



Type: Magazine Article

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Source: *Improvement Era*, Vol. 68, No. 8 (August 1965), pp. 696-699, 704

Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The Protestant cemetery on Mount Zion showing the scarp of the Jebusite fortress and the Valley of Hinnon.



SINCE CUMORAH

NEW VOICES FROM THE DUST

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The Testament of Lehi / Part I, continued

● *Desert imagery.* We have just mentioned Lehi's "desert vision." The desert imagery of Nephi's writings has been studied against the real desert background before now, but it has never been compared with the rich desert imagery in the apocryphal writings, both Jewish and Christian—which is not surprising, since *Lehi in the Desert* appeared before the Dead Sea Scrolls had been published. Take Nephi's supplication:

"O Lord, wilt thou . . . that I may walk in the path of the low valley, that I may be strict in the plain road!

"O Lord, wilt thou encircle me around in the robe of thy righteousness! O Lord, wilt thou make a way for mine escape before mine enemies! Wilt thou make my path straight before me! Wilt thou not place a stumbling block in my way

—but that thou wouldst clear my way before me, and hedge not up my way, but the ways of mine enemy." (2 Nephi 4:32-33.)

It is all straight desert lore—the low valley, the plain road, the flight from relentless enemies, the great sheikh placing the fringe of his robe (*kuffeh*) around the shoulder of the kneeling suppliant as a sign of his protection, the open passage, and the stumbling blocks—but it is also authentic apocryphal imagery. So *Ben Sirach*: "His paths are plain for the blameless; even so they present stumbling-blocks to the offender."³³ Sirach sees in the dangerous journey through the desert the most compelling image of man's dependence on God, as Nephi does.³⁴

The latter describes those who fall away as being led "away into broad roads, that they perish and

are lost."³⁵ In our culture the broadest roads are the safest, but it was not so in the desert. In the popular Egyptian literature of Lehi's day "it became a very common teaching," according to H. Grapow, "that a man should never depart from the right path . . . but be righteous, not associate his heart with the wicked or walk upon the path of unrighteousness."³⁶ Recently Couroyer has shown that there was actually a close connection between this Egyptian concept and the "way of life" teachings in Israel, the two stemming from a common literary tradition.³⁷ "We went astray from the way of truth," says the *Wisdom of Solomon*, ". . . and we journeyed through trackless deserts, but the way of the Lord we knew not."³⁸ This is exactly the lesson of the Liahona:

"Therefore, they tarried in the wilderness, or did not travel a direct course . . . because of their transgressions." (Alma 37:42.)



The Haram Esch Sherif with the golden gate is shown from the Garden of Gethsemane.

Lehi, in "a dark and dreary wilderness" (1 Nephi 8:4), found a wonderful tree (v. 10), and near it "a river of water" (v. 13) at the source of which he saw the righteous members of his family standing as they considered where to go from there (v. 14); he called them to join him at the tree (v. 15), and also called Laman and Lemuel to join the rest of them, but these refused. (Vs. 17-18.) While some got to the tree by taking hold of an iron rod, "Many were drowned in the depths of the fountain; and many were lost from his view, wandering in strange roads." (V. 32.) The obedient members of the family found both the waters and the tree of life. The tree and the water are often mentioned together, for the simple reason that in the desert the two necessarily occur together. (Cf: the First Psalm of David.)

Lehi's appeal to his sons must have sounded like that of the *Odes of Solomon*: "Come and take water

from the living fountain of the Lord. . . . Come and drink and rest by the fountain of the Lord!"³⁹ ". . . he that refuses the water shall not live!" says the *Zadokite Fragment*.⁴⁰ "I saw the fountain of righteousness," says *I Enoch*, telling of his vision, "and around it were many springs of wisdom, and all the thirsty drank from them and were filled. . . . But woe unto ye who . . . have forsaken the fountain of life!"⁴¹ The *Thanksgiving Hymns* of the Dead Sea Scrolls often refer to the knowledge of God as a fountain and declare that only the humble of broken heart and contrite spirit partake of it.⁴² This theme is strongly emphasized in Lehi's story, where those who partake of the fruit are mocked for their humility. (1 Nephi 8:25-28.)

Filthy water. In the tree-and-river image the emphasis is sometimes on the fruit, sometimes on the water. Nephi gives a special interpretation to the latter when he

says that his father failed to notice that the water of the river was filthy, and that it represented "the depths of hell." (*Ibid.*, 15:26ff, 12:16.)

"This was a typical desert *sayl*," we wrote some years ago, "a raging torrent of liquid filth that sweeps whole camps to destruction."⁴³ The same queer and unpleasant imagery meets us in the *Odes of Solomon*: "Great rivers are the power of the Lord, and they carry headlong those who despise him: and entangle their paths; and they sweep away their fords, and catch their bodies and destroy their lives."⁴⁴ The foolish ones who refuse counsel are swept away in the wreckage of the flood.

The *Thanksgiving Hymns* use the same flood image in a different but related sense—the vanity of the world is the torrent; "the way of the princes of this world" is such a confused rush of water that brings only ruin and is soon dried up.⁴⁵

The early Christian *Acts of Thomas* contrasts the pure perennial water with the filthy seasonal flood: God's fountain being "never filthy, and the stream thereof never faileth," it is "the sweet spring that never ceaseth, the clear fountain that is never polluted."⁴⁶

In the *Thanksgiving Hymns* the soul that refuses to drink of "the Wellspring of Life, even though it was yielding [life or water] everlasting" becomes "as . . . rivers in flood, for they poured forth their mire upon me."⁴⁷ Again the filthy water. The *Zadokite Fragment* speaks of the false teachers of Israel as drenching the people with "waters of falsehood," the evil counterpart of the waters of life:

" . . . there arose the 'man of scoffing,' who dripped [or preached] to Israel 'waters of falsehood' and 'caused them to go astray in a wilderness without way' by 'causing eternal pride [or: pride of the world] to become low' by turning aside from the pathways of righteousness. . . ."⁴⁸

It is not only the images but the combination of images that are arresting here. Let us recall that Nephi saw that "many were drowned in the depths of the fountain [of filthy water]; and many were lost from his view, wandering in strange roads." (1 Nephi 8:32.) This wandering, he explains, was the direct result of "the attitude of mocking" (v. 27) of the people in the fine house that represented "the pride of the world." (*Ibid.*, 11:36.)

Scoffing, filthy waters, the pride of the world, and straying in the wilderness are a strange combination, but the coincidence is explained by Rabin's translation, which we are giving here; in it, almost every phrase is put in quotation marks, because almost every phrase is actually a quotation from the Bible or (usually) some old apocryphal work.

The writer of the *Thanksgiving Hymns*, that is, though a genuine poet and inspired preacher in his own right, draws the whole of his material from very ancient Jewish sources, many of them long since vanished. In describing a clever false prophet of his own day, the author here uses the language of earlier scripture throughout.

This peculiar practice of the Dead Sea Scrolls, of which the *Habakkuk Commentary* has become a classic example, is highly characteristic of the Book of Mormon, where Nephi "did liken *all* scripture unto *us*, that it might be for our profit and learning." (*Ibid.*, 19:23. Italics added.) Nephi's imagery meets us again in *Baruch*: "Thou hast forsaken the fountain of wisdom and wandered away from the way of God,"⁴⁹ and in a striking passage of the *Talmud*, where Rabbi Isaac says, "I will give you

GENEALOGY

BY ADAH LEMPKE

*For so long
I let their feathered whisperings
Pass me by.
"Let the dead past be," I said;
"Their mumblings point to nothing-
ness."
One day the petalled fragrance
Of their voices enveloped me;
I cupped my ear to listen.
I listened
Until their time-coated words
Surrounded me.
Then I learned the joy
Of eavesdropping on the echoes
Of the past.*

a likeness: Once there was one wandering hungry, weary and thirsty, in the desert, and he came to a tree with beautiful fruit and shade beside a stream of water, etc."⁵⁰

The newly found *Apocalypse of Elijah* tells how the righteous are led to the place where "they may

eat of the Tree of Life and wear a white garment . . . and they will never thirst."⁵¹ In these instances the tree and the water go together. The two things so wonderful as to defy imagination, according to the *Acts of Thomas*, are "the incorruptible food of the tree of life and the drink of the water of life."⁵²

An odd aspect of the tree in the Book of Mormon is the perfect whiteness of it (the whitest of trees, 1 Nephi 11:8) and of its fruit. (*Ibid.*, 8:10f.) Whiteness is not an appetizing quality in trees or fruit, and so it is impressive to learn from the *Creation Apocryphon* that though the tree of life looks like a cypress, its fruit is perfectly white.⁵³

Sometimes imagery seems to get remarkably jumbled up in the Book of Mormon, as in Helaman 3:29f:

" . . . whosoever will may *lay hold* upon the word of God, . . . which shall *divide asunder* all the cunning and the *snares* and the *wiles* of the devil, and lead the man of Christ in a straight and *narrow course* across that everlasting *gulf*. . . .

"And *land* their souls . . . at the *right hand* of God in the kingdom of heaven, to *sit down* with Abraham, and Isaac, and with Jacob . . . to go no more out." (Italics added.)

Here in a single sentence we have the image of the rod or staff ("lay hold"), the sword, the nets, the path, the yawning gulf, the ship, the throne, and the kingdom. To us this may appear rather tasteless and overdone, but it is typical. Take this from an important Mandaean writing attributed to John:

"Come, come to me! I am the shepherd, whose ship soon comes. . . . Who does not hearken to my call shall sink. . . . I am the fisherman . . . come, I will rescue you from the filthy birds. I will rescue my friends and bring them into my ship. I will clothe them in garments of glory and with precious



The remains of a religious community in the desert 40 miles east of Qumran. Only early Moslem and Byzantine buildings have been excavated.

light. . . .”⁵⁴

Incidentally, Helaman’s “lay hold upon the word of God,” while reminding us of the iron rod, is also authentic usage. Mormon wants us to “lay hold upon the gospel . . .” (Mormon 7:8), and five times Moroni speaks of laying hold on every good thing.⁵⁵ The *Zadokite Document* deplores Israel’s refusal to “grasp instruction,” as Rabin translates it, noting that the expression is found in other early Jewish Apocrypha;⁵⁶ and urges the people to “take hold of the way of God,” another expression found in other Apocrypha.⁵⁷

The forgotten prophets. The Book of Mormon refers repeatedly to a line of prophets that nobody ever heard of in Jewish or Christian circles—such men as Zenos, Zenock, and Neum. These were not Nephite prophets but were “prophets of old” in Palestine. (Alma 33:3.) We are favored with brief

biographical notes on some of them, from which we can see what kind of men they were and what they did; and we are given extensive extracts of their teachings, so we know what religious tradition they are supposed to represent. What all of them had in common was a clear emphasis in preaching the coming of the Messiah, by which they incurred the wrath of certain factions among the Jews and were often obliged to flee to the desert with their followers to carry on what they considered to be a purer and more honest version of the religion of Moses and the prophets.

Lehi is expressly included in this line of Messianic prophets:

“. . . there have been many prophets that have testified these things; yea, behold, the prophet Zenos did testify boldly; . . .

“. . . also Zenock, and also Ezias, and also Isaiah, and Jeremiah, . . .

“Our father Lehi was driven out of Jerusalem because he testified of these things. . . .” (Helaman 8:19-20, 22.)

Lehi, loaded with “seeds of fruit of every kind” (see 1 Nephi 8:1), was hoping to found his own religious community following the pattern of Jonadab ben Rechab and others who had gone out before him.⁵⁸

Today, of course, all this puts one at once in mind of the Qumran community and other such settlements of pious Jewish sectaries.

An essential part of the picture is the machinations of false prophets of a special breed who play a conspicuous role both in the Book of Mormon and in the newly found Apocrypha. Those false teachers, for example, who drenched the Jews with the filthy water of false doctrines are depicted as clever intellectuals and skilful rhetoricians

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trace of Jewish apocalyptic thought as well.⁶⁸ That is why the line of Messianic prophets disappeared.

To judge by the Dead Sea Scrolls they were closely associated with the priestly line of Zadok—"the priests who remain true to the covenant"—which was also suppressed.⁶⁹ An important name in the Zadokite tradition was that of Enos, another vanished prophet; one of the first Nephite prophets also had that name.⁷⁰ Is the Zenes or Zenos, some fragments of whose

words were first published in 1893, the same as our Book of Mormon Zenos?⁷¹ At least the names can now be confirmed, as also the existence of a suppressed line of prophets and the fact that very great prophets have actually disappeared from sight because of their messianic teachings. Let us take the case of Zenos.

(To be continued)

FOOTNOTES

- ³³Ben Sirach, 39:24.
³⁴Ibid., 34:11-17.
³⁵1 Nephi 12:17; cf. 8:32.
³⁶H. Grapow, *Die Bildlichen Ausdrücke*

des Aegyptischen (Leipzig, 1924), pp. 64f.

³⁷R. P. B. Couroyer, "Le Chemin de Vie en Egypte et en Israel" *Revue Biblique*, 56 (1949) pp. 392-411.

³⁸Wisdom of Solomon, 5:6f.

³⁹Odes of Solomon, 30:1.

⁴⁰Damascus Covenant (*Zadokite Fragment*), 3:16.

⁴¹Enoch, 96:6.

⁴²Thanksgiving Hymns, 18:14f.

⁴³H. Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, p. 225.

⁴⁴Odes of Solomon, 39:1.

⁴⁵Thanksgiving Hymns, 8:1-120.

⁴⁶Acts of Thomas, 25 and 29. In the former section the best rendering of the Syriac word is "filthy," since *ka-irah* means both turbulent, muddy, and foul-smelling.

⁴⁷Thanksgiving Hymns, 8:15; T. H. Gaster, *The Dead Sea Scriptures* (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1957), p. 166.

⁴⁸Rabin, *The Zadokite Documents*, p. 4; *Damascus Document*, 1:15.

⁴⁹Book of Baruch, 3:13f.

⁵⁰Tanith, fol. 5b-6a.

⁵¹Apocalypse of Elijah, 21:8.

⁵²Acts of Thomas, 36.

⁵³Creation Apocryphon (Labib), 158:16.

⁵⁴Mandaean Book of John, c. 36, ed. Lidzbarski (Giessen, 1915), II, 144ff.

⁵⁵Moroni 7:19, 20, 21, 25; 10:30.

⁵⁶Rabin, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 40.

⁵⁸See H. Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, pp. 127-9.

⁵⁹As in the *Thanksgiving Hymns* and *Habakkuk Commentary*; see below, notes.

⁶⁰Damascus Document (*Zadokite Fragment*), 1:16.

⁶¹Ibid., 20B:25f.

⁶²Gospel of Truth, fol. xi, line 24.

⁶³Goodenough, *op. cit.*, I, 17-19.

⁶⁴Old Babylonian literature offers a good illustration; W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford, 1960), pp. 4-19.

⁶⁵W. Jaeger, *Paideia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1943), I.

⁶⁶So Alma 58:40, ". . . to keep his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments continually," and Helaman 3:20. Though "statutes and judgments" occurs in consistent combination in Deuteronomy, for the most part "statutes" occurs alone in the Old Testament. In the Book of Mormon (where it occurs 13 times) and the Dead Sea Scrolls, however, it never occurs alone.

⁶⁷J. Danielou, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Primitive Christianity* (New York: Mentor Omega Books, 1958), p. 81.

⁶⁸How well they succeeded is shown in Goodenough, *op. cit.*, I, 20-21.

⁶⁹Damascus Covenant, iv, 2; *Battle Scroll*, iii, 20f.

⁷⁰Enos is the name which John the Baptist gave himself; it is discussed by R. Eisler, *Jesous Basileus*, II, 26, 36, 42, 76, 107, etc. According to Jewish tradition, John the Baptist was the great-great-grandson of Zadok, who in turn was the great-great-grandson of Zadok, Th'labi.

⁷¹Under the title *Visio Zenez* (Kenaz), the fragments appear in M. R. James, *Apocrypha Anecdota, Texts and Studies* (Cambridge), II, 3 (1893), 179. The fact that this Zenes is the father of Othniel puts him right in the midst of the Qumran tradition.



“THE DOCTRINE OF COMPLETED WORK”

RICHARD L. EVANS

We have seen sometime, somewhere, a title—"The doctrine of completed work"—which suggests a subject for those who are looking for challenging assignments in life. Having too many unfinished tasks before us is confusing. There is a limit to what we can pursue effectively at any one time; and one way to keep from ineffective fretting is to finish, to complete what should be done. In the pressure and complexity that is all around us, those responsible for moving work forward must delegate duties to others. But there comes a time when someone must follow to the finish—must take responsibility for final decisions. We may give a child a small task to do, and in the learning process he comes back again and again for an opinion on each phase of his performance: "Is this all right?" "What do I do now?" And he might reach the point where he says: "Now you finish it for me." In childhood, and in the learning process, this we understand. But it is priceless to find a person who will take responsibility, who will finish and follow through to the final detail—to know when someone has accepted an assignment that it will be effectively, conscientiously completed. But when half-finished assignments keep coming back—to check on, to verify, to edit, to interrupt thought, and to take repeated attention—obviously someone has failed to follow the doctrine of completed work. There is much competition, much technology, much need for training, for knowledge, experience, judgment, decisions, leadership; much need for the best and honest efforts of us all. And every needless re-attention to problems, reshuffling of papers, redoing of projects once assigned and supposedly solved is wasteful and worrisome. The doctrine of completed work requires not only knowledge and skills, but also requires character. It requires the willingness to take responsibility, to make decisions, to discipline ourselves to pursue good purposes, not only partly, but to see them through to a realized result so that we can close the file on that particular part or project or compartment, then go to the next opportunity and effort without too many unfinished tasks too long hanging over our heads. He that endures to the end shall be saved—but he who both endures and does what he should, shall find the greater return and satisfaction, as he puts into practice the doctrine of completed work.

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