

TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

HUGH NIBLEY

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Mosiah 19–20

King Noah

The Daughters of the Lamanites

King Noah is one of the most clearly drawn characters in the Book of Mormon. He is drawn as a great artist would do it, by what he does and not by what he says. It's very subtle throughout the Book of Mormon here.

The great American historian, Freeman, says he can tell you where General Lee was and what he was doing every day between such and such years during the Civil War, but he would never dare to guess what he was thinking. But other types of authors, critics of Joseph Smith like Fawn Brodie, could never tell you exactly where Joseph Smith was or what he was doing, but they can always tell you exactly what he was thinking. No, it doesn't work that way.

But Noah is a very clearly drawn character, and note how the person behaved. We are in Mosiah 19. Alma and his people departed from the waters of Mormon. Hey, we hadn't got to the waters of Mormon, had we? There's that song at the end. I shouldn't have left out that marvelous song. We're jumping ahead, but I'm going to go back and talk about that for next time. Let's talk about King Noah now and what happened. Alma and his people ran away, and they got back to Zarahemla, so they [Noah's soldiers] weren't able to catch up with them. They searched in vain and didn't find Alma and his people. How is that possible? Well, that happens quite often. The United States Army chased Chief Joseph for three years, all over Montana. He didn't quite make it over the border, though, and they finally caught up with him (and other chiefs like Cochise). David spent a good part of his youth hiding out here and there with little groups of soldiers and retainers. There's a lot of description of how he hid in the rocks and on the heights, escaping notice. So this happens. And they searched in vain and couldn't find them [Alma's people].

Fortunately, I found some old notes, and they're not bad, so I'm going to follow them. The king's forces were not up to the task. He lost face, and the king's forces were small. They had dwindled, and they weren't able to do the job. Already because of his excesses, he had alienated a good part of the people, a small number. The forces of the king were small because there was division among the remainder of the people. He had been alienating the people with his excesses. Also, his wastefulness and extravagance had given rise to this popular unrest, and an opposition party was formed by Gideon. A little later we find out that his group actually bears his name—they're called the men of Gideon. They're referred to a number of times by that name, making it very clear who they were.

Question: Later in the Book of Mormon it mentions that Gideon had the priesthood. Do you think that Gideon was of an aristocratic family who had the priesthood and who was ousted by Noah?

Answer: Well yes, he had always been hostile, and Alma could have given it to him. It's another tradition, another party. He had always been opposed, it tells here. He was an old personal enemy of the king.

Verse 3: "And the lesser part [notice] began to breathe out threatenings against the king [ah, things are getting tough here, and the opposition party is becoming outspoken]. And now there was a man among them [the opposition party] whose name was Gideon, and he being a strong man and an enemy to the king, therefore he drew his sword, and swore in his wrath that he would slay the king" So this was a personal feud going on, and this was a real revolution, if you pronounce that you're going to slay the king. He met him and he chased him to the top of the tower. Verse 5: "And it came to pass that he fought with the king; and when the king saw that he was about to overpower him, he fled and ran and got upon the tower which was near the temple." Remember, it was the tower from which you could view the whole land. Notice that it's on a small scale. He chased him through the town, and the king went up the tower with Gideon hot on his heels. Gideon pursued him right to the top, a very dramatic moment here. Verse 6: "The king cast his eyes round about towards the land of Shemlon [that means east], and behold, the army of the Lamanites were within the borders of the land." He could even see that.

So he [Gideon] could see them, don't worry. He could see that things were stirring on the eastern part of the country, and they were coming in from that side when he got on the high tower. I always think of Palenque when that comes in about getting on the tower.

Here's a comment on the character of [Noah] in verse 8. The king wasn't really interested in his people—it was his own life he wanted to save. That reflects on his character. You notice [Noah's] greatest sin was not lechery or luxury; it was his meanness. He was a mean, petty person. He had no feelings for anybody else but a great deal for himself. It's characteristic here of people with great power. He said, "Gideon, spare me, for the Lamanites are upon us [he uses that as the ruse, you see; it's the enemy at the gates routine, and it was mostly to get him out of the jam], and they will destroy us; yea, they will destroy my people" (Mosiah 19:7). So Gideon gave him the benefit of the doubt. He spared him and let him go. These are interesting human relationships that go on in the Book of Mormon. And then what did he do? He said the king was concerned about his own life; that was what really concerned him. He had no appetite for fighting, notice. He had lost his nerve along with most of the army. He panicked and said, we'll clear out of town. He ordered a general evacuation—a silly thing to do. It shows again that he's not really a strong character at all. He did it again when they go a little further on. He ordered his soldiers with himself to leave the women and children and hightail it to save themselves. Then when he got out with them, he fled with just a company of priests to get away from them. This is the kind of man he was, and we're going to see this all through here. Nice reflection on King Noah. So he lost his nerve along with most of the army, and in the Book of Mormon, the actions tell the story and speak for themselves. He ordered a general retreat to the wilderness, an evacuation. This is the reverse of the Rechabites, you'll notice. He went out with his court, and especially with his priests, his immediate accomplices. They accompanied him deeper and deeper into the woods while he left more and more of the others farther and farther behind.

Today's a marvelous day for this. What is the classic retreat to the woods from the royal court? It's the duke in *As You Like It*. What happens there? His brother stirs up a revolution and trouble. He's a treacherous character, so the good duke has to flee, and he takes his court with him. They flee to the Forest of Ardennes. I spent a winter—January

and February—in the Forest of Ardennes, and it was just as cold and had just as much snow as we have here. Fortunately, I didn't have to go to Bastogne with the rest of the division. Just as I was warming up the jeep, there came the four-star order from Paris saying I had to go back there for reassignment. And I was sent right back where I would have been anyway because they wanted people who spoke French and German. That was Rundstedt's last "throw of the dice," so they sent in a lot of people in false uniforms and dressed up as civilians behind the lines. And especially they were hiding stuff in caves in the Ardennes. I visited so many caves in the Ardennes. It was marvelous because these are the oldest inhabitations in the world. It was in the dead of winter. Then when Patton came up and saved the day, I was attached to the Third Army and was there for the rest of the time, and in Luxembourg.

The point is here we were in the Ardennes, and this is where the duke is, in the Ardennes. And Shakespeare is no fool. The only way you can escape the sophistication and corruption of this thoroughly corrupt court, says the duke, is to go out into the wilderness. Well, people have that idea, but it's impractical. Well, it was impractical. Notice, he doesn't show the Ardennes as it's shown in the usual production of *As You Like It*, as an existence *à la Watteau*—everybody just happy there in the green forest with the green scenery. They bring in the deer and everybody's celebrating. The court is sitting around the fire enjoying themselves. No, none of that. It happens in the dead of winter, and it's a miserable time. They're all standing around shivering, and the duke in the opening scene in the forest is trying to raise their spirits. He's trying to give them a pep talk. He says,

Now, my co-mates and brothers in exile,

[He treats them as his brothers, being very generous with them.]

Hath not old custom made this life more sweet
Than that of painted pomp? Are not these woods

[They left the peak of civilization with sophistication, ease, comfort, luxury, etc., to live out here in the woods. It's terrible—it's midwinter when you shiver around.]

More free from peril than the envious court?

[There's actually a physical danger; everybody's poisoning and bumping off people. Well, look at the trouble he had at court. Remember, Orlando? His brother has sought his life, too. He's a member of the court, too, following Duke Frederick, and he's after his brother Orlando's life. And so it goes—it's dangerous. And so he says],

Are not these woods
More free from peril than the envious court?
Here feel we but the penalty of Adam—
The seasons' difference: as the icy fang
And churlish chiding of the winter's wind,
Which when it bites and blows upon my body,
Even till I shrink with cold, I smile and say,
This is no flattery [what you get at court]: these are
counsellors That feelingly persuade me what I am.

He has no vanity here. He has a right sense of values, but he had to come back to the dank woods. Imagine, people have been hunting in those dank woods of the Ardennes for possibly 15,000 to 20,000 years [and living] in those caves. During the war they were still running around, and the GIs used to shoot them. The reason was that they [the U.S. Army] had been dropping materials there—radios, ammunition, explosives, weapons, and things like that. We had to go flush out the caves, and there were people in them. This was the old Ardennes.

After the line, “That feelingly persuade me what I am,” we all know the lines that follow:

Sweet are the uses of adversity;
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head;
And this our life, exempt from public haunt

[You get away from the public.]

Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in everything.
I would not change it.

He’s trying to cheer them up. And that’s why Jaques is so downcast and says such cynical things, because everybody is standing around with the royal court and having no fun at all—standing in the snow and shivering their heads off.

The king [Noah] escapes here with his court ever deeper into the woods, and it has happened with many others. Kings do that. There’s the *syech* in Russian. There’s a famous story by *Gogol* called “Taras Bulba,” about how the people would flee to the *Syech*. Those are the big islands in the River Volga, and there they would build up their strength and their companies. Then there were the *Bagoudi* in the early Middle Ages, in the fifth and sixth centuries. All over France bands, spontaneously to support themselves in dead of winter, would come together, hide out in the woods, and form what strength they could with some leader. They’d start out plundering the country and end up building a castle. [People] had the Middle Ages upon them before they knew it. Well, you have these things happening everywhere.

It happens repeatedly through the Book of Mormon. Lehi left Jerusalem because the pressure was too great. And then Nephi left his brethren in the New World and went off by himself. Then, Mosiah left Nephi’s community after Nephi died, of course, and went out and ended up in [Zarahemla]. Then Ammon left Zarahemla and went out and tried to convert the people. So we have this process going on all the time. Then finally the Saints came west here, didn’t they? As George Albert Smith used to say, “We came west of our own free will because we had to.” We had no choice—we were driven out, like Israel in the wilderness.

So it’s God’s wandering people. A famous book was written by Erich Käsemann called *God’s Wandering People*. God’s people are always being driven out. They’re always wandering because here, as Paul says of Abraham, we are pilgrims and strangers. Here we have no abiding kingdom; don’t look for it. So I smile when I see these books called *How to Have a Happy Life* or *Secrets of Successful Living* and all that sort of tripe. Don’t fool yourself. We’re too strong on that in the Church, because this isn’t where we’re going to

have our successful living. This isn't what we're going for at all. It's the eternities, and eternity is a big thing.

Well, we go on with our story now, "And the king commanded the people that they should flee before the Lamanites [a foolish thing to do], and he himself did go before them, and they did flee into the wilderness, with their women and their children [Mosiah 19:9. Now I've fled into the wilderness and hid out more than once. In Operation Market Garden we lost our shirts and had to run away]. And it came to pass that the Lamanites did pursue them, and did overtake them, and began to slay them [you can't evacuate a whole people all at once; they catch up with them; and then the king panicked again]. Now it came to pass that the king commanded them that all the men should leave their wives and their children, and flee before the Lamanites [still running away—what a king]. Now there were many that would not leave them [they wouldn't do it—they wouldn't follow the king; he has a ruinous effect wherever he goes], but had rather stay and perish with them. And the rest left their wives and their children and fled [so part were left behind]. . . . Those who tarried with their wives and children caused that their fair daughters should stand forth and plead with the Lamanites that they would not slay them."

Again, this is ancient custom. (Do we have anything about it here? Yes.) Those who stayed behind had their daughters go out to meet the enemy. Well, there's the story of *Lysistrata*, the comedy of Aristophanes about how the women end the war. They go out and plead with the other side. The men, being starved for sex, make concessions and they settle. And there's the story of the "Rape of the Sabine Women." We have lots of stories of armies being stopped in war. The German anthropologists make a great thing of *Frauraub*, the robbing of brides. You had to go and steal brides outside of the tribe. That was required of you. You were not supposed to marry within your tribe. You must steal the brides from outside the tribe, and some Indians practice that. The Hopis still do; you don't marry inside your own clan. You must marry outside your clan, which is an important and a healthy thing.

Verse 14: "And it came to pass that the Lamanites had compassion on them, for they were charmed with the beauty of their women [this is chivalric; the Lamanites are always shown as being barbarians, but this is a more chivalric attitude than the others]. Therefore the Lamanites did spare their lives, and took them captives and carried them back to the land of Nephi." They went back with the women. That crowd went back, and they delivered up King Noah, when they caught him, into the hands of the Lamanites and delivered up their property. You can come back and settle again but you'll be sharecroppers from now on. We'll get one-half of your crops, one-half of your gold, silver, and everything else [they were told]. And this was a condition on which they went back and suffered. Then we have Limhi. This is where Ammon found Limhi. They were completely enclosed. Notice this interlacing and all this harking back. It's very complicated [and amazing] how the author keeps this all in order, because there are different plates being used here. Verse 16: "And now there was one of the sons of the king among those that were taken captive, whose name was Limhi [he is the one Ammon found, or that found Ammon]."

Well, let's see if we're missing any gems here. Another love-hate issue surfaces, a very interesting reflection on character, you'll notice here. Verse 17: "And now Limhi was desirous that his father should not be destroyed [Limhi was a righteous man, but Noah was his father; he did the noble and right thing, even though Noah was his father, which threatened to make him unpopular]; nevertheless, Limhi was not ignorant of the iniquities

of his father, he himself being a just man.” Even in such a cesspool there can be just men, and there are. It never gets that bad. Limhi had feelings [for his father]. He was Noah’s son, and we don’t judge people. Don’t judge people by their parents and relatives. Verse 18: “And it came to pass that Gideon sent men into the wilderness secretly, to search for the king and those that were with him.” Gideon wasn’t going to let up; he was a tough character, you know that. He pursued him all the way. Gideon still had it in for the king; he secretly continued the searching operation. He caught up with the whole royal force, except the king and his priests who had skipped on ahead again. He [the king] was always leaving his supporters in the lurch if he could get away faster. “And it came to pass that they met the people in the wilderness, all save the king and his priests.” The king and the priests were the cause of the whole trouble, so when they fled, there was no reason why the people shouldn’t go back. So they decided they’d go back again, all the rest of them.

Or would they? This is what happened; this is why the king had gone on ahead. “Now they had sworn in their hearts that they would return to the land of Nephi [so they wanted to go back; they wanted to go back to their wives and children; they didn’t want to be out here with the king]. . . . And the king commanded them that they should not return [they had to stay with him again] and they were angry with the king, and caused that he should suffer, even unto death by fire” (Mosiah 19:20). This is the priests that went on with them. They were going to go back, and finally he commanded the last group that was with him to continue, and this had gone too far. They were going to go back, so they burned the king. This is the normal thing. It’s very interesting. Right in front of Mina Lansa’s house, the first house you come to in old Oraibi, you see the four holes in the ground. They are still there from the year 1768. I think it was 1768 when a new group of priests was imposed on the Hopis by the Spanish, and they ruled very cruelly. They had one leader. They enslaved the people, actually, but they [the Hopis] didn’t put up with it for long. And then when they started playing around with the women, that did it. This was the place where they set up a gibbet and burned them. They burned the chief that came with the Spaniards, and they burned the priests—that was a way to get rid of them. So they still have this custom of burning the people they don’t like. The Spanish were tyrannical from way back when Cabeza de Vaca came over. The Hopis always had a rough time with the Spanish, but that was the final solution. After that, they never came back.

So this is what they did. They burned the king, and then they fled by themselves without the king. “And it came to pass that they were about to return to the land of Nephi, and they met the men of Gideon.” Once they got rid of the king, everybody wanted to go back home to the land of Nephi. But was it safe? They’d have to go back under these conditions, that they share, because of what they’d done. They went back to the land of Nephi, and on their way back who should they meet but the men of Gideon. And notice the *men of Gideon* is definitely a title here. It’s referred to four times all of a sudden. We find in verse 24 that Gideon wasn’t present with them. They weren’t called the men of Gideon because they were his company. He was back home, and they called themselves the *men of Gideon*. So it was a regular party now. (I guess we should capitalize it.) “They met the men of Gideon. And the men of Gideon told them of all that had happened to their wives and their children; and that the Lamanites had granted unto them that they might possess the land by paying a tribute to the Lamanites of one half of all they possessed [so they explained the situation back home to them]. And the people told the men of Gideon that they had slain the king, and his priests had fled from them farther into the wilderness.” This was the rest of the company that went. The priests went on ahead after they got rid of the king. So the priests were the ones who were off in the woods by themselves, and they really did some mischief.

Verse 24: “And it came to pass that after they had ended the ceremony, that they returned to the land of Nephi.” This is a very interesting thing here—what ceremony, you immediately ask? Notice the men of Gideon—we’re going to find out about them here. The term *men of Gideon* is used three times in these two verses like a title. Gideon’s followers, as might be expected, had formed a party around the old reliable fire-eater. Gideon was not with them, as we learn in verse 24. They were a special party or alliance to bear the name even in his absence, the party of Gideon. He’d been going right from the beginning, too. Now the 24th verse: “And it came to pass that after they had ended the ceremony, that they returned to the land of Nephi.” Now what ceremony is mentioned in verse 24? Well, it’s very clear. Remember these people had left the town, and Gideon had come to catch up with them and punish their leader. Gideon couldn’t leave Noah alone—he was on his heels all the time.

So they were hostile parties who were opposed to each other. One was the refugees, and the other was the avenging party following them, so they were hostile. They couldn’t go back home together until they had settled, smoked the peace pipe, and had the ceremony. You have to have a ceremony before you can reach peace with a hostile group. You either fight them or have the ceremony, so that’s what they did. They had a peace ceremony. They always have that, but this is putting it so casually, as if Joseph Smith knew exactly what he was saying. They carried out certain rites of reconciliation here, which is very common and has to be done, as far as that goes. It’s unthinkable to omit it. Then they went back and told Gideon himself all that they told the men of Gideon about the king, his old rival. Then Limhi and the Lamanite king both agreed and swore to the treaty. Limhi hadn’t left; they’d been out with Gideon’s people. They swore to the treaty under which the Nephites would settle down as wards of the Lamanites, completely surrounded by them. This was the condition that Ammon found them in. And the treaty was respected on both sides for two years, as we learn in verse 29, but it had the seeds of conflict in it.

Incidentally, I should have noted something at the beginning of this chapter here. Chapters 15 and 16 are the doctrinal chapters of Abinadi, and then 17 and 18 describe Alma’s community in the wilderness by the waters of Mormon as an idyllic setting. There’s an existence *à la Watteau*; there’s the forest of Ardennes. But these chapters, from 19 on, are the most enlightening of all. After the description of the Church, the subject here is how to deal with your enemies. Many interesting test cases are presented here for our profit and learning on how to deal with your enemies. They’re dealing with enemies here. Notice this settlement we’ve just mentioned. They made their peace. After the ceremony, they were all ready to go back home and be happy together, but they were still dealing with them. Then Limhi was under very close guard by the Lamanite king. You’ll notice in verse 28 that the Lamanite king was taking no chances; he’d had experience. He sent out inspection teams to insure compliance. “And the king of the Lamanites set guards round about the land.” He’s going to watch to make sure they keep the treaty now that they’ve made it. It shows various ways of dealing with enemies, various degrees.

Now in the next chapter it breaks into a real cold war. Two years was all they could take of this; the pressure was too great on them. After they made an oath and paid a tribute of one half, “the king of the Lamanites set guards round about the land, that he might keep the people of Limhi in the land, that they might not depart into the wilderness [he was going to keep them here; they had been fooled too many times; this departing into the wilderness had been routine]; and he did support his guards out of the tribute which he did

receive from the Nephites.” So the tributes they paid went to support the guards that watched over them, a very normal operation. You’ve got to pay for them somehow. All right, we collect half the Nephites’ crops, and that pays for the guards. Verse 29: “And now king Limhi did have continual peace in his kingdom for the space of two years, that the Lamanites did not molest them nor seek to destroy them.” It was profitable to them, but it wasn’t very pleasant for the Nephites. So what are they going to do?

More dealing with your enemies in chapter 20. “Now there was a place in Shemlon where the daughters of the Lamanites did gather themselves together to sing, and to dance, and to make themselves merry.” Now this reminds us of all sorts of things. Notice, there was a particular place to sing and dance and make themselves merry. At the end of the year, after all the formal dances have taken place, then the girls among the Hopis have three dances. These are fun dances. They are for relaxation more than anything, but they are still very ritually conditioned. They go out to the desert alone by themselves to celebrate. They go to a big black rock that has a lot of bumps in it, and these bumps are supposed to have significance. The *Lakon* and the *Marawu* are the most important. The *Owaglt* is the basket dance that comes at the end. In each of these three dances the preceding rites are the most important. They divide into four groups under four maidens. Each one has a different color, and they represent different directions. They have competitions, they run races among themselves, and things like that. All the rites and ordinances have to do with two things here. This is play, this is just for fun. The whole tribe doesn’t enter into this. As it says here, the girls go out to a particular place to make themselves merry. That’s exactly what they’re doing. And the reason I’m emphasizing this is that we’re going to see exactly the same thing in the Old World, and our ancestors doing exactly the same thing in England. If you go through the four volumes of Grimm, of which I’m the proud possessor (I got the whole thing for four bucks many years ago), you’ll find hundreds of instances of it happening on the continent in the nineteenth century. These are very ancient rites, and they’re universal. We get that very interesting problem of why they are universal and why they are so much alike. In the first dance, the *lakon*, they make a big cloud pattern on the ground with meal, and then they throw little corn images wrapped in cornhusks at it. They try to hit it, and this represents both rain coming from the clouds and the wind. They get things going. In all of them they scatter things. In the basket dance they give away baskets free. But in between them they give away food. Everything has to do with rain, weather, and food. If you live in the sand and have nothing, you depend on the rain. Remember, there’s not a running stream on the whole reservation, so they depend on the rain. They say that’s a blessing that God sends them there because they must always depend on it. No matter how hard they work or what they do, they cannot guarantee success in this world. Don’t think that hard work will do it. It won’t. No people worked as hard as the Hopis. In some years, the stuff just won’t grow. But if they do these things, the food will grow. This is a very important thing, too. They time them by the rising of the Pleides, and these rites take place at dawn. That’s very important to have these contests done by the Pleides.

Now we go to the oldest Greek songs, Alcman’s poems. Alcman, a very early poet writing in Sparta before the days when Sparta degenerated into a military state, wrote the maiden songs, which still survive. The girls were divided into two companies, and they would have a foot race at dawn. One group is called the Pleides, or the doves. There’s a passage in Aeschylus where he says they are also the Pleides, which means the doves. They had a foot race at dawn in order to elect the queen, and they had a beauty contest. They formed in antiphonals on either side and sing to each other. There had to be twelve on either side. And I notice here [Mosiah 20:5] that it says specifically there were twenty-four maidens

when they caught them out by themselves. They also had to time themselves by the moon. As you know, the women always follow the moon, and there are twelve months in the year. Once a year they held this for the year rite. This was at the end of the year, right at the end when they have to guarantee food and succession for the new year. It's the same thing whether it's with the Hopis or Greeks way back there—it makes no difference. They run and have this beauty contest, and one side says, "Hagussicora's hair is of spun gold," and the other says, "I am black but comely." You get the very same things in the Songs of Solomon. In Solomon's love song they have the contest where they say, "I am black but comely." They're competing for the hand of the king, for David. They say "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (1 Samuel 18:7). They were having a contest, too. All of these contests are very ancient. But here [among the Hopis] they are competing to choose the queen for the year, while the big rites are to be held later. They do the same thing. They [the rites] have to do with the sowing and with the weather and all that sort of thing. They sing these songs.

Now we come back to Shakespeare, and this is one I like, too. Remember what Titania says? This takes us way back to the early days, but these things were still being practiced. [Henry] John Feasey wrote a very good book on English Easter ceremonies, because Easter is much older than Christianity, and this was in England. Titania [*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, act II, scene 2] is talking about the equinox and the solstice:

And never, since the middle summer's spring,
Met we on hill, in dale, forest, or mead,
By paved fountain, or by rushy brook,
Or on the beached margent of the sea [the women go out here],
To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind.

[I was just looking at some photographs last hour of the *lakon* dance. They are always in a ring, and there are always twelve. They throw away the baskets with the food on them.]

But with thy brawls thou hast disturb'd our sport.

[They're out there to disport themselves, and the men have come and bothered them.]

Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,
As in revenge, have suck'd up from the sea
Contagious fogs; which, falling in the land,
Have every pelting river made so proud
That they have overborne their continents:
The ox hath therefore stretch'd his yoke in vain,

[They're not getting any crops because they've stopped the rites, so the ox has therefore stretched his yoke in vain.]

The ploughman lost his sweat; and the green corn
Hath rotted ere his youth attain'd a beard:

[See, the crops are rotten. Nothing happens if they don't do these things right. They call themselves the corn maidens in this dance, and the corn has rotted.]

The fold stands empty in the drowned field.

[The field has drowned, there are no crops, and there are no flocks anymore.]

And crows are fatted with the murrain flock;

They've got the disease, murrain, of the flocks, and the crows are fattening on them. Now this is a very important thing because it refers to the very oldest rites. This goes right back to paleolithic times. You find these designs on cave walls everywhere. It's the Troy game, and I made quite a study of it once because the Romans made a big thing of it. It's very old. They took it back to Troy, etc. That's these designs with the maize. So Titania says:

The nine men's morris is fill'd up with mud.

That's where the men dance the ring dance; it's the Mars dance. *Morris* is *Mars*. It's the same thing, and it's very old. In the North they don't have the seven. It's *nine* they emphasize, and they dance these ring dances.

And the quaint mazes in the wanton green,
For lack of tread, are undistinguishable:

They've grown over. They're not using the mazes any more, which they should use. In the maze, you see, you get back to the center of the underworld. Then the sun emerges again, and you emerge again. A resurrection is what the maze signifies. It's a universal rite throughout the world.

The human mortals want their winter here;
No night is now with hymn or carol blest:

See, hymns and carols belong to the Christmas season, the turn of the year, and to Eastertime. With these solar festivals, the whole thing is to assure the crops. It's not the water they're after. They get too much water, these people in England. The Hopis have to have more water and less sun. These people have to get less water and more sun, and this is what's worrying them.

Therefore the moon, the governess of floods,
Pale in her anger, washes all the air,

[Those are magnificent lines; this is all women's rites.]

That rheumatic diseases do abound:

[The human race is afflicted. Everything is sick. Nothing is working here.]

The seasons alter: hoary-headed frosts
Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose;
And on old Hyem's chin and icy crown
An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
Is, as in mockery, set: the spring, the summer,
The childing autumn, angry winter, change
Their wonted liveries; and the maz'd world,
By their increase, now knows not which is which:

It shows everything is cockeyed now. “Hoary-headed frosts fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose.” When it should be spring, we get frost. When it should be winter “an odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds is, as in mockery, set.” In the early spring everything blossoms out. That’s what’s happened in the East this year. Everything was 70 and 80 degrees a week or so ago, and then all of a sudden—whammo. This is what hits them. The seasons alter, and we shouldn’t be having these summer buds in the middle of winter. “And this same progeny of evils comes from our debate.” This is what brings it up—when men quarrel, when they do not cooperate, when there’s a fight between them, this is what happens.

And this same progeny of evils comes
From our debate, from our dissention:
We are their parents and original.

[We started all these things. It’s the same thing.]

In one of the last verses of the Bible, just before you get to Malachi, they’re told the very same thing. I mean these rites are very common among the Jews. And it says here in Zechariah 14:16: “And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts [the lord of hosts, *Adonai Šebā’ôṭ*, which means the gathering of the people; it doesn’t mean the military host; it means the general assembly of everybody] and to keep the feast of tabernacles.”

See, when they came there, it was a natural feast. It had to be in the desert. Remember, the tabernacle was a temporary tent thrown together of green boughs or anything you can get. It tells us that its purpose was to shelter you from the sun in the daytime and the rain and the weather because you’re out in the open. “Thou shalt not celebrate the Passover within thy gate.” You have to come as a pilgrim and you have to live outside, and this is in the desert. Remember, Moses asked Pharaoh [to let them go] and said, we cannot celebrate the Passover at home. We must go out in the desert to celebrate it there [paraphrased]. Pharaoh didn’t want to let them go, but they had to go. That’s why he said, because this is the festival of the Lord, we have to go out to the desert to do it.

We have the same thing here [in Zechariah]. It’s the feast of the tabernacles, and everybody has to come. And what happens if you don’t come? Then he says “And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain.” Zechariah 14:15: “And so shall be the plague of the horse, of the mule, of the camel, and of the ass, and of all the beasts that shall be in these tents, as this plague.” If you don’t come to do this, you’ll not get any rain. So they were doing the same things as our ancestors were doing in England quite recently, and as the Hopis do today, and as these maidens are doing here. It’s the very same thing.

Now, what is the rationale of this? These things are much too close together to be accidental. I mean the same number of maidens doing the same number of things, having the same types of songs. I would say the purpose is to keep the people acting together in one purpose with one mind in a community. Remember, these people were struggling for existence. Back to the Hopis again. They live on the margin of nothing, nothing but dry

sand to live on. Yet they've kept going, and this is what's kept them going. Everybody's tried to undermine them, and they've still kept going. They're the only people in the world who still do this exactly as it should be done from the beginning, and at what a cost, because they are the poorest people on earth. Well, anyway, it focuses their minds on these things, on dependence on the Creator. They say, "We have no streams, no irrigation, nothing like that. We push the corn in the sand and hope it will grow. That's all we have to pray to God about. And they always talk about God. They don't talk about the gods or the demons. They don't have anything like that. It is the Lord.

We find this later on in the Book of Mormon. When Ammon is preaching, he says to the king, "Do you believe in the Great Spirit?"

And he says, "Yes, we believe in the Great Spirit."

And Ammon says, "That's God—the same God we believe in." So don't think we're dealing with wild pagans here.

But this is very necessary here. It keeps the common interest in survival. It's to plan and complete the common enterprises that have to be done. It's to give beauty and variety to the scene—to banish boredom and monotony in what would otherwise be a very dull existence. But remember, as the duke says, this is much more interesting than life in the painted pomp and dangerous jealousy of the court, if you have a choice between them. This is pretty hard, but I would not change this life [he says]. See, his people all want to go back, of course, just as they do here. They want to go back where it's easier. So it [the dancing] does that, too. It prevents this boredom and monotony. It's always interesting, always exciting, always fun. It's a completely stable and reliable way of life which could be repetitious and dull—[most Americans think it's dull] unless you are expanding and acquisitive. Unless the stock market is going up, we panic, but you can't go on doing that forever. But how can these people stand it out there living life like that? Well, I love to go down there just to enjoy myself. Everybody enjoys themselves with these dances; that's why they don't miss them. You would think that old people who have seen them hundreds of times wouldn't bother to go. Oh, no. Nobody ever misses them, regardless of the weather.

These [Lamanite] girls were out there [dancing]. The discredited priests of Noah were afraid to go home, and they watched a small company of the girls. If a man watches these rites, he's [supposed to be] struck blind. Well, there's a very famous case in Egypt where a man was struck blind for doing this very thing. Or he could be struck dead, like Actaeon. He saw Diana (Artemis) and her maidens. He was out hunting and accidentally blundered on the place in the woods where the maidens were dancing. She turned his own dogs against him and they tore him to pieces because he was not supposed to be there. Well, these priests were also not to be snooping there. But you know what they had in mind, and they watched the daughters of the Lamanites. It says there were twenty-four of them, which is very interesting, there you have your double row, your antiphonal with twelve on each side. They had to have a contest, you see, with one girl for each month of the year, or each moon—these moon maidens. All these things go together in a very interesting way. "And when there were but few of them gathered together to dance, they came forth out of their secret places and took them and carried them into the wilderness; yea, twenty and four daughters of the Lamanites they carried into the wilderness." This is plundering, which used to be a common thing, according to an anthropologist at Berkeley. They used

to teach that the bridal veil came from that. You had to catch your bride, and so you went and threw a net over her. That was the bridal veil, the net you threw over her to catch her.

When they found out that their daughters were missing and didn't come home, they thought naturally it was the people of Limhi that had fled out there from the town—they hadn't all come back, and that they had done this. Now we have a very interesting business on how to deal with a very touchy, dangerous situation. Notice how well the leaders, Limhi and the Lamanite king, handled it. This is what happened: "And now Limhi had discovered them from the tower, even all their preparations for war did he discover [like the glistening goggles that I was talking about; I mean, if that dark thing disturbs the peace of our celebration here, you can see what all this shining metal would do in the woods]; therefore he gathered his people together, and laid wait for them in the fields and in the forests [so that's what the terrain was, and he was going to catch them]. . . . The people of Limhi began to fall upon them from their waiting places, and began to slay them. And it came to pass that the battle became exceedingly sore, for they fought like lions for their prey" (Mosiah 20:8–10). And they won—they fought like dragons. That's a very interesting thing that it uses the word *dragons* here. There was this surprising ferocity. You wouldn't think *dragons*, a concept from the Old World, would be found among these people, but it is. The one-horn and the two-horn societies get themselves up as savagely as possible, and you know in Central America this is common. The warrior phratries, every one of them, had monsters for their emblems, and they wore the mask. You see this on the vase paintings and the murals, etc. They wore these monster masks for emblems, and there was nothing more popular than the snake with the horns and all the rest. The dragons, and other monsters appear there. So it says they fought like dragons. The Lamanites must have been pretty spectacularly gotten up. They did these things later on, even more so.

There was a great deal of slaughter with their warrior castes. Verse 12: "And it came to pass that they found the king of the Lamanites among the number of their dead [they thought he was dead but he was only wounded]. . . . And they took him and bound up his wounds, and brought him before Limhi." Well, that was the right thing to do, of course. And then what happened? They brought him for execution and said, "Let us slay him." But you notice Limhi was a very sensible person. He was tolerant of his own father, because there was nothing much he could do about it. Being that kind of a person, his father was going to go on doing it. But he did what he thought was right because he was a righteous man. Here again, they all came saying, hurray, hurray, we've won; let's put the king to death—which is the thing you do. That's what *checkmate* is—"the king is dead." In all Semitic languages, and especially Egyptian, *mat* means *dead*. *Checkmate* means "the king is dead," when you win the game. We've won the game; let's kill the king. But Limhi said, no. "Ye shall not slay him, but bring him hither that I may see him [and they question him]. . . . What cause have ye to come up to war against my people? [what are you fighting for, anyway?] Behold, my people have not broken the oath that I made unto you [but they thought they had broken the oath]; therefore, why should ye break the oath that ye made unto my people?" You broke your oath, we didn't break ours—the usual charges.

Verse 15: "And now the king said I have broken the oath because thy people did carry away the daughters of my people; therefore, in my anger I did cause my people to come up to war against thy people." Limhi had heard nothing concerning this. He didn't know anything about this breaking of the oath, because it was the priests who had done it, not his people. So he said, "I will search among my people, and whosoever has done this thing shall perish." I'll launch a thorough investigation, he says in verse 16. This is not the usual

reaction. The usual reaction would be “boys will be boys.” Following lots of atrocities, we can just say “boys will be boys,” but he’s going to see that this is done. I could a tale unfold here. And if it was done on our side, it was all right. There were terrible things done, worse than the Germans did, but that was all right.

Verse 17: “Now when Gideon had heard these things, he being the king’s captain . . .” He was there when they had brought the captive king up there; naturally the chief military man had to be present for consultation. So he said, hey, we know who did that, remember? Don’t search this people; go out and look for the priests of thy father [paraphrased]. Now there’s a very interesting rhetorical device used here. It tells us what the word is here. In Arabic, for example, and in Hebrew less, you cannot begin a sentence cold. You just can’t say “he went into the house” or “there was a house on the hill.” You have to begin with *hinneh*, *behold*. Behold, this happened, whether it’s a nominal sentence or a verbal sentence. You begin with *hinneh* or *behold*, or *it is so*. But in urgent cases you have to introduce what you’re saying by an excitement word. In Egyptian you have to use it before every sentence. In this case it would be *wn in*. And notice the way he builds up here. The way it’s translated here is *behold*. He says in verse 18: “For do ye not remember the priests of thy father whom this people sought to destroy? [he gets more excited about it]. And are they not in the wilderness? And are not they the ones who have stolen the daughters of the Lamanites? *And now behold, and tell* is redundant, but it’s used three times in this sentence: “And now, behold, and tell the king of these things, that he may tell his people that they may be pacified towards us; for behold they are already preparing to come against us; and behold also there are but few of us. And behold, they come with their numerous hosts” (Mosiah 20:19–20). See, he builds up the climax and excitement; he says we’ve got to act quickly here. It’s just like it came to his mind in a flash. He knows who it was now, so he uses this series of *beholds*, which are very Semitic, very eloquent, and very necessary. Anybody could see that. Joseph Smith knew this very well, of course [speaking ironically].

Verse 20: “And behold, they come with their numerous hosts; and except the king doth pacify them toward us we must perish [you’ve got to do something]. For are not the words of Abinadi fulfilled, which he prophesied against us—and all this because we would not hearken unto the words of the Lord and turn from our iniquities?” All this progeny of evil comes of us, from our debate, from our dissension. It always comes back to our own guilt. Here we are, having come full circle here.

I find the Book of Mormon quite convincing; somebody did an awfully good job on it. But, of course, you can’t stay to listen to this—the usual thing for critics of the Book of Mormon. They ask a perfectly logical and reasonable question, let’s say about horses or something, and then they leave the room. They won’t wait for an answer. If they were honest about asking the question, they would use every means they could to answer the question, but they don’t. We know they [early inhabitants of the Americas] came by Alaska; they came by the north side [critics say], but that’s the only place they ever think of. Hrdlicka spent all his life trying to prove it and failed. Of course, they came that way. The Hopis called that “the back door.” Many people came by the back door, they say, but it’s not the way the Lord sent them. There are other people. The Navajos came in the eighth century by the back door, speaking another language. They overran the Hopis, and there have been very great pressures on them ever since. But although they came by the back door, there’s no reason why that’s the only way people had to come. There are plenty of Mongolian types among them, but they’re by no means the only types.

It's nice to be provided with a handbook and a syllabus and something that has all the answers in it under one cover. It's just a marvelous book to have—all this editing and so forth. We might ask, why did they put this part in? This isn't doctrine. What's it doing in here? Ah, it is doctrine. It tells us how to get along with each other—which we need today.

Question: Why do you think that Limhi became king after his father was deposed instead of Gideon seizing power?

Answer: He didn't seize power. It was the Lamanites that made him king; they put him in. The Lamanites trusted him, and he was a man you could trust. He was reliable. You'll notice he had this agreement all along with the Lamanite king, and that's why he was in. Gideon was a fire-eater. He was chasing around anyway. He was too busy getting rid of Noah.

Question: Are you saying that if the Lamanite king hadn't put Limhi in charge, Gideon might have become king and seized power?

Answer: Yes, if he had seized power. He was a revolutionary and had already chased the king out with a sword. He was not necessarily ambitious, but he had a thing for Noah—one of these classic feuds.