

# THE BOOK OF MORMON

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*Is It "The Stick of Ephraim"  
Referred to in the Thirty-seventh Chapter of  
Ezekiel, Verses Fifteen to Nineteen*

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BY ELDER JOSEPH LUFF

# FOREWORD

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The aim of the author of this pamphlet, in writing it, is to help and not to hinder the work of the church. He has been an active minister of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints for sixty years and is today as devoutly interested in the welfare and success of that church as he has ever been; but for the reasons herein assigned, believes it to be his duty to put forth this effort towards correcting what he esteems to be an error in its authorized teaching, as is also the case in the teaching of every branch or faction of the church that professes to be an exponent of the faith introduced through the agency of Joseph Smith in or prior to the year 1830—not a doctrinal error, but a mistake in the employment of a scriptural passage where it does not apply or belong. Where, or just how, or by whom this error first found place in those teachings I do not know, but if it be, as is claimed herein, an error, it matters not what its age, or who its author, or where its birthplace, there is no justification for its continuance.

A church should be willing to correct its mistakes immediately upon the discovery of them, regardless of the

consequent humiliation, otherwise its request of the world to do so is inconsistent and hypocritical.

The L. D. S. Churches all believe they are rendering a kindly and even divine service to the religious world when exposing some popular doctrinal errors and urging a correction of them. The writer of this pamphlet believes likewise in publishing it, and asks only a thoughtful reading and study of what it contains, declaring his readiness to consider kindly and carefully anything that may be properly offered in rebuttal.

The people of Berea, anciently, were more noble than those of Thessalonica, the Good Book says, because they received the word with all readiness of mind, when it was offered to them, and then searched the Scriptures daily to discover whether those things were so. (See Acts 17:11.) A similar exhibition of nobility would be regarded as a kindness by this writer now, believing, as he does, that every wrong in teaching and practice in the church—continued after discovery—will bring discredit in heaven and loss of saving grace and spiritual distinction on earth.

# The Book of Mormon

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*Is it the "Stick of Ephraim" referred to in Ezekiel 37: 15 to 19 herewith quoted?*

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"Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah and for the children of Israel his companions; then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions; and join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand. And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not show us what thou meanest by these? say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand. And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes. And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen whither they be gone and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel and one king shall be king to them all, and they shall no more be two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all."

For about one hundred years, every Latter Day Saint Church, without an

exception, has from pulpit and press said "Yes!" Nearly every sermon on the Divine Authority of the Book of Mormon has included the above verses and these verses have been employed as being among the strongest biblical evidences at command.

For this writer, therefore, to answer the above question with an emphatic **No**, may sound like a human whisper uttered in an attempt to silence divine thunder, and may go unheeded in consequence; but as I have done a thousand times before, when defending our beloved gospel claims against the boisterous denunciations of an unbelieving world, let me here again use the scriptural word of counsel and suggestion as a means of reaching a safe conclusion as to which answer is right:

"To the law and to the testimony, If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."  
—Isaiah 8:20.

Does the Bible authorize or warrant the L. D. S. Church answer? **No**.

Does the Book of Mormon declare or intimate that it is the Stick of Joseph or Ephraim? **No**.

Does the Book of Doctrine and Covenants anywhere say that the Book of Mormon is the Stick of Joseph or Ephraim? **No**.

If my reading and understanding are correct, those books justify me in the distinct and positive answer thus made.

For years after entering the church I accepted, without question, the position held by the church on this question and so preached, as may be seen by reference to my Book of Sermons, published thirty years ago, in which the popular church belief was proclaimed.

As years passed and what seemed to me to be light came through different channels to my mind when in study, I was compelled to discard the popular idea as being incorrect and to fix my expectation elsewhere than the Book of Mormon for a fulfillment of the Stick of Ephraim prediction. Hence, let me again state that I am a believer in both the Book of Mormon and Ezekiel's prophecy, but I do not believe that the latter has any reference to the former. It is the wrongness of the **application** that stirs my pen, for Ezekiel's prophecy, if authorized of God, **will some day be fulfilled**, and when that day comes and its **intended** application is attempted, the discovery will be made, to the humiliation of the church, that the place divinely intended for it has been usurped by the Book of Mormon heralds and zealots blindly.

There is an abundance of Bible evidence supportive of the Book of Mormon without Ezekiel's prophecy, so that its elimination need cause no disappointment, and a right application of Ezekiel's prophecy ought to vitalize our expectation regarding the event to which it properly applies—an event at least as wonderful and glorious as the coming of the Book of Mormon could possibly be.

As already stated, I do not know who first enlisted Ezekiel's prophecy to support the Book of Mormon. I am of opinion that Orson Pratt, who was so

marvelously efficient in acquiring and applying scriptural passages to support the claims of the New Evangel, may have been the man; but be that as it may, does it not seem remarkable that (if the popular use of the text is correct) so important a passage as that was not referred to by the angel who visited Joseph Smith and recited so many other passages of scripture in support of the coming book—and associated events—not one of them surpassing in direct value this passage, if it was really applicable thereto? Isaiah, Malachi, and Joel were quoted, and several apparently less important items. It is true that Joseph said that other passages were quoted, but it seems evident that one so important as Ezekiel's prophecy would never have been left unquoted, if it related to the involved event. Judging from the prominence given it in all sermons and articles relating to the Book of Mormon, it is evident that it has been rated by the church as of first importance. My desire is only that each portion of the word of God shall be applied **where he said it should be**, and that when each passage is fulfilled there will be no clashing of church teaching and claims. No claims should be made for the book other than its contents justify. The book has its place and Ezekiel's prophecy has its place, and both will figure in and contribute in an important way and degree toward the consummation promised of God; but the success of God's processes will be delayed rather than hastened by us if we locate one where the other belongs, and compel a readjustment by the church when the blunder is exposed upon the housetops by the later divinely planned fulfillment of prophecy. There will be no friction in the God-ordered process; but there will be in our manipulation of church

affairs if in our ignorance we disarrange the details connected therewith when professing to act as his interpreters.

But to my reasons for believing and declaring as I have done. The books speak for themselves. Let me, therefore, appeal to their speech.

First, to secure a few sidelights on the subject, let me call your attention to some facts announced regarding those who figure in the involved case, that will help us to more easily reach a proper conclusion:

From 1 Kings 12, and 2 Chronicles 10 we learn that, following the death of Solomon, Rehoboam, his son, became king of Israel (embracing all of the twelve tribes), but because of his attitude towards the people, a division occurred and ten and a half tribes revolted and, later, under Jeroboam, started a separate nation at Shechem in Mount Ephraim for themselves, leaving the tribe of Judah and part of the tribe of Benjamin as a separate nation under Rehoboam at Jerusalem, and from the later verses we learn that wars occurred continually thereafter between these two nations. That breach to this day has never been healed. Since that time they have ever been referred to as **two nations—Judah and Israel, or Ephraim and Judah.** (See Isa. 11:12.)

Seven hundred years before Christ Shalmanezzer, **King of Assyria**, besieged Samaria and took Israel (the ten and a half tribes, including Ephraim) captive to Assyria. (See 2 Kings 17: 5, 6; also 18:10-12.)

About six hundred years before Christ, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came against Jerusalem, destroyed it, and took the tribe of Judah to Babylon. Seventy years later, by grant of

Cyrus, king of Persia, Judah returned to Jerusalem and remained there till about seventy years after Christ, when the dispersion occurred "unto all nations." From that time, reference has been made to them as the dispersed of Judah, while the ten and a half tribes are mentioned as the "outcasts of Israel." Thus keeping clear the fact of **two nations.** (Isa. 11:12.)

Every thoughtful reader of the Scriptures knows that they abound with prophecies of a future return of both Israel and Judah to their former home at Jerusalem. Jeremiah, Isaiah, Hosea, Ezekiel, and others are very pronounced in such prophecies.

Next I wish to note what is recorded in 1 Chronicles 5:1-3. Here we learn that while Reuben was really the first born of Jacob, yet because he defiled his father's bed, the birthright was taken from him and transferred to the sons of **Joseph—Ephraim and Manasseh.** After that we find the word **Ephraim** frequently used interchangeably with Israel when referring to the ten and a half tribes, that revolted and later went to Assyria. Sometimes it reads Israel and Judah, at other times Ephraim and Judah, substituting the word **Ephraim** for **Israel**, and in referring to the final gathering, says, "I will bring them from the north country whither they have gone, and the coasts of the earth, for I am a father to Israel and **Ephraim is my firstborn.** Ephraim then is in that north country or in the coasts of the earth apparently. Read now Isa. 11:12, 13: "The envy of Ephraim shall depart and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off. Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim. Here Ephraim stands for Israel.

Carefully now read 2 Kings 17: 6, 23; Jer. 31:6-9; Hosea 7:11; 8:8, 12; 9:3; 10:6; 11:3-5; 12:1.

It doubtless was while he was in Assyria that God wrote the "great things of his law to Ephraim" which were accounted as a "strange thing" (Hosea 8:12), and when the "stick" of Ephraim comes forth it probably will contain that writing.

These passages clearly show Ephraim to be in Assyria, and as being one of the two nations which Ezekiel's prophecy refers to, and revelations to this church show that nation (those lost tribes) to be there still, as we shall show.

Let me now come to the main point in mind, upon which all these passages throw a helpful light. Read Ezekiel 37:16-19, as found above. Observe closely, please, the language of the prophecy, and keep in mind the common interpretation of the word "sticks" or "stick" which I believe to be correct. That is: "records" or "record," and what is made clear? Let us see:

First, please note that the Lord herein says in his interpretations of the vision, that he refers to the **two nations** (Ephraim, or Israel, and Judah), and there is not a word to justify the admission of any other people or to justify a severing of these.

Now what does He say? Read, using the word **record** for **stick**.

"Take thee one record and write upon it, For Judah and for the children of Israel, his companions; and take another record and write upon it, For Joseph, the record of Ephraim, and **ALL THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL, HIS COMPANIONS**, and join them one to another in one record and they shall become one in thine hand."

As a meaning for this command God told Ezekiel to thus explain:

"Behold I will take the record of Joseph WHICH IS IN THE HAND OF EPHRAIM AND THE TRIBES OF ISRAEL HIS FELLOWS, and will put them with him—even with the record of Judah, and make them one record, and they shall be one in my hand."

Further, in explanation, he says:

"I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side and bring them into their own land, and I will make them **one nation** in the land upon the mountains of Israel, and one king shall be king to them all, and they shall be **no more two nations**, neither shall they be divided into **two kingdoms any more at all**."

Now, please notice that this stick or record of Ephraim must contain the history of Ephraim and all the house of Israel, his companions. Does the Book of Mormon contain that?

Notice further, that it is to be found in the hands of Ephraim and the tribes of Israel, his fellows. Was the Book of Mormon found there?

And again it is distinctly referring to and dealing with one of the **two nations** referred to—that nation known as Israel or Ephraim (including the ten and a half tribes that revolted under Reho-boam's rule) and are yet separate from that other nation known as Judah.

Does the Book of Mormon represent that nation, or is it not a simple fact that all that the Book of Mormon pretends to be is a history of **two families** whom God led to America (not to but from Jerusalem) and some items from plates found by them, and offers not a word regarding this nation of Israel as history or as a record of them and their whereabouts and development. It is simply a record of Lehi or Nephi and

Zoram and their descendants in America.

It is therefore clear from the Bible and especially the passage from Ezekiel itself, that the Book of Mormon cannot be a fulfillment of its prediction.

Let us now consult the Book of Mormon itself and see if it warrants the claim made for it that this pamphlet is written to oppose.

I will quote from the small Plano edition, published in 1876, beginning on page 105, paragraph 8:

"Wherefore because that ye have a Bible ye need not suppose that it contains all my words; neither need ye suppose that I have not caused more to be written; for I command all men, both in the East and in the West and in the North and in the South, and in the islands of the sea, that they shall write the words that I shall speak unto them; for out of the books which shall be written I will judge the world, every man according to their works, according to that which is written. For behold I shall speak unto the Jews and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the Nephites and they shall write it, and I shall also speak unto the other tribes of the house of Israel, which I have led away, and they shall write it, and I shall also speak with all nations of the earth and they shall write it. And it shall come to pass that the Jews shall have the words of the Nephites, and the Nephites shall have the words of the Jews, and the Nephites and the Jews shall have the words of the lost tribes of Israel, and the "lost tribes of Israel" shall have the words of the Nephites and the Jews; and it shall come to pass that my people which are of the house of Israel shall be gathered home unto the lands of their possessions and my word also shall be gathered in one."

The "words of the Jews" here doubtless refer to the record of Judah mentioned in Ezekiel's prophecy. And I suppose that all my readers will agree with me that the words or record of Nephi here referred to means the Book of Mormon, for that book certainly is their record. There can be no question about that. On the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated these words appeared concerning it: "It is an abridgment of the record of the people of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites, written to the Lamanites." See Church History, volume 1, page 74. Hence, as I have shown, it is at some future day to be united with the record of Ephraim and Judah. If, then, it is the Book of Mormon, and will someday be joined with the record of the lost tribes of Israel, how can it be the record of those lost tribes, which as we have shown, are the nation referred to in Ezekiel's prophecy as one of the two nations of former history which was removed by Shalmanezar from Samaria to Assyria, including the ten and a half tribes?

The record of those tribes cannot be taken "from their hand" till they are located, and sacred testimony declares that their appearance will be accompanied with miracles that will eclipse the glory of Israelitish delivery formerly from Egypt. Then they will cease to be referred to as the "outcasts"—the "lost tribes," and their records will be joined with Judah's and that of the Nephites.

In the Book of Doctrine and Covenants 108:6, dated November 3, 1831, we are told that those tribes were then still in the north country and we are informed that "they who are in the north countries shall come in remembrance before the Lord, and their prophets shall hear his voice and shall no longer stay themselves, and they

shall smite the rocks and the ice shall flow down at their presence. And an highway shall be cast up in the midst of the great deep. . . Behold this is the blessing of the everlasting God upon the tribes of Israel and the richer blessing upon the head of Ephraim and his fellows."

This probably has reference to the same events as are foretold in Jeremiah 16:14, 15, indicating miraculous display in its fulfillment.

If, therefore, the Book of Mormon does not contain a record of "**Ephraim and all the house of Israel his companions**"—(the lost tribes) as we have shown, how can it be the Record or Stick of Ephraim, which was to do that?

If the Book of Mormon was found in America, how can it be the Record which, according to Ezekiel, was to be found in the hands of Ephraim and the tribes of Israel his companions, whom we have shown were in Assyria?

The Book of Mormon was written in America and only pretends to be a record of God's dealings with people in America. Any reference in it to others is copied from the record of Judah.

We have no known record of what those tribes (meaning or including Ephraim) found or did in Assyria, or what became of them. The prophet Esdras (supposed by many to be the prophet Ezra of our Bible) in the second book of his writings in what is known as the Old Testament Apocrypha, says that after reaching Assyria they took a year and a half's journey north

—helped by miraculous intervention—to a country where they were determined to faithfully serve God as they had never done in their own land. Thus the known chapter of their history closes. Our Book of Mormon, as a record, stick, or history, does not even squint in their direction; and when they later appear they will likely be amazed to learn that the Book of Mormon has been posing as their history, while not even knowing their whereabouts.

While calling his attention to my views on this subject some time ago, an elder directed me to a statement found in Doctrine and Covenants, section 26, paragraph 2, which he thought declared the Book of Mormon to be the Stick of Ephraim. But close reading will reveal that it merely says that Moroni had been sent to reveal the Book of Mormon, and that to him had been committed the keys of the record of the stick of Ephraim. It does not connect the Book of Mormon with the Stick of Ephraim but merely declares that unto Moroni had been committed the authority for the double service—one dealing with the Book of Mormon and the other with the stick of Ephraim.

My views are now before you. Whatever may be the fate of this pamphlet, my mind is freed from the urge that led to its being written. I present it with a desire to "make straight the way of our Lord," and am ready to take cheerfully the consequences.

In gospel bonds,

JOSEPH LUFF.