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Women, the Book of Mormon, and the Law of Moses

Carol Pratt Bradley

The intent of this study is to provide a more complete understanding of the position and status of women in ancient Jewish law. This is intended to be a study of eternal principles, not of worldly practice, in an effort to show that the same eternal principles are at work now as in ancient times—to show that there is no inconsistency from one dispensation to another, but that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever (see Hebrews 13:8; 1 Nephi 10:18,19; 2 Nephi 2:4; 27:23; 29:9; Alma 7:20; Mormon 9:9–11; Moroni 8:18; 10:7, 19; D&C 20:12; 35:1; 38:1–2; 39:1–2; 76:1–4).

The Old Testament and the Book of Mormon uphold the original integrity of the law of Moses. In Deuteronomy Moses testifies to Israel of the completeness of the divinely revealed law: “And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?” (Deuteronomy 4:8). His instructions to the people were that they should “not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God” (Deuteronomy 4:2; see also Mosiah 29:25, Alma 31:9).

Despite its divine origin, the law of Moses as found in the Old Testament is incomplete, and scholars have found evidence of scribal error and alteration.¹ In the Book of Mormon Nephi explained that when the Bible was first written, it contained “the covenants of the Lord” and “the fulness of the

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gospel” (1 Nephi 13:23–24). But through time, many “parts which are plain and most precious; and . . . many covenants of the Lord [did] they [take] away,” with the intent to “blind the eyes and harden the hearts of the children of men” (1 Nephi 13:26–27). After this loss occurred, the Bible went to the gentile nations (see 1 Nephi 13:29; see also Moses 1:40–41). It is this version that is the record we now have.

The accuracy of the biblical record can be evaluated by comparing it to other ancient records. Some of the laws in Deuteronomy and Exodus are very similar to other ancient Near Eastern laws. For example, Deuteronomy 22:28–29 resembles a twelfth-century B.C. Middle Assyrian law, and Deuteronomy 22:23–27 is similar to instruction found in the eighteenth-century B.C. Code of Hammurabi. These “parallels between Israelite marriage laws and those found in other ancient Near Eastern law codes” suggest “cultural borrowing during the monarchy period.”² Ze’ev Falk addresses this factor: “It is possible to show that many changes in particular rules were derived from the evolution of society. We know also that the weakening of the clan system and the urbanization under the monarchy resulted in a far-reaching assimilation of surrounding culture. This may have been the occasion for the reception of foreign ideas by Hebrew law.”³

Falk brings up another point crucial to a factual study of the place of women in ancient Hebrew society:

Hebrew society, like others, cannot be defined by legal concepts only, since religious, moral, and other social norms played an important role. The law, for instance, treated women harshly, whereas custom operated in her favor. The legal rule, in such cases, preserves the more ancient attitude, which was no longer applied in practice. Juridical sources, unless corroborated by other evidence, must therefore be used with caution for an historical investigation.⁴

We as Latter-day Saints have modern revelation to aid our understanding of the Old Testament. To gain a more

accurate perspective, biblical laws must be studied side by side with the teachings of the New Testament, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. The writings of the apostle Paul are invaluable because he understood both Jewish law (Acts 22:3) and Christian beliefs. The perspective of the restored gospel saves a study of the laws contained in the five books of Moses from becoming mired in semantics and conjecture. Within the pages of the Book of Mormon, we find clarification of the law of Moses, not in its particulars, but in its purpose and vision—there we can find the original meaning of Old Testament law. For example, the prophet Alma states clearly that sexual immorality is an offense for both man and woman (Alma 39:3–5), while in the Old Testament that fact is not clear.

It is impossible for us to understand the purpose or principles of the law of Moses without placing Christ at the center, as the Book of Mormon makes clear through the words of its prophets Abinadi (Mosiah 13:28–31), King Benjamin (Mosiah 3:14–15), Jacob (Jacob 4:5), and Nephi (2 Nephi 25:24–25). As Andrew Jukes, in his study of the Mosaic offerings, states, “All Scripture [has] one great thought stamped on it, . . . every act, every history shews it,—that thought is the grace of the Redeemer. . . . Christ is throughout the key to Scripture.”⁵

A basic premise of this study is that the laws given by Moses are not based on the relationship between man and woman. Instead, these laws concern human beings, both male and female, in relation to Jesus Christ, and teach the effects of the Fall and the necessity of the Atonement for each individual. With this perspective, we can proceed to study the role of women in the law of Moses.

Parents

Exodus 20:12 reads: “Honour thy father and thy mother” (see also Deuteronomy 5:16). In the Book of Mormon, this requirement was recited by Abinadi when he listed the Ten

Commandments in his discourse to King Noah (see Mosiah 13:20). Nephi recorded that he was born of goodly parents (see 1 Nephi 1:1). Referring to Lehi and Sariah, Jacob spoke of laboring diligently so that Nephite children “[might] learn with joy and not with sorrow, neither with contempt, concerning their first parents” (see Jacob 4:3). Helaman told his sons Nephi and Lehi that he gave them the names “of our first parents who came out of the land of Jerusalem” so that his sons would remember their works (see Helaman 5:6).

In the law of Moses, mothers and fathers were to be respected equally. The punishment was death for smiting or cursing either parent (see Exodus 21:15, 17; Leviticus 20:9). Deuteronomy 21:18–21 goes into further detail:

If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die; so shalt thou put evil away from among you.

However, Anthony Phillips clarifies: “Even though repudiation of parental authority carried the death penalty . . . , the parents themselves could not take the law into their own hands, but had to secure a criminal conviction in the courts. . . . Parents had no power of life or death over their children.”⁶

Commentary by Adam Clarke on the commandment to honor father and mother gives this insight: “For a considerable time parents stand as it were in the place of God to their children, and therefore rebellion against their lawful commands has been considered as rebellion against God.”⁷

Laman and Lemuel “murmured against their father,” saying he had “led them out of the land . . . of their inheritance . . . because of the foolish imaginations of his heart” (1 Nephi 2:11–12). They sought to murder their father and brother Nephi (see 1 Nephi 16:37). No harsh action was ever taken against them by their father Lehi, but he spoke to them “with power,” confounding them until they “shook before him, and durst not utter against him; wherefore they did as he commanded them,” until the next time they disagreed (1 Nephi 2:14). When Nephi began to build a ship, Laman and Lemuel opposed him. Nephi rebuked them and accused them of inwardly being murderers for seeking their father’s life. After administering a physical demonstration of God’s power, Nephi told his brothers to worship God and to honor their parents (see 1 Nephi 17:44, 55).

The law was also specific in the obligations of parents to their children. King Benjamin instructed his people to “not suffer your children that they go hungry, or naked; neither will ye suffer that they transgress the laws of God, and fight and quarrel one with another, and serve the devil. . . . But ye will teach them to walk in the ways of truth and soberness; ye will teach them to love one another, and to serve one another” (Mosiah 4:14–15).

Deuteronomy contains the instructions of Moses to parents to teach the statutes, judgments, and commandments of God diligently to their children: “Talk of them . . . in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up” (Deuteronomy 6:7; see also 4:10; 11:19–21). Parents were to command their children to obey “the words of this law” (Deuteronomy 32:46). Nephi recorded that he taught his children of Christ, “that they might know to what source they may look” (2 Nephi 25:26). Jacob admonished his erring people to remember their children and the effect of the parents’ bad examples (Jacob 3:10; see also Alma 39:16).

Mothers played a significant role in the teaching of their children. From birth to age three the mother was the primary teacher of a child; after that age the father was responsible for teaching his sons. Thus we read Nephi's words: "I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father" (1 Nephi 1:1); also Enos spoke of his father Jacob as "a just man" who taught him "in his language, and also in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Enos 1:1). King Benjamin also taught his three sons (see Mosiah 1:2). In his address to his people he commanded them to teach their children to "walk in the ways of truth and soberness," and to love and serve each other (Mosiah 4:15).

The Book of Mormon is clear that mothers also taught their children, as we see in the account of the sons of the converted Lamanites, the Anti-Lehi-Nephies, who served under Helaman. Helaman recorded that these valiant young men remembered and rehearsed the teachings of their mothers to him. They "had been taught by their mothers that if they did not doubt, God would deliver them" (Alma 56:47-48). The power of their teachings upon these sons is evident in the words "we do not doubt our mothers knew it" (Alma 56:47-48). Moses 5:12 states that Adam and Eve "made all things known unto their sons and their daughters." According to a legend of the Jews, like Rebekah, all "mothers are endowed with the gift of prophecy," and fathers and mothers are "endowed with the prophetic spirit."⁸

Women in a Patriarchal Society

In ancient Israelite society, the father stood at the head of the family, holding broad powers over his wife and children.⁹ Under ancient family law, they were considered his property, as the wording in Exodus 20:17 clearly shows: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house . . . thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's" (see also Deuteronomy 5:21).

This raises many questions in our modern minds. What does it mean to possess something or someone? In the context of God's law, is this possession demeaning? Does it indicate automatic unrighteous dominion? It is important that we study this concept within the proper context, and even more important, within the proper spiritual context.

Legally, a man's possessing his family meant he was required by the law of Moses to provide his wife with the things she needed—food and clothing (see Exodus 21:10)—and to provide similarly for his children. Failure to do so was grounds for divorce.¹⁰ The husband was duty bound to work for, honor, support, and maintain his wife.¹¹ After his death, the widow was entitled to residence and maintenance in her deceased husband's house. The firstborn son was then responsible for the care of his mother and unmarried sisters.¹²

In New Testament times as well, men were commanded to provide for their wives. Paul wrote: "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Timothy 5:8). The later revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants contain the same law: "Women have claim on their husbands for their maintenance. . . . All children have claim upon their parents for their maintenance until they are of age" (D&C 83:2, 4).

The ideas of possession and duty are illuminated by doctrine found in the Book of Mormon. Abinadi, quoting the Ten Commandments to King Noah, uses wording identical to that found in Exodus 20:17 (see Mosiah 13:24). Nephi includes Lehi's family in the list of his father's possessions: "he left his house, and the land of his inheritance, and his gold, and his silver, and his precious things, and took nothing with him, save it were his family, and provisions, and tents" (1 Nephi 2:4). When Alma the Elder and his people fled Lamanite oppression, the record states: "Therefore they took their tents and their families and departed into the wilderness"

(Mosiah 18:34). Alma the Younger also categorized women and children with possessions when he pronounced a blessing upon the people: "May the peace of God rest upon you, and upon your houses and lands, and upon your flocks and herds, and all that you possess, your women and your children." (Alma 7:27). In A.D. 26, when the Nephites returned to their lands after a war with the Gadianton robbers, they went "every man, with his family, his flocks and his herds, his horses and his cattle" (3 Nephi 6:1).

Throughout the scriptures the word *possess* also has implications of inheritance, treasure, stewardship, accountability, and responsibility. In fact, the scriptures suggest that a man's possession of his wife and children does not grant a right to control, but rather bestows a collection of duties and responsibilities. In the Book of Mormon, we find references similar to this concept as expressed by Captain Moroni concerning "the sacred support which we owe to our wives and our children" (Alma 44:5; see also Alma 58:12). He taught his people that it was a commandment of God to defend their families "even unto bloodshed" (Alma 43:47). On his title of liberty were the words "In memory of our God, our religion, and freedom, and our peace, our wives, and our children" (Alma 46:12). Mormon also exhorted his people to "fight for their wives, and their children, and their houses, and their homes" (Mormon 2:23).

Although an Israelite father stood as head of the family, each family member could approach God independently. Gender was not a factor in access to God. This is seen in the Old Testament account of the ancient marriage of Isaac and Rebekah. God did not make himself known exclusively through the father. He communicated with "young and old, men and women, and all to whom he appeared were comfortable in his presence."¹³ Nephi also teaches that God "inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond

and free, male and female . . . and all are alike unto God” (2 Nephi 26:33).

Jan Joosten explains that

the laws are impressed upon every man, in order that they be obeyed by all the Israelites. . . . every man represents his own household. The laws of YHWH are entrusted to the family. . . . The Israelite men, as heads of their families, represent the whole people. . . . The Israelite men are addressed, not so much as individuals, but in their quality as head of the family. . . . Holiness is the charge of every single Israelite, but the responsibility for this assignment is entrusted to the families, of which the men are the head.¹⁴

The Book of Mormon gives us an example of a righteous father in Lehi. No evidence within the record suggests that he used his place at the head of his family in any but a righteous manner; we learn only that he deeply loved his wife and children and was concerned for their welfare. At the end of his life he told his children and grandchildren, “I have none other object save it be the everlasting welfare of your souls” (2 Nephi 2:30).

Essential to an accurate view of women in ancient Jewish society is an understanding of patriarchy. In the minds of many modern scholars, patriarchy is synonymous with male dominance over females. One scholar questions this popular view of patriarchy and warns against judging ancient societies by modern standards: “Patriarchy is related to ideas of male dominance, but what does male dominance mean? . . . Male dominance cannot be equated with female passivity or lack of autonomy. Nor does the existence of some dominant males mean that all males dominate all females.” Indeed, “at best it is a risky business to apply these distinct spheres and attendant values known from modern experience to societies that are smaller and less complex than our own. At worst, doing so means failing to grasp the important position of women in such societies.” Furthermore, there is no evidence that ancient

Israelite women felt oppressed, degraded, or unfairly treated. “Gender differences that appear hierarchical may not have functioned or been perceived as hierarchical within Israelite society.”¹⁵

Similarly, “often modern scholars claim that women in the Old Testament were of low status and were treated as property by their husbands. But [the] example [of Jacob counseling with his wives in Genesis 31:4], and others like it, show that such was not the case.”¹⁶

In our day, Elder Russell M. Nelson explains:

Ideally, the Latter-day Saint family is presided over by a worthy man who holds the priesthood. This patriarchal authority has been honored among the people of God in all dispensations. It is of divine origin, and that union, if sealed by proper authority, will continue throughout eternity. He who is the Father of us all and the source of this authority demands that governance in the home be in love and righteousness.¹⁷

Doctrine and Covenants 121 explains the role and limits of patriarchy, making it clear that control or compulsion in any degree is unacceptable and that influence is to be maintained only “by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned” (D&C 121:41).

Marriage

We can gain insight into marriage and family relationships in Book of Mormon times by examining Nephi’s recollections of his parents Lehi and Sariah and his description of his own marriage and those of his brothers. Nephi records that his family lived in the land of his father’s inheritance in Jerusalem (see 1 Nephi 1:4; 2:4; 3:16), and that under Lehi’s direction, his family fled Jerusalem. Throughout Nephi’s account of their journeyings, he is always careful to state that he worked under his father’s authority. Falk points out that a man had complete control over his children and dependents

but the man had no corresponding right over a wife. As mentioned earlier, Lehi rebukes his rebellious sons Laman and Lemuel with such power that they shook before him “and he did confound them, until they durst not utter against him; wherefore, they did as he commanded them” (1 Nephi 2:14).

We do not read of Lehi commanding Sariah or confounding her for rebelling against his decision to leave all that she had known, most probably beloved parents, siblings, and other kin. Lehi comforted his wife when her faith faltered at what seemed the certainty of her sons’ deaths and the seeming hopelessness of their situation even when she called her husband a visionary man, saying, “thou hast led us forth from the land of our inheritance, and my sons are no more, and we perish in the wilderness” (1 Nephi 5:2). In his record, Nephi showed no condemnation of his mother for her words, stating only that “after this manner of language had my mother complained against my father” (1 Nephi 5:3). Nephi quotes his father’s response to Sariah’s complaint, so we can assume it was part of Lehi’s record. In her husband’s answer there is no anger at her for defying his authority, only gentle persuasion: “I know that I am a visionary man; for if I had not seen the things of God in a vision I should not have known the goodness of God, but had tarried at Jerusalem, and had perished with my brethren. But behold, I have obtained a land of promise” (1 Nephi 5:4–5). In faith he assured his wife that her sons were indeed safe and would return. Nephi records that “after this manner of language did my father, Lehi, comfort my mother, Sariah, concerning us” (1 Nephi 5:6). Only after the safe return of her sons was Sariah comforted and her faith in her husband renewed. She gave her testimony: “Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath commanded my husband to flee into the wilderness; yea, and I also know of a surety that the Lord hath protected my sons” (1 Nephi 5:8). Then Lehi and Sariah together offered sacrifice and burnt offerings, giving thanks to God (see 1 Nephi 5:9). This Book of Mormon account shows

an ancient marriage between equals; no indication is given that Sariah's rank was below that of her husband.

Lehi arranged for the marriages of his sons. Nephi lists this event as a commandment from the Lord to Lehi that "his sons should take daughters to wife, that they might raise up seed" (1 Nephi 7:1). Nephi records that he "took one of the daughters of Ishmael to wife," as did his brothers and Zoram (1 Nephi 16:7). Note the same Old Testament wording, "I took to wife," that is found in Alma, where the Lamanite king Lamoni offers Ammon one of his daughters (see Alma 17:24).

Perhaps Lehi's record would reveal more details of how these marriages were arranged. Instead, we must piece together Nephi's brief statement of the events that brought about these marriages. Under Lehi's direction, the brothers returned to Jerusalem to the house of Ishmael, a family apparently well known to them and probably closely related. Hebrew custom forbade marriages to women too closely related, such as a half sister or an aunt (see Leviticus 18:11–16), but preferred marriages to one's relation, such as a first cousin.¹⁸ Ishmael accepted the marriages of his five daughters to Lehi's sons and the servant Zoram, though assuredly without the customary bride price, as Lehi's possessions had been plundered by Laban (1 Nephi 3:25–26). We assume, however, that Ishmael could have provided a dowry for each of his daughters to bring to their marriage, though they might not have carried this with them into a wilderness. The home these women would have been brought to would have been a tent. Nephi records that not only Ishmael's heart was softened but the hearts of all his household, including his wife and daughters (1 Nephi 7:5).

As the group journeyed from Jerusalem back to Lehi and Sariah, the two sons of Ishmael¹⁹ and their families rebelled against Nephi and were determined to return to Jerusalem. Two of Ishmael's daughters, Laman, and Lemuel also joined the rebellion against Nephi, Sam, Ishmael, his wife, and the other three daughters. When Nephi was seized and bound, to

be murdered by his brothers, one of the daughters of Ishmael, along with her mother and one brother, pleaded for Nephi's life with such persuasion that Laman and Lemuel repented and asked Nephi for forgiveness. When recording who intervened in his behalf, Nephi first mentions this daughter of Ishmael (1 Nephi 7:19). Perhaps she was the woman who became his wife (1 Nephi 16:7), and perhaps the two daughters who rebelled married Laman and Lemuel. It is possible that Lehi had specified which daughter of Ishmael was to be betrothed to which of his sons before they left for Jerusalem, or they could have been betrothed before Lehi and his family ever left.

Nephi's record, written later in his life, mentions his wife only in brief sentences. During the rebellion on the ship, she pleads for his life at the peril of her own, for Laman and Lemuel and the two sons of Ishmael "did breathe out much threatenings" against anyone who would speak for Nephi (1 Nephi 18:17). He writes that "my wife with her tears and prayers" could not soften the hearts of his brothers (1 Nephi 18:19). Nephi, like Lehi, was patient with his wife when her faith faltered. When their bows broke and the small company was starving, all, with the exception of Nephi, murmured against God because of their sufferings—his brothers and brothers-in-law and their wives, his father and mother, and his own wife (see 1 Nephi 16:20, 27). Nephi's wife perhaps lost faith again at the death of her father, when "the daughters of Ishmael did mourn exceedingly" and wanted to return to the life they had known in Jerusalem (1 Nephi 16:35–36). Rather than offer rebuke, Nephi writes encouragingly of their eventual softening, repentance, and submission. In the next chapter, he records the great blessings of the Lord on these women: in spite of the difficulties of living in the desert and of bearing children under harsh conditions, they were able to nurse their children while subsisting on raw meat, they became as strong as men, and they could bear the journey without complaining. Nephi attributes all this to the blessings of the Lord (see 1 Nephi 17:1–2).

A Matrimonial Festival

Abraham P. Bloch tells of a matrimonial holiday among the ancient Israelites, held yearly on the fifteenth of Av, at the conclusion of their harvest. The maidens of Israel, dressed in white, gathered to dance, and the men gathered to watch, all with matrimony in mind. The book of Jasher includes a gathering of the women of the land to dance and rejoice, claiming this is where Shechem first beheld Dinah, the daughter of Jacob.²⁰

We read of a similar celebration in the Book of Mormon. Mosiah 20 tells of a “place in Shemlon where the daughters of the Lamanites did gather themselves together to sing, and to dance, and to make themselves merry” (Mosiah 20:21). The wicked priests of King Noah, hiding out in the wilderness and unable to return to their wives for fear of their lives, discovered these women. At an opportune moment, they “came forth out of their secret places and took them and carried them into the wilderness” (Mosiah 20:5). This led to a war between the Lamanites and the people of Limhi. These women became the wives of the priests, and the women eventually pled successfully with their own people for the lives of their husbands (see Mosiah 23:33–34). This is similar to the account in Judges in which the men of Benjamin were told of the feast of the Lord held yearly at Shiloh in which the daughters of Shiloh came out to dance. The men of Benjamin were permitted to take wives of the maidens gathered there “whom they caught” (Judges 21:23).²¹

The Right of the Wife to Support and Protection

We read in the Old Testament that a man owed his wife support and protection (see Exodus 21:10–11), and we find this concept even more clearly in the Book of Mormon. Captain Moroni taught the people of “the sacred support which we owe to our wives and our children” (Alma 44:5; see also 48:10; 58:12). He taught the people to fight for their

homes, their wives and children, quoting God that “ye shall defend your families even unto bloodshed” (Alma 43:47; see also 48:24). Written on the coat that he tore and fastened to a pole were these words: “In memory of our God, our religion, and freedom, and our peace, our wives, and our children” (Alma 46:12). We find this concept also in Mosiah 20, where the people of Limhi fought the Lamanites “for their lives, and for their wives, and for their children” (Mosiah 20:11). In the Old Testament Nehemiah also exhorted the men to “fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses” (Nehemiah 4:14).

King Noah’s command to his people to abandon their wives and children when they were fleeing from the Lamanites was a violation of this support. Many of the men would not leave their families, but chose to stay and perhaps die with them. This issue brought about the execution of King Noah when he attempted later to prevent those men who had fled from returning to their families (see Mosiah 19:19–20).

During a time of war the Lamanites had taken many women and children prisoners. In contrast, the Nephite Captain Moroni did not take a single woman or child captive. In answer to the Lamanite leader’s request to exchange prisoners, Moroni stipulated that one Lamanite prisoner would be delivered in exchange for a Nephite man and his wife and children (Alma 54:3, 11).

Laman and Lemuel used the condition of their wives and children to justify their desire to return to Jerusalem: “We have wandered in the wilderness for these many years; and our women have toiled, being big with child; and they have borne children in the wilderness and suffered all things, save it were death; and it would have been better that they had died before they came out of Jerusalem than to have suffered these afflictions” (1 Nephi 17:20). This complaining stands in contrast to Nephi’s gratitude as he recorded that their women had borne children in the wilderness: “And so great were the

blessings of the Lord upon us, that while we did live upon raw meat in the wilderness, our women did give plenty of suck for their children, and were strong, yea, even like unto the men; and they began to bear their journeyings without murmurings” (1 Nephi 17:2).

Plural Marriage

The law of Moses recognized the practice of having more than one wife but placed restrictions that protected the rights of plural wives. A king was instructed to not “multiply wives to himself” (Deuteronomy 17:17). A man was not permitted to take another wife if it would reduce the “food, . . . raiment and . . . duty of marriage” of his first wife (Exodus 21:10).

The husband could not prefer the sons of a second wife to the detriment of the firstborn son of his first wife. Deuteronomy reads:

If a man have two wives, one beloved, and another hated, and they have born him children . . . and if the firstborn son be hers that was hated: Then it shall be, when he maketh his sons to inherit that which he hath, that he may not make the son of the beloved firstborn before the son of the hated, which is indeed the firstborn: But he shall acknowledge the son of the hated for the firstborn, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath. (Deuteronomy 21:15-17)

Plural marriage is found throughout the Old Testament, particularly with the Patriarchs and during the reigns of David and Solomon. However, according to the law established by Lehi in the new world, polygamy was not to be practiced except by express command of the Lord, in order “to raise up seed” (Jacob 2:30). But it was practiced in the Book of Mormon among those who were apostate. Under the king reigning after Nephi, the people wanted to have many wives and concubines (see Jacob 1:15). Jacob taught: “Hearken to the word of the Lord: For there shall not any man among you have save it be one wife; and concubines he shall have none” (Jacob 2:27).

The people were instructed not to follow the practice of having many wives and concubines and “committing whoredoms” as their ancestors in Jerusalem had done (Jacob 2:23–26). The people were apparently very familiar with the laws set down by Lehi, because Jacob told them: “Ye know that these commandments were given to our father, Lehi; wherefore, ye have known them before” (Jacob 2:34). They also were familiar with the practices of the Jews from their brass plates, “for they seek to excuse themselves in committing whoredoms, because of the things which were written concerning David, and Solomon” (Jacob 2:23). In stating the law of marriage given by Lehi to his people, Jacob quoted the Lord:

For I, the Lord God, delight in the chastity of women. And whoredoms are an abomination before me. . . . For behold, I, the Lord, have seen the sorrow, and heard the mourning of the daughters of my people in the land of Jerusalem, yea, and in all the lands of my people, because of the wickedness and abominations of their husbands. And I will not suffer that the cries of the fair daughters of this people, which I have led out of the land of Jerusalem, shall come up unto me against the men of my people. For they shall not lead away captive the daughters of my people because of their tenderness, save I shall visit them with a sore curse, even unto destruction; for they shall not commit whoredoms, like unto them of old. (Jacob 2:28, 31–33)

The Lamanites apparently were monogamous at this time. Jacob told the Nephites that they had committed greater iniquities than the Lamanites: “They have not forgotten the commandment . . . that they should have save it were one wife, and concubines they should have none . . . wherefore, because of this observance . . . the Lord God will not destroy them. . . . Behold, their husbands love their wives, and their wives love their husbands” (Jacob 3:5–7).

Later, King Noah and his priests had many wives and concubines (see Mosiah 11:2, 4, 14; 12:29–30). In Ether we

read of the king Riplakish, who also had many wives and concubines, against the commandments of the Lord, and taxed the people heavily to support himself (see Ether 10:5).

There are other possible instances of polygamy in the Book of Mormon. In Alma 50:30 an apostate named Morianton beat one of his maidservants. The term *maidservant* is used in the Old Testament to mean wife or concubine. When Sarai ordered her husband to cast out Hagar and her son, she referred to Hagar as “this bondwoman” (Genesis 21:10). Bilhah and Zilpah were handmaids of Leah and Rachel and given to Jacob as wives (see Genesis 30:4, 9). Exodus 21:7–9 speaks of a father selling his daughter to be a maidservant for the purpose of becoming a wife to the man who bought her or to one of his sons. According to Falk “the marital relationship was created by ‘appointment’ . . . rather than by betrothal.”²² She had all the rights of a legal wife, but did not need a formal divorce. She could leave her husband without his consent, probably because he had not paid a bride-price for her.²³ By law in the Book of Mormon there were to be no slaves (see Mosiah 2:13; Alma 27:9), yet we find that Morianton apparently had more than one maidservant. It is possible that this term meant the same as those used in the Old Testament, and this beaten maidservant had been sold by her father to be Morianton’s concubine.

It is possible that Amulek practiced polygamy. A descendant of Nephi, he described himself as “a man of no small reputation” (Alma 10:3), with many relations, friends, and riches. He lived in the apostate city of Ammonihah, and after his conversion acknowledged his hardness of heart and rebellion against God (see Alma 10:6). Amulek stated that he was “journeying to see a very near kindred” when an angel came to tell him to return and care for Alma (Alma 10:7). In bearing testimony of his conversion, he said: “[God] has blessed mine house, he hath blessed me, and my *women*, and my children,

and my father and my kinsfolk” (Alma 10:11, emphasis added), so it is possible that he had more than one wife.

The Widows and the Fatherless

The book of Mosiah tells of a group of Nephites who lost a great many of their men in battle with the Lamanites. To care for the resulting widows and orphans, their leader, King Limhi, commanded every man to give a part of his material goods to the support of the widows and their children (see Mosiah 21:17). A few years earlier, King Benjamin had instructed his people to “administer of [their] substance” to those in need, “both spiritually and temporally” (see Mosiah 4:26).

This practice is also evident in ancient Israel. Every third year all the tithes of the people’s increase were to go to the Levite (who had no inheritance share in the land), the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow (see Deuteronomy 14:28–29). When harvesting a field or an orchard, a man was to leave the excess sheaves in the field “for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow” (Deuteronomy 24:19).

In Exodus, penalties that the law exacted were severe against those who afflicted widows or fatherless children; by God’s wrath they would be killed by the sword, leaving their own wives widows and children fatherless (see Exodus 22:22–24). Isaiah wrote against those who “decree unrighteous decrees . . . to turn away the needy from judgment, and to take away the right from the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless” (Isaiah 10:1–2; 2 Nephi 20:1–2).

Mormon spoke of those in our modern day who “build up . . . secret abominations to get gain, and cause that widows . . . and also orphans to mourn before the Lord, and also the blood of their fathers and their husbands to cry unto the Lord from the ground, for vengeance” (see Mormon 8:40). Malachi’s words, recorded in the Book of Mormon, speak of

the “swift witness” against those who oppress widows and the fatherless (see 3 Nephi 24:5).

The plight of widows and orphans is a recurring theme in the Book of Mormon. Mormon records that the widows of Limhi’s people, in fear of the Lamanites, cried “mightily from day to day” (Mosiah 21:10). Of his own day, Mormon wrote to his son Moroni of many widows and their daughters in the tower of Sherrizah who were left without food, causing the deaths of many of the older women (see Moroni 9:16). He wrote of the horrific suffering of the women and children because of the wars (see Moroni 9:19).

Divorce

There are few references to divorce in the Book of Mormon. Jacob referred to the concept when he quoted Isaiah: “Thus saith the Lord: Have I put thee away, or have I cast thee off forever? . . . Where is the bill of your mother’s divorcement? To whom have I put thee away . . . ?” (2 Nephi 7:1). The law concerning divorce is found in the Savior’s teachings to the Nephites: “It hath been written, that whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement. Verily, verily, I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery; and whoso shall marry her who is divorced committeth adultery” (3 Nephi 12:31–32).

The Book of Mormon peoples had the brass plates, which contained the five books of Moses, so we assume they would have known of Deuteronomy 24:1, which reads: “When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because that he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house.” They also had the writings of Jeremiah who invokes this when he referred to Israel as having committed adultery (a reference to idolatry), and having been given a bill of divorce by the Lord (see Jeremiah 3:8).

Marriage is referred to in Malachi as a covenant: “The Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously; yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did he not make one? . . . let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For the Lord, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away” (Malachi 2:14–16). Falk states that marriage as a covenant “must have limited the right of divorce.”²⁴

According to many scholars, it was the husband’s prerogative to divorce in ancient Israel, not the woman’s, but that fact is not made clear in the Bible.²⁵ Rabbis disagreed on the interpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1, some interpreting the passage to mean that a man could divorce his wife for any reason; others were more restrictive. In first century B.C., the school of Shammai held that a man could divorce his wife only for “gross immorality”; the school of Hillel maintained that a husband needed no specific reason and could divorce his wife even for “spoiling his food.” The term *uncleanness* was interpreted to mean anything offensive to the husband. Rabbi Aqiba, in A.D. 135, extended the interpretation even further—a man could divorce his wife if he found another he considered more beautiful.²⁶

But other evidence exists that divorce was not condoned or treated lightly. According to Jewish legend, although divorce was allowed in the Torah, “it is said that, when a husband gives his wife a *get* (divorce document), the altar sheds tears and a great noise, inaudible to man, reverberates throughout the universe.”²⁷

Ze’ev Falk states: “Being almost her husband’s property, the wife was not originally able to demand a divorce. Where, however, a husband had refused his wife her conjugal rights, she was permitted to leave him.” He refers to the fifth-century B.C. Elephantine papyri, which indicates that both spouses were capable of dissolving the marriage at will, the wife making the same declaration as the husband in order to

effect dissolution of the marriage. There was also a provision in the papyri for the payment of divorce money.²⁸ In a divorce initiated by either party, the wife was entitled to her dowry, the husband being required to make up any deficiency in belongings or cash. This was to ensure that the wife left with belongings equal in value to what she brought into the marriage.²⁹

We can gain further understanding of divorce in Christ's teachings to the Jews as recorded by Matthew and Mark (see Matthew 19:3–11; Mark 10:2–12). When the Pharisees came to Jesus to trap him with the question, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife?" Jesus replied that divorce was allowed in the law of Moses only because of "the hardness of [the people's] heart" (see Mark 10:3–5).

He then taught, "I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery" (Matthew 19:9). Mark records that Jesus said, "And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery" (Mark 10:12). This seems to indicate that during that period a woman could initiate divorce.

We find more of Jesus' words concerning divorce in the Joseph Smith Translation of Luke. On one occasion he calls the Pharisees adulterers, "and they reviled him again, being angry for the saying, that they were adulterers. But he continued, saying, Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery; and whosoever marrieth her who is put away from her husband, committeth adultery" (Luke 16:22–23 JST; Luke 16:18).

In his teachings to the Nephites at the temple in Bountiful, Christ gave them the new law, which transcended the old: "whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery; and whoso shall marry her who is divorced committeth adultery"

(3 Nephi 12:32). In his book *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple and Sermon on the Mount*, John W. Welch notes the context in which Jesus gave this strict commandment:

In light of the exceptionally righteous audience that had assembled at the temple in Bountiful, the context of the Sermon at the Temple suggests that this very demanding restriction may have something to do with the spirit and law through which husbands and wives are to be bound together in the eternal covenant relationships involved here. This explains the strictness of the rule, for eternal marriages can be dissolved only by proper authority on justifiable grounds and are sealed up for all eternity. . . . Until they are loosed by proper authority, a person who tries to put aside such a spouse on his or her own authority commits an adulteration of the eternal covenant-marriage relationship.³⁰

We must note the difference between the statement by Jesus given to the Pharisees in Luke 16 and the law given in the Sermon on the Mount to the righteous Jews and at the temple in Bountiful to the Nephites. In these two instances of presenting the law to a righteous people, Jesus uses the phrase “saving for the cause of fornication”; to the Pharisees that phrase is omitted (Luke 16:23 JST).

We must note also the law written in Doctrine and Covenants 42:

Whatever persons among you, having put away their companions for the cause of fornication, or in other words, if they shall testify before you in all lowliness of heart that this is the case, ye shall not cast them out from among you; But if ye find that any persons have left their companions for the sake of adultery, and they themselves are the offenders, and their companions are living, they shall be cast out from among you. . . . be watchful and careful, with all inquiry, that ye receive none such among you if they are married; And if they are not married, they shall repent of all their sins or ye shall not receive them. (D&C 42:74–77)

Chastity

Leviticus chapters 18 and 20 specify the laws concerning sexual immorality. A man was not to have sexual relations with anyone considered a close relative—his mother, his father’s wife, his sister, a niece, half sister, aunt, an uncle’s wife, a daughter-in-law, or sister-in-law (see Leviticus 18:6–18). The law prohibited sexual relations with a neighbor’s wife (see Leviticus 18:20).³¹ Homosexuality was prohibited, as was bestiality (see Leviticus 18:22; 20:13, 15, 16). Prostitution was forbidden; a man was prohibited from prostituting his daughter (see Leviticus 19:29). “There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel” (Deuteronomy 23:17). A man was not permitted to take a “wife and her mother”—the punishment was death by fire (Leviticus 20:14). These practices were apparently common among the cultures surrounding Israel, “For all these abominations have the men of the land done, which were before you, and the land is defiled” (Leviticus 18:27; see 20:23).

Specific laws are listed in Deuteronomy 22 concerning illicit sexual relations. The first concerns relations between a man and a married woman (see Deuteronomy 22:22). The punishment was death for both involved. The second concerned a betrothed virgin who had sexual relations with another man. The punishment was death for the man, whether the woman consented or not. For the woman, the law determined that if she was in the city, she was to be stoned (the determining factor being that she could have cried out for help but chose not to). The man was to be stoned “because he hath humbled his neighbour’s wife” (Deuteronomy 22:24).

Whereas the Old Testament leaves some questions unanswered concerning the responsibility for chastity of a man or woman, the Book of Mormon brings clarity. As priest, Jacob taught his people that “I, the Lord God, delight in the chastity of women. And whoredoms are an abomination before me” (Jacob 2:28). The people were to keep the commandments of the Lord “or cursed be the land for their sakes” (Jacob 2:29).

Those who practiced whoredoms were cursed, “even unto destruction” (Jacob 2:33). Jacob warned his people “against fornication and lasciviousness, and every kind of sin, telling them the awful consequences of them” (Jacob 3:12). Note the similarity to Leviticus in these phrases.

Jacob records:

I, the Lord, have seen the sorrow, and heard the mourning of the daughters of my people in the land of Jerusalem, yea, and in all the lands of my people, because of the wickedness and abominations of their husbands. And I will not suffer . . . that the cries of the fair daughters of this people, which I have led out of the land of Jerusalem, shall come up unto me against the men of my people . . . For they shall not lead away captive the daughters of my people because of their tenderness, save I shall visit them with a sore curse, even unto destruction; for they shall not commit whoredoms, like unto them of old. (Jacob 2:31–33)

We find similar wording in Lamentations:

The virgins of Jerusalem hang down their heads to the ground. Mine eyes do fail with tears, my bowels are troubled, my liver is poured upon the earth, for the destruction of the daughter of my people. . . . What thing shall I take to witness for thee? what thing shall I liken to thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? what shall I equal to thee, that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Zion? for thy breach is great like the sea: who can heal thee? (Lamentations 2:10–11, 13)

This message is also in the words of Jeremiah, a prophet contemporary with Lehi, whose prophecies were on the brass plates: “Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease: for the virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow” (Jeremiah 14:17).

For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace: when there is no peace. Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination?

ay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush . . . they shall be cast down, saith the Lord. . . . For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt. . . . Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered? (Jeremiah 8:11, 12, 21, 22)

In the Book of Mormon we read Mormon's anguished words to his son concerning the wickedness and destruction of his people: "and the sufferings of our women and our children upon all the face of this land doth exceed everything; yea, tongue cannot tell, neither can it be written" (Moroni 9:19). And again, in Jacob: "Ye have broken the hearts of your tender wives, and lost the confidence of your children, because of your bad examples before them; and the sobbings of their hearts ascend up to God against you. And because of the strictness of the word of God, which cometh down against you, many hearts died, pierced with deep wounds" (Jacob 2:35).

Nephi wrote that the people were not to commit whoredoms: "for whoso doeth them shall perish" (2 Nephi 26:32). Two chapters later we read of "all those who commit whoredoms, and pervert the right way of the Lord, wo, wo, wo be unto them . . . for they shall be thrust down to hell" (2 Nephi 28:15).

The Gadianton robbers used secret signs and words to protect each other that "they might murder, and plunder, and steal, and commit whoredoms, and all manner of wickedness, contrary to the laws of their country and also the laws of their God" (Helaman 6:23). We learn from this description that "whoredoms" were against the civil laws of the land, as well as the laws of the church. The anti-Christ Korihor taught people that whatever a man did was no crime. He led away "many women, and also men, to commit whoredoms" (Alma 30:18).

The importance of sexual purity can be found in Mormon's letter to his son Moroni in which he laments that

many of the daughters of the Lamanites were taken prisoner and deprived of that “which was most dear and precious above all things, which is chastity and virtue” (Moroni 9:9).

Alma the Younger clarifies further how the Lord views unchastity for both sexes when Alma corrects his errant son Corianton. While on a mission with his father, Corianton went to the Lamanite borders after the harlot Isabel. Alma rebukes him: “These things are an abomination in the sight of the Lord [note the same wording as found in Leviticus]; yea, most abominable above all sins save it be the shedding of innocent blood or denying the Holy Ghost. . . . I would to God ye had not been guilty of so great a crime.” Corianton was told to repent and “go no more after the lusts of your eyes, but cross yourself in all these things . . . [or] ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God” (Alma 39:5, 7, 9).

It is clear from these writings that sexual immorality was as much an offense for the man as for the woman, not just in marriage, but before. Note that Corianton was not punished by the law for this crime. Note also the similarity between Alma’s words and the warning in Leviticus 18:29: “the souls that commit [these abominations] shall be cut off from among their people.” Alma lists the punishment for immorality as being cut off from the presence of God (see Alma 39:9).

We find the word “lasciviousness” used in the writings of the Book of Mormon. Alma prophesied near the end of his life that the Nephites would become extinct because of lasciviousness (see Alma 45:12). Around 20 B.C. the people were ripening for destruction due to “fornication and wickedness” (Helaman 8:26).

Adultery

In Leviticus 20:10 contains the law concerning adultery: “And the man that committeth adultery with another man’s wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to

death” (see also Deuteronomy 22:22–24). In Leviticus 18 is the instruction that “thou shalt not lie carnally with thy neighbour’s wife, to defile thyself with her” (Leviticus 18:20).

The terms of adultery in the Old Testament are described in *People of the Covenant*: “an engaged or married woman committed adultery if she had sexual relations with anyone except her husband-to-be or her husband. A man committed adultery only if he had relations with the betrothed or wife of another man.”³² A man who lay with an unbetrothed woman was not guilty of the sin of adultery. Indeed, in our Old Testament it is not clear that sexual relations with an unmarried woman was considered a sexual offense, or at least it was not as major an offense as adultery (see Exodus 22:16–17; Deuteronomy 22:28–29). But Proverbs includes the concept of fidelity in marriage: “Rejoice with the wife of thy youth . . . and why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger?” (Proverbs 5:18, 20). We find it also in Hosea, in his words to his adulterous wife: “thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for another man; *so will I also be for thee*” (Hosea 3:3, emphasis added).

Anthony Phillips, in “Another Look at Adultery,” states: “In Israel adultery was regarded as a sin against God which in all cases demanded exaction of the death penalty. This was a principle of Biblical law. Punishment was not designed to redress the injury done to the husband but was exacted at the express command of God.”³³ He asserts that the law covering adultery in Israel was “treated as a crime and not as a civil offence.”³⁴ Adultery was a matter of public concern, “prosecution being undertaken by the state and not the husband. . . . At no time did the Israelite head of the house have the power of life or death over those under his protection.”³⁵

This stands in contrast to other ancient law codes, which appear to consider adultery to be merely a violation of the

husband's rights over his wife. Daniel Murray's study indicated several reasons for the prohibition of adultery—as a violation of a community's moral sense, as a threat to the integrity of the family, and as an offense against a man's right of property over his wife. His main conclusion was that adultery was a blow to the man's pride.³⁶

One scholar states that these laws assert the submission of a wife to her husband's authority. Carolyn Pressler maintains that in the law of Moses a husband had “unilateral control over his wife's sexuality”; the laws concerning adultery having to do with “the husband's control over his household, and thus with family order.” She maintains that they only “assert the interests of the husband.”³⁷

The Book of Mormon reflects similar prohibitions against adultery. In preaching to King Noah, Abinadi quoted the Ten Commandments, among them “thou shalt not commit adultery” (Mosiah 13:22). Alma 16:18 tells of Nephite priests and teachers who preached against “committing adultery, and all manner of lasciviousness.” The newly converted Lamanites were instructed in a proclamation by their king “that they ought not to . . . commit adultery” (Alma 23:3).

There is evidence throughout the record to indicate that adultery was a criminal offense, subject to the laws of the land. King Benjamin reminded his people that he had not suffered them to make slaves of one another, to murder, plunder, or steal, “*or commit adultery*” (Mosiah 2:13, emphasis added). According to Jarom, in 420 B.C. the people kept the law of Moses. He records also that the laws of the land were exceedingly strict (see Jarom 1:5). The most compelling evidence is found in Alma 30:10–11 in a list of the laws of the land: “if [a man] murdered he was punished unto death; and if he robbed he was also punished; and if he stole he was also punished; and if he committed *adultery* he was also punished; yea, for all this wickedness they were punished. For there was a law that men

should be judged according to their crimes” (emphasis added). Murder alone is listed as punishable by death, as also in Alma 1:18: “he that murdered was punished unto death.”

In Alma 30, Korihor tries to convince the people that “whatsoever a man did was no crime” (Alma 30:17). Mormon records that he led away “many women, and also men, to commit whoredoms,” convincing them there were no spiritual consequences for such sinful acts (Alma 30:18). Jacob taught the people, “Wo unto the murderer who deliberately killeth, for he shall die. Wo unto them who commit whoredoms, for they shall be thrust down to hell” (2 Nephi 9:35–36). We can compare this to Leviticus 18, in which it says that those who commit sexual sin are to “be cut off from among their people” (Leviticus 18:29).

These laws were based on the laws given by Lehi, as Mosiah reminded the people when he established judges in place of kings. “And whosoever has committed iniquity, him have I punished according to the crime which he has committed, according to the law which has been given to us by our fathers” (Mosiah 29:15); and again, “that ye may be judged according to the laws which have been given you by our fathers, which are correct, and which were given them by the hand of the Lord” (Mosiah 29:25). These laws were based on equity, that an individual’s sins and iniquities were to be answered upon his or her own head (see Mosiah 29:30). There is no apparent distinction made between gender. This is found throughout the Book of Mormon. King Benjamin, when speaking to a group consisting of men and women, taught them to watch themselves, their deeds and thoughts, in order to avoid committing sin (see Mosiah 4:29, 30).

King Mosiah established that after his reign the law was to be enforced by judges. Judges were chosen by the voice of the people, to do business by the voice of the people (see Mosiah 29:25). No man was to be put to death except by the

governor of the land, who had been appointed by the people (see 3 Nephi 6:24).

In Alma 1 we learn that the law was

put in force upon all those who did transgress it, inasmuch as it was possible. . . . [for] persecuting, lying, thieving, robbing, *committing whoredoms*, and murdering, and all manner of wickedness . . . that by thus exercising the law upon them, every man suffering according to that which he had done, [the people] . . . durst not commit any wickedness if it were known. (Alma 1:32–33, emphasis added)

Here again there appears to be no distinction made between the sexes; both were to be held responsible for their actions.

In 30 B.C., the apostate Nephites had “altered and trampled under their feet the laws of Mosiah, or that which the Lord commanded him to give unto the people; and they saw that their laws had become corrupted” (Helaman 4:22). They had grown weak because of “murdering, plundering, lying, stealing, [and] *committing adultery*” (Helaman 4:12, emphasis added). The Gadianton robbers used secret signs to enable them to “murder, and plunder, and steal, and commit whoredoms . . . contrary to the laws of their country and also the laws of their God” (Helaman 6:23). They filled the judgment seats, “having usurped the power and authority of the land; laying aside the commandments of God . . . doing no justice unto the children of men,” so that “*they might the more easily commit adultery*, and steal, and kill . . . according to their own wills” (Helaman 7:4–5, emphasis added).

From these passages in the Book of Mormon we can determine that Nephite law included punishment for the crime of adultery, though these laws appear to have been changed at various times from the original law set down by Lehi, which was based on the law of Moses contained on their brass plates (see 1 Nephi 4:15, 16; Jacob 2:34; Mosiah 29:25; Helaman 4:22–23).

Christ gave the same direction to the Nephites that he gave to the Jews, again directed to the men: “whosoever looketh on a woman, to lust after her, hath committed adultery already in his heart” (3 Nephi 12:28; see also Matthew 5:28). He added these words that are not found in his words to the Jews: “Behold, I give unto you a commandment, that ye suffer none of these things to enter into your heart; For it is better that ye should deny yourselves of these things, wherein ye will take up your cross, than that ye should be cast into hell” (3 Nephi 12:29–30; see also D&C 42:23; 63:16; 88:121).

This demonstrates the same tender feeling toward women as expressed by Jacob, that women’s “feelings are exceedingly tender and chaste and delicate before God, which thing is pleasing unto God” (Jacob 2:7). Nephite men, in committing whoredoms, came under severe censure.

For I, the Lord God, delight in the chastity of women. . . . I, the Lord, have seen the sorrow, and heard the mourning of the daughters of my people in the land of Jerusalem, yea, and in all the lands of my people, because of the wickedness and abominations of their husbands. . . . For they shall not lead away captive the daughters of my people because of their tenderness, save I shall visit them with a sore curse, even unto destruction. (Jacob 2:28, 31, 33)

It is clear from these verses that the practices of the Nephites were not acceptable to God, that because of them Jacob told the men of his people, “Ye have broken the hearts of your tender wives . . . and the sobbings of their hearts ascend up to God against you” (Jacob 2:35).

Clean and Unclean

In the law of Moses, there were strict commandments given concerning cleanness and uncleanness. These are found in Leviticus 11–15, called by scholars the manual of purity.³⁸ While we are probably more familiar with the requirement of strict adherence to a diet that included only those foods

considered to be clean, there were also laws that dictated when in daily life men and women were considered to be unclean. A man or woman was rendered unclean by contact with the dead (see Leviticus 11:24), by infections associated with leprosy or boils, or by body fluids such as semen (referred to in Leviticus as the “seed of copulation”). There were also laws dealing with the process of purification after childbirth.

In the Latter-day Saint scriptures, the heading for Leviticus 15 describes the chapter as the “laws, rites, and sacrifices revealed for cleansing those who have an issue and other types of uncleanness.” The first eighteen verses deal with a man’s uncleanness due to “a running issue out of his flesh” (Leviticus 15:2). Verses 19–30 concern a woman with an issue of blood—either regular menstruation, or a blood flow that continues for a period longer than seven days. Verses 32–33 indicate that the first verses apply specifically to men and the remaining verses to women: “This is the law of him that hath an issue, and of him whose seed goeth from him, and is defiled therewith; And of her that is sick of her flowers, and of him that hath an issue, of the man, and of the woman, and of him that lieth with her that is unclean.”

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all give an account of a woman cleansed of an issue of blood lasting twelve years. Within this story can be found the essence of the law of Moses concerning the clean and unclean. The woman determines through her faith that if she could but touch the garment of Jesus, she would be healed—“For she said, If I may touch but his clothes” (Mark 5:28). Luke wrote that she touched the hem, or border, of his garment, which was considered by the Jews to be the holiest part of the clothing (see Numbers 15:38–39).

Though surrounded by a throng of people, “immediately knowing that virtue [power] had gone out of him,” Jesus said, “Who touched my clothes?” (Mark 5:30). The woman, “fearing and trembling” (Mark 5:33), knowing “that she was not hid, . . . she declared unto him before all the people for what

cause she had touched him” (Luke 8:47). Mark records that when she touched Jesus, “straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up” (Mark 5:29; see also Leviticus 20:18).³⁹ In discussing her miraculous healing, Matthew uses the word *whole*—“thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour” (Matthew 9:22). The story seems to symbolize the true essence of the law of Moses of clean and unclean—that an individual, male or female, looks for cleansing and purity through Jesus Christ, the only person with power to make one whole.

In our search to find the true meaning and the original intent of God concerning these laws, we can look to the Book of Mormon. We find no direct indication of whether the Nephite people, in their observance of the law of Moses, kept the purity laws given in Leviticus. But a careful study of the words used by the prophets shows that they were concerned with purity and that they observed at least some of the outward performances of the law of Moses.

Nephi explained:

notwithstanding we believe in Christ, we keep the law of Moses, and look forward with steadfastness unto Christ, until the law shall be fulfilled. For, for this end was the law given; wherefore the law hath become dead unto us . . . yet we keep the law because of the commandments. . . . Wherefore, we speak concerning the law that our children may know the deadness of the law. . . . And, inasmuch as it shall be expedient, ye must keep the performances and ordinances of God until the law shall be fulfilled which was given unto Moses. (2 Nephi 25:24–27, 30)

Jacob told his people, “Do not say that I have spoken hard things against you. . . . I know that the words of truth are hard against all uncleanness; but the righteous fear them not, for they love the truth and are not shaken” (2 Nephi 9:40). As a consecrated priest, Jacob was to teach his people the consequences of sin (see 2 Nephi 9:48); he was to

“teach . . . the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean” (Ezekiel 44:23; see also Leviticus 10:10).

Abinadi spoke of the law of Moses as a “very strict law . . . of performances and ordinances, a law which they were to observe strictly from day to day, to keep them in remembrance of God and their duty towards him” (Mosiah 13:29, 30). He refers to the laws as types. He sternly warned the priests of Noah that “if ye teach the law of Moses, also teach that it is a shadow of those things which are to come . . . that redemption cometh through Christ” (Mosiah 16:14, 15). Without that, the laws were meaningless.

King Benjamin called his people to gather at the temple, to offer sacrifice and give thanks, and to hear his words. The people came as families, bringing the “firstlings of their flocks, that they might offer sacrifice and burnt offerings according to the law of Moses” (Mosiah 2:3).

He explained to his people that one purpose of his calling the people together was to “rid [his] garments of [their] blood” (Mosiah 2:28). Benjamin taught that the Lord “dwelleth not in unholy temples” (Mosiah 2:37). He spoke of types and shadows, all pointing to the atonement of Christ’s blood (see Mosiah 3:14, 15). All men are to “[put] off the natural man” through the Atonement, the only way or means for salvation (see Mosiah 3:17). The people were to view “themselves in their own carnal state,” “unworthy creatures” (Mosiah 4:2, 11). They were to call “on the name of the Lord daily” and retain a remission of their sins from day to day (Mosiah 4:11). These phrases—carnal, the natural man, daily remission of sins—illuminate our understanding when we remember that Benjamin spoke to a people who kept a law that covered every aspect of life, from what they ate, to their bodily functions, to relations with family and neighbors. All of this was to remind them, in every daily action, of their carnal, fallen state through the fall of Adam and their need for

redemption through the atoning blood of their Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

The words of Alma the Younger, a high priest (see Alma 5:3), also yield insights into the purity laws. He uses language such as “this mortal body . . . this corruption” (Alma 5:15), having a “pure heart and clean hands” (Alma 5:19), garments washed white, “purified until they are cleansed from all stain” (Alma 5:21), also, “garments stained with blood and all manner of filthiness” (Alma 5:22). He speaks of the prophets “whose garments are cleansed and are spotless, pure and white” (Alma 5:24). This wording gives us insight into the continual cleansing of the body and clothing enumerated in Leviticus 15. In Alma 5:57 we find this significant wording: “come ye out from the wicked, and be ye separate, and touch not their unclean things.”

Indeed, the words *clean* and *unclean* occur in many places throughout the Book of Mormon, beginning with Nephi: “if ye have sought to do wickedly . . . then ye are found unclean before the judgment-seat of God; and no unclean thing can dwell with God” (1 Nephi 10:21; see also 15:34). Nephi taught that we will have “a perfect knowledge of all our guilt, and our uncleanness, and our nakedness” (2 Nephi 9:14); also that “the words of truth are hard against all uncleanness” (2 Nephi 9:40).

Alma taught that God does not “dwell in unholy temples; neither can filthiness or anything which is unclean be received into the kingdom of God” (Alma 7:21) and that “no unclean thing can inherit the kingdom of heaven” (Alma 11:37). The wicked are unclean and become dead as “to things pertaining to things of righteousness; for they are unclean, and no unclean thing can inherit the kingdom of God; but they are cast out” (Alma 40:26).

Again, in 3 Nephi, in the words of the Savior: “Put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city, for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean” (3 Nephi 20:36), and “touch not that which is unclean; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord” (3 Nephi 20:41). “No unclean thing can enter into

his kingdom; therefore nothing entereth into his rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood” (3 Nephi 27:19). In Mormon we read: “strip yourselves of all uncleanness” (Mormon 9:28). And in Moroni: “touch not the evil gift, nor the unclean thing” (Moroni 10:30; compare Isaiah 52:11).

In the Old Testament the reasons for the purity laws are not clearly stated. But in these passages from the Book of Mormon one can find a rich interpretation. In summary, several points become clear.

1. The emphasis on physical cleanliness in the purity laws is of spiritual significance. The continual cleansing of self and clothing and household furniture by water was not just for physical cleanliness, but was to remind the people of the need to be clean spiritually. Thus physical cleanliness symbolized spiritual cleanliness.

2. Through these laws the people were reminded that because of the fall of Adam all mortal men and women are in a carnal state and thus not worthy to enter God’s presence. King Benjamin taught his people that they were to “[put] off the natural man” (Mosiah 3:19). This indicates why the people were not to go to the tabernacle while ceremonially unclean. It does not indicate inferiority or superiority, only the state of all mankind before God because of the Fall. There was equity and justice in the law for each gender. “The physical body and its natural functions remind one that he is of the earth, of the physical. Therefore, to say that a man or woman was unclean (that is, not to perform sacred ordinances) at certain times was to suggest to the mind that the natural man must be put aside in order to approach God.”⁴⁰

3. The people were reminded constantly of their need for redemption through the atonement of Christ. The sacrifices they offered at the door of the tabernacle to be cleansed clearly symbolized this.

In the Lord's words to Adam in the Pearl of Great Price: "All things have their likeness, and all things are created and made to bear record of me, both things which are temporal, and things which are spiritual" (Moses 6:63). In one sentence all is made clear:

That by reason of transgression cometh the fall, which fall bringeth death, and inasmuch as ye were born into the world by water, and blood, and the spirit, which I have made, and so became of dust a living soul, even so ye must be born again into the kingdom of heaven, of water, and of the Spirit, and be cleansed by blood, even the blood of mine Only Begotten; that ye might be sanctified from all sin, and enjoy the words of eternal life in this world, and eternal life in the world to come, even immortal glory. (Moses 6:59)

This is the purpose and promise of the purity laws given to the children of Israel.

Women in Book of Mormon times would have kept the purity laws with the proper perspective, as taught by their prophets, who taught not just the law of Moses but "the intent for which it was given" (Jarom 1:11). In each ritual and sacrifice they would have sensed the types and shadows of Christ (see Mosiah 16:14), so all that the law required of them "did serve to strengthen their faith in Christ" (Alma 25:16).

Equality

A study of the role of the women of the Bible and Book of Mormon would not be complete without examining the emphasis placed on equality in the records. Similar wording is found in both records concerning equality before God. Nephi wrote clearly that God invites all the children of men "to come unto him and . . . denieth none . . . black and white, bond and free, *male and female*; and all are alike unto God" (2 Nephi 26:33, emphasis added). We find this same wording sequence earlier in his writings concerning the fate of those who "fighteth against Zion, both Jew and Gentile,

both bond and free, both *male and female*" (2 Nephi 10:16, emphasis added). We find it used again in Alma, in describing the members of the church being "liberal to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both *male and female*, whether out of the church or in the church, having no respect to persons" (Alma 1:30, emphasis added). Jacob taught that Christ "suffereth the pains of all men, yea, . . . both *men, women, and children*, who belong to the family of Adam" (2 Nephi 9:21, emphasis added).

Included is the concept that God does not distinguish between individuals, that all are equal before him. Nephi wrote that "the Lord esteemeth all flesh in one" (1 Nephi 17:35). This was a concept taught to the people by their leaders as a command from the Lord. Alma the Elder refused to become king so that no man should "esteem one flesh above another, or . . . think himself above another" (Mosiah 23:7). "Every man should esteem his neighbor as himself" (Mosiah 27:4). In Jacob's teaching at the temple he encouraged his people to "think of your brethren like unto yourselves" (Jacob 2:17) and taught them that "the one being is as precious in [God's] sight as the other" (Jacob 2:21).

The teaching that God is no respecter of persons is found throughout scripture. In the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord declares, "I am no respecter of persons" (D&C 1:35; 38:16). The New Testament is filled with this concept (see Romans 2:11; Ephesians 6:9; Colossians 3:25). James taught fellow church members that to have respect to persons was a sin, and who did so stood before the law as a transgressor (see James 2:1-9; see also 1 Peter 1:17). This is clarified in the Joseph Smith Translation of James 2:1: "ye cannot have the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . *and yet have respect to persons*" (emphasis added). Alma and Amulek imparted the word of God "without any respect of persons" (Alma 16:14; see also Moroni 8:12).

This doctrine follows the teachings in the Old Testament found in Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy and Proverbs. In executing the laws the people were to do no unrighteousness in judgment; they were not to show unjust favoritism to the humble or to the mighty (see Leviticus 19:15). Deuteronomy states that “the small as well as the great” were to be heard before the law and righteous judgment offered (Deuteronomy 1:16–17). These same principles are repeated in Proverbs 24:23 and 28:21 (compare Mosiah 29:32).

We find these same teachings in the Book of Mormon. No laws were to be enacted “which should bring men on to unequal grounds” (see Alma 30:7). This was a practice in the law of the land and also the law of the church, where the righteous were to be liberal in giving to all, “both old and young, both bond and free, *both male and female*,” in or out of the church (Alma 1:30, emphasis added). Mosiah, in establishing judges, wanted every man to be on equal ground before the law, enjoy his own rights and privileges, and have an equal chance, every man being held accountable for his own sins (see Mosiah 29:30–38).

Inequality was considered a sin. Alma “saw great inequality among the people, some lifting themselves up with their pride, . . . turning their backs upon the needy and the naked and those who were hungry, and those who were athirst, and those who were sick and afflicted” (Alma 4:12). Mormon inserted this into his abridgment: “And thus we see how great the inequality of man is because of sin and transgression, and the power of the devil” (Alma 28:13). This led to the eventual decline of the church (see 3 Nephi 6:14). The ideal society was based on equality and unity, every man dealing justly with one another, as we find in the society established after Christ’s visit, where all were “free, and partakers of the heavenly gift,” all “in one, the children of Christ” (see 4 Nephi 1:3, 17; see also v. 2).

In the Old Testament and Book of Mormon we find the people, both men and women, assembling to hear the word

of the Lord and to make covenants. In the wilderness Moses called all the people together to give them God's words, and the Israelites covenanted that, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do" (Exodus 19:8). All Israel—men, women, and children—were to hear the law read every seven years, "that they may hear, and that they may learn . . . and observe to do all the words of this law" (Deuteronomy 31:12). Joshua "read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, . . . before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones" (Joshua 8:34, 35). Ezra read "the law before the congregation both of men and women, . . . and all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands" (Nehemiah 8:2, 6) then bowing their heads with their faces to the ground, weeping while they listened to the words of the law. They were instructed not to grieve, but to feast and to be merry "because they had understood the words that were declared unto them" (Nehemiah 8:12; see also v. 9).

King Benjamin assembled his people (see Mosiah 2:5) to hear the law and to enter into a covenant (see Mosiah 6:1, 2). Benjamin explained the purpose and promise of this covenant—to be known as "the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters" (Mosiah 5:7). Every person old enough to be accountable entered this covenant, also referred to as an oath (see Mosiah 6:2, 3). Alma the Younger explained, "Marvel not that all mankind, yea, men and women, all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, must be born again; yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and his daughters," ultimately to inherit the kingdom of God (Mosiah 27:25).

About 620 B.C., before Lehi left Jerusalem, a book of the law was found in the temple, presumed by modern scholars to be Deuteronomy. When King Josiah heard the words of the book, he rent his clothes in mourning and instructed his priests and scribes to enquire of God for him and all of Judah

concerning the words of this book. They went to Huldah the prophetess in Jerusalem and returned to the king with her instructions. Josiah had the book read to all the people, great and small, and put them under covenant to keep the laws written in it (see 2 Chronicles 34:19–32; 2 Kings 22:8, 11–20).

In these events spanning hundreds of years and two continents, we see that women were under equal obligation to hear the law of God, to understand it, and to place themselves under covenant to fulfill it.

Female Witnesses of Christ

The power of this equality reverberates throughout the Book of Mormon, never more beautifully than in the account of the Lamanite king Lamoni and his wife. When Lamoni woke from his “sleep . . . in God,” his first words were to his waiting wife. In this tender scene between husband and wife, Lamoni “stretched forth his hand unto the woman, and said: Blessed be the name of God, *and blessed art thou*. For as sure as thou livest, behold, I have seen my Redeemer; and he shall come forth, and be born of a woman, and he shall redeem all mankind who believe on his name” (Alma 19:8, 12–13, emphasis added). She was also privileged to be taught eternal truth by the Spirit, after which she stood upon her feet and blessed the name of Christ, being filled with joy, speaking many words unto the people “which were not understood” (Alma 19:30).

It is significant that out of an ancient culture in which women were not allowed to testify as witnesses in a court of law,⁴¹ we have recorded in the New Testament the account of a woman, Mary Magdalene, becoming the first witness to the resurrection of Christ (see John 20:1–3, 11–18). She, along with Mary the mother of James, Joanna, Salome, and other women (see Mark 16:1; Luke 24:10), were charged by Christ “go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God” (John 20:17). But their words “seemed to [the disciples] as idle

tales, and they believed them not” (Luke 24:11; see Mark 16:11), saying as the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, “Certain women also of our company made us astonished” (Luke 24:22). When he appeared to the eleven as they sat eating, he “upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen” (Mark 16:14).

Another woman witness in the Book of Mormon is the Lamanite servant woman Abish. She must have been an older woman during the recorded incident, for she had been “converted to the Lord for many years, on account of a remarkable vision of her father . . . never having made it known” (Alma 19:16–17). In the remarkable events happening to her king and queen she saw an opportunity for her people to come to believe in the power of God; “therefore she ran forth from house to house, making it known unto the people” (Alma 19:17). When she returned and saw contention instead of growing belief, “she was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto tears” (Alma 19:28). She took her queen by the hand to raise her from the ground, and as soon as she did so, the queen rose to her feet, and cried with a loud voice, giving her witness of her Savior and his power to save: “O blessed Jesus, who has saved me from an awful hell! O blessed God, have mercy on this people!” (Alma 19:29).

Abish’s witness echoes that of the woman of Samaria in the New Testament, who came at noon for her daily task of drawing water from the well and found her Savior, who gave her living water. This is the first recorded account in which the mortal Jesus manifested his eternal identity, “I that speaketh unto thee am he” (John 4:26)—to a woman who was scorned by the Jews for being a Samaritan and scorned by her own people as a sinner for having had five husbands and cohabitating with a sixth man. Christ’s own disciples privately marvelled, astonished that Jesus would speak with

this woman (see John 4:27). This woman believed and did as Abish; she left her daily duty to draw water from the well and ran to her village (see John 4:28), saying to the men, “Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?” (John 4:29). “And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman” (John 4:39) and came to Jesus, entreating him to tarry with them, which he did for two days. “And many more believed because of his own word; And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world” (John 4:41–42).

The New Testament and the Book of Mormon record not only these witnesses, but the silent witness of the many women who knelt at Christ’s feet at the temple in Bountiful and on the plains of Judea, testifying of him as their Savior and Redeemer. Their witnesses echo throughout scripture: He lives! He lives! Come unto Him.

Conclusion

A close study of the place of women in Old Testament and Book of Mormon society yields ideas that challenge and illuminate preconceptions. While evidence for the domination of women in secular societies certainly exists throughout history, in contrast, a righteous society living by God-given truths includes, indeed embraces, the equality of women. This equality is found within the laws established by Moses and lived by God-fearing peoples on two continents—in the laws of the clean and the unclean, the marriage relationship, in chastity and fidelity, the rights of parents, and the responsibility of both men and women to hear, understand, and obey the laws of God. All of these are eternal principles that echo throughout the dispensations.

The Book of Mormon contains more about women than a surface reading yields. In this abridged history we see that

women are valued, cherished, and protected. This comes across most clearly in the teachings of Jacob, in the care of the widow and fatherless, and in the recurring theme of the support and protection owed by a man to his wife and children. Book of Mormon history also reveals that women become dominated and devalued when a people apostatize the laws of God.

Most important, any attempt to study the law of Moses that is devoid of the central, all-encompassing theme of a Redeemer for all mankind, is to strip this law of its foundation and eternal meaning, that of binding male and female together in relation to their Lord, Jesus Christ.

Notes

1. See the Bible Dictionary in the Latter-day Saint edition of the King James Version of the Bible, s.v. "Pentateuch": "The Pentateuch was written by Moses. . . . It is also evident that scribes and copyists have left their traces upon the Pentateuch as we have it today."

2. Victor H. Matthews, *Manners and Customs in the Bible*, rev. ed. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991), 133–34.

3. Ze'ev W. Falk, *Hebrew Law in Biblical Times*, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Wahrman, 1964; reprint, Provo, Utah, and Winona Lake, Ind.: Brigham Young University Press and Eisenbrauns, 2001), 16.

4. *Ibid.*, 109.

5. Andrew Jukes, *The Law of the Offerings* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel, 1976), 12.

6. Anthony Phillips, "Some Aspects of Family Law in Pre-Exilic Israel," *Vetus Testamentum* 23 (1973): 360–61.

7. Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible, with Commentary and Critical Notes* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1824), 1:405.

8. Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1925), 5:271, 281.

9. John W. Welch, "Lehi's Last Will and Testament: A Legal Approach," in *The Book of Mormon: Second Nephi, the Doctrinal Structure* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1989), 65.

10. *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1904), 8:337.
11. *Ibid.*, 12:557.
12. Bible Dictionary, s.v. "Firstborn."
13. Henry Jackson Flanders Jr., Robert Wilson Crapps, and David Anthony Smith et al., eds., *People of the Covenant: An Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 166.
14. Jan Joosten, *People and Land in the Holiness Code* (New York: Brill, 1996), 31, 32, 39.
15. Carol Meyers, *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 30, 32, 34.
16. *Old Testament: Genesis–2 Samuel (Religion 301 Student Manual)*, 2nd ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981), 88.
17. Russell M. Nelson, "Our Sacred Duty to Honor Women," *Ensign* (May 1999): 398.
18. Welch, "Lehi's Last Will and Testament," 68.
19. Erastus Snow attributed to Joseph Smith a statement that the two sons of Ishmael "married two of Lehi's daughters into Lehi's family" (*Journal of Discourses* 23:184).
20. Jasher 33:5–8; *The Book of Jasher* (Salt Lake City: J. H. Parry, 1887), 90.
21. See John W. Welch, ed., *Reexploring the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City and Provo, Utah: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992), 139–41.
22. Falk, *Hebrew Law in Biblical Times*, 127.
23. *Ibid.* See also Judges 19.
24. Falk, *Hebrew Law in Biblical Times*, 156.
25. Leo G. Perdue et al., *Families in Ancient Israel* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 185.
26. S. B. Gurewicz, "Divorce in Jewish Law," *Res Judicatae* 7 (1957): 357–58.
27. Alan Unterman, *Dictionary of Jewish Lore and Legend* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 84.
28. Falk, *Hebrew Law in Biblical Times*, 152.
29. Reuven Yaron, *Introduction to the Law of the Aramaic Papyri* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1961), 59–60.
30. John W. Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount*, (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1999), 70.

31. The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible interprets that verse as “no sexual relations with your kinsman’s wife” (Leviticus 18:20 NRSV).

32. Flanders, Crapps, Smith, *People of the Covenant*, 202.

33. Anthony Phillips, “Another Look at Adultery,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 20 (July 1981): 3.

34. Phillips, “Another Look at Adultery,” 19.

35. Phillips, “Some Aspects of Family Law,” 354.

36. Daniel E. Murray, “Ancient Laws on Adultery: A Synopsis,” *Journal of Family Law* 1 (1961): 89.

37. Carolyn Pressler, *The View of Women Found in the Deuteronomic Family Laws* (New York: de Gruyter, 1993), 97–98.

38. Philip J. Budd, *Leviticus: Based on the New Revised Standard Version* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1996).

39. Jacob Milgrom, in discussing the meaning of “her source of blood,” gives the basic meaning of the word *maqor* as a “fountain, well, or source.” Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 761.

40. *Old Testament: Genesis–2 Samuel*, 174.

41. Falk, *Hebrew Law in Biblical Times*, 110.