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Lessons for Living

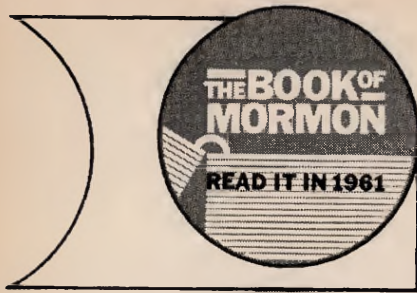
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Abstract: This article discusses some of the many rewarding approaches to the Book of Mormon. One can approach the Book of Mormon historically, through the external evidence, through its marvelous theological teachings, and through its application to life.



Lessons for living

BY PRESIDENT MARION D. HANKS, OF THE FIRST COUNCIL OF THE SEVENTY



There are a number of varied routes over which one can approach the Book of Mormon. All are interesting and rewarding and rich in their promise of exciting adventures in learning and faith. Consider some of them:

1. *Some individuals find particular satisfaction by coming to the Book of Mormon by way of its historical roots, relating its origin to that of the Holy Bible and how it came to be.* The Bible is, of course, a compilation of sacred records written over a long period of time by prophets who lived on the Eastern Hemisphere. These prophet-historians communicated to their contemporary people the revelations and dealings of God with his children, and they left to the ages their witness of faith in Almighty God, in his loving Fatherhood, in the gospel, and in the divine mission of his Savior Son.

The Book of Mormon is also a compilation of records written over many centuries by prophet-historians who spoke for God and who left to posterity their accounts of God's dealings with his children. The locale of the Book of Mormon story is primarily the Western Hemisphere, the people having originated, however, in the eastern lands. The account of the preservation of the records and of their having come in modern times into the hands of the Prophet Joseph Smith is fascinating and marvelous in light of the nature of the book and of its origins.

2. *There are those who are chiefly attracted to the Book of Mormon through what might be called its external evidences.* Many books have been published to present evidences, viewpoints, and theories about Book of Mormon archaeology, history, geography, and literature. Current research in heretofore untouched fields (*An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, by Dr. Hugh Nibley), and adventures and experiences (*Kon Tiki*, etc.) lend excitement and substance to this approach.

3. *Many become interested in the Book of Mormon and find faith in it through its great theological teachings and the marvelous promise of personal spiritual witness made by Moroni in the last chapter of the book.* The Book of Mormon goes hand in hand with the Bible and adds great strength and understanding to the marvelous eternal truths taught in that Holy Book; for instance, consider the force and meaning added to the account of Christ's baptism in Matthew 3:13-15 by Nephi's explanation of the event in 2 Nephi, chapter 31.

4. With the above and other valid approaches available to the Book of Mormon student or teacher, *there are many who find the most fruitful and satisfying source of faith and testimony in the great "life lessons" to be found in the book.* Wonderful personal direction and inspiration can be found on page after page. For the searcher who reads with an eye to his own needs and experiences, who can apply eternal lessons to his own circumstances, who is observant of life and those around him, the Book of Mormon again and again speaks its inspiration and enlightenment and encouragement.

Such application is, of course, one great reason for reading the scriptures. Nephi explained his extensive use of the writings of Isaiah by saying, "for I did liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning." (1 Nephi 19:23.) Again, he told his people to listen to the words of Isaiah and "liken them unto yourselves." (*Ibid.*, 19:24.)

Among the many impressive examples of such opportunities, consider this one from the Book of Mormon.

During the travels of Lehi and his family and followers after they left Jerusalem, an accident occurred which brought about an unusual result. Nephi broke the bow which he had used to obtain food for the group, and they were without provisions. As

usual in times of difficulty, Laman and Lemuel and the sons of Ishmael immediately began to murmur and cry out against their brother Nephi and against the Lord. Then, astonishingly, even faithful old father Lehi, having endured many trials of faith but suffering now for want of food, complained and "began to murmur against the Lord his God." (*Ibid.*, 16:20.) What followed was a unique demonstration of love and humility and loyalty.

Nephi was a choice young man, a chosen servant of the Lord, and blessed with visions and with visitations from heavenly messengers. He was the logical successor to his father as the leader of the people. He might reasonably have been expected to "take over" at this critical moment when the faith of the others wavered. Many men in similar circumstances in other affairs of life have done so, and many would be quick to do so if the occasion permitted.

Nephi counseled his father and brethren in their faithlessness. Then, having made a new bow and arrow, and taking a sling and stones, he went to his sorrowing father and asked him, "Whither shall I go to obtain food?" (*Ibid.*, 16:23.) Lehi, strengthened and renewed by the confidence and love of his son,

humbly inquired of the Lord and received the answer. Food was obtained. Lehi resumed the leadership of his people and wavered no more to the end of his days.

Nephi could have made his own inquiry of the Lord; his faith was strong. He had successfully hunted the wilderness for food previously. But he loved his father and was willing and wise and loyal enough to do for him the most important thing he could do.

A small incident? Let it be repeated: It is no small thing to restore confidence and faith in a man at a critical point in his life.

It was once said:

"I have believed the best of every man, and find that to believe it makes a good man better, and even a bad man swing his lantern higher."

Another great writer has said this,

"If you treat an individual as he is, he will remain as he is; but if you treat him as if he were what he ought to be and could be, he will become what he ought to be and could be." (Goethe.)

How important to the happiness and wholesomeness of our lives to know such lessons as this and many others which can be learned in the Book of Mormon.

NO LAST FRONTIERS

BY HELEN KIMBALL ORGILL

Dream on, O youth, dream on, nor fear the morrow
Will bring a hindrance of your firm desires—
There are no "last frontiers" and those lost chances
Will come again and you may still aspire.
Olympian heights, bright vista shine before you—
Doubt not your strength to scale the rugged peak,

For hidden potencies and needed power
Will aid you toward the goal that you may seek.
Dream on, dream on, those hopes and fervid longings
Are prophets, telling what you may attain.
Live worthily, and if you are deserving,
The good of earth, the best will be your gain!