

# Book of Mormon Study – Mosiah 1-3

Online zoom Sunday School, 19 Apr 2020

## Some Background

"Zarahemla" is Aramaic

Aramaic: זרעחמלא Zera (seed/dispersed) and Ch'mla (gathered in). Suggests the group who came with Muloch and founded Zarahemla may have spoken Aramaic. (footnote 8, SJ Moshiyah 1:2 [Mosiah 1:10])

The people of Zerach'mla (commonly called Mulochites) and the Nefites had each only been in the land of Promise about 400 years—not long enough for language corruption alone to make their language unintelligible to one another. The Stick of Joseph tells us very little about the Mulochites, only that they were descendants of Muloch, the son of king Tzidkiyahu, and those who came with Muloch into the wilderness and across the sea (Ameni 1:6–7; Moshiyah 11:13; Cheleman 2:29; 3:9). We are never told who smuggled a son of Tzidkiyahu, heir to David's throne, out of Jerusalem. Could they have been Babylonian dissidents? Whereas the Nefites spoke Hebrew (M'raman 4:11), there is internal evidence that the Mulochites may have been Aramaic speakers. Zerach'mla is Aramaic and after the merger of the Nefites and Mulochites, Aramaic names like "Alma" (the Aramaic form of the Hebrew name "Elam") begin to appear. (footnote 10, SJ Ameni 1:7 [Omni 1:17])

## Sukkot - Feast of tabernacles

*My son, I would that ye should make a proclamation throughout all this land among all this people, or the people of Zarahemla, and the people of Mosiah who dwell in the land, that thereby they may be gathered together (Mosiah 1:10)*

*So they established a decree to make proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beer-sheba even to Dan, that they should come to keep the passover unto the Lord God of Israel at Jerusalem: for they had not done it of a long time in such sort as it was written. (2 Chron. 30:5)*

Sukkot is one of the three pilgrimage feasts requiring the people to gather to "the place which he shall choose", i.e. the Temple (Deut. 16:16). (footnote 17, SJ Moshiyah 1:4 [Mosiah 1:18])

## Firstlings:

Gen. 4:4; Ex. 13:12; 34:19; Lev. 27:26; Num. 3:41; 18:15–18; Deut. 12:6, 17; 14:23; Neh. 10:36. Neh. 10:36 is just two days after Sukkot Neh. 8:2 and 9:1). Sukkoth coincides with lambing season, so firstlings would have been available. Moreover, the Talmud indicates a firstling could be offered up even more than a year after birth (b. Rosh Hashanah 5b) (footnote 18, SJ Moshiyah 1:5, [Mosiah 2:3])

At Sukkot, "fourteen lambs of the first year" served as a burnt offering (Num. 29:13). (ibid, footnote 19)

This keeps with the Sukkot theme of Binyamin's speech. Each of the biblical Temples was dedicated at Sukkot (1 Kings 8:2, 65; Neh. 8:13-18; 2 Macc. 10:5-8). See also Alma 16:37 (footnote 29, Moshiyah 1:11 [Mosiah 2:38])

## God sustains us

Consider King Benjamin's description that we are supported and preserved by God's power moment to moment, how He lends us breath and sustains us that we may live and move and do according to our own will (Mosiah 2:21. See also Acts 17:28). Not only does God put up with our brass overconfidence in ourselves, he sustains us in the very act of our disdain for His role in supporting us day by day.

In 2 Enoch, God put it this way:

*"There is no counselor and no successor, only myself, eternal, not made by hands. My unchanging thought is (my) counselor, and my word is (my) deed. And my eyes behold all things. If I turn my face away, then all falls into destruction; but if I look at it, then all is stable." (2 Enoch (A) 33:4, Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, 1:157, emphasis mine.)*

All it involves for God's spirit to "no longer strive with man" (Gen 6:3) is for Him to withdraw His gaze.

## Evil Spirits

*For behold, there is a wo pronounced upon him who listeth to obey that spirit; for if he listeth to obey him, and remaineth and dieth in his sins, the same drinketh damnation to his own soul; (Mosiah 2:33, 38)*

This is almost identical to 1 Cor. 11:29, "drinks damnation to himself" pointing to an underlying Hebrew word nefesh נפש (Strong's 5315), meaning "soul, life, or self" (see 3 Nepi 8:9). (footnote 27, SJ Moshiyah 1:10)

cf Alma 20:17, 34:34, Moroni 8:14

## Mysteries

*...that we might read and understand of his mysteries (Mosiah 1:3,5)*

*...open your ears that ye may hear, and your hearts that ye may understand, and your minds that the mysteries of God may be unfolded to your view. (Mosiah 2:9)*

Joseph B. Wirthlin counseled, "God has revealed everything necessary for our salvation. We should teach and dwell on the things that have been revealed and avoid delving into so-called mysteries. My counsel to teachers in the Church, whether they instruct in wards and stakes, Church institutions of higher learning, institutes of religion, seminaries, or even as parents in their homes, is to base their teachings on the scriptures and the words of latter-day prophets." ("Deep Roots," Ensign, Nov. 1994, 77)

Elder W. Mark Basset spoke on the topic of "mysteries", Oct 2016, For Our Spiritual Development and Learning

## Wisdom's path

*...if ye should transgress and go contrary to that which has been spoken, that ye do withdraw yourselves from the Spirit of the Lord, that it may have no place in you to guide you in wisdom's paths that ye may be blessed, prospered, and preserved - (Mosiah 2:36)*

compare:

*...blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts, and lend an ear unto my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom; for unto him that receiveth I will give more; and from them that shall say, We have enough, from them shall be taken away even that which they have. (2 Ne 28:30)*

cf 3 Ne 26:7-12 and Alma 12:9-11

## Son of God the Father of heaven and earth

Changing of punctuation can change meaning.

*And he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning; and his mother shall be called Mary. (Mosiah 3:8)*

These commas suggest Christ is both the Son of the Father and Christ is also the Father of heaven and earth.

*And he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God the Father of heaven and earth the Creator of all things from the beginning; and his mother shall be called Mary.*

This suggests Christ is the Son of God the Father. And God the Father is the Father of heaven and earth, and the creator of all things from the beginning.

In the first layout, we are forced to view the content of these verses as essentially Trinitarian, because Christ is both the Father and the Son. In the second, instead we have two personages, one of whom was the Father of heaven and earth and the other who is His Son.

## Becoming a Child

*Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. (Matt 18:3)*

Becoming "as a child" is a requirement.

*For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father. (Mosiah 3:19)*

## Meeknes

A difficult attribute to recognize, it is found in the relationship between man and God, not between man and man; to be meek is to follow the Lord's will, even when one doesn't want to do so, even when it brings one into conflict with friends, family, or community. Meekness is measured as between the servant and the Lord, not as between the servant and his critics. Meekness, among other things, involves a conscious effort to avoid harming or offending others. It requires an absence of pride or self-will. It is not insistent upon being recognized or applauded. It denotes a willingness to suffer without complaint. Others may never recognize the meek, because meekness does not vaunt itself nor demand notice. There is great freedom in meekness. It relieves the meek from the burden of seeking their acclaim. It gives them the security of feeling God's approval for their course of living. It is private. Meekness means a person voluntarily restrains himself and uses the absolute minimum control or authority over others. It is related to humility. Humility is voluntary submission to the control or power of God — in other words, obedience. Meekness affects a person's relationship with his fellow man. There is nothing showy or attention-grabbing about the meek. Instead, they are content to know they have a relationship and power with God. Unless God requires something to be done or revealed, the meek do not voluntarily put this authority on display.

## Humility

Voluntary submission to the control or power of God or, in other words, obedience. Children are by nature more humble than adults. They not only do not have a good working knowledge of practical skills, they are keenly aware of their own ignorance. As a result, children are inquisitive and eager to be taught. They not only don't know, they know they don't know and want to be given the chance to learn. They "seek" and "ask" and "knock." Children do, by nature, just as Christ bids all to do. One is not teachable without humility. Humility and the capacity to accept new truth are directly related. Humbling oneself is not just an expression to wear on one's countenance. Rather, it is opening one's heart up to higher things. Can you accept truth if it is taught to you? Even if it contradicts your traditions? Even if it alienates you from family, friends, comfortable social associations, your neighbors (Matthew 19:27-30)?

## Patience

As used in Mosiah 3:19, patience is not defined as it typically is; rather, it refers to the patience a child has as he grows into adulthood. There are many years ahead to reach adulthood — there is nothing the child can do to change that, nor do they attempt to do so. In much the same way, most adults have many years ahead of them before they become fit for an audience with Christ (or the Second Comforter. See John 14:16-17, 2 Ne 32:5-6, D&C 93:1). Just like one cannot rush from childhood into adulthood but must progress by degrees through the many long months into many years, so too, men and women must progress from a smaller degree to a much larger one. Perhaps it takes decades to develop, as necessary, to receive an audience with Christ. Children persist in waiting, growing, and maturing. Their progression into adulthood is gradual. But that process is relentless and marches on through two decades of development and maturity. That is the patience spoken of in this scripture.

## Full of love

Being "full of love" is what the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of 1 Corinthians is all about. Charity is the "pure love of Christ." This childlike attribute comes from a natural disposition to share love which children enjoy by their native status. As we progress into adulthood and experience the disappointments of other's failings, we become less willing to love others.

## Willing to submit

Christ asked: "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46.) Calling Him Lord is not enough. Willingness to submit requires a willingness to be inconvenienced.

From the book, *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid* by Douglas Hofstadter.

You see, for a crab to walk on dry ground, the weight of its forward arms is so great that they must be dragged along the ground. They cannot push them by going forward. Instead, that requires the crab to walk backwards. To go forward, it must walk backwards. Since all things testify of God and His ways, the crab is also a testimony of some truth. It tells us by its movement that to go forward we must go backward.

Says the crab: "After all, when we walk forwards, we move backwards. It's in our genes, you know, turning round and round. That reminds me-I've always wondered, 'Which came first-the Crab, or the Gene?' That is to say, 'Which came last the Gene, or the Crab?' I'm always turning things round and round, you know. It's in our genes, after all. When we walk backwards, we move forwards.

Here is a short section one of the Crab's Genes, turning round and round. When the two DNA strands are unraveled and laid out side by side, they read this way:

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....TTTTTTTTTCGAAAAAAAAA  
....AAAAAAAAAGCTTTTTTTTT
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Notice that they are the same, only one forwards while the other goes backwards. This is the defining property of the form called "crab canon" in music.

That same pattern appears in the Menorah. The seven lamps have arms which connect the first to the last. If you were to set the lamp stand out in the same form using "ABC" the pattern would look like:

A-B-C-D-C-B-A.



This pattern also reminds us anew of the Lord's injunction: 'Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.' (Matt 18:3.) Returning to the mind of a child is necessary as a precondition, according to Christ's words, for us to be able to enter His kingdom"

What is it about the mind of a child that makes him or her more suited to following Christ? Is it innocence? Certainly a child's mind is more innocent than the adult's. But innocence also accompanies the willingness or even the necessity to imagine things. Children are able to hold out the possibilities for Santa and tooth-fairies and Peter Pan. To a child these things are possible. It requires failures and disappointments to form an adult mind. Those failings and disappointments make the adult mind skeptical, and unbelieving. Things once held in honor by the childish mind become impossible to believe in adulthood.

Simplicity marks the child's mind. Things are much clearer to a child than they are to an adult. Craftiness and cunning develop in the maturing adult mind and are alien to the child's mind. Part of the process of developing involves learning people can be mean, cunning and manipulative. Adults can generally recall specific events in their childhood when they felt betrayed for the first time. All of that is part of the mortal curriculum because we have come here to receive knowledge of good and evil.

Adult cynicism and skepticism, however, ill-serves us as we seek higher things. The Lord was teaching a profound principle in telling us we must become as little children if we wish to enter His kingdom. It is a requirement.