

TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

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Semester 1, Lecture 7
1 Nephi 1; Jeremiah
The Days of King Zedekiah:
“There Came Many Prophets”

Well now, we have to get Lehi out of Jerusalem. With all these stories and all these other notes and things, I turn and read that first chapter of 1 Nephi, and it's miraculous—the condensation, the prose, the simplicity, the directness. He has the four qualities that Matthew Arnold attributes to Homer. The Book of Mormon has them; I don't know anything else that has them. If you were to be asked on a test, for example, “What is the significance of the Lachish Letters for the Book of Mormon? They are immensely important. They are contemporary records—first-hand records, not records that have come down to us. They are the original documents, and they name names. They don't name Jeremiah. It's interesting that Jeremiah is never named in the Bible except in the book of Jeremiah. In Jeremiah's time the person they were all consulting as a prophet was Huldah, a woman. She was the prophetess; it's very interesting. Like Lehi, Jeremiah was an amateur prophet. You can see that he was engaged in business dealings and things like that. He moved around a lot, preaching as he went. The same thing happened with Lehi; it's very clear there in the first chapter. But it [the Lachish record] mentions Uriah who was a friend to them both. It mentions some other people and what went on, and various places.

They are leaving, and the situation is so close to the Book of Mormon. It's very dramatic and very intense. This is quite clear in both documents. But here we have something with which we can check the Book of Mormon story step by step. So we go on: “The Lachish letters center on the activities of the prophets. They are causing grave concern to the government; they are subversives.” We read in 1 Nephi 1:4, “In that same year there came many prophets, prophesying unto the people that they must repent, or the great city Jerusalem must be destroyed.” That was subversion; that would never do, you see. So the government was after them. Torczyner, the editor of these Lachish Letters, said, “It must certainly be admitted that there was more than one prophet at this time. There were prophets circulating around.” Israel usually has a chief prophet at a particular time, like Isaiah or Jeremiah, but Jeremiah wasn't even the chief one at this time. Uriah was an important man. He had been preaching perhaps longer than Jeremiah had. As I said, the prophetess was Huldah. She was the center of attention if they wanted the big stuff. Torczyner says here, “The central figure, of course, was Jeremiah, but it is only by chance we know about him. He is not even mentioned in the book of Kings; it's the Prophetess Huldah, an otherwise quite unknown figure, whom Josiah consults.” Well, that was back in Josiah's day, but now we are down in the time of Zedekiah. We are told that Uriah's religious influence had been great. Uriah prophesied, “according to all the words of Jeremiah” (Jeremiah 26:20). So he was spreading Jeremiah's message. Lehi did the same thing, so this was the Jeremiah party, you might say. And they were not popular, remember. Nobody wanted them with all this doom and gloom. They were running from the police everywhere.

Question: You tell us that Jeremiah was a little-known prophet, and this prophethood was well known. When you say the word “prophet” to me, I think of the hierarchy in the Church that we have today. Was it like that at all back then? Answer: No, that has nothing to do with it. As Brigham Young said, “Prophecy is not an office; it’s a gift. Some people have it and some don’t.” We are told that anyone who has a testimony of Jesus Christ has the gift of prophecy. But you have no right prophesying for the Church. There are various people who have the gift very strongly. No president of the Church ever had it more strongly than Eliza R. Snow. She made some marvelous prophecies, but she didn’t speak to the world and to the Church. This is given as a special gift, like healing, etc. There are some interesting stories on that.

Uriah was a prophet and had this particular gift. He went around and Jeremiah was authorizing him. You notice how Lehi took up the activity later on. Lachish Letter number six tells us, “The words of the prophets are dangerously undermining morale of both the military and the people. Behold, the words are not good, both to weaken the hands of the country and the city everywhere.” Jeremiah 38 says the very same thing, “For thus he weakeneth the hands of the men of war [soldiers, *yedê anshê ha-milḥāmāh*] that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people [*kōl hā-‘ām*]” (Jeremiah 38:4). This is what we are told in the Book of Mormon, that many prophets came prophesying doom, and the people must repent. Nephi said that there were many prophets. “Lehi, as he went forth prayed unto the Lord, yea, even with all his heart, in behalf of his people” (1 Nephi 1:5). In the fifth verse already; things move fast in that first chapter. In reply to his prayer, he received a vision which sent him out to join the prophets. Nephi said, “My father . . . went forth among the people, and began to prophesy” (verse 18). This was as a result of this vision. What happened? He wasn’t a prophet before, but then he joined the prophets. He went forth among the people. You notice that every mention of the prophets here says that they were discouraging the people—that they were spreading dissent (repentance) among the people. It worried the ruling party, of course; it made them look bad. Verse 18: “. . . and began to prophesy and to declare unto them concerning the things which he had both seen and heard” (his vision). Well, he got into real trouble then, as you know. In 1 Nephi 7:14, Nephi tells us, “For behold, they have rejected the prophets, and Jeremiah have they cast into prison [this is not by revelation; he knows this by the news]. And they have sought to take away the life of my father, insomuch that they have driven him out of the land.” Such is the situation.

We find out from these Lachish Letters, as Torczyner says, that Uriah and others have hidden in the hills of western Judah for a long time. Lehi and his family went out and hid, but they didn’t hide long; after three days they moved down the coast. But the brothers went and hid in the caves near Jerusalem. As you know (many of you have been there, I’m sure), the whole limestone area around Jerusalem is just peppered with caves, wonderful caves all over the place. Right up to Jerusalem, there are caves everywhere—the cave of Machpelah and all the famous caves. There are hundreds of caves. The Dead Sea Scrolls were found in as many as three hundred different places, including the huge cave of Murabaat (which is much bigger than this room) where they found hundreds of documents. They were just a few miles from Jerusalem, and nobody knew of their existence until quite recently. We’ll come to them. They are the second great find that has direct bearing on the Book of Mormon. But Torczyner said, “They may have hidden in the hills of Western Judah.” And we find Lehi doing the same thing. It’s very interesting here that “Uriah’s story is being told,” as Torczyner points out, “only as a parallel to Jeremiah’s not less dangerous position.” Uriah’s story is a parallel; they were both doing

the same thing (this is where you get the characteristic repeated scenario, etc.). Well, that's exactly what Lehi's story is, a parallel to Jeremiah's. That's what his son said. Nephi said, "They put him into prison and cast my father out." Like Uriah's story, his is a parallel to Jeremiah's "not less dangerous position." So we can add Lehi to this as a thoroughly typical figure of the time. Then there's the name *yahu*, etc.

This is a national calamity, of course, with the background of darkening skies, etc. But the Lachish Letters are concerned with relatively narrow circles of friends. You see groups working together (little circles). We read about clandestine flights from the city in both the Book of Mormon and here, involving friends and family (going back to talk with Laban, etc.). Nephi and his brethren go back to town to persuade Ishmael, a friend of the family who had a family of daughters, to come down and join them. Nephi gets Zoram, the servant of Laban to come. They go up to strike a deal with Laban who knew them. He knew the boys when they came there, and he knew they had this great wealth. Well, they brought it up and showed it to him. They found out in the plates that they were related to Laban. So we have this sort of aristocracy in the town, and this is where the trouble is. This is clearer in the book of Jeremiah than anywhere else. It was long believed that it was only a few of the chief families that were taken away into Babylon. We know today that it was very different. They took everybody except that relatively small group of poor people. Nephi and his brethren went back, and they began to split up right off. When they went on their first mission to get the brass plates, they split up. Later, they took sides in the family. Laman and Lemuel and two daughters of Ishmael wanted to go back and give up the whole operation. They said, "We are fools to leave Jerusalem." Remember, he said, "The people of Jerusalem were a righteous people, for they kept the law of Moses." Then Nephi said, "If the former inhabitants of this land had been righteous, do you think the Lord would have allowed our ancestors to move in here and drive them out? No, it was because they were unrighteous, and that's exactly what's happening today." When they were going through Arab country there, he said, "Do you think if those people had been righteous, it would have happened?"

It was the same thing that happened here. Here's what they said in 1 Nephi 17:22: "And we know that the people who were in the land of Jerusalem were a righteous people; for they kept the statutes and judgments of the Lord, . . . they are a righteous people; and our father hath judged them." They got so prejudiced that they even planned to murder their father if they got chance. They were especially disgruntled at having to defer to their father in a very interesting quality. This is another thing that is mentioned in the Lachish Letters, a *piqqeah*. A *piqqeah* is a person who sees things that others do not see. It means very sharp sighted. Here we are told that a man of prophetic calling, one of the prophets they are trying to catch (not Uriah), is *ha-piqqeah* (with the definite article). He is the *piqqeah*, the sharp seer. He is a man who sees something that other people don't see, but it is real. Such people were held in suspicion then. This is what Torczyner said, "They looked down upon them as being visionary." See what Laman and Lemuel said about their father. Torczyner said, "This means the open-eyed or the visionary man [he underlined visionary], the seer, the man whose eyes God has opened to see the things that others do not see. To the followers of the prophets this was the highest term of praise, but for his critics it was a term of derision." This is what the brothers say to Nephi already in the second chapter, "They did murmur in many things against their father, because he was a visionary man . . . [using exactly the same word; they weren't going to follow him; he was a *piqqeah* just like these other prophets that he knew] and had led them out of the land of

Jerusalem, to leave the land of their inheritance, and their gold, and their silver, and their precious things, to perish in the wilderness. And this they said he had done because of the foolish imaginations of his heart” (1 Nephi 2:11). They wouldn’t believe a prophet. He was a *piqqeah*, and that’s what they accused him of being, “visionary.” These are exactly the qualities that Lehi revered and treasured, and he had them himself.

In 2 Kings we read where Elisha asked the Lord to open the eyes of certain servants that were with him. He opened them (the word is *piqqeah* again), and then they saw that there were hosts standing by that they didn’t know were there at all. They were on a different level. You can understand how that is. People who watch “Star Trek” and things like that know that you can disembodify and appear in other places. There are other dimensions, other wave lengths, and things like that. That’s what a *piqqeah* is. He sees things on a different wave length that you can’t see at all, but it is there. Because you can’t see it, doesn’t mean it isn’t there. Anyway, the brothers thought so.

This is an eloquent passage in which Torczyner sums it up: “The Lachish Letters reflect the mind, the struggles, the sorrows, the feelings of ancient Judah.” Notice, there were high feelings in the family—talking about murder and accusing their father. Their brother called them down, and they beat him up. The angel came and told them to stop doing it (all sorts of things). Then they humbled themselves and went and asked their father’s pardon. The next thing you know they are murmuring again. Well, this is typical of those people. Do you read the news about Lebanon, the Near East today? It’s that way all the time, isn’t it? It’s just like this Starcky here. He was making a peaceful mission, just 25 miles from Lachish back to Jerusalem to bring some stuff, and he was stopped in the road by some Arabs who wanted what he had. They took it and murdered him, just like that. This is what goes on. It’s not a safe country to be in. I had a terrible experience in Sidon once, but we won’t go into that.

“. . . the mind, the struggles, the sorrows, the feelings of ancient Judah.” The emotions run so high. To an even greater extent the family of Nephi split along political lines. If the situation of Uriah parallels that of Jeremiah, even more closely does it parallel that of Lehi when we learn from the Lachish Letters, “. . . a warning from the prophet to one of his friends who is apparently in the same danger as he himself is. It is, therefore, a prophet fleeing from his home and his friends, a prophet wanted by the military authorities.”

We saw that at the center of nearly all the letters was a high military officer. It’s very interesting that the Jaush we talked about (*Yaush* or *Jaush*; *Yaush* is the way it is usually rendered) was the man who was going to try Hoshayahu of Qiryat Ye‘arim for treason because he had tipped Uriah off and let him escape to Egypt. They fetched him back to the palace and killed him. But the funny thing is that Yaush was a good friend of Uriah himself; he didn’t want to have Uriah killed. So what position did that put him in? This is the situation we find in the Book of Mormon all the way through here, and we can run into these split loyalties ourselves. The essence of tragedy is not the good guys against the bad guys; it’s not black against white at all. It’s the incompatibility of two good things.

You should see the Theban (Greek) plays; they are very good productions. They are about Oedipus and Orestes, and it’s the same thing. What makes it really tragic? Why is the case of Orestes so tragic? Well, his father was murdered. He was bound by sacred oath to avenge the murder of his father; he must do it. But the murderer of his father was his

mother. He was also bound not to kill his mother; it's not good to do that. What's he supposed to do? Well, he solved the problem, as all of us would, by going stark raving mad. It was too much for him, you see. He must avenge his father, but he can't kill his mother. So what can he do? He went mad. What do you do in a case like that? This stumped Aeschylus. He had the solution, and they always leave it hanging. This is what happened: Orestes went to the hill of the Areopagus where Paul preached his sermon and where there is another one of those caves from the most ancient, archaic times. It was the spirit of the earth, and so they used to go there. The jury—the twelve good men and true—in long, black robes (just as they still wear in England; judges still wear the black robes, and for murders they put on the black hoods) were supposed to judge them. So how did they judge? The only way they could—six against six. Six said he was innocent because he couldn't help it—he was avenging his father. Six said he was guilty for killing his mother, although he had to do it (he did it, you know). So what do you do in a case like that? It is deadlocked. The only thing you can have is a *deus ex machina*. A statue of Athena there suddenly came to life. Athena descended from heaven in a basket (a machine; that's the *machina*), and she cast the final vote (casting the white pebbles against the black pebbles; the black for death and the white for life). The moral is that the problem can only be solved by direct intervention from heaven. God must intervene in some way or another, so Athena came and cast the deciding vote which was for acquittal. He was innocent. Then he gained his sanity back. The last play was called "The Furies." Then it became "The Eumenides," which means "the blessed ones" or "the favored ones." So they changed their identity from furies to eumenides.

This is the same situation in Lehi's family. There was something to be said on both hands. The brothers [Laman and Lemuel] say, "We have to respect these people; they are living the Law of Moses very strictly. They are going to church and all that sort of thing." Nephi says, "That isn't enough; that doesn't count." So what's going to happen? Their father is visionary. It's great to be visionary, but they are not going to follow him. And this man Jaush who had been ordered to investigate the prophet who had escaped "appears to have been on the best of terms with the king, and both men still respected the prophet." Remember, the king respected the prophet. He brought him in for secret consultations and said, "Don't let the people find out about this. Don't let the princes (the *sarim*) find out about this, but tell me, how is it going to be?" Then he didn't like the news that Jeremiah gave him. Notice what Torczyner said, "Their hearts ached that they should be responsible for his destruction." They had to do it, but it's terrible that they had to do it. This is a situation we may find ourselves in from time to time. "And in both dramas both sides had ties to the Egyptian party." Lehi supported the anti-Egyptian party, and that's a strange thing. It's a strange thing also that the prophet Uriah was fleeing to Egypt, not to Babylonia. He had been supporting the Babylonian party and had been against the Egyptian policy of the government. Why should he flee to Egypt? Torczyner said, "That's a paradox." He can't figure out what was going on. Why did Lehi's people flee toward Egypt? They went down to Arabah in the same direction that Johanan took the people from Bethlehem to Egypt, and took Jeremiah along with them. Torczyner asked, "Why would the good man flee to Egypt of all places when his crime was supporting Jeremiah in calling for peace with Babylonia?" He favored Babylonia and should have gone to Babylonia. Torczyner said, "It's simply astonishing that he fled toward Egypt instead of Babylonia." Well, Lehi's family did the same thing.

This Jaush was a very important person. Let's see what we say here: He was the military governor of the second most important town, the oldest and strongest fort, halfway between Egypt and Jerusalem (that is Lachish). The records were being kept in his house,

which was really the guardhouse. It was his house by virtue of his office. He had to stay there in the dwelling quarters upstairs. You find the same thing with Laban, as the man says here, “Laban’s official position resembles that of Jaush. They play a key role.” Torczyner postulates that Jaush must have been the military governor of Lachish, and possibly governor of the city. Laban had a very high office. He was a military governor; we are told what he was here. He was out with the elders counseling by night. The king was rather weak; he sort of turned things over to Laban. There are wonderful character pictures here, just painted with a few deft strokes, as Shakespeare did. You get a very good picture of Laban in his ceremonial armor—his greed, meanness, and cruelty, etc. So you don’t feel a moment’s hesitation when . . . Well, I must tell you that story (that’s my favorite one) when we get to Laban’s demise.

He was possibly governor of the city, but probably would have been housed in the region of the palace fort or keep, especially I would say, during the crisis both in Jerusalem and Lachish for the sake of safekeeping. If the records weren’t there all the time, they would be put there for safekeeping during this time of crisis. Anyway, that’s where they were in both stories, at the military governor’s house. The military governor was an important man at this time. The most important man at Thebes was the high priest of Amon, but he was a military governor. He was a high military officer at the same time. So there were these offices of military governor, high priest, and king at Thebes. But there were rival kings at Tanis, and Bubastis, and Sais (it was a mess). The picture is characteristic here: “. . . a mighty man apparently in command of at least fifty men, and possibly even of tens of thousands.”

It’s interesting that we read in the Amarna Letters from the earlier time when Jerusalem was being besieged that the military governor commanded fifty men in the city for patrolling the streets, etc. and ten thousand men in the field. Well, that’s the very same thing you find in the Book of Mormon where the brothers say they don’t dare go back and face Laban: “How is it possible that the Lord will deliver Laban into our hands? Behold, he is a mighty man, and he can command fifty, yea, even he can slay fifty; then why not us?” (1 Nephi 3:31). Nephi replies, “Let us be faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord; for behold he is mightier than all the earth, then why not mightier than Laban and his fifty, yea, or even than his tens of thousands?” (1 Nephi 4:1). It’s like the normal setup of a division, a brigade, or a platoon today which has so many men. It’s very stable and lasts for centuries.

Where is the king in all this? Well, in both cases he is a weak character. Remember, he told Jeremiah he was afraid of the people and the princes. He didn’t stop the princes when they took Jeremiah away from the palace prison and put him in a dungeon—down in that filth so that he sank in. Incidentally, the word the Bible uses to describe the rags they threw down to him is “filthy.” He was down there in the filth. He stood on the rags, and then they put more rags under his arm pits and pulled him up. But the king was a weak character. He didn’t take the lead at all because he was scared stiff. Remember, he had been installed by Nebuchadnezzar who changed his name to Zedekiah from Mattaniah. He was responsible to the king of Babylon, and yet he was supporting Necho, the Egyptian king who had just chased the Babylonians away. He thought, “The Babylonians won’t come back now. The safe thing for me is to stick with the Egyptians.” But if you owe your job to Nebuchadnezzar, when he comes back you’re going to be “in the soup.” As we see, he was. He was taken to Riblah and blinded and then taken away to Babylon.

Torczyner summarizes the letters. We could be going through and reading the letters. It would be very interesting, but that would slow us down. It would take forever. Since Torczyner knows something about them, we will trust him to say what's in them: "As for Jaush, the king appeals to him in everything concerning this part of the country." He consults him on everything. He's the same weak king here in the Lachish Letters that you find in the Lehi story. Notice, they don't go to the king to get the family records back; they go to Laban. Laban would probably have enjoyed the same preference at Jerusalem that Jaush did in Lachish. "The archives were housed at Laban's official residence, making him a top candidate for counselor to the king," like Jaush. Then there's the story of negotiating for the brass plates—the bribery and threats of violence. We are getting ahead of the story, but that is so beautifully reflected in the story of Wenamon, an earlier Egyptian story from the time. He went to buy some logs for the temple at Thebes. He was a high priest there. He had letters of credit which he lost, and he had been robbed in the harbor because of all these international troubles. When they wanted to collect the money, he said, "I was robbed in your harbor."

The king said, "Well, it was probably your men who robbed you."

He said, "No, it was a Syrian crew that robbed me."

"Ah, they gave you a Syrian crew, did they? They were out to plunder you; you can see that." Everybody was up to tricks like that. Wenamon asked for the logs, and it's interesting that he said, "Reverence Amon who is the ruler of the world." Notice, Amon was everything there, and he is also important in the Book of Mormon. By far the most common name in the Book of Mormon is Ammon. Amon was the king of the empire. Of course, we have a hymn about Amon [spelled *Ahman*]. "What tho, if the favor of Ahman possessing, this world's bitter hate you are called to endure?" [Hymn #266, "The Time Is Far Spent," Eliza R. Snow].

Anyway, the king said, "All right, I respect Amon; I'll give you the logs when you give me the money. The records are all right here." Then he had his secretary go in, and there were all the records stacked up from hundreds of years back. He brought them out and said, "Look, you paid so much for logs when you came another time. Yes, we respect Amon and all that, but you paid cold cash for the logs before." So he had to raise the cash. The point is that the king had the records right in the room next to his palace. It gave a very vivid description. When Wenamon went in, he said, "There was a big window at the back [a beautiful scene]. The Syrian Sea was dashing on the rocks as he lay on the cushions with a window behind him." He went into this airy room in the palace, but the records were right next door. This was the situation.

I might as well tell you the story about Nephi's successful encounter with the drunk Laban and his deception of Laban's servant to gain access to the treasure in the archives. Notice his night mission. He went where the Spirit led him. We see that Zoram, the servant, had been out with the elders by night, and he was scared stiff when he found out who Nephi was. Then Nephi found Laban lying drunk after the meeting. He was out there dead drunk in the streets, in his full ceremonial armor. Nephi wondered what he was supposed to do. Then he had a long debate with himself (we should mention that). At the time when I had to have all Arab classes here (I should say all Moslem; but they were all Arabs—some Persians). There were two sitting in the front row, Salim and Fayek Salen down in New Mexico now. He became a physician to Qadhafi. He was only seventeen years old when he came here, and he lived at our house. He was a very bright little guy. He

knew all the *Mu‘allaqāt*, the seven Hanging Poems by heart. That’s really something; they were written before Islam, you know. Well, I told the story of cutting off the head of Laban there, which has always shocked everybody as being immoral. Well, it is. It shocked Nephi, too. He had to argue with himself for an hour. He wouldn’t do it (I’ll tell you about that when we get to it). But anyway, these boys were worried. I could hear murmurs all over the class. They didn’t like this story of cutting off Laban’s head like that. Fayek Salim raised his hand and said, “Mr. Nibley, there is something very wrong about this story; this is not a good story. When he found Laban lying in the street like that, why did he wait so long to cut off his head? That doesn’t ring true—any Arab would have done it like that, of course.” In other words, the story does ring true. I explained that Nephi was a city boy, and he was rather squeamish about cutting people’s heads off and things like that. But that’s just the natural thing. That would have been the natural impulse. The streets, of course, were pitch dark; they were not illuminated by night. He could have gotten away with it by moonlight. But that’s getting ahead of the story. We’d better move along, hadn’t we? No, I don’t know that we should. I mean you could spend the rest of the semester on that first chapter. My land, what a document it is!

The situation matches that in Lachish Letter eighteen. This letter must be forwarded from Jaush, the important man here, to the king. It would pass through Qiryat Ye‘arim and be taken by night. Well, now if the king’s own messenger can’t take a message from the high command in the field back to the king without having to do it by night (sneak it through), things are pretty bad, aren’t they? They tell us in the Lachish Letters that the halfway point between them was Azekah. That was where the signal fires were, so they could signal direct code from Jerusalem. They had gone out. Azekah had fallen, so the letters had to be taken personally now by hand, and also by night. Oh, it was tough going!

I can remember no less a person than Prince Bernard rushing in at about 2:00 o’clock in the morning on a rainy night in Holland at Eindhoven. He dashed in on his motorcycle to deliver some messages. He was a very dashing person and rather enjoyed this—Prince Bernard himself at headquarters. But little kids would carry them most of the time, and this is what we have here. Lehi’s son takes Laban’s servant with him “that the Jews might not know concerning our flight, . . . lest they pursue us and destroy us” (1 Nephi 4:36). Remember, they tried to pursue them, but they lost them. And as it told us before, the Prophet Uriah was running away and being chased by the police. They caught up to him. They got extradition, took him out of Egypt, and took him back to the palace. Even so, we see in the Lachish Letters “a prophet fleeing from his home and his friends, a prophet wanted by the military authorities. The military correspondence of the Lachish Letters with its grim suspicions and disloyalty, the double dealing, fervid denials, charges and investigations [You see, Josiah at Qiryat Ye‘arim denied everything. He hadn’t been guilty of it at all. But somebody had to be suspected; somebody was opening the mail. Somebody helped the prophet escape. Who was it? There were charges and denials. It may have been Jaush himself who was a friend of Uriah. So there’s all sorts of intrigue here] and reports remind one of the later Bar Kokhba Letters, original letters from a much later time but the same place and same situation.” We will mention them the next time. Torczyner suggests that “the prophet’s warning letter could have been sent while the prophet was still near his town through a little boy, most suited as an unsuspected messenger.” Little boys were used for that in the time of David. In 2 Samuel there are a couple of passages. He says, “Such small boys are used also today in Palestine, often for quite responsible missions.” They also brought all kinds of information during that unfortunate operation, Market Garden in Holland at Arnhem. The best ones to bring

information were the little Dutch kids. They got a thrill out of it. It was really exciting to bring them, so they would bring the messages.

The name of the boy was Nedabياهو, a very interesting name because he is mentioned in 1 Chronicles 3:18 (Nedabiah). We're not in the book of Jeremiah; we're now in Chronicles, the events of the kingdom. This Nedabياهو is the grandson of King Jehoiakim. Torczyner said that it is "possible, even probable," that he is the very one named here. "Is the king's own grandson bearing letters from the prophet?" That's the question here in letter three. "He delivered the letter from the prophet to one Shelum, warning him of the danger he was in. It was delivered by the Nedabياهو, the *NKD* of the king. The exact meaning of *NKD*, we are told, is unfortunately not definitely established, but it simply means 'offspring' or 'descendant.'" He [Torczyner] figures now with the new chronology that he was probably Zedekiah's grandnephew or even grandson. The Hebrew *nekhed* may certainly be used for *grandnephew* as well as for *grandson*. By an interesting coincidence, which he does not mention, the word used for the *NKD* in the Septuagint (which is actually 300 years older than any Hebrew version we have; that's the Greek version that was translated in Alexandria and is much older than any of our Hebrew texts) is the *seed*. It calls this little boy "the seed of Zedekiah." That's what the Book of Mormon calls him, "the seed of Zedekiah." Well, who was he? Nedabiah, whose title "may equally well mean the grandson of Jehoiakim or the grandnephew of Zedekiah" (one or the other) was quite young. Torczyner said, "One would prefer the age of 10–13 to that of 5 years." According to the chronology, he could have been 5 years old. Quite little kids would carry the written messages. Someone 10–13 has a better chance of getting through, I think. I wouldn't trust a 5-year-old for a really dangerous mission, would you? Boys 10–13 were "carrying dangerous letters between the towns and camps for the prophet's people." Since he was carrying the letters to the prophet's people and the letters warned them to decamp and get out (that's what the main purpose of the letters was; he would have been picked up by the last group), it seems like he was being treasonable to the royal family, doesn't it? He was on Jeremiah's side, and he was delivering letters to the people to the effect that they should clear out. Well, what would happen when they learned that the royal family had been captured and taken away, which is what happened while the boy was out among the settlements. "When news reached them [the people he was delivering letters to] that the royal family would be wiped out, only one course survived." That was to take the kid with them and get out themselves. He could not go back to Jerusalem because his family was in the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. His army was taking them up to Riblah to kill them all. He couldn't join his brothers; they had already been taken. This sort of situation turns up all the time.

I'll tell you the most remarkable thing that actually happened. The first town to fall in Normandy was Carentan. They went through Carentan the first day. Oh, it was a mess because the enemy immediately took it again. They went out on a little piece of land along a canal. There was a factory overlooking it, and we saw somebody looking out the window of the factory. Major Danahay sent someone to find out who it was. He said, "There's a spy up there; we'll have to go get him." They brought him down. There he was in the factory looking out, and he was a German (this was in Holland). So Major Danahay said to David Bernaise (a fiery, little Jew who won a silver star with two clusters; he was no friend of the Nazis), "Take him out and shoot him." So he took him out, and he was going to do it. David was a very close friend of mine. We were in the same little tent there. He took him out, and they came to a little drainage ditch. "Gehen Sie bitte über den Fluss" (Step over the ditch there), he said.

The man said, "Do you speak German?"

"Yes," David said.

"Where did you come from?"

"I come from Maximiliansau."

"Maximiliansau! That's just little place on the Rhine. There was a celluloid factory there."

"Yes."

"Did you know Herr Bernaise?"

"He is my father."

It turned out that this man he was about to shoot was his father's close friend. He had managed the factory for David's father, and he was the one who made it possible for the family to escape from Germany and get to New York. He was just about to shoot him when he found out the man was his father's friend. They threw themselves at each other, and the man said, "This must be little David." So there you are; he was just about to shoot him. These things do happen, and it was very moving. Dave Bernaise was quite the character. Then immediately this man [the suspected spy] became a valuable source of information. You can't waste that.

Well, what about Mulek? We have to get Mulek in here. In Heleman 8:21 we read, "Will you dispute that Jerusalem was destroyed? Will ye say that the sons of Zedekiah were not slain, all except it were Mulek? Yea, and do ye not behold that the seed of Zedekiah are with us, and they were driven out of the land of Jerusalem?" So one group escaped; they were the Mulekites. We know now from the Lachish Letters that people were escaping. This is twelve years after Lehi. That's another thing we have to notice, the timing of this. Torczyner said that this episode happened between 590 and 588. What's a good round number between 590 and 588? I think it's 589, don't you? Now 589 was exactly eleven years after Lehi left Jerusalem. We're told in the Book of Mormon that the Mulekites left Jerusalem eleven years after Lehi. That figures very closely, doesn't it? The "company escaped from Jerusalem bearing with them the youngest son of Zedekiah, the only member of the family not put to death when Jerusalem was taken. From the descendants of these people in the New World, the Nephites learned that Jerusalem actually did fall as was prophesied." Remember, the Mulekites figure in the Book of Mormon; they are more important than the Nephites actually. Zarahemla wasn't a Nephite city at all; it was a Mulekite city. Remember, Mosiah was voted king when he came there because of his great ability, etc. But it was always a Mulekite city, and we are told that the Mulekites were far more numerous than the Nephites at all times. The two of them together weren't half as numerous as the Lamanites. So we have some very interesting mixtures here. They were dealing with each other all the time, too. We tend so to oversimplify the Book of Mormon.

"Will you dispute that Jerusalem was destroyed? Will ye say that the sons of Zedekiah were not slain, all except it were Mulek? Yea, and do ye not behold that the seed of Zedekiah are with us, and they were driven out of the land of Jerusalem?" Nowhere are we told that Mulek was the leader of the community. Why did they bear his name? There was

a Mulek, and they were called the Mulekites. Because of his apparent youth this would be unlikely. “But as the sole survivor of the royal family, naturally he would be the most distinguished member of the troop, Mulek, the little king.” But that name is very interesting. They don’t call themselves the “king people”; they call themselves the “Mulekite people.” This would be Mulekites. That’s the way we do it—Mulaikum. These are the diminutives. The word is *Mulek*. The word for king is *malik*. You see the word *malik* all the time, and it means *king*. But *mulayk* means *little king*. It’s an affectionate term that means “our dear little king.” We have *Melek* and *Melchites* and *Malakians* and all sorts of people in the Book of Mormon, but only one group of Mulekites. That’s a diminutive, but it occurs very often. It means a *king*, a *leader* and that sort of thing. So the name tells us everything here. *Mulek* is not found anywhere in the Bible, but anybody who has had first-year Arabic knows that a diminutive takes the form *fuʿayl*. So *Malek*, the king, would be *Mulayk* or *Mulek*. And anyone who belongs to a society or is a follower is an *iyya*—*Mulaykiyya*. It would be translated in the Bible as *Mulekite*. So they called themselves Mulekites because they were the people with the little king, and they were proud of him. They don’t give him credit for being king or anything like that, but they call him “little king.”

So we get this picture very vividly drawn. (I see the time’s almost up now.) This takes us directly to another batch of documents that are much more extensive and have equal importance for the Book of Mormon. You would think that the Dead Sea Scrolls, coming 600 years after this, wouldn’t be so important, but don’t fool yourself. They are absolutely loaded, but we are not going to take too much time with them.

These records were found in 1961. They have been finding these Dead Sea Scrolls all along. The same thing happened when Jerusalem fell to the Romans. The point is that the people all flee. They go out into the desert and hide in the caves. It’s not just at Qumran that you find these things. It is all the entire length and down to the south. Here we find a tremendous batch of letters from the Cave of Letters that gives us all the business doings that were going on, how the people bought and sold their farms, etc. Then there were the legal matters, the court matters. There was rich woman named Babata. She was a mean one, but she got herself terribly rich claiming farms here and there. We see the rich with the lands of their inheritance and their dealings with each other. Again, the charges of treason and the like that go on. We won’t have time for this now, but we will mention some of it the next time because it is important. If it weren’t beginning to sound so familiar, we wouldn’t bother about it. We are told that the Book of Mormon is meant for us, and we had better read it. “This comes to you, oh ye Gentiles, that ye may be wiser than we have been.” So we’d better see what they were up to and what happened to them. Well, we know what happened to them. Now we are being told why. But these letters show how beautifully documented the Book of Mormon is. Read that first chapter. He says everything. It’s an abridgement, but it hits all the high points, touches all the bases, and gives us these character pictures. That’s the way it is.