

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM



Edited by
Daniel H. Ludlow

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

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over their concern for family, members are encouraged to make pivotal decisions with regard to their effect on the family. This priority of family unavoidably influences the role expectations for women, including that of mother, wife, homemaker, and teacher. Latter-day Saint women are taught from their youth to prepare for marriage and homemaking, as well as for a vocation. Camilla Kimball, wife of President Spencer W. KIMBALL, counseled every girl and woman to: “qualify in two vocations—that of homemaking, and that of preparing a living outside the home, if and when the occasion requires. A married woman may become a widow without warning. . . . Thus a woman may be under the necessity of earning her own living and helping to support her dependent children” (*Ensign* 7 [Mar. 1977]:59).

Church leaders have long urged women, individually and as a group, to obtain all the education available to them, to “be given to writing, and to learning much” (D&C 25:8). Schooling for women has been encouraged not only for their own fulfillment and achievement but also for its value in helping them make the home a place of learning and refinement and for its importance in the lives of children. Even though training and education may open many career opportunities for women, the role of mother is dominant for those who have young children, and they are urged to use their training to benefit their children.

The Church does not oppose women working outside the home per se, and recognizes the contributions that they make in government, professions, business, and in creative fields. Marvin J. Ashton of the Quorum of the Twelve explained that “a woman should feel free to go into the marketplace and into community service on a paid or volunteer basis if she so desires when her home and family circumstances allow her to do so without impairment to them” (Ashton, p. 93). It is understood that some mothers are required to work for the support of their children, but it is hoped that whenever possible, mothers with children in the home will make home their priority career.

All women are daughters of “glorious mother Eve” (D&C 138:39) who, as the “mother of all living” (Moses 4:26), left a legacy that is the inheritance of every woman. This role transcends the care of an immediate family. It describes a nature and attitude that is basic for all women. President Harold B. LEE expressed this when he addressed the women of the Church assembled in the Taber-

nacle: “Now you mothers over the Church. . . .” (see MOTHERS IN ISRAEL). Every woman, whatever her family status, calling, or occupation, is involved in the roles of one who nurtures, lifts, consoles; who tenders love; and who protects and preserves families.

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BARBARA B. SMITH
SHIRLEY W. THOMAS

WOMEN IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

Some general conclusions about Book of Mormon women can be drawn from the book’s fragmentary material about marriage, family, and religious organization. Six women are mentioned by name: Sariah, Isabel, Abish, EVE, SARAH, and MARY. Since no women are mentioned as religious or military leaders and only a few as political leaders, it appears that males held virtually all leadership positions in this society. Also, since the Book of Mormon was written primarily to remind future readers of the goodness of God and to persuade them to believe in Christ, it contains no law books and little intellectual or social history discussing the meshing of familial and religious practices. It is reasonable to assume, however, that these people began with many customs similar to their ancestral Semitic cultures and that their practices changed somewhat over the years.

In Nephite society, marriage and childbearing were expected, carrying religious significance and responsibilities (1 Ne. 7:1; Mosiah 4:14–15; 4 Ne. 1:11). Marriages may have been arranged within ethnic groups (1 Ne. 16:7; Alma 17:24) and were restricted outside certain groups (Alma 3:8). Polygamy and concubinage were prohibited and scorned; monogamy was expected, except as the Lord might command otherwise to “raise up seed” unto himself (Jacob 2:27–30).

Husbands and wives were expected to be faithful and loyal to each other (Jacob 3:7). One case shows that a wife was valued, even if unable to conceive. The righteous Jaredite king Coriantum remained with his barren wife until her death at age 102. He then married a young maid and fathered sons and daughters (Ether 9:23–24). It was, likewise, a sign of great wickedness that the priests of king Noah deserted their families. While in hiding, they abducted twenty-four Lamanite women for wives. When Lamanite kinsmen discovered and sought to kill the priests several years later, however, these women faithfully pleaded for the lives of their husbands (Mosiah 23:33).

Men were expected to support their wives and children, as well as the widows and children of men killed in war (Mosiah 21:17). Men were to pray for their households (Alma 34:21), and many took up arms to defend their families.

Both parents were concerned about their offspring (1 Ne. 5:1–7; 8:37). LEHI blessed and counseled his granddaughters and grandsons (2 Ne. 4:3–9). Children were taught to honor their mother and father. HELAMAN₁ and his 2,000 young warriors credited their Ammonite mothers with instilling in them the faith that “if they did not doubt, God would deliver them” (Alma 56:47).

In religious life, women participated in assemblies at the temple (Jacob 2:7; Mosiah 2:5–8), in teaching their children about God (Alma 56:46–47), and in offering sacrifice (1 Ne. 5:9). Evidently they were not excluded from, or segregated during, worship (2 Ne. 26:28–33); nor is there any indication that they were considered ritually unclean during menstruation. The gospel taught by the NEPHITES and Christ in the Book of Mormon is addressed to all, regardless of gender, age, or descent (2 Ne. 26:33; Mosiah 27:25; Alma 11:44; 32:23; 3 Ne. 17:25). BAPTISM was offered to all men and women who believed (Mosiah 18:16; Moro. 9:10). Women demonstrated profound faith and were tested by great sacrifice. In Ammonihah, women were burned to death with their children for refusing to renounce their faith in Christ (Alma 14:7–11). Apparently the LIAHONA responded to the collective faith and diligence of the entire group, men and women (1 Ne. 16:28).

During the years in the wilderness, the Lehite women toiled and were strong, but little is known about their activities, other than pregnancy and childbirth. Spinning is the only work specifically attributed to women (Mosiah 10:5; Hel. 6:13).

Women’s dancing is associated with leisure and sometimes with wickedness (1 Ne. 18:9; Mosiah 20:1; Ether 8:10–11). Harlots provided immoral sexual activity in return for sustenance (Mosiah 11:14).

Politically, women had rights of succession to the Lamanite throne, for when Amalickiah murdered a Lamanite king, rule passed to the queen, whom Amalickiah then married to gain the throne (Alma 47:32–35). In extreme crises women took up arms in war alongside their men (Alma 54:12; 55:17; Ether 15:15).

Assignment of tasks in the family or in the whole economy—trade, planting and harvesting crops, and tending animals—is not apparent. Cycles of colonization, agriculture, urbanization, war, destruction, and renewal, as well as differing belief systems, certainly affected family and work patterns.

The Book of Mormon women Sariah, Abish, and Isabel can be viewed not only as historical figures but also as archetypal figures of, respectively, the righteous mother, the godly servant, and the attractive but sexually impure outsider.

Sariah was the faithful mother of the Nephite and Lamanite nations. She left a comfortable home near Jerusalem with Lehi and their family to suffer the rigors of desert and ocean travel, bearing two more sons, JACOB and JOSEPH, late in life while in the wilderness (1 Ne. 18:7, 17–19). She complained against Lehi when she thought their sons were dead, but affirmed his calling and the power of God when they returned unharmed (1 Ne. 5:2–8). With Lehi she gave sacrifice in thanksgiving. She was the mother of six sons and at least two daughters (2 Ne. 5:6).

Abish, a Lamanite convert of surpassing faith, servant to the queen of king Lamoni, recognized that the power of God had overcome the king, queen, and Ammon when they fell to the ground unconscious; she gathered people to witness the event and then raised the queen with her touch when the confusion of the crowd led to contention. Many believed the testimonies of the revived queen, who then raised the king, who also testified of Jesus (Alma 19:16–36).

Isabel, according to ALMA₂ (Alma 39:3–4), was a harlot who stole the hearts of many, including that of Alma’s son Corianton, who for a time forsook the ministry to go after her (Alma 39:3).

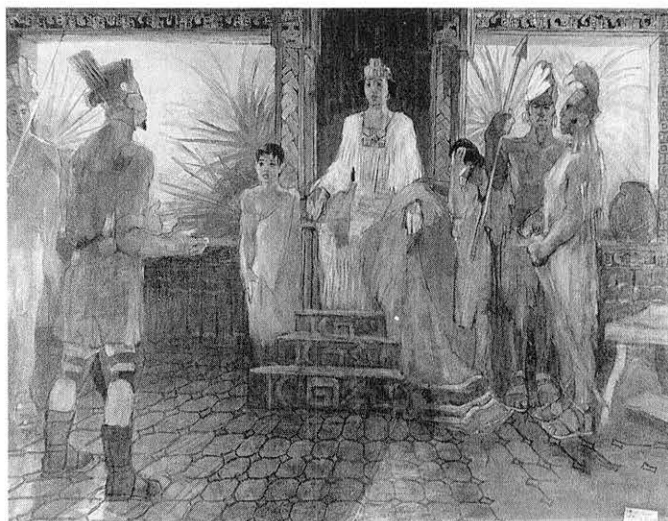
The other three named women are biblical figures: Eve (e.g., 2 Ne. 2:15–20; cf. several refer-

ences to “our first parents,” e.g., 2 Ne. 9:9); Sarah (2 Ne. 8:2); and Mary, the mother of Jesus (e.g., Mosiah 3:8). Eve is mentioned in the context of an explication of the doctrine of the FALL OF ADAM as the precursor of the salvation of mankind. Sarah is recognized as the faithful mother of nations. Mary is called “a virgin, most beautiful and fair above all other virgins” (1 Ne. 11:15).

Other women are known in the Book of Mormon only by their individual deeds: the wife of NEPHI₁ a daughter of Ishmael, tried to soften wicked hearts with her tears (1 Ne. 7:19; 18:19); Ishmael’s wife and three of their daughters supported Nephi (1 Ne. 7:6); a maidservant fled from Morianton’s camp, after being severely beaten by him, to warn MORONI₁ of the plans of her rebel master (Alma 50:30–31); a daughter of Jared originated a plot to regain the kingdom for her father through enticement, violence, and deceit (Ether 8–9); two Lamanite queens were converted by the sons of Mosiah₂ (Alma 19:29–30; 22:19–24). Perhaps, as in some Semitic cultures today, the formal or more polite way of referring to a woman was not by her given name, but by describing her position in the family, such as “the daughter of Jared.” Others so designated include Ishmael’s wife, Ishmael’s daughters, Ishmael’s eldest daughter and wife of Zoram, Lehi’s daughters and Nephi’s sisters, Lamoni’s daughter; and Coriantumr’s unrepentant daughters.

The behavior and treatment of women were seen as an index of social and spiritual health. Many references to women concern their suffering during war, captivity, and hardship. Nephi and his brothers measure the difficulty of their travels in terms of the suffering of their wives, though Nephi emphasizes that the women were made strong like the men, while his brothers describe their wives’ sufferings as being worse than death (1 Ne. 17:1, 20). Jacob sharply contrasts male infidelity with the tenderness of the women (Jacob 2–3); immorality is described as precipitating the collapse of both family and society. The inhumanity and depravity of dying civilizations are also described in terms of the suffering of women: Lamanites fed to women and children the flesh of their dead husbands and fathers (Moro. 9:8); Nephite women were sacrificed to idols (Morm. 4:15, 21); Nephites raped captured Lamanite women, tortured them to death, and then ate their flesh as a token of their bravery (Moro. 9:9–10).

Much of the imagery involving women in the



Widow of King Lehonti, Minerva K. Teichert (1935, oil on canvas, 36" × 48"). After assassinating the Lamanite king Lehonti, the treacherous Amalickiah married the queen, legitimating his accession to the throne (Alma 47:18–35). The paintings of Minerva Teichert are particularly sensitive to the extensive but understated importance of women in the Book of Mormon. Courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Brigham Young University.

Book of Mormon parallels that in the Bible. For example, Christ compares his gathering of the repentant to a mother hen gathering her chicks under her wing. As in Proverbs 3:13–20, wisdom is female (Mosiah 8:20), as is mercy (Alma 42:24). Sometimes female imagery is applied to the Lord, as when the mother nursing her child is the image used of the Lord comforting and remembering his covenant children (1 Ne. 21:15).

In a sense, the woman is the image of God’s people. The biblical imagery of God as husband and his people as wife is continued in the Book of Mormon, mostly from the writings of Isaiah. Decadent Israel is described as devoid of honorable men, in that they valued women as decorative sex objects (2 Ne. 13:16–26; Isa. 3:16–26). When God’s people become unfaithful to him, they are called “the whore of all the earth” (2 Ne. 10:16). When he calls his people to repentance, the Lord asks rhetorically, “Have I put thee away? . . . Where is the bill of your mother’s divorcement?” (2 Ne. 7:1; Isa. 50:1). The images of a mother too weak to nurse her child and a pregnant woman so near term she is unable to flee destruction are used to motivate the Nephites to repent (Hel. 15:1–2); the woman whose children are lost is the image of

desolation (1 Ne. 21:20–21). Those who accept “marriage” with the Lord are to experience joy as abundant as that of a barren woman who becomes a mother of many children, and the Lord consoles his people by saying, “For thy maker, thy husband, the Lord of Hosts is his name; . . . For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee” (3 Ne. 22:1, 5–8; Isa. 54:1, 5–8).

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DONNA LEE BOWEN
CAMILLE S. WILLIAMS

WOMEN'S TOPICS

[Women; their roles in the family, in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and in the community; and other issues of concern to them are the subjects of several articles in this encyclopedia. Also included are the biographies of women who have figured prominently in the history of the Church.]

For a discussion of both doctrinal perspectives and historical influences on women's roles, see Feminism; Mother in Heaven; Mother in Israel; Motherhood (cf. Fatherhood); Single Adults; Sisterhood (cf. Brotherhood); and Women, Roles of (cf. Men, Roles of). Related articles include Family; Marriage; and Plural Marriage.

For issues related to sexuality and reproduction, see Abortion; Birth Control; Maternity and Child Health Care; Sex Education; and Sexuality.

Articles discussing women in the scriptures include Eve; Mary, Mother of Jesus; Ruth; Sarah; and Women in the Book of Mormon.

Among Church Auxiliary Organizations, three are headed by women: Primary; Relief Society; and Young Women. See also Retrenchment Association. For biographies of individual women, including many who served as auxiliary presidents, see Fox, Ruth May; Gates, Susa Young; Horne, Mary Isabella; Kimball, Sarah Granger; Lyman, Amy Brown; Parmley, LaVern Watts; Robison, Louise Yates; Rogers, Aurelia Spencer; Smith, Bathsheba Bigler; Smith, Emma Hale; Smith, Lucy Mack; Smith, Mary Fielding; Snow, Eliza R.; Spafford, Belle Smith; Taylor, Elmina Shephard; Wells, Emmeline B.; Williams, Clarissa Smith; and Young, Zina Huntington.

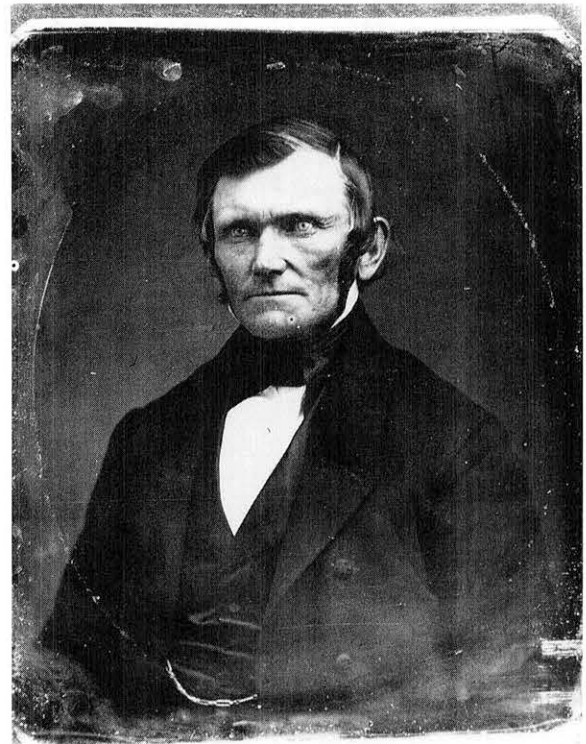
Publications by and for LDS women have included Relief Society Magazine; Woman's Exponent; and Young Woman's Journal.

[See also Abuse, Spouse and Child; Divorce; Silk Culture; and Woman Suffrage.]

WOODRUFF, WILFORD

Wilford Woodruff (1807–1898), the fourth President of the Church, is especially remembered for his 1890 MANIFESTO, which led to the discontinuance of PLURAL MARRIAGE among the Latter-day Saints and to the assimilation of Utah into the political and economic mainstream of America. Prior to that event he led a strenuous life, notable for his remarkable success as a missionary and his diligence as one of the Church's premier diarists.

Wilford was born in Farmington, Hartford County, Connecticut, on March 1, 1807. His father, a miller, worked hard to support a family of eight sons and one daughter. Wilford was fifteen months old when his mother died of spotted fever at age twenty-six. During his early years Wilford worked as a miller, attended school, fished with his brother Thompson, and engaged in the social life of the community. At an early age he became con-



Wilford Woodruff (1807–1898) was a stout, hard-working man who escaped a score of life-threatening injuries. In his extensive daily journal he once wrote: “The repeated deliverances from all these remarkable dangers I ascribe to the mercies of my Heavenly Father.” Photograph c. 1853; attributed to Marsena Cannon.