

TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

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(Jeremiah)

Insights from Lehi's Contemporaries:
Solon and Jeremiah

The Book of Mormon tells us “for whom the bell tolls.” Lehi and his great contemporaries started a lot of chain reactions. We don't mention them just because they were interesting curiosities, or anything like that, but because we are still living on their capital. Why did I put Thales on the board, for example? He first raised the question of science and religion on a really scientific basis, and it has never been settled. The arguments have always been the same ever since, on both sides. Remember, Thales predicted the eclipse in 585 B.C. [858 was a slip of the tongue]. His mother was a Phoenician. He was supposed to be of the family of Cadmus. They migrated and settled Thebes in prehistoric times. Cadmus is the person who is supposed to have brought the Phoenician (phonetic) alphabet to Greece. Cadmus means “the man of the East” in Hebrew or Arabic. He's the man who comes from the East with the wisdom of Qedem. A descendant of his was Thales who moved to Miletus, and he is the first of the Milesian school. He is called “the first philosopher”—the first person who actually thought by himself entirely, ruling everything else out. This is very important. He began the Milesian School, and one of this group was Heraclitus of Ephesus, a nearby city. These were the cities of Asia Minor, settled by people who had been uprooted, who left the graves of their fathers. Their old cultures had, more or less, cracked up. They were engaged, as we saw, in mercenary works and in trade, and also in philosophy and thinking for themselves.

The Milesian School started out on this basis: “There is a God, but we can't use him in our calculations. We can't bring him into the laboratory. We can't weigh or measure anything about him, so let's see how far we can get without him.” So they became the first physicists. They first studied the *physis* which is the physical, tangible cosmos (the order of things in the *physis*). They were the physical scientists. Their argument was that you don't need God for your calculations; in fact, he will spoil things. This is what wrecks all theological arguments. All you have to do is say, “God did it,” and you don't have any argument left. Anything is possible with God. There's no argument after that, and it's absurd to go on arguing about it—though they do all the time. As I said, bringing God into the picture is the way to end any argument. He is infinite, he is everywhere, he is indescribable. You can't say anything about him without insulting him because he is so far from your comprehension, and yet he can do anything. Anytime you want to explain anything, you just say, “God.” Well, these people didn't find that approach satisfying. They said, “We can assume that God exists and let that go, but let's see how far we can go with our own experiments in weighing and measuring. So they became physicists. As they discovered, if God is unnecessary in your calculations, he soon becomes a nuisance. If he's a nuisance he becomes an obstacle, a pernicious element. They resent him, and before you know it they begin to preach actively against him. We've had very eminent scientists come here as evangelists, preaching nothing else but against God. Alfred Kazan has talked to students about that (at least, they've read about it). He has said we live in a generation that has decided they can get along without God; and now that leaves them in a rather

tragic situation. This was the same with the Greeks too. They didn't rule God out—but once you start saying, "Well, we can get along without him," you have problems. Laplace was the one who invented the spiral nebula origin of the universe. When Napoleon asked Laplace about God, he said, "I have no need for that hypothesis" (he didn't need God in his work). Men like him claim, "I have no need for that; whether he exists or not is none of my business. We don't deal with the big questions." Well, scientists are back to the big questions again. But this raised the issue which naturally became this: All right, when you are talking about God, how does everything begin? (This relates to the Book of Mormon, incidentally.) How does everything begin is the first thing. What about the cosmology—its organization, what it is made of, why it operates, and what makes it go? This became the first thing; they were looking for a first principal, a *primum mobile*. Thales looked for it and discovered it was water. Now, you notice this is exactly the same thing that the quantum physicists are doing today. They are looking for something smaller than quarks, which are smaller than atoms—some single element or particle which will be responsible for everything. It's that particle that we are after; that's the whole thing. That's exactly what they were looking for, and the process is still going on. They used whatever evidence they had. They used ingenious experiments. Thales decided that the basic element was water. Anaximander, who was the *aoriston* and the boundless, said that worlds proceed out of each other, and you don't ask how, particularly. As the Arabs say, "Never ask how." That's a good way of getting rid of an argument. When you say, "God does it," you ask, "How?" And the Arab says, "That's a *bilā kayfa* (that's a "don't ask how"). You just don't ask how. Actually, as Einstein said, "Science does not explain; it only describes." You describe what happens, but you haven't explained it. Then you go to the next step and describe what happens. You still haven't explained it. We still haven't explained what that ultimate particle is. Then Thales was followed by Anaximenes, an Athenian philosopher and celebrated atheist, who said it is air and has to do with condensation (hot and cold, condensed heavy and light, etc.)—that there's a solid element that is thinned out and is extreme in air; it would depend on the degree of condensation how near you get to atoms. Then Heraclitus said, "It's fire; that is the basic element." You get down to real atomists with Democritus and the Stoics.

Thales was a real scientist, and he raised the question that has never been settled yet. This comes right down to our time. It's the same thing with Solon. He is in direct line with our founding fathers. We must not forget that the founding fathers read their Cicero and their Plutarch, and they knew all about Solon and Diodorus—and the famous speeches of Thucydides and others. They knew those speeches, and they knew the arguments about democracy which Solon began. He was the father of modern democracy. They used them as their guide for producing the Constitution. These men were constitutionists. For four years at Claremont College, I taught a course alternately with Everett Dean Martin. He would teach on Tuesdays, and I on Thursdays. We taught absolutely opposite points of view. He was a founder of Cooper Union in New York, and he was a great student of the Constitution. This was his main theme: the great influence of the classical writers on the authors of the Constitution. So Solon comes right down to us. He was the first and greatest of the administrators. As I said, Senators are sometimes called Solons (it's easy to spell out in headlines), which is not without irony.

We were showing that Solon was more than a rational politician. He saw the religious foundation of things and what the real trouble was and where the enemy was. In a famous elegy of his, he said, "The ruin of our state will never come by the doom of Zeus, or through the will of the blessed, immortal gods. Who is the enemy? Don't blame them. For

Pallas Athena, Magathimus, Obrimopatres, Episcopus (she is the episcopal, the overseer) is the valiant daughter of a valiant sire. Our stout-hearted guardian, holdeth over us her protecting arms. We are all right as far as heaven is concerned. It is the townsfolk themselves and their false-hearted leaders who would fain destroy our great city through wantonness and love of money (we get back to the fundamentals here; in the Book of Mormon they set their hearts on riches), but they are destined to suffer sorely for their outrageous behavior. They know not how to hold in check their full-fled lust, nor be content with the merriment the banquet affords to take their pleasure soberly and in order (we should enjoy life, but these people don't hold themselves back). They are rich because they yield to the temptations of dishonest courses. They spare neither the treasures of the gods nor the property of the state and steal like brigands from one another."

I have a pile of clippings that high from the *Wall Street Journal* showing the shenanigans that go on in high places today. This is absolutely true. Solon goes on, "They pay no heed to the unshaken rock of holy justice [this passage comes up in the Book of Mormon and is practically a quote from Jeremiah; we will turn to Jeremiah in a minute] who, though she be silent, is aware of all that happeneth now or hath happened in the past, and in the course of time surely cometh to demand retribution [the rock of holy justice, which is referred to in the book of Moses in the same way by Enoch]." We talk about "the rock of our salvation." The rock is any firm foothold you can get for a thing, and the rock here is justice—doing that which is right. "Even now there cometh upon the whole city a plague which none may escape. The people have come quickly into degrading bondage. Bondage arouseth from their sleep war and civil strife, and war destroyeth many in the beauty of their youth. It is as if we were prey of a foreign foe. Our beloved city is rapidly wasted and consumed in those secret combinations [right out of the Book of Mormon, you see] which are the delight of dishonest men. [Again, where is the enemy? Not those wicked Lamanites.] These are the evils which stalk at home; meanwhile, the poor and needy in great numbers are loaded with shameful bonds and sold into slavery for foreign lands [because they couldn't meet it on their small farms; they were being taken over by the big land owners, as Isaiah says, 'adding field to field']."

You can match every verse of this with Isaiah who lived before this. But Jeremiah and Lehi were contemporary. Remember, the year 600 B.C. is the peak of Solon's career, just as it is with Lehi. Solon continues: "Thus the public calamity comes to the house of every individual, and a man is no longer safe in the gates of his own court." Crime is going to hunt you down, although you put yourself behind gates, etc. A couple of years ago I visited in southern California with a very high official who is also a member of the Church. He couldn't get into his own house without presenting a special card at the electronic gate opener. The place was patrolled by Doberman pinschers and by search lights. He had to have bodyguards all the time just because he had been so very, very successful. That's the way to live in a prison, isn't it? "His own court which refuse him their protection. It leapeth over the garden wall, however high it be, and surely findeth him out though he run and hide himself in the inmost corner of his chamber." Again, this is the language of the prophets of Israel. They use these very same terms and images. But this is literally true. It will trace you; you can't get away from it. Of course, it is also like prime time TV, where we are taken to the boudoirs of the mighty to see the shenanigans that go on there—usually ending in somebody getting shot.

This is his revelation: "These things my heart prompteth me to teach the Athenians to make them understand that lawlessness worketh more harm to the state than any other cause, but a law-abiding spirit createth order and harmony and, at the same time, putteth

chains upon evil doers. Under the reign of law, sanity and wisdom prevail ever among men.” Here is the principle. This is the “fullness of time,” the ripeness when the cup is full, when the fruit is ripe. In the promised land the promise is given (it is standing all the time) that the people will be swept from the land (they will not just hang around) when the time is fully ripe—when their cup of iniquity is full. The Lord will wait until then. As Solon says here, “Out of the cloud cometh snow and hail in their fury and a thunderbolt springeth from the lightning flash, so from great men [he is talking about Pisistratus who had been the tyrant of Athens; he was a great and capable man, but this is what they will always bring] ruin issueth upon the state, and people, through their own folly, sink into slavery under a single lord. Having raised a man to too high a place, it is not easy later to hold him back.” Mosiah, in chapter 29, gives a long sermon to his people on this subject. His sons refuse to become kings. He says if you make a man king, you can’t replace him. Remember the case of King Noah; it’s going to be awfully tough. “Now is the time to be observant of all these things. If ye have suffered the melancholy consequences of your own incompetence, do not attribute this evil fortune to the gods. You have yourselves raised up these men to power over you and have reduced yourself by this course to a wretched state of servitude. Each man among you individually [this is the way it goes; this is your free enterprise] walketh with the tread of a fox, but collectively you are a set of simpletons. You don’t act together at all, but for yourself you’re all out to get it.” Now this is the fatal thing. Rhetoric is the secret of the whole thing. We get it in the Book of Mormon too: “For ye look to the tongue and play of a man’s speech and regard not the deed which is done before your eyes [the skillful rhetoric, the skillful speech].” This reminds us that the Book of Mormon has characters that are concerned with this philosophical rationalism and atheism, such as Nehor and Korihor, who are also men of great ambition. There’s a whole string of them in the Book of Mormon who are very skillful in speech and do the same sort of thing. The people “look to the tongue and play of a man’s speech.” Remember, he was “skillful in many words,” we are told; he led all the people, and they just loved him. King Noah was extremely popular that way.

But what about the religion? This man has had experience. This is a theme you get in all the Greek tragedies. Remember, the Book of Mormon is a tragic book; it is “a voice from the dust.” It’s very sad, as you know. It begins on a note of destruction and ends on a note of destruction. It begins with lone survivors in the wilderness and ends with a lone survivor. There’s nothing more sad than survival; it’s a dirty word. “Thus all men of mortal mold, good and bad, think by straining every nerve to win a fair name, each man for himself by his own unaided efforts, until something befall him from without. Then straightway cometh pain. Until then, like gaping fools, we amuse ourselves with empty dreams. He who is worn by cruel disease [this is the American dream too; I can give you many cases] pondereth how one day he will be whole [our constant preoccupation with medicine and cures, miracle and otherwise]. Another who is a coward thinketh himself brave. Another still counteth himself handsome, though he hath no beauty of body. If one be penniless and subject to the toils of poverty, he assureth himself that he will someday win great riches.” There’s a marvelous speech by Timon of Athens on this in Shakespeare, in which he talks about what money can do. When Timon finds the treasure, he says, “This much of this will make black white, base noble, wrong right, coward valiant, young old. Why this, you gods, why this?” Money will do that; it will give you the answer. If you are a coward, if you are miserable, if you are base, it will exalt you. “This it is that makes the wappered widow wed again.” She can wed, no matter what, if she has it. “This again gives thieves honor, knee, and approbation with Senators on the bench.” A person can buy himself a place in politics, and he will be honored with the best. Timon gives this long speech. I could recite it for you if I were in the mood. This is the theme, and notice that

Shakespeare puts his play in Athens. *Timon of Athens* is a true story. Timon of Athens was very rich; he inherited this great fortune. But he was also very generous. He entertained everybody; he paid anybody's debts. He'd loan anybody anything they wanted. Doing that, he ran out of funds and became impoverished. Then he went around to his friends and tried to collect. Shakespeare knows how people are, and Timon couldn't collect anywhere. Everybody had a good excuse and felt sorrow. They cut him dead in the streets because he didn't have money anymore, etc. So he became a recluse. He went out in the woods and lived on roots. Then he says, "Earth, give me roots. He who asks better of thee sauce his pallet with thy most inoperative poison. What have we here? Gold! Precious!" Then he digs up a treasure. Herodes Atticus was the person who did it (he actually did). He went out in the woods to dig himself a grave. He was going to commit suicide because he had lost his wealth, and had no recognition whatever. As he started digging, he struck a fabulous treasure which made him enormously rich. He went to the Emperor Nerva and said, "Look, what can I do with this treasure; I can't use all this." Then the good Emperor Nerva said, "Well, if you can't use it, abuse it; it's yours." But he didn't abuse it; he gave the theatre of Herodes Atticus to the Athenians. It's still there. That's the one where they still put on Greek plays from way back in the first century. It's a beautiful theatre. I've seen some Aristophanes produced there. He found his money, but he found that people will do anything for it and will do nothing for you without it (this is the point).

This is the theme with Solon. Here is an example. "This is the trouble," he said, "no visible limit is set to wealth among men." Do you know who the richest family in America is? Did you see that in the newspaper the other day (oh, I cut this out too; it's too good to be true). It's a marvelous comment on our sense of values—the things that we consider to be of real worth. What is the richest family in America, worth approximately nine billion dollars? (That's a lot of dough, you see—nine thousand million.) The people who make M&Ms. That's where they made their fortune, on M&Ms. "They melt in your mouth, not in your hand; nine billion dollars, please." That's what we pay for in our society, the things that really count.

"Even now, those among us who have the largest fortunes are striving with redoubled energy. What abundance of riches could satisfy us all? Increase of goods cometh to mortals by gift to the gods, but out of it appeareth madness [this is the process again, the four steps of the cycle: the *olbos*, the *koros*, the *hubris*, and the *atē*]." This book I'm reading from is not in the library. It's by Professor Linforth from whom I had quite a number of seminars, including Greek composition. He was an eminent Hellenist. The book is called *Solon, the Athenian*.

Quoting from Solon again: "But out of it [the increase of goods] appeareth madness which leadeth to destruction. When Zeus sendeth his madness as punishment to men, it lighteth first upon one and then upon another." Then here is the typical Greek statement, right out of the Greek tragedy, as Sophocles would say, "Oh, human race, how I calculate you to be equal to exactly nothing." That's what Solon says here: "Perfect bliss as state of mind denied to mortal men, wretched are all they upon whom the sun looks down." That's what we learn. Nobody is completely happy in this life. "*Poneroi*, wretched are all those upon whom the sun looks down." Well, where does religion come in here and how does it help him? Well, there's his personal life, etc.? We mentioned his most famous line before.

Let's go on to somebody who's going to tell the same story exactly, but should be required reading for anyone who intends to study the Book of Mormon. If we put nothing else on the reading list, this is number one, two, three, four, and five. Of course, it's Jeremiah. As we read 1 Nephi 7:14, it appears that Jeremiah must have been a close personal friend of Lehi (he mentions him personally). "For behold, the Spirit of the Lord ceaseth soon to strive with them; for behold, they have rejected the prophets, and Jeremiah have they cast into prison [this is contemporary; it's Nephi speaking to his people]. And they have sought to take away the life of my father, insomuch that they have driven him out of the land." So they imprisoned Jeremiah, and they drove Lehi out of the land, who belonged to the party of Jeremiah. Now, we have very good contemporary sources which we will soon mention here that put us right into the scene—discovered between 1935 and 1938. No one believed him, as you will see from the book of Jeremiah, they didn't want to believe him. They knew he was right, as he said, but they didn't want to believe him. He had no large following at all, but he had some who were faithful to him, including prophets in the city and in the country (a faithful band). One of those was certainly Lehi. Being a very influential man and being of the party of Jeremiah, Lehi would have known Jeremiah (they were certainly contemporary). Jeremiah tells us about the situation in Jerusalem.

Let's get going here. We will use the King James, which is a great literary masterpiece. We will find good old Jeremiah here, and I'll read off the passages I quote. This will save you trouble if you want representative passages from Jeremiah. This will tell us what the situation is at Jerusalem. You have just heard from Solon (there's a lot more we could put in here) what the situation was in Athens. Incidentally, I think the library is making a photo copy of this, and I'll put it on reserve. They don't have this; it's my own. I got it from Professor Linforth, and it's a rare book. In Jeremiah 5:25 he begins summarizing the situation at Jerusalem: "Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you. [You could have had good things, but your own sins have kept you from having them; the Lord wants you to have good things.] For among my people are found wicked men: they lay wait, as he that setteth snares; they set a trap, they catch men." Well, this is what sales strategies are for, what public relations is for, what hype is for—to trap people. We have given courses here called "Strategies of Salesmanship." Well, strategy is defined in the dictionary as deception practiced on an enemy. That's exactly what it is, and you win wars by strategy—by making them think you are where you are not, deceiving them about your strength and your intentions. You fool them every way you possibly can. That's the soul of strategy because surprise is what you want to achieve. You want him to move in one direction while you're really moving in another, so strategy wins wars and tactics win battles. They are the same thing, but the idea is trickery all the way through. That's what you are supposed to do. A good general saves lives and everything else if he can fool the enemy and surprise him completely.

Jeremiah 5:27, "As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit [notice, the emphasis is all on deceit—saying things you don't mean; you can't rely on anybody; nobody keeps his word anymore]: therefore they are become great, and waxen rich [through deception; that's the secret of getting rich]. They are waxen fat, they shine [the Hebrew word there, *shemen* is to be fat and gleaming, glossy, fat and sassy; *shemen*, of course, is the very essence of prosperity, and it's just the word for fat]; yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked: they judge not the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge [they don't take his part]. Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely." They want to hear good things, of course. Samuel the Lamanite is the classic in the Book

of Mormon: If a person comes to Zarahemla telling you what is wrong with Zarahemla, you say he is a false prophet and try to put him to death. If a person comes and tells you what is right with Zarahemla, you lift him up on your shoulders, you dress him in fine apparel, and you claim he is a true prophet and become his followers. You just want to hear what's right with the country, not what's wrong with it (paraphrased). "And the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof? [what's going to happen if this is the way it is?]." The next chapter tells what's going to happen to them. Notice that the cause of this is not these wicked people from the north at all that he is talking about. They are the cause of it. But in Jeremiah 6:22 we read: "Thus saith the Lord, Behold, a people cometh from the north country, and a great nation shall be raised from the sides of the earth. They shall lay hold on bow and spear; they are cruel, and have no mercy; their voice roareth like the sea; and they ride upon horses [this is Babylonia; the Assyrians had already swept through there in a preceding generation], set in array as men for war against thee, O daughter of Zion."

Then in chapter 7, verse 4: "Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, are these." This is where we have our reference: Church members say, "This is the true church; we have the gospel, etc. We have the temple; that will make us safe." He says, "Don't trust in that." It's repeated three times in the fourth verse here. Then verse 5: "For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor [this is what they were not doing]; If ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt [notice walking after other gods comes last in the list; but, of course, it's a bad one; the other gods were Egyptian]: Then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever. Behold, ye trust in lying words that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; And come and stand before me in this house [come to the temple in that condition], which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the Lord." Remember, this is what the Lord said when he drove the thieves out, "My Father's house has become a den of thieves." He was quoting Jeremiah.

Verse 15: "And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim." This is a very interesting picture of how strong the Egyptian culture is in the city. It's referred to later on more fully, but he says in verse 18, "The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven [that's Isis, the Egyptian mother goddess], and to pour out drink offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger?" The ties with Egypt were very close; they had been for generations. In verse 25 here he tells what's been going on: "Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them: Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: they did worse than their fathers. Therefore thou shalt speak all these words unto them; but they will not hearken to thee." Jeremiah is commanded to preach to them. The Lord says, "I know they won't listen to you, but you are going out to preach to them. I sent my prophets before, and they didn't listen. I knew they wouldn't listen to them."

You might say, "Why do you bother to do these things?" Remember, when the Lord came, he said, "Now they have seen and hated both me and the Father. If I had not

testified to them, then they would not be guilty, but now they have to be responsible for refusing. They had the chance.” In the book of John, the Lord says, “What have I done that’s wrong? Which man convicteth me of evil? Then why don’t you believe?” He says, “Because your works are evil.” The Savior had come to bear witness, and he sent the apostles out to preach the same way and bear witness of him “that they may be without excuse.” That’s the word he uses. This leaves them without excuse. If he didn’t send the prophets, then the people would have an excuse. They could say, “Well, we didn’t have a chance; we never heard anything like that.” But he sent the prophets to them continually, and they paid no attention to them. This isn’t fatalism or anything like that. The Lord knows they are not going to receive it. “Thou shalt also call unto them; but they will not answer thee.” It was a futile mission he was on, but it was a very important mission. Even when we send missionaries out, we don’t expect them to convert everybody.

In chapter nine he wishes he were out of it all. This is the Rechabite principle. He’s going to refer to the Rechabites later on. The Rechabite principle is “get out of it, escape it, go to the desert, be by yourself.” This has happened from the very beginning. This always happens in the Near East where the desert begins right at the city wall. You can always get away from it. The only problem is how are you going to live once you are out there? So the hermits become men of extreme austerity of life—living, as John the Baptist did, on locusts and wild honey. These are the big locusts, and they are nourishing. They have protein in them. Then John had the wild honey. Well, what else was there to eat if you know what the Jordan is like? In chapter nine, verse two, Jeremiah says, “Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them! for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men. And they bend their tongues like their bow for lies: but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the Lord. Take ye heed every one of his neighbor, and trust ye not [*beware* is the word they look for] in any brother: for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbor will walk with slanders.” Don’t trust your brother, your neighbor, or anybody: that’s the principle. He says he’s got to get out of there. There’s too much, and he can’t take it. When you can’t trust anybody anymore, what’s the point of going on?

Verse five: “And they will deceive every one his neighbor, and will not speak the truth; they have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity. Thine habitation is in the midst of deceit; through deceit they refuse to know me, saith the Lord.” Notice, the deceit and lies. It’s Madison Avenue right down the line, isn’t it? “Their tongue is as an arrow shot out; it speaketh deceit: one speaketh peaceably to his neighbor with his mouth, but in heart he layeth his wait [to bring him on, etc.]” Let’s look at the first section of the Doctrine and Covenants. He uses this expression there. But remember Solon, where you couldn’t escape it. It comes into your bedroom, etc. Jeremiah says in verse 21 of the ninth chapter: “For death is come up into our windows, and is entered into our palaces, to cut off the children from without, and the young men from the streets. Speak, Thus saith the Lord.” These are the four things men are after. The Book of Mormon tells us there are four things that everyone is after. First Nephi says it, and the younger prophet Nephi says the very same thing. The four things everybody seeks for in the Book of Mormon are: wealth, power, popularity, and the lusts of the flesh (plenty of sex and all the rest of it). And these are the basic plots of the sure-selling TV prime time. And isn’t it interesting how many authors it took to produce that glorious plot and its glorious developments and ramifications. Nine thousand two hundred writers struck in southern California during this terrible strike. It took 9200 geniuses to write these old repetitious, thread-bare plots on TV. The industry ground to a halt when the 9200 decided

not to write anymore. I think two good writers could have handled it pretty well. These are commentaries on our culture we get here. This was Lehi's world, this was Jeremiah's world, and this was Solon's world. And there were these very developed societies with everything relatively peaceful at times. But there was great tension between Egypt in the West (in which Israel is putting its trust) and Babylon in the East (the great Asiatic power).

Verse 23: "Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom [clever guy], neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches [now what a change of tone; how suddenly everything cools off and becomes utterly delicious; what a contrast when he says]: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord [don't delight in those things]." This takes us back to Mosiah 4:11: "I would that ye should remember . . . the greatness of God, and your own nothingness, and his goodness and long-suffering towards you." Then you "shall always rejoice [there's nothing to worry about]." But it keeps everything churned up if people are after the power, the gain, and the celebrity. As he says, "If you glory, glory in the Lord who exercises loving kindness." Remember the opening passage of the Koran. *Rahmān* means "gentle;" and *rahīm* means he is "holding back. There is no power, there is no might, except God." He has all the power, and yet he doesn't use it—He holds back. He is loving and kind; he withholds all the time. This passage from the Koran is contrasted with the bloody, absolutely murderous, disposition of so many Moslems against each other. And the Christians are just as bad. But these passages explain how the Lord is, and this was the world of Jeremiah.

We'll go on; we need to get some good ones here. Notice Jeremiah 14:12. This is the theme of all the prophets, especially Isaiah. Isaiah is the most quoted prophet in the Book of Mormon. We don't need to quote him here. He was the most quoted author in all subsequent Jewish literature. They quote Isaiah all over the place. The Dead Sea Scrolls are practically built around Isaiah. Here in verse 12: "When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and an oblation, I will not accept them: but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence. Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, the prophets say unto them, Ye shall not see the sword [now, these are the false prophets], neither shall ye have famine; but I will give you assured peace in this place [the prophets were full of happy talk]. Then the Lord said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them . . . [he comes up against these]." He tells them they cannot obtain peace through strength (armaments). In chapter 15, verse 12, he says, "Shall iron break the northern iron and the steel? Thy substance and thy treasures will I give to the spoil without price, and that for all thy sins, even in all thy borders."

They are breaking the sabbath, and it is very important to keep the sabbath. In chapter 17, verse 21, we read: "Thus saith the Lord; Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem; Neither carry forth a burden [a thousand paces was the limit] out of your houses on the sabbath day, neither do ye any work, but hallow ye the sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers. But they obeyed not, neither inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear, nor receive instruction." So this is the theme. Then in Jeremiah 18:18, "Then said they, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, and let us smite him with the

tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words.” Remember, Solon said, “I was like a wolf between two packs of dogs. Nobody wanted me because I didn’t say what either side wanted to hear.” In that time people said, “Solon is a fool. If I had that power, I would be flayed and consent to the annihilation of my race.”

So Jeremiah was cut off. He was a man alone, and so was Lehi. Remember, he got into real trouble and had to leave town if he was going to save his life at all. Continuing in Jeremiah 22:17, “But thine eyes and thine heart are not but for thy covetousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence, to do it. . . . Thus saith the Lord; Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place. For if ye do this thing indeed, then shall there enter in by the gates of this house, the kings sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, he, and his servants, and his people” (Jeremiah 22:3–4). But their eyes are just for covetousness, the opposite of these things, so the condition is clear.

Incidentally, I was talking about the Egyptian pharaoh Necho and Nebuchadnezzar and Hophra, who is Apries. They are all in here. Necho II wasn’t killed at the Battle of Carchemish in 605 B.C. He withdrew to Egypt and defended it. The Babylonians weren’t able to take Egypt. He did defend it against them. Then he was followed by Pharaoh Hophra who was Apries. He always kept promising hope to Jerusalem in Lehi’s day, but he never gave it. He was lackadaisical, and he lost the city. That was when it fell. But they put all their trust in Egypt because they said, “Egypt has the money and the power.” It also had the navy, but it didn’t save Jerusalem because the king didn’t act. He is talking about this in Jeremiah 25:18–21: “To wit, Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah, . . . Pharaoh king of Egypt, and his servants, and his princes, and all his people; And all the mingled people, and all the kings of the land of Uz, and all the kings of the land of the Philistines, and Ashkelon, and Azzah, and Ekron [Phoenician centers], and the remnant of Ashdod, Edom [way south in Arabia], and Moab [where Amman is today; that’s Jordan], and the children of Ammon.” It’s very interesting that the capital of Jordan is still Amman. Ammon is by far the most common name in the Book of Mormon. Amon was the god of the empire; his name was everywhere at this time. This was the great commercial empire of the twenty-sixth dynasty, and Israel (Judah) was right in the midst of it. This long list includes the kings Zimri, and the kings of Elam (verse 25). They are way back in Persia. And all the kings of Medes, way up in central Asia. That’s where Cyrus came from.

Then they wanted to put him to death, and Jeremiah said, “But know ye for certain, that if ye put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves” (Jeremiah 26:15). “Then said the princes and all the people unto the priests and to the prophets; This man is not worthy to die: for he hath spoken to us in the name of the Lord our God” (verse 16). It was the priests who wanted to go through with it. This is important here because this is the historical part that has now been so well supported by the Lachish Letters. We will have to refer to them the next time. Chapter 26 is very good historically. He puts this into the local scene and the Book of Mormon scene, as Lehi describes it. Lehi gives the most vivid description of all of the actual situation, the state of mind, in Jerusalem at the time. This gives us the international affairs, and it gives us the moral condition of the city, etc. But it doesn’t tell us about the tension, the particular parties, the differences in families, etc. that you find in the Book of Mormon.

Jeremiah 27:12, “I spake also to Zedekiah king of Judah according to all these words, saying, bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live [you won’t have any trouble; you’ll be all right]. Why will ye die, thou and thy people, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence? [if you just knuckle under to Babylon it’ll be for seventy years; then it will be all right, meantime] ye shall not serve the king of Babylon.” The prophets say that, but they are just prophesying lies. It was the Egyptian party against the Babylonian party.

Chapter 28 begins this way (compare with the Book of Mormon): “And it came to pass the same year, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the fourth year, and in the fifth month, that Hananiah the son of Azur . . .” Hananiah is the false prophet, and he has a debate with Jeremiah. Hananiah is wrong and Jeremiah is right, of course, but they won’t listen to him. Hananiah is a good name for him; it means “happy talk, happy man.” *Hanan* is to be healthy, happy, and contented with everything. He says, “Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. Within two full years will I bring again into this place all the vessels of the Lord’s house, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place, and carried them to Babylon.” In 597 Nebuchadnezzar had taken the city before and taken this stuff to Babylon. Hananiah said he’s going to bring it back within two years. This is in the first year of Zedekiah, but we are told here it was in the tenth year that the blow struck. That gave Lehi plenty of time to escape.

The Prophet Jeremiah wouldn’t go for what Hananiah said (verse 9): “The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the Lord hath truly sent him.” Now, this is the test. Jeremiah agrees that what Hananiah said would be great. He says, “I like what you say. It’s very pleasing. I would think that was wonderful if it happened that way.” Verse 6: “Amen: the Lord do so: the Lord perform thy words which thou hast prophesied, to bring again the vessels of the Lord’s house, and all that is carried away captive, from Babylon into this place.” He’s not an evil wisher, not a spiteful character. He just says, “That’s not the way it’s going to be. What we will have to do is just wait and see how it turns out.” Verse 9: “The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the Lord hath truly sent him [so we will know]. Then Hananiah the prophet took the yoke from off the prophet Jeremiah’s neck, and brake it.” He was wearing a yoke to show that Israel and Judah would have to wear a yoke of the king of Babel. Hananiah broke it off and said, “There’s not going to be any yoke.” Verse 11: “Even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from the neck of all nations within the space of two full years. And the prophet Jeremiah went his way.” He didn’t fight or argue about it. He would just have to wait and see how it turned out. The interesting thing is that he said, “Three cheers for Hananiah. I only hope you’re right, but I know you’re not.”

Continuing with verse 12: “Then the word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah . . . saying, Go and tell Hananiah, saying, “Thus saith the Lord; Thou hast broken the yokes of wood; but thou shalt make for them yokes of iron. . . . [Verse 15] Hear now, Hananiah; The Lord hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lie. Therefore thus saith the Lord; Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the Lord. So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month.” So this proves that Jeremiah, not Hananiah, was right. In making these decisions, Jeremiah is not being rancorous. He says, “This is what the Lord tells me to say.” We always get this picture of the prophets of Israel as fierce, old mullahs,

something like the Ayatollah, showering the sparks of hatred and fear and the great Satan. There's none of that in it at all. He keeps saying, "Look, the Lord is gentle and kind. He wants to help you and do everything he can for you, and you won't let him." He says, "Hananiah has given you a wonderful program. If you would only behave yourself, that's the way it would be. But I'm afraid that's not the way it's going to be." So this is the Jerusalem of Jeremiah. There's a lot more, of course. This is the second longest book in the Bible (52 chapters). Isaiah is 66 chapters. In Jeremiah you will find the story of what was going on. But what you find in the Book of Mormon is not a rehash or a paraphrase of Jeremiah at all. It's a much fuller picture of the specifics of what was going on. You get a marvelous picture of what was happening. We'll talk about that next time and his getting out. Our time is up now, and we must go and hide in the cliffs of the mountains. Jeremiah did that. When he went to Babylon, he hid in a cave for a while. Then he went back. He was a very important man.