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## Secret Covenant Teachings of Men and the Devil in Helaman Through 3 Nephi 8

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Victor L. Ludlow

The title page of the Book of Mormon records that a major purpose of this scripture is “To show unto the remnant of the House of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and *that they may know the covenants of the Lord*, that they are not cast off forever” (emphasis added). Thus, the Book of Mormon is intended to teach God’s chosen people about their covenant relationships with the Lord. The Book of Mormon prophets not only teach the Nephites about their covenant relationship with God, but they also record some covenant promises made by government leaders to each other. Furthermore, they instruct future readers about the origins and dangers of secret covenants with Satan and his followers.

Of the 154 references to “covenant” in the Book of Mormon, 113 of them explain some promises made between God and his children on the earth. Most of the remaining references describe honorable promises made between leaders and individuals, usually to end periods of conflict. But a third and smallest category of passages contains 17 references to evil, secret covenants made between men and the devil. Fifteen of these secret covenant references are found in the book of

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Helaman and the first chapters of 3 Nephi, where all three types of covenants are mentioned (see Alma 37:27, 29 for the other two secret covenant references). In a similar pattern, of the 41 “oath” references in the Book of Mormon, 20 of them are positive promises openly made between individuals and leaders while 9 of them are righteous oaths made with God or his servants, and the other 12 are negative vows entered into with secret combinations.

Ironically, when Helaman received stewardship over the records of the prophets, his father told him not to divulge the secret oaths and covenants found on the plates of Ether (Alma 37:27–29). Later, Helaman would witness the resurgence of secret covenants among his own people, but the knowledge of those covenants did not come from him or the records under his charge—instead the devil conspired anew with the wicked leaders of the time. The patterns of their origin and the examples of the destruction they wreaked upon the people provide insights for us today, because we have been warned that similar secret combinations and covenants will develop among the enemies of the righteous in the last days.

## Meaning of “Covenant”

Before we start our discussion of secret covenants, it will be helpful to come to an understanding of what the word “covenant” and the concept “covenant making” mean. The first two definitions in Webster’s dictionary are both very appropriate to the covenant context within the Book of Mormon. First, Webster defines the word “covenant” as “a binding or solemn agreement by two or more persons, parties, etc.” (Compare BD 651). Covenants in the Book of Mormon are always binding or solemn agreements, whether they represent a vertical (God-to-person) relationship binding together Heavenly Father and individuals or a horizontal (person-to-person) relationship in a solemn oath between two people. Indeed, the Satanic

covenants were mainly horizontal and so serious that physical death was to be inflicted on those who broke them.

The second definition of “covenant” amplifies the vertical aspect. Webster defines covenants also as “the promises of God to man, usually carrying with them conditions to be fulfilled by man, as recorded in the Bible.” From this definition, we learn that covenants are conditional; they are promises dependent upon people’s individual and collective behavior as recorded in the scriptures. Unfortunately, Satan tries to replicate God’s covenants with his own set of conditions, all of them destructive, as he works as a “Father of Deceit” among the children of men.

The language roots of the Old Testament indicate that the ancient meanings of “covenant making” involved symbolic acts and customary rituals. For example, when two parties came to a covenantal agreement, they could indicate it through an unusual act—such as cutting the throat of an animal to be used either as a sacrificial offering or as the main dish for their feast of celebration. One of the Book of Mormon settings where “cutting” comes close to describing a symbolic covenant action is found in Alma 46:21–22 when the people rent or tore their garments or robes as a token that they would not forsake the Lord their God. Satan also directed his followers in the secret combinations to use a knife or sword in cutting/stabbing the flesh of their victims (Hel 9:6).

## The Five Steps of Covenant Making

Moses, in the book of Deuteronomy, presents the oldest record we have of covenant making which continues into later dispensations. This process can be divided into the five steps, which are the same steps that a sovereign ruler would use to establish a covenant or treaty relationship with his vassals in the ancient Near East. These same five steps exemplify the covenant process between the Heavenly Sovereign of this earth

and his children, particularly as demonstrated through baptism and the temple ordinances:

1. Historical background = Introducing the covenant parties and recounting past relationships and promises
2. Stipulations = Listing the general and specific expectations of either party
3. Blessings and Curses = Announcing the possible consequences (blessings/rewards and curses/punishments)
4. Witnesses = Verifying the contract through earthly and heavenly observers
5. Remembrance = Recording a review, revision, and renewal process

We will see that all five of these steps are found among the imitation secret covenants of wicked men as recorded in Helaman and 3 Nephi.

The following chart shows all the “covenant” and secret “oath” references in this part of the Book of Mormon:

<b>“COVENANT” REFERENCES IN HELAMAN AND 3 NEPHI 1–8:</b>			
*	Helaman	1:11	covenant to protect Kishkumen, the murderer
*		1:12	Kishkumen and his secret band
*		2:3	Kishkumen’s band seeks Helaman’s death
* ;		6:21	a growing covenant band of robbers
**		6:22	signs and words of the secret band of robbers
* ;		6:25	Alma’s warning not to reveal secret covenants
* ;		6:26	Satanic origin of the “new” secret covenants
* ;	Helaman	6:30	the works and secret covenants of the devil
†	3 Nephi	5:4	Lamanites covenant to commit no more killings: set free
†		5:5	Lamanites who don’t covenant to cease killings: punished

‡‡‡	5:25	Lord's covenants with house of Jacob: mentioned five times in one verse
‡‡		
†	6:3	covenant by reformed robbers to keep peace in the land
***	6:28	evil men covenant with Satan against the righteous
*	6:29	covenant against the Lord's people and the laws of the land
*	6:30	covenant to destroy the legal government
*	7:11	opposition to those of the secret covenant band
‡	=	References to righteous/vertical covenants
†	=	References to positive/ horizontal covenants
*	=	References to negative/ "secret" covenants
i	=	References to negative/ "secret" oaths

Before we look at these secret covenants, we will first evaluate the one verse in this section of the Book of Mormon which refers to God's covenant promises with Abraham. In 3 Nephi 5:25, we read that Abraham's posterity is promised a full knowledge of God's covenants with the house of Jacob. In fact, in this one verse, the root "covenant" will appear five times, more than in any other single verse of scripture! Mormon indicates:

And as he [the Lord] hath *covenanted* with all the house of Jacob, even so shall the *covenant* wherewith he hath *covenanted* with the house of Jacob be fulfilled in his own due time, unto the restoring all the house of Jacob unto the knowledge of the *covenant* that he hath *covenanted* with them. (3 Nephi 5:25; emphasis added)

Some Book of Mormon insights into this covenant were presented earlier in 1 and 2 Nephi (see 1 Nephi 22 and 2 Nephi chapters 3, 10, and 29). But how is a knowledge of these covenants going to come to Jacob's descendants in the last days? Later in 3 Nephi, the resurrected Lord answers this question and gives further details about his covenant promises with the house of Israel in two important discourses: The Law and the Covenant Discourse (3 Nephi chapters 15 and 16), and

The Covenant People Discourse (3 Nephi 20:10–23:5; see also Ludlow).

These and other marvelous covenant teachings to be found later in the Book of Mormon are implied in the promise of Mormon as recorded in 3 Nephi 5:25, that the house of Jacob will come to a knowledge of their covenant relationship with God.<sup>1</sup> Mormon is speaking with inspired hindsight as he gives this promise. He already knows the covenant teachings of the resurrected Savior which he is going to record later on his gold plates.

Although only one verse in this section of the Book of Mormon specifically mentions God's covenants with his children, that verse contains the important promise that the house of Jacob will eventually come to a full knowledge of their covenant relationship.

## The Secret Covenants of Men and the Devil

As indicated earlier, 15 of the 23 covenant references in Helaman through 3 Nephi 8 relate to secret vows made between men and Satan. These references are found in 12 verses. Analyzing these specific verses will tell us much about secret, evil vows. We will evaluate the key secret covenant elements in each verse and also highlight a modern manifestation of these elements in our contemporary setting. We will also identify the specific covenant steps in each set of passages. Studying the secret covenant elements and steps in these verses will, in turn, help us understand the motives and techniques of evil people and Satan as they conspire against God and his children today.

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<sup>1</sup> Later in 3 Nephi, Mormon adds his own testimony to the covenant teachings of the Savior that he has recorded. In chapter 29, Mormon promises that after the Book of Mormon comes forth, the people will no longer say that the Lord delays his coming to the children of Israel. The prophet pronounces judgements upon those who deny the Lord's doings and those who persecute Israel (vv 6–8). Mormon testifies that no one can hinder the Lord from fulfilling the covenant which he has made with the house of Israel (v 9; later important teachings about covenant promises to Israel in the last days are in Mormon 5, 8; Ether 4, 13; and Moroni 7, 10).

The passages start in the first chapter of Helaman when contentions arise among the people as they try to select one of the sons of Pahoran as his successor after his death. We have capitalized each use of the word covenant for emphasis:

And he went unto those that sent him, and they all entered into a COVENANT, yea, swearing by their everlasting Maker, that they would tell no man that Kishkumen had murdered Pahoran.

Therefore, Kishkumen was not known among the people of Nephi, for he was in disguise at the time that he murdered Pahoran. And Kishkumen and his band, who had COVENANTED with him, did mingle themselves among the people, in a manner that they all could not be found; but as many as were found were condemned unto death. (Hel 1:11–12)

The key elements and covenant steps are highlighted in the following chart:

### Secret Covenant Verses 1 & 2 = Helaman 1:11–12

#### **KEY ELEMENTS:**

**SECRECY**—To avoid consequences of actions, evil people try to defy justice as they “glory in their works for a season” (compare Moses 5:31—murder to get gain).

**IRONY**—Their Satanic oath is sworn in the name of God.

**GROUP GOAL**—They want to kill the people in authority over them [if they could, they would kill the ultimate chief judge—Christ].

**DISGUISE**—Secret combinations encourage “wolves in sheep’s clothing;” on the surface, evil and good are hard to distinguish; indeed, Satan can appear as an angel of light.

**MODERN MANIFESTATIONS**—We don’t “rat” on sinners, especially if their goals are the same as ours.

The wicked can disguise themselves in the world; as LDS become more materialistic and image oriented, they become virtually indistinguishable from Satan’s followers.

**COVENANT STEPS IN THESE VERSES:**

1. **Historical context**—Contention among the three sons of Pahoran: followers of one son (Paanchi), frustrated and angry, send assassin to kill Pahoran, the son elected by the people to be chief judge and governor
2. **Stipulations**—Secrecy
4. **Witnesses**—Band of men who sent Kishkumen

A few years later, Kishkumen and his secret band sought to kill the prophet, Helaman, who had recently been selected as the chief judge:

But behold, Kishkumen, who had murdered Pahoran, did lay wait to destroy Helaman also; and he was upheld by his band, who had entered into a COVENANT that no one should know his wickedness. (Hel 2:3)

A few new key elements of secret covenants become apparent in this passage. These elements and some additional attributes of covenant steps are shown in the following chart:

**Secret Covenant Verse 3 = Helaman 2:3**

**KEY ELEMENTS:**

**TARGETS**—The wicked seek to destroy anyone who may know of their wickedness (especially those with a spiritual gift of discernment).

**MODERN MANIFESTATION**—The wicked find safety in numbers and fear in disclosure; a people's righteousness will thwart a small secret combination.

**COVENANT STEPS IN THIS VERSE:**

2. **Stipulations**—secrecy, further murder; desire for the office of chief judgeship and political spoils
4. **Witnesses**—secret band of followers

The band of Kishkumen, also known as the Gadianton robbers, were eventually chased into the wilderness where they died out. About 25 years later, a new band of robbers began to

follow Satanic influences as secret covenants were established again:

But behold, Satan did stir up the hearts of the more part of the Nephites, insomuch that they did unite with those bands of robbers, and did enter into their COVENANTS and their oaths, that they would protect and preserve one another in whatsoever difficult circumstances they should be placed, that they should not suffer for their murders, and their plunderings, and their stealings.

And it came to pass that they did have their signs, yea, their secret signs, and their secret words; and this that they might distinguish a brother who had entered into the COVENANT, that whatsoever wickedness his brother should do he should not be injured by his brother, nor by those who did belong to his band, who had taken this COVENANT. (Hel 6:21–22)

Murdering, stealing, and all manner of wickedness characterized this growing band of robbers as they sought for increased power. Some key elements and covenant steps of their secret combination are seen in the following chart:

### Secret Covenant Verses 4 & 5 = Helaman 6:21–22

#### **KEY ELEMENTS:**

**ANARCHY**—The wicked have a total disregard for the law and authority; the defenseless feel they have to band with others in order to survive.

**ATTITUDES**—A type of ultimate humanism develops as people look to other mortals (instead of God) for help and security; they also try to avoid punishment and suffering as you set up another system of “laws” and rule by the “arm of flesh.”

**IMITATION**—Satan introduces a blasphemous replica of the Lord’s covenant system of signs and tokens.

**BROTHERHOOD**—It is easy to be accepted by fellow conspirators.

**MODERN MANIFESTATIONS**—People try to follow the ways of the world and “get away with it.” This is much like modern street gangs and drug circles.

People follow the peer or “in” group and seek their acceptance.

**COVENANT STEPS IN THESE VERSES:**

1. **Historical context**—c. 25 years later—Gadianton band is found out, flees into the wilderness; Lamanites take land of Zarahemla; church dwindles but some missionary success, esp. among the Lamanites; “peace and prosperity” in the land; new murdering of the chief judges
2. **Stipulations**—protect and preserve one another; no punishments; secret signs and words
3. **Blessings/curses**—desire to get gain (v. 17) with no punishment; any disclosure of secrets results in trial and “justice” by the band
4. **Witnesses**—many Nephites, “brothers”
5. **Renewal**—expansion among new and more people

The source for these secret covenants was Satan, who had enticed Gadianton, as seen in the next set of verses:

Now behold, it is these secret oaths and COVENANTS which Alma commanded his son should not go forth unto the world, lest they should be a means of bringing down the people unto destruction.

Now behold, those secret oaths and COVENANTS did not come forth unto Gadianton from the records which were delivered unto Helaman; but behold, they were put into the heart of Gadianton by that same being who did entice our first parents to partake of the forbidden fruit—. (Hel 6:25–26)

The increasing power of Satan over these secret covenant makers is seen in the following chart:

**Secret Covenant Verses 6 & 7 = Helaman 6:25–26**

**KEY ELEMENTS:**

**HUMAN NATURE**—Satan’s expectations are easier to follow than God’s commandments.

**GUILT BY ASSOCIATION**—The longer people are exposed to evil, the more likely they will succumb to it.

**BONDAGE**—Once people are on the path to spiritual destruction, it is hard to turn back without losing face and “life.”

**FALSE PROMISES**—Satan’s covenants seem to be based on the premise that individuals can have “anything in this world” if they will follow him.

**IRONY**—Satan’s plan seems liberating on the surface (do what you want and you won’t be punished), when in reality it is the path to bondage; God’s plan seems to be restrictive (all those commandments)

**MODERN MANIFESTATIONS**—People believe the idea that following Satan isn’t really going to harm them.

Harboring too much time, talk, and energy on evil doings may lead to evil doings. In a similar manner, Latter-day Saints should not spend time or energy in putting down other religions or worrying overmuch about anti-Mormon movements.

Before long, Satan had great power over the people, as recorded in the next passage:

And behold, it is he who is the author of all sin. And behold, he doth carry on his works of darkness and secret murder, and doth hand down their plots, and their oaths, and their COVENANTS, and their plans of awful wickedness, from generation to generation according as he can get hold upon the hearts of the children of men. (Hel 6:30)

The pervasiveness of Satan’s influence is seen in the next chart:

### Secret Covenant Verse 8 = Helaman 6:30

#### **KEY ELEMENTS:**

**DARKNESS**—Satan’s works are symbolized by darkness.

**POWER**—Satan’s plan is only as strong as its adherents “according as he can get hold.”

**CONTINUITY**—Wickedness often carries on from one generation to the next; false “traditions” are one of Satan’s most powerful tools because if a society is already evil, he does not have to work as hard to have his methods and secrets passed on (D&C 74:4; 93:39; 123:7).

**MODERN MANIFESTATION**—It is very difficult to break the pattern of sin (such as child abuse continuing into the following generations).

The power and influence of the Gadianton band remained in spite of the great examples, teachings, and warnings of the Nephi, the Nephite prophet, and Samuel, the Lamanite prophet. Famines, wars, and the miraculous signs of the Savior's birth did not eliminate the followers of wickedness and their secret covenants. In fact, the Gadianton leaders and their armies almost gained control of the Nephite lands (3 Nephi 3, 4). Finally, about 50 years after the founding of this latter secret robber band, the Nephites were able to destroy all the wicked, secret combinations (3 Nephi 5:6). Unfortunately, within ten years, a new secret combination of murderers and robbers was established:

And they did enter into a COVENANT one with another, yea, even into that COVENANT which was given by them of old, which COVENANT was given and administered by the devil, to combine against all righteousness. (3 Nephi 6:28)

As seen in the following chart, this new band soon followed the pattern of the earlier secret combinations:

### Secret Covenant Verse 9 = 3 Nephi 6:28

#### **KEY ELEMENTS:**

**AUTHORSHIP**—Satan is the author and administrator of secret combinations.

**MOTIVE**—The devil and his followers rebel against all righteousness.

**MODERN MANIFESTATION**—Natural desire to join the crowd for one's own gain.

#### **COVENANT STEPS IN THESE VERSES:**

1. *Historical context*—over 50 years later—In the meantime: Gadianton band gains control of Nephite government; oppression of the weak and righteous; Nephi preaches; murdering within the band (Hel 8:27–28); Nephi gives signs of murder of chief judge and his murderer; wars, famines; strong Gadianton band; Samuel the Lamanite.

- (3 Nephi) signs of Christ's birth given; Gadianton band increases; Nephites unite and Gadiantons are defeated; c. 10 years later a new group of secret members (judges, lawyers, high priests) form a new band under Satan's influence
2. *Stipulations*—oppose righteousness and the Lord's people; destroy the government; establish a king
  3. *Blessings/curses*—no punishment for murder
  4. *Witnesses*—judges, lawyers, high priests, friends and kindreds
  5. *Renewal*—new, expanded Gadianton band (compare Hel 11:24–27)

The wicked purposes behind their secret covenants soon became obvious:

Therefore they did combine against the people of the Lord, and enter into a COVENANT to destroy them, and to deliver those who were guilty of murder from the grasp of justice, which was about to be administered according to the law.

And they did set at defiance the law and the rights of their country; and they did COVENANT one with another to destroy the governor, and to establish a king over the land, that the land should no more be at liberty but should be subject unto kings. (3 Nephi 6:29–30)

The key elements in the great struggle of the wicked who fight against the Lord and his followers are seen in the following chart:

### Secret Covenant Verses 10 & 11 = 3 Nephi 6:29–30

#### **KEY ELEMENTS:**

**REBELLION**—The ultimate struggle is both against the Lord's people and also for the protection or deliverance of the guilty ones.

**DEFIANCE**—The wicked oppose the laws of the land which were about to administer justice upon the murderers.

**POLITICAL CHAOS**—Those in the secret combination sought to destroy liberty and the government and to establish a kingship, even though he might make them subject to him.

**IRONY**—The wicked try to eliminate those in authority while blindly subjecting themselves to the master authoritarian (the devil) and those like him (evil, powerful kings).

**MODERN MANIFESTATIONS**—The non-exercise of freedoms and liberty will result in a government of authoritarian control.

Might makes right

However, not all people were willing to follow the lovers of wickedness and their secret covenants. Although not wanting to join the righteous, many people still opposed the evil bands of robbers and their king, Jacob:

And it came to pass that they [of the evil band] were not so strong in number as the tribes of the people, who were united together save it were their leaders did establish their laws, every one according to his tribe; nevertheless they were enemies; notwithstanding they were not a righteous people, yet they were united in the hatred of those who had entered into a COVENANT to destroy the government. (3 Nephi 7:11)

Although no strong central government remained and only a minority of the people were righteous, the members of many tribes were able to weaken the power of the secret band, as seen in the following chart:

### Secret Covenant Verse 12 = 3 Nephi 7:11

**KEY ELEMENTS:**

**DIVISION**—As the government fell, people banded into many various tribes, weakening the central control of the secret band of the wicked.

**TERRESTRIAL JUSTICE**—Descent, just people may not agree with each other, but they can unite in opposition to the wicked.

**MODERN MANIFESTATION**—Good “Gentiles” still have the wisdom and strength to unite in their hatred of evil, wicked leaders.

**COVENANT STEPS IN THIS VERSE:**

1. *Historical context*—chief judge killed, people divide into tribes; secret band appoints a king, Jacob; tribes united in hatred of band, which flees north; some “peace” in the land, but much wickedness; Lord’s great destruction at Christ’s crucifixion destroys the wicked
2. *Stipulations*—protect tribe, oppose band
3. *Blessings/curses*—some peace is finally established in the land
5. *Renewal*—the secret combinations lose their power

Ultimately, lasting peace (200 years of it) came only after the Lord destroyed the wicked off the face of the earth. Mortals were unable to cleanse the land of the secret combinations by themselves; they had to have divine assistance. Ideally, such secret combination should never be allowed to gain a foothold in society. Otherwise, they quickly become so powerful that only the powers of heaven can destroy them.

## Summary

Let us now list and briefly describe 14 characteristics which we learn from these references from the book of Helaman and 3 Nephi about secret covenants.

1. Secret oaths: Oaths are sworn in secret.
2. Sworn in God’s name: Ironically, some oaths are sworn in the name of God, the “everlasting Maker” to give them some false “legitimacy.”
3. Goal is to overthrow anyone in authority: One major goal of secret combinations is to overthrow anyone in authority, political or religious.
4. Satan’s program includes murder for gain: The enticement of secret combinations is the same promise Satan made to Cain—you can murder and get gain. Satan’s plan is always the same.

5. **Escape punishment:** In overthrowing authority figures, secret combinations seek to murder and escape punishment; maybe to demonstrate that Heavenly Father is powerless as a God of power.

6. **Disguised as regular, even exemplary, members of society:** Secret combinations use the “wolf in sheep’s clothing” principle—they are disguised as regular, even exemplary members of society. For example, just as Satan can appear as an angel of light, these evil groups can appear harmless and even virtuous on the surface. If the Lord’s people are indistinguishable from the world in appearance and actions, they are in effect helping to camouflage those who are aligned with Satan.

7. **Target any who may expose their evil designs:** Secret combinations target any group that may expose their evil designs. Thus, prophets are often attacked. Even if it isn’t a physical attack, as President Kimball states, we mentally stone the living prophets by disregarding their counsel (257; see also 1 Nephi 19:7). When we rationalize and argue that the General Authorities are not really in touch with how things really are, we are aligning ourselves with Satan.

8. **Strength in numbers:** Secret combinations seek strength in numbers. They are the worst pyramid scheme possible! Their sales pitch is the antithesis of “seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt 6:33). They say: “Take what you can now, through whatever wicked means, and establish your kingdom here.”

9. **Temporal security through protection and riches:** Rather than focusing on the long-term, spiritual consequences of their actions, they promise temporal security—protection and riches. Their slogan might be, “Seek to save your life and get rich, and forget about eternity.”

10. **Might makes right:** When a majority of the people choose iniquity and align themselves with secret combinations, law and justice are replaced by the law of the jungle—“might makes

right". Right and wrong are not even an issue; all that matters is that you are smart enough or powerful enough to escape punishment. Ironically, the original promises of security last only until factions form within the secret group, and then a person is more vulnerable than before. Thus, not only are eternal blessings sacrificed, but even the temporal rewards, which had seemed so appealing, are short-lived.

11. Counterfeit sets of tokens and signs: Satan's covenants are complete with their own set of tokens and signs in imitation of the Lord's system.

12. Easy acceptance into band: Acceptance into a secret combination is easy compared with acceptance into the Lord's church. For example, look at the example of teenagers—to be accepted by the drinkers, all they have to do is drink.

13. Darkness: Darkness is a term always associated with the plans of secret combination; it describes both their means and purposes.

14. As strong as its adherents: Satan's plan is only as strong as its adherents—"according as he can get hold upon the hearts of the children of men." We possess the power to crush him, while he can only bruise us if we let him.

### Book of Mormon Warnings Against Secret Covenants

The Book of Mormon does not name and warn us about specific secret combinations in the last days. Rather, it reveals the general characteristics and eventual dangers of secret covenants. Even more important for us personally, it helps us realize that it is not just organized secret evil organizations that we have to fear; rather, we need to be alert for any manifestation of Satan's attitudes or techniques in our own lives. Satan is very subtle, and he would be glad to have us accept any of his lies. If we, through ignorance or selfishness, are converted to any of his ideology or behavior, then we not only weaken God's

kingdom on earth, but we also make it more difficult for the world to distinguish and eradicate wickedness from among us. With a careful reading of the scriptures, thoughtful study and pondering, and the gift of discernment, we should recognize the beginning signs of Satanic influences in our society, and thus we and others can more easily and quickly overcome them.

The purpose of this study has been primarily to warn about the elements of secret covenants. By looking at the negative examples of the devil's covenants, we are better able to appreciate the spiritual power of God's covenant people. The Book of Mormon exposes the characteristics of Satan's secret covenants to help us avoid his subtle means so that we will not uphold them as did some of the ancients. Our gratitude for God's covenants should motivate us to keep the promises we have made with him so we can strengthen ourselves and others against Satan's continuing evil influences in our own families and society.

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