



Type: Magazine Article

How We Obtained the Book of Mormon

Author(s): Mollie Higginson

Source: *The Latter-Day Saints' Millennial Star*, Vol. 78, No. 27 (6 July 1916)

Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Page(s): 417–422

Abstract: This article is a six-page synopsis of the Book of Mormon. Higginson encourages researchers of the origin of the American Indians to read the Book of Mormon and end their research there. Through prayer all can know the truth of the Book of Mormon.

THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS'
MILLENNIAL STAR.

[ESTABLISHED 1840].

"I will love thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower" (PSALM 18: 1, 2).

No. 27, Vol. LXXVIII.

Thursday, July 6, 1916.

Price One Penny.

HOW WE OBTAINED THE BOOK OF MORMON.

THE Book of Mormon is a book published by one Joseph Smith, a young man, twenty-four years of age, living on the American continent. Setting aside its value as an exponent of theological doctrines, and judging it merely from an historical standpoint, it is the most wonderful book of the nineteenth century. Men of learning to-day are spending (I had almost said squandering) both time and money in vain endeavor to answer the question, "From whence came the American Indians?" If they would but lay down a modest two shillings, taking in exchange a copy of this same book, go home and shut themselves up with it until they had digested its contents, their researches would be at an end, for the book shows in the clearest language, that admits of no controversy, who these people are, whence they came, and who were the architects of those mighty ruins which to-day are the puzzle of all the leading archeologists.

A brief account of how the "Mormons" became possessed of this marvelous book might be of interest to our readers.

Eleven years before the Babylonian captivity, in the first year of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah, a man named Lehi, living in Jerusalem, was visited by heavenly beings and warned of the destruction about to befall that great city. Taking advantage of the warning thus conveyed to him, he gathered his family around him and journeyed into the wilderness, leaving behind him all the accumulated wealth of years. After traveling three days in a southerly direction, he had a dream, in which he was commanded to send his sons back to Jerusalem to obtain the records of the Jews, together with a genealogy of his fathers, engraven on

plates of brass, and kept by one Laban. The boys returned to Jerusalem, but Laban refused to part with the records; so they went to their former home and gathered together the money and jewels they had left behind and returned to Laban, who, coveting their wealth, sought to slay them; but finally the Lord delivered him into their hands and they returned to their father Lehi in the wilderness, carrying with them the prized records, and accompanied by Zoram, Laban's servant.

The records were engraven on plates of brass and contained :

(1) The five books of Moses—Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy. (2) An account of the creation. (3) An account of Adam and Eve. (4) A record of the Jews down to Zedekiah. (5) Prophecies of the ancient prophets. (6) Genealogies of Lehi's fathers.

When Lehi received the plates, he prophesied that they should go forth to all nations.

Once more the boys returned to Jerusalem, this time to fetch Ishmael and his family of girls, to whom they were married in the wilderness, and continued their journey, now traveling eastwards, till they came to the sea. They lived eight years in the wilderness, the last stopping place being Bountiful—supposed to be on the Persian Gulf. Here they were instructed to build a ship to cross the waters. The ship finished, they stocked it with grain, fruit, honey, or whatever they needed and could obtain, and set sail. The Lord guided the ship and brought it to the west coast of America, where a landing was effected near Chile—in the northwest of South America, about 590 B.C. Upon their arrival in America, the Lord commanded Nephi (who had assumed charge of the company on the death of his father), to make new plates of the gold ore he found in abundance, on which to write their records. These new plates of gold were smaller than the old ones of brass, and contained the prophecies and doctrines of the church. The old plates of brass contained the history of the people, in full.

There were now two sets of plates. (1) The old plates, made of brass, containing history. (2) The new plates, made of gold, containing doctrine, prophecies, and revelations, with history in brief.

Fifty-five years after Lehi left Jerusalem, Nephi gave the plates into the keeping of his younger brother Jacob, who was born in the wilderness and appointed a king to reign over the people who were called the Nephites. The people separated into two companies; one, the Nephites, following Nephi, the other, the Lamanites, following his older brother Laman.

When Jacob died, the plates were passed to his son Enos. The Lamanites became very troublesome, and were constantly raiding the Nephite land, so Enos prayed that the records might not be destroyed by them, but preserved to come forth to future generations, and taken to the Lamanites for their salvation. Enos dying,

the records passed to his son Jarom, 421 B.C. From him they passed to his son Omni, 362 B.C. Omni passed them to Amaron, Amaron to his brother Chemish, Chemish gave them to his son Abinadom, and Abinadom passed them to his brother Amaleki.

Many and grievous wars had taken place between the Nephites and Lamanites, and the people had become very wicked. In the days of Amaleki a man named Mosiah was warned by God to leave Nephi, a city in the north of South America. He set out with those who would accompany him, traveling in the wilderness northward until he came to the land of Zarahemla, about three days' journey from the Isthmus of Panama. Here they discovered a people who left Jerusalem at the time Zedekiah was carried captive to Babylon, eleven years after Lehi left. They were a large body of people at the time of their discovery by Mosiah, but although they were of Jewish origin, as were the Nephites, their language the Nephites could not understand, and they had wandered so far from God, that they even denied His existence, and they had no records; but after Mosiah taught them his language, the leader gave him their history, as far as his memory served him.

Mosiah was made king, and a time of peace and prosperity followed. Some little time afterwards, some of the people were desirous of returning to Nephi to gain news of those left behind. They set out, and arrived on the outskirts of their destination, when a difference of opinion caused a rebellion, and brother fought against brother, all but fifty being slain. These fifty returned to Zarahemla, but soon set out again under the leadership of one Zeniff. On arrival in the land of Nephi, Zeniff interviewed the king, who gave him and his people two cities, Nephi and Shilom. When a few years had elapsed, they discovered that the king was long sighted, for he had ceded the cities to them, that they might beautify them, and cultivate the surrounding country, in order that he might grow rich at their expense, for he and his people were lazy and idolatrous. A band of Lamanites came against them, but were repulsed with great loss. To prevent further raids, they fortified the land, and for twenty-two years peace and prosperity attended them. Then the king, Laman, died, and his son reigned in his stead. Zeniff also died, and his son Noah reigned; but he was rebellious, and taxed the people to support his wives and concubines. Rebellion arose amongst Noah's people; at the same time the Lamanites came upon them, with the inevitable result that they were subdued and forced to pay heavy taxes to the Lamanites.

Noah was burnt at the stake, and Limhi, his son, made ruler, reigning as vassal to the Lamanites. Meanwhile, in Zarahemla, Mosiah, the king, had died, leaving the throne to his son Benjamin. He also died, and left the kingdom to his son Mosiah, and he became desirous of knowing the fate of the company who had left Zarahemla in the days of his grandfather Mosiah; so he sent out a

company, under the leadership of Ammon, and when on the outskirts of the city, Ammon and three of his brothers were arrested and imprisoned for two days, after which they were brought before the king, who informed them he was the grandson of Zeniff. Ammon then declared that he and his people were the very ones they were in search of, and Limhi then told him of the bondage they were in to the Lamanites, and how a party of his people had journeyed in the wilderness, endeavoring to find their way back to Zarahemla, but succeeded in finding nothing but twenty-four plates of pure gold, with writing on that they could not understand, and a land in ruins, covered with dead men's bones. Deeming this to be Zarahemla, or all that was left of it, they brought the plates and returned.

Led by Ammon, the whole company escaped the guards by making them drunk, and returned to Zarahemla, carrying the plates with them, which they gave to Mosiah, the king, who translated them.

We must now return to Amaleki, the last prophet to hold the Nephite plates; he filled these plates up. Having no children of his own, he searched around for someone worthy upon whom to bestow the sacred records, and his choice fell upon King Benjamin, to whom he gave the plates. Benjamin passed them on to his son Mosiah, so that Mosiah now had three sets of plates: (1) The large brass plates containing Bible history down to the time Lehi left Jerusalem, together with the history of the Nephites and Lamanites; (2) the smaller gold plates, containing a brief history of the Lamanites and Nephites, which Nephi said the Lord commanded him to make, for a wise purpose which he understood not; (3) the twenty-four plates found by Limhi's people, containing history of the Jaredites.

The second set of plates was filled by Amaleki, so that King Benjamin would continue the history on the larger brass plates.

When Mosiah died, 100 B.C., his sons all refused to reign; so Alma the prophet was chosen first chief judge, and given the plates. He bestowed them upon his son Helaman. Helaman gave the records to his son Nephi, who immediately bestowed them upon his son Nephi and left the land of Zarahemla, never to be heard of again. This was six hundred years after Lehi left Jerusalem, and the people were looking for the sign of the coming of Christ, which had been promised them. True to promise and prophecy, the night before Christ was born, when the new star appeared in the east, on the western continent the sun went down; but no darkness came, so for two whole days and a night it was perfectly light, and from this time on the Nephites altered their mode of reckoning time, this being taken as the year one. Thirty-three years passed away, Nephi III. keeping faithful record, when one day a most terrific storm raged for three hours, causing floods and earthquakes, whole cities being swamped, burned, or buried in

falling debris as the land was torn asunder and thrown up into mountains. It was the time of the crucifixion, and all nature shared in the death throes of the Redeemer of the world. And after this most awful storm came the sign the Lord had given them years before—the three days of darkness—during which time no one could light a fire or prepare food; but all lay terror-stricken, waiting for they knew not what. During the darkness, a voice was heard out of the clouds, reproving the people for their wickedness. When the people heard the voice, so astonished were they, they ceased their lamentations and howlings, in which they had been indulging, and silence prevailed for many hours. Then the voice was heard again, and so passed the days of darkness.

Shortly after Christ's ascension, He appeared unto the Nephites and established His Church amongst them, Nephi III., who had possession of the plates, being chosen one of the twelve apostles. At Nephi's death, the plates passed to his son Nephi, who handed them on to his son Amos. Amos, the son of Amos, was the next to receive them, after which they passed to his brother Amaron, who, on account of the great wickedness of the people, was instructed by the Lord to hide the records in the ground, 320 A.D. When Amaron hid the records, Mormon was a boy ten years of age. Amaron informed him of what he had done, and told him that when he was twenty-four years of age, he was to take the plates from their hiding-place; i.e., he was to take the plates of Nephi—the large brass plates—leaving all the other sacred things where they were. Mormon was a descendant of Nephi. At the age of eleven years, he removed with his father to the land of Zarahemla. War broke out afresh, and the people continued in their wickedness; and because of their great wickedness, the disciples were withdrawn, as were also miraculous gifts.

When Mormon was fifteen years old, the Lord visited him and forbade him to preach to the people. He was very tall at the age of sixteen, and was given command of the army. A general revolution arose throughout the land, the Lamanites driving the Nephites northwards until they came to Jason, where Amaron had hidden up the records. Mormon went to the hill where the records were hidden, and took out the brass plates, leaving the other sacred things, as he had been commanded.

On the plates of Nephi he made a full account of all the proceedings of the people. Later, he resumed command of the army, when, seeing that victory would eventually lie with the Lamanites, he returned to the hill Shim and took up all the records deposited by Amaron. The Nephites then moved northeast, and the armies were assembled near the hill Cumorah, in the state of New York. In this hill Mormon hid up the records before going forth to his last battle, all but a few plates on which he himself had been writing, and which Moroni, his son, filled up.

In the great final battle, fought near Cumorah, Mormon and all

his people, with the exception of twenty-four, were slain. The survivors were hunted down by the Lamanites, and all slain, with the exception of Moroni, 400 A.D.

Moroni lived on for twenty-one years after the Nephites were all slain, seemingly spending part of his time in making an abridgment of the history of the Jaredites, found on the twenty-four plates, returning the records to the hill Cumorah, as he felt his end approaching.

There were, therefore, deposited in the hill Cumorah: (1) The large brass plates of Nephi; (2) the smaller gold plates containing an abridgment of the larger plates, made by Nephi; (3) the twenty-four plates containing the history of the Jaredites; (4) the abridgment of the large plates made by Mormon, which also contained the history of the Jaredites, abridged by Moroni.

All these Moroni sealed up in the hill Cumorah, 421 A.D., where they lay hidden from all eyes until September 22nd, 1823, when the angel Moroni, who had last placed them there, revealed their hiding-place to the boy prophet, Joseph Smith, who, four years later, September 22nd, 1827, was given the abridgment made by Mormon, and bidden by the angel Moroni, to translate it into English and publish it to the world. This great task he accomplished, under the power of the Lord, aided by the interpreters deposited with the plates.

When Mormon received the plates, he made an abridgment of the large plates down to King Benjamin, and after doing so, found the smaller plates containing exactly the same account. So he took both his abridgment and the smaller plates, and put them together. He said he felt it was for a wise purpose, although he did not know what that purpose was. When Joseph Smith was translating the plates, he let Martin Harris take the manuscript. This had been taken from Mormon's abridgment; but having lost it, Joseph Smith fell back upon the plates of Nephi, which gave exactly the same account, so that up to page one hundred and fifty-seven of the Book of Mormon is really Nephi's abridgment, the rest of the book, with the exception of the Book of Ether, containing the history of the Jaredites, and the writings of Moroni (Moroni writing the book of Ether, the book of Moroni, and part of the nine chapters of the book called Mormon), being Mormon's abridgment.

Such is the history of the Book of Mormon, and all who would obtain a knowledge of its truth, can do so in the same way that Joseph Smith, the prophet, obtained possession of the book. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God."

Prayer is the key that will unlock the door that closes the heavens to man. Prayer will reveal to all doubting Thomases that the Book of Mormon is of divine origin, given to man for his guidance in these last days.

Salt Lake City.

MOLLIE HIGGINSON.