

Book of Mormon Study – Mosiah 11-17

Online zoom Sunday School, 10 May 2020

Trying to get an idea of numbers.

King Noah reigns for about 12 years before Abinadi shows up. To be able to accumulate enough gold, copper, ziff, etc. in 12 years to build a spacious palace and to ornament the chairs in the temple with pure gold where he and his priests sat (11:9-11), from taxes collected from the people at a rate of 1/5th of all they possessed (11:3), how many people at a minimum could we assume makes up the kingdom? (Keep in mind mining and refining these precious metals is also involved)

Quick search tells me Iraq (where there is polygamy) is currently growing at a rate of 2.32%. USA grows at about .6%, Denmark about .4%

If we assume Noah's kingdom is a city size of Smithfield at around 9K, and Zeniff settled at around 200 BC, then at the time Abinadi starts preaching is around 52 years later:

At an aggressive growth rate of 2%, for the population at the time of Abinadi to be 9K, Zeniff would have had to come down with around 3181 people. If we assume a population of only around 4K, then Zeniff's party would have needed to be around 1413. (These numbers would not account for any immigration that might have contributed to the population).

Abinadi

When Noah's people departed from God's path, a single man entered the scene. He was unconnected from any known genealogy. Only he bears the name "Abinadi" in the book, and therefore we cannot know for certain if he was Nephite, Lamanite, Jaredite, or something other. The lone witness, Abinadi, condemned King Noah, his court and his people. The established authorities were incredulous. King Noah declared: "Who is Abinadi, that I and my people should be judged of him, or who is the Lord, that shall bring upon my people such great affliction?" (Mosiah 11:27) The "house of order" (play on D&C 109:8), as far as the king and his priests could tell, could not include such an outsider.

Stick of Joseph footnote Mosiah 12:1

Avinodi would almost certainly have chosen an opportune time to re-enter the city. A festival would have given him a large audience (compare John 7:1–10, where Yeshua secretly returned to Jerusalem for Sukkot [feast of tabernacles]). It appears that this occasion was Shavuot [feast of weeks], evidenced by Avinodi's strong use of Shavuot imagery, themes, and liturgy in his message. (See *Stick of Joseph* footnotes to Moshiah 12:33, 13:5,24 below).

Shavuot - Festival of Weeks

Shavuot, (Hebrew: שבועות, lit. "Weeks"), is known as the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost (Koinē Greek: Πεντηκοστή) in English. It is a Jewish holiday that occurs on the sixth day of the Hebrew month of Sivan, meaning it may fall between May 15 and June 14. (This year it will be May 29)

Shavuot has a double significance. It marked the all-important wheat harvest in the Land of Israel (Exodus 34:22) and it commemorates the anniversary of the day when God gave the Torah to the nation of Israel assembled at Mount Sinai—although the association is not explicit in the Biblical text between the giving of the Torah (Matan Torah) and Shavuot.

The holiday is one of the Three Pilgrimage Festivals of the Bible. The word Shavuot means "weeks" and it marks the conclusion of the Counting of the Omer. Its date is directly linked to that of Passover; the Torah mandates the seven-week Counting of the Omer, beginning on the second day of Passover, to be immediately followed by Shavuot. This counting of days and weeks is understood to express anticipation and desire for the giving of the Torah. On Passover, the people of Israel were freed from their enslavement to Pharaoh; on Shavuot, they were given the Torah and became a nation committed to serving God. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shavuot>)

Mosiah 12:4

Pestilence is not just bugs and vermin; it is also confusion, disorder, and chaos.

Stick of Joseph footnote Mosiah 12:5

Shavuot is the wrapping up of Passover after the counting of the Omer. Avinodi begins using Exodus imagery in Moshiah 7:10–11 (Mosiah 12:1-5. See also Mosiah 11:20-25). Compare Ex. 1:11.

Stick of Joseph footnote Mosiah 12:6

These words were particularly relevant, as Shavuot is a harvest festival.

Mosiah 12:12

Here is pride, vanity, and here is the very thing which, had the people to whom Melchizedek spoke, had they done this, there would have been no City of Peace, there would have been no Salem, there would have been no second Zion. Contrast with Melkesidek's people in Alma 13:17-18.

Mosiah 12:15

"And behold, we are strong, we shall not come into bondage, or be taken captive by our enemies; yea, and thou hast prospered in the land, and thou shalt also prosper."

This verse is advice given by wicked, deceived priests to a vain and insecure king. These priests are like many others condemned in scripture: they are religious and believe themselves to be teaching correct principles, but they are profoundly wrong. It is interesting that these counselor-priests are confident in

the advice they give because of the apparent success of King Noah's reign. They confuse outward signs of success with God's approval of the King.

Do we confuse outward signs of success with God's approval in our day? Where the scriptures emphasize that obedience is what brings prosperity, do we tend to switch it and use prosperity as the gauge (for example, our prosperity as a church is evidence of God's favor on us as his chosen people)? (Deut 29:9; Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do. [see also 2 Chron 24:20] Job 36:11-12 If they obey and serve him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures. But if they obey not, they shall perish by the sword, and they shall die without knowledge.) Nowhere does the Lord commend we measure our standing before Him by the prosperous circumstances of our lives.

An example of this is in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man. The rich man "fared sumptuously" (Luke 16:19) in his lifetime. Yet he merited no name in the parable. As to the beggar Lazarus, he was not only named, but he was given the same name as one of Christ's beloved friends. In the parable, the character called "Lazarus" never does "prosper" in life. He begged from hunger and was "full of sores,... moreover the dogs came and licked his sores." This is not a picture of prosperity. But it is the picture of someone whom the Lord loved, despite his terrible circumstances in life. Upon his death, Lazarus "was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom" Here at last, and only after death, does Lazarus finally "prosper."

- Ps 73:12, Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches.
- Ps 37:16, A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked.
- Ps 73:3, For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

Stick of Joseph footnote Mosiah 12:33

Shavuot is traditionally the anniversary of Moshe receiving the Torah on Mount Sinai (b.Shabbat 86b).

Stick of Joseph footnote Mosiah 13:5

Ex. 34:29. The Shavuot imagery continues with Avinodi's face shining as Moshe's did when he received the Torah.

Stick of Joseph footnote Mosiah 13:24

Ex. 20:4–17. The Shavuot imagery continues with Avinodi's recitation of the mitzvot.

Law of Moses

Mosiah 12:31-32; 13:27-28

If Abinadi were speaking to us today, what would he be telling us... They relied on the law of Moses as the thing that brought salvation. What is the similar thing upon which we rely or trust as authoritative thing that signifies that we are sealed unto eternal life with our families? It, like the law of Moses was to the people of Nephi (or Israel), was a means to something, an end, not the end itself.

What does it mean The Law of Moses fulfilled?

“And as many as have received me, to them have I given to become the sons of God; and even so will I to as many as shall believe on my name, for behold, by me redemption cometh, and in me is the law of Moses fulfilled.” 3 Ne 9:17

Stick of Joseph footnote 2 Ne 25:24

What does it mean to fulfill the Torah? David Bivin and Roy Blizzard wrote: “‘Destroy’ and ‘fulfill’ are technical terms used in rabbinic argumentation. When a rabbi felt that his colleague had misinterpreted a passage of Scripture, he would say, ‘You are destroying the Law!’ Needless to say, in most cases his colleague strongly disagreed. What was ‘destroying the Law’ for one rabbi, was ‘fulfilling the Law’ (correctly interpreting Scripture) for another” (Bivin, D. and Blizzard, R. (1983) *Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus*. Arcadia, CA: Makor Publishing, p. 154). Yosef ben Yosef [Joseph Smith] understood “fulfilled the law” to mean that Mashiach [Messiah or Christ] “magnified” the Torah and made it “honorable” and not that he destroyed it. He said that Mashiach himself “fulfil[l]ed all righteousness in becoming obedient to the the (sic) Law which himself had given to Moses on the mount and thereby magnified it and made it honorable instead of destroying it” (Cook, L.W. & Ehat, A.F. (Eds.) (1980) *The Words of Joseph Smith*. Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, p. 162-3)."

Stick of Joseph footnote 2 Ne 25:27

142 We read in the Torah, “Cursed be he that confirms not all the words of this Torah to do them” (Deut. 27:26). This deadness is not from Torah observance, but from Torah violations. Yet Torah is life (Deut. 30:10–20; 32:46–47), and the Mashiach is the Torah (3 Nephi 15:2-10).

143 The underlying Hebrew may have been chalaf חָלַף (Strong’s 2498), which can mean “done away” but can also mean “changed, renewed, or revived.” This same word (that is translated in the as “renewed”) is found in Isa. 40:31 and 41:1. Yeshua later testifies to the Nefites (in 3 Nephi 12:46) in parallel thought that “things which were of old time... [were] all fulfilled. Old things are done away and all things have become new” (see note to 3 Nepi 5:31; M’roni 8:2).

Mosiah 14:2

For Christ was going to grow up before God "as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." Almost the entire Hebrew vocabulary is based upon a three-letter root. The root of the word translated as “beauty” is talking about something to be coveted, desired, or some kind of precious thing you want... It could be translated, "He had no bona fide authority that we should submit to it." Or perhaps, “He had no standing, credibility, bona fides, he had no position that we should acknowledge him."

Mosiah 14:10

“Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him;”

Notice the astonishing statement, "it pleased the Lord to bruise him." Can you imagine! This seems so surprising at first. However, it is not. In the account of Enoch account, this topic is explained from the viewpoint of heaven. Enoch was in heaven looking at the events of the earth. He was shown in vision the events to follow his time. Enoch saw the destruction of the wicked and spoke in the bitterness of his heart. We read in Moses chapter 7 verse 44:

"Enoch saw this, he had bitterness of soul, and wept over his brethren, and said unto the heavens: I will refuse to be comforted; but the Lord said unto Enoch: Lift up your heart, and be glad; and look. And it came to pass that Enoch looked; and from Noah, he beheld all the families of the earth; and he cried unto the Lord, saying: When shall the day of the Lord come? When shall the blood of the Righteous be shed, that all they that mourn may be sanctified and have eternal life? And the Lord said: It shall be in the meridian of time, in the days of wickedness and vengeance. And behold, Enoch saw the day of the coming of the Son of Man, even in the flesh; and his soul rejoiced, saying: The Righteous is lifted up, and the Lamb is slain."

Enoch was weeping in the bitterness of his heart. "I will refuse to be comforted." All this loss, all this waste, all this death, all this wickedness! So much reason to mourn, "I will refuse to be comforted." He beheld men killing one another until God ended the bloodshed by destroying the wicked. It was so awful a scene Enoch determined nothing could possibly comfort him about the ruin of mankind. But then the Lord says to Enoch, in effect, "No, no, no! Be happy! See! The Lamb is slaughtered!" This suffering and death of the Lamb will undo the destruction. Where there was now death before Enoch, the scene is transformed by the sacrifice of the Lamb of God. Through that sacrifice, hope is provided. This is why Isaiah declared; "It pleased the Lord to bruise him." Is there no other way? No, there's no other way. God must offer Himself as a sacrifice.

Stick of Joseph footnote Mosiah 15:1

Ex. 19:11; Ps. 50:3. Ps. 50 is an important part of the Shavuot imagery and has many parallels with Avinodi's message. Ps. 50:13–14 emphasizes that Elohim prefers thanksgiving over sacrifices, while Avinodi calls for the mitzvot to be "written in your hearts" (Mosiah 13:11). Ps. 50:16–21, like Avinodi, gives a strong rebuke to observe the Torah; Ps. 50:16, 22, also like Avinodi (in Mosiah 11:20-25; 12:25-30), calls us to keep the Torah, not merely proclaim the Torah.

Christ is both Father and the Son

Mosiah 15:2-5

In the declaration of Abinadi he uses language that also tends to make Christ the same person as God the Father. Here is Abinadi's statement:

"Abinadi said unto them: I would that ye should understand that God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people. And because he dwelleth in flesh he shall be called the Son of God, and having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, being the Father and the Son—The Father, because he was conceived by the power of God; and the Son, because of the flesh; thus becoming the Father and Son—And they are one God, yea, the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth. And thus the flesh becoming subject to the Spirit, or the Son to the Father, being one God, suffereth temptation, and yieldeth not to the temptation, but suffereth himself to be mocked, and scourged, and cast out, and disowned by his people." (Mosiah 15: 2-5.)

Abinadi likewise says Christ will be “called the Son of God.” He qualified to be “called” because He “subjected the flesh to the will of the Father.” You cannot be the Son of God the Father unless you reflect Him. You are His “Son” when you are like Him. To be like Him you must subject your will to the will of the Father. This is how Christ defined Himself. (3 Ne 11:11)

When Christ subjected Himself entirely to the will of the Father, He was in every deed, thought and action “the Father” even though He was flesh and blood and living among us. They were “one.” (John 10:30) If you beheld Christ, you would behold the image of His Father. (John 14:9)

Who is Christ's seed?

Mosiah 15:8-10

What Abinadi is talking about here are those who have connected with God, like becoming a “seer” that we talked about last week. Or what Joseph Smith meant when he spoke of a legally authorized administrator, “Whenever men can find out the will of God and find an administrator legally authorized from God, there is the kingdom of God; but where these are not, the kingdom of God is not.” (TPJS p. 274) This is His seed. It’s not our relationship as “Children of God” that we sing about in primary. It’s something we gain when we prove worthy of it as described in LoF 6:8.

Mosiah 15:14-18

The feet of those who walk upon the mountains crying peace are beautiful (Isa. 52:7) because they are clean from the blood and sins of their generation.

In the ancient ceremonies involving animal sacrifice, blood was shed upon the ground and the feet of those involved in the rites became bloody. The blood of the sacrifice upon the feet became a symbol of the sins for which the sacrifice was offered.

The feet of those who walk upon the mountains crying peace are cleansed from that blood. Christ’s washing of His Apostles’ feet was to symbolize this cleansing which He alone could provide. He employs no servant to provide such a cleansing. (2 Ne. 9: 41.) These feet, washed by Him are, therefore, beautiful because they connote the sanctity of the one crying peace.

“Crying peace” because the only thing which stills the mind of man, and brings rest from the trouble of this world, is the atonement of Christ. That is why it is called “the rest of the Lord.” When cleansed, it becomes the consuming desire of those who are clean to bring others to partake. Just like Lehi’s dream, when those who had eaten of the fruit of the tree of life ate, they immediately invited others to come and join them.

“Upon the mountains” because the mountain is nature’s symbol of the ascent to God. The climb represents repentance and purification of the soul. When a person stands upon the top of the mountain, she appears to be part of heaven itself and no longer earthbound. Her profile is with the sky, symbolizing the completion of the ascent back to God.

It is beautiful. All of it is beautiful. All of it is a reflection of the purity and intelligence of God, whose ways are higher than man’s ways as the heavens are higher than the earth. (Isa. 55: 8-9.)

Mosiah 15:26

But behold, and fear, and tremble before God, for ye ought to tremble; for the Lord redeemeth none such that rebel against him and die in their sins; yea, even all those that have perished in their sins ever since the world began, that have wilfully rebelled against God, that have known the commandments of God, and would not keep them; these are they that have no part in the first resurrection. (cf with Mosiah 2:36-37)

Mosiah 15:27

Therefore ought ye not to tremble? For salvation cometh to none such; for the Lord hath redeemed none such; yea, neither can the Lord redeem such; for he cannot deny himself; for he cannot deny justice when it has its claim.

“When you think of Christ as 'the prototype of the saved man' (LoF 7:9) you should also remember Christ 'attained to the resurrection' by 'breaking the bonds of death.' Justice requires man to die. When we die it will be deserved. From Adam to the present, this has been true for everyone. But when Christ died it was unjust. The 'wages of sin' is death, but He did not earn those wages. He never fell to sin, and therefore the law of justice was offended by His death. Because of this, He was able to take His body up again, and the law of justice could not prevent it. To the contrary, justice required His resurrection. Christ's death offended the law of justice.

When a man who should have lived forever is slain, something infinite is taken. Therefore the price He paid was infinite. Whatever justice could demand from the fall had been satisfied. Accordingly, Christ can intercede for all mankind.”

Stretched Forth His Hand

Mosiah 16:1 (see also Mosiah 12:2)

And now it came to pass that after Abinadi had spoken these words, he stretched forth his hands and said, The time shall come when all shall see the salvation of the Lord, when every nation, kindred, tongue, and people shall see eye to eye and shall confess before God that his judgments are just (Mosiah 16:1). Mosiah 12:24 helps one to understand what he stretched forth his hand(s) means: The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations. Abinadi is demonstrating the Lord's action, thereby affirming he is His messenger. He had been given the sign to testify and used it to declare he was a true messenger. Later in the Nephite history, the prophet Alma concluded his testimony of Melchizedek by using the same sign to evidence his authority: And now it came to pass that when Alma had said these words unto them, he stretched forth his hand unto them and cried with a mighty voice, saying, Now is the time to repent, for the day of salvation draweth nigh! (Alma 13:21). He used this sign because he was authorized to do so, and he understood what the declaration meant. Although those who were there may not have understood, it was a sign that he was a true messenger. Man cannot be saved in ignorance. Once the key of knowledge is lost, mankind is lost and cannot be saved until that key is returned. Prophets sent with messages who testify to an ignorant people use signs that the Lord recognizes and authorizes, but they may not be noticed or understood by those who

hear the message. Nevertheless, the testimony becomes binding when the Lord's seal is put upon it. This often involves a required sign to be given, or in other words, for hands to be stretched forth.

Stick of Joseph footnote Mosiah 16:14

For example, the Passover was a shadow which Mashiach fulfilled; therefore, Paul says, "Therefore let us keep the feast" (1 Cor. 5:7–8).

Mosiah 17:7-8

For all else they might have found to accuse him, Abinadi ends up being put to death for teaching that Christ is the Son of God, become man.