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## The Purposes for Which the Book of Mormon was Written

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## CHAPTER III.

### THE PURPOSES FOR WHICH THE BOOK OF MORMON WAS WRITTEN.

The several purposes for which the Book of Mormon was written are to be learned from the writers of the book itself, and from the revelations of God to Joseph Smith.

First, I introduce the statement of Moroni, into whose hands Mormon's abridgment of the larger records of the Nephites, called the Book of Mormon, was given. On the last plate of the collection given to Moroni by his father, on the left hand side of the collection, the language of the whole book running as in the Hebrew, from right to left, Moroni engraved the following explanatory title to the record he sealed up, and therein also stated the reasons why the record was written. This Joseph Smith translated and made the title page of his translation of the Book of Mormon:

#### THE BOOK OF MORMON.

An Account Written by the Hand of Mormon, upon Plates taken from the plates of Nephi.

Wherefore it is an abridgement of the record of the people of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites; written to the Lamanites who are a remnant of the house of Israel; and also to Jew and to Gentile; written by way of commandment, and also by the spirit of prophecy and revelation. Written and sealed up, and hid up unto the Lord, that they might not be destroyed; to come forth by the gift and power of God unto the interpretation thereof; sealed by the hand of Moroni, and hid up unto the Lord, to come forth in due time by the way of Gentile; the interpretation thereof by the gift of God.

An abridgment taken from the Book of Ether also; which is a record of the people of Jared; who were scattered at the time the Lord confounded the language of the people when they were building a tower to get to heaven; which is to show unto the remnant of the house of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers, and that they may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off forever; and also to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting Himself unto all nations. And now if there are faults, they are the mistakes of men; wherefore condemn not the things of God, that ye may be found spotless at the judgment seat of Christ.

In the above, three reasons are given why the Book of Mormon was written and preserved to come forth among men in the last days:

First, to show unto the remnant of the House of Israel what great things the Lord has done for their fathers.

Second, to teach them the covenants of the Lord made with their fathers, that the remnants may know that they are not cast off forever.

Third, that this record may convince both Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, and that he manifests himself to all nations.

In a revelation given to Joseph Smith in July, 1828, on the occasion of the Urim and Thummim being restored to him after it had been taken from him in consequence of allowing Martin Harris to have a portion of the manuscript of the Book of Mormon, contrary to the will of God, the Lord said to him:

My work shall go forth, for inasmuch as the knowledge of a Savior has come unto the world, through the testimony of the Jews, even so shall the knowledge of a Savior come unto my people, and to the Nephites, and the Jacobites, and the Josephites and the Zoramites, through the testimony of their fathers—and

this testimony shall come to the knowledge of the Lamanites, and the Lemuelites, and Ishmaelites who dwindled in unbelief, because of the iniquity of their fathers, whom the Lord has suffered to destroy their brethren the Nephites, because of their iniquities and their abominations—and for this very purpose are these plates preserved which contain these records, that the promise of the Lord might be fulfilled, which he made to his people; and that the Lamanites might come to the knowledge of their fathers, and that they might know the promises of the Lord, and that they may believe the gospel, and rely upon the merits of Jesus Christ, and be glorified through faith in His name, and that through their repentance they might be saved.<sup>a</sup>

In this passage we have substantially the same reasons given why the Book of Mormon was written, though not stated in the same order, but as follows:

First, that a knowledge of a Savior might come unto the remnants of the house of Israel in the western hemisphere, who are called Nephites, Jacobites, Josephites, Lamanites, etc.

Second, that the Lamanites might come to a knowledge of their fathers.

Third, that the Lamanites might know the promises of the Lord, both to their fathers and to themselves.

Mormon also left upon record his testimony as to why the book which bears his name was written, and why it would be preserved and come forth in the last days. In his own book, by which I mean that book in which he wrote the things which he saw in his own day, Mormon says:

Now these things are written unto the remnant of the house of Jacob; \* \* \* and behold they shall come forth according to the commandment of the Lord, when He shall see fit in his wisdom. And behold they shall go unto the unbelieving of the Jews; and for this intent shall they go; that they may be

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<sup>a</sup>Doc. and Cov., Sec. iii:16-20.

persuaded that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God; that the Father may bring about, through his most beloved, his great and eternal purpose, in restoring the Jews, or all the house of Israel, to the land of their inheritance, which the Lord their God hath given them, unto the fulfilling of His covenant; and also that the seed of this people<sup>a</sup> may more fully believe His Gospel, which shall go forth unto them from the Gentiles.<sup>b</sup>

Again, this same writer, Mormon, addressing himself to the remnants of the Lamanites to whom, in the future, his record would come, says:

“Know ye that ye must come to a knowledge of your fathers, and repent of all your sins and iniquities, and believe in Jesus Christ that he is the Son of God and that he was slain by the Jews, and by the power of the Father he hath risen again, whereby he hath gained the victory over the grave; and also in him is the sting of death swallowed up. And he bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead, whereby man must be raised to stand before his judgment seat. And he hath brought to pass the redemption of the world, whereby he that is found guiltless before him at the judgment day, hath it given unto him to dwell in the presence of God in his kingdom to sing ceaseless praises with the choirs above, unto the Father, and unto the Son, and unto the Holy Ghost, which are one God, in a state of happiness which hath no end. Therefore repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus, and lay hold upon the Gospel of Christ, which shall be set before you, not only in this record, but also in the record which shall come unto the Gentiles from the Jews,<sup>c</sup> which record shall come from the Gentiles unto you. For behold, this<sup>d</sup> is written for the intent that ye may believe that;<sup>e</sup> and if ye believe that, ye will believe this also; and if ye believe this, ye will know con-

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<sup>a</sup>Mormon here refers to the Lamanites, that is, that the seed of the Lamanites, the present “Indians” of the western hemisphere, might more fully believe the Gospel, etc.

<sup>b</sup>Book of Mormon, Chapter v; 12-15.

<sup>c</sup>The Bible.

<sup>d</sup>The Book of Mormon.

<sup>e</sup>The Bible.

cerning your fathers, and also the marvelous works which were wrought by the power of God among them; and ye will also know that ye are a remnant of the seed of Jacob; therefore ye are numbered among the people of the first covenant." (Mormon, vii; 5-10.)

This passage is important because that in addition to assigning substantially the same reasons for the writing and coming forth of the Book of Mormon, as those before enumerated, it brings out the fact that the Book of Mormon was written also to be a witness for the Bible, to prove it true, for the language in the above passage makes plain reference to the Bible, the "record" which comes from the Jews to the Gentiles, and from the Gentiles to the remnant of the Lamanites to whom Mormon makes reference.

There is also the testimony of the first Nephi. In vision he saw the advent of the Gentile races upon the western hemisphere. He saw their victories over the remnant of the seed of his brethren, the Lamanites. He then proceeds:

And I beheld the Spirit of the Lord, that it was upon the Gentiles; that they did prosper, and obtain the land for their inheritance; and I beheld that they were white, and exceeding fair and beautiful, like unto my people, before they were slain. And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld that the Gentiles who had gone forth out of captivity did humble themselves before the Lord; and the power of the Lord was with them; and I beheld that their mother Gentiles were gathered together upon the water, and upon the land also, to battle against them; and I beheld that the power of God was with them, and also that the wrath of God was upon all those that were gathered together against them to battle. And I, Nephi, beheld that the Gentiles that had gone out of captivity, were delivered by the power of God out of the hands of all other nations. And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld that they did prosper in the land; and I beheld a book, and it was carried forth among them. And the angel said unto me, knowest thou the meaning of the book? And I said

unto him, I know not. And he said, beheld, it proceedeth out of the mouth of a Jew; and I, Nephi, beheld it; and he said unto me, the book that thou beholdest; is a record of the Jews, which contains the covenants of the Lord which He hath made unto the house of Israel; and it also containeth many of the prophecies of the holy prophets; and it is a record like unto the engravings which are upon the plates of brass,<sup>f</sup> save there are not so many; nevertheless, they contain the covenants of the Lord, which he hath made unto the house of Israel; wherefore, they are of great worth unto the Gentiles.

And the angel of the Lord said unto me, thou hast beheld that the book proceedeth forth from the mouth of a Jew; and when it proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew, it contained the plainness of the Gospel of the Lord, of whom the twelve apostles bear record; and they bear record according to the truth which is in the Lamb of God; therefore, these things go forth from the Jews in purity, unto the Gentiles, according to the truth which is in God; and after they go forth by the hand of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, from the Jews unto the Gentiles, thou seest the foundation of a great and abominable church, which is most abominable above all other churches; for behold, they have taken away from the Gospel of the Lamb, many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away; and all this have they done; that they might pervert the right ways of the Lord; and they might blind the eyes and harden the hearts of the children of men; wherefore, thou seest that after the book had gone forth through the hands of the great and abominable church, that there are many plain and precious things taken away from the book, which is the book of the Lamb of God; and after these plain and precious things were taken away, it goeth forth unto all nations of the Gentiles, yea, even across the many waters which thou hast seen with the Gentiles which have gone forth out of captivity; thou seest because of the many plain and precious things which have been taken out of the book, which were plain unto the understanding of the children of men, according to the plainness which is in the Lamb of God; because of these things which are taken away out of the Gospel of the Lamb, an exceeding great

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<sup>f</sup>The "record" upon the plates of brass is the record containing the Jewish Scripture which the colony of Lehi brought with them from Jerusalem, to which reference is here made.

many do stumble, yea, insomuch that Satan hath great power over them. \* \* \*. And it came to pass that the angel of the Lord spoke unto me, saying, behold, saith the Lamb of God, after I have visited the remnant of the house of Israel, and this remnant of whom I speak, is the seed of thy father;<sup>g</sup> wherefore, after I have visited them in judgment, and smitten them by the hand of the Gentiles; and after the Gentiles do stumble exceedingly, because of the most plain and precious parts of the Gospel of the Lamb, which have been kept back by that abominable church, which is the mother of harlots, saith the Lamb; I will be merciful unto the Gentiles in that day, insomuch that I will bring forth unto them in mine own power much of my Gospel, which shall be plain and precious saith the Lamb;

For behold saith the Lamb, I will manifest myself unto thy seed,<sup>h</sup> that they shall write many things which I shall minister unto them, which shall be plain and precious; and after thy seed shall be destroyed, and dwindle in unbelief, and also the seed of thy brethren; behold these things shall be hid up, to come forth unto the Gentiles, by the gift and power of the Lamb;

And in them shall be written my gospel, saith the Lamb, and my rock and my salvation. \* \* \*. And it came to pass that I beheld the remnant of the seed of my brethren, and also the book of the Lamb of God, which had proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew, that it came forth from the Gentiles unto the remnant of the seed of my brethren, and after it had come forth unto them, I beheld other books, which came forth by the power of the Lamb, from the Gentiles unto them, unto the convincing of the Gentiles, and the remnant of the seed of my brethren, and also the Jews, who were scattered upon all the face of the earth, that the records of the prophets and of the twelve apostles of the Lamb are true. And the angel spake unto me, saying, these last records which thou hast seen among the Gentiles, shall establish the truth of the first, which are of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, and shall make known the plain and precious things which have been taken away from them; and shall make known to all kindreds, tongues, and people, that the Lamb of God is the Son of the Eternal Father, and the Savior of the world; and all men must come unto him, or they cannot be saved; and they must

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<sup>g</sup>The descendants of Lehi.

<sup>h</sup>The Nephites.



come according to the words which shall be established by the mouth of the Lamb; and the words of the Lamb shall be made known in the records of thy seed, as well as in the records of the twelve apostles of the Lamb; wherefore, they both shall be established in one; for there is one God and one Shepherd over all the earth.<sup>i</sup>

The reference here made to "the book of the Lamb of God, which had proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew," is beyond all question the Bible; while the "other books," which came forth by the power of the Lamb, from the Gentiles unto the remnant of Lehi's descendants, and which records are to establish the truth of the first records, or the Bible, is in plain allusion to the Book of Mormon and other scriptures to be brought forth by the power of God in the last days.

From all this, then, it is very evident that the purposes for which the Book of Mormon were written, counting in this summary both those reasons already enumerated and those stated in the passages last quoted, are:

First, to show unto the remnant of the house of Israel what great things the Lord has done for their fathers.

Second, to teach them the covenants of the Lord made with their fathers, that the remnants may know that they are not cast off forever.

Third, to convince both Jews and Gentiles that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, and that he manifests himself to all nations.

Fourth, to bring the knowledge of a Savior to the remnants of the house of Israel on the western hemisphere, through the testimony of the Nephites and Lamanites as well as through the testimony of the Jews, that they might more fully believe the gospel.

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<sup>i</sup>I. Nephi, Chapter xiii.

Fifth, to bring to the Jews the testimony of the Nephites that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God; that they might have the testimony of the Nephites as well as that of their fathers that Jesus is their Messiah.

Sixth, to be a witness for the truth of the Bible, to establish its authenticity, and its credibility by bringing other witnesses than those of the Eastern world to testify to the same great truths that are contained in the sacred pages of the Bible.

Seventh, to restore to the knowledge of mankind many plain and precious truths concerning the gospel which men have taken out of the Jewish Scriptures, or obscured by their interpretations; by the absence of which passages, or misleading interpretations, many have stumbled and fallen into unbelief. In a word, it is the mission of the Book of Mormon to be a witness for Jesus, the Christ; for the truth of the gospel as the power of God unto salvation; for that purpose it was written, preserved from destruction, and has now come forth to the children of men through the goodness and mercy and power of God.