourself; watch what happens here. They gather at the temple; we saw that. Remember, they always have a census when they come in because you must be one of the *incisi*. You must register your name. This was in Israel, too. You must register your name when you go up to the temple. They didn't bother to do it because there were so many. They would take their time with it. They brought their firstlings; it was the new year all right. Notice in chapter 2, verse 4, what keeps a society great. It is having "just men to be their teachers, and also a just man to be their king, who had established peace in the land . . . and filled with love towards God and all men." This is your great society, you might say, but you see nothing about power and gain, about the military might and wealth of the nation. Wealth is no measure of its greatness, and military might isn't either. If so, the Assyrians and Genghis Khan's society would be the greatest culture of all time. Just men, just peace, and love toward all men [are the important things].

So they came to the temple and camped around according to the old custom, as we know from the *Temple Scroll* now. It was discovered in the 1950s and first published in 1976. [They camped] according to their families—"every family being separate one from another," as they had to. They ate with their backs to each other, in fact. Their tents faced the door of the temple, and he had a tower erected. That's a novelty we didn't know about at all until we get Nathan the Babylonian. I may as well put some of those things from Nathan down here. He was Nathan the Babylonian, Nathan ha-Babli. That means "the man of Babel." We talked about the two schools, the seats on either side. They were his counselors. They could give the speech instead of him. He invites them by courtesy to do so. They invite each other to do so, and it comes back to the king again. Then he gives a speech. First, he reads the law. He gives the sermon of the day. But then he gives a *darash* [explanation, commentary]. He doesn't read it, but he teaches from it. He lays down the new law, the policy of his administration. There was the School of Sura and the School of Pumbeditha. The first school, the more important one, was back in Palestine. That was the

School of Jamnia, the one that Johanan Ben Zakkai established when they broke with the temple. They didn't like the temple at all.

Then he starts his speech to them. These are the words; they are going to quote his speech to us with the people all around the temple. He began to speak from the tower. The people couldn't all [hear] it; the words were written and sent forth. We actually have circulars of the king's speech that was circulated by the king of Persia in distant provinces of the empire. Copies of a speech from the time of Darius have been picked up. So if you couldn't attend the king's speech, he would have it copied and circulated in the empire, as we have it here. Verse 9: "And these are the words which he spake and caused to be written." And you notice how it begins: "Open your ears that ye may hear." This is a *silentium*. No matter what the culture was, they always used the Roman word—whether it was the Byzantine court and then it went into the Russian court when the Russians took over the Byzantine Empire. In East or West, everywhere they used this word *silentium* because everybody had to be absolutely silent and give ear. In Israel it's called the *shem*, *listen*. Notice: "Open your ears that ye may hear, and your hearts that ye may understand, and your minds that the mysteries of God may be unfolded to your view." It's a solemn and awesome occasion. There is going to be a dramatization here that will set forth the basic principles. They are going to be in contact with the other world. This is a very important thing. It's very interesting that what the Romans call *mactus*, the Egyptians have a word just like it. That's when the *mundus* is open, the *orcus mundi*. Just as in all Hopi celebrations, there is in the center of the ring the *canistra*. There's a hole, the *sipapu*, which opens up to the Spirit World. It's only opened up on this day. It's the same thing here. You notice what the formula is. As I said before, "The Lord is in his holy temple; everybody hush." That's a thing that has been taken up by the churches. When you are all together then the Lord enters, as the king enters on the tower, and everybody has to hush then. That's the *silentium* here, "The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him." So they have come to hear the mysteries of God.

First of all he tells them, Don't be afraid of me; I'm just a man [paraphrased]. This is a spooky occasion. Remember, when you leave this great celebration in Israel, according to the law of Moses, everyone must eat the last meal with his sandals on his feet, his staff in his hand, and wearing his robe. They are going to be ready for a quick getaway. Before dawn they must leave the site and leave no food there. They must have eaten everything, and no one must look back when they leave. This is very important. The Spirit is there and you are going to leave. It's a very holy and sacred occasion; something very powerful is happening there, which the Romans called *mactus*. He says, Don't be afraid of me. This is nothing spooky; I'm just a man [paraphrased]. This is important to know. Verse 10: "I have not commanded you to come up hither that ye should fear me, or that ye should think that I of myself am more than a mortal man." This is the occasion on which the king would assert his divinity; he would be hailed as a God. "My name is Ozymandias, king of kings: Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!" That name *Ozymandias* comes from *weser maat Ra*, which was the name of Senwsret III who is supposed to be the same as Sheshonk and contemporary with Abraham. That's supposed to have been the Pharaoh of Abraham. These things all run together anyway.

I'm just a man like yourselves, he says. Notice in verse 11 that he has his authority from three sources: "I have been chosen by this people, and consecrated by my father." He has it in the patriarchal line; he has been consecrated by his father. But he has been chosen first of all. Notice that all the kings, including Nephi, had to be chosen by the people. He

was chosen by the people, and that's what the people come for—to acclaim the king. We have the psalms of David that describe various aspects of this situation. The climax of the meeting is the *acclamatio* when everyone acclaims. That's why you come up. All must acclaim in a single voice. We'll see they do it in a single voice, and you will see how that is possible. That is because of the *hazzān*, the *praecentor*. He waves a flag and says what they are to shout, and then they all shout it together. This is the way they did it everywhere, including Israel. It may seem funny to you that people reply in one voice—"we have seen; we understand; we accept"—using exactly the same formula. It's because they have been told what to say, and they are being led by a choral leader. They shout together that way, and it's very important to have him there. Sometimes the king himself would take that role, as in a Greek play. "I have been chosen by this people, and consecrated by my father, and was suffered by the hand of the Lord that I should be a ruler and a king over this people." That *suffered* is very good; it's the same word that is used with respect to the Constitution—"which I have suffered to be established by the hand of righteous men." That means to *permit* it, to go along with it. It doesn't mean to initiate, as we read in the Doctrine and Covenants 101, verse 77 and following, especially verse 79. And he mentions it in the next verse: "I say unto you that as I have been suffered to spend my days in your service, even up to this time." Not that I have been commanded, but I have been allowed; I have been given that privilege. I have been *suffered* to do it. It may not be God's plan, but he will allow men to do it their way, because it is for their own good.

No one can come empty handed into the presence of the king. And Nathan the Babylonian said, "Everyone brings as costly a gift as he can possibly afford." But Benjamin says, none of that. He mentions it and talks about it, but says, I'm not that kind of a king. This is an important thing. There has been an article come out recently in the *Studi e Materiali*, the Italian journal of ancient religion, a very good journal. The main theme of the king's speech when he speaks in Israel is to formally deny that he is the king. The real king is God; he makes that clear. He says, "You've elected me your king, but the real king is God." It was the theme of the king's speech in Israel, and, sure enough, it's the theme of the king's speech right here in Mosiah's book. He says here: "I . . . have not sought gold nor silver nor any manner of riches of you [you are not supposed to bring up any of that for me at all; that's not what I'm after]; Neither have I suffered that ye should be confined in dungeons [he wouldn't put up with anything like that], nor that ye should make slaves one of another." Where does the king get his power? He is going to tell you where he gets his power. He hasn't suffered it. How does he stop it? Does he lock them up in jail? Does he make slaves of them if they do that? Does he put them in dungeons? No, he says they don't have dungeons; they don't make slaves. Well, how does he do it? Notice in verses 13 and 14 that he does it two ways: First, by teaching, and then by example. "Nor even have I suffered that ye should commit any manner of wickedness, and have taught you that ye should keep the commandments of the Lord, in all things which he hath commanded you [and I have set the example]. And even I, myself, have labored with mine own hands that I might serve you, and that ye should not be laden with taxes, and that there should nothing come upon you which was grievous to be borne." Notice again that *to suffer* is *to tolerate*, *to condone*. The countermeasure was teaching and example, and this is how it worked. Does this mean no taxes at all? Many people love this part of the Book of Mormon about not being laden with taxes. This means not *grievous* taxes, "grievous to be borne." As he says a little later on, "We pray the Lord not to suffer us to be tempted beyond what we can bear." Of course, that's what we talk about in the Lord's prayer, "beyond what we can bear." But the idea that any required contribution of me is painful, that's Scotch. I hear many Scotch jokes in the family about

that. If you have to give anything at all, that really hurts—no matter what it is. Whatever brings me money is good; whatever takes money away from me is bad. That's the simple rule we are following today in our legislation policy and everything else. Anything that makes me rich is good; anything that doesn't make me rich is not good. It's a very simple rule, and it works beautifully with us. We stick to it like glue. But Benjamin said, I have not permitted you to be "laden with taxes grievous to be borne."

Then he says, "I can answer a clear conscience before God this day." This is an important thing, too. To whom is the king answerable? He is not answerable to the people or anyone else. It's just as in the temple. He is answerable to no one but God—as if that wasn't enough. But, of course, the doctrine of majesty in the ancient world is that the king is answerable to no one, with the divine right of kings. George III became king, and that brought on the American Revolution. [James II] became king, and that brought on the revolution of 1688, the Glorious Revolution in England. Or King John brought on [the Magna Carta] at Runnymede in 1215. But Benjamin said he could answer with a clear conscience. The Roman theory of majesty, *maiestas* (Cicero discoursed on it) is that the magistrate—the king, the top man who is a *Rex*—is absolute. Nobody can question him; he can do anything he wants. The king's will is as high as it goes. This has been taught right down into the twentieth century. Just before World War II, this was absolutely believed and taught throughout Europe in the great empires of Russia, Austria, and Germany. The emperor could do no wrong; he was the one and they didn't question him. He had absolute right. Parliamentarianism came in way back in the days of King John and put a check on that, but it was still the thing [in some countries]. Today we have another source that is answerable to no man. Do any of you read much of Malcolm Forbes? Well, if you have money you don't have to answer to anybody. That's the whole point of having money, he says. You are your own boss; nobody can question you. So the worst thing that could happen would be that somebody would threaten to take any of it from you, by legal or any other means. That can't be legal means because we have to be free. As Cain said, now I am free—his property falls into my hands [paraphrased]. That's what made Cain free. This is a very important speech, and we must pay attention to it.

To whom do you make your covenants, in the temple or anywhere else? With God and God alone. We don't swear oaths to each other, even when you get married. Remember, the covenant for both the man and the woman is with God directly and nobody else. As Heber C. Kimball said, "All the others are present only as witnesses." That's why you're not going to be punished if you break them. Nobody is going to send out a posse and run you down because you have broken your covenants or promises. No, that's between you and the Lord entirely. It's made that way in the first place, and he is the only one you will have to answer to. You don't have to answer to other people. They don't know your condition. I don't know yours, and you don't know mine.

Now, he goes on here. God is the employer and the paymaster here. Verse 16: "Because I said unto you that I had spent my days in your service, I do not desire to boast, for I have only been in the service of God." Again you see, I haven't been serving you—I have been serving God actually. If you ask him what he wants done, that's the way he wants you to serve him. He's the employer and the paymaster, but how does he want you to serve him? As Solomon said at the dedication of the temple, What kind of a house can we build for you? The heaven is your throne, and the earth is your footstool. What kind of a temple can we build you? [paraphrased]. Well, we can't at all, of course. It's for our benefit that the work is done, but God wants you to serve him. I heard a good one yesterday: "There are a lot of Latter-day Saints who are eager to serve God on an advisory basis." And that's

as far as it goes. In verse 17 he tells them that applies to them, too. “I tell you these things that ye may learn wisdom; that ye may learn that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings, ye are only in the service of your God.” If you want to serve God, this is how. This is how God wants us to serve him.

It’s so easy to use the word *God*. It’s like the Victual brethren of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in the Baltic. They were a pious band of old holy pirates. They had a great castle called the Umsberg, and they robbed everyone. But their slogan that justified everything they did was “Friends of God, enemies to all men.” How can you be friends of God and enemies to all men? Well, you can use the word *God* so easily and say, “God wills that I chop your head off,” etc. Both sides appeal to God in a war to justify their case. You can’t do that. If you want to serve God, that’s the way you serve him. He wants you to [serve your fellow beings]. There’s nothing you can do for him; he doesn’t need your help. He doesn’t need your assistance. He doesn’t need you to rush into the field and avenge his honor, as we get from Abelard in the Middle Ages, and also Thomas Aquinas. God’s honor has been damaged, and we must avenge it. So we go out and chop people up, etc., to do honor to God.

Verse 18: “Behold, ye have called me your king; and if I, whom ye call your king, do labor to serve you, then ought not ye to labor to serve one another?” This is how I serve; I labor to serve you as your king, not to expand my power or my might. It can’t be, “Me first. I want it all and I want it now.” You labor to serve one another. He is rubbing it in here. “And behold also, if I, whom ye call your king, who has spent his days in your service, and yet has been in the service of God, do merit any thanks from you, O how you ought to thank your heavenly King! [He is the real king—this is the point. This is the theme of the king’s address from the tower. We know this from other cases, too]. I say unto you, my brethren, that if you should render all the thanks and praise which your whole soul has power to possess . . . if ye should serve him who has created you from the beginning, and is preserving you from day to day, . . . I say, if ye should serve him with all your whole souls [twenty-four hours a day] yet ye would be unprofitable servants.” An unprofitable servant is somebody who consumes more than he produces. You can’t possibly produce what you consume. You can’t produce even a blade of grass. No one can pay his own way in this world. If you say you’ve paid your own way, you can’t. He is “even supporting you from one moment to another—I say, if ye should serve him with all your whole souls yet ye would be unprofitable servants.” So much for being independent. You are dependent on him every minute. You should know that and realize that other people are, too. What he wants you to do is to help them. He doesn’t need your help.

Verse 22: “And behold, all that he requires of you is to keep his commandments; and he has promised you that if ye would keep [them] ye should prosper in the land; and he never doth vary from that which he hath said; therefore, if ye do keep his commandments he doth bless you and prosper you.” Then he mentions three points here. Notice this thing is one of the constants. It isn’t just the law of the promised land; it applies everywhere. Here he goes now: “And now, in the first place, he hath created you, and granted unto you your lives, for which ye are indebted unto him.” You have no control over that whatever—this idea of life and death. Then to make somebody work, because if he won’t you threaten his life. He’ll starve if he doesn’t work on those terms, and they did. When Brigham Young told about his first mission, it was terrifying and horrifying what happened. He said that people were dropping dead in the streets. They couldn’t find work because it had been a bad winter. Nobody would give them anything to eat, and they would actually drop dead in the streets in Liverpool, Manchester, and places like that. The

poverty was simply terrible and nobody would lift a finger. At the same time the nobility and the upper classes were rolling in wealth. The wealth of the empire started pouring in then. He [Brigham Young] didn't think that was right. But God has created you and all that, and why should you deny anyone the right even to live unless he works on certain terms. If he is forced, he has no other choice than to take a minimum in order to keep body and soul together, which barely does it. You've got him where you want him, and you take advantage of his necessity to stay alive.

Verse 24: "And secondly, he doth require that ye should do as he hath commanded you." First, he has created you. You should be grateful to him; therefore, in view of that you should do anything he tells you to do because you are his creatures. And thirdly, if you do that he blesses you immediately. You don't have to wait around for sometime later on to see if it happens. This is a very interesting thing. You say, "I've waited and waited and nothing has happened. I've prayed." It's like the old woman who prayed that the hill would be removed from behind her house. It was a nuisance. She got up in the morning and it wasn't moved. She said, "Oh, I knew it wouldn't be moved anyway." That's the kind of faith [some people] have. But really, if you do it [keep the commandments], you immediately get results—no waiting. So much for being independent. "And ye are still indebted unto him, and are, and will be, forever and ever; therefore, of what have ye to boast?" Remember, everybody was happy and bursting with fun. They were feasting and all this sort of thing. Now he really starts pouring cold water on it. He's the "wet blanket" here.

Verse 25: "And now I ask, can ye say aught of yourselves? I answer you, Nay, Ye cannot say that ye are even as much as the dust of the earth; yet ye were created of the dust of the earth; but behold it belongeth to him who created you." Where is the hype here? Where is the national pride? Where is the standing tall? Why does he put them down this way? This is no way to celebrate. He tells us that he is being very realistic about this thing. In the next verse he says, don't think that I am putting you down. "I, whom ye call your king, am no better than ye yourselves are; I am also of the dust. And ye behold that I am old, and am about to yield up this mortal frame to its mother earth. Therefore, as I said unto you that I had served you, walking with a clear conscience before God [you must serve one another], even so I at this time have caused that ye should assemble yourselves together, that I might be found blameless." He had his stewardship, and that's why he was doing this. It's the same as Paul said in Corinthians. He said, I thank God that I baptized none of you because all Asia has turned against me [paraphrased]. His mission in Asia seemed to have been a failure. He said, I thank God I baptized none of you. I am clean. I've done my mission, I performed my duty, I did what I was called to do. He shook his garments and said, Now I am clear. The blood is on your garments now; it's not on mine anymore [paraphrased].

Verse 27: "... that I might be found blameless, and that your blood should not come upon me, when I shall stand to be judged of God of the things whereof he hath commanded me concerning you." Notice that it is very personal. God has commanded me to do certain things concerning you, and I have done them. Now you have to do certain things because that is what I have been told to tell you. I want to "rid my garments of your blood, at this period of time when I am about to go down to my grave, that I might go down in peace, and my immortal spirit may join the choirs above in singing the praises of a just God." Remember, there is a very well-trained choir of distinguished young men singing under the platform. It was covered over so nobody could see it. In some of the rites, the choir would hear it and cry "amen" when the whole

thing was done in whispers up on the stand there. They were there for the Creation Hymn; they were very important. Verse 29: “I have caused that ye should assemble yourselves together, that I might declare unto you that I can no longer be your king [we are to transmit the rule of the kingdom now; that’s the purpose of the meeting]. . . . My son Mosiah is a king and a ruler over you.” Not until he is acclaimed; he has to receive the acclamation. The *acclamatio* is very important. If you fail to raise your voice and acclaim the king, you haven’t supported him. Then you are in a state of rebellion. All the earth is either *ager pacatus* or *ager hosticus*. According to the Romans, it is either “pacified earth” or “hostile earth.” If you haven’t sworn allegiance to the emperor, then you are legitimate bait for us. We can go out and conquer you because you are in a state of rebellion against the king who is the *pater mundi*, the parent of all the world. That was the title of the Roman emperor, *pater mundi*. He had the right to rule the earth. If anybody did not acknowledge his rule and had rebelled against him, the Roman army went and conquered them. There was this everlasting imperial expansion, which reached its limits and then collapsed like a bubble, as these things do.

So Benjamin is going to hand it over to his son Mosiah. And he is following the commandments of his father. Notice that it is being handed down in the patriarchal order now. Verse 31: “As ye have kept my commandments, and also the commandments of my father, and have prospered, and have been kept from falling into the hands of your enemies, even so if ye shall keep the commandments of my son [Benjamin’s father was Mosiah, and then his son is another Mosiah], or the commandments of God which shall be delivered unto you by him [you listen to his commandments; I’m handing over the authority to him now], ye shall prosper in the land, and your enemies shall have no power over you.” Keep the commandments of God given to you by him. If you don’t do it no amount of armaments is going to save you, as we learn in 1 Nephi 2. Here is the real danger in verse 32: “But, O my people, beware lest there shall arise contentions among you, and ye list to obey the evil spirit, which was spoken of by my father Mosiah. . . . For if he listeth to obey him, and remaineth and dieth in his sins, the same drinketh damnation to his own soul; for he receiveth for his wages an everlasting punishment, have transgressed the law of God contrary to his own knowledge.” That’s the important point. He did it quite deliberately and quite openly. This is what your “hell fire” is.

Then back to this theme again of your obligations. Don’t think you are independent. Verse 34: “Ye are eternally indebted to your heavenly Father, to render to him [not to anyone else. Do what he wants you to do; that’s all that’s required of you, and he has told you what he wants you to do] all that you have and are; and also have been taught concerning the records.” He thinks these records are very important—the obligation to keep conference reports, etc. You know the Church has always kept the best records in the world. Herbert Bolton at Berkeley was in charge of all the American history; he was the “big wheel” there. I remember when he stood in front of a collection of Church records in the Historian’s Office in Salt Lake City. He was aghast and said, “These are the only perfect records in the world.” Everything was in there—every meeting, everybody who attended the meetings, and everything else. You may think it’s all useless. It probably is useless, but the record is complete. We insist on keeping a complete record. We are told occasionally by writers such as Nephi and Mosiah in the Book of Mormon, “I don’t know exactly why [we are keeping it].” Nephi said, “Maybe it is to preserve the language of our fathers,” but it didn’t preserve the language. But we have to keep these records; we don’t know what they will be useful for at some future day. It’s a very interesting thing.

My daughter just got back from China after spending one week in Peking. Imagine flying over to Peking, spending one week, and then coming back here. She and her husband were on an assignment. They had this thing funded by Harvard with plenty of “dough,” etc. So they went over for one week and then they came back. But the interesting thing they discovered is the attitude toward the gospel there. Certain things and records of the Church, especially the book of Abraham and the Egyptian matters, have absolutely fired the people’s imagination. She said, “It will just explode once these things get there.” These are records we thought would never have any particular value; they have never had any great appeal to us. I’ve taught this book of Moses year after year, and nobody ever pays any attention to it. We just put all that Egyptian stuff on covers of candy boxes, argue about it, and guess about things. That’s not it at all. It’s going to mean an awful lot to those people. It may convert half the world, for all we know. But why did we keep those records? Why did Joseph hand them down? That’s quite a story, and the records we keep today can sometimes be extremely important. In about 1909 there was a terrific rumpus in Washington against admitting Reed Smoot to the Senate, because he came from Utah and was a Mormon. Of course, this was a state within a state, etc. After he was in the Senate they made another rumpus—they framed him with a couple of women in a hotel room and all this sort of thing. The great day came and he said, “Everybody in the Senate knows that I keep a journal and I write everything down in that journal. I can tell you where I was and what I was doing.” The whole thing collapsed right then and there. There was no case because he had kept a record of what he had been doing and everywhere he was during the day. You never know, so keep a record. Especially if you are horsing around, you’d better keep a record [laughter], but don’t keep double books as most of the big corporations used to. “Used to,” I say.

Notice he tells them to keep a record of “all that has been spoken by our fathers until now [no matter how repetitious it is, etc.—that’s very important to keep the traditions]. And behold, also, they spake that which was commanded them of the Lord; therefore, they are just and true [here’s your tradition again]. And now, I say unto you, my brethren, that after ye have known and have been taught all these things, if ye should transgress and go contrary to that which has been spoken, that ye do withdraw yourselves from the Spirit of the Lord, that it may have no place in you to guide you in wisdom’s paths that ye may be blessed, prospered, and preserved.” See, the Spirit of the Lord guides you. It won’t promise you instant prosperity; it will guide you and give you a sense of the things you should be doing. If you don’t, you are in a state of “open rebellion against God; therefore he listeth to obey the evil spirit. . . . Therefore if that man repenteth not, and remaineth and dieth an enemy to God, the demands of divine justice . . .” Notice that he shifts this whole thing to the larger scale. This is on a cosmic pattern and has to do with the other world. That’s where atonement takes place. That’s where we return to Heavenly Father and are redeemed, bought back again. See all that *re* business. You are *redeemed*, you are *resurrected*, you are *raised* up again, you *return* and go back. *Teshûvâh* means *to return* and *yeshîvâh*, *sit down* once you get there. We mentioned the *reconciliation*. It all has to do with going back to a prior condition that you lived in before you came here—it’s very clear. As I said, the only alternative to that is a simplistic predestination which just stops everything dead cold. “The demands of divine justice do awaken his immortal soul to a lively sense of his own guilt, which doth cause him to shrink from the presence of the Lord [this is what hell is, of course], and doth fill his breast with guilt, and pain, and anguish, which is like an unquenchable fire, whose flame ascendeth up forever and ever.”

In this life we have a very lively sense of other people's guilt, but we don't have a very lively sense of our own, do we? When you get there, you'll be the one that knows about it. They won't have to bring forth too many books to tell you what you have been up to; you will know everything. You will remember everything vividly, it says. See, you've missed your chance, no matter how many chances you have hereafter. For example, if you flunked out of school at an earlier time, you may be given other chances. That's fine, but that will always set you back. You'll always regret it and be disadvantaged by it. So "his final doom is to endure a never-ending torment." These are terms we must accept if we want eternity. But he'll have to face the never-ending torment of the fact that he had the great chance here, and he muffed it—he spoiled it himself, he willfully lost it. That will never cease to bother him. That doesn't mean he will always cook in the fire and things like that at all. Don't lose it here! This may be the greatest chance you ever had. Verse 40: "I pray that ye should awake to a remembrance of the awful situation of those that have fallen into transgression." How high the stakes are here, and it's an awful situation. I have to remind you of that, he says, because we are always falling into it.

Verse 41: "I would desire that ye should consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God." He wants them to be blessed and happy. After all, that's the whole thing. We are talking about fear and trembling, but that's not the object of our being here. We should have joy here and now—there's no reason why you shouldn't. Remember what Eve said to Adam in the book of Moses [Moses 5:11]. Those who keep the commandments "are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual." If you want prosperity, that's what you do—you keep the commandments of God. We are capable of happiness. The word *joy* appears 167 times in the Book of Mormon. (With a computer you can check up on anything like that and have an authoritative statement. We have to quantify everything now, don't we? The quantification of the obvious.) You will be blessed in all things, and what you are doing is "making for a state of never-ending happiness." Isn't that asking for a lot? If you have a chance of getting that, what a fool you would be to miss it. The punishment is not too severe. The punishment is in missing this: Being blessed and happy here in things temporal and spiritual, and then a state of never-ending happiness after this. See, the idea of Christmas is to give us a glimpse of what the world could be. In "A Christmas Carol," Scrooge gets a look. But the point is that it should be Christmas every day. The purpose of the great assembly, the meeting of the Jews on Yom Kippur to celebrate these things, and the Festival of the Booths is to remind them (he's going to bring out that theme of equality here) of the time when all men lived as they should—when the earth was a paradise and a Zion. That's the way it should be. We rehearse it once a year just to show that it can be done. Just one day of the year we show that it can be done. Then it's *mactus* and the bonds are let down. All your formalities, all your stiffness, all your class consciousness must be thrown aside now. This is a *saturnalia*. They said *ia saturnalia*, and then they were all equal, all brothers. At the feast everybody got enough to eat, etc. That's what we try to do at Christmas; we allow the poor one good meal a [year] and feel very virtuous because of that. One day they get proper nourishment, but the rest of the time they can take care of themselves. But it's supposed to rehearse the eternal order of things every day.

We have to fight down the feeling that that's the right way and what we are doing is the wrong way. We have to fight down the "intimations of immortality," that there is this better life. There are so many poems about it. The one that is most recited in the Church is Wordsworth's "Intimations of Immortality."

Heaven lies about us in our infancy!

Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing Boy, . . .
At length the Man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.

“Common day” is the real life, but it isn’t, after all. It isn’t the real life. We come here “trailing clouds of glory” and this is the nostalgia we all feel. That’s the basis of Platonic idealism, that this is not the real world. You all know Plato’s story of the cave at the end of *The Republic*. [According to that] this world is just shadows on the wall of a cave, and the real light is behind us. We are not facing it, but that’s the world we came from. What we see here is just shadows moving on a wall—not real substance, not real things. It isn’t real, after all. We talk about a never-ending state of happiness. It should be never ending, but we don’t have this idea of eternal progression or never-ending happiness. That’s been wiped out by the concept of the career, which is a very dirty one. That is the idea of the slippery slide. You climb the ladder in your career and reach the top, and then down you come. That’s the only way you have to go. Everybody knows that, and it’s a terrible disillusionment. There’s nothing else except to die. Careerism is as near as we get to it. You feel justified, exhilarated and fulfilled as long as you are getting promotions. When you don’t get a promotion [it’s bad]. Oh, the bitterness in the Army. I heard General Bradley say that he never knew a happy general because everyone wants to be promoted over the other. The promotions get fewer and fewer; there are five thousand generals. The competition becomes fiercer and fiercer. The feuds among their wives and all the rest become unbearable. So he said he never knew a happy general because they want more promotions.

Benjamin goes here. Now concerning that which was to come, remember, the purpose of the year festival was to determine the fortunes of the new age. It was not just launching a new year. *Year* is *gār* and *yule*, the same word as *wheel*. It means “a turning, a revolution.” It’s the same word as *while*. The interesting thing is that in the Arabic world it’s *ḥawl ḥawla*. It means “the cycle turned, the wheel revolved, the year went around.” The Greeks call it the *enianton*, “the here we are again.” Jane Harrison wrote a book about that. You come back again, and you are in a revolving circle of the time that goes on forever and ever. You prophesy, and the king has to prophesy. In Asia he would use the *baresma*, that is the 52 slips or cards with signs on them. He would practice divination, as fortune tellers do with 52 cards. Or the king of Babylon would mount to the top chamber of the tower, where there was a round table. He would spend the night there and cast the dice on the table, with 360 possibilities. There were 36 possibilities on the dice, and he would cast them ten times on a special table. Each day would be predicted by casting the dice. In Germany, he would pour lead into water and watch the way it formed. It was the time of fortune telling and that sort of thing. In Rome you would have the *sortes*. You would throw things out and watch how they fell, just like the divination arrow. The *Liahona* was a divination arrow. The tossing of arrows is still done by the Arabs and the Jews. It’s in the Bible. The twelve arrows of the tribes were the *shevet*. They were kept in a container, and they would draw out the lots for the tribes. The *shevet* is an arrow shaft, and that’s the word for *tribe*. Each tribe would have its shaft which was marked, just as there was marking on the arrows of the *Liahona*. You would predict by drawing lots. Everywhere they would predict. And by observing the sun, the Egyptians had very elaborate ways of telling. You had to face toward the south, etc. There were the *haruspices* from the flight of birds—and [there were] livers and all the rest of it. But the thing was that it was the time for fortune telling.

[Benjamin] said, “Behold, I have things to tell you concerning that which is to come.” This is the assembly, this is your future, and it’s the king’s obligation to prophesy on that occasion. But in this case he is going to tell them what an angel told him. Verse 2: “And the things which I shall tell you are made known unto me by an angel from God. And he said unto me: Awake; and I awoke, and behold he stood before me. And he said unto me: Awake, and hear the words which I shall tell thee; for behold, I am come to declare unto you the glad tidings of great joy.” This “glad tidings of great joy” is very interesting. It’s repeated in Alma the same way. Of course, that comes from Luke 2:10. This is the season for that. There were certain shepherds in the field watching their flocks, and the angel of God came and said, “Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy.” This is an oriental form. In Greek it has been strained, and in English even more strained. But it’s the *masdar*. When you want to make something extremely emphatic, the *maṣḍar* is to repeat the verbal noun. For example, in Arabic it’s not right to say, “He rejoiced greatly.” You have to say, “He rejoiced a great rejoicing or a great gladness.” So we have that form there, *joy* and *gladness*; or *fear* and *trembling*. You always intensify it. That’s biblical parallelism. Professor Popper wrote his dissertation on that subject of biblical parallelism. You emphasize it by repeating the same thing in another word. There shall be *joy* and *gladness*, *fear* and *trembling*, *light* and *truth*—things like that. They are the same thing, and you put them here. This formula, “glad tidings of great joy,” and other such combinations are used as intensives. As I said, it’s a required form in the language the shepherds would have been speaking. It sounds funny in Greek is all. It’s not lifted; I mean this is the proper form as it should be expressed. This is the way it is in the Bible. The angel uses this on more than one occasion. It’s always an angel that says this, “Awake, glad tidings of great joy.”

The angel scares the daylight out of everyone he appears to because it is a culture shock. He comes from this other world, and it’s more than they can take. The first thing he says is, “Don’t be afraid.” He even has to say that to Mary. And Zacharias was stuck dumb; he was absolutely paralyzed after his session with the angel. Nobody had seen an angel for for a hundred years, and it came as a shock. But here the angel came to him with the usual formula. He is not quoting the scripture here; he is just stating the formula. They are speaking the same language here that they spoke in Israel, I dare say. But this is the Christmas message here. Notice this. The birth of Christ is exactly what he is predicting here. Verse 4: “For the Lord hath heard thy prayers, and hath judged of thy righteousness, and hath sent me to declare unto thee that thou mayest rejoice; and that thou mayest declare unto thy people, that they may also be filled with joy. For behold, the time cometh, and is not far distant, that with power, the Lord Omnipotent . . . shall come down from heaven among the children of men [so this is a Christmas celebration here; this is very apposite to the time, isn’t it?] and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay, and shall go forth amongst men, working mighty miracles, such as healing the sick, raising the dead, causing the lame to walk, the blind to receive their sight. . . . And lo, he shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death [and then there’s one more thing to note here—why he suffers so much anguish]; for behold, blood cometh from every pore.” As I said, that used to be considered one of the serious breaks in the Book of Mormon. [People said], “Ah, Joseph Smith really slipped up there.” No, *porus* is an ancient Latin word that was used by the doctors. Galen and Hippocrates knew all about pores. They didn’t know about circulation of the blood. The answer was, “Well, nobody knew about circulation of the blood until Harvey in the seventeenth century.” But they did know that people could sweat, and even sweat blood, too. They used the word *porus*, the old Latin word for it.

Why did he suffer like this? Not because of the crown of thorns or the nails or the whipping, however bad that may have been. That had nothing to do with it. Remember, mental anguish is far worse than any physical anguish. Notice: “So great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and abominations of his people.” That is what caused the suffering, of course. Read in 3 Nephi 19. We will have to take up here next time and finish his speech. You can see the theme of “fear and trembling” runs like a red thread through this discourse.