

Sherem's Skepticism

The Tactics of a Faith Shaker

Our foundation of faith can become unshaken in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Ghost, the scriptures, and the words of living prophets.

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After a fitting conclusion to his record in the Book of Mormon, the prophet Jacob writes a prophetic postscript. He recounts his experience with a man named Sherem,¹ who tries in vain to “shake [him] from the faith” (Jacob 7:5) using several tactics. Understanding the eroding influence of one who tries to shake our foundation in Jesus Christ is critical today, when information is ubiquitous but wisdom is scarce.²

Sherem's Tactics

1. Your faith in Christ will be attacked.

When he comes among the Nephites, Sherem declares “that there should be no Christ” (Jacob 7:2). Likewise, some people today declare that Jesus of Nazareth was not divine and that if God exists, He is irrelevant. They rely instead on their own learning and prosperity. If anything could destroy us today, it would be to disconnect ourselves from the source of all light and protection. Jesus Christ is the rock of our salvation, the only true foundation that can survive hurricane-force winds of doubt and adversity (see Helaman 5:12).

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2. You will be enticed.

Sherem labors diligently to “lead away the hearts of the people,” using “much flattery” (Jacob 7:3–4; see also 2 Nephi 28:22). He manifests his ulterior motives through his knowledge of language and his power of speech. Some individuals in our day likewise adopt the adversary’s methods to attempt to shake the faith of others. Elder Ronald A. Rasband of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has warned: “Satan is a subtle snake, sneaking into our minds and hearts when we have let our guard down, faced a disappointment, or lost hope. He entices us with flattery, a promise of ease, comfort, or a temporary high when we are low. He justifies pride, unkindness, dishonesty, discontent, and immorality, and in time we can be ‘past feeling’ [1 Nephi 17:45].”³

3. You will be accused.

Following in the tradition of Satan, “the accuser of our brethren” (Revelation 12:10), Sherem accuses Jacob of teaching false doctrine (see Jacob 7:7). Today some individuals similarly claim that the Church needs to change to accommodate the world. The Sherems of today sound accusations against the Church, which they say is outdated and led by men who are too old and out of touch. Those who are quick to challenge the servants of God but slow to pay them heed become vulnerable to the power of the adversary.

4. You will face misinterpretation of God's word.

Sherem misinterprets scripture by missing the entire point of the law of Moses (see Jacob 7:7), which points “our souls to [Christ]” (Jacob 4:5). Questions of scriptural interpretation can plague members of the Church who find perceived inaccuracies or misinterpretations in the word of God. If we do not diligently and prayerfully study His word, our own interpretations and biases may overshadow what the united voices of prophets and apostles have consistently taught and emphasized in the scriptures.



5. You will be asked to “prove it.”

When Sherem is confounded by Jacob, he falls back on the faith-shaking fail-safe: “Show me a sign” (Jacob 7:13). But divine demonstration does not provide concrete flooring in a matter of seconds. Likewise, foundations of faith are not built on the flippant quip, “Prove it,” but rather on prayer, study, service, and righteousness

Triangle of Faith

Because Sherem “had been deceived by the power of the devil” (Jacob 7:18), he thought he was doing good by correcting a prophet. We can avoid being similarly deceived by today’s Sherems—or becoming like them ourselves—if we appeal to the same three things Jacob appealed to: the Spirit, the scriptures, and the prophets (see Jacob 7:8, 10, 11), especially living ones. This triangle of faith can give us stability and strengthen our spiritual defense as we build our testimony on Jesus Christ and the strength of His words.

Like Jacob, whose faith “could not be shaken” (Jacob 7:5), and like his son, Enos, whose “faith began to be unshaken in the Lord” (Enos 1:11), we too can have a foundation of faith that becomes unshaken through the power of the Holy Ghost, the scriptures, and the words of living prophets. ■

NOTES

1. Sherem, Nehor, and Korihor are often grouped as the three anti-Christes in the Book of Mormon, though only Korihor is expressly labeled as one in Alma 30:6 (see John W. Welch, “Comparing Sherem, Nehor, and Korihor,” in *The Legal Cases in the Book of Mormon* [2008], 302, archive.bookofmormoncentral.org/node/323).
2. Many of the ideas that follow in this article had a genesis with Robert L. Millet’s work “Sherem the Anti-Christ,” in *The Book of Mormon: Jacob through Words of Mormon, To Learn with Joy*, eds. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (1990), 175–91, rsc.byu.edu.
3. Ronald A. Rasband, “Build a Fortress of Spirituality and Protection,” *Ensign*, May 2019, 108.