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Book of Mormon Studies

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Abstract: This is a series of articles intended for Relief Society course study. It discusses the importance of the Book of Mormon, its coming forth (i.e., the translation, the witnesses, the publication, Joseph Smith), brief overview of its contents, and explains the text from 1 Nephi 1 through Alma 58. Each article features several questions that are helpful in synthesizing and applying the Book of Mormon to daily life.

of tithing can only partly be known to the learner of the word. To know fully the doctrine, the work must be done.—From *Tithing*, a pamphlet.

BOOK OF MORMON STUDIES*

The Plates of Nephi: The discovery of the land of Zarahemla and the events in connection therewith occurred between the years 279 and 130 B.C. The record of the accomplishments and struggles of the descendants of Lehi—the Nephites and the Lamanites—were kept upon the plates of Nephi, which plates were handed down from father to son or successor. This practice continued until the days of the Prophet Mormon, who lived and wrote an abridgement of the record about the year 385 A.D. The remainder of the book from the writing of Amaleki in 130 B.C. is the abridgement of the plates as made by the Prophet Mormon, from whom the Book is named. Read the title page and the brief analysis on the first two pages of the book.

Mormon's Abridgement: “The Words of Mormon were written between the time of the destruction of the Nephites at Cumorah and the death of Mormon—or between 385 and 400 years after the birth of Christ. These “Words” are Mormon’s preface to his abridgement of the records of the Nephites. The books that precede it in the Book of Mormon are translations direct from the smaller plates of Nephi; all that follows is the abridgement made by Mormon, which was continued after his death by his son Moroni.

“The writings on the smaller plates of Nephi pleased Mormon, because he knew that so many of the prophecies and revelations therein contained had been fulfilled, so he took them and added them to his own record. He was inspired to do this by the Lord for a wise purpose, which purpose he himself did not understand. But it has been made plain in these days. When Joseph, the Prophet, had translated one hundred and sixteen pages of Mormon’s record, Martin Harris, his assistant in the work of translation, teased him so often for permission to show these pages to his wife and others that Joseph at last very reluctantly consented. Martin agreed to show them only to certain parties. He broke his promise. The pages were stolen for the purpose of altering them, so that when Joseph translated them again these people could bring forward the sheets on which they had changed the writing and say that Joseph could not translate the same thing twice alike. To prevent this the Lord told Joseph not to retranslate that portion—which was called the Book of Lehi—but

*Lesson 13 of the Relief Society Course of Study—for use on the first lesson night in July. Read from the Words of Mormon to Mosiah, chapter 14.

to translate that which was contained on the smaller plates of Nephi, part of which covered the same ground as that which had been stolen by Martin Harris' professed friends."*

Mosiah, the Nephite leader who was led by God to discover the land of Zarahemla, was made the first king of the united peoples. His son Benjamin, a righteous man, succeeded him as ruler and also became the custodian of the sacred plates or record. Of King Benjamin's three sons, Mosiah, Helorum and Helaman, the elder, Mosiah, was chosen to succeed his father and to receive and perpetuate the record.

Mosiah's Reign: "Mosiah, the son of Benjamin, was the third king of the Nephites in the land of Zarahemla. He was born in 154 B.C., and died in 91 B.C. He was trained in all the learning of his people, and in the ways of the Lord. This early training bore rich fruit in his subsequent life and chareter.

"About the year 125 B.C., King Benjamin sent a proclamation throughout the land, calling the people together that they might hear his last instructions to them. Among other things he declared his intention of anointing his son Mosiah as his suceessor. At this time Mosiah was consecrated king, and he reigned in the place of his father.

"At the time of Mosiah's accession, conditions were unusually anspicious. The godly life of his father had exercised a powerful influence over the character of the times. The people, for the most part, were righteous, prosperous and happy. They were not at this time harassed by the Lamanites from without, nor by dissensions from within. Peace and contentment reigned over all the land.

"Mosiah's reign was, during the greater part of it, a continuation of the conditions that had made that of his father so prosperous. The king, like his father before him, laboured with his hands that he might not become burdensome to his people. He reigned thirty-three years, at the end of which time he caused a change to be made in the form of government. The monarchy became a sort of republic, and judges ruled instead of a king."†

Return to Lehi-Nephi: "It appears that some of the Nephites in Zarahemla did not like that country as well as they thought they did Lehi-Nephi; so they wanted to go back. They used to tease the king for his consent to do so. After a time he gave it, and a large party started. On their way they quarreled and fought. After the fight the few that were not killed returned to Zarahemla. In a little while another large company started. They wandered in the wilderness for a long time and were in great want of food. At last they reached the land of Nephi. Then their leader, whose name was Zeniff, took four of his men and

*Deseret Sunday School Union Leaflets, June, 1898.

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went into the city. There they talked to the king, whose name was Laman. He agreed to remove his people from the lands of Shilom and Lehi-Nephi, so that the Nephites might possess those parts. King Laman made this treaty in the hope that he would be able to get Zeniff and his followers into his power and make slaves of them. Of course, when Zeniff made the treaty he had no idea what was in Laman's mind; so he went out into the wilderness where he had left his people and brought them all into the city. The Nephites at once began to repair the city and make it pleasant and clean as it was when their fathers dwelt there. There was a temple in the city and Zeniff had priests with him who offered the sacrifices which the law of Moses required. But his people did not keep the law as strictly as they should, and little by little they grew more careless with regard to the things of God. But they were a thrifty and industrious people, and soon grew rich; at the same time they increased rapidly in numbers."*

Relapse into Wickedness: After the death of Zeniff, his son Noah became ruler of the restored land of Lehi-Nephi. But he was a self-indulgent, luxury-loving man, whose thoughts and practices were far from God-like. He led the people into much wickedness for which the Prophet Abinadi, who had arisen in their midst, denounced them. Abinadi was cast into prison and was condemned by the false priests who sat in judgment upon him. Through divine intervention his life was spared until his mission was fulfilled.

QUESTIONS

1. What blessing came to the people in the possession of the sacred records? Why must this always be so?
2. Relate in brief the events which led to Mormon's abridgement of the plates. What possible dilemma in our day was prevented thereby? Tell the story of the plates as related in the brief analysis on the second page of the Book of Mormon.
3. Why did King Benjamin build a tower and what use did he make of it? See Mosiah, chapter 2.
4. Give a synopsis of King Benjamin's instruction to the people. See Mosiah chapters 3, 4.
5. What was the effect of these righteous teachings?
6. Tell of the finding by Ammon of the twenty-four gold plates. See Mosiah, chapter 8. How were these plates used in the Book of Mormon?
7. How do you account for the condition of the people led by Zeniff to the land of their inheritance as it was under King Noah? How may the people of our day prevent this condition?

*Deseret Sunday School Union Leaflets, July, 1898.