

October 26–November 1, 2020

## Mormon 1–6

“I WOULD THAT I COULD PERSUADE ALL . . . TO REPENT”

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**Summary:** *Ammaron instructs Mormon concerning the sacred records—War commences between the Nephites and the Lamanites—The Three Nephites are taken away—Wickedness, unbelief, sorceries, and witchcraft prevail. [About A.D. 322—326]*

*Mormon leads the Nephite armies—Blood and carnage sweep the land—The Nephites lament and mourn with the sorrowing of the damned—Their day of grace is passed—Mormon obtains the plates of Nephi—Wars continue. [Between A.D. 327 and 350]*

*Mormon cries repentance unto the Nephites—They gain a great victory and glory in their own strength—Mormon refuses to lead them, and his prayers for them are without faith—The Book of Mormon invites the twelve tribes of Israel to believe the gospel. [Between A.D. 350 and 362]*

*War and carnage continue—The wicked punish the wicked—Greater wickedness prevails than ever before in all Israel—Women and children are sacrificed to idols—The Lamanites begin to sweep the Nephites before them. [Between A.D. 363 and 375]*

*Mormon again leads the Nephite armies in battles of blood and carnage—The Book of Mormon shall come forth to convince all Israel that Jesus is the Christ—The Lamanites shall be a dark, filthy, and loathsome people—They shall receive the gospel from the Gentiles in the latter days. [Between A.D. 375 and 384]*

*The Nephites gather to the land of Cumorah for the final battles—Mormon hides the sacred records in the hill Cumorah—The Lamanites are victorious, and the Nephite nation is destroyed—Hundreds of thousands are slain with the sword. [A.D. 385]*

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### Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

#### How did conquering and covering create “mounds?”

The military encounters related in these chapters

include the description of the young commander, Mormon. It reminds me of the young commanders in Israel. Young, because in its modern time, Israel itself is such a young nation. In ancient times, fortifications were built by Israelites as well as others who conquered the land. These fortifications are now called *tels*. They were raised areas or man-made mounds. Some covered upwards of 200 acres of area, such as Hazor that controlled the northern third of Israel. The mound or *tel* of Megiddo controlled the middle third of the country while Gezer controlled the southern third of Israel. Each time they were conquered, the city was destroyed, covered over and

another was built upon it. That meant the *tels* became higher by each conquering.

#### How can one describe the “tower” of a city?

“From the information given in the Bible as well as the archaeological finds, it has been possible to reconstruct the structure and layout of the typical ancient Palestinian city. Towering above the city, at its most easily defensible point, rose the inner fortified area, the acropolis, which was the center of government and the main military stronghold. The acropolis consisted of a complex of government buildings, including the palace of the ruler or king, the temple, the offices of the senior government officials, storehouses, and the like. This part was called the ‘tower’ or the ‘citadel.’” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*) Many of the Book of Mormon locations and cities had biblical names, so I am guessing that their fortifications

were built in a similar fashion to and would look like biblical *te/s*. My traveling experience in parts of Mexico and Guatemala has revealed many ruins that look like *te/s*.

### **What is a reason God will always keep His covenants?**

A recurring theme throughout the Book of Mormon is a reminder that the Lord always remembers his covenants with his covenant people. Sometimes the term “Jews” is meant as a separate entity and at other times it means the whole house of Israel (representing twelve tribes or families). The plan of salvation was first given to the House of Israel. Later, a major part of Israel was taken captive. The remainder, mostly Judah, became known as what was left of Israel, the Israelites or the Jews. These days, when referring to the Jews, most people usually think of the Jews as the people of Israel. “And behold, they shall go unto the unbelieving of the Jews; and for this intent shall they go--that they may be persuaded that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God; that the Father may bring about, through his most Beloved, his great and eternal purpose, in restoring the Jews, or all the house of Israel, to the land of their inheritance, which the Lord their God hath given them, unto the fulfilling of his covenant;” (**Mormon 5:14**)

### **What is one reason for the “scattering” and “gathering” of Israel?**

The constant reminders of “returning home” carry several messages that can guide the people of Israel, help them recognize true religion and the give Jews and Gentiles a pathfinder to a heavenly home with God. “Therefore I write unto you, Gentiles, and also unto you, house of Israel, when the work shall commence, that ye shall be about to prepare to return to the land of your inheritance;” (**Mormon 3:17**) The scattering and gathering of Israel as well as the gathering of their records is succinctly characterized in **Ezekiel 37**. Of the two sticks or scrolls that Ezekiel speaks of, one represents Judah and the skeleton of what would be left of the true religion – the Bible. The other stick or “scroll” represents Joseph

and the record that some of his descendants gave us, the Book of Mormon. The scattering and gathering of people, the apostasy and restoration of true religion, and our sojourn in earthly life with a subsequent return to a heavenly life is reflected in the metaphors that Ezekiel uses. He teaches that the gathering of Israel and the full restoration of truth will occur when the scriptural records are “in our hands.” There is a pleasant connection to hands, ours and God’s. “Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand. And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes.” (**Ezekiel 37:19-20**) “Know ye not that ye are in the hands of God? Know ye not that he hath all power, and at his great command the earth shall be rolled together as a scroll?” (**Mormon 5:23**)

### **How can the “hand of the Lord” be “pointed out” to me?**

The hand is a powerful metaphor in Judaic tradition. Modern Judaism, however, attempts to pull away from recognizing the literal imagery of God’s hand as such. “A pointer molded in the shape of a miniature hand (*yad*) is used to read (the Torah scroll) with, and crowns, usually with bells whose tinkling symbolizes the joy of the Torah, rest on the handles. In the synagogue, the Torah is placed in a specially built Ark covered by a decorated curtain (*parokhet*), in front of which the eternal light (*ner tamid*) burns continuously in a decorative lampshade.” “In the Bible very often the acts of God are referred to figuratively using terms such as ‘the hand of God.’ Such metaphors are examples of how the Bible speaks in the language of man in order to help us understand concepts which would otherwise be beyond our grasp. Thus a metaphor like ‘The hand of God’ may be used to represent strength and protection such as in the verse, ‘Your right hand, O Lord, is glorious in power; Your right hand, O Lord, shatters the enemy’ (**Exodus 15:6**). At the same time, the image of

God's hands has been used to show benevolence and loving-kindness, as in the verse, 'You open Your hand and satisfy every living thing with favor' (**Psalms 145:16**).” “In addition to references to God's hands, biblical history contains instances of miracles performed by the symbolic acts of human hands carrying out the will of God. One such example is the war which Israel fought with Amalek. When Moses held up his hands, Israel prevailed in battle, when he lowered his hands, Amalek prevailed. When his hands felt heavy and tired, Aaron and Hur helped him to hold them up throughout the battle, so that Israel would be victorious.” (**Exodus 17:12**) “In business transactions, the handshake has a significant meaning. According to halakhic authorities, the handshake is an act of acquisition and binding agreement, and some sources even ascribe to it the importance of an oath.” “Another frequent instance of hands occurs in inscriptions on amulets, many of which were written in the shape of a hand --- a symbol believed to ward off the ‘evil eye.’” (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

### **How can I sit at the Lord's “right hand?”**

The tragic accounts of the destruction of a great people are reminders that when people do not keep the commandments of the Lord, they are not in his hands. Mormon's written admonition to his son reminds him to stay in the hand of the Lord. “My son, be faithful in Christ; and may not the things which I have written grieve thee, to weigh thee down unto death; but may Christ lift thee up, and may his sufferings and death, and the showing his body unto our fathers, and his mercy and long-suffering, and the hope of his glory and of eternal life, rest in your mind forever. And may the grace of God the Father, whose throne is high in the heavens, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who sitteth on the right hand of his power, until all things shall become subject unto him, be, and abide with you forever. Amen.” (**Moroni 9:25-26**)