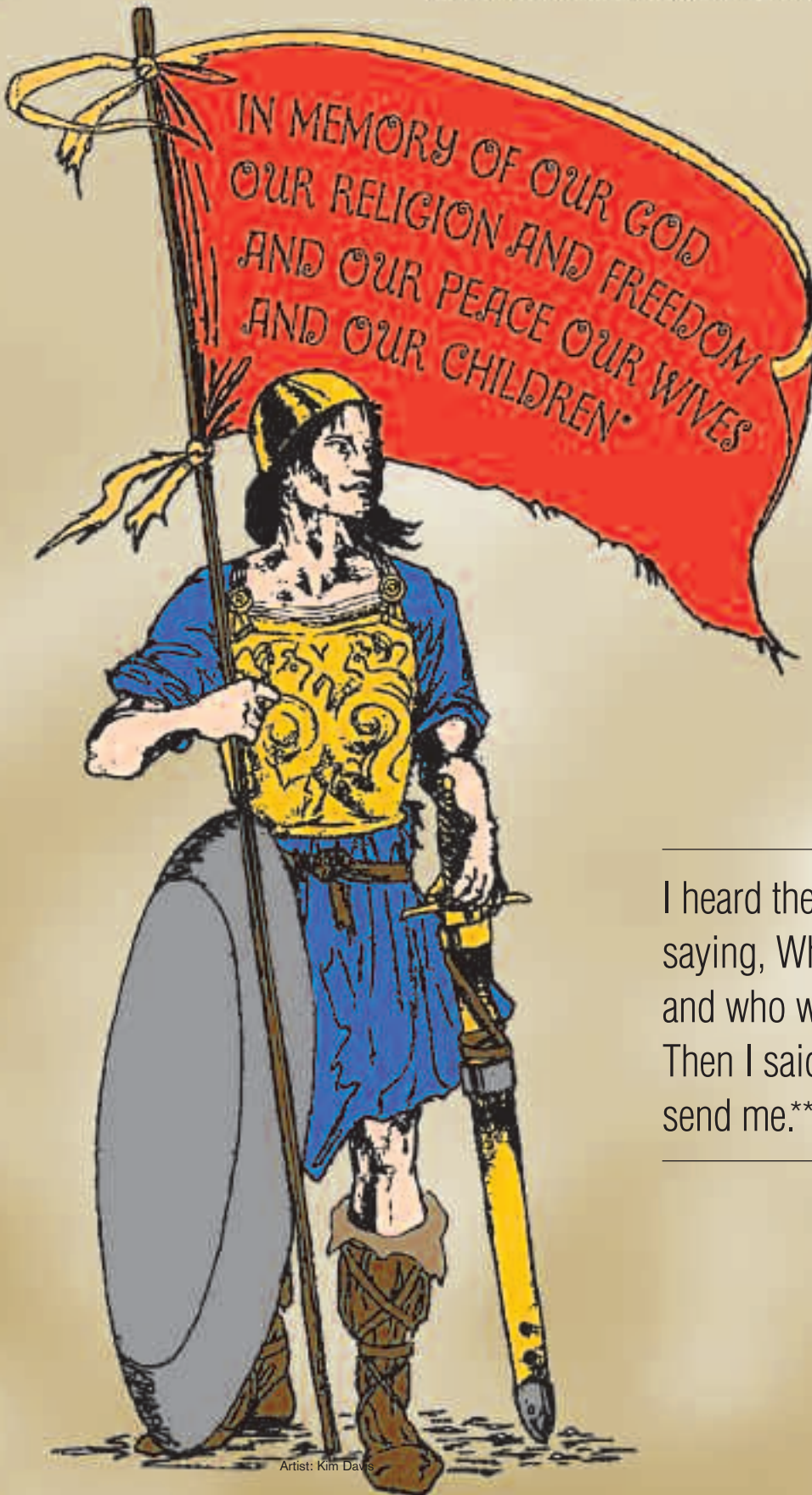




# THE WITNESS

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION BY THE BOOK OF MORMON FOUNDATION

Number 120 ■ Fall 2006



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I heard the voice of the Lord,  
saying, Whom shall I send,  
and who will go for us?  
Then I said, Here am I;  
send me.\*\*

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From Cover:  
 \*Alma: 21:41 RLDS [Alma 46:12 LDS]  
 \*\*11 Nephi 9:8 RLDS [11 Nephi 16:8 LDS]

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Desire, dedication and commitment are three words used to describe the ESL committee. Led by director, Karen Blakeney; two teams of instructors are developing beginning and intermediate classes that will enable BMF to reach out to non-English speaking communities. Beginning level instructors are Vicky Alvez, Lynda Friend and Judi Haworth. Intermediate instructors are Lynn and Sugar Baumgart.

Curriculum materials are being ordered and a workshop developed to train additional instructors. If you would like to participate in this exciting program as a teacher, class assistant or financial contributor please contact The Book of Mormon Foundation. Classes will begin January 2007.

The Book of Mormon Foundation is a nonprofit corporation composed of individuals who desire to promote The Book of Mormon and its witness of Jesus Christ.

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# WALLEY OF LEMUEL

A New Candidate in Arabia for the

by George Potter

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## The Discovery

Finding a river of running water in the ancient land of Midian was not what Craig Thorsted and I had in mind on that day in May 1995. In fact, he and I were

searching for one of the Arabian candidates for Mount Sinai when our journey became one of unexpected discovery.

We had come to the oasis town of al-Bad' to explore the Wells of Jethro, the priest of Midian. To obtain authorization to enter that area, we stopped at the mayor's office. The mayor sent one of his

supervisors to show us the sites and explain their history. The supervisor was justly proud of the city's history and appealed to the Qur'an to relate the stories of Moses, Jethro, and the town of al-Bad'. Complimenting me on my knowledge of the Qur'an, he said that if we were really interested in Moses, we should visit the Waters of Musa (Moses) near Maqna. Maqna is a small, isolated village that lies 20 miles west of al-Bad' on the Gulf of Aqaba.

The official in al-Bad' explained to us that, according to local tradition, Maqna had been the first camp of Moses after the Israelites had crossed the Red Sea at the mouth of the Gulf of Aqaba. He said it was at the Waters of Moses that the Prophet Moses had touched his staff to the rock and 12 springs gushed forth, one for each tribe ( Qur'an 7:160). The official feared, however, that the springs might have dried up because in recent years the government had placed pumps on all the natural wells in Midian.

When we reached Maqna we stopped at a restaurant to inquire about the springs. Americans must be a rare sight in this remote village, for our truck was immediately surrounded by curious Arab children who shouted "Ameriki." The supervisor in al-Bad' had given us the name of a contact man in Maqna who would show us the Waters. Everyone, it seemed, knew the man. But he was away from the village.

We decided to inquire at the first "official" building we could find. We came to a large complex that turned out to be a Saudi coast guard station. From the gate we were led to the captain's salon for an interview. After a series of questions, the captain granted us permission to visit the Waters of Moses. We learned from him that the place was 12 miles to the north, along a restricted coast guard patrol road. He gave us written permission and promised a military escort.

(It wasn't until my fourth trip to the area, 3½ years later, that I finally discovered that the Waters of Moses



Photography by George D. Potter and Richard Wellington

*Shoreline of the Gulf of Aqaba as one approaches the mountains near the well Bir Marshah that block further travel south. Note the valley in the center of the photograph which leads eight miles upward to a pass that connects to the upper valley.*

we had heard about in al-Bad' were actually located at Maqna itself. By a turn of events, the captain had directed us to the wrong spot farther north along the coast. Some may say that it was by pure luck that we came, not to the traditional Waters of Moses, but to another source that we might easily never have seen. I see the experience as providential. By "mistake," had we unintentionally stumbled upon the river Laman and the valley of Lemuel?)

As we drove north from Maqna, the scenery was typical of what I had seen along the shores of the Gulf of

*continued on next page*

## Valley of Lemuel

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Aqaba of the Red Sea—lifeless sand plains and barren rocky valleys. The landscape reminded me of Moses' words: "that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water" (Deuteronomy 8:15 IV, KJV). Nephi's mention of a river valley, possibly with fruit trees, seed-bearing plants and grain, seemed totally out of place (1 Nephi 2:6; 8:1 LDS) [1 Nephi 1:33, 2:40 RLDS]. Yet, this shoreline is the general area where the valley of Lemuel should be found.

Eight miles north of Maqna, we came to our first surprise. The southern end of the mountain range that here forms the shoreline seemed to drop directly into the waters of the Gulf of Aqaba. There was just enough room for the coast guard dirt road to pass between the giant cliffs on the right and the watery gulf on the left. We followed the narrow road for another four miles, with waves occasionally breaking over our path. Rounding the base of a cliff, we came upon a truly spectacular sight. A magnificent narrow canyon just ahead of us ended in a palm-lined cove. The brilliant blue shades of the clear gulf waters and the sky framed the scene.

### **First Impressions**

We decided to walk up the spectacular wadi or canyon. After 3¼ miles it opened into a beautiful oasis with several wells and three large groves of date palm trees. However, what caught my interest most was the stream that started in the canyon near its upper end and ran down the wadi virtually all the way to the sea. The small desert river appeared to flow continually night and day, year after year.

At the time the Book of Mormon was first published, the claim that a river ran in arid northwestern Arabia could not be checked. Western explorers did not venture into this remote area until well after 1830. Today it is a different matter. Geologists have thoroughly explored Arabia in search of oil and water. The Saudi Arabia Ministry of Agriculture and Water, with the assistance of the U.S. Geological Service (USGS), has spent the last 44 years surveying the kingdom's water resources. Their studies have involved seismic readings, surface and aerial surveys, and satellite photo analysis. But the findings of the scientists regarding the possibility of an above-ground river have not been encouraging. Rather, they concluded that Saudi Arabia "may be the world's largest country without any perennial rivers or streams."

Yet Lehi spoke of "a river of water" that "emptied into the Red Sea" and was "continually running" (1 Nephi 2:6, 8–9 LDS) [1 Nephi 1:33, 1:35–36 RLDS]. How could we reconcile Lehi's description and the geologists' findings?

It might be thought that the climate was wetter in Lehi's time. But that notion runs against both what little we know about the region from the Bible (e.g., Exodus 3:1 IV, KJV) and the known meteorological history of the Near East. Scientists say of Arabia: "The past 6000 years have been marked by . . . arid conditions, similar to those of the present." Hugh Nibley also commented, "though some observers think the area enjoyed a little more rainfall in antiquity than it does today, all are agreed that the change of climate has not been considerable since prehistoric times—it was at best almost as bad then as it is now."

What can we reasonably say about the river Laman from the Book of Mormon? First, the river was quite surely not a major stream. Otherwise a permanent settlement, and a name, would have accompanied it. Second, Lehi gave the river a name, so it probably had no name that he was aware of (1 Nephi 2:8 LDS) [1 Nephi 1:35 RLDS]. It is hard to imagine that any substantial flow of water in the Near East would go unnamed, implying that the stream did not amount to much and probably was a localized phenomenon. Third, the river Laman was in the wilderness (1 Nephi 2:6 LDS) [1 Nephi 1:33 RLDS], a place generally devoid of people. Fourth, the waters of the river Laman emptied into the sea (1 Nephi 2:9 LDS) [1 Nephi 1:36 RLDS] in the area where Lehi had camped, which must have been at the north end of the Red Sea, near the Gulf of Aqaba. Fifth, Nephi described the stream as "continually running" (1 Nephi 2:9 LDS) [1 Nephi 1:36 RLDS]. Finally, the river Laman ran through a geographical feature that Lehi called the valley of Lemuel (1 Nephi 2:6–10 LDS) [1 Nephi 1:33–37 RLDS]. Our initial visit confirmed that the stream in the canyon met at least all of the physical criteria.

The Hebrew term for "river" enters into our evaluation of this stream because of Nephi's account. There are several Hebrew words which Nephi could have used (1 Nephi 2:6; etc. LDS) [1 Nephi 1:33 RLDS]. Most of them refer to any running stream. These terms for river could mean seasonal waterways that fill with water only after a storm, such as the "River of Egypt" (Wadi El-'Arish). They could also refer to large, continually flowing currents such as the Euphrates River (Genesis 15:18 KJV) [Genesis 15:21 IV]. Whichever word Nephi used that came into English as "river" could denote a large stream, a small continuously flowing one, or a seasonal flood. His choice of the phrases "river of water" and "continually running" is significant.

ally running,” however, seem to point to a stream that flows more or less all the time, at least throughout the period that they camped nearby.

What were the characteristics of the valley through which the river Laman flowed? First, Lehi described it as “firm, steadfast, and immovable” (1 Nephi 2:10 LDS) [1 Nephi 1:37 RLDS], terms that hint at impressive geological features. Second, the valley was located within three-day’s walk or camel ride beyond the northeast tip of the Red Sea (1 Nephi 2:5–6 LDS) [1 Nephi 1:30–33 RLDS]. Finally, the valley of Lemuel reached the Red Sea, for Lehi observed the mouth of the river emptying into the sea (1 Nephi 2:8 LDS) [1 Nephi 1:35 RLDS]. So it was not strictly an interior valley; rather, it reached the seashore.

As with the stream, our first observations were that the valley we had found met these conditions. The fact that the stream and canyon fulfill the conditions reported by Nephi for the “river of Laman” and the “valley of Lemuel” convinced me that we may well have indeed discovered these Book of Mormon landmarks. Nothing my colleagues and I have learned subsequently has given us reason to change that view.

### **Characteristics of the Valley**

The grandeur of the valley is difficult to describe in words or even portray in photographs. It is a narrow gorge cut through a massive granite mountain. It consists of three sections: the upper valley (or the Waters of Moses), the canyon of granite, and the lower canyon. The upper valley constitutes an oasis that lies at the south end of a twelve-mile long wadi—known locally as Wadi Tayyib al-Isim—that leads down from the north (see map). The upper valley sits like a pleasant jewel, spread out over approximately one square mile with several hundred palm trees and 12 wells that local residents call the Waters of Moses.

The upper valley ends as the long, descending wadi veers west and runs against the eastern granite cliffs of the shoreline mountains. But rather than forming the usual impassable barrier, the coastal mountains have been breached by a narrow canyon. This deep fracture in the granite mountain border provides a passage to the sea; I call it the canyon

of granite. Tim Sedor, a colleague in the exploration effort, has surveyed the length of this section of the Wadi Tayyib al-Isim to the Gulf of Aqaba; he concludes that it is approximately 3¾ miles.

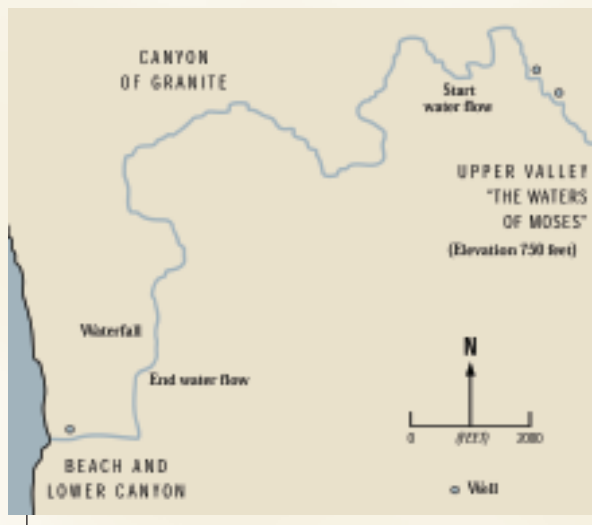
Flash floods are a winter-time danger in this part of Arabia. If the family of Lehi and Sariah had camped here in the hot summer months, they could have stayed in the shade of the canyon. During the rainy winter months, however, campers would wisely move out of the canyon up to the much wider oasis that the upper valley offers. Climatically the shade provided by the steep walls of the canyon of granite provides a pleasant environment year round, even during the terrible heat of an Arabian summer.

Although the trip from Jerusalem was perhaps the least difficult portion of the trek of Lehi’s group, party members still murmured. Laman and Lemuel thought they would die (1 Nephi 2:11 LDS) [1 Nephi 1:38–39 RLDS]. Even in springtime, temperatures in Arabia reach over 100°F. The murmuring of the sons could well have been caused by exposure to the stark sunlight and extreme temperatures. A survival expert who advises the Saudi military has offered some insights into the environmental difficulties that would have faced Lehi and his family as they crossed this land. Based on his experience, he advises downed pilots in the desert first to find shelter from the heat, next to look for water, and only

then to seek food. Within hours, he notes, the midday Arabian sun will kill a person who cannot find shade. Maximum daily temperatures average between 115°F and 125°F during the summer months in this part of Arabia.

When considering the cruel climate, one can begin to appreciate just how difficult the journey from Jerusalem must have been, and seemed. This would have been especially difficult for city dwellers from Jerusalem, particularly if this was their first exposure to severe desert conditions in summer. The canyon would have offered an ideal place in which to wait out the

summer months before continuing. At the same time it was off the main route southward, in case Nephi’s part in the death of Laban had become known to pursuers.



*Sketch of the winding 3¾ mile course of the canyon, Tayyib al-Isim (eastwest). The exit on the Gulf of Aqaba lies southwest of the point at which one enters the canyon from the upper valley. (Sketch courtesy Timothy Sedor.)*

*continued on next page*



# Valley of Lemuel

*continued from previous page*

The final section of our valley of Lemuel is the lower canyon and the beach. The granite canyon opens out into a flat gravel floor just a few feet above sea level. This level area at the mouth of the canyon is about 3/8 mile long. This is the most impressive section of the canyon. Here the height of the canyon walls rises approximately 2,000 feet straight up from the canyon's floor.

The lower canyon provides important clues which tend to confirm that this could be the valley of Lemuel. First, Lehi found that the stream in the valley "emptied into the Red Sea," that is, into the Gulf of Aqaba (1 Nephi 2:8 LDS) [1 Nephi 1:35 RLDS]. The walls of our candidate for the valley of Lemuel end within 60 feet of the waters of the gulf.

Second, though the valley carries a stream to the sea, when Lehi first came into his valley (necessarily from its upper end, not from the coast) he apparently could not see from his camp that the river emptied into the sea; at least that is implied by (1 Nephi 2:6 and 9 LDS) [1 Nephi 1:33 and 36 RLDS]. Our candidate for the valley is less than four miles long, yet its towering walls permit seeing the Red Sea only during the last 375 yards as one descends to the coast. The beautiful palm-laden beach cove that one finally encounters is a spectacular scene.

It may be worth noting that when Lehi's party was preparing to leave their valley, Nephi wrote of the Lord's gifts to them, including provisions (1 Nephi 16:11 LDS) [1 Nephi 5:13–14 RLDS]. In this spot such provisions might have included dried fish from the sea, dates and berries, found primarily in the upper valley, date pits (Arabs today make a coffee substitute from ground date pits), grain, and of course drinking water from the river.

## Approaching and Camping by the Waters

One may ask how easily a person can reach the canyon and stream when traveling from the northeast tip of the Red Sea, the direction of Jerusalem, where modern Aqaba sits. From Nephi's description, we know that after his family reached the Red Sea they continued

another three days before making camp (1 Nephi 2:5–6 LDS) [1 Nephi 1:30–33 RLDS]. A reasonable estimate would be that they traveled between 45 and 75 miles during those three days, averaging 15 to 25 miles per day. The valley we are describing lies just over 70 miles (on the ground, not in a direct line) south of Aqaba, clearly within the limits of our estimate on the basis of Nephi's record.

A traveler can come to the valley from the north by either of two routes (see map). The most direct takes a person south from Aqaba 44 miles along the coast. Here one reaches a 6,000-foot mountain range that blocks further coastwise travel. So it is necessary to turn eastward near Bir Marshah and climb up through an eight-mile long wadi, finally cresting a ridge at about 1,500 feet elevation. Both people and pack animals can easily follow this route. From this point, keeping the coastal mountains to the right (west), a person travels south 20 or so miles into the long valley mentioned earlier, which leads down to our upper valley and the head of the granite canyon. The distance from Aqaba to the canyon is almost exactly 74 miles.

Another route, well-traveled in ancient times, follows the modern highway south from Aqaba. It runs up Wadi Umm Jurfayn and then south between mountain



*These mountains, 44 miles south of Aqaba, force travelers eastward and inland near the well called Bir Marshah.*

ranges to the town of al-Bad'. About midway through the long mountain pass, one can turn west and south to reach the long, deep valley and on to our upper valley. But this route adds significant distance.

The river Laman might have had some name in Lehi's time, but it would have been known only to the local residents. Brown notes that "in a desert climate all



*Center: The pass that allows access from the seashore into the long valley known as Wadi Tayyib al-Isn can be seen to the right of center (looking north). Below: The upper reaches of the long valley as it runs southward toward the canyon.*

arable land and all water resources have claimants.” How might Lehi have acquired the right to camp in a valley that was likely controlled by a local tribe? There are several reasons why this may not have been a serious problem for Lehi. First, Lehi had evidently been a wealthy man and, though he left his gold and silver in Jerusalem, his family probably carried among their provisions some items that could be exchanged for temporary camping privileges. Another possible scenario is that Lehi’s group appeared small and nonthreatening enough that the locals required no payment of them. The hosts may even have pointed out to Lehi where he could find water and a campsite out of their way in the side canyon whose lower reaches they did not use themselves. (Nephi did not write that his family “found” a river, but only that they pitched their tent next to it; see 1 Nephi 2:6 LDS) [1 Nephi 1:33 RLDS]. This latter possibility is enhanced when we note that Lehi apparently brought no sheep or goats with him into the wilderness. If that was so, the local shepherds probably did not consider the Lehites as a threat to their resources since they had no flocks. In other words, Lehi may have been treated as a welcomed, noninvasive tenant who, best of all, could pay, even if only nominally. (In order to offer sacrifice, by the way, he would have needed to buy a lamb or sheep from his hosts.)

A third possibility is that there were no inhabitants in this valley. That is true today. Except for a stone box constructed in the earth by Bedouins, evidently for keeping valuables safe, and a few scattered remains whose date is not determined, there is little sign that the valley has seen long-term residents. The soil appears unfavor-

able for farming. Besides, the narrowness of the river valley severely limits its use for agriculture since the area of land available to cultivate is not enough to support a significant resident population. If the area was empty of people except for nomadic Bedouins, then Lehi was in no way beholden to locals.

### ***The River Runs Continuously***

The question we posed while standing in the canyon of granite was: Does this desert river flow “continually” as (1 Nephi 2:9 LDS) [1 Nephi 1:36 RLDS] says? Does it flow night and day, 365 days a year? I could answer affirmatively only after our third excursion to the valley in November 1996. It had just rained for six straight days before our arrival—a freak storm, the heaviest in years. But this storm provided a reverse key of sorts.

On our first and second visits we witnessed the river during and just after the winter rainy season. As a result, we had expected the stream to be running. But in November 1996, after a seven-month dry spell, we were finally able to ascertain that the stream does flow constantly. The key came not from the flow at the moment we were there, which could have come from the recent rains, but from the flora in and around the river. We had earlier discovered the river’s source to be a spring some 600 feet down the canyon of granite from the upper valley. On our prior two visits, the grass, weeds, and herbs surrounding the springhead had been a lush green. On our third visit, they were still green even after seven months of no rain. This vegetation could not have survived those seven months unless the spring were feeding the river “continually.”

I have now visited the valley in the months of April, May, November, December and, most recently, January. Colleagues have visited in July and August. We have observed that the volume of water in the river seems rather constant throughout the year (even though from 1995 to 1999 the volume seems to have decreased perhaps 50 percent



*The walls of the canyon. Notice the truck on the canyon floor. The walls continue upward to at least twice the height visible.*

*continued on page 12*



# BOOK OF MORMON F



## Paul Marsh

I had an absolutely wonderful time working together as a team in the Internship. We went to Tucker Institute, where we learned to trust each other and solve problems as a body.

I was especially impressed by one of our team challenges. The last part of it was to get all but two people over a 4½ foot high crossbar without touching it. An individual in our group had worries about heights and people lifting her. However, when the time came for us to get the first person over the bar, she was the first to volunteer! Also, during this challenge, we kept making mistakes and taking penalties until half of our team was blind-folded. We actually got over the bar easier because we relied on each other more. Everyone participated, contributed and learned valuable lessons that day. I wish everyone could experience teambuilding exercises such as these.

## Zach Wilson

When I first heard about the Internship, I must have been in the 8th grade. The interns came to junior high camp and provided a service. I really enjoyed their ministry and thought about how I would enjoy going through a program like that.

A few years went by, and I didn't think much about it until I saw a flyer in my church bulletin. Both of my parents strongly encouraged me to apply. After some time and thought, I did. The night I went to my interview, I felt everything that could have gone wrong did go wrong. Later that night, I prayed that if I was supposed to be in the program, God would make it possible and, if not, then I would not worry about it.

The next day, I learned I had been selected for the Internship. I knew God wanted me in the program, but I also told Him He would now have to make it financially possible for me to participate. I accepted the position and, even though at times it has been financially difficult, the Lord has blessed me tremendously. As a result of stepping out in faith, everything I have needed has been provided.

What I have received from this experience has been priceless. I have learned that I need to pray about everything, and the Lord has shown me many testimonies about prayer. I have learned through classes and experience how to be a more effective witness. There have been times when He has given me the words to say and removed all the nervousness when I witnessed to people. I have learned that when you step out in faith, the Lord will bless you.





# FOUNDATIONS

## FOUNDATION INTERNS



### **Nathan Reed**

The Internship has been an amazing learning experience for me. The classes had the greatest impact on me, specifically the apologetics class. I have always been scared to share my faith with others because I have felt inadequate to answer people's questions. The Internship had some classes that answered many of the questions posed to me by others about my faith.

On our trip to New York, we had an opportunity to witness to several evangelicals and, because of the classes we had, I was able to address most of the questions asked of me. This experience and the knowledge I have gained has really made me excited to share the gospel. I know that the Lord has truly blessed us in our classes.

### **Aaron Jensen**

My testimony is about the Lord's timing. I have wanted to go through the Internship program ever since I heard about it, but there was the issue of money. Since I have been out of high school and attending college, I have had to work. I had car payments and rent, so I couldn't afford to be without an income for six weeks.

This past year was different, though. The Lord provided me with enough financial support I did not have to work during the school year. This was a blessing because I had some leadership responsibilities in Restoration Campus Ministries at college. However, the extra money also carried me through the summer. On top of that, the interns were paid this year since our trip was in the United States.

This coming school year, I will not have that extra money available to me, and I am going to have to go back to work. I will be graduating in May and will need to look for permanent work. Next summer the interns are going out of the country for their trip, so they will not be paid. If I had not applied and been accepted this year, I never would have had the chance to be in the Internship program. I know the Lord made it possible for me to be an intern this year.



# Interns

*continued from previous page*



## Breanne Kristek

The application process for the BMF Internship was a little intimidating. I had to fill out an application and answer questions both in a video and telephone interview since I do not live in the Independence area. It has always been my dream to do some missionary work, but I am somewhat shy. It has been hard for me to put myself out there — to step out of my comfort zone. After the phone interview though, I received the call that I had been selected. I was so excited!

Then I started to get nervous. I was nervous because I was afraid of meeting new people and wondering how they would treat me. At first, it was difficult because everyone else knew each other, but I didn't know anyone. By the end of the first week though, I realized how welcoming, funny and accepting everyone was.

Now, because of them and what I have been able to

accomplish myself during the six weeks, I am not so afraid to step outside my box and talk to people. I believe the Lord has helped me overcome my shyness, and now I feel like I can talk to anyone.

## Rachel Caldwell

I have always wanted to be in The Book of Mormon Foundation Internship, but didn't know exactly when I should apply. I had received an application, but was concerned about missing out on my last senior high camp. I purposely put the Internship out of my mind. I thought I was too busy with school to fill out the application. As the deadline neared, I was reminded of it by my dad. I asked the Lord if I should apply this year, and I felt the Holy Spirit come over me so strongly that I decided to fill out the application. I turned in the application on the last day and, after the interview, learned I had been selected. I am so glad I listened to the promptings of the Spirit.

This Internship has been the best experience of my life. It's better than the happiness you feel from riding roller coasters or going to the beach. I have received many testimonies, and I have built friendships that will probably last a lifetime. There is a joy that comes from uniting with friends and serving the Lord by helping others. We do have a story to tell to the nations!

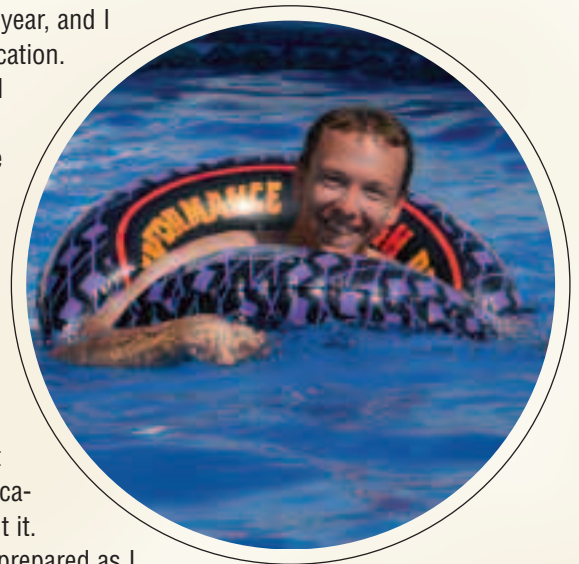
## Leah Gould

I wanted to apply for the Internship, but had some doubts about being selected. I was encouraged by former interns, so I asked for an application but then procrastinated filling it out until the last minute. I hand delivered my application in order for it to arrive by the deadline. I then went home and prayed about it.

The day of my interview came, and I was really nervous. I felt I wasn't as prepared as I should have been and didn't answer the questions as well as I wanted. I left believing that I would not be selected. However, when I received the call and was invited to be part of the 2006 Internship, I was so excited, overjoyed and overwhelmed.

However, I had not yet asked off from work. I had decided that the Lord had given me this opportunity and, if I needed to, I would quit and find a job afterwards. I walked into the office and gave them my application for time off. I called later that day and they said it would not be a problem at all to take the six weeks off. They even gave me the option of coming in to work whenever I had some free time.

I feel so blessed that the Lord gave me the experience and blessings of this Internship. I thank him and praise him greatly.





# Book of Mormon Day for Kids

Saturday, October 21st



Artist: Kim Davis

"Here am I; send me"  
*Captain Moroni*

When God calls, what  
will be your answer?

**Who:** 1st through 6th Grades

**Where:** South Chrysler Restoration  
Branch  
16101 East Salisbury Road  
Independence, MO 64050

**When:** 9:00 a.m. – 3:15 p.m.

**Cost:** \$7.50 per child  
\$20.00 max. cost per family  
All activities, a light breakfast  
and a lunch will be provided

**Registration is due by October 16, 2006.**

Contact The Book of Mormon Foundation  
Linda Guin 816-461-3722  
or  
Julie Marsh 816-616-9293

*I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send; and who will go for us?  
Then I said, Here am I; send me. (II Nephi 9:8 RLDS) [II Nephi 16:8 LDS]*

## Valley of Lemuel

*continued from page 7*

due to the continued effects of pumping the water in the upper valley). We have also observed throughout the year that vegetation flourishes in the canyon where the river runs, and moss and algae line the banks of the stream.

The spring that feeds the river comes from an underground reservoir system. Dr. Wes Garner, our consulting geologist, painted the following picture of the system: When the occasional rains fall in the long wadi to the north, they are trapped in the sands. This watershed of sand runs southward for 20 miles until its downward course to the sea is blocked by the granite underpinnings of the towering cliffs to the west. (Richard Wellington, my writing and exploring companion, has estimated the



*The desert stream that runs "continually" toward the Red Sea.*

size of the watershed to be approximately 105 square miles). This subterranean rock runs deep beneath the surface, forming a dam. The subsurface waters are thus trapped at the upper end of the canyon in an underground reservoir. The canyon and its stream run westward from the area of this underground reservoir for 3¼ miles, starting at an elevation of 750 feet and ending at sea level in the Gulf of Aqaba. The floor of the canyon descends steadily. Within a few hundred feet, a spring begins to flow as the canyon floor drops to the level of the underground reservoir. The waters form the small river that runs above ground almost the rest of the way. At the point where the river comes to a level grade in the canyon floor, it runs just underground, leaving the soil moist. But soon the grade increases in its descent, and the river reappears. It is last seen as it reaches a gravel bed in the lower part of the canyon about 3/8 mile from the beach. From there, the water runs underground

to the gulf where it feeds a well used by the coast guard post a short distance away. (If Lehi's camp were upstream a bit from the mouth, in the shade of the precipitous cliffs, as we suppose, the stream would still have appeared to him to flow right into the gulf.)

It should be remembered that we were informed that the government had placed gasoline pumps on all the wells in the area. As a result, the supervisor whom we met in al-Bad' indicated that the wells and springs in the region were drying up. We found this to be the case with the wells in the upper valley. Our geologist, Dr. Garner, confirmed to us that a lowering of the water table due to pumping could cause the river to dry up in the future.

There are at least two indications that a substantial river has flowed in the canyon for a very long time. First, there is evidence of significant erosion of rocks and the lower canyon walls. Second, water-laid calcite deposits that are found on the valley floor are at times 15 to 20 feet wide, much wider than the current stream bed. At places in the canyon, one can find such deposits that have formed at higher layers on the rocks. We have measured these deposits 11 inches higher on the rocks than the level of the stream today. These observations point to the flow of a larger stream in the past, evidently long before the pumps were installed.

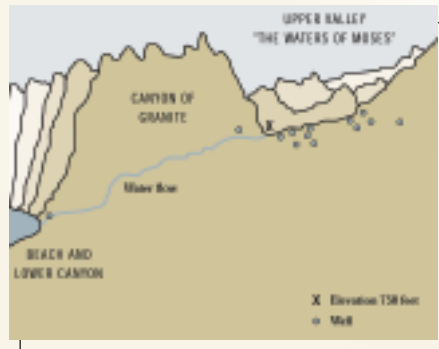
As I noted, the river flows under a gravel bed for the last 3/8 mile as it approaches the Gulf of Aqaba. The reason the river does not reach the Red Sea today is simple. The elevation of the floor of the canyon is not the same as it was at the time of Lehi. According to geologist Garner, in Lehi's era this lowest part of the canyon was submerged by the Red Sea. Where the river ends today was below the surface of the Red Sea in ancient times. As the continental plates have moved along the Great Rift Valley that forms the Gulf of Aqaba, they have pushed the eastern plate upward by one to five centimeters per year. During the 2,600 years since Lehi camped in the area, the canyon floor has risen out of the Red Sea, perhaps as much as 200 to 400 feet. Thus, not so long ago, the flat lower part of the canyon would have been below sea level. Therefore, if the river flowed at the same rate in Lehi's time as it does today, it would have reached all the way to the waters of the Red Sea. In the lower part of the canyon, the smooth stony floor of the canyon and the eroded cavelike undercuttings of the cliff seem to confirm that the lower part was once a sea floor rather than a river bed. The ancient river, carrying a significantly higher volume of water, would have run the entire distance to the Red Sea.



## Conclusion

I have escorted over a dozen people into the valley. Several others have made their own way there based on my directions. Are we witnesses of the river Laman and the valley of Lemuel? In my view, the characteristics of the site are compelling evidence that this is so. In the four years since the discovery, I have surveyed the entire Arabian shoreline of the Gulf of Aqaba and the valleys that open onto it. With the exception of the springs at Maqna, which are not in a valley, I have found only rocky valleys almost entirely devoid of vegetation and with no flowing water. Although I have not conducted a thorough survey of the entire region, I have so far found no other place within three-day's walk of the tip of the Gulf of Aqaba that is as inviting as these Waters of Moses.

I have drunk from the pure spring-fed waters of what I believe is the river Laman. From the staggering heat of 120°F plus, I have walked into the cool confines of a deep canyon that I believe is the valley of Lemuel.



**Top:** Cross-section of the canyon showing the drop of the stream from the upper end (750 feet) to sea level. Courtesy George D. Potter. **Bottom:** The erosion channel left by the stream when running high.



On the shore of the Gulf of Aqaba, my tent has been blown over by the torrent-like winds that swirl each night along the shoreline. I have stood in awe of the force required to split open a pass through the four-mile wide granite mountain barrier to form this canyon refuge, with towering walls that could protect those camped in its shadows from the heat and from the tempests and sand storms that blow into Arabia from the Sinai Peninsula. I now seem to sense why Isaiah's words were so relevant to Nephi's family: "And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land" (Isaiah 32:2 IV, KJV). Here the handiwork of the Lord appears at every turn and reminds me

of a passage from the Qur'an: "Whithersoever ye turn, there is the presence of God . . . all that is in the heavens and on earth; everything renders worship to Him" (Qur'an 2;115, 116).

## Notes

1. My efforts, of course, tie to the work of others. Earlier Latter-day Saints who attempted to visit the areas that may have been inhabited by Lehi and Sariah include Lynn and Hope Hilton. They posited that Lehi may have set up his first camp near the oasis town of al-Bad' in the Wadi Ifal; see Lynn M. Hilton and Hope A. Hilton, *In Search of Lehi's Trail* (Salt Lake City, Deseret Book, 1976), 62–75. My suggested candidate lies north and west of their choice. Before them, Hugh Nibley offered the view that Lehi had camped "not far above [north of] the Straits of Tiran" near "Mt. Musafa or Mt. Mendisha," Hugh Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert, The World of the Jaredites, There Were Jaredites*, 2nd. ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988, orig. pub. 1959), 85. Actually, Mt. Mazhafa (Musafa?) is the granite mountain that forms the north side of the canyon that is my candidate for the valley of Lemuel. One must also consult the works of Eugene England: "Through the Arabian Desert to a Bountiful Land: Could Joseph Smith Have Known the Way?" in *Book of Mormon Authorship*, ed. Noel B. Reynolds (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1982), 143–56, and Paul Hedengren, *The Land of Lehi: A Book of Mormon Geography* (Provo, Utah: Bradford and Wilson, 1995), 3–6. Hedengren suggests that Lehi pitched his camp in the Wadi al-Nuwaybi, 18 miles south of Aqaba.
2. Andrew Taylor, *Traveling the Sands, Sagas of Exploration in the Arabian Peninsula* (Dubai: Emirates Printing, 1995), 19–31.
3. Ministry of Agriculture and Waters, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with the cooperation of the Saudi Arabia United States Joint Commission on Economic Cooperation, the U.S. National Graphic Center and the U.S. Geological Service, *Water Atlas of Saudi Arabia* (Riyhad: Saudi Publishing, 1984), xv.
4. James Sauer, "The River Runs Dry," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 22/4 (July/August 1996): 63–64. Testing by taking core samples from dry desert lakes and by measuring tree rings has only been done in the Egyptian desert at latitudes compatible with the Arabian peninsula. Studies show a clear shift toward a drier environment several thousand years ago with very few periods of greater moisture. See the summary by Karl W. Butzer, "Environmental Change in the Near East and Human Impact on the Land," in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, ed. Jack M. Sasson et al. (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1995), 180–82.
5. Ministry of Agriculture and Waters, *Water Atlas of Saudi Arabia*, 9.
6. Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert*, 50–51.
7. See William L. Reed, "River," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George A. Buttrick et al. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962, 1976), 4:100–101.
8. The Hebrew term nahar is used for both rivers mentioned in Genesis 15:18. On the river of Egypt as Wadi El-Trish or Nahal Bezor, which are seasonal streams, see Manfred Göörg, "Egypt, Brook of;" and "Egypt, River of;" in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman et al. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 2:321, 378.
9. Currently one can find grain as well as three varieties of dates in the upper valley or in the canyon (see 1 Nephi 8:1).
10. Nigel Groom, *Frankincense and Myrrh: A Study of the Arabian Incense Trade* (London: Longman, 1981), 173, 211, notes that a loaded camel travels "slightly less than 2.5 miles an hour" and "rarely exceed[s] 25 miles" per day.
11. S. Kent Brown, "A Case for Lehi's Bondage in Arabia," *JBMS* 6/2 (1997): 206. Nibley made a similar point; see *Lehi in the Desert*, 66.
12. There has been discussion about whether the river Laman was seasonal or whether it flowed year round. Nibley holds to the view of a seasonal stream (*Lehi in the Desert*, 76, 78, 79–81). The Hiltons share the same view (*In Search of Lehi*, 64–65). From studying maps, Hedengren maintains that the "lower portion" of Wadi al-Nuwaybi has a "continual flow" (*Land of Lehi*, 3–6; quotations are from p.4). Of course Lehi's party did not, in all probability, stay there anything like a full year. "Continually" may only refer to the period of their observation. But if, as suggested earlier, they were there in the hot season, then surely the stream would have run in the winter also.
13. Retired professor of geology, King Fahad University of Petroleum and Minerals, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.

# Our Hope in the Days of Wars and Rumors of Wars

by Brenda Evans, Lee's Summit, MO

Today when we would like to see a world of happiness and peace we see instead a world filled with sadness and conflict. People question if goodness and happiness can coexist with the constant bombardment of chaos, destruction, upheaval and wickedness. The tumultuous battles and tribulations of our times seem almost insurmountable and we are filled with concerns about "wars and rumors of wars." Where have we heard that phrase before? Right in the scriptures! Jesus told us we would hear of "wars and rumors of wars . . . nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom . . ." (Matthew 24:29-30 IV) [Matthew 24:6-7 KJV]

**So what do we do?** How can we find happiness, peace and joy when there is so much turmoil, calamity and evil around us? The correct response is to turn to those same scriptures! In Matthew 24:39 IV, Jesus says that, "And whoso treasureth up my words, shall not be deceived." The words of Jesus direct us to righteousness and goodness.

Can righteousness, however, be attained and maintained in an atmosphere of suspicion, fear and wars and rumors of wars? Can goodness and happiness even be found in an environment where it seems that life is not respected nor God revered? Can a righteous, peace-minded individual continue to have upright qualities under such destructive conditions? That's why we need to study the scriptures. We, who are in "those days" of war, deceit, rumors and great signs and wonders will do well to turn to the scriptures, where we are told over and over that leading righteous lives will bring the happiness and peace we seek.

Many people claim that their favorite scriptures are in The Book of Mormon. Others say they don't enjoy The Book of Mormon because they don't want to read about wars and battles. The reality is that there has always been war. Historians even say that war is one of the constants of history. Before the beginning of time there was a war in Heaven, and Satan continues that war now, on earth. (Genesis 3:4-5, 6:13 IV); (Revelation 12:6, 8, 12 IV) [Revelation 12:7, 9, 12 KJV]

The scriptures, however, even with the accounts of wars, assure us there is still hope for peace and happiness, and they provide wonderful examples for us to consider. Some observers say that the task is overwhelming — that seeking for peace is futile and that righteousness practiced by small groups has no effect on the world. Paul told us in Romans 5:19 (IV and KJV) that by one man's disobedience, many are made sinners; **BUT** by the obedience of one, many shall be made righteous. The Book of Mormon writer, Mormon, would agree — and illustrated this as he gave us the answer to our questions and concerns when he chose to tell us of the days of the Nephites during their wars and battles for their lives and their beliefs; and he highlighted the integrity of one particular leader. Mormon introduced us to one of the most charismatic people in The Book of Mormon: the chief Nephite army commander, Captain Moroni.

Now . . . the man who had been appointed to be the chief captain over the Nephites . . . took the command of all the armies of the Nephites: and his name was Moroni . . . and he

was only twenty and five years old when he was appointed chief captain over the armies of the Nephites.

**And Moroni was a strong and a mighty man;** he was a man of a perfect understanding; yea, a man that did not delight in bloodshed; a man whose soul did joy in the liberty and the freedom of his country, and his brethren from bondage and slavery; Yea, a man whose heart did swell with thanksgiving to his God, for the many privileges and blessings which he bestowed upon his people; a man who did labor exceedingly for the welfare and safety of his people: Yea, and he was a man who was firm in the faith of Christ, and he had sworn with an oath, to defend his people, his rights, and his country, and his religion, even to the loss of his blood.

Now the Nephites were taught to defend themselves against their enemies, even to the shedding of blood, if it were necessary; Yea, and they were also taught never to give an offense; yea, and never to raise the sword, except it were against an enemy, except it were to preserve their lives;

And this was their faith, that by so doing, God would prosper them in the land; or in other words, if they were faithful in keeping the commandments of God, that he would . . . warn them to flee, or to prepare for war, according to their danger;

And also that God would make it known unto them, whither they should go to defend themselves against their enemies; and by so doing, the Lord would deliver them, and this was the faith of Moroni;

And his heart did glory in it; not in the shedding of blood, but in doing good, in preserving his people; yea, in keeping the commandments of God; yea, and resisting iniquity. (Alma 20:18, 19 and 21:132-139 RLDS) [Alma 43:16, 17 and 48:11-16 LDS]

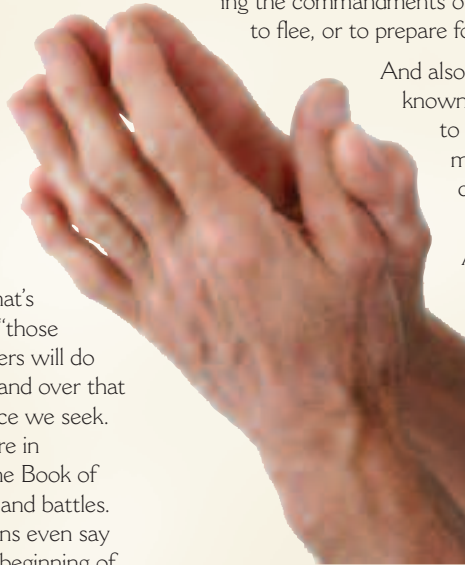
Captain Moroni did not want to shed blood. He loved peace, and he desired to keep God's commandments; yet he spent most of his life

in war. He took good people — many who were his friends — into battle and had to watch them suffer and die. Even with this lifestyle, he remained righteous. Mormon gave this moving description of him: "if all men had been, and were, and ever would be, like unto Moroni . . . the very powers of hell would have been shaken for ever; yea, the devil would never have power over the hearts of the children of men." (!) (Alma 21:140 RLDS) [Alma 48:17 LDS]

In the 20th chapter of Alma where the story of Captain Moroni began, Mormon had been in the process of writing the sermons and testimonies of the missionary work of Alma and his sons. Then, as he is recording those events, he makes a sudden announcement that he is changing his emphasis:

Now we shall say no more concerning their preaching, except that they preached the word, and the truth, according to the spirit of prophecy and revelation: and they preached after the holy order of God, by which they were called.

And now I return to an account of the wars between the Nephites and the Lamanites, in the eighteenth year of the reign of the Judges." (Alma 20:2-3 RLDS) [Alma 43:2-3 LDS]





At first, this statement seemed to me to be a strange decision for Mormon, the abridger, to make. Wouldn't readers of this book have benefited more from the instruction and examples of the sermons and powerful testimonies of the missionary endeavors? I questioned why he would prefer to write about the wars of the Nephites and their captain, Moroni. As I studied, I began to recognize the reason. These people and these events are illustrations to help us face the disorder and the battles of our day. They have been recorded for our benefit! The writers and abridgers of The Book of Mormon — blessed by the Holy Spirit — saw our day. They also saw, in their own history, a pattern of wars and civil upheavals that were like those prophesied for the last days. Mormon and his son observed their history and were inspired to write in their records about those events that would best help the readers face the turmoil in these last days. We are the readers that those ancient writers desired to help attain righteousness and happiness.

Mormon and Moroni knew that "wickedness never was happiness." (Alma 19:74 RLDS) [Alma 41:10 LDS] Coming to Christ and winning those battles over evil in our inner souls is righteousness and will bring us the happiness and peace of Christ despite the outward conditions of the world. Jesus said that if we love Him, we will abide in Him and keep His commandments (John 15:7 IV). He told us not to be afraid, nor let our hearts be troubled, for He would give us peace - not the peace the world gives, but the peace of the heart where He desires to reign (John 14:27 IV).

Moroni recognized this, and he felt he must help the people to be faithful to God. We read in (Alma 21:123 RLDS) [Alma 48:1 LDS]. "... (while the Lamanite) Amalikhiah had thus been obtaining power by fraud and deceit, Moroni, on the other hand, had been preparing the minds of the people to be faithful unto the Lord their God." Here we see that Moroni, the noble military leader, knew that the public victories on the battlefield depended on the private victories in the lives of the people as they sought to keep God's commandments. Captain Moroni constantly strived to prepare the people to be prayerful, faithful and obedient.

And it came to pass that he [Moroni] rent his coat; and he took a piece thereof, and wrote upon it: In memory of our God, our religion, and freedom, and our peace, our wives, and our children; and he fastened it upon the end of a pole thereof.

And he fastened on his head-plate, and his breastplate, and his shields, and girded on his armor about his loins; and he took the pole, which had on the end thereof his rent coat (and he called it the title of liberty),

And he bowed himself to the earth, and he prayed mightily unto his God for the blessings of liberty to rest upon his brethren so long as there should be a band of Christians remain to possess the land. (Alma 21:41-43 RLDS) [Alma 46:12-13 LDS]

**Captain Moroni then went forth among the people** waving the Title of Liberty and inviting them to come forth in the strength of the Lord and enter into a covenant that they would maintain their rights and their religion (Alma 21:48-49 RLDS) [Alma 46:19-20 LDS]. He prayed a dedicated, mighty prayer and then he went forth with dedicated, mighty action! How many of us have heard our parents or grandparents say, "If you want your prayers answered, you must get on your feet and do your part!" That's what Captain Moroni did, and the response to his action was amazing.

And it came to pass that when Moroni had proclaimed these words, behold, the people came running together, with their armor girded about their loins, rending their garments in token, or as a covenant, that they would not forsake the Lord their God;

Or, in other words, if they should transgress the commandments of God, or fall into transgression, and be ashamed to take upon them the name of Christ, the Lord should rend them even as they had rent their garments.

Now this was the covenant which they made; and they cast their garments at the feet of Moroni, saying, We covenant with our God, that we shall be destroyed, even as our brethren in the land northward, if we shall fall into transgression;

Yea, [God] may cast us at the feet of our enemies, even as we have cast our garments at thy feet, to be trodden under foot, if we shall fall into transgression. (Alma 21:50-53 RLDS) [Alma 46:21- 22 LDS]

**Take a moment and think about this statement:**

"... We covenant with God... that we shall be destroyed... if we fall into transgression... or be ashamed to take upon (us) the name of Christ!" What a difference it would make in our world if this covenant were in effect today!

Captain Moroni was not only a fearless and courageous warrior, a strong and mighty man, but he was also a respected and beloved leader who led by example, lived his faith, kept a close relationship with God, and believed firmly in the rights of liberty and freedom for people to be able to practice their religion. He set a standard for his people — and for us. Truly Captain Moroni was in the forefront of the Lord's Army — evidence of a caring God who raises up leaders of stature to meet the needs of the times and leave sterling examples for future generations on how to face the difficult battles of life.

The title page of The Book of Mormon states that it is to show the remnant of the House of Israel great things that the Lord has done and, throughout the book, its writers were concerned for the future readers and wanted to prepare those readers to survive the problems of the latter days. Prophets suggested that this book would be brought forth "in those days" of destruction and wars when our hearts are hardened and we are fearful because of all the evil and chaos around us. See (Isaiah 29:1-12 IV, KJV); (I Nephi 3:181-195 RLDS) [I Nephi 13:34-41 LDS]; (II Nephi 15:11-17 RLDS) [II Nephi 33:10-14 LDS]; (Mormon 4:32-44 RLDS) [Mormon 8:25-33 LDS]; (Moroni 10: 22-26 RLDS) [Moroni 10:27-29 LDS]; (DC 1:3a-4e; DC 45:4,6,8).

The Scriptures teach us throughout their pages that the reality of a peaceful future and a joyful people will come because people repent and serve the Lord. If people of these latter days have any hope for happiness and freedom from the fear of wars and rumors of wars, it will be found in righteousness, repentance and close communion with God. We have been given the pattern of the Book of Mormon peoples as well as the people of the Bible. We can become acquainted with those who chose righteousness and those who chose evil — and we can read the consequences. If we choose to be in the "Lord's Army," then we have the duty to live virtuously and to be an influence for all that is honorable and good. If — and when — the time comes that we have to fight "for our homes, our liberties, our children and our worship of God," then we must be prepared, like Captain Moroni and his people, to respond with righteousness and purity of heart. It will take courage and great faith, but we will experience happiness and joy and the peace of our Savior because of the victory God has in our lives.

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