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The Book of Mormon

Author(s): Thos Sleight

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Abstract: This two-part series uses biblical scriptures to prove the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon, gives a summary of 1 Nephi, and discusses plates (who wrote them, what language was used, their size and description). Sleight explains how Joseph Smith found the plates in the Hill Cumorah, and gives a history of the founding of the LDS church. The first part begins the series.

THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS' MILLENNIAL STAR.

"The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant."
—ISAIAH xxiv, 5.

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THE BOOK OF MORMON.

BY ELDER THOS. SLEIGHT.

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AN Elder laboring as a missionary among people who are not of his faith finds much prejudice against him and the cause he represents, because the word has gone forth that the Latter-day Saints believe in a record called the Book of Mormon, and claim it to be divine. With as much consistency they could have the same feeling against him for believing the Bible to be a divine record. Often do we hear and see men who profess to be theologians, trying to convey the idea that all the Lord ever did or ever will say until He comes on earth to reign is contained within the lids of the Bible. Any one who has read the Bible and studied it carefully, will find many books made mention of which no doubt contained as much valuable information as those that make the volume we possess. I will quote a few passages: "And he took the book of the covenant, and read it in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient" (Exodus xxiv, 7.) "Wherefore it is said in the book of the wars of the Lord, What he did

in the Red sea, and in the brooks of Arnon" (Num. xxi, 14). "And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jasher?" (Joshua x, 13). "Now the acts of David the king, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of Samuel the seer, and in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the book of Gad the seer" (1 Chron. xxix, 29). "Now the acts of Rehoboam, first and last, are they not written in the book of Shemaiah the prophet, and of Iddo the seer" (2 Chron. xii, 15). "Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of Jehu" (2 Chron. xx, 34.) "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators" (1 Cor. v, 9). "And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed: And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray

thee: and he saith, I am not learned" (Isaiah xxix, 11, 12).

Many more passages from Scripture might be quoted if necessary. The book referred to by Isaiah is believed by the Saints to be the Book of Mormon. It has many objectors, and on various grounds. Some reject it because the compiler of the book (Mormon) claims to be of Israel. Others object to the way it was written and the material it was written on. Many find fault with the way it was hidden up, while the world generally repudiate the statements of the man who came in possession of it.

Now why should this record be rejected because the writer claims to be of the house of Israel? When Israel with his family went from Canaan into Egypt, they were known by the name of Hebrews; they spoke the Hebrew language, and notwithstanding they were governed by Egyptian laws, they were always held to be a foreign race. Being slaves to the Egyptians, they would naturally acquire the Egyptian tongue. The sons of Ham who occupied the land of Egypt, though destitute of the Holy Priesthood, possessed much wisdom and were skilled in art and science. Their architecture and hieroglyphics can be seen and read to-day, when nearly four thousand years have passed since their genius wrought those magnificent works that wondering nations have traveled far to behold. Israel being lineal descendants of Shem, possessing the Holy Priesthood, would no doubt excel their neighbors in intelligence, under as favorable circumstances. Previous to Jacob's death he blessed his sons and told them what should befall them and their posterity in the future. On the head of Joseph he said he should be as a fruitful bough by a well whose branches run over the wall.....unto the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills.

After the four hundred years of Israel's sojourn in Egypt, Moses led them forth by the power of God, and he sought diligently to educate them and bring them up from the low habits they had contracted while in bondage. He himself was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and, being a chosen man of the Almighty, was

capable of giving instructions. When they built the tabernacle in the wilderness we can read of their skilled workmen, how they wrought in gold, silver, brass and stone, as well as other material that was common. After Moses and the vast host that left Egypt with him had passed away, another generation was called to play an important part in colonizing and dividing the land they were privileged to occupy, according to the number of tribes that should cultivate the soil. So long as they observed to do that which they covenanted with the Lord to do they prospered exceedingly, and because of their unity and strength they were envied and feared by the nations that surrounded them, but when they fell into transgression their prestige and wisdom weakened. Afterwards, being divided, ten tribes were led to the north, leaving Judah and part of the tribe of Benjamin, with a few scattering ones from the others, to occupy Palestine, Jerusalem being their chief city. It was in the reign of Zedekiah, King of Judah, which was about six hundred years before Christ, that prophets came warning the people if they did not repent the Lord would cause them to be taken captive and their city destroyed. Lehi, a prophet, living in Jerusalem at this time, was warned of the Lord to flee into the wilderness with his family, which consisted of his wife and four sons, named Laman, Lemuel, Nephi and Sam. Two more were born to him after he left Jerusalem. They invited a man by the name of Ishmael, and his family, which consisted of his wife, two sons and five daughters, to accompany them. A man by the name of Zoram also went with them. Lehi was a learned man, and he procured from Zedekiah's librarian the history of the Jews, the five books of Moses, the genealogy of his fathers, that informed him he was of the tribe of Manasseh, and many writings of the prophets, all written on plates of brass in the Egyptian language.

While traveling in the wilderness towards the Red sea, they slew wild beasts for food, for they were eight years in the wilderness, and they sought the Lord for instruction to guide them the way they should tra-

vel. They were rewarded one morning by finding at their tent door a brass ball of curious workmanship, and inside two spindles, one pointing the way they should go with written instructions on it, being changed from time to time as was needful for their welfare. Nearing the sea shore they found a fruitful land. Nephi was commanded of the Lord to build a ship after the pattern He gave him, to carry them and their effects, which consisted of their clothing, provisions, and the various kinds of seeds they had in their possession, unto the promised land. The sons of Lehi and Zoram married Ishmael's daughters, but, to the grief of the little colony, they had to leave the body of Ismael in the wilderness. They embarked in their ship with confidence in God who had brought them through the wilderness, and provided them with food and material to make tools to work timber, and had shown them how to build a ship and given them a compass. They started for the land the Lord had promised Lehi he would lead him to when He told him to leave Jerusalem. Their sea voyage and their arrival in the promised land on the coast of Chili are graphically described by Nephi, the son of Lehi, on gold plates made by his own hands from ore he found in their new home. He did not write in the Egyptian nor Hebrew language, but in a language of their own adoption, called the Reformed Egyptian. Nephi being a righteous man was worthy to lead others, and those who were willing to be led by him were called Nephites. He relates how they commenced to till the soil and sow the seeds they brought with them, and that they found beasts in the forest of every kind—the cow and the ox and the ass and the horse and the goat, and all manner of wild animals.

Laman and Lemuel, the eldest sons of Lehi, rebelled against their brother and became very wicked, which caused Nephi and those who followed him to flee from them so that they could live in peace. All who followed Laman were called Lamanites. They made war upon the Nephites, and became a lazy, loathsome and barbarous race, living on wild beasts and the prey

they obtained from their brethren the Nephites; and because of their wickedness the curse of God followed them, and in time they became a dark colored race, which mark they carry to this day. With the exception of a colony that left Jerusalem a few years after Lehi, which was not known to the Nephites for a great length of time, the Nephites and Lamanites peopled North and South America.

When Christopher Columbus discovered America in the 15th century, he found a savage and warlike people possessing ornaments of gold and other metals, and since that time wherever the American Indian has been found, whether in the north or south, his eye and skin and hair bespeak a common origin.

Being of the house of Israel many of the Nephites revered the law of Moses, and so long as they kept the law of the Lord they prospered exceedingly. They were favored with prophets to instruct them and tell them of glorious events that should be witnessed in the future. Among the many wonderful things looked for was the birth of the Savior, His crucifixion and resurrection from the dead. According to the record one of their prophets, who lived before and probably cotemporary with Jesus, prophesied of the day He would be born and the sign that should be given. I quote the prophecy of Samuel, a converted Lamanite: "Behold, I give unto you a sign; for five years more cometh, and behold, then cometh the Son of God to redeem all those who shall believe on his name. And behold, this will I give unto you for a sign at the time of his coming; for behold, there shall be great lights in heaven, insomuch that in the night before he cometh there shall be no darkness, insomuch that it shall appear unto man as if it was day, therefore there shall be one day and a night, and a day, as if it were one day,.....and behold there shall a new star arise, such an one as ye never have beheld" (Book of Heleman, xiv, 2—5). He also foretold the signs that would appear at His crucifixion: "Behold in that day that he shall suffer death the sun shall be darkened and refuse to give his light unto you, and

also the moon and the stars, and there shall be no light upon the face of this land even from the time that he shall suffer death, for the space of three days, to the time that he shall rise again from the dead" (20th verse).

Jesus speaking to His disciples on one occasion said: "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold,

and one shepherd." His disciples knew nothing of the people of America, but Jesus knew whereof He spake. He visited America after His resurrection, and conversed with many of His followers.

For the particulars of this very interesting and important event, we refer the reader to 3rd Nephi, 11 c. 3—17 v. (Book of Mormon).

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

IN BONDS FOR THE TRUTH'S SAKE.

Utah Penitentiary, July 20, 1886.
President D. H. Wells.

Dear Brother, — Thinking that a letter from one of the Elders of Israel, incarcerated in the Utah Penitentiary for obeying the law of the celestial kingdom, would be of some interest to you and the readers of the MILLENNIAL STAR, I take the liberty to tell you a little of my experience in this place in the years 1883 and 1886. I was arrested on the 1st of May, 1883, on a charge against me under the Edmunds law, by Marshal Ireland, and brought to his office, where I had to wait for four hours until my case came up for examination before Commissioner McKay. I waived an examination, and was put under \$2,500 bonds (which was a very high bond at that time,) to await the action of the grand jury, which was not then in session. I was a poor man without any real estate or property of my own, so was not able to get bonds, and I was, in default of this, sent to the Utah Penitentiary, where I remained nearly three months, and was released on bonds on the 16th of July, 1883, having fasted and prayed to God until He softened the hearts of some good men to go bail for me. I can tell you that liberty was sweet to me, and I never appreciated it before I had been in prison. When I was here before, I was shut up alone among sixty-five men of the lowest character, and had not one brother of my own faith to stand by me, and I was persecuted and derided by thieves, robbers and murderers. My trials were great, but God stood by me and blessed me with a great deal of His Holy

Spirit, so that I was able to endure them manfully, and this gave me an experience which cannot be bought with gold or precious stones, and it has strengthened my faith in God. Who can trust in man? Nobody; for if they do it will often fail. It has been my experience in life to trust only in the true and living God; and in His dealings with me as His servant, so long as I have been living upon the earth, which will be fifty years on the 15th of next month, I have found He has been my truest friend, for He has never forsaken me, but has stood by me under all circumstances. This is my testimony to you and to all the Saints of God who may read this, that they may have great faith and trust in Him under all circumstances, for our trials are only given to us for our own good and to give us experience.

I had the privilege of seeing my family occasionally, which was the greatest blessing I had at that time, for I assure you that I never loved them more than I did when in the Penitentiary. But it was a great trial for them to see their loving husband and father in prison, and after thirty minutes' conversation, watched closely by the guard, to leave him and see the prison gates close on him. It brought tears to their eyes and they wept in sorrow.

I was out of prison for nearly two years and six months, and was able, through my faith and prayers, to put off my case from time to time. In this two years and a half I enjoyed liberty in full measure, associating with my family and friends, and again