

Introduction

Mosiah 9–24 recounts the history of a colony led by Zeniff from the land of Zarahemla to the land of Lehi-Nephi. The record covers a period of almost 80 years, from about 200 B.C. until their return to the land of Zarahemla in about 121 B.C. This was about the same time period that Kings Mosiah¹, Benjamin, and Mosiah² were reigning in the land of Zarahemla; Zeniff, Noah, and Limhi reigned in the land of Lehi-Nephi.

During the reign of King Noah, the prophet Abinadi warned the people to repent. He also prophesied of pending destruction for turning from God. Abinadi's teachings also demonstrated the Savior's divinity, His unity with the Father, and the great sacrifice the Savior would make in the Atonement process. By studying the words of Abinadi, you can renew feelings of gratitude for the Savior's sacrifice and gain deeper appreciation of the Atonement.

Abinadi's martyrdom exhibits his great courage. Abinadi's testimony led to the conversion of Alma but cost Abinadi his life. As you ponder the events of Abinadi's ministry, consider the influence that one righteous man had on future generations. Through his one known convert—Alma—came the next several generations of prophets who prepared the people for the coming of Jesus Christ. Like Abinadi, you too can profoundly affect your family and others you know by testifying of truth and by living righteously.

Commentary

Insert before Mosiah 9

- The inserted heading prior to the chapter summary of Mosiah 9 is part of the original record given to the Prophet Joseph Smith (see commentary for The First Book of Nephi: His Reign and Ministry on p. 12). The phrase “Comprising chapters 9 to 22 inclusive” was added when the Book of Mormon was published in chapter format in the 1879 edition.

Mosiah 9. The Record of Zeniff

- Mosiah 9:1–4 and Omni 1:27–29 both relate the story of Zeniff's first expedition to recolonize the land of Nephi-Lehi; however, Mosiah 9:1–2 reveals why the first expedition fought a civil war and was forced

to return to the land of Zarahemla. Zeniff did not delight in war but desired to live in peace among the Lamanites. Mosiah 9–10 was written by Zeniff without abridgement or comment by Mormon. Note that the date for Mosiah 8 is 121 B.C. The date for Mosiah 9 is 200 B.C. The record reverted back in time 80 years to tell what happened in the land of Lehi-Nephi during the time period of Benjamin and Mosiah's reign in Zarahemla.

Mosiah 9:16–18; 10:10–11, 19. “In the Strength of the Lord”

- Zeniff recorded that they fought “in the strength of the Lord” when battling the Lamanites (see Mosiah 9:16–18; 10:10–11, 19). Although Zeniff's people were greatly outnumbered, they overcame their Lamanite aggressors with comparatively few casualties. Their success was due to their faithfulness to God. The Lord heard their cries and blessed them with strength. Throughout the Book of Mormon we see that giving strength to His people is one of God's tender mercies. Benjamin's people in Zarahemla were victorious over the Lamanites because they fought “in the strength of the Lord” (Words of Mormon 1:14).

In the book of Alma, the success of the Nephite armies can be attributed to their ability to trust in God to assist them in their battles and not in the size of the army (see Alma 2:27–31; 43:49–51; 56:56). Although our battles may not be physical warfare, the phrase “in the strength of the Lord” teaches us that we too can ask for assistance from God to grant us strength to triumph over our foes.

Mosiah 9–22. The History of Zeniff and His People

- The book of Mosiah is often confusing because of the different storylines and historical flashbacks that are part of the book (refer to the chart “Flashbacks from Omni through Mosiah” in the appendix, p. 413). The history contained in Mosiah chapters 9–22 flashes back approximately 80 years to the time when Zeniff and a small band of followers left the land of Zarahemla to return to the land of Nephi. The record contains the history of Kings Zeniff, Noah, and Limhi. The flashback narrative takes the reader back to the Book of Mormon

history as Zeniff's group is reunited with the people of Zarahemla in Mosiah 25.

Mosiah 10:11–17. False Traditions

- The Lamanites came to accept as truth a distorted version of events concerning their original journey from Jerusalem. These false traditions were handed down from generation to generation, creating deep prejudices or an “eternal hatred” among the Lamanites against the Nephites (Mosiah 10:17). In latter-day revelation the Lord warned that Satan uses false traditions to take “away truth and light” (D&C 93:39; see also D&C 123:7–8). Because of these traditions the Lamanites felt justified in murdering, robbing, and attempting to destroy or enslave the Nephites (see Mosiah 10:17).
- Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught what we should do when a family or cultural tradition conflicts with God's plan or standards. He counseled us to carefully examine our lives to determine what traditions may differ from the teachings of the Lord:

“Your Heavenly Father assigned you to be born into a specific lineage from which you received your inheritance of race, culture, and traditions. That lineage can provide a rich heritage and great reasons to rejoice. Yet you have the responsibility to determine if there is any part of that heritage that must be discarded because it works against the Lord's plan of happiness.

“You may ask how can one determine when a tradition is in conflict with the teachings of the Lord and should be abandoned? That is not easily done. I have found how difficult it is as I work to overcome some of my own incorrect traditions. . . . Customs and traditions become an inherent part of us. They are not easy to evaluate objectively. Carefully study the scriptures and counsel of the prophets to understand how the Lord wants you to live. Then evaluate each part of your life and make any adjustments needed. Seek help from another you respect who has been able to set aside some deeply held convictions or traditions that are not in harmony with the Lord's plan. . . .

“Is yours a culture where the husband exerts a domineering, authoritarian role, making all of the

important decisions for the family? That pattern needs to be tempered so that both husband and wife act as equal partners, making decisions in unity for themselves and their family. . . .

“These are other traditions that should be set aside—any aspect of heritage:

“That would violate the Word of Wisdom.

“That is based on forcing others to comply by the power of station often determined by heredity.

“That encourages the establishment of caste systems.

“That breeds conflict with other cultures” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 112–13; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 86).

Mosiah 11:2–19, 27. Noah Walked “after the Desires of His Own Heart”

- For discussion on concubines, see commentary for Jacob 1:15 on page 115.
- Mormon vividly described the wickedness of King Noah (see Mosiah 11:2–19, 27). Later, Mosiah used the example of King Noah as the primary reason to eliminate government by kings: “How much iniquity doth one wicked king cause to be committed, yea, and what great destruction! Yea, remember king Noah” (Mosiah 29:17–18). King Noah's complete selfishness in seeking the desires of the flesh stands as a warning to modern readers of the fate of such individuals.

Mosiah 11:20. The Prophet Abinadi

- Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles highlighted Abinadi's courage and willingness to obey the Lord: “Abinadi infuriated wicked King Noah with his courageous testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ. Eventually this great missionary offered the ultimate sacrifice for his witness and faith but not before his pure testimony touched one believing heart. Alma, one of King Noah's priests, ‘repented of his sins . . . , [accepted Jesus as the Christ,] and went about privately among the people, and began to teach the words of Abinadi’ (Mosiah 18:1). Many were converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ as a direct result of Abinadi's powerfully borne testimony of the

Savior, believed by one soul—Alma” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2004, 43; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 41).



- While serving in the Seventy, Elder Cree-L Kofford discussed Abinadi’s influence and example: “What is there that is so special about Abinadi? Perhaps it was his total obedience as he went, presumably alone, among those whom he must have known would take his life, to deliver the word of the Lord and to cry repentance to the people. Perhaps it is the very fact that we know so little about him, or perhaps it was simply the way with which he faced the adversities which came into his life in such a straightforward, ‘square-to-the world’ way. Whatever the reason, Abinadi was and is special. His life, lived so long ago, still has the power to excite the mind and cause the pulse to pound” (“Abinadi,” in *Heroes from the Book of Mormon* [1995], 69–70). We know that Abinadi was a man who came from among the people, not from outside their society. He was obviously a righteous man called to warn his own people that if they did not repent, bondage and destruction would follow.

Mosiah 11:21; 12:1–2, 8. Abinadi’s Warnings

- The failure of the people of Noah to hearken to Abinadi’s first warning (see Mosiah 11:21) led to a more serious warning when he returned two years later. The consequence became that they would be in bondage, and if they did not repent they would be destroyed (see Mosiah 12:1–2, 8). This is often the case in life—when we put off obedience or delay following the prophet, we bring more serious consequences upon ourselves.

Mosiah 12:15–24. “Him That Bringeth Good Tidings”

- One of King Noah’s wicked priests challenged Abinadi: “What meaneth the words . . . : How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings; that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good?” (Mosiah 12:20–21). As you read Mosiah 12–15, note how thoroughly Abinadi responded to this question.



MOSIAH 12:25, 27

Why were the priests unable to understand the scriptures? How can we keep from falling into the same error?

Mosiah 12:34–36; 13:11–26. The Ten Commandments

- President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) declared that the Ten Commandments (see Exodus 20:3–17 ) are an essential part of the gospel of Jesus Christ in every generation: “[The] Ten Commandments [were] written by the finger of Jehovah on tablets of stone for the salvation and safety, for the security and happiness of the children of Israel and for all of the generations which were to come after them” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1991, 71; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 51).

Mosiah 13:28. “Salvation Doth Not Come by the Law Alone”

- Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles testified of the absolute need for Jesus Christ, even when we live righteously: “Men and women unquestionably have impressive powers and can bring to pass great things. But after all our obedience and good works, we cannot be saved from death or the effects of our individual sins without the grace extended by the atonement of Jesus Christ. The Book

of Mormon makes this clear. It teaches that ‘salvation doth not come by the law alone’ (Mosiah 13:28). In other words, salvation does not come simply by keeping the commandments. ‘By the law no flesh is justified’ (2 Ne. 2:5). Even those who try to obey and serve God with all their heart, might, mind, and strength are ‘unprofitable servants’ (Mosiah 2:21). Man cannot earn his own salvation” (“Another Testament of Jesus Christ,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1994, 67).

Mosiah 13:34. “God Himself Should Come Down”

- The term *God* generally refers to our Heavenly Father, and it is Him whom we ultimately worship. It is also true that Jesus Christ is God. Saints of the Old Testament era knew Him as Jehovah, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Elder James E. Talmage (1862–1933) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that the scriptures help us understand the divinity of Jesus Christ and His role as a God: “We claim scriptural authority for the assertion that Jesus Christ was and is God the Creator, the God who revealed Himself to Adam, Enoch, and all the antediluvial patriarchs and prophets down to Noah; the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; the God of Israel as a united people, and the God of Ephraim and Judah after the disruption of the Hebrew nation; the God who made Himself known to the prophets from Moses to Malachi; the God of the Old Testament record; and the God of the Nephites. We affirm that Jesus Christ was and is Jehovah, the Eternal One” (*Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. [1916], 32).

Mosiah 13:27–35. The Law of Moses and Jesus Christ

- Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught how the law of Moses relates to the gospel of Jesus Christ:

“The modern reader should not see the Mosaic code—anciently or in modern times—as simply a tedious set of religious rituals slavishly (and sometimes militantly) followed by a stiffnecked people who did not accept the Christ and his gospel. This historic covenant, given by the hand of God himself . . . was . . . a guide to spirituality, a gateway to Christ. . . .

“. . . It is crucial to understand that the law of Moses was overlaid upon, and thereby included, many basic parts of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which had existed before it. It was never intended to be something apart or separated from, and certainly not something antagonistic to, the gospel of Jesus Christ. . . . Its purpose was never to have been different from the higher law. Both were to bring people to Christ” (*Christ and the New Covenant* [1997], 136–37, 147).



MOSIAH 14:2-5
What do we learn of the Savior?

Mosiah 14:1–12. Isaiah’s Messianic Prophecy

- To powerfully teach the importance of the Atonement, Abinadi quoted from the writings of Isaiah. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland explained the significance of Isaiah 53 (Mosiah 14) as a witness of the Savior’s role: “Surely the most sublime, the lengthiest and most lyrical declaration of the life, death, and atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ is that found in the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, quoted in its entirety in the Book of Mormon by Abinadi as he stood in chains before King Noah” (*Christ and the New Covenant*, 89).

Mosiah 14:5. “With His Stripes We Are Healed”

- In reference to the suffering of Jesus Christ during the Atonement and its healing power, Elder M. Russell Ballard shared the following:

“What peace, what comfort this great gift is which comes through the loving grace of Jesus Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of all mankind. . . .

“. . . Even though His life was pure and free of sin, He paid the ultimate penalty for sin—yours, mine, and

everyone's who has ever lived. His mental, emotional, and spiritual anguish were so great they caused Him to bleed from every pore (see Luke 22:44; D&C 19:18). And yet Jesus suffered willingly so we might all have the opportunity to be washed clean—through having faith in Him. . . . Without the Atonement of the Lord, none of these blessings would be available to us, and we could not become worthy and prepared to return to dwell in the presence of God" (in Conference Report, Apr. 2004, 86–87; or *Ensign*, May 2004, 84–85).

Mosiah 15:1–7. How Christ Is Both the Father and the Son

- Sometimes the scriptures refer to Jesus Christ by using the title "Father." Elder M. Russell Ballard explained why Jesus Christ is sometimes referred to as both the Father and the Son:

"How can Jesus Christ be both the Father and the Son? It really isn't as complicated as it sounds. Though He is the Son of God, He is the head of the Church, which is the family of believers. When we are spiritually born again, we are adopted into His family. He becomes our Father or leader. . . .

"In no way does this doctrine denigrate the role of God the Father. Rather, we believe it enhances our understanding of the role of God the Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. God our Heavenly Father is the Father of our spirits; we speak of God the Son as the Father of the righteous. He is regarded as the 'Father' because of the relationship between Him and those who accept His gospel, thereby becoming heirs of eternal life. And the third member of the Godhead, God the Holy Ghost, has the specific mission to teach and to testify of truth as it pertains to the divinity of both God the Father and God the Son" ("Building Bridges of Understanding," *Ensign*, June 1998, 66–67).

- On June 30, 1916, under the leadership of President Joseph F. Smith, the Brethren set forth a detailed statement on the Father and the Son entitled "The Father and the Son: A Doctrinal Exposition by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles." A portion of this exposition explains how Jesus Christ is identified in the scriptures as both the "Son" and at times as the "Father":

"'Father' as Creator. . . . Scriptures that refer to God in any way as the Father of the heavens and the earth are to be understood as signifying that God is the Maker, the Organizer, the Creator of the heavens and the earth.

"With this meaning, as the context shows in every case, Jehovah, who is Jesus Christ the Son of Elohim, is called 'the Father,' and even 'the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth' [see Ether 4:7; Alma 11:38–39; Mosiah 15:4; 16:15]. . . .

"Jesus Christ the 'Father' of Those Who Abide in His Gospel. [Another] sense in which Jesus Christ is regarded as the 'Father' has reference to the relationship between Him and those who accept His gospel and thereby become heirs of eternal life. . . .

"To His faithful servants in the present dispensation the Lord has said, 'Fear not, little children, for you are mine, and I have overcome the world, and you are of them that my Father hath given me' (D&C 50:41). . . .

"Jesus Christ the 'Father' by Divine Investiture of Authority. . . . Jesus the Son has represented and yet represents Elohim His Father in power and authority. . . . Thus the Father placed His name upon the Son; and Jesus Christ spoke and ministered in and through the Father's name; and so far as power, authority, and godship are concerned His words and acts were and are those of the Father" ("The Father and The Son," *Ensign*, Apr. 2002, 14–15, 17).

Mosiah 15:10–13. The Seed of Christ

- Elder Dallin H. Oaks explained how one becomes a son or daughter of Jesus Christ: "In these great scriptures from the Book of Mormon, we learn that those who are qualified by faith and repentance and compliance with the laws and ordinances of the gospel will have their sins borne by the Lord Jesus Christ. In spiritual and figurative terms they will become the sons and daughters of Christ, heirs to his kingdom. These are they who will be called by his name in the last day" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1985, 104; or *Ensign*, May 1985, 82).

- While serving as Presiding Bishop, Elder Merrill J. Bateman described how Jesus would see His seed: "The Savior, as a member of the Godhead, knows each of us personally. Isaiah and the prophet Abinadi

said that when Christ would ‘make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed’ (Isaiah 53:10; compare Mosiah 15:10). Abinadi explains that ‘his seed’ are the righteous, those who follow the prophets (see Mosiah 15:11). In the garden and on the cross, Jesus saw each of us and not only bore our sins but also experienced our deepest feelings so he would know how to comfort and strengthen us” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 15–16; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 14).

Mosiah 15:13–20. How Beautiful Are the Feet

- Paraphrasing Isaiah, Abinadi extolled the great blessings that have come and will come to all the holy prophets who publish peace (see Mosiah 15:15–17) and to the Savior, who “is the founder of peace” (see Mosiah 15:18). That peaceful message is that the Redeemer would come and indeed has come to redeem his people from sin and has brought to pass the resurrection of the dead (see Mosiah 15:18, 20).
- While serving in the Seventy, Elder Carlos E. Asay (1926–99) shared an insight into the imagery of this statement from Isaiah:

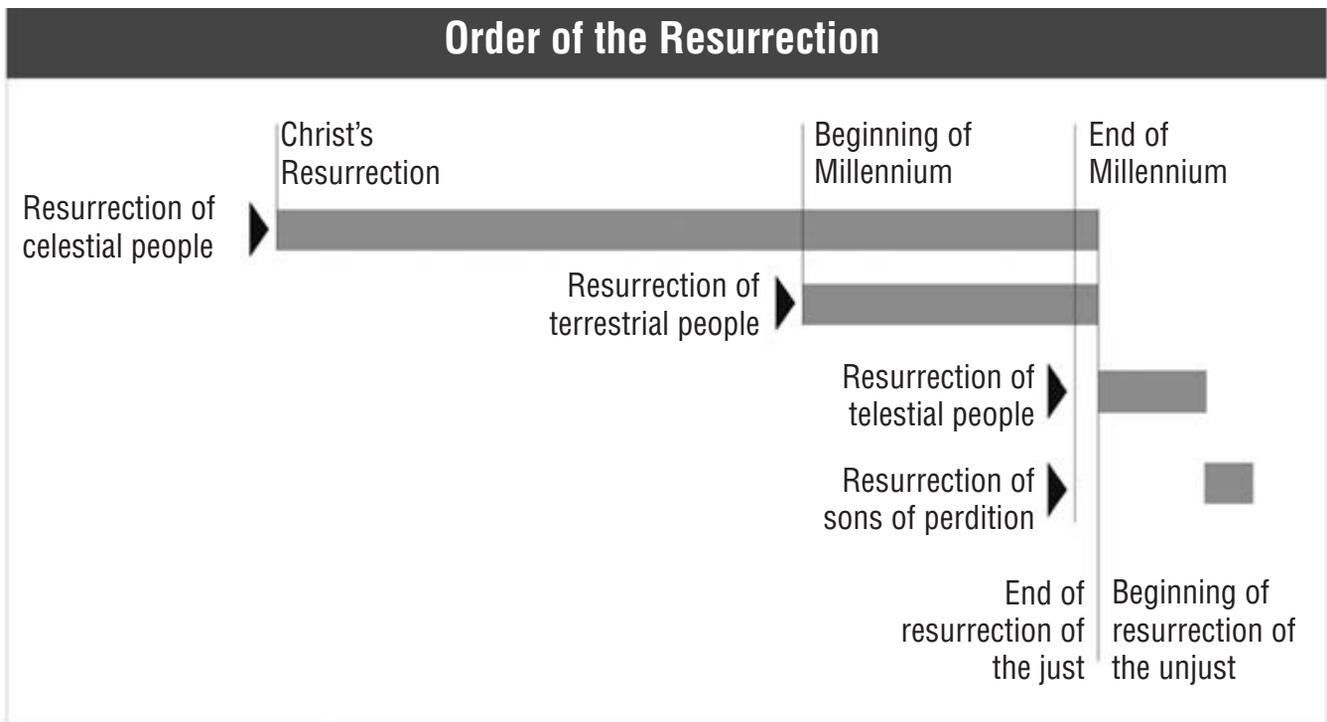
“No one is more beautiful or more blessed than those who serve God by preaching and exemplifying the

truth. It is the most sanctifying and beautifying labor of all! . . .

“The feet, the voices, the faces, and the whole being of those preachers who share saving truths will always be precious and beautiful to new converts, especially to those who have suffered in their sins. In the eyes of those who have learned of Christ and of his power to save, there are few if any blemishes in the missionaries who walked long distances to bring the gospel message” (*The Seven M’s of Missionary Service* [1996], 135–36).

Mosiah 15:20–31. The First Resurrection

- Jesus Christ was the first person on this earth to be resurrected. Consequently, the period of time referred to in the scriptures as the First Resurrection commenced with His triumph over the grave and continues through the Millennium. Abinadi taught that those who would come forth in the First Resurrection would include “the prophets, and all those that have believed in their words” (Mosiah 15:22), those who have died in ignorance without having “salvation declared unto them” (Mosiah 15:24; see also D&C 45:54), and little children who die before they are accountable (see Mosiah 15:25; Moroni 8:1–24).



Brian D. Garner, *Search These Things Diligently* (2003), 151.

Mosiah 15:25. Little Children Have Eternal Life

- Concerning the salvation of little children, the Prophet Joseph Smith (1805–44) taught, “Children will be enthroned in the presence of God and the Lamb . . . ; they will there enjoy the fullness of that light, glory and intelligence, which is prepared in the celestial kingdom” (*History of the Church*, 4:555–56).

Mosiah 17:6–20. The Example of Abinadi

- Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles emphasized the need to follow the example of Abinadi’s courage in keeping the commandments:

“What a powerful example Abinadi should be to all of us! He courageously obeyed the Lord’s commandments—even though it cost him his life!

“Prophets of all dispensations have willingly put their lives on the line and, with courage, have done the will and proclaimed the word of God.

“The Prophet Joseph Smith went ‘like a lamb to the slaughter’ (D&C 135:4), never wavering as he fulfilled the Lord’s commandments.

“And think of our Savior’s example. . . . He endured to the end, fulfilling His divine mission and completing the atoning sacrifice for all mankind.

“. . . Let us follow the example of our Lord Jesus Christ and His prophets, past and present. It may not be required of us to give our lives as martyrs, as did many of the prophets. What is required is our obedience to the Lord’s commandments and our faithfulness to the covenants we have made with Him” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1996, 49; or *Ensign*, May 1996, 35).

Points to Ponder

- What do you think it means to have the Lord’s commandments “written in your hearts”? (Mosiah 13:11).
- Why is it important to know that the Savior was and is a God? How should this knowledge affect our faith in His ability to save us?
- How can you live a righteous life regardless of the wickedness that is all around?

Suggested Assignments

- As you read through Mosiah 12:34–13:24, find and mark each of the Ten Commandments. Choose one of these commandments to obey more fully. Record in your journal how you will accomplish this.
- Read Mosiah 14 and compare it with Mosiah 3:7–8. Write a one-page summary of Mosiah 14 in your own words, or write a one-page testimony of what the Savior means to you.