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A Book of Mormon Year

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Abstract: Encourages Church members to read the Book of Mormon, and tells faith promoting stories of those who have read the book and have experienced a "spiritual revival" in their lives.



A BOOK OF MORMON YEAR

In the Gospel Doctrine and "B" or Teachers' Departments (age 15 and 16) of the Sunday School, beginning in January next and extending throughout the year, the story of the teachings of the Nephite Record will be studied. Since that volume can hardly be considered intelligently in any aspect without a careful reading of it, there is a great likelihood, therefore, that the adult membership of the Church as well as the youth will experience a spiritual revival.

No doubt such an awakening is necessary. For eight to ten hours a day and for six days a week, we are engrossed in the problem of obtaining the essentials of life—food, clothing, and shelter. Washing dishes, preparing meals, dressing the children for school, sewing and mending, baking and ironing, or working the typewriter, on the part of the women, and office work, managing businesses, selling and buying, farming, teaching school, or pleading cases in a court of law on the part of the men—these are the things that distract our attention from the higher values in life. And, when the day is done and the mind looks for relaxation from the cares and vexations of labor, we are apt to go to the "talkies" or to private parties, which, as a rule, are anything but spiritual. So it comes about that, if we are to "gird up our loins," as an old Jewish phrase has it, for the making of a life rather than a mere living, we must go to religion. There alone we shall be able to find the necessary stimulus, the force that both directs and energizes.

Now, there is perhaps no one book in the whole range of world literature, outside of course of the four Gospels, which can supply this spiritualizing power like the *Book of Mormon*. Matthew Arnold, a great English teacher, used to advise every one to read twelve lines of Milton each morning before going to work, as an antidote against doing anything mean during the day. Joseph Smith had an even better recommendation. It was that the members of the Church become steeped in the spirit of the *Book of Mormon*. The Nephite Record, he said, is "the keystone of our religion," and added that "a man will get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts than by those of any other book." And so it is probably true that a man or a woman who reads a few verses of the *Book of Mormon* every morning will find it a little harder to lie, to cheat, to indulge in idle gossip, not to mention the grosser sins, than one who never looks between the lids of that great book.

That the *Book of Mormon* is able to do just that for any one who accepts it as true, is evident by what it has actually done in the past. A woman, for instance, puts a copy of the book in the bottom of her unbelieving sailor husband's trunk, and he comes home from a voyage a convert to Mormonism. Another woman, a widow, before she is a member of the Church, buys a copy of the work, and, without knowing anything of its origin, brings up her children on its simple, understandable truths, and when some elder knocks on her door and tells her the story of that interesting volume, at once becomes a member of the organization that is built on its doctrines. A man reads the *Book of Mormon* on the lonely beach of the ocean, while he is recuperating from a spell of sickness, and as soon as he is able to do so applies for baptism in the Church. Another man, while reading the volume to get subjects for his art, becomes so absorbed in its ideals that he rushes off to Utah, where he embraces Mormonism. And still another man, accepting the *Book of Mormon* as a true history of ancient America, treats the natives with justice and kindness, and thus wins their friendship, by which he is able to save entire communities from destruction at their hands. And tens of thousands of men and women in all parts of the world, after having read the record of the ancient Nephites, have come to live a saner, happier, and more useful life.

A hundred years ago many good Christians were in the habit of reading the Hebrew Scriptures every morning and evening aloud in the family circle. It was a salutary practice. And members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, on joining the new faith, carried over this practice into their own family worship. Only,

in addition to reading the Bible now, they read also the *Book of Mormon* and the *Doctrine and Covenants*. They thus had a greater variety of scripture than their neighbors in other churches. There used to be Christians, too, who read the Bible once through every year. It was a good practice, and did not take so much time as one would think. Many of the early Saints applied this thought to the *Book of Mormon*, because of its greater plainness and simplicity, and because it is a "New Witness for God."

This practice should be revived. This year, especially, every adult Latter-day Saint should make it a point to read the Nephite Record from cover to cover, with a view primarily to increasing his supply of spirituality. Also, it might increase his power to live a decent life here below, as well as his power to do service to others.

HOW WE GOT THE BOOK OF MORMON

By Elder James E. Talmage

It was on September 22, 1827, when Joseph Smith, under Moroni's direction, took from the side of the hill that had been shown him in vision a book made up of thin leaves of beaten gold, held together by rings after the fashion of our modern loose-leaf books. As described by Joseph Smith and by others to whom they were shown these leaves or plates were engraved with fine characters having all the appearance of ancient workmanship. They had been laid away with care and attention to preservation; for, when uncovered, they were found resting in a box of stone.

The characters were of a modified Egyptian type, though the language of the record was Hebrew—likewise altered through the isolation of the people—that is to say the Hebrew words were spelled out in Egyptian characters, just as today we have books in the German language printed in English letters. As the translation proceeded it was found that the writing constituted a history of the aboriginal peoples of the Western Continent, of whom, as stated, the existing tribes of American Indians are the descendants.

Like the Bible, the *Book of Mormon* is a compilation of books by a succession of authors, and covers the period between 600 B. C. and about 420 A. D., with an inclusion of a more ancient history, discovered by Lehi's descendants, which tells of an immigration to America soon after the building of the Tower of Babel.

Translation by the Gift and Power of God

Let us go back to the unearthing of the plates. With them in the box lay two stones set in bows of silver. These as the angel Moroni informed Joseph Smith were the Urim and Thummim, the possession and inspired ability to use which constituted the

gift of seership as exercised of old; and of these particular instruments the angel said "that God had prepared them for the purpose of translating the book." With the aid of these "interpreters" Joseph Smith was instrumental in translating the ancient record into English. He was no linguist; indeed, at the time, he was unschooled beyond the rudiments of a simple education, unversed in any tongue but the vernacular, and according to all human standards was wholly unequipped to translate the records of a nation long extinct, and, except for certain Indian traditions, forgotten. But the operation of a power higher than human, by which the engraved plates were brought forth from the earth, was to be effective in making the long-buried chronicles intelligible to modern readers.

Joseph Smith avers that the translation was made *through the gift and power of God*. It was divinely appointed that the sacred archives should be restored to the knowledge of men through that power and not through human learning. Had it not been written that in the latter days the Lord would accomplish a marvelous work and a wonder, whereby the wisdom of the wise would fail and the understanding of the learned be hidden—and this because men would put their dogmas and precepts above the revealed word? (See Isa. 29:13-14) In the translation of the *Book of Mormon* there was to be no gloss of fallible scholarship, no attempt to improve and embellish the plain, simple and unambiguous diction of the original scribes who wrote by inspiration. Therefore was the commission laid upon one who was rated among the weak of the earth, but whose ministry, nevertheless, has confounded the mighty. (See I Cor. 1:27-28.)

The nation "brought down" as Isaiah foresaw and foretold has spoken "out of