

TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

HUGH NIBLEY

Semester 1, Lecture 4
Introduction
Setting the Stage, 600 B.C.

One thing we've got to make just a short remark about here is the evidence for the Book of Mormon. They talk so much about archaeological evidence; that always comes up where the Book of Mormon is mentioned. If you want proof of the Book of Mormon, you must go to the Old World. You won't find it in the New World. You can see why. In the Old World we have massive, legible sources. Remember, the vitally important first book of Nephi all takes place in the Old World; it doesn't take place in Central America or anywhere else, except in the Old World. Of course, New World archaeology won't cut anything because it covers this vast area of the Western Hemisphere, and we have only an infinitesimal sampling. Nobody knows what was going on a thousand years ago in this hemisphere; they haven't the vaguest idea. Moreover, archaeology gives no specific answers anyway; you have to speculate about them. The greatest archaeological progress and programs for centuries were in Egypt. That's where they started digging already in the Middle Ages because it fascinated them. So for hundreds of years archaeology has been at work in Egypt. Twenty years ago everything we had found out about it was thrown away. Through the years they had built up a standard, accepted account (the approved school solution) of what happened in Egypt—how the kingdoms of the North and the South conflicted, then came together and were united in the crowns. That isn't so at all. The things we regarded as the most basic Egyptian history (the result of ages of archaeology and immense expense) don't hold up at all anymore.

Well, we must get on here, but not until we have looked more curiously at a few things that the authors of the Book of Mormon want us to see. A syllabus is a list of things that should be studied. Usually, you end up by studying the syllabus. You study the things you have to, and you are eager to get on from one point to the next, etc. But how do you study these things in the Book of Mormon? The teacher has just one purpose: to save the students time. I can save you a lot of time (here's where we get the books on the shelf). You could have discovered these things for yourselves, but it would take you much more time. A few years ago St. Johns University tried a new method of teaching in which the students went through all the steps of discovery (it was a humanistic sort of thing) necessary to discover the telescope or to discover the mountains on the moon. They constructed an exact replica of Galileo's telescope. Then they looked at the mountains on the moon. Then they discovered the moons of Jupiter, etc. But this takes your whole lifetime. It took Galileo a lifetime to do it. The best way for you to learn it is to do exactly what Galileo did, but then you are through and you have done nothing for yourself. The whole advantage of recording is to save time. The Book of Mormon is an epitome of that. We are constantly reminded in the Book of Mormon that they have cut things down, that things have been very carefully edited and reduced to only the things most vital that the authors want us to have. It is a digest of a vast amount of records that they have gone through and edited for our benefit. They are going to save us time, so I invite you to look up the things that interest you. There will be books on reserve for this class. It's foolish, but most of the things for the time being will be mine because they are the things I've been talking about. That's where you find them. Oh, there are others, but the Book of

Mormon itself is what you need to learn. This is a strange class on a strange subject. It's not like anything else; this is the point. It's a crash course, an emergency course. It's what they call a "quickie course" in the army. We haven't got long to learn; we haven't got long to go. If you had seen the newspaper this morning, you might say, "Great guns, what's happening now!" This is so. The situation is very urgent today. It's not like it has been at other times.

Where do you research in the Book of Mormon? This is the point: you must research in yourself. I'm not talking in the abstract sense; I'm talking in the historical sense here. Actually, you must see yourself in the book. That's one thing students have always been able to do very easily. They can find themselves in the book. The Arab students always identified themselves with Nephi. Boy, he was their man. For a time we had the Point Four. It was President Harris who introduced the Point Four in the Middle East. It was a program by which we would bring Middle Eastern students over here to study. BYU had a great influx of Moslem students from all the Middle Eastern lands. They were required to take religion here. The only religion they would take was the Book of Mormon, and they had me teaching a Book of Mormon class just for Moslems. Some very amusing things came out. But, brother, the Book of Mormon was their book, and Nephi was their hero. They were all for him. But you do find it in yourself. The Book of Mormon is unique, and it has been a great converter. It has been irresistible. It has done more than all the missionaries put together because it involves the reader like no other book. You do identify with it; it grabs you if you read it carefully. You don't even have to read it carefully. So many people are impressed on first reading it.

I was just remembering yesterday when the Salmon brothers were visiting us back in 1959. They are fifth-generation Israelis, eminent scientists now. One of them has to do with the disposition of radioactive materials in Israel, which is a very important problem, of course, because they have to use that form of energy and they don't have much space to put it in. The other one is in North Carolina now, I think; he has moved around. But anyway, they were here for a short time. They went skiing, and John, the younger brother, broke his leg. He went to the infirmary here, and they were held up. Somebody gave him a Book of Mormon and he read it. But then he insisted the next day on being baptized. Now, here was a fifth generation Israeli. He said, "I have to be baptized." Well, he had this huge cast on his leg. Were they going to baptize him with the cast on his leg? Yes, we baptized him; he wouldn't settle for anything else. He just had to be baptized. Well, that's the way the Book of Mormon can grab you. They were fifth generation Hasidic Jews. Hasidic Judaism is the old-fashioned Judaism, and they recognized the Book of Mormon as their book culturally. And the Arabs recognized it. Religiously, it was perfectly clear to the Jews what this was. So he had to be baptized on the spot, and he had never heard of it before.

The Book of Mormon does that, and that is why the only possible test for this course must be an essay of some sort in which you can show how the Book of Mormon has stirred you to thought and action—how it has affected you. The question will be worded as a subject for an essay or two, and identification questions could be significant to show that you follow along. The historical part of it is also extremely important, not just as evidence. But we hope to see why this morning, if we ever get on to this. So that's what it is. All I can do is to show you how it stirs me and the things that interest me. That's all, you see. It's quite unfair that your work should be judged by another—that I should judge you by the way your work impresses me. An essay can only be judged on the quality alone, and the quality is a personal judgement. As Joseph Smith says, "No man's opinion is worth a

straw.” It’s his opinion, and he is welcome to it, but you can’t use it as authority to prove anything in law courts or anything else. Well, they do it all the time, of course. But this is what we’ve got to grade on, and worst of all, I have my opinion of quality. Take today’s lesson, for example. We say, “How long is it to be? In what direction will it move? That depends entirely on what we find out from the text here.

Consider the circumstances under which the Book of Mormon was composed—the tremendous work that has gone into it over centuries. Then an angel bothered to bring it down and personally hand it over. Then Joseph Smith risked life and limb right from the beginning because of the Book of Mormon. Since we are told how carefully it has been edited, with a particular audience in mind, we must assume that every sentence in it has significance for us. They couldn’t afford to waste anything. So, we get going. Here’s a saying of Joseph Smith that I like (two of them): “The things of God are of deep import, and time and experience and careful, ponderous, solemn thoughts can only find them out.” Who is engaging today in careful, ponderous, and solemn thoughts? Everybody is “on the make.” This is almost a joke today, such things going on. “Thy mind, oh man, must stretch as high as the utmost heaven. The Saints ought to lay hold of every door, obtain a foothold on earth, and make all preparations within their power for the terrible storms that are now gathering in the heavens. The angels of heaven have taken council together. They have passed some decisions. These decisions will be made known in their time.”

So the Book of Mormon is our guide for these particular times, and it is essential to know, for example, that this was Jerusalem where it began. It was the first year of King Zedekiah when it began. There we have a specific time and place. As soon as we get to the New World, it is wide open. Anybody’s Book of Mormon geography will go, and they just argue forever about Book of Mormon geography, which is worthless. I wouldn’t touch that—never have touched Book of Mormon geography. There’s no point to it whatever—except they move north, they move south, they meet somebody, etc. But we do know specifically where this was (it was Jerusalem) and when it was (the first year of Zedekiah). This launches us on a sure footing. We know who installed Zedekiah.

Incidentally, I misinformed you last time when I said that it was Necho who installed Zedekiah. Necho installed Zedekiah’s predecessor. Let me give you the lineup here. We will begin with Hezekiah because the Book of Mormon is full of Isaiah, and Isaiah is the great preacher. In the Dead Sea Scrolls Isaiah hopelessly swamps all the others as far as statistics are concerned. So we will begin with Isaiah and King Hezekiah because that’s where the story of the Book of Mormon begins. That was way back in the eighth century (720 B.C.) when the Assyrians descended on Jerusalem. King Hezekiah was a contemporary of Isaiah, and Hezekiah’s son was Manasseh (that’s a good Book of Mormon name), and Manasseh’s son was Amon (another good Book of Mormon name), and his son was Josiah (the great reformer). Josiah drove the Assyrians out of Israel, but at the famous Battle of Megiddo in 609 Josiah was beaten and killed by Necho II of Egypt. They wanted to get rid of Assyria. Once they had gotten rid of Assyria, Necho took over. Four years later Necho, being victorious in Palestine, tried to stop Nebuchadnezzar in 605 B.C. at the Battle of Carchemish (up in the North, not far away), and he was killed. Necho II had overcome Josiah, but he put Josiah’s son Eliakim in as king of Judah and changed his name to Jehoiakim (2 Kings 23–24). He also deposed his brother Jehoahaz. This is the trick: you put your own man in and give him a new name. As I said, Necho was beaten by Nebuchadnezzar. Then Nebuchadnezzar came in and deposed Jehoiakim, the one who had been put in by the king of Egypt. He put in his place Mathoniah who was Zedekiah. He

was installed by Nebuchadnezzar, not Necho of Egypt (his brother was). Then the king changed his name to Zedekiah.

This is typical of the story: Zedekiah very soon rebelled against the Babylonians. He rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar who had installed him on the throne (who trusts whom in these days?). That brought the Babylonians in, and Nebuchadnezzar came and destroyed Jerusalem. That brought him into Jerusalem in Lehi's time because Zedekiah had turned against him. In the first year of Zedekiah is when Lehi had to leave Jerusalem. This is quite a while before because in 587 Jerusalem was destroyed. So this mix-up here is typical of what is going on.

As we mentioned before, in the year 600 B.C., the pivotal year, everything turned on its hinges and there was an entirely new world. The sacral kingship went out of the window, and there was revolution everywhere. Suddenly, the founders of most of the world's great religions appeared. They are all strictly contemporary with Lehi. This book is *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, and it has a chapter on this. We can read some things from here, "Lehi counted among his contemporaries not only the greatest first names in science, politics and business, but also the most illustrious religious founders known to history: Gautama Buddha, Confucius, Lao-tze, Vardhaman Mahavira (the founder of Jainism), [we had a Jainist in the class a while back], Zarathustra, and Pythagoras were all of Lehi's day." The top men, they were never exceeded, and they founded these religions. So you can see it was going to be a new world. They were all contemporary with Lehi (did they know Lehi?). This reminds us of another situation. In Lehi's day was when the Seven Wise Men lived. The Greeks talk about them, and they were all contemporaries of Lehi. These were wise men who had been rich and successful in the manner of Lehi and all left their homes to wander in the world, looking for wisdom. There are all sorts of stories about them. Once a year they would come together at a banquet feast and share their ideas and discoveries. They were seeking only for wisdom. They were the *Sophoi*, the wise men. They were succeeded by the Sophists, phony wise men who completely took over the scene a little while after by cultivating the art of rhetoric (that's something else). But the wise men were contemporary with Lehi.

We can talk about some other men. Who is the first great name in Western science? We should put his name on the board, I suppose. It's Thales of Miletus. We know he was contemporary because he predicted the solar eclipse of 585 B.C., just two years after Jerusalem was destroyed. That was just fifteen years after Lehi, in the prime of life, had left Jerusalem. So Thales of Miletus was a contemporary. His mother was a Phoenician, probably Jewish. He had studied mostly in Egypt; his ideas were Egyptian. See how international everything is? He was the father of modern science; it goes back to Thales in mathematics, geometry, etc. Let's see if we have something to say about good old Thales here: "Another who visited the East on business in Lehi's day was Thales of Miletus . . . Father of Western philosophy and science. His mother was a Phoenician and he received most of his education in Egypt." Here's another contemporary of Lehi. He probably knew Lehi because he was in business. Thales said that he didn't have much money. He traveled around and visited places. As I said, his mother was a Phoenician, and Sidon was the principal Phoenician port. Naturally, he would visit Tyre and Sidon on business. Who visited Tyre and especially Sidon on business? What's the famous city name on the river in the Book of Mormon? It's Sidon. The River Sidon is their outlet to the sea. They named it after Sidon (the city) as colonists always do. They name things after places back home. I'd be willing to "bet a dime to a donut" that Lehi and Thales were friends because Lehi was in business too through Sidon. He traveled about a great deal and had a great

fortune—many, many precious things (gold and the like). So everything comes together in Lehi's time, and this is very important for our world too.

I suppose I should put the names of these religious founders on the board. You know about Buddhism (Gautama Buddha), the largest religion in the world for membership. And Jainism (Mahavira) and Confucianism, which is a philosophy. Then there's Pythagoras, the founder of the hermetic cults that started in Egypt. It all comes out of Egypt too—the same thing with Zarathustra. It has been shown in the last generation, especially by Professor Jaeger, that Zarathustra (the Persian) was the principal inspiration of Plato. But he had a tremendous reputation everywhere. Everybody was traveling around in this time. Everybody was uprooted, *deracine*. Lehi's family was going to go through the same sort of thing. As I said, they were religious. This is an important thing because you are not going to get a new religion unless you get a new way of life. It's a new culture. Whenever you get a new religion, you also get a new script, a new writing, etc. Sanskrit emerges at this time in Hindu. Why? What is Sanskrit? It is Aramaic writing. Aramaic was the international writing at this time. If they find records in Egypt, or Asia Minor, or Babylon, they are written in Aramaic. But Sanskrit is an adaptation of Aramaic characters. The same thing with Hebrew, Hieratic, and hieroglyphic (*hier* means sacred). Hieroglyphic was a sacred writing that was invented for religious purposes, to be used in the temples only. Then when Christianity came along, the Egyptians didn't keep it any longer. They changed to Coptic, though they had a good reformed Egyptian in Lehi's time, which was Demotic. They changed to Coptic which kept fourteen Egyptian characters, but they used the Greek alphabet. Using Coptic had a special religious significance. Recently, they have discovered a great deal of Coptic, and we have a good collection of Coptic here in the Coptic library. The nice thing about Coptic is that it is very easy and pleasant to learn, whereas Egyptian isn't. The uighur alphabet of the Celtic languages of Central Asia, and the runes of our Nordic ancestors all were invented strictly for religious purposes—the Estrangela and the masnad of the Arabs, etc. Eduard Meyer said, "The most significant contribution the Mormons ever made was the invention of the Deseret alphabet [Brigham Young's Deseret alphabet]." I have half a dozen books in Deseret alphabet, but I couldn't find them. They are out in the garage or somewhere like that. They are very interesting; it was a very good alphabet design. But notice, when you have a new religion, you separate yourself. As a mark of distinction, you have a new alphabet. For a while all our school books here, including Brigham Young Academy, were published in the Deseret alphabet. It's quite a fantastic alphabet and quite a good one. It works very well.

There was also Silas John, a Chiricahua Apache, who in 1904 invented an alphabet for them to preserve their sacred records in. It was a very good alphabet, and they still use it. But it was a secret alphabet. See, all alphabets are supposed to be secret; all reading is supposed to be secret. The Urim and Thummim is something special that way (we talked about that yesterday). Remember, I showed you this Meroitic. When the priests of Thebes fled south and then had to flee farther south, they invented the Meroitic script. This is it, and here it is compared with the characters in the Book of Mormon. They had their own characters that were very much like Meroitic and derived from a reformed Egyptian. There is a good deal said in the Book of Mormon about them having their own writing. The Jaredites had their writing too, which was translated by King Mosiah.

At the center of every culture is a religion; every culture is religious. This again is a new discovery. Civilization does not go without religion. There is a new book out by Herbert Schurtz, the German at Yale University. They made a very careful study of all the cultures

of prehistoric Europe, and the book concludes by saying this, “From the material evidence surveyed, culture appears to be a collective attempt at providing answers to the question posed by man about his position in this life and the next.” There was, of course, the Darwinistic (Marxism) theory and the capitalistic theory. They claim that it was a practical, economic thing—that civilization and everything else came in response to an economic need (a need for food and clothing). That wasn’t it at all. The thing that comes first is to know where you are and not feel lost. According to Schurtz, the evidence is that every culture seems to be a collective attempt to provide answers to these questions about your position in this life and the next—not where will you get the next meal. As Aristotle said, “The mice and the cockroaches and the bees and the lice have all solved the economic problem.” They are all able to live from day to day and from generation to generation. Some of their species are thousands (maybe millions) of years old, and they are still going. They are not very bright, but they have solved their economic problem. That isn’t the problem. He said, “Our purpose is not to stay alive but to live well.” That doesn’t mean “live it up” either. He followed Socrates dictum, “The unexamined life is not worth living.” But, you see, the idea is not to stay alive at all. That’s not what we’re here for, and that’s not going to satisfy. That’s a great Book of Mormon theme. They’re always saying, “Well, we’ve got all we need.” Then everything goes to pot. Schurtz goes on, “As long as a people thought they could answer that question, the culture remained stable. If it collapsed, it was because of the lack of an intellectual and spiritual (mythical, if you will) foundation for a culture’s general view of the world.”

Here is a very recent statement by one of the most eminent British nuclear physicists, J. G. Taylor. As he ends his book called *Black Holes*, he says, “We may live and die without raising our eyes to the heavens, secure in the safety of our cotton-wool globe [it’s not so safe now]. Yet that is false. We cannot divorce our lives from the basic problems of the universe. Whatever we do, we must come to terms with the infinite before we can act. The wish for survival, in one form or another, after this life is absolutely essential for our existence.” You’re not going to have it without religion. You’re going to be empty, and people will become irresponsible, wild, sour, and negative. We’re going to get to that in a minute.

Since we mentioned that idea of evidence in archaeology, one thing is very important here in this particular regard—the general nature of the ruins found in Central America and elsewhere. Robert Heine-Geldern started out studying the archaeology of Southeast Asia—the great temples, Angkor Wat, etc. Then he saw the great resemblance to those in Central America, and he became an American archaeologist. He started comparing them. Then he went back to the Near East and compared them. He calls attention to the often stunning resemblance (you’ve noticed this yourself) between the exotic remains of Cambodia, India, Mexico, and Guatemala. They look very much alike. Now, we should be showing you slides like crazy here, but you’ve all seen the pictures. Should we draw a picture of one of these towers? “The impressive number of Chinese elements in Olmec, the tiger cult, the bronzes, the jade carving [very Asiatic].” I notice that the American archaeologists have shifted everything now to Asia, the cultured Asiatic—not those primitives who covered the Bering Strait when it was frozen and when it was a land bridge. That’s not it at all. Now they come with full-blown culture from Asia, and everything is Asiatic here.

Here we are quoting Michael D. Coe, the foremost American who is always sounding off on this subject from back at Yale. He has been here, and we have had students with him. He said, “Many have noted the great ceremonial centers of Meso-America are highly

reminiscent of Anchor and Khmer civilizations of Southeast Asia.” Then we showed that Robert Heine-Geldern got very interested and started comparing them in a big way. Coe wrote, “Contacts must have been by sea, not directly across the Pacific, however, but using the Kuroshio drift following the great cirque by the northern route [the Japan current, as we sometimes have suggested for the Jaredites].” W. Krickenberg has a book on that, incidentally. “But there is something seriously wrong here for the whole Southeast Asian complex doesn’t arise until the ninth and tenth centuries after Christ [that’s a thousand years after the Nephites disappeared; what are we going to get here?] so they could not have inspired the American cult centers, built a thousand years earlier.” Krickenberg says on page 572, “The only explanation is to look for a common source somewhere, [they look alike because they came from the same place] which Heine-Geldern finds in the Near East [at a much earlier time, of course, both in its American and Asiatic forms].” They were both brought from the Near East; that’s why they look alike. They came from the same center, and it was the Near East. That happens to be where the Book of Mormon people came from.

Now, this is the thing I was getting at about the culture, religion, etc. “If the people came from Asia, there’s a puzzling lack in the New World of Asiatic cultivated plants and domestic animals from the Old World. There is the absence of the plow, the potter’s wheel, the bellows [all the essential implements of culture they should have brought with them] glass, iron, stringed instruments, the true arts.” They didn’t bring any of that with them. What is wrong? Well, they did bring something entirely different with them, and this is why these places look so much like ceremonial centers. There is a religious center in everything. “This is more than outbalanced by the more important cultural items, such as political patterns, cosmology, art, religion, symbolism, and ceremonial architecture. They are alike, far too much alike in the two hemispheres to be explained by the recent and far-fetched theory of convergence. How to explain a super-abundance of one type of cultural accoutrements, along with a complete deficiency in the other kind of stuff.” Well, it’s the kind of people who made the migration; that’s it. So this is what Heine-Geldern concludes here: “The solution is the type of migration indicated. The people who crossed the sea were not artisans or technicians . . . [the kind that were spreading all around the Mediterranean at that time].” We have their poems, their diaries, etc. from Lehi’s time—the great time of colonization and business expansion. No, these were people of a religious and intellectual, a priestly persuasion. What is indicated, according to Heine-Geldern is “a carefully planned and prepared undertaking, primarily with missionary goals, a religious group of people that fled across the sea.” That’s what their centers are. What was the first thing Lehi did when he landed? He built a replica of the temple. It was small and didn’t have as much expensive stuff in it, but it was a temple. They planted that Near Eastern culture right here as soon as they got here and made a replica of Solomon’s Temple, as the Jews were doing. In 1925, ample records were found at Elephantine (far up the Nile at the first cataract), the Elephantine Hebrew texts. They are a lot of Hebrew letters from people living down there—soldiers and people who had fled from Jerusalem and were living way up the Nile. They wrote to the elders at Jerusalem asking for permission to build a temple there, and they did. So this was the practice. (Way up the Nile is where you get Meroitic.) So there are some strange relationships. Continuing from Heine-Geldern: “Then why no trace of Southeast Asiatic religious teachings in America? Why no Hinduism and Buddhism?” The answer again is to look to the Near East. When the Spanish priests and Puritan divines came here, they instantly recognized the Old Testament and the New Testament in the teachings of the Indians, nothing of Eastern Asia. So it’s an interesting cultural pattern we have here in the Book of Mormon.

In Lehi's day, as I said, the barriers broke down. It was wide open; it was another swarming time. Samuel N. Kramer has written the best study of that subject, a monograph on "The Swarming Time." In the year 3,000, in 1,700, in 1,200, and 700 B.C. everything turned. Also in 300, 800 (the Vikings), and A.D. 1,200 it happened again. I've written a number of articles on that. When we get to the Jaredites (as we surely shall in a couple of weeks), we will talk about that sort of thing. This is what happens when society breaks down. It's a matter of survival, and everybody scatters. They move as tribes and as individuals; things break up. It's a heroic age. We saw Gyges financing Persians on one side and Greeks on the other. Croesus is buddy-buddy with Greek tyrants. It was Gyges, the tyrant and rich man, who financed Necho II, and he installed the king, Jehoiakim. He was also supported by Pisistratus, the tyrant of Athens at that time. I think we'll have some time to mention him. So the barriers broke down, and there was this mixing up. Remember, Piankhi, Sheshonqides, Nubian, Libyan, Asiatic, Amu—everything all mixed up; it was international. You could go to any city, and it was metropolitan. You'd hear all the languages from everywhere spoken in the same city—Aramaic dominating, but Greek moving in and going to take over. It was a time of the self-made merchant kings (the twenty-sixty dynasty; that's what the family of Semiticus were). Everything was up for sale to the highest bidder. People were scattering in colonies, and we have their recollections. The Phoenicians at this time founded Carthage. You know the story Dido from the *Aeneid*. They went forth in 800 B.C. [slip of the tongue]. Then Carthage became a center for founding colonies all over. This is what led to the war with the Romans, who were expanding at this time, and the destruction of Carthage. Everybody was expanding, and everybody was grabbing the best possible places they could. We have some very vivid accounts of what went on by eye witnesses, Archilochus, etc. We have these personal remarks by lyric poets.

So things are stirred up in Palestine all the time, and they are mixed and blended. Now, the point is, where is security? Who is in charge around here? We talked about tyrants. If anyone could get the power, it was his. But who wasn't corruptible; who didn't have a price? Who could you count on? There are just two great men we think of whom you could count on. They probably knew each other, and they were Solon and Lehi (the immortal Solon). Solon left Athens in 595 B.C., five years after Lehi left Jerusalem, for the same reason. We talked about the Seven Wise Men. Well, Solon was always considered to be wisest of the Seven Wise Men. He became archon of Athens in 600 B.C., so this puts him in the same bracket with Lehi. Moreover, his family had lost their wealth. He was too honest. He went into the business of trading in olive oil and pottery. He would sail back to the Levant and visit places like Sidon (he loved to travel). It used to be common in the newspapers to designate members of Congress as Solons (there's real irony in that). We mustn't forget this: he is the father of modern democracy. He gave us the first democratic state, and it stuck. The great Solon, the wisest of the Greeks, gets the credit for founding Western democracy. So we have Solon and Lehi, and what a man this Solon was. Fortunately, I was able to find this book last night. We don't have it in the library. This is by my old teacher Professor Ivan Linforth.

I'm just going to quote from Professor Linforth's introduction and then some of the poems to show what the situation was. This was the situation in Jerusalem and in Athens, and it is the situation today here. "Solon, himself, in the longest of his extant poems gives us an account of the principal occupations of the men of this time." Yes, he has one of those poems here. (This is a short cut, so I'll use it in the interest of time.) "He shows us the trader, the husbandman, the artisan, the minstrel, the prophet, and the physician—a busy, bustling world it seemed to him [this isn't the ancient world at all; this is the

modern world] in which all were working blindly with little thought of the future. Moneymaking, he tells us, filled men's minds [everybody wanted a career]. In his day a deep social and economic unrest pervaded the society as a result of unequal distribution of wealth. Society fell into two conflicting classes. One was composed of the best people, the *aristoi*, by which it meant the people of wealth and noble birth. The other consisted of folk at large, the *demos*. Political power lay entirely in the hands of the former class, and magistrates were chosen only from their number. The restlessness, however, of the lower classes seems to have been due not so much to political inequality as to cruel economic conditions." Solon was a member of the aristocracy, and we go into his genealogy here. "It appears that early in life Solon embarked in commerce. He was forced to do this, according to Plutarch, by the impaired state of the family fortune." As I said, he traveled east. He gave Athens the ideal constitution, and nobody was willing to accept it. Each party thought they were shortchanged, as he is going to explain here. So he made a rule when he gave them the ideal constitution that it couldn't be changed without his signature. They also voted that he should take a trip for ten years and not come back to Athens. So he traveled for ten years. He was on business in Palestine, and I'll bet he knew Lehi because these were top men who met each other all the time (I can't prove that, of course; it's a nice picture).

Continuing the quote from Professor Linfoth, "... family fortune, which had brought about by the excessive generosity of his father [the story of Timon of Athens is the same thing; he ruined himself by being too generous]. He belonged to a family which was accustomed to help others, and he was unwilling when he was in financial straits to ask aid of his friends who would have been glad to render it to him. Others found the motive for his voyage in his desire to acquire learning and experience, rather than to make money [He is one of the Seven Wise Men, the traveling *sophoi*]. ... Solon must have carried many a cargo of oil and pottery from his own rocky Attica to the wealthy cities across the Aegean, and, in spite of his love for his own native land, must have been charmed by the brilliant society which he found in Asia." He had a wild and merry life on his ten-year vacation.

Let's see how Solon got Salamis back; that won his reputation. "Sometime between 595 and 590 he was elected to the archonship [so this puts him right in Lehi's bracket]. We are told that he was entrusted with extraordinary powers to do anything he wanted. Both sides trusted him because of what he did to get back Salamis." They had lost Salamis—that low, flat, rocky island that blocks the harbor of Athens. They had fought over it for years with the people of Aegina. They passed a law that anyone who should propose another attempt to take Salamis would be put to death (capital punishment). They'd had enough of it. So he put on a funny hat and pretended to be crazy. Like Hamlet, he put on an antic disposition. He stood on a barrel in the agora and recited a song about getting back beautiful Salamis—acting crazy so he could get away with it. People started listening to him. He led an expedition, and they did get Salamis back. So both sides trusted him when there was a deadlock between the two. They made him archon and gave him absolute powers; he could make any change in government that he wanted (such power over the whole machinery of government). "By the joint will of all the conflicting elements, the one man they could trust was Solon [he would do the honest thing]. It was one of Solon's chief claims to glory among the Athenians of a later day that he had been the first of the distinguished line of statesmen who had championed the rights of the people and resisted the rule of special privilege." So he was the founder of Athenian democracy.

Now here we are in Lehi's world. "The general character of the seventh and sixth centuries is well known. It was an age of colonization." This is just the time, you see, for Lehi to set out. He would have in his baggage the whole equipment of the culture. Right at the beginning, Nephi reminds us he was well educated. His parents insisted that he learn Egyptian and all this. So they were in a position to take with them across the ocean all they would need to get a new culture launched. And other people were doing the same thing. Remember, Necho sent an expedition clear around Africa. But at this time hundreds of colonies were being founded—all around the Black Sea, for example, places way up north there. So Lehi is typical; this is just what is going on at this time. Linforth continues: "The old, traditional life of the isolated Greek communities was undergoing a transformation. The old noble families embarked on new enterprises of money making. The lower classes saw opportunities for advancement which did not depend on ownership of the soil. The mass of people began to be aware of hopes and possibilities that never before entered their heads [the American dream, you see]. The world was suddenly open to them. A spirit of adventure and eagerness for a larger and fuller life marked the whole age. One single, concrete thing had an incalculable influence, the invention of coined money [right at Lehi's time; it has the same influence in the Book of Mormon]. The fundamental transformation in human society wrought by the invention of money is sufficiently well known. With these general characteristics of the age in mind, we can see what probably took place" (he goes into this now).

Let's read what Solon himself has to say here. First, we will begin with his most famous of all sayings, "As I get older, I am constantly learning new things." Getting old is a process of learning more, he says. This is the situation, and Aristotle is reporting what was happening here: "The organization of the state being such as I have described, the many were the slaves of the few, and in consequence the people rose in opposition to the upper classes. The feud was a violent one, and the opposing factions were pitted against one another for a long time. [Remember, Ammon speaking to the Zoramite people met on the hill there that they had to build the sacred center. They resented it because they weren't even able to go in; they were improperly dressed, etc.] In the end by common agreement they elected Solon as archon to act as arbitrator between them. His elegiac poem already appeared which begins, 'I am not aware, and pain lies heavy at my heart as I watch the oldest of Ionian states sinking lower and lower.' Solon himself was a man who by birth and reputation belonged to highest class, but his business activities and his limited means placed him in the middle class. In general, he puts the blame for the dissension upon the wealthy class [notice, the resemblance to the power and gain motif in the Book of Mormon here]. That is why he says at the very beginning of the poem that he fears their covetousness and insolence, implying that the hostile feelings, which were prevalent, were due to their causes. Then he says 'To the common people, I have given such a measure of privilege as suffices them—neither robbing them of the rights they had, nor holding out hope for greater ones. And I have taken equal thought for those who are possessed of power and who are looked up to because of their wealth, careful that they too should suffer no indignity. I have taken a stand which enables me to hold a stout shield over both groups, and I have allowed neither to triumph unjustly over the other.' " That's why he's the great Solon, you see.

I told you about that cycle of the four steps. He puts them here in his poem, "When people are too prosperous, then they begin to choke in it. *Olbos* is followed by *koros* [overweening fullness], and this is followed by *hubris*." Then he says, "Just as sure as

anything, you are going to get *atē*.” This is the way Professor Linforth renders it, however: “For excess giveth birth to arrogance when great prosperity attendeth upon men whose minds lack sober judgment.” (Well, if that isn’t like the Book of Mormon, I don’t know what is.) This is typical in a political year: “They who gathered to share in the spoils entertained vast hopes. Each one of them expected to make his fortune and thought that I, though I might prattle mildly now [political promises], would reveal a nature stern enough in the end. Idle were their notions. Now they are all angry with me and look at me with sidelong glances [he hasn’t got a friend left because he was fair to both sides] as at an enemy. They have no reason to do so. What I promised, with God’s help I fulfilled. Other things I did not thoughtlessly undertake. I should find no pleasure in a thing which was achieved through the exercise of a tyrant’s power. Nor should I be glad to see the rich soil of the fatherland divided equally among everybody [so he wants to play fair whatever happens]. The black earth, the supreme Mother, is all of us. I remove the stones of her bondage [which he did]. I drafted laws which show equal consideration for the upper and lower classes and provided a fair administration of justice to every individual. An unscrupulous and avaricious man, if he had got the whip hand of the city as I had, would not have held the people back. If I had adopted the policy which had been advocated by opponents then, or if thereafter I had consented to the treatments which their opponents had already planned for them, this city would have lost many of her sons. This was the reason why I stood out like a wolf at bay amidst a pack of hounds, defending myself from attack against every side.”

He played fair with everybody, and as a result he was in the position of a wolf. Packs of hounds are attacking him on every side because he didn’t give them what they wanted. He wanted to play fair with the others. But that’s what happens. He refused to be a tyrant, and he replaced the tyrant, Pisistratus, who was a friend of his and a very powerful man. Solon said, “For if another man had obtained this office, he would not have held the people back. He would not have rested until by continued agitation he’d got the butter from the milk. But I set myself up as a barrier in the debatable land between hostile parties” (that’s not the one I’m thinking of).

Here he starts speaking exactly like the prophets of Israel. (Well, the time is up now; we don’t hear the bell here.) But, remember, these men in Greece knew the prophets of Israel too. Jeremiah traveled around; he had an independent fortune. He had lots of investments here and there. There are some very interesting things. We have the office documents of a perfume factory, a consortium in Egypt, that had branches all over the Mediterranean in Spain, Carthage, Greece, way back in Asia, etc. Pharaoh guaranteed them protection on the sea and a fair profit. Then he took his cut too. There were investors, businessmen, in all these places that had shares in this company. They had the same sort of thing you see now. They also had the takeovers and all sorts of dirty work too. So the Book of Mormon starts out one hundred percent with a completely authentic ring to the situation and the setting. If you were composing it, is that how you would have started it out? Would you have put all those nice little details in it? Where are we now—the fourth verse of the first chapter? Oh, we are just moving right along here.