

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM



Edited by
Daniel H. Ludlow

*The History, Scripture, Doctrine, and Procedure
of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

Macmillan Publishing Company
New York

Maxwell Macmillan Canada
Toronto

Maxwell Macmillan International
New York Oxford Singapore Sydney



Copyright Brigham Young University, 1992.

Archived at Book of Mormon Central by Permission.

[1979], 507 F.Supp 706 [1981]) and subsequently ruled against the ERA on the major issues. On appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court, the case was dismissed as moot because the time for ratification of the ERA had expired (*National Organization for Women, Inc., et al. v. Idaho et al.*, 459 U.S. 809 [1982]).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allen, James B., and Glen M. Leonard. *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*. Salt Lake City, 1976.
- Burman, Jennifer Mary. "Corporation of Presiding Bishop v. Amos: The Supreme Court and Religious Discrimination by Religious Educational Institutions." *Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics and Public Policy* 3 (1988):629–62.
- Driggs, Kenneth David. "The Mormon Church-State Confrontation in Nineteenth-Century America." *Journal of Church and State* 30 (1988):273–89.
- Firmage, Edwin Brown, and Richard Collin Mangrum. *Zion in the Courts: A Legal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830–1900*. Urbana, Ill., 1988.

ROBERT E. RIGGS

LEHI

The patriarch and prophet Lehi led his family from Jerusalem to the western hemisphere about 600 B.C. and was the progenitor of two major Book of Mormon peoples, the NEPHITES and the LAMANITES. His visions and prophecies were concerned chiefly with the pending destruction of Jerusalem, the mortal ministry of the coming Messiah—including the time of his coming and the prophet who would precede him—and future events among his own descendants in the PROMISED LAND. His words provided spiritual guidance to both lines of his posterity during their mutual history (1 Ne. 1, 8, 10; 2 Ne. 1–3). Several of his prophecies concerning his posterity remain to be fulfilled. Although Lehi wrote much, only portions were preserved in the present Book of Mormon from the records of two of his sons NEPHI₁ and JACOB (cf. 1 Ne. 1:16–17; 19:1; Jacob 2:23–34; 3:5; see Brown).

At the time of his first known vision, Lehi lived near Jerusalem, was familiar with "the learning of the Jews," and possessed "gold and silver, and all manner of riches" (1 Ne. 1:2; 3:16). He knew the Egyptian language and was familiar with desert nomadic life. Some scholars have suggested

that Lehi was a merchant or smith with ties to Egypt (*CWHN* 5:34–42; 6:58–92).

His life was dramatically changed when he beheld a "pillar of fire" and "saw and heard much" while praying about the predicted fall of Jerusalem (1 Ne. 1:6). In a vision he saw God and a radiant being—accompanied by twelve others—who gave him a book in which he read of the impending destruction of the city and of "the coming of a Messiah, and also the redemption of the world" (1 Ne. 1:19). Like the speeches of his contemporary JEREMIAH, Lehi's warnings to the people of Jerusalem roused strong opposition. Surrounded by growing hatred, he was warned by God that the people sought his life; therefore, he was to flee with his family, consisting of his wife Sariah, his sons LAMAN, Lemuel, Sam, and Nephi, and his daughters (1 Ne. 1:8–2:5).

Sariah once accused her husband of being a "visionary man" in a hard test of her faith (1 Ne. 5:2). The phrase aptly characterizes Lehi, for he dreamed dreams and saw visions through which God guided his family to the promised land. After fleeing Jerusalem, at divine behest Lehi twice sent his sons back: once to obtain written records (containing the holy scriptures, a record of the Jews from the beginning, the law, prophecies, and genealogical records) needed to preserve the family's history, language and religion; and a second time to invite ISHMAEL and his family—including marriageable daughters—to join the exodus (chaps. 3–4, 7).

Through revelation, Lehi instructed his sons where game could be hunted in the wilderness (16:30–31). In this he was assisted by a curious compasslike object (*see* LIAHONA) that operated according to the faith, diligence, and heed they gave it (16:10, 28–29).

One of Lehi's grandest visions was of the tree of life (1 Ne. 8). In a highly symbolic setting, Lehi saw the prospects for his family members measured against the PLAN OF SALVATION. Nephi had the same vision opened to him and gave details and interpretation to what his father had seen (1 Ne. 11–14). Lehi first saw a man dressed in white who led him through a "dark and dreary waste." After traveling many hours, he prayed for divine help, and found himself in a large field where there grew a tree whose fruit was white and desirable (symbolic of God's love). When he urged his family to come and partake, all did so except Laman and Lemuel. Lehi also saw a path, alongside which ran

an iron rod (representing God's word) leading to the tree and extending along the bank of a river. Many people pressing forward to reach the path became lost in a mist of darkness (temptations); some reached the tree and partook, only to become ashamed and fall away; others, following the rod of iron, reached the tree and enjoyed the fruit. On the other side of the river Lehi saw a large building (the PRIDE of the world) whose inhabitants ridiculed those eating the fruit. LDS scholars have pointed out that the features of Lehi's dream are quite at home in the desert in which Lehi was traveling (*CWHN* 6:253–64; cf. Griggs; Welch).

Lehi's prophecies concerned the future redemption of Israel. He spoke of the destruction of Jerusalem (587 B.C.), the taking of the Jews to Babylon, and their subsequent return to Jerusalem. He foretold the mission of JOHN THE BAPTIST and the Messiah's coming, death, and RESURRECTION. Finally, Lehi compared Israel's eventual scattering to "an olive-tree, whose branches should be broken off and . . . scattered upon all the face of the earth" (1 Ne. 10:12; cf. ALLEGORY OF ZENOS).

In the wilderness Sariah bore two sons, Jacob and Joseph (1 Ne. 18:7). Apparently the journey was so difficult that she and Lehi aged substantially. During the transoceanic voyage, their grief—caused by the rebellion of their two eldest sons—brought them close to death (18:17–18).

In the New World, Lehi gathered his family before his death to give them final teachings and blessings (2 Ne. 1–4). He taught them that he had received a great promise regarding his descendants and the land they now possessed. This promise was conditioned upon their righteousness: "Inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments ye shall prosper in the land; but inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye shall be cut off from my presence" (2 Ne. 1:20; cf. Abr. 2:6).

Lehi addressed his son Jacob about the plan of salvation (2 Ne. 2). Instead of using imagery, he explained it plainly and logically. He taught that while all know good from evil, many have fallen short. However, the Messiah has paid the debt if men and women will accept his help with a contrite spirit. He further explained that a fundamental OPPOSITION in all things exists so that people must choose. He reasoned that, as freedom of choice allowed ADAM and EVE to fall, so it permits each to choose between "liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose

captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil" (2 Ne. 2:27).

Before giving his final blessings to others in the family (2 Ne. 4:3–11), Lehi spoke to Joseph, his youngest (2 Ne. 3), mentioning two other Josephs: JOSEPH who was sold into Egypt, and another, of whom the first Joseph had prophesied—Joseph SMITH. He then set forth Joseph Smith's mission of bringing forth the Book of Mormon, prophesying that a "cry from the dust" would summon Lehi's seed (2 Ne. 3:19–25), and he promised the sons and daughters of Laman and Lemuel, "in the end thy seed shall be blessed" (2 Ne. 4:9).

After Lehi's death, family dissensions forced Nephi and others who believed the revelations of God to separate from the group led by the two oldest brothers, causing a rupture in the colony. While Lehi lived, his family stayed together, a demonstration of his leadership abilities.

[See also Book of Mormon: First Book of Nephi.]

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Brown, S. Kent. "Lehi's Personal Record: Quest for a Missing Source." *BYU Studies* 24 (Winter 1984):19–42.
- Griggs, C. Wilfred. "The Book of Mormon As an Ancient Book." *BYU Studies* 22 (Summer 1982):259–78.
- Nibley, Hugh. *Lehi in the Desert, An Approach to the Book of Mormon, and Since Cumorah*. In *CWHN*, Vols. 5–7.
- Welch, John W. "The Narrative of Zosimus and the Book of Mormon." *BYU Studies* 22 (Summer 1982):311–32.

S. KENT BROWN
TERRENCE L. SZINK

LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD

Levitical Priesthood is a rarely used term today, and it is sometimes applied to the AARONIC PRIESTHOOD (Heb. 7:11; D&C 107:1, 6, 10). MOSES and his brother AARON belonged to the tribe of Levi. Latter-day revelation indicates that before Moses died, the Melchizedek Priesthood and the higher law of the gospel were withdrawn from the Israelites because of their disobedience. Aaron and his sons were then given a lesser PRIESTHOOD to administer the lesser LAW OF MOSES as priests in Israel (D&C 84:18–28; Ex. 28:1). To assist Aaron and his sons, other worthy male members of the tribe of Levi were also given authority in the lesser priesthood, although they