

Book of Mormon 43
How Could Ye Have Departed from the Ways of the Lord
(Mormon 1-6; Moroni 9)
By Lenet Hadley Read

(Here is inspirational background and evidences supporting the Book of Mormon).

I. As Mormon sees the prophecies of the destruction of the Nephites fulfilled, he weeps:

A. "O ye fair ones, how could ye have departed from the ways of the Lord! O ye fair ones, **how could ye have rejected that Jesus, who stood with open arms to receive you!**

"Behold, if ye had not done this, ye would not have fallen, But behold, ye are fallen, and I mourn your loss.... But behold ye are gone, and my sorrows cannot bring your return...."
(Mormon 6:17-22).

II. We'll soon see the Jaredite's story is a deliberate reaffirmation of the Nephites' history.

A. "Behold, this is a choice land, and **whatsoever nation shall possess it shall be free** from bondage, and from captivity, and from all other nations under heaven, **if they will but serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ...**" (Ether 2:12).

C. The Jaredites fell also through disobedience "... and the word of the Lord came to Ether, that he should go and prophesy unto Coriantumr that, if he would repent, and all his household, the Lord would give unto him his kingdom and spare the people --- Otherwise they should be destroyed, and all his household save it were himself. **And he should only live to see the fulfilling of the prophecies which had been spoken concerning another people receiving the land for their inheritance...**; and every soul should be destroyed save it were Coriantumr. And it came to pass that Coriantumr repented not..." (Ether 13:20-22). (Emphasis added)

III. Interestingly, both **the Jaredites and the Nephites fell at the very same place.**

("the army of Coriantumr did pitch their tents by the hill Ramah: and it was that same hill where my father Mormon did hide up the records unto the Lord," (Ether 15:11).

A. Evidence shows **the Lord had a specific purpose** in this.

1. Mormon *deliberately* chose the site for the final battle (Mormon 6:2). While it seems strange to us that the Lamanites would grant Mormon's request to stage the final battle at a place of his own choosing, Dr. Hugh Nibley tells us this is an ancient custom (*Since Cumorah*, p. 370).

2. The Jaredites as well chose their final battle place and spent four years gathering its people there for that battle (Ether 15:14).

3. The scriptures say this final battle place was chosen due to its excellent resources to sustain armies and to defend --- an area of many waters with fertile lands for food (Mormon 6:4). This accurately describes the Hill Cumorah area.

IV. The Lord likely had another purpose for this location, as **the Place of Refuge did not succeed.**

A. His purpose was as a Warning! The state of New York would become **the major gateway to the Promised Land**. The millions who entered thereafter would come through this gateway with all its past history. And from the beginning, they did discover its tragic end. As they ploughed their fields and tore out tree roots, **the bones and abandoned weapons of the past civilizations surged up as warning.**

B. Prominent people recognized the warning: "We are **surrounded by evidence** that a race preceded the present Indian, farther advanced in civilization and the arts. **Here and there upon the brow of hills, at the head of ravines, are their fortifications...** Uprooted trees of the forest that are **the growth of many centuries expose their ... remains, the uncovered mounds with masses of their skeletons** promiscuously heaped one on top of the other" O. Turner's *Pioneer History of Western New York* (Emphasis added).

C. Turner claimed "there is perhaps no portion of the United States where ancient ruins are more numerous [than in New York]." And "[it is likely] this ancient people, assailed from the north and east, made this their refuge in the shock of a final issue, and were subject to its adverse results.... The evidence that this was one, at least of their final battlefields predominates.... **That here was a war of extermination** we may well conclude from the masses of human skeletons we find indiscriminately thrown together..."

D. Samuel Kirkland, a Protestant minister, also saw the ancient fortification in Western New York and sought the stories behind them: "From many concurring accounts which I have been able to get from elderly Indian historians from several tribes, there are well defined traditions that long before the white man came here there **was a great war in these parts** that lasted many moons. An old gray-headed Indian told me that he and his progenitors for generations back had lived among these ruins. He said that many ages ago, before his people knew anything about firearms, there was a great war... They then fought with bow and arrow, cutting swords, spear, javelin, war-clubs, death-mauls, slings, and other ways to kill. He also said ...that the dead were so many that they could not be counted..."

E. Even the Governor of New York, DeWitt Clinton, spoke to its Historical Society in 1808 of "the vast ancient fortifications ... scattered everywhere."

[These evidences were gathered by Willard Bean, sent by President Joseph F. Smith to Palmyra in 1915, to help preserve and develop Church interests. See Wayne May, *This Land: Willard's Cumorah Land*, pp. 146-184].

F. **The Book of Mormon would soon come forth which would give all the details and clarifications of what had happened here and why the destructions had occurred.**

V. The two names given to the Hill at Palmyra sheds light on the significance of the place.

A. The first being "Ramah" which means "high" but particularly **to be at the height of pride.**

B. **Both the Jaredites and the Nephites were destroyed at this same place for the same reason: they had reached the height of pride.**

C. The Nephites gave a new name to this same hill --- "Cumorah." For it contained Hope!

1. "Cumorah means "Mound of Light" or revelation, and gives promise for the future.

2. This was also the place of future hope, as shown by Joseph Smith in D&C 128: 20 when he greatly rejoices at all the blessings which have poured forth from Cumorah.

a. After the destruction, from this same hill would come God's merciful, redeeming light.

VI. Old Testament prophets had foreseen and prophesied of this site.

A. One was Ezekiel.

B. "The hand of the Lord was upon me, ... and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, And caused me to pass by them ... and, lo, they were very dry [meaning very ancient], And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live?Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live ... Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones *are the whole house of Israel* [not just the Jews]... and I shall

place you in your own land; then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord" (Ezek. 37: selected verses). (Emphasis added).

C. *This re-arising of Israel meant more than the resurrection.* For from this very valley of bones of Israel, at Cumorah, the Book of Mormon would come forth. And it would cause the mortal re-arising of the House of Israel. The **Church, the new Israel, began in the Palmyra area.**

We find that prophecy in the very next verses of Ezekiel (37:15-23).

"...take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah... then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph... And join them one to another; and they shall become one in thine hand."

Ezekiel then prophesied that this union of two scriptural records would cause the House of Israel to arise and re-inherit its lands. **For the Hill Cumorah to be positioned in the midst of this valley of dead bones from among whose ashes the new Israel would arise was indeed prophetic.**

D. Isaiah 29 also prophesied that out of the dust [of bones] Israel's voice would speak again!

E. Moroni refers to Isaiah's prophecy, telling men to search Isaiah, as he anticipates the burial of the plates (Mormon 8:23).

F. Honoring those marvelous prophetic voices on the plates, he testifies **it is those voices which will speak out of the dust to us in our generation.**

VII. The Book of Mormon confirms its role and its power to restore Israel.

A. "... and behold [the Nephite/Jaredite records] 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 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 may more fully believe his gospel, which shall go forth unto them from the Gentiles" (Mormon 5:13-15).

VIII. The Book of Mormon continually warns unbelievers of a fate similar to the Nephites and Jaredites if they do not obey the Lord.

A. "And then, O ye Gentiles, how can ye stand before the power of God, except ye shall repent and turn from your evil ways?

"Know ye not that ye are in the hands of God? Know ye not that he hath all power, and at his great command the earth shall be rolled together as a scroll?

Therefore, repent ye, and humble yourselves before him, lest he shall come out in justice against you --- lest a remnant of the seed of Jacob shall go forth among you as a lion, and tear you in pieces, and there is none to deliver" (Mormon 5:22-24).

[This means the believing descendants of Jacob (Israel) will become again the inheritors of this land, after the Second Coming. But this will include many descendants of Jacob as well as the seed of Lehi: immigrating descendants of Ephraim and immigrating descendants of Manasseh [for Lehi was not the only descendant of Manasseh who has likely been led to the Western Hemisphere at some point], and remnants of all the ten tribes who would accept the Gospel and begin to be identified.)

All this is in fact occurring today! Peoples of all Israel's tribes are being identified and are receiving their blessings in our temples]. And the Kingdom of God is spreading throughout the earth.

IX. These messages are for more than America. The Promised Land, we must remember, is ultimately a symbol for Eternal Life! The message of the Book of Mormon is for all the ends of the earth. All those who worship and serve Jesus the Christ in truth will inherit the Lord's true Promised Land --- Eternal Life.

"Yea, behold, I write unto all the ends of the earth: ...And these things doth the Spirit manifest unto me; therefore I write unto you all. And for this cause I write unto you, that ye may know that ye must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, yea, every soul who belongs to the whole human family of Adam; and ye must stand to be judged of your works, whether they be good or evil... And I would that I could persuade all ye ends of the earth to repent and prepare to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ" (Mormon 3:18, 20, 22).

As Mormon lamented the fall of the Nephites, so there will be similar laments for those who fall at the return of Jesus Christ.

We should pray and earnestly strive that we will not be among those of whom it is then said, "O ye fair ones, how could ye have departed from the ways of the Lord! O ye fair ones, how could ye have rejected that Jesus, who stood with open arms to receive you! Behold, if ye had not done this, ye would not have fallen, But behold, ye are fallen, and I mourn your loss.... But behold ye are gone, and my sorrows cannot bring your return...." (Mormon 6:17-22).