



Type: Manual Lesson

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## Lesson 19 - Life in the Desert, 2. Man versus Man

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Source: *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*

Published: Salt Lake City; The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,  
1957

Pages: 202-216

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**Abstract:** A valuable passage about fire-making in 1 Nephi furnishes the perfect clue to the nature of Lehi's contacts in the desert. He avoided all contact whenever possible. This behavior is perfectly consistent with the behavior of modern Arabs and with known conditions in the desert in Lehi's day. The whole story of Lehi's wandering centers about his tent, which in Nephi's account receives just the proper emphasis and plays just the proper role. Another authentic touch is Lehi's altar-building and sacrificing. The troubles and tensions within Lehi's own family on the march, and the way they were handled and the group led and controlled by Lehi's authority are entirely in keeping with what is known of conditions both today and in ancient times. The description of the role and the behavior of women in 1 Nephi are also perfectly consistent with what is known of actual conditions from many sources.

## Lesson 19

### LIFE IN THE DESERT

#### 2. Man versus Man

**Prospectus of Lesson 19:** A valuable passage about fire-making in 1 Nephi furnishes the perfect clue to the nature of Lehi's contacts in the desert. He avoided all contact whenever possible. This behavior is perfectly consistent with the behavior of modern Arabs and with known conditions in the desert in Lehi's day. The whole story of Lehi's wandering centers about his tent, which in Nephi's account receives just the proper emphasis and plays just the proper role. Another authentic touch is Lehi's altar-building and sacrificing. The troubles and tensions within Lehi's own family on the march, and the way they were handled and the group led and controlled by Lehi's authority are entirely in keeping with what is known of conditions both today and in ancient times. The description of the role and the behavior of women in 1 Nephi are also perfectly consistent with what is known of actual conditions from many sources.

Nephi's account is very enlightening on the subject of human relationships in the desert. These are to be considered under two heads: (1) contacts with other parties in the desert, and (2) relationships within the group.

**"Not Much Fire":** The key to the first of these is an enlightening comment on cooking and firemaking:

For the Lord had not hitherto suffered that we should make much fire, as we journeyed in the wilderness; for he said: I will make thy food become sweet, that ye cook it not; and I will also be your light in the wilderness . . . (1 Ne. 17:12-13.)

It was only "as we journeyed" that the Lord restricted fire-making; there was no restraint once they reached the seashore, nor was fire ever forbidden absolutely, but only "much fire". Since there was nothing wrong with fire as such, why the limitation? "I well remember," writes Bertram Thomas, "taking part in a discussion upon the unhealthfulness of campfires by night; we discontinued them forthwith in spite of the bitter cold."<sup>1</sup> Major Cheeseman's guide would not even let

him light a tiny lamp to jot down star readings, and they never dared build a fire on the open plain where it "would attract the attention of a prowling raiding party over long distances and invite a night attack."<sup>2</sup> Once in a while in a favorably sheltered depression "we dared to build a fire that could not be seen from a high spot," writes Raswan.<sup>3</sup> That is, fires are not absolutely out of the question, but rare and risky—not *much* fire, was Lehi's rule. And fires in the daytime are almost as risky as at night. Palgrave tells how his party were forced "lest the smoke of our fire should give notice to some distant rover, to content ourselves with dry dates," instead of cooked food.<sup>4</sup>

**Shunning Human Contacts the Safe Rule:** We have seen that Lehi left Jerusalem secretly and that the Lord is careful to conceal from the wicked the movements of those whom he "leadeth away into precious lands." Nephi persuaded Zoram to join Lehi's party "that the Jews might not know concerning our flight into the wilderness." (1 Ne. 4:36.) It was policy on Lehi's part to avoid human contact in the desert as much as he possibly could, but even had his party been ordinary Arabs they would have done the same. The only contacts travelers through the desert should make are those necessary to obtain escorts, but often it is impossible to get any escort at all. "We still feared to proceed without the company of an escort," writes Hariri of a journey across the Syrian desert to Damascus, "And we therefore sought one from all the tribes of the Bedu and tried everything to get it; but still it was impossible to find any escort." So they went without, in fear and trembling.

And after that we proceeded on our intended journey with prayers instead of drivers to encourage our camels, and words instead of warriors to protect our goods . . .<sup>5</sup>

Everyone is suspicious of everyone else in the desert, because no one is exactly sure of his status. "The camps are scarcely ever placed in the immediate

neighborhood of water, but the Arab women go perhaps a mile away from the tents and bring the needful supply in black skins," Conder reports. "I have often asked the Arabs why they did not pitch close to the water, but never got a satisfactory answer. They have probably learned from experience that the great requisite for a camp seems to be shelter and concealment."<sup>6</sup> While in the desert the Arab dreads the approach of anyone—even a friend. Hariri tells how when he saw a figure approaching his camp, "I discovered his turning aside to the place that I occupied, and commended myself to God for protection against intruders."<sup>7</sup>

Many have noted that "the Bedouins are not ashamed of acting like cowards,"<sup>8</sup> and that they will always beat a retreat unless "they are really in a safe majority, and if they are outnumbered, they hide in the undulations of the ground, in a manner which would excite the admiration of any military man."<sup>9</sup> The inscriptions are full of scouting, spying, dodging, evading:

N. was on the lookout for his imprisoned fellows. So, O Baal-Samin, rest to those who are distressed.<sup>10</sup>

N. went away in the evening in order to go eastward into the desert. So, O Allat, grant return and protection from the enemy!<sup>11</sup>

N. was heavy-hearted on account of his brother and on account of his father and on account of his uncle. And he was afraid of the enemy. So, O Allat and Gad-'Awihh, grant protection. And he found traces of his fellows and longed for them. . . .<sup>12</sup>

That is a grim little testimony to the sort of thing that might easily have happened to Lehi's family!

N. was on the lookout. So, O Allat, (give) deliverance from the plotter.<sup>13</sup>

One group of inscriptions, that can be dated 123-4 A.D., contains the names of many who describe themselves as "on the lookout" and the Thamud inscriptions contain a whole class of texts dealing with "spying and being on the lookout."<sup>14</sup> One is "by W. son of Malik son of I., and he escaped with the cattle into this valley. So O Allat (give) peace."<sup>15</sup>

All these dramatic little inscriptions, which are counted by the hundreds, have been discovered within the last sixty years. How eloquently they recall Lehi and his predicament! Thomas lays down a rule which is to be observed by all travelers in the desert, even to this day—"An approaching party may be friend, but is always assumed to be foe."<sup>16</sup> In the words of the ancient poet Zuhair, "He who travels should consider his friend to be his enemy."<sup>17</sup> St. Nilus describes Bedouins on the march in the fifth century as possessed by the same jittery nervousness and unbearable tension that make the accounts of Cheeseman, Philby, Thomas, Palgrave, Burckhardt, and the others such exciting reading. At the merest sign of an armed man, he says, his Bedu fled in alarm "as if seized by panic fear," and kept on fleeing, "for fear makes them exaggerate danger and causes them to imagine things far beyond reality, magnifying their dread in every instance."<sup>18</sup> Just so their modern descendants "live always under the impression that an invasion is on the way, and every suspicious shadow or movement on the horizon calls for attention," according to the astute Baldensperger.<sup>19</sup> This almost hysterical state of apprehension is actually a prime condition of survival in the desert: "A bedawy never tells his name," says the writer just quoted, "nor his tribe, nor his business, nor the whereabouts of his people, even if he is in a friendly district. They are and must be very cautious . . . a word out of season may bring death and destruction."<sup>20</sup> When the Beni Hilal migrate, it is "under the darkness of the night, under the obscuring veil of the rain," by-passing settled places in darkness and in silence. What can better describe such a state of things than the Book of Mormon expression, "a lonesome and a solemn people"? Doughty said he had never met a "merry" man among the Arabs—and there is no humor in the Book of Mormon. This mood is hardly accidental. If the Hebrew gets his brooding qualities from his desert ancestors, why not the Lamanite?

**A Hostile Land:** But what was there to be afraid of? First of all, resentment of intrusion. "A Chinese wall seems to surround this land," a recent visitor reports, "jealously guarded from foreign intrusion." Everyone, he says, not excluding Moslems, is suspect, and "it is extremely difficult to invent a plausible reason for one's presence there."<sup>21</sup> What kind of a reason could Lehi invent? The whole of Arabia proper is "to this very day almost absolutely closed to the investigations of science."<sup>22</sup> "The Arab tribes are in a state of almost perpetual war against each other. . . ." Burckhardt says,<sup>23</sup> but even friends do not trust each other: "They often treat their *confederates*, of a more peaceful turn of mind than themselves, in a very oppressive way," Harmer reports, citing I Sam. 25:7.<sup>24</sup>

Now we have seen that in Lehi's day the whole Arabian Peninsula was in a state of great upheaval and unrest; it was a time of major migrations when nobody knew who was trespassing where. When Lehi's party was the smaller one it would skillfully avoid contact, when it was the larger one the other side would just as skillfully avoid contact! The wilderness of Judaea, writes Dupont-Sommer, "throughout the history of Palestine, has served as a place of refuge for bandits and outlaws and all wanted men."<sup>25</sup> But this was far more conspicuously the case in the Nejd, the southern desert of Idumea into which Lehi escaped.<sup>26</sup> Lehi's position was pretty much that of the sheikh of the Amer, one of whose young men killed the vicious and oppressive Sherif or Governor of Mecca. So the family had to flee, and exactly reversing Lehi's route went north through the Arabah to Gaza and thence to Moab, where they became the ruling tribe in the Middle Ages.<sup>27</sup> In their wanderings, spying and scouting is their main activity, their whole march is one protracted reconnaissance in enemy territory; they are uprooted and homeless, outcasts from their native city, and to survive must play a skillful game of dodging and evading.<sup>28</sup>

**The Raiders:** But the main danger to travel in the desert, even in the best of times, has always been the raiders. *Tul-ma henna hayyun inghazi*: "as long as we breathe we must make raids!" is the saying of the Bedouins.<sup>28</sup> The raid is a highly honorable and traditional undertaking, and includes attacks on neighboring tribes as well as on traveling caravans. It is undertaken whenever possible. "The Arabs may be styled a nation of robbers," Burckhardt writes, "whose principal occupation is plunder, the constant subject of their thoughts. . . . The Arab robber considers his profession honorable; and the term *haramy* (robber) is one of the most flattering terms that could be conferred on a youthful hero. The Arab robs his enemies, his friends, and his neighbors. . . . The Bedouins have reduced robbery, in all its branches, to a complete and regular system. . . ." <sup>29</sup> A hundred years before Burckhardt, Harmer tells us that "the Arabs wait for caravans with the most violent avidity, looking about them on all sides, raising themselves up on their horses, running here and there to see if they cannot perceive any smoke, or dust, or tracks on the ground, or any other marks of people passing along." Once they have spotted a caravan they follow it all day, keeping just out of sight, "and in the night they silently fall upon the camp, and carry off one part of it before the rest are got under arms."<sup>31</sup> And so it was in Lehi's day, when his friend and contemporary Jeremiah wrote: "Thou hast laid in ambush for them, as the Arabians in the wilderness." (Jer. 3:2.)

**The Tent:** It is most significant how Nephi speaks of his father's tent; it is the official center of all administration and authority. First the dogged insistence of Nephi on telling us again and again that "my father dwelt in a tent." (1 Ne. 2:15, 9:1, 10:16, 16:6.) So what? we ask, but to an Oriental that statement says everything. Since time immemorial the whole population of the Near East have been either tent-dwellers or house-dwellers, the people of the *bait ash-sha'r* or the

*bait at-tin*, "houses of hair or houses of clay."<sup>32</sup> It was Harmer who first pointed out that one and the same person may well alternate between the one way of life and the other, and he cites the case of Laban in Genesis 31, where "one is surprised to find both parties so suddenly equipped with tents for their accommodation in traveling," though they had all along been living in houses.<sup>33</sup> Not only has it been the custom for herdsmen and traders to spend part of the year in tents and part in houses, but "persons of distinction" in the East have always enjoyed spending part of the year in tents for the pure pleasure of a complete change.<sup>34</sup>

It is clear from 1 Ne. 3:1, 4:38, 5:7, 7:5, 21-22, 15:1, 16:10, that Lehi's tent is the headquarters for all activities, all discussion and decisions.

" . . . **Have Place with Us**": Nephi's invitation to Zoram was: ". . . if thou wilt go down into the wilderness to my father, thou shalt have *place* with us. . . . (1 Ne. 4:34.) Accordingly after an exchange of oaths, ". . . We departed into the wilderness, and journeyed unto the tent of our father," (1 Ne. 4:38) —with their own tents, of course. (1 Ne. 3:9.) The first thing a suppliant does seeking "place" with a tribe is to "put up his tent near that of his protector, take a woolen string from his head and lay it around the neck of his new patron saying, 'I seek protection with thee, O So-and-so.'" To this the answer is: "Be welcome to my authority! We receive all of you but what is bad. Our *place* is now your *place*."<sup>35</sup> From that moment the newcomer is under the full protection of the sheikh and "has place" with the tribe. The immemorial greeting of welcome to those accepted as guests in any tent is *Ahlan wa-Sahlan wa-Marhaban*: in which *ahlan* means either a family or (as in Hebrew) a tent, *sahlan* a smooth place to sit down and *marhaban* the courteous moving aside of the people in the tent so as to make room for one more. The emphasis is all on "having place with us".<sup>36</sup>

**Councils in the Tent:** The main activity in the sheikh's

tent is always the same. It is talk. In every Arab tribe the sheikh's tent is before all the place where the councils of the tribe are held; says Musil, "the tent of tryst."<sup>36</sup> When they are not raiding and hunting, the men of the tribe sit in the chief's tent and talk.<sup>37</sup> To make up for the long silence on the march—necessary to avoid undue thirstiness, "When they assemble under their tents, a very animated conversation is kept up among them without interruption."<sup>38</sup> So it is the most natural thing in the world for Nephi after being out alone to return to the tent of his father and find his brothers there," . . . and they were disputing one with another concerning the things which my father had spoken unto them." (1 Ne. 15:1-2.) And it was perfectly natural for him to join the discussion and win the day with a long and eloquent speech.

"The tent is the family hearth, the common bond and something of the incarnation of the family," writes De Boucheman. "*Beyt* means 'house' in Arabic in the sense that we speak of a royal or princely 'house'; it is likewise the term designating the family group, and embraces more than just one family *ahl* but is less comprehensive than the tribe."<sup>39</sup> That is a perfect description of the society that traveled with Lehi—more than one family, less than a clan—properly designated by the peculiar word tent, exactly as Nephi uses it. Zoram came not to his father's family or tribe, but to his tent. In modern times a great tribe would number about 1000 people or 300 tents, the average tribe about 100 tents. But "the scantiness of pasture and water supplies obliges the Arabs to divide themselves into numerous small camps . . . The Sheikh of the tribe, with his family, generally collects the largest encampment round his tent, and this forms the rendezvous of the rest."<sup>40</sup> To seek pasture "the whole tribe . . . spreads itself over the plain in parties of 3 or 4 tents each . . ."<sup>41</sup>

**Lehi's Altar:** As his first act, once his tent had been pitched for his first important camp, Lehi ". . . built an altar of stones, and made an offering unto the Lord,

and gave thanks to the Lord" (1 Ne. 2:7) It is for all the world as if he had been reading Robertson Smith. "The ordinary mark of a Semitic sanctuary [Hebrew as well as Arabic, that is] is the sacrificial pillar, cairn, or rude altar . . . upon which sacrifices are presented to the god. . . . In Arabia we find no proper altar but in its place a rude pillar or heap of stones beside which the victim is slain."<sup>42</sup> It was at this same altar of stones that Lehi and his family ". . . did offer sacrifice and burnt offerings . . . and they gave thanks unto the God of Israel" (1 Ne. 5:9) upon the safe return of his sons from their dangerous expedition to Jerusalem. When Raswan reports, "A baby camel was brought up to Mishal'il's tent as a sacrificial offering in honor of the safe return of Fuaz," we cannot help thinking of some such scene before the tent of Lehi on the safe return of his sons.<sup>43</sup> This is what the Arabs call a *dhabiyeh-l-kasb*, a sacrifice to celebrate the successful return of warriors, hunters, and raiders to the camp. "This sacrifice," writes Jaussen, "is always in honor of an ancestor,"<sup>44</sup> and Nephi twice mentions the tribal ancestor Israel in his brief account. In the best desert manner Lehi immediately after the thanksgiving fell to examining the "spoils". (1 Ne. 5:10.)

To this day the Bedouin makes sacrifice on every important occasion, not for magical and superstitious reasons, but because he "lives under the constant impression of a higher force that surrounds him . . ." St. Nilus in the oldest known eyewitness account of life among the Arabs of the Tih says, "They sacrifice on altars of crude stones piled together."<sup>45</sup> That Lehi's was such an altar would follow not only the ancient law demanding uncut stones, but also from the Book of Mormon expression "an altar of stones," which is not the same thing as "a stone altar." Such little heaps of stones, surviving from all ages, are still to be seen throughout the south desert.

We have seen that the first thing the Jewish merchant in Arabia would do on settling in a place, whether

a camp or town, was to set up an altar.<sup>46</sup> Bertholet has argued that since the family and the house were identical in the common cult of hospitality, to be received as a guest was to be received into the family cult of which the center was always the altar.<sup>47</sup>

**Family Affairs:** But how do the members of such closed corporations get along together? It is the domestic history that presents the real challenge to whoever would write a history of Bedouin life. To handle it convincingly would tax the knowledge of the best psychologist, and woe to him if he does not know the peculiar ways of the eastern desert, which surprise and trap the unwary westerner at every turn.

The ancient Hebrew family was a peculiar organization, self-sufficient and impatient of any authority beyond its own. "These are obviously the very conditions," writes Nowack, "which we can still observe today among the Bedouins."<sup>48</sup> Thus, whether we turn to Hebrew or to Arabic sources for our information, the Book of Mormon must conform. Lehi feels no pangs of conscience at deserting Jerusalem, and when his sons think of home, it is specifically the land of their inheritance, their own family estate, for which they yearn. Not even Nephi evinces any loyalty to the "Jews at Jerusalem," split up as they were into squabbling interest-groups.

While Lehi lived, he was the sheikh, of course, and the relationship between him and his family as described by Nephi is accurate in the smallest detail. With the usual deft sureness and precision, the book shows Lehi leading—not ruling—his people by his persuasive eloquence and spiritual ascendancy while his murmuring sons follow along exactly in the manner of Philby's Bedouins—"an undercurrent of tension in our ranks all day . . ." great difficulty to "appease their evil, envious souls. . ."<sup>49</sup> "We left Suwaykan," says Burton, "all of us in the crossest of humors. . . . So 'out of temper' were my companions, that at sunset, of the whole party, Omar Effendi was the only one who would eat supper. The rest sat upon the ground, pouting

and grumbling . . . Such a game as naughty children, I have seldom seen played even by Oriental men . . .”<sup>50</sup>

**“Hate and Envy Here Annoy”:** The character and behavior of Laman and Lemuel conform to the normal pattern. How true to the Bedouin way are their long bitter brooding and dangerous outbreaks! How perfectly they resemble the Arabs of Doughty, Burton, Burckhardt and the rest in their sudden and complete changes of heart after their father has lectured them, fiery anger yielding for the moment to a great impulse to humility and an overwhelming repentance, only to be followed by renewed resentment and more unhappy wrangling! They cannot keep their discontent to themselves, but are everlastingly “murmuring.” “The fact that all that happens in an encampment is known, that all may be said to be related to each other, renders intrigue almost impossible.”<sup>51</sup> “We were all one family and friendly eyes,” Doughty recollects, but then describes the other side of the picture—“Arab children are ruled by entreaties. . . . I have known an ill-natured child lay a stick to the back of his good cherished mother, and the Arabs say, ‘many is the ill-natured lad among us that, and he be strong enough, will beat his own father’.”<sup>52</sup>

The fact that Laman and Lemuel were grown-up children did not help things. “The daily quarrels between parents and children in the desert constitute the worst feature of the Bedouin character,” says Burckhardt, and thus describes the usual source of the trouble: “The son . . . arrived at manhood is too proud to ask his father for any cattle . . . the father is hurt at finding that his son behaves with haughtiness towards him, and thus a breach is often made.”<sup>53</sup> The son, especially the eldest one, does not feel that he is getting what is coming to him and behaves like the spoiled child he is. The father’s attitude is described by Doughty, telling how a great sheikh dealt with his son—“The boy, oftentimes disobedient, he upbraided, calling him his life’s torment, Sheytan, only never menacing him, for that were far from a Bedouin father’s mind.”<sup>54</sup> It is common,

says Burckhardt (*Ibid.*, I, 114) for mothers and sons to stick together in their frequent squabbles with the father, in which the son "is often expelled from the paternal tent for vindicating his mother's cause."<sup>55</sup> Just so Sariah takes the part of her sons in chiding her own husband, making the same complaints against him that they did (1 Ne. 5:2), and she rates him roundly when she thinks he has been the cause of their undoing.

**Authority in the Family:** Is it any wonder that Laman and Lemuel worked off their pent-up frustration by beating their youngest brother with a stick when they were once hiding in a cave? Every free man in the East carries a stick, the immemorial badge of independence and of authority and every man asserts his authority over his inferiors by his stick, "which shows that the holder is a man of position, superior to the workman or day-labourers. The government officials, superior officers, tax-gatherers, and schoolmasters use this short rod to threaten—or if necessary to beat—their inferiors, whoever they may be."<sup>56</sup> The usage is very ancient. "A blow for a slave" is the ancient maxim in Ahikar, and the proper designation of an underling is *abida-l'asa*, "stick-servant." This is exactly the sense in which Laman and Lemuel intended their little lesson to Nephi, for when the angel turned the tables he said to them, ". . . Why do ye smite your younger brother with a rod? Know ye not that the Lord hath chosen *him* to be a ruler over *you* . . .?" (1 Ne. 3:29.)

Through it all, Laman, as the eldest son, is the most disagreeable actor. "When only one boy in the family, he is the tyrant, and his will dominates over all."<sup>57</sup> So we see Laman still thinking to dominate over all and driven mad that a younger brother should show superior talents. The rivalry between the sons of a sheikh "often leads to bloody tragedies in the sheikh's household,"<sup>58</sup> and Nephi had some narrow escapes.

In the sheikh's tent the councils of the tribe are held and all decisions concerning the journey are made (1 Ne. 15:1 ff), but "no sheikh or council of Arabs can

condemn a man to death, or even inflict a punishment . . . it can only, when appealed to, impose a fine; it cannot even enforce the payment of this fine."<sup>59</sup> Why, then, if there was no power to compel them, did not Laman and Lemuel simply desert the camp and go off on their own, as discontented Arabs sometimes do?<sup>60</sup> As a matter of fact, they tried to do just that (1 Ne. 7:7), and in the end were prevented by the two things which, according to Philby, keep any wandering Bedouin party together—fear and greed. For they were greedy. They hoped for a promised land and when they reached the sea without finding it, their bitter complaint was, "Behold, these many years we have suffered in the wilderness, which time we might have enjoyed our possessions . . ." (1 Ne. 17:21.) And their position was precarious. Nephi pointed out to them the danger of returning to Jerusalem (1 Ne. 7:15), and where would they go if they deserted their father? As we have seen, with these people, family was everything, and the Arab or Jew will stick to "his own people" because they are all he has in the world. The family is the basic social organization, civil and religious, with the father at its head. To be without tribe or family is to forfeit one's identity in the earth; nothing is more terrible than to be "cut off from among the people," and that is exactly the fate that is promised Laman and Lemuel if they rebel. (1 Ne. 2:21.) "Within his own country," says an Arab proverb, "the Bedouin is a lion; outside of it he is a dog."<sup>61</sup>

**The Women:** The women particularly had a hard time in the wilderness (1 Ne. 17:20), as they always do, since they do all the work, while the men hunt and talk. "The Arab talks in his tent, cares for the animals, or goes hunting, while the women do all the work."<sup>62</sup> The women have their own quarters, which no man may invade; and an older woman may talk up boldly to the sheikh when no one else dares to, just as Sariah took Lehi to task when she thought her sons were lost in the desert. (1 Ne. 5:2-3.) All that saved Nephi's life on one occasion was the intervention of "one of the

daughters of Ishmael, yea, and also her mother, and one of the sons of Ishmael," (1 Ne. 7:19), for while "the Arab can only be persuaded by his own relations," he can only yield to the entreaties of women without losing face, and indeed is expected to yield to them, even robbers sparing a victim who appeals to them in the name of his wife, the daughter of his uncle.<sup>63</sup> "If a courageous woman demands that a raiding sheikh give back something so that her people will not starve, he is in honor bound to give her a camel. . . ."<sup>64</sup> Nephi marvelled at the strength that the women acquired in the midst of their trials and toils. ". . . Our women did give plenty of suck for their children, and were strong, yea, even like unto the men; . . ." (1 Ne. 17:2.) This phenomenon has aroused the wonder and comments of travelers in our own day.<sup>65</sup>

**Mourning Customs:** It was the daughters of Ishmael who mourned for him and chided Lehi for his death. (1 Ne. 16:34-35.) Budde has shown that the Old Hebrew mourning customs were those of the desert, in which "The young women of the nomad tribes mourn at the grave, around which they dance singing lightly." The Arabs who farm also put the body in a tent around which the women move as they mourn. "At the moment of a man's death, his wives, daughters, and female relations unite in cries of lamentation, (*welouloua*), which are repeated several times. . . ."<sup>66</sup> It is common in all the eastern deserts for the women to sit in a circle in a crouching position while the woman nearest related to the dead sits silently in the middle—in Syria the corpse itself is in the middle; while singing, the women move in a circle and whenever the song stops there is a general wailing. The singing is in unison, Indian fashion. In some parts the men also participate in the rites, but where this is so the women may never mix with the men. They have a monopoly and a mourning tradition all of their own.<sup>67</sup> Mourning begins immediately upon death and continues among the Syrian Bedouins for seven days, a few hours a day. "All mourning is by

mourning women and female relatives. No men are present . . .”<sup>68</sup> As is well known, no traditions are more unchanging through the centuries than funerary customs.<sup>69</sup>

### Questions

1. What are the implications of the restrictions on campfires in the Book of Mormon?
2. What would Lehi’s attitude be towards human contacts in the desert? Why?
3. What is the normal attitude of travelers in the desert to meetings with other parties?
4. Politically, what was the general state of things in the desert in Lehi’s day?
5. What has always been the principal peril to travelers in the deserts of the Near East?
6. Was it so in Lehi’s day? What is the evidence?
7. Why does Nephi so often repeat that his father dwelt in a tent?
8. What is the significance as evidence of Nephi’s invitation to Zoram: “Thou shalt have place with us”?
9. Was Lehi guilty of a pagan practice in setting up an altar?
10. Is the behavior of Laman and Lemuel exaggerated or overdrawn in the Book of Mormon?
11. Is the part of the women in Nephi’s account convincingly described?
12. What is the authentic touch in Nephi’s account of the mourning for Ishmael?