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## Abinadi and Noah: Normative Judaic Nephite Religion versus Syncretic Mayan-Judaic Dissident Religion

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# Chapter 1

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### The Setting of the Land of Nephi at the Time of Abinadi

According to the Sorenson model (2013) the land of Nephi was located in the current Valley of Guatemala, with one of the principal archaeological sites being the ancient city of Kaminaljuyu. The known parts of Kaminaljuyu lie on a broad plain beneath roughly the western third of modern Guatemala City. Unfortunately, large portions of this archaeological site were destroyed or covered by the urbanization of Guatemala City, so a complete archaeological representation of the city is now impossible.

The calendar system for year-counts in the Book of Mormon up until nine years after the coming of Christ was the 12 lunar month year of 354.367 days/year. Some additional dates are now also known from the “Caractors” Document (Grover 2015). Using this calendar count, the basic timeline involving this area, and the Book of Mormon calculated up to the time of king Noah and the order of Nehor is:

- circa 179 BC – Zeniff departs Zarahemla
- circa 166 BC – Conflict between Lamanites and Nephites within the Valley of Guatemala; Lamanites described as an idolatrous people; Lamanites described as a wild, ferocious, and blood-thirsty people
- circa 155 BC – King Noah comes to power (estimated)
- circa 145 BC – Abinadi put to death (estimated)
- circa 93 BC – First year of the reign of the judges

After becoming king, Noah had many wives and concubines, and “did cause his people to . . . commit whoredoms and all manner of wickedness” (Mosiah 11:2). He laid a tax on the people, taking a portion of their ownership of various items, which he used to support himself and his wives as well as his priests and their wives and concubines (Mosiah 11:4). He engaged in “riotous living” with his wives and concubines, as did his priests with their harlots (Mosiah 11:14).

Notably, the prophet Abinadi, who reprimanded king Noah and was eventually put to death by him, specifically noted two areas of wickedness: worshiping graven images and sexual lasciviousness amongst the priest class, which was then extended to the general population. In addition to general greed, Abinadi specifically identified these two main areas where they had deviated from the law of Moses (Mosiah 12:29, 34–35, 13:12–13). Noah and his priests were apparently practicing a version of religion that they thought somewhat consistent with the law of Moses (Mosiah 12:28). Their religious practices were evidently incorporating some elements of indigenous Mesoamerican religious practices. This type of incorporation of surrounding religious practices is called syncretization and is found in other situations of Nephite apostasy in the Book of Mormon (Wright et al. 2012). It seems apparent that the elements of the Mesoamerican religion being incorporated shared consistency with some corrupted elements of the law of Moses.

The incorporation of native religious beliefs by an enclave of a different religion is a common occurrence, even in the modern world. I have witnessed Chinese Catholic churches that allow the traditional worshipping of ancestors involving the burning of incense, where only saints were worshiped before. Statues of Christ often had Asian facial features.

The syncretization and modification of the enclave religion is easier when it involves slight modifications or incorporates parallel practices that do not completely change the religious ceremony or practice. This makes it much easier for practitioners of the modified religion to claim that they are still essentially practicing the “old time” religion. Thus priests of Noah could still claim they were still practicing the law of Moses without compunction.

The Southern Maya Region, which includes the Valley of Guatemala, has been classified by most archaeologists during the Late Preclassic period (400 BC–AD 250, which includes the time of king Noah) as having a mix of cultures and ethnicities present, with the Maya culture being one of the dominant cultures (Love 2011). There is much disagreement among archaeologists as to the cultural and geographical source of the Maya. The Book of Mormon itself reflects that at least two groups existed at that time, the Nephites and the Lamanites. Since political and religious affiliations are only two elements of a culture group, it would not necessarily be expected that the other basic ways of life and culture (agricultural practices, dwelling type, etc.) were extremely different between these groups.

It would not be expected that any significant portion of the Maya culture in the Valley of Guatemala would have incorporated many cultural elements of the original Lehi group. The Maya as a culture group at the time of king Noah extended geographically far beyond the Southern Maya Region. In addition, it would not be expected that the culture of the original small group of Lehiites arriving in the sixth-century BC would be existent in its exact original form 400 years later at the time of king Noah.

While the original culture of king Noah would be classified as Nephite, it seems clear from the religious practices (graven images, human sacrifice, etc.) that there was a significant deviation on the level of the king and the priests to a different religious practice and that they were incorporating the religious practices of adjacent cultural groups. Within a decade or so of Zeniff’s arrival, he described the Lamanites as “idolatrous” (Mosiah 9:12), so the Lamanites are identified as a likely source of the later idolatry practiced by king Noah. It would be reasonable to assume that the cultural group from which they were borrowing was the Maya, which would be equivalent to the Lamanites in this respect. Since the adjacent group that the Book of Mormon refers to are the Lamanites, it would seem reasonable that the Lamanites belong to the Maya cultural group of the local area.

### **Religious Syncretization by King Noah with the Maya**

Since the setting for the location of king Noah in the Land of Nephi has been identified as the area of the Valley of Guatemala, a look at aspects of what we know of the area in relation to the syncretization of the Nephite religion by king Noah might be of interest. Specifically the large archaeological site of Kaminaljuyu in the valley can provide us some information.

Also notable is the fact that Abinadi emphasized that God would come down to earth and take upon himself the form of a man (Mosiah 13:34), which offended king Noah and his priests greatly and was one of the principal religious doctrines for which they condemned Abinadi to death (Mosiah 17:8). There are various possible reasons why this may have been an offense worthy of death.

1. The political position of king may also have been perceived as constituting a divine power, such that no intervention was needed by deity.

2. The form of worship that was being engaged in involved worshiping of graven images, “or any likeness of any thing in heaven above, or things which are in the earth beneath” (Mosiah 12:36) that were not in human form, so the description given by Abinadi would have been contrary to their belief in the form of God.

### King as a Divine Individual on Earth

Among the Maya during the Classic period, the inherently human nature of kings contrasted against their ability to manifest the divine, a phenomenon described as “concurrency” by several authors (Houston and Stuart 1996, 297–300; Houston et al. 2006, 270, 275), meaning the king’s human body became simultaneously occupied by divine presence(s) during ritual performances (see also Schele and Freidel 1990, 70; Schele and Miller 1986, 302; Stone 1991).

Sculpture 11 at Kaminaljuyu (see figure 1) has been interpreted in a similar fashion as the regalia of a king representing the god known as the Principal Bird Deity (“PBD”) (Henderson 2013, 335). Sculpture 11 is thought to be from roughly the same period as king Noah. The setting in this respect is consistent with the hostile reaction to Abinadi’s statement that God would come to the earth and walk among men, which would have been perceived as a direct challenge to king Noah’s position of being the manifestation of the divine on earth.

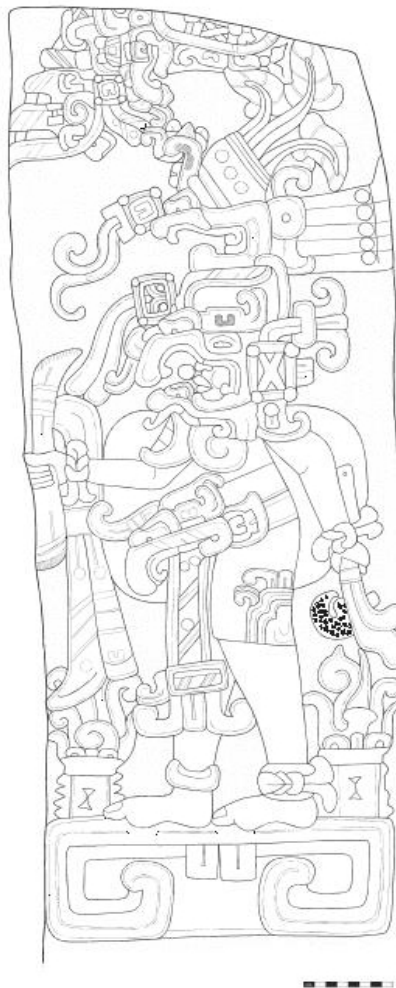


Figure 1. Sculpture 11 at Kaminaljuyu (Henderson 2013, 539)

It has been pointed out that king Noah is contrasted in many details with king Benjamin, with Benjamin the paragon of righteous leadership, while Noah is the epitome of wicked kingship (Donaldson 1991). King Benjamin, while not specifically referring to king Noah, makes clear that the practice of divine kingship is common and that he is not that type of king:

Mosiah 2:10

I have not commanded you to come up higher that ye should fear me, or that ye should think that I of myself am more than a mortal man.

### **Candidate Gods for King Noah graven images in Kaminaljuyu**

The following Maya gods have been potentially identified based on iconography that has been found at Kaminaljuyu and all had what would qualify as “graven images” present at Kaminaljuyu. Most would be considered a local god or a local form of a regional Maya god.

- Goddess O
  - Trefoil eye god
  - Antecedent God N
  - Old God (Sculpture 17 at Kaminaljuyu)
  - Kaminaljuyu Rain God
  - Horned water deity
  - Witz Eyed Earth
  - Crocodile earth deity
  - Bracket Beaked Deity
  - Feathered serpent
  - Principal Bird Deity
  - Foliated Jester God
- (Henderson 2013)

Henderson (2013, 268) asserts that “some kind of fusion or mixing took place among the trefoil-eyed god, God N, and the Principal Bird Deity to engender the later, standardized form known as Itzamna.” There may of course be other gods whose likeness or figures have yet to be unearthed.

### **Prophecies Regarding King Noah and His People Made by Abinadi Previous to Those of His Death**

During Abinadi’s first foray among the people of Noah he prophesied in relation to the future fate of the people that should they not repent, they would:

1. Be “delivered into the hand of their enemies”
  2. “Be brought into bondage”
  3. Be “smitten by their enemies”
  4. Their prayers will not be heard neither will they be delivered from their afflictions
- (Mosiah 11:20–26)

Though the people wanted to kill Abinadi, he was “delivered out of their hands.” He returned two years later prophesying that “this generation” would be:

1. “Brought into bondage”
2. “Smitten on the cheek”
3. “Shall be driven by men and shall be slain”

4. The vultures, dogs, and the wild beasts “shall devour their flesh”
5. Specifically, that the life of king Noah will be “valued even as a garment in a hot furnace,” or “as a garment in a furnace of fire.” Noah will also be as a stalk trodden underfoot and as a thistle which is driven forth upon the face of the land when blown by the wind.
6. The people would be smitten with sore afflictions, famine and pestilence.
7. The people “shall howl all the day long.”
8. The people “shall have burdens lashed upon their backs” and shall “be driven before like a dumb ass.”
9. Hail will be sent among them, and it shall smite them. They shall be smitten with the east wind, and insects shall pester their land and devour their grain.
10. The people shall be smitten with great pestilence.  
(Mosiah 12: 1–12)

### **Maya Ritual and Ceremony**

The Valley of Guatemala culture in which the Zeniffites were embedded was Maya, so it is useful to look into the Maya culture to determine if there are rituals or ceremonies that would be consistent with the incorporation of Maya elements into the Abinadi story. This section will describe many details of Maya New Year beliefs, rites, and practices. These details will provide the basis for the comparison of Maya practices with the Abinadi narrative. Readers who wish to understand Maya religion in its specifics and be able to make the comparisons for themselves will want to read this section closely. On the other hand, readers who are less interested in the details of Maya religion and mainly want to see the result of the author’s comparisons of it with the Book of Mormon text may wish to skim much of the description of Maya ritual.

In trying to postulate elements of the Late Pre-Classic (400 BC–AD 100) Maya religious practices one has to rely on later recounting of the Maya practices at the time of the Spanish conquest, on any Maya monumental or codex texts that may have existed, and iconographic depictions on buildings, stelae, or pottery.

#### Maya Bacab New Year Rituals and Prophecies

Diego de Landa (AD 1524–1579) was a Spanish bishop of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Yucatán, who compiled much valuable information on pre-Columbian Maya civilization, and specifically discussed New Year’s ceremonies and festivals.

The Maya Haab' calendar is comprised of eighteen months of twenty days each, plus an additional period of five days (“nameless days”) at the end of the year known as the Uayeb (Wayeb’ under current orthography). Because of the way that the Haab' calendar cycle plays out, there are four particular Maya days which must always be the first day of the Maya year. These New Year day names (“Year Bearers”), which identify the year, are, in order, Kan, Muluc, Ix, and Cauac. The five Wayeb’ days are linked to the perceived death of the world preceding its rebirth on New Year’s Day. During this time normal life is suspended and the people are susceptible to disease, misfortune, and death and have been referred to as “Utuz Kin” (Days of Lies or Deception), and “Ulobol Kin” (Days of Harm or Ruin) (Christenson 2016, 25–26).

Tozzer (1941), Love (1986, 169–71) and Taube (1988a, 272–73) have all indicated that Landa outlined three different rites that took place during the New Year’s festival. Taube defined them as (1) the death of the old year, corresponding with the termination of Cumku (Kumk’u under current orthography), which is the last twenty day month; (2) following Kumk’u, during the Wayeb’ period of the last five unlucky days of the year, transitional rituals; and (3) the rituals relating to the first day of Pop (the first month of the year; Pohp under current orthography). Love prefers to divide the rituals into two periods, the first during the Wayeb’, and the second the rituals relating to

the Pohp. Love labels the Pohp rituals as “New Year Ceremonies to Avert Calamities.” Pharo (2014, 179) has proposed a structure similar to Taube expanding on the first element which is:

1. The three preliminary veintena (month) rites (*Pax*, *K’ayab*, *Kumk’u*) of *Sabacil Than* of separation.
2. The transition five-day *Wayeb’* rites.
3. The incorporating, renovation and renewing rites of Pohp.

Preliminary Month Rites of Death of the Old Year; *Pax*, *K’ayab*, and *Kumk’u* rites

*Sabacil Than* was celebrated within towns and families as a diversion before the unlucky five day *Wayeb’* period in each of the last three veintenas of the calendar year. The wealthy arranged feasts with dancing and “excessive drinking” (Pharo 2014, 179). Landa reports that these ceremonies lasted until Pohp, the first veintena of the New Year.

The etymological meaning of “*Sabacil Than*” is a dye or ink from the burned soot of the *sabac-che* tree (Sp. *Exostema*), *than* is a word for “speech,” “word,” or “language,” but also “ordenanzas” or “law.” Tozzer proposed that this expression alludes to a rule or law to paint oneself black during the rituals of the last three veintenas of the year. Tozzer quotes Roman and Zamora indicating that the Indigenous people of Guatemala “each time they (the priests) sacrifice they blacken themselves. The men commonly do not bathe but blacken themselves and this is a kind of silicon and ornament of penance.” During the later Pohp rituals certain fasting persons are described as removing their black “*tizne negra*” with the arrival of the New Year. Landa indicates that this black soot was cleansed in a purification ceremony (Pharo 2014, 179–80). They were at this stage of the rite of passage ornamented with red ointment (Tozzer 1941, 152).

Fasting and celibacy were practiced from up to three veintenas beforehand among the lords, the religious specialists, the “principal people,” and “those who wished to do so on account of their devotion.” Thus, two ritual strategies were executed in preparing for the *Wayeb’* period: (1) drunken and excessive festival of the wealthy and elite; and (2) fasting, penance, and celibacy of certain religious specialists and devotees.

One of the sacrificial rituals that occurred during *Pax* is discussed later in relation to the sacrifice of *Abinadi*.

#### Wayeb’ Rituals

The veneration of four gods called the *Bacabs* occurred during the *Wayeb’* and involved the Year Bearers and their prognostics. The primary ritual inaugurating each New Year takes place during the five unlucky year ending days of the previous year. According to Landa, each *Bacab* ruled one of the directions and the associated Year Bearer day (one of four New Year days), as shown in table 1.

The Year Bearer correlation to cardinal directions documented by Landa has been disputed by Thomas (1882, 68–69), Thompson (1934, 212), and Tozzer (1941, 136–37n635). They agree that *Kan* should be associated with the east, *Mulek* with the north, *Ix* with the west, and *Kawak* with the south.

The general features of the *Wayeb’* ritual abstracted from Landa’s account are that each of the four entrances to a town had two heaps of stone “facing each other” according to the cardinal directions (Coe 1965). A hollow clay image of the god of the *Wayeb’* days with the correct color association was made, carried to the entrance at the appropriate direction, and placed on one of the stone heaps, with the facing heap still having the *Wayeb’* god from the previous year’s ceremony.

**Table 1. Maya Year Bearer Days and Associated Bacabs, Directions, and Color in the 1500s (Coe 1965)**

<i>Ceremony for year</i>	<i>in Uayeb days of</i>	<i>Color</i>	<i>Direction</i>	<i>Bacab</i>	<i>Chac</i>
Kan	Cauac	Yellow ( <i>Kan</i> )	South	Kanal Bacab (Hobnil)	Kan-xib Chac
Muluc	Kan	Red ( <i>Chac</i> )	East	Chacal Bacab	Chac-xib Chac
Ix	Muluc	White ( <i>Sac</i> )	North	Sacal Bacab	Sac-xib Chac
Cauac	Ix	Black ( <i>Ek</i> )	West	Ekel Bacab (Hosan Ek)	Ek-xib Chac

An official (referred to as a principal) was chosen by the nobles and the priest. He was in charge of the ceremony and in his house the festival was celebrated. A second image of another god was then made and placed in the house of the principal. The nobles, priests, and townspeople then gathered at his house and formed a procession over a road, which had been cleaned and adorned with arches and greenery and which led directly to the appropriate entrance and to the image of the Wayeb' god for the coming year.

The priests performed various rituals before the image of the god. The image was censed with *pom* (cobalt resin) ground up with maize; a bird was sacrificed by decapitation (usually a turkey hen), and the idol was then placed on a standard representing one of the world direction trees matching the appropriate color.

The image was then carried back in a recessional to the house of the principal. Once back in the principal's house, the Wayeb' image was placed opposite that of the second god, and offerings of food and drink were made to both, which then were divided among those present. The participants then drew blood from their ears with which they anointed a third image called *Acantun* (*acan* "set up"; *tun* "stone"). The Wayeb'god and the second god were censed and the Wayeb' god was regularly fed until the end of the Wayeb' days.

At the end of the Wayeb' days, on the eve of the New Year, the second god's image was carried out to the rock pile at the entrance located at the next cardinal point in a counterclockwise direction from that in use during that year's ceremony and placed there. Each year to come had its own omens (both good and bad), called by the Bacab for that year. The effect of the rituals was to "avert calamities."

A diagram of the movement of the idols was created by Coe (1965) (see figure 2).



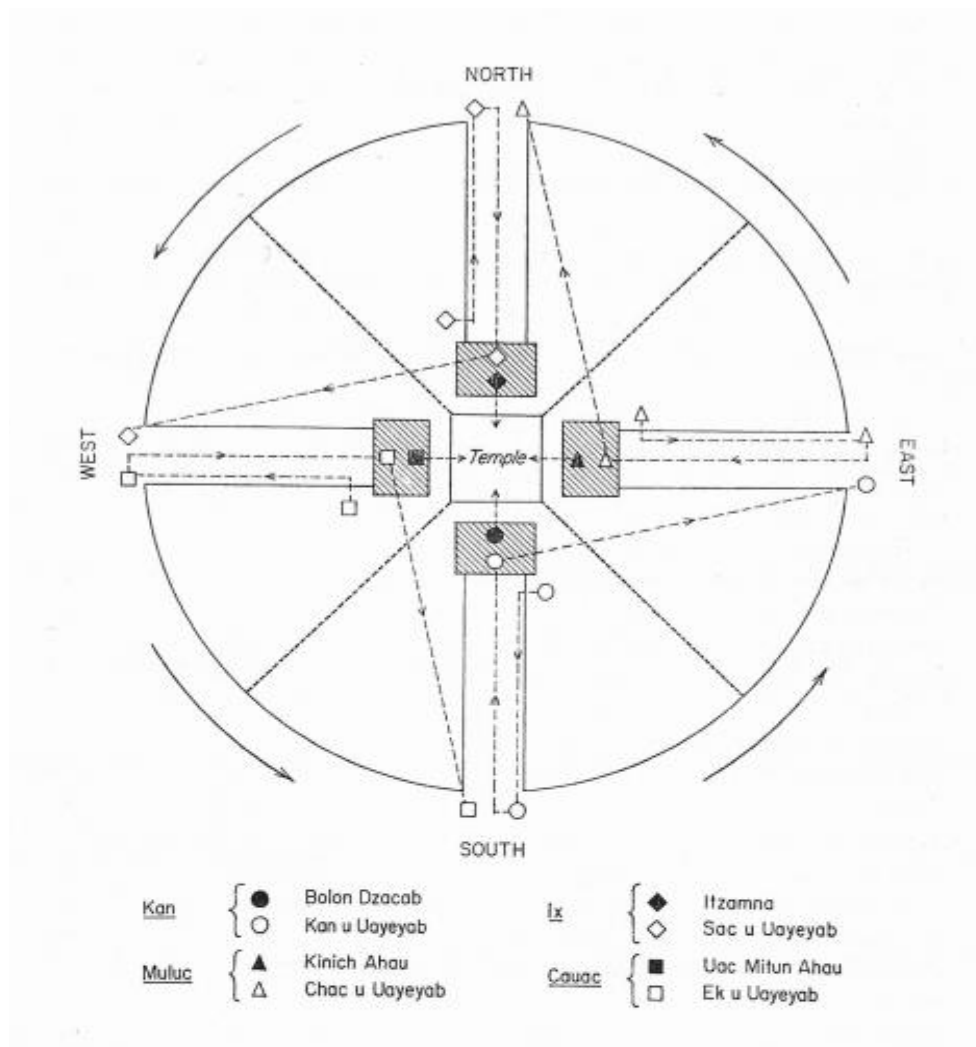


Figure 2. Diagram of ceremonial circuits in the Wayeb' rites. The shaded oblongs represent the houses of the *principales*. Hollow symbols stand for the images of the Wayeb' gods, and solid symbols stand for the images of other gods that were eventually carried into the temple. (Coe 1965, 101)

The four Bacabs were invoked in connection with rain and agriculture, since they were intimately associated with the four Chaacs, or rain deities, and the four Pawahtuns, or wind deities, and all sets of these gods are associated with the four cardinal directions. *Bacab* may simply be another term for *pawatun*. The four Bacabs are described as part of the earth and also supporters of the sky:

They gave other names to each one of them [Bacabs] and designated by them the part of the world where God had placed him, bearing up the heavens, and they appropriated to him and to the part where he stands one of the four dominical letters [year bearers]. And they distinguished the calamities and fortunate events which they said must happen during the year of each one of them, and other the letters, which must accompany them. (Tozzer 1941, 136)

The Pawahtuns have also been identified as an aspect of the God N deity (Vail et al 2013, 357). The four Mams are one of the deity sets identified in the year bearer pages of the Maya codices, and is an epithet of the Pawahtuns

(Vail et al. 2013, 79) and are also associated with the four cardinal directions and are said to live in the mountains and the Underworld.

In many polytheistic religions, a deity's epithets generally reflected a particular aspect of that god's essence and role, for which his influence may be obtained for a specific occasion. Alternatively the epithet may identify a particular and localized aspect of the god. Often the epithet is the result of fusion of one form of the deity with an older one.

According to Karl Taube's (1989) analysis, the Mams, Bacabs, and the Pawahtuns were different aspects of the same underlying deity and are also tied to God N.

It is interesting corollary to king Noah, that on Maya ceramics, God N is very often portrayed as a drunk and a lecher. Since the Bacabs were Year Bearer patrons, and also because of their meteorological qualities, the Bacabs were important in divination ceremonies; they were approached with questions about crops, weather, or the health of bees.

According to Landa and the *Chilam Balam de Chuymayel* (a mythic history from the town of Chuymayel), the Bacabs were created by the creator deity Hunab Ku when the gods made the universe in the third age and were placed at the four corners of the universe. Itzamna was worshiped as a creator deity at least as far back as the Classic period. Christenson (2016, 40–41) indicates:

The *Relación de Valladolid* refers to him [Itzamna] as the ah tepal (supreme ruler) of the sky, while the *Relación de Ekbalom* declares that “[the Maya] worshipped only one god, whose name was Hunab [Junab’, meaning “alone, sole, singular”] and Zamna [Itzamna].” (Taube 1992, 35–36)

A deluge destroyed the third age, but the Bacabs escaped destruction, were given new names, and then were again placed at the four corners of the earth to support the sky during the current age (Read et al. 2002). According to the *Chilam Balam de Chuymayel* the Bacab were the ones who caused the flood and the destruction of the prior age. Presumably, the destruction of the world would again occur if the Bacabs failed to perform this function (Christenson 2016, 28) or leave their posts as the pillars holding up the sky. As Landa indicated, if the Bacabs were not there to sustain the heavens, the heavens would fall (Tozzer 1941, 136).

According to the *Chilam Balam de Chuymayel* and the *Dresden Codex*, after the flood, the four Bacabs were responsible to put the new world in order by being responsible through the erection of four Imix trees at the cardinal points and one in the center and are referred to as “pillars of the skies” (Vail et al. 2013, 55).

The Bacabs have been identified as a manifestation of God N from the *Madrid Codex* (Thompson 1970, 278–79). Inscriptions on Panel I from Pomona show four God Ns holding the day associated with the seating of the first month of the calendar year (Stuart 2005, 4).

As well as being skybearers, the Bacabs are considered the gods of the underground, terrestrial water, and thunder. The word *bakab* can be translated as “first in the world” and the term was a commonly used title for rulers (and occasionally their wives) during the Maya Classic period (Vail et al. 2013, 71).

After the five days are past, according to Landa, there are four gods separate from the Bacabs who then rule over the rest of each of the years respectively: Bolon Czacab (a god of rain and regeneration); Kinich Ahau (a sun god); Itzamna; and Uac Mitun Ahau (an underworld deity). During the five days of Wayeb’ these gods are removed from their temples and offerings that would normally go to them are had by the Bacabs.

The Mam are thought of as evil, and are used to refer to an aged god of thunder. At times other than the Wayeb' the Mam is contained in the Underworld and bound in cords, the sound of thunder is believed to be his attempt to escape. López de Cogolludo recounts that the Wayeb' period rituals included an "idol" of the deity Mam (López de Cogolludo 1971, 4, VIII, 255). Pio Pérez (Craine and Reindrop 1979, 170–71) associates the "idol" of Mam with the ceremonies of the Wayeb' period (Stephens 1843, 281).

In present day Maya communities, the Mam "grandfather" comprises deities of rain and the mountains assigned to color and cardinal directions (Tozzer 1941, 138n639). There are four bearers of time (Year Bearers), Ik', Kiej, Ee, and Noj, called Alcalde or Mam in the K'iche' calendar of Momostenango, Guatemala. These are the deities of the cardinal directions and are each associated with the four mountains, El Tamanco, El Kilajá, Zocop, and Pipilj (Pharo 2014, 216). From various contemporary Maya groups are examples of Mams operating as Year Bearers where they are associated with mountains. In postclassic New Year rituals mounds of stone represent symbolic mountains, which were the place of the Uayeyab figure, also known as Mam, Bacab, and Pawahtun (Taube 1988a, 285–88). The Mam is a deity of evil that is feared among the Maya, who comes out of his dwelling beneath the surface of the earth during the Wayeb' (Christenson 2016, 50).

While Landa records the New Year Bearer ritual system in the 1500s among the Maya of the Yucatan, there is evidence that the New Year Bearer system was practiced in the Classic (AD 250 to AD 900) and Late Pre-Classic (300 BC to AD 250)(Stuart 2005), which extends back to the time of Abinadi. Stuart (2005) finds evidence that rituals involving the New Year Bearer system remained consistent through time. Shifts or adjustments in calendars causing changes in the four day names would not have made any change to the underlying ritual. Karl Taube has identified murals from the first century BC at San Bartolo, Peten, Guatemala with identical effigy World Trees and four offerings that match exactly those in the *Dresden Codex*, showing consistency of Maya New Year ritual practice for over 1,500 years (Taube 2010, 12–13, 25–29; Christenson 2016, 42).

There were a few other sets of New Year Bearer day names that were used in earlier times. The likely calendar at the time of Abinadi in the Valley of Guatemala was the Kaminaljuyu calendar, which utilized the Ik series of New Year Bearer days (Edmonson 1988, 6–8; Rice 2007, 36) which consisted of:

Day Name	Meaning	Associated God
Ik	Wind	God B
Manik	Deer	Earth
Eb	Grass	Destructive rain god
Caban	Quake	Youthful earth, rain goddess

The New Year Bearer rituals were tied to specific directions as the rituals described by Landa involved placing idols upon one of four sets of piles of stones situated around the town, with the piles located on the four cardinal directions of the town.

The Maya colors and direction pairs are correlations that were closely connected whereas the day names are not (Thompson 1934, 152) so when the Year Bearer observance occurs on days different than the series Landa described (Kan-Muluk-Ix-Cauac), the color, direction, and the rituals associated with each of the Landa series days would occur in association with the different series. It is not known which of the Year Bearer days utilized at the

time of Abinadi would correspond to the Ix day ceremonies documented by Landa, but all the rituals, colors, and directions would be expected to all remain the same as a group for whichever day it was.

#### New Year Ceremonies to Avert Calamities

Landa (Tozzer 1941, 136) described a portion of the New Year Bearer rituals and ceremonies related to prophecy as follows:

(T)hey distinguished the calamities and fortunate events which they said must happen during the year of each one of them [Bacabs], and of the letters [year day sign], which accompany them. And the devil, who deceived them in this as in everything else, informed them of the worships and offerings, which they were to make to him in order to escape the calamities. And so the priests said, when no calamity happened to them, that it was on account of the services which they had offered to him; and in case misfortunes came, they made the people understand and believe that it was owing to some sin or fault in the services or in those who performed them.

When comparing each of the New Year Bearer calamity prophecies with the initial calamity prophecies made by Abinadi, the Ix year ceremonies are striking. In the Ix year, certain calamities may occur if the New Year Bearer ritual ceremonies performed by the religious priests are not successful:

This year, in which the dominical letter was Ix in which the Bacab Sac cimi ruled, they considered as a mean year, since they said they had to suffer during it many misfortunes for they said there would be a great want of water, and many hot suns, which would follow a great famine, and from the famine thefts, and from the thefts slaves and selling those who stole. And from this would follow discords, and wars between themselves and with other towns. And they also said that there would be sure to be a change in the rule of the lords and the priests as a consequence of the wars and discords. They had also a prediction that some of those who wished to be lords would not arrive at their end. They said that they would also have locusts and that many of their towns would be depopulated by famine. That which the demon ordered them to do as a remedy for these calamities, all of which or some of which they believed would befall them, was to make an idol which they called Kinich Ahau Itzamna, and to place it in the temple, where they incensed it often and offered many offerings and prayers and shedding of blood which they anointed the stone of the idol Sac Acantun. . . . at this festival they built anew a little oratory to the idol or renovated it, and they assembled in it to make sacrifices and offerings to the idol, and to make a solemn orgy all together, for this festival was general and obligatory. There were also some fanatics, who of their own free will and through devotion, made another idol like that which has been spoken of above, and they placed in in other temples, where they made offerings and got intoxicated. They considered these orgies and sacrifices as very pleasing to their idols and as remedies to free themselves from the calamities of the prediction. (Tozzer 1941, 146-147)

A summary of the imminent relevant Maya calamities identified by Landa for Ix are:

1. Want of water and heat which would destroy the crops, followed by famine.
2. War between themselves and other towns which would trigger a change in the rule of the lords and priests as a result.
3. Locusts would come causing famine.
4. As mentioned, each of the New Year Bearer rituals involved the entrance to the town that corresponded with the direction of the New Year Bearer. Each of these four entrances may be protected by Maya markers (typically crosses for the contemporary Yucatec Maya) that protect the community from *k'ak'as* "bad winds." A specific ritual held in the past was performed to protect the community from the calamity of evil winds that had either already entered the community or caused sickness or from those that threatened (Vail et al. 2013, 360).

These crosses are thought to be representations of World Trees. From the description of Landa, two effigies trees are venerated during the Wayeb' which represent the World Trees. World Trees are symbolic of the creation or regeneration of the world (Christenson 2016, 35).

The recent Maya people of San Antonio, Belize, celebrate a ritual that is similar and is tied to the New Year Wayeb' ceremony described by Landa (Taube 1988a, 281–82). It involves worship to the four Mams (a counterpart of the Bacab), the gods of pestilence, and the ceremony protects the community from sickness and wild beasts.

It is noted also that sexual lasciviousness and drunkenness, according to Landa, were involved in the New Year's festival. Each year of the New Year's ritual also entailed the building of buildings (Love 1986, 177).

In the *Madrid Codex* (one of three surviving pre-Columbian Maya books dating to the Postclassic period of Mesoamerican chronology, circa AD 900–1521), prophecies are represented both visually and iconographically, and included portions related to the New Year Bearers. In one register are birds whose meanings are not specifically known. It is common for birds to serve as omens for particular time periods in Maya iconography, specifically a vulture in the *Dresden Codex* signifies an evil omen (Vail et al. 2013, 361). The *Dresden Codex* is a pre-Columbian Maya book of the eleventh or twelfth century of the Yucatecan Maya in Chichén Itzá and is believed to be a copy of an original text of some three or four hundred years earlier. The vulture is also known to have an important symbolic role within the Classic scaffold human sacrifice renewal ceremony (Taube 1988, 343).

Landa also indicated the sacrifices of dogs and men as part of the Kan year rituals (Tozzer 1941, 143). The dog figure and attacking wild beast figures are also featured on New Year ceremony pages of the *Madrid Codex*. A dog figure is featured on the Kan page.

The *Madrid Codex* also features dogs and garments as integral parts of the New Year's ritual. While both are more indicated as part of the Muluc ceremony, one of the dog figures bears the Kan sign. Thomas (1882) noted that there are many striking correspondences between the Madrid New Year pages and Landa's account of the 16th century Yucatec New Year rites. Thomas noted that according to Landa, for the year Muluc there was a stilt dance and another with small pottery dogs and, in addition, the sacrifice of a spotted dog (*Madrid Codex*, pg. 36). All three features are present in the Madrid Muluc scenes. Thus in the upper portion, there is a figure standing upon stilts. In the lower section, two small dogs are placed upon human feet, clearly a reference to the dance with pottery dogs. Just to the right, there is a spotted dog. Although this dog is not explicitly being sacrificed, it carries a Kan tamale affixed with Imix sign upon its back. Thomas noted that in Landa's account, the small pottery dogs were said to have carried "breads" or burdens on their backs. On page 37 of the *Madrid Codex* is a dog with human hands beating on a drum and howling (Vail et al. 2013, 363). Thomas also suggested that the garment just to the right of the stilt dancer represents the undecorated cloth woven by old women as a Muluc offering to Yax Coc Ah Mut (Taube 1988a).

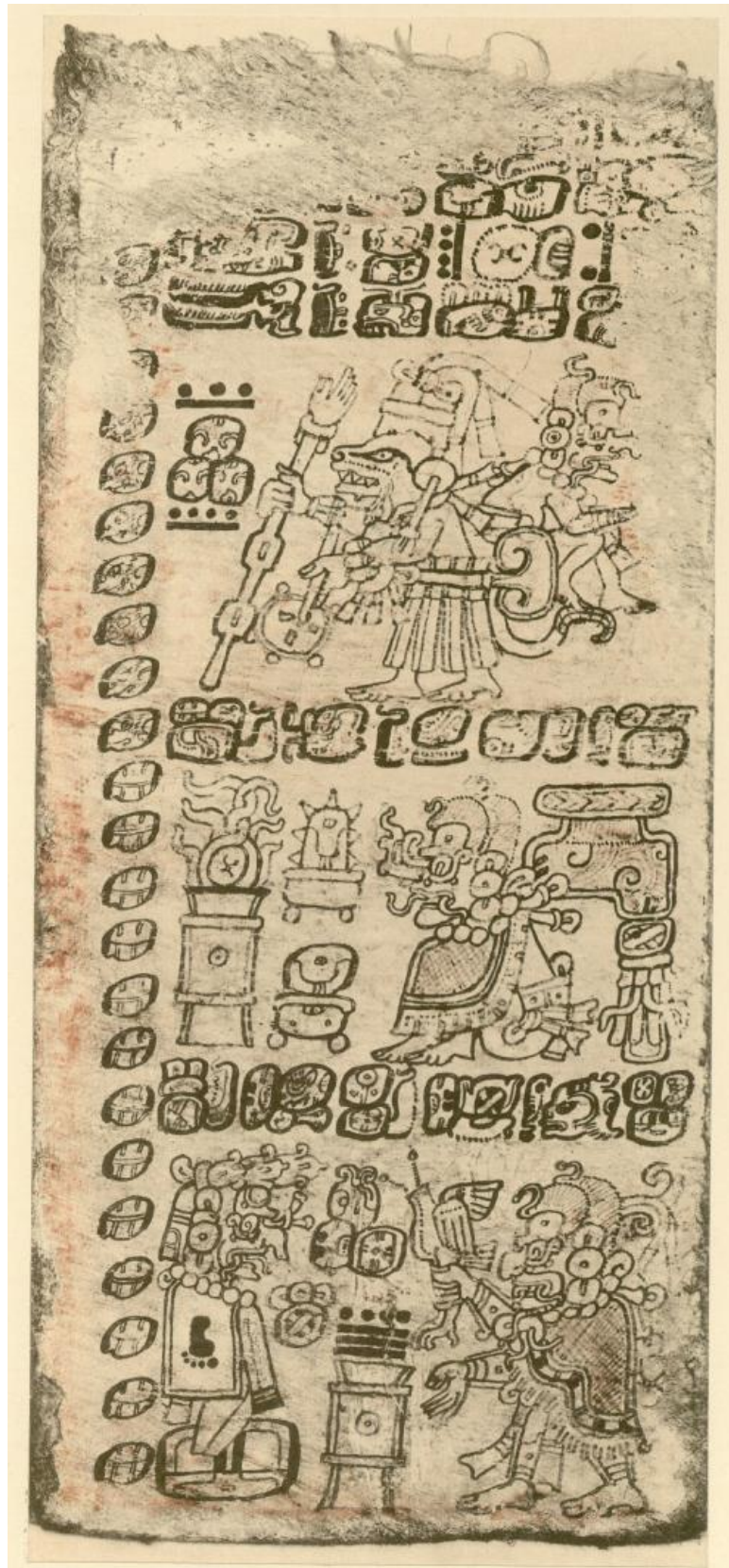


Figure 3a. *Dresden Codex*, page 25 ([www.Famsi.org](http://www.Famsi.org) 2016; *Dresden Codex* [www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/3\\_dresden\\_fors\\_schele\\_pp25-35.pdf](http://www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/3_dresden_fors_schele_pp25-35.pdf))



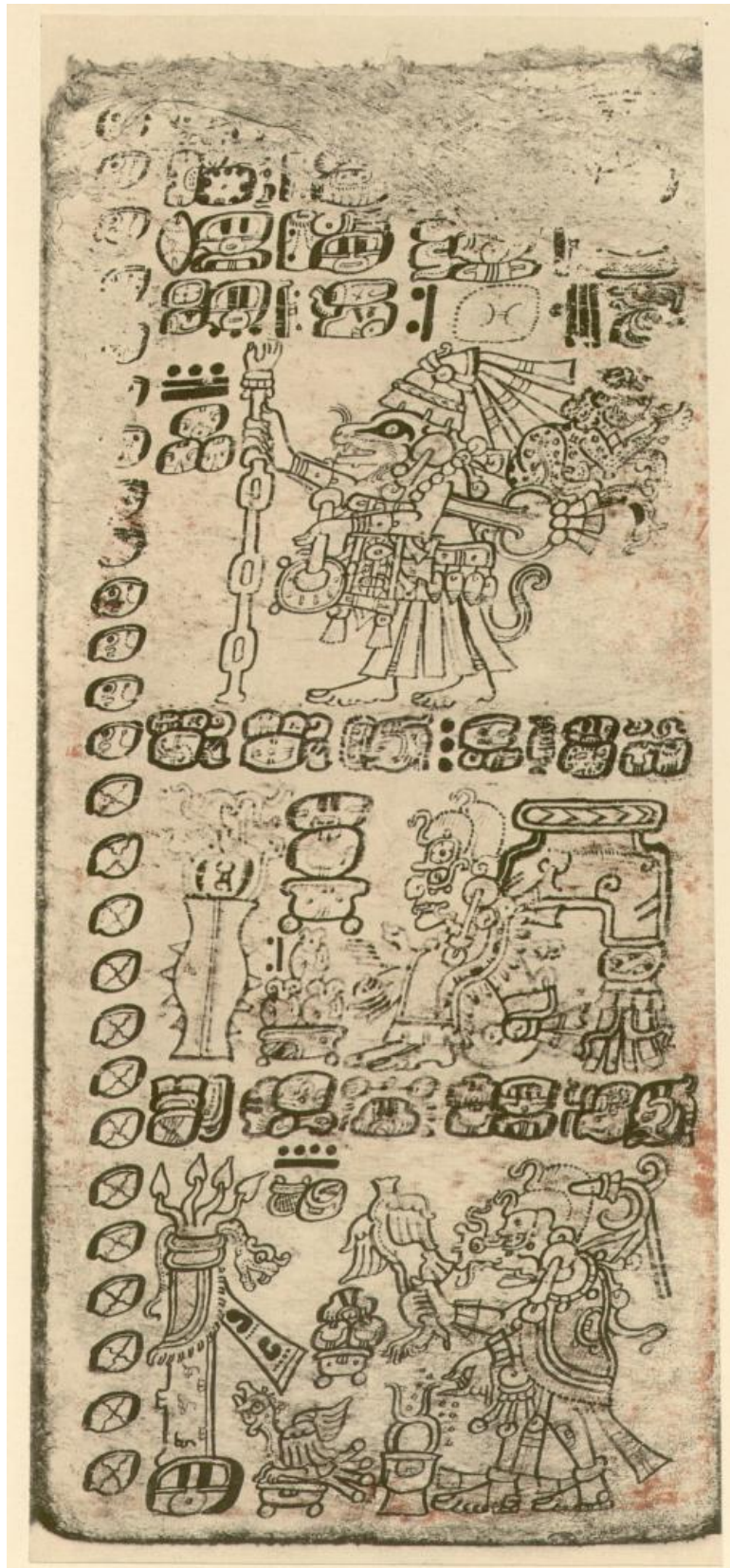


Figure 3b. *Dresden Codex*, page 26 ([www.Famsi.org](http://www.Famsi.org) 2016; *Dresden Codex* [www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/3\\_dresden\\_fors\\_schele\\_pp25-35.pdf](http://www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/3_dresden_fors_schele_pp25-35.pdf))

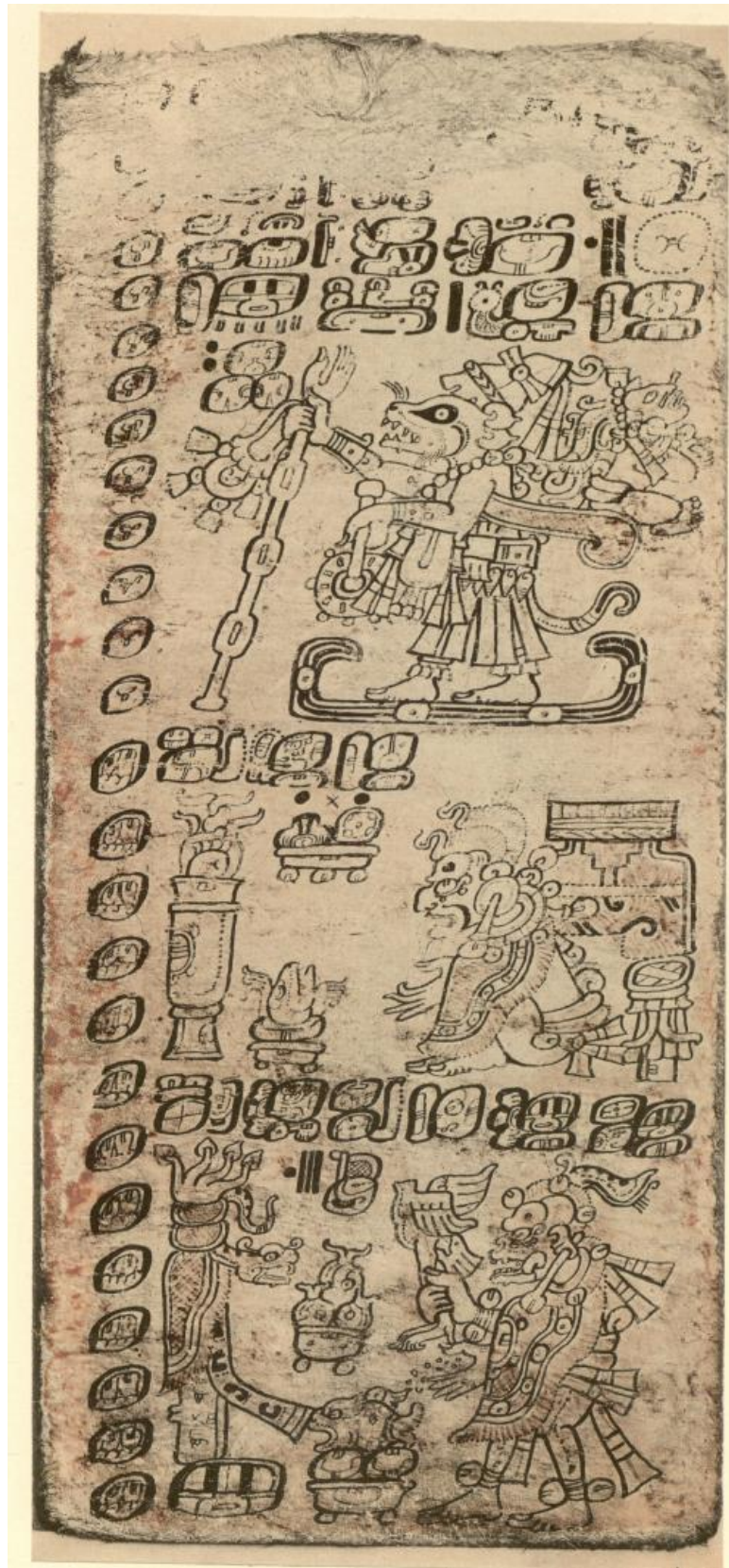


Figure 3c. *Dresden Codex*, page 27 ([www.Famsi.org](http://www.Famsi.org) 2016; *Dresden Codex* [www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/3\\_dresden\\_fors\\_schele\\_pp25-35.pdf](http://www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/3_dresden_fors_schele_pp25-35.pdf))



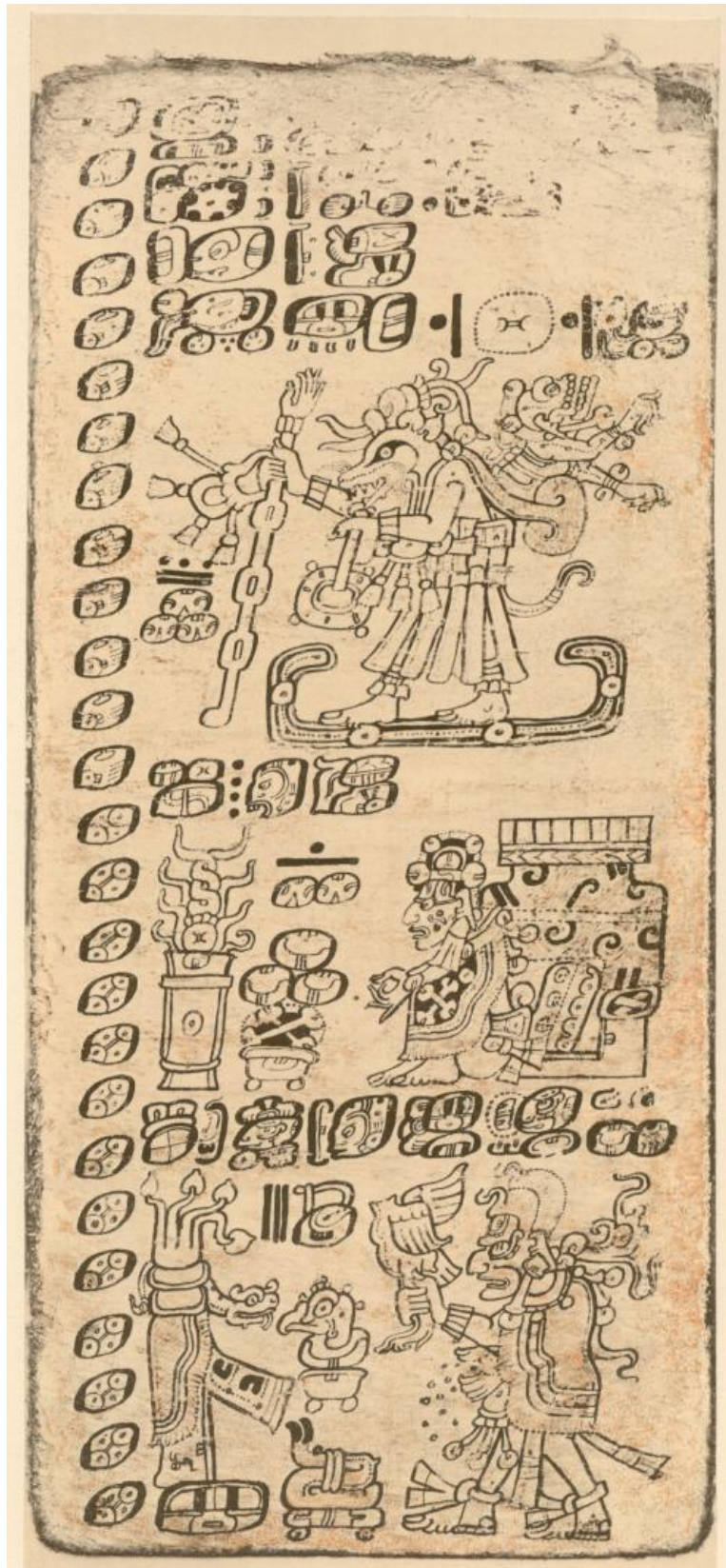


Figure 3d. *Dresden Codex*, page 28 ([www.Famsi.org](http://www.Famsi.org) 2016; *Dresden Codex* [www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/3\\_dresden\\_for\\_schele\\_pp25-35.pdf](http://www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/3_dresden_for_schele_pp25-35.pdf))



Figure 3e. *Madrid Codex*, page 34 ([www.Famsi.org](http://www.Famsi.org) 2016; *Madrid Codex* [www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/2\\_madrid\\_rosny\\_bb\\_pp22-56.pdf](http://www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/2_madrid_rosny_bb_pp22-56.pdf))





Figure 3f. *Madrid Codex*, page 35 ([www.Famsi.org](http://www.Famsi.org) 2016; *Madrid Codex* [www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/2\\_madrid\\_rosny\\_bb\\_pp22-56.pdf](http://www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/2_madrid_rosny_bb_pp22-56.pdf))



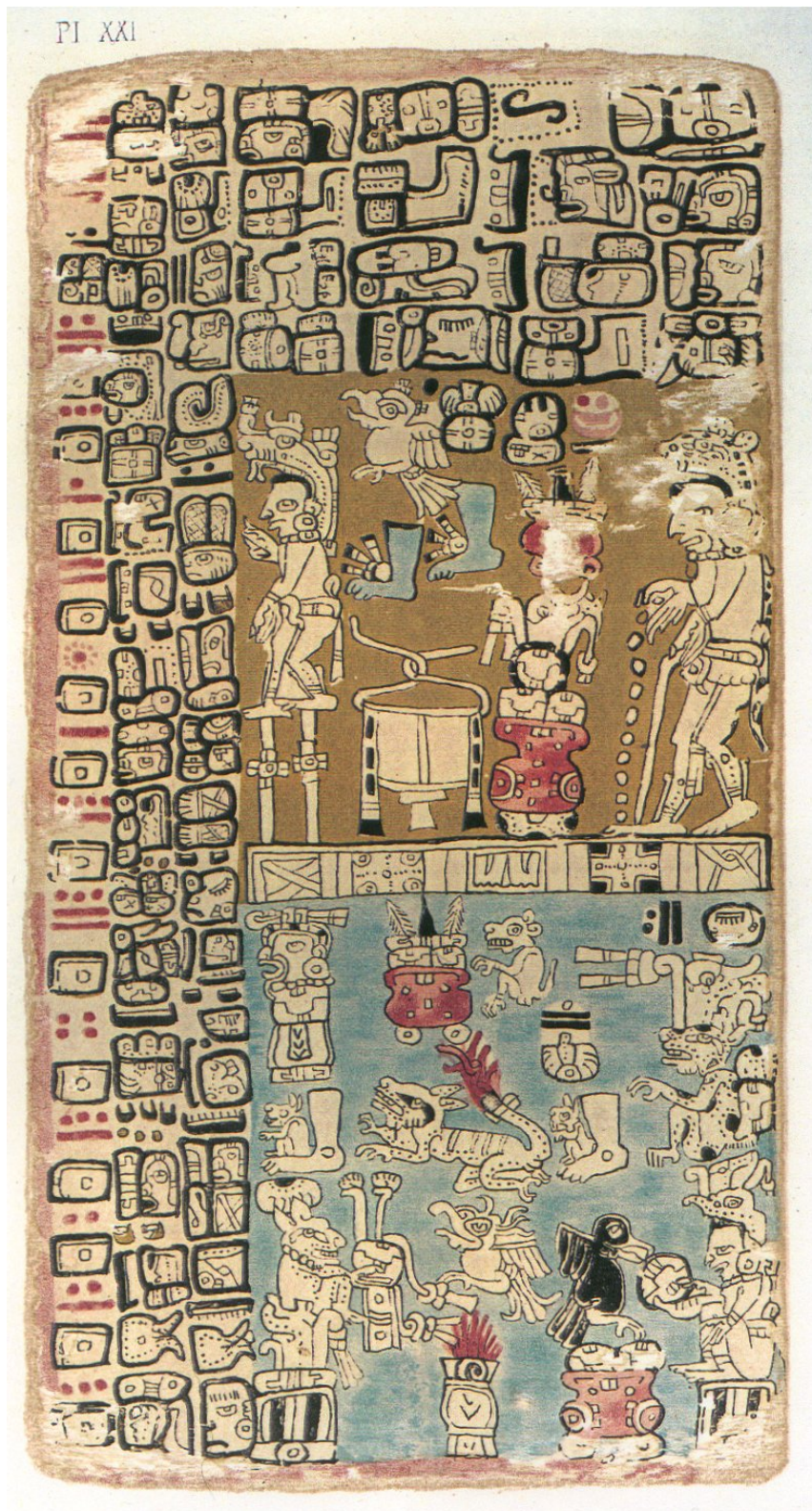


Figure 3g. *Madrid Codex*, page 36 ([www.Famsi.org](http://www.Famsi.org) 2016; *Madrid Codex* [www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/2\\_madrid\\_rosny\\_bb\\_pp22-56.pdf](http://www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/2_madrid_rosny_bb_pp22-56.pdf))





Figure 3h. *Madrid Codex*, page 37 ([www.Famsi.org](http://www.Famsi.org) 2016; *Madrid Codex* [www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/2\\_madrid\\_rosny\\_bb\\_pp22-56.pdf](http://www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/2_madrid_rosny_bb_pp22-56.pdf))



Figure 3i. *Paris Codex*, page 19 ([www.Famsi.org](http://www.Famsi.org) 2016; *Paris Codex* [www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/paris\\_love.pdf](http://www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/paris_love.pdf))



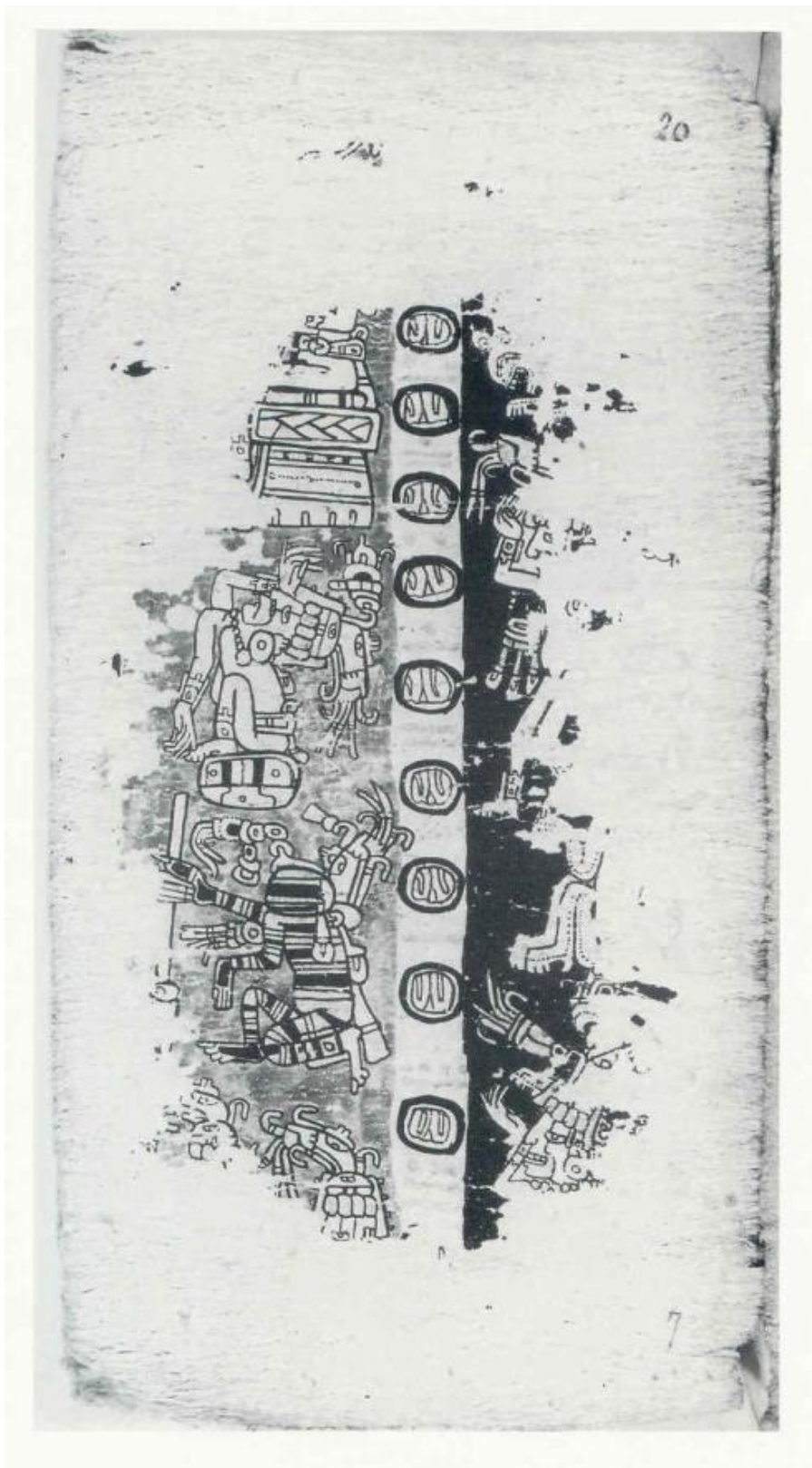


Figure 3j. *Paris Codex*, page 20 ([www.Famsi.org](http://www.Famsi.org) 2016; *Paris Codex* [www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/paris\\_love.pdf](http://www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/paris_love.pdf))

The *Paris Codex*, like the *Madrid Codex*, is another Late Post Classic Codex (AD 1250–1521) which features year bearer scenes, although it is considered to be earlier than the Madrid. In association with the Year Bearers the *Paris Codex* features wild beasts and vultures (Taube 1988a, 248–49). Pío Perez describes wild beasts and dangers that threaten the society during the Wayeb' period (Pharo 2014, 227).

Landa also noted that in the Kan year, the old women of the town, whom they had chosen for this purpose, danced clothed in certain garments. They said that an angel descended and received this sacrifice (Tozzer 1941, 142–43). The *Madrid Codex*, related to the Year Bearer, indicates a cloth without embroidery is offered to an idol (Love 1986, 236).

In the Maya religion Maya deities bore what is called the Burden of Time throughout all eternity and beyond. The ancient Maya calendar was closely bound up with religion and the involved tracking the gods who carried the Burden of Time on their backs, each deity picking up the burden laid down by the preceding deity. Specifically, throughout Mesoamerica the Year Bearers are depicted with a burden upon their backs, often with the burden itself depicted as the New Year glyph (Miller et al. 1993, 193).

The burden can represent guilt, a public office, or a heavy weight (Taube 1988a, 187). The Maya conceived the Year Bearer as carrying the year as a burden on his back, a load that he passes on to his successor at the end of the time period, thence derives the term “Year Bearer” (Thompson 1978, 125).

### Corroborative Parallels

In Mosiah it is noted that the armies of Noah “did delight in blood, and the shedding of the blood of their brethren” (Mosiah 11:19). It is clear from the text that the “delight in blood” was an addition and involved much more than the mere killing of persons. Not only did the New Year Bearer rituals involve the shedding and spreading of blood, but it is fair to say that the religious practices of the Maya specifically and Mesoamerica in general encompassed a full scale veneration of blood in the form of sacrifice and various forms of human and animal bloodletting from numerous locations of the body (Miller et al. 1993, 46–47).

Another corroborative parallel, which also has elements in relation to blood, is the mention of the metal *Ziff* in the Book of Mormon in relation to king Noah and the construction of his spacious buildings (Mosiah 11:3, 8). The word *Ziff* was capitalized in the Printer’s Manuscript of the Book of Mormon, and a previous analysis of capitalization of item names shows that it likely indicated a religious connotation in the Book of Mormon (Grover 2016, 3).

The most likely candidate for *Ziff* in the Book of Mormon was the Pre-Columbian alloy known as tumbaga. Tumbaga appears to have had religious and symbolic qualities for some peoples of the New World. It has been pointed out:

What is the point of making objects from surface-enriched tumbaga? It cannot be to economize the gold, for the gold below the surface is ‘wasted’, and a golden appearance could be achieved more cheaply by applying gold foil. Perhaps ... the ‘essence’ of the object required it to contain gold throughout, or it may have been the reddish color that was valued, or even the distinctive smell of tumbaga. (Bray 1985)

Bray further cites other direct sources from certain Columbian tribes who viewed the metals and their colors as related to reproductive creative forces and associated religious connotations.

An extensive analysis of *Ziff* was completed in a recent book, *Ziff, Magic Goggles, and Golden Plates* (Grover 2016), which established a likely Aramaic and Biblical Hebrew etymology involving the Aramaic and Arabic word *zyf*. The determination there was that it was a gold gilded metal with religious significance, specifically because of its reddish color, likely indicative of the Mesoamerican religious significance of blood.



The meaning of the word *zyf* in the Old World was “a counterfeit gold coin,” with one reference indicating that it was used as the coinage in Abqar, which is a city or a town in the invisible world of the Jinns. In addition to being a location, Abqar is the highest rank given to demons, Satan being the lowest—Ifrīt is one step higher, Marid is another step higher, and Abqar is the highest.

The definition of *zyf* from the Arabic lexicons also consistently referred to building or architectural features specifically including or concerned with the upper portion or top of walls (battlements, upper part of walls, steps of a staircase, molding on the top of walls, jumping over a wall, and a top that protects a wall). The additional definition for *zyf* related to a variety of animals and animal positions/movements would also be consistent with the use of animal figures in the ancient Arabic world that were placed on various places on buildings (top of domes, walls, thresholds) in a religious or magical context as talismans or *apotropia*. One of the principal animals identified in this definition of *zyf* is a pigeon.

The relationship of the definition of *Ziff* to the evil practices of king Noah is fairly transparent, as his religious practices would be considered false, related to demons, and involving manifestations of various idol gods, with a primary likelihood of a bird-themed god.

Additional research into the Sumerian roots of *Ziff*, which language has been identified as the source of the Jaredites, indicated a meaning that matches the description of tumbaga, with the condition that the “ff” is reflected as a “b” sound (Grover 2017). With the Sumerian compound word taken together, *Ziff* literally means “the color of life,” which in a Mesoamerican content would mean “blood.”

*zib*: a mark; mark, token; color, paint

Additional etymological units for or related to the religious significance of *Ziff* from Sumerian are:

*zi*: life

*zi-ba* (form of *zi*)

*zi-bi* (form of *zi*)

*i*: oil; container for oil (royal or priestly anointing)

*i<sub>3</sub>-be<sub>6</sub>* (form of *i*)

*i<sub>3</sub>-bi* (form of *i*)

Constructed Compound Sumerian Word: ***zib***

Although not specifically identified in the New Year Bearer ceremony, the Bacabs were also invoked in Maya healing incantations for such things as seizures, wasp-poisoning, and obstruction of breathing passages (Roys 1965, 143).

The elements of the IX New Year’s Bearer ceremony are a clear match to the Abinadi’s prophecies made during his second visit. The first prophecy made two years previously by Abinadi was limited to the people being taken by their enemies and placed into bondage. In the *Madrid Codex*, the maize god of the Year Bearer IX is shown as a bound captive (Taube 1988a, 261–62).

Themes of creation and world renewal or resurrection are an integral part of the Maya New Year’s ceremony (Vail et al. 2013, 385; Christenson 2016, 86), and Abinadi made central these themes (especially the resurrection) in his defensive sermon, with specificity as to the Lord being the god of creation and resurrection (Mosiah 13:19; 37; 15:8; 20–24; 16: 6–11).

The New Year festival was a public event that functioned as a normative code of the community by reinforcing the social and moral values through purification of the corruption of the old New Year days (Taube 1988a, 310). The five day Wayeb’ period was reported by various sources to be a period of affliction and anxiety (Pharo 2014, 227).

Abinadi essentially takes the prophecies and rituals of the New Year Bearer rituals and ceremonies and turns them on their heads, directing them by prophecy directly back onto the wicked Noah, his wicked priests, and the wicked people. A summary comparison of the prophecies of Abinadi against the condition of Noah and his priests and the Maya Ix ritual and other related elements are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Comparison of Maya Rituals with Abinadi Episode**

<b>Maya Rituals and Prophecies</b>	<b>Abinadi Prophecies/Noah Comparison</b>	<b>Book of Mormon Reference</b>
Sexual Perversion	Noah and his priests had multiple wives, concubines, harlots, and practiced whoredoms	Mosiah 11: 2, 4, 14, 20
Prophecies	Noah and his priests “understand the spirit of prophesying” (or so they claimed)	Mosiah 12: 25
Drunkenness	Noah and his people were winebibbers	Mosiah 11: 15
Worship of idols	Noah and his people practiced idolatry	Mosiah 11: 6, 7
Blood	Noah’s armies delighted in blood	Mosiah 11:19
Buildings of buildings	Noah constructed elegant, spacious buildings	Mosiah 11: 8–13
Creation and Resurrection as central themes of New Year rituals	Central themes of Abinadi’s defense are Creation and Resurrection	Mosiah 13:19; 37; 15:8; 20–24; 16: 6–11
Use of the temple in idol worship	Noah constructed ostentatious temple and spacious buildings	Mosiah 11: 8–11
Prophetic famine	People will be smitten with famine	Mosiah 12:4
Prophetic invasion of locusts	Insects to pester the land and devour grain	Mosiah 12:4
Wars	People would be smitten, driven, slain and delivered into the hands of their enemies	Mosiah 11:21; 12:2
Slavery	People will be placed in bondage with burdens on their backs	Mosiah 11:21; 12:2, 5
Leaders deposed	Noah valued as a garment in a hot furnace; shall be run over and trodden underfoot; blown by the wind like blossom of a thistle	Mosiah 12:3, 10–12
Reference to wind (the Pawahtuns, or wind deities)	Noah will be blown by the wind like blossom of a thistle; people smitten with the east wind	Mosiah 12:6, 12
Wind of sickness	People to be smitten with the east wind; people to be smitten with pestilence (sickness)	Mosiah 12:6–7

<b>Maya Rituals and Prophecies</b>	<b>Abinadi Prophecies/Noah Comparison</b>	<b>Book of Mormon Reference</b>
Protection from sickness, pestilence	People to be smitten with pestilence (sickness)	Mosiah 12:6–7
Fear and protection from wild beasts	Wild beasts will devour the flesh of Noah’s people	Mosiah 12:2
Dogs are featured	Dogs will devour the flesh of Noah’s people	Mosiah 12:2
Vulture as evil omen	Vultures mentioned as devouring the flesh of the people	Mosiah 12:2
Garments burned by fire in sacrifice	Noah’s life is valued as a garment in a hot furnace of fire	Mosiah 12:3, 10
Muluc/Kan day ceremony direction is East with corresponding wind God	People smitten with the east wind	Mosiah 12:6
Year bearer carries burden lashed on his back	People will bear burdens lashed on their backs	Mosiah 12:5
Year Bearer Bacab gods are part of the earth and supporters of the sky, and have manifestations as gods of the waters under the earth	Noah, his priests and people worshiped graven images that were in the sky, in the earth beneath, or were in the water under the earth	Mosiah 12:36; 13:12
Bacab invoked in healing incantations	People to be smitten with pestilence (sickness)	Mosiah 12:6–7

The citing of the Ten Commandments included the instruction on graven images (Mosiah 13:12), essentially mirroring that found in Exodus 20:4, with the difference that Exodus indicates the “likeness of any thing” as opposed to the plural form “of things”:

Mosiah 13:12

And now, ye remember that I said unto you: Thou shall not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of things which are in heaven above, or which are in the earth beneath, or which are in the water under the earth.

Although use of the plural may not be precisely definitive of a set of Maya gods, it is a unique match for all of the god manifestations associated with the Maya New Year, namely, Itzamna (sky god), Pawahtuns (wind gods), Bacabs (skybearers who stand on the earth), and Mams (gods of the earth and waters under the earth).

Abinadi’s prophecies in the context of the Maya ritual directly challenged and threatened the authority and power of Noah and his priests, especially given the fact that Abinadi was likely a priest himself. As Landa indicated, when no calamity happened it was on account of the services of the Maya priests; but, when misfortunes came, it was blamed on some sin or fault in the ritual services or in those who performed them. Abinadi’s prophecies were in line with the calamities that the performance of the New Year Bearer ritual was supposed to prevent. If Abinadi’s prophecies were correct, than the fault lay directly with Noah and his priests and Abinadi thus became a direct challenge to their authority, especially given the fact that one of the Maya prophecies was that there would be a change in the rule of the current lords and priests.

Meaning of King Noah's name in the Maya cultural context

It has been determined that many Book of Mormon names have multiple levels of meaning in Biblical Hebrew, Sumerian, and sometimes Egyptian (Grover 2017). In Biblical Hebrew one of the individuals named Noah as found in the Bible derives from the root-verb נוּע (*nu'a*), which means to shake, stagger, quiver, tremble, etc. Psalms 107:27 is an example where it is used of drunks who stagger. The Biblical Hebrew meaning of staggering as a drunkard nicely fits the Book of Mormon description of king Noah and also matches God N.

Many Book of Mormon names consist of constructed compound words from Sumerian and are metonymic, meaning the names match the characteristics or story line of the individual or place (Grover 2017). The Sumerian roots of the name Noah—which fit his Maya role as the divine representative on earth of Itzamna in its Principal Bird Deity manifestation, along with the corresponding themes of the Maya creation also associated with the Maya New Year ceremony (the abatement of the flood and the world tree often constructed of polished stone, see Christenson 2016, 42, 44), and including his reputation among the Nephites—are:

*nu*: creator  
*nu*: night bird  
*U*: type of stone  
*U*: tree  
*ua*: owl; a bird  
*ah*: scum; spittle; poison  
*he*: be it, be he  
 (*The Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary*, 2006)

The phonetic “u” in Sumerian dictionaries may also indicate an historical “o” sound in Sumerian that is not reflected in modern Sumerian dictionaries. The constructed Book of Mormon names indicated that in the compounding of the individual words they often overlap (likely reflecting the underlying glyph). Thus the name Noah would be composed of all of the words listed here (*nu*, *nu*, *u*, *u*, *ua*, *ah*, *ah*, and *he*) with a combined meaning of something on the order of “He who is Night bird (owl), stone tree, scum.”

The bird and stone tree elements of the name of Noah are consistent with his affiliation with the Principal Bird Deity religion.

The name Abinadi

Since the Book of Mormon name *Abinadi* is metonymic, his constructed name in Sumerian and Biblical Hebrew is:

Sumerian  
*a*: strength; power  
*a<sub>2</sub>-bi*, *a<sub>2</sub>-ba*, *a<sub>2</sub>-da* (form of *a*)  
*abba*: old (person); witness; father; elder; an official  
*ab-a* (form of *abba*)  
*i*: clothing, garment  
*i*: (vocative exclamation), hey!  
*i*: oil; container for oil  
*i<sub>3</sub>-ni* (form of *i*)  
 (indicative of anointed status)  
*in*: abuse  
*in-na*, *in-a* (form of *in*)  
*na*: man  
*na*: pestle; a stone

*na*: stone; stone weight

*na<sub>4</sub>-da* (form of *na*)

*ad*: (to be) crippled

*ad*: voice; cry; noise

*di*: go

*di*: to shine

*di*: non-finite imperfect stem of *dug* [to speak]

*na-di* (form of *di*)

(*The Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary*, 2006)

Constructed Compound Name: **Abinadi**

Biblical Hebrew

'*ab*: father, an elder; position of authority; a counselor

*bin*: perceive, discern

'*b*: father

*nd'*: to cast down

'*bn*: stone

'*d*': father

([www.abarim-publications.com](http://www.abarim-publications.com) 2015)

Based on the Sumerian etymology, the name *Abinadi* would mean “Powerful anointed elder, father, and witness; abused and crippled by stone; he who shone and spoke.” The correlation of “shone” comes from the reference that when Abinadi withstood the priests “his face shone with exceeding luster, even as Moses did” (Mosiah 13:5). The Biblical Hebrew provides similar meanings with the addition of “cast down.”

Based on the meaning of his name, there is some indication that Abinadi was in a position of some authority. Perhaps he was one of the original priests of Zeniff that was “put down” by Noah (Mosiah 11:5). As such he was probably well known among the people even prior to his first prophetic preaching event, and a disguise was needed to avoid being arrested.

### **Abinadi's Disguise**

It is also worth noting that Abinadi, in his second prophetic venture, “came among them in disguise” but when he commenced prophesying he announced exactly who he was. It is clear that the disguise was only so that he could place himself in a position to prophesy “many things” “against the people” (Mosiah 12:1, 8). Maya New Year's celebrations consisted of music, pageantry, processions, ritual songs, dances, pantomimes, and dramatic performances (Christenson 2016, 100). It is likely that Abinadi utilized a mask for his disguise so that he could present himself and deliver his message. The Maya used masks for a variety of reasons and occasions including to adorn (decorate) the faces of the dead, to be worn during battle, and in Abinadi's case, to be worn at important events. Iconography of Pre-classic Kaminaljuyu shows the use of masks, at least in a religious context (Henderson 2013).

### **Source of the Nephite Religion in the Land of Nephi**

The people of Zeniff were apparently a mixed population of the people of Mulek and Nephites, as evidenced by Alma (and Abinadi) being differentiated as “also being a descendant of Nephi” (Mosiah 17:2). Zeniff himself and at least some of the founding group appears to be Nephites as Zeniff had a “knowledge of the land of Nephi, or the land of our fathers' first inheritance” (Mosiah 9:1). The people of Mulek in Zarahemla that Mosiah<sub>1</sub> found “denied

the being of their Creator” (Omni 1:17). It is interesting that the wording does not necessarily indicate that they denied a Creator altogether, just the “being of their Creator” which can be reasonably interpreted that the form or identity of the Creator was different.

Since the people of king Noah were just a few generations removed from the merging of the Nephites and the people of Mulek, it is reasonable that the this original native religion to which the people of Mulek had devolved was still present among some of the people of Zeniff and then Noah. Zeniff himself had indicated that the initial founding group had been “slow to remember the Lord our God” (Mosiah 9:3). As a result, the apparent de-evolution of the people of Noah to a Maya religion was equally likely to have been an assimilation of the surrounding Lamanite religion as it was to have been a resurgence of the latent (or continuing) practice of the native religion. Since Noah did a wholesale replacement of his father’s priests with idolatrous priests and “had changed the affairs of the kingdom” (Mosiah 11:4) it seems apparent that there were those among the people of Zeniff that were available for Noah to utilize who did not substantially follow the Nephite religion but instead practiced a portion of a native religion that had incorporated some elements of Nephite religion.