

# MOSIAH 7–10

John W. Welch Notes



## Main Themes of Bondage and Deliverance

In these central chapters of the book of Mosiah, readers encounter several names and events that are not very well known. The primary theme, however, should be quite familiar. These four chapters deal mainly with what it takes to be delivered from bondage of any kind in our lives. Although the types of bondage we face today may be quite different from those faced by the people in these narratives, the primary message about how we overcome such challenges is just as important now as it was then.

The following summary may be helpful as a guide to this complicated series of accounts and these amazingly interconnected records. If this history seems hard to follow as you read through these chapters, imagine how much more difficult it would have been for King Mosiah or an assistant such as Alma or Mormon as the abridger to assemble the underlying, interlocking records that stand behind the final form of the book of Mosiah. In addition, notice how precisely the details in these chapters fit together, and then appreciate Joseph Smith keeping all of this straight as he translated and dictated this record, line upon line, to Oliver Cowdery in mid-April, 1829.

- **Ammon**, a Mulekite descendant of King Zarahemla. Ammon was allowed to lead a group of 16 men to go from Zarahemla back up to the City of Nephi, to find out how the Nephites were doing who had returned there to repossess “the land of their inheritance” (Omni 1:27). Amaleki, the last writer on the Small Plates of Nephi, had a brother who had previously gone back up with that group early in the reign of King Benjamin (Omni 1:30). When King Mosiah began to rule, people in Zarahemla were curious to find out what had become of those people, and Mosiah allowed this group to go and see. Ammon’s words are quoted or summarized in 7:12–13, 8:2–3, and 8:13–17.

- **Amaleki**, one of Ammon's brethren (7:6), has the same name as the last descendant of Jacob to write on the Small Plates, so there may have been a personal family interest in wanting to reconnect with long-lost relatives. People in Zarahemla had rightly suspected that things were not going very well for their relatives, since they had not heard from them for about forty years.
- **Limhi** was the Nephite king in the land of Nephi when Ammon arrived (7:9). He was the **son of King Noah**, who was the **son of King Zeniff**. Limhi's words are quoted or summarized in 7:9–11, 14–15, 18–33. Limhi does not mention his father Noah by name. Apparently he was ashamed that Noah's people had killed a prophet of God (7:26), named Abinadi (11:20). Limhi reports the reasons why Abinadi was killed (7:27–28; see later 17:8), for which the people of Limhi had ended up in bondage under the Lamanites (7:15).
- Two generations earlier, **Zeniff**, who was Limhi's grandfather, had been made king over his small group of Nephites who had returned to the city of Nephi, but Zeniff had been tricked into entering into a treaty with King Laman, the Lamanite King (7:21). *This was bondage 1*. Zeniff's own first-hand record of the events during his lifetime is found in two full chapters (9:1–10:22). Zeniff had led his people in fighting off an attack by a host of Laman's soldiers (9:16–19). *This was Lamanite invasion 1*. After Laman had died (10:6), Zeniff in his old age (10:10) needed to rally his men once again. They contended "face to face" with the invading Lamanites, driving them back out of the land of Nephi and killing many of them (10:6–10, 19–20). *This was Lamanite invasion 2*. The Nephites won because they trusted in the strength of the Lord (10:10–11, 19).
- **Laman** was the cunning and crafty ruler who had deceived Zeniff by his enticing promises (7:21; 9:10; 10:18). He had oppressed the Nephite resettlers for twelve years (9:11). King Laman and his son, who succeeded him, believed that their ancestors had been wronged by the Nephites, who robbed them of their records and rights (10:12–18).
- **Laman's son** continued pressing his father's grievances. But during the time of the reign of King Noah (who was Zeniff's son), the Lamanites mounted no further attack. Noah had built watch towers (11:12) and presumably other fortifications. The Lamanites did not invade again until after the death of Abinadi (17:13–20) and divisions had arisen among Noah's people (18:3; 19:2, 6).
- Although **Noah's** name is skipped over in these chapters, Limhi's words tell how the Lamanites attacked again (20:9). *This was Lamanite invasion 3*. Limhi and his people had thus come to find themselves in bondage after Noah's death, paying heavy tribute yet again to the Lamanites (7:15; 21:2–21). *This was bondage 2*. It paved the way for Limhi's offer to Ammon to flee back to the Land

of Zarahemla and become, if necessary, “slaves to the Nephites” (7:15). Having heard the words of King Benjamin’s speech (8:3), Limhi’s people entered into a covenant with God and were desirous to be baptized (21:31–33). Under the leadership of Limhi, who listened to the wise counsel of Gideon, the people made their escape and eventually found their way to Zarahemla (Mosiah 22).

Many lessons can be learned from these chapters about bondage and deliverance, as the Nephites came into bondage for various reasons and were delivered by watching, preparing, and trusting in the Lord. In this compilation of texts and materials, plenty of hints can be found to help us figure out the spiritual and allegorical implications. The *captivity* experienced by these Book of Mormon peoples can meaningfully function as an allegory for our own spiritual captivity. The story is about physical bondage, but the Book of Mormon contains these stories to tell us something about our spiritual bondage, including guidance on how we can get out of spiritual captivity. Believers in Christ may not be following the path of wicked King Noah or heading for destruction. But are we modern Ammons? or Zeniffs? Or Limhis? Are we like Alma, or Gideon?

#### Further Reading

Monte S. Nyman, “Bondage and Deliverance: Mosiah 7–8, 19–24,” in *Book of Mormon, Part 1: 1 Nephi–Alma 29, Studies in Scripture: Volume 7*, ed. Kent P. Jackson (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1987), 260–269.

Clyde J. Williams, “Deliverance from Bondage” in *Mosiah, Salvation Only Through Christ*, Book of Mormon Symposium Series, Volume 5, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1991).

#### Several Significant Journeys to and from Zarahemla

These chapters are also difficult to follow geographically (Figure 1). The history covers, at minimum, seven different groups of people who made significant journeys to and from Zarahemla, the land of Lehi-Nephi, and the surrounding area. While these four chapters in the Book of Mormon may seem a bit dull to modern readers, people should remember that the earliest historical works—such as those by Herodotus or in the Old Testament books of Samuel and Kings—typically focused (as do these chapters) mainly on events involving kings, armies, contacts, conflicts, treaties, official and prophetic messages, diplomacy, and divine influences on political outcomes. Skillfully, these historical chapters describe such factors. Because they sometimes use flash-backs, these chapters require readers to keep in mind past, present, and future events simultaneously (Figure 2).

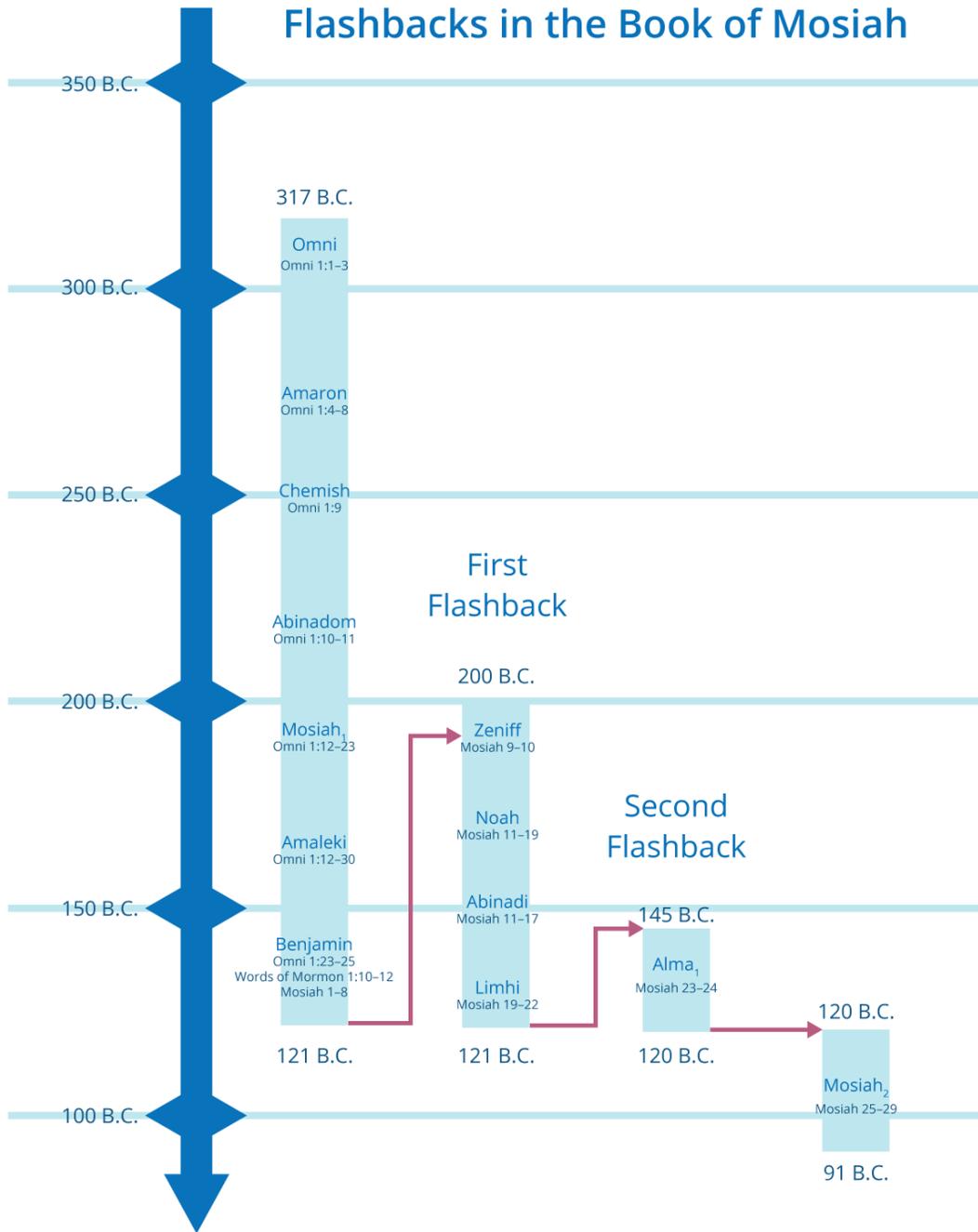


Figure 1 John W. Welch and Greg Welch, "Flashbacks in the Book of Mosiah," in *Charting the Book of Mormon*, chart 29.

- 1 Some Nephites seek to reclaim the land of Nephi.**  
 They fight amongst themselves, and the survivors return to Zarahemla. Zeniff is a part of this group. (See Omni 1:27–28; Mosiah 9:1–2.)
- 2 Nephite group led by Zeniff settles among the Lamanites in the land of Nephi** (see Omni 1:29–30; Mosiah 9:3–5).  
*After Zeniff died, his son Noah reigned in wickedness. Abinadi warned the people to repent. Alma obeyed Abinadi’s message and taught it to others near the Waters of Mormon. (See Mosiah 11–18.)*
- 3 Alma and his people depart** from King Noah and travel to the land of Helam (see Mosiah 18:4–5, 32–35; 23:1–5, 19–20).  
*The Lamanites attacked Noah’s people in the land of Nephi. Noah’s son Limhi reigned while the people lived in bondage to the Lamanites. (See Mosiah 19–20.)*
- 4 Attempt to find Zarahemla:** Limhi sends a group to find Zarahemla and get help. The group discovers the ruins of a destroyed nation and 24 gold plates. (See Mosiah 8:7–9; 21:25–27.)
- 5 Search party led by Ammon** journeys from Zarahemla to find the descendants of those who had gone to the land of Nephi (see Mosiah 7:1–6; 21:22–24).
- 6 Limhi’s people escape** from bondage and are led by Ammon back to Zarahemla (see Mosiah 22:10–13).  
*The Lamanites sent an army after Limhi and his people. After becoming lost in the wilderness, the army discovered Alma and his people in the land of Helam. The Lamanites brought them into bondage. (See Mosiah 22–24.)*
- 7 Alma’s people escape** from bondage and journey to Zarahemla (see Mosiah 24:20–25).

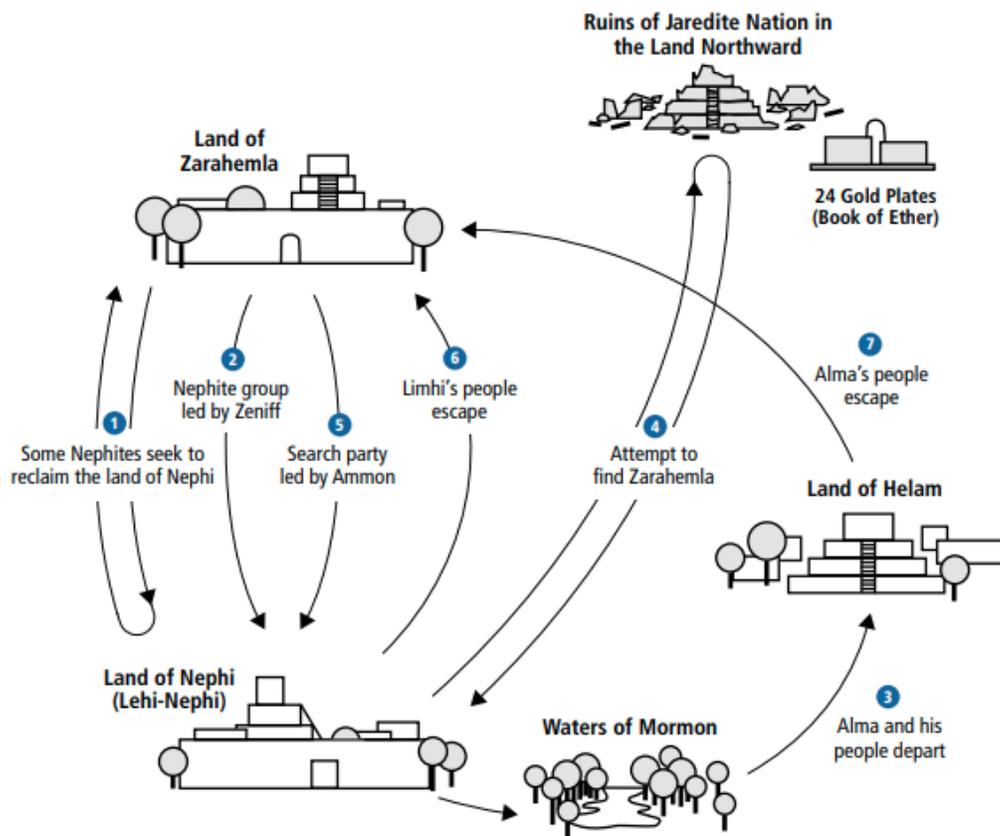


Figure 2 Image from Church of Jesus Christ Seminary Manual.

The geographical, temporal, and interpersonal dimensions of the book of Mosiah are often cited as one of the most complexly impressive sections in the entire Book of Mormon. This complexity and the satisfying resolution of each scenario into the overall story is rightly seen by many to be one of the strongest evidences of the divine authenticity and historicity of the Book of Mormon. Why would Joseph Smith choose to include a storyline where it is extremely difficult to follow the many characters, locations, twists and turns—a narrative that requires a diagram, such as the one below, for readers to follow keep track of all of the details?

Many well-educated and seasoned authors hire others to assist them when writing a novel that includes many characters and many locations to make sure that the characters' personalities remain consistent, the characters are in the right location at the right time doing the right things, and the description of the location of each city or country remains consistent and accurate. This fact-checking often takes months. Joseph Smith translated and perfectly dictated the entire Book of Mormon—a book of more than 500 pages—in 65 days with the assistance of only one scribe at a time and almost never went back to make changes to the record. The ability to write a record of this complexity, with no notes, and in such a short period of time has not been done by the best and most experienced of authors. And yet, Joseph, an uneducated, inexperienced farm boy was able to accomplish such a task because, as he said, this ancient record was translated by the gift and power of God.

### Further Reading

Tad R. Callister, *A Case for the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2019), 229–235.

## Mosiah 7

### Mosiah 7:3 — Two Ammons

There are two Ammons in the Book of Mormon. The one in this text was sent by King Mosiah three years into his reign (7:1), following three years of peace, to look for the people who had left years prior with a man named Zeniff to try to reclaim their inheritance in the land of Lehi-Nephi. Zeniff was described as “a strong and mighty man, and a descendant of Zarahemla,” and was asked to lead a search party of sixteen “strong men.” Three of them were named (or titled) Amaleki, Helem, and Hem. The name Hem might be a title. At least, as Nibley points out, *hm* means “chief servant” in Egyptian, “especially in the title *hm tp n imn*, “chief servant of Amon,” i.e., the high priest of Thebes. To have been given this assignment of leadership, this Ammon must

have been a highly trusted military officer and diplomat in King Mosiah’s court. After forty days of wandering, Ammon and his group arrived in the land of Nephi during the reign of King Limhi.

The other Ammon was the eldest (first mentioned) of the four sons of King Mosiah (Mosiah 27:34), who likewise left Zarahemla, but at the end of King Mosiah’s reign, to become missionaries to teach the Lamanites, again in the Land of Nephi. Because Mosiah was 30 years old when he was crowned and reigned for 33 years (Mosiah 29:46), Ammon could well have been born around the time the first Ammon led his group of 16 explorers to the south. If so, the second Ammon may have been named after the first highly trusted Ammon. They were at least contemporaries. There are also similarities between them: Just as the first Ammon had been sent back up to the land of Nephi because people (perhaps including that Ammon himself) had “wearied” Mosiah with their “teasings” (persistent provoking or prodding), this second Ammon and his brothers “did plead with their father,” pestering him for “many days that they might go up to the land of Nephi” (Mosiah 28:5). The second Ammon may well have hoped for similar success as his namesake, the first Ammon. Among his successes, Ammon, the son of Mosiah, is the one who cut off the arms of the Lamanites while saving the flocks of King Lamoni and converting him (see Alma 17). He also converted and led the Anti-Lehi-Nephis, who were eventually called Ammonites (Alma 56:57), north into the land of Jerushon.

### **Mosiah 7:9 — King Limhi Is Quoted Directly**

King Limhi was “the son of Noah” and the grandson of “Zeniff, who came up out of the land of Zarahemla to inherit [the land of Lehi-Nephi].” Even though he was the son of wicked King Noah, Limhi was a just man who had faith in God and who was concerned for the welfare of his people.

John Gee has pointed out that direct quotations of Limhi occur in four places in the Book of Mormon record:

1. The trial of Ammon, Amaleki, Helem, and Hem (Mosiah 7:8–15);
2. An official address given to all his subjects at a covenant renewal ceremony (Mosiah 7:17–33);
3. The discussion with Ammon about the records (Mosiah 8:5–21); and
4. The interrogation of the king of the Lamanites (Mosiah 20:13–22).

Gee further noticed that all direct quotations of Limhi derive from situations where an official scribe would normally have been on hand to write things down. According to Gee, we can learn some very important things about Limhi’s character from these

quotations. “The major speeches of king Limhi [carefully quoted by Mormon] are dotted with quotations from previous records and prophecies, some of which are no longer available to us.” He also observed that Limhi’s speeches show a man who was very well-versed in the records. “From these [speeches] it seems that Limhi had spent a good deal of time studying and memorizing the records of his people.”

Thanks to the inspired preservation by Mormon, we can look to Limhi as a righteous example. As Gee stated, “Limhi’s passionate interest in records and scriptures might also explain why he was righteous in spite of the wickedness of his father. . . . We need look no further than Limhi for reasons to be serious about studying our scriptures.”

### Further Reading

John Gee, “[Limhi in the Library](#),” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 1, no. 1 (1992), 54–66.

Book of Mormon Central, “[Why Are Mormon’s Extensive Quotations of Limhi Significant?](#)” *KnoWhy* 85 (April 25, 2016).

### Mosiah 7:20–21 — Limhi’s People Were in Bondage Because of Their Iniquities

The right words have been selected from the words of Limhi in order to clearly communicate his main message that he and his people were in bondage because they had sinned. Limhi was definitely aware of this. As king, he gathered his people at the temple and reminded them that God had saved their ancestors, reiterating the miracle of the Israelites crossing the Red Sea on dry ground. “[T]hat same God has brought our fathers out of the land of Jerusalem, and has kept and preserved his people even until now.” But, “[i]t is because of our iniquities and abominations that he has brought us into bondage.” In the context of the Exodus theology, returning to “bondage” could mean nothing less than returning to slavery, which the Israelites had known in Egypt before Moses delivered them. To Limhi’s people, who had returned to the Land of Nephi in order to reclaim the traditional temple in that city, nothing could have been more inspiring than Limhi’s impassioned temple speech reminding his people—and us too—to keep our covenants.

### Mosiah 7:25, 32–33 — God’s Covenant Still Applies

King Limhi spoke to his people after the arrival of Ammon and pointed out that because of sin, the Lord “will not succor my people in the day of their transgression” (7:29), but “if my people shall sow filthiness they shall reap the east wind, which bringeth immediate destruction,” and thus “the promise of the Lord is fulfilled, and ye are smitten and afflicted” (7:31–32). But then he added the positive side of the covenant in verse 33: “But if ye will turn to the Lord with full purpose of heart, and put your trust in

him,” “who was the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob,” he will “deliver you out of bondage” (7:19, 33). In saying this, I think Limhi may well have had in mind the powerful promise given by God in Leviticus 26:40–44, offering the opportunity for his people to be reconciled with God:

If they shall confess their iniquity, and ... be humbled ... [t]hen will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and ... Isaac, and ... Abraham. ... I will not cast them away ... to break my covenant with them: for I am the Lord their God (Leviticus 26:40–44).

It is clear that the Law of Moses applied to these Nephites just as it did to other descendants of the patriarchs. The Lord had told the Israelites that “all these curses shall come upon thee, and shall pursue thee, and overtake thee, till thou be destroyed; because thou hearkenedst not unto the voice of the Lord thy God” (Deuteronomy 28:45). Limhi knew that this was true: “[I]f this people had not fallen into transgression the Lord would not have suffered that this great evil should come upon them. But behold, they would not hearken unto his words.”

Many of the problems faced by Zeniff’s community, when they sinned and broke their covenants, were the same afflictions imposed upon the Israelites if they broke their covenants. For example, in Mosiah 9:14–16, the people of Zeniff living in Shilom were attacked and “a numerous host of Lamanites came upon them and began to slay them, and to take off their flocks, and the corn of their fields.” Again, in Mosiah 11:13–17, when King Noah and the Nephites broke their covenants through oppression of the people and through immorality, “the Lamanites began to come in” upon the people of King Noah, “to slay them in their fields, and while they were tending their flocks ... and drove many of their flocks out of the land.”

Both of these events are reminiscent of what the Lord had said, in the law of Moses, would happen to those who broke their covenants: “Thine ox shall be slain before thine eyes, and ... thine ass shall be violently taken away from before thy face and ... thy sheep shall be given unto thine enemies” (Deuteronomy 28:31). If they refused to repent, they were warned that they would be in bondage to their enemies, which also corresponds with the warning given in Leviticus 26:25.

The Book of Mormon repeatedly demonstrates that the covenant God made with ancient Israel still applied to the Nephites. Likewise, the blessings as well as the curses of God’s covenants apply to us today as well, if we do not repent and accept his atoning mercy. In verse 33, Mormon gave the Lord’s covenant requirements a happy ending:

But if ye will turn to the Lord with full purpose of heart, and put your trust in him, and serve him with all diligence of mind, if ye do this, he will, according to his own will and pleasure, deliver you out of bondage.

So, what do we need to do to get help from the Lord? According to this verse, there are three things we must do: (1) Turn to the Lord; (2) Trust Him; and (3) Serve Him.

And, when will the Lord deliver us? “According to his own will and pleasure”—that is the part that we do not like so much. We often want him to deliver us from our trials *now* and we want to prescribe the way we want it done.

**Table 1**      **Biblical Curses in Mosiah**

Curses or Blessings	Leviticus 26	Deuteronomy 28	Mosiah
Flocks Violently Taken Away		Deuteronomy 28:31	Mosiah 11:16–17
Delivered into Hands of Enemies	Leviticus 26:25		Mosiah 11:21
No Man Save Them		Deuteronomy 28:29	Mosiah 11:23
Blindness		Deuteronomy 28:29	Mosiah 11:29 (cf. 8:20)
Smitten Before Enemies		Deuteronomy 28:25	Mosiah 12:2
Slain	Leviticus 26:17		Mosiah 12:2
Devoured By Wild Beasts	Leviticus 26:22	Deuteronomy 28:26	Mosiah 12:2
Crops Smitten		Deuteronomy 28:22	Mosiah 12:4
Famine	Leviticus 26:26		Mosiah 12:4
Pestilence	Leviticus 26:25	Deuteronomy 28:21	Mosiah 12:7
Fear and Lamentation		Deuteronomy 28:67	Mosiah 12:4

			Mosiah 21:9–10
Insects Devour Crops	Leviticus 26:20	Deuteronomy 28:22, 38, 42	Mosiah 12:6
Destruction and Desolation	Leviticus 26:31–33	Deuteronomy 28:20	Mosiah 12:8 (8:8?)
Diseases		Deuteronomy 28:60 (cf. vv. 27, 35)	Mosiah 17:16
Scattered	Leviticus 26:33	Deuteronomy 28:64	Mosiah 17:17–18
Internal Bloodshed	Leviticus 26:37		Mosiah 7:25 Mosiah 19:2–3, 6–10
Enemies Oppress and Eat Up Fruit of Labor	Leviticus 26:16 (26:38?)	Deuteronomy 28:33	Mosiah 7:15; 21:17 Mosiah 19:15; 21:21
Few Left	Leviticus 26:39	Deuteronomy 28:62	Mosiah 21:17 (22:2; 25:9?)
Pine Away in Iniquity	Leviticus 26:39		Mosiah 21:30–35
Cursed Because did not Harken to God		Deuteronomy 28:45	Mosiah 7:25
God Will Remember If They Repent	Leviticus 26:40–46		Mosiah 7:18–33 Mosiah 21:13–16

### Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, “[How Do the Covenants in the Scriptures Apply to Me Today?](#)” *KnoWhy* 369 (October 3, 2017).

S. Kent Brown, “Curse, Cursing(s)” in *Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, ed. Dennis Largey (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2003), 224–225.

Hugh Nibley, *Teachings of the Book of Mormon*, 4 vols. (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1993), 2:265.

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1987–1992), 2:189.

## Mosiah 8

### **Mosiah 8:3 — King Benjamin’s Speech Shared with the People of Limhi**

Interestingly, Ammon either had with him a copy of King Benjamin’s speech or he knew it by memory, for he “rehearsed unto [the people of Limhi] the last words which king Benjamin had taught them, and explained them.” Ammon and King Limhi most likely believed that this people would benefit by knowing the revelations that Benjamin had given his people, and also by following Benjamin’s public laws, since these statutes and ordinances had already proven to be very beneficial to all the people of Zarahemla.

For example, King Benjamin, in his accounting of how he had discharged his duties, declared that he had not allowed the people to “murder, or plunder, or steal, or commit adultery ... or any manner of wickedness” (Mosiah 2:13). These are sometimes referred to as Benjamin’s “rules of public order.” This list of five public laws is found six other times in the Book of Mormon. In three instances, the list functions as a measure of how well the kings and rulers had maintained public order (see Alma 23:3; Alma 30:10; and Mosiah 29:14–15, 36). In Helaman 6:23; Helaman 7:21; and Ether 8:16, they serve to indicate how wicked and corrupt that particular society was. Limhi would likewise have been eager to know that he had discharged his royal duties by leading his people in wisdom, truth, and righteousness. More is said about Limhi’s people entering into a covenant with God in Mosiah 21:31–35.

### **Further Reading**

John W. Welch, “Benjamin the Man: His Place in Nephite History,” in *King Benjamin’s Speech: “That Ye May Learn Wisdom,”* ed. John W. Welch and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, UT: FARMS 1998), chapter 2.

### **Mosiah 8:7–10 — Limhi’s Search Party Discovers the Jaredite Remains**

In hopes of delivering his people out of bondage, King Limhi had sent a party of forty-three people to Zarahemla to appeal for help. The group never made it to Zarahemla and, instead, got lost and found the land once occupied by the Jaredites. We do not know exactly where Limhi’s search party found the Jaredite remains, but we are getting a better idea as scholarly research continues. From the Book of Mormon record, we know the following: (1) there was a narrow neck of land in the general area; (2) the Land of First Inheritance, or the Land of Nephi, was somewhere southward and the party traveled northward, aiming to find Zarahemla; and (3) the party missed finding Zarahemla and for some reason ended up farther north, where they found the Jaredite records.

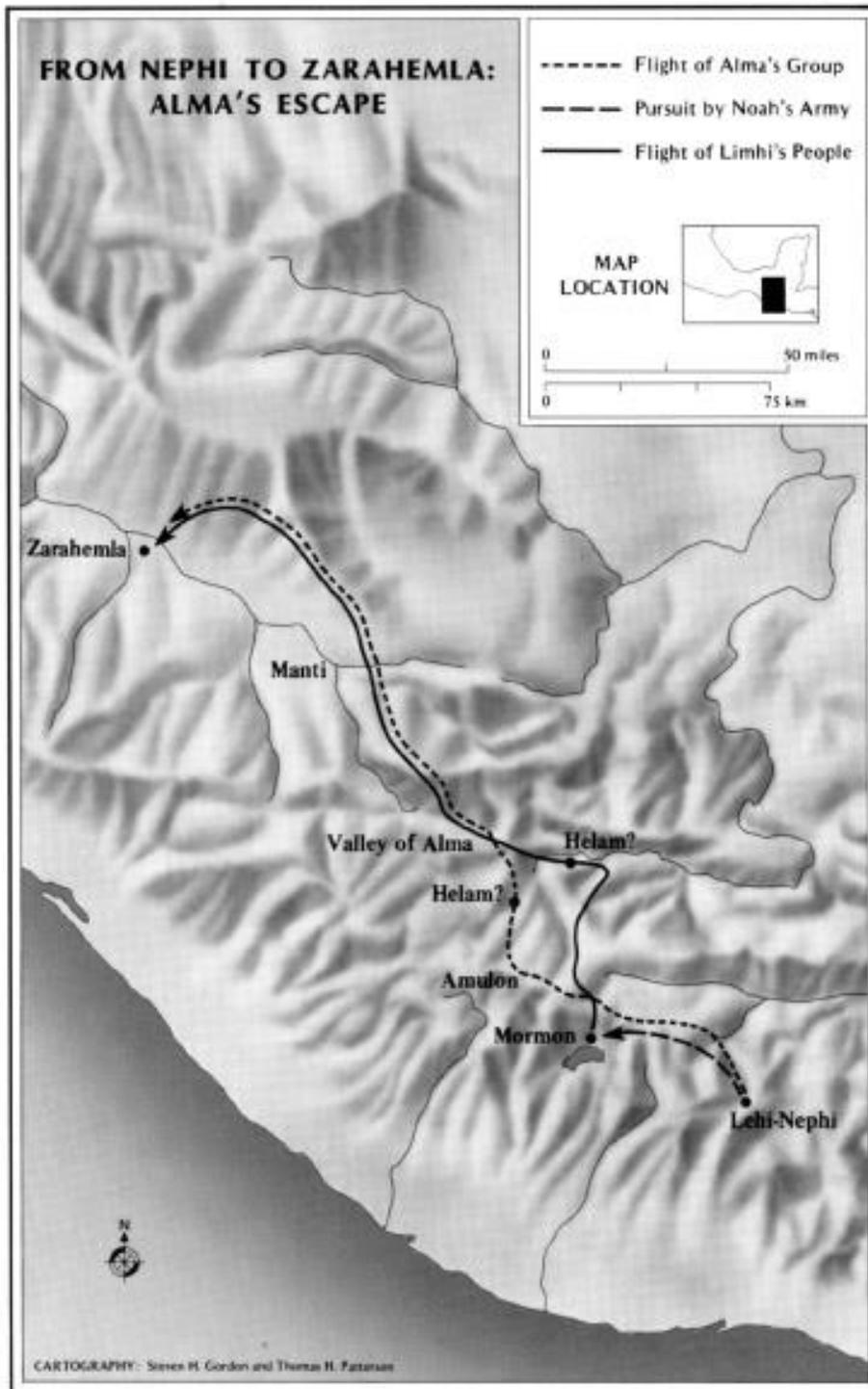


Figure 3 John W. Welch and Greg Welch, "From Nephi to Zarahemla: Alma's Escape," in *Charting the Book of Mormon*, chart 155.

We also know approximately how far Zarahemla was from the Land of Nephi, where Limhi's expedition started their journey. Alma and his group traveled from the Waters of Mormon, not too far from the city of Nephi, all the way up to the land of Zarahemla in 21 days. Alma's group included men, women, children, and flocks and herds, so they couldn't have traveled quickly or gone far in that amount of time. Alma and his people did not follow trails and presumably traveled over jungle terrain, so it would have been really pushing it if they were able to cover more than ten miles a day under those conditions. Scholars estimate that the distance between the Land of Nephi and Zarahemla was no more than 200 miles (Figure 3).

As Limhi's party went north from the Land of Nephi, there must have been two ways to travel through the area, and they took the wrong one. Assuming that the lands of the Book of Mormon are located in Central America—in the area of Guatemala, Chiapas, the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, and Mexico—there are, in fact, two ways Limhi's party could have gone. One is to stay in the mountains—the highland route. That is the route that the Pan American Highway follows and is the traditional main trail through this area. However, if the trail was washed out or lost and the party moved off that trail and dropped down into a ravine (even slightly), they would have then been on the wrong side of a volcanic ridge, and there was no way to get back over to the river valleys to the east. Limhi's expedition did not have compasses, so it would have been rather easy for them to lose their way in the wilderness as they tried to navigate or cross this area. If they managed to get down off the ridges, they would have had to travel on the coastal route, which is the only other way to go northward.

Travelling northward on the coastal route would in fact have dropped Limhi's party into the area where the ancient Olmec population had settled. "Olmec" is the name given by modern archaeologists to describe the people living in this area anciently. It is not the name the ancient people would have used to identify themselves. The Olmec people lived in this land from about 2000 B.C. to around 500 B.C. The dates for the rise and fall of the Olmecs closely align with the dates that we have for the rise and fall of the Jaredites within the Book of Mormon. If the Olmecs were the Jaredite people who wrote their record on 24 plates found by Limhi's expedition, this area of land would be where the explorers of Limhi discovered those plates and the remains of the Jaredite population.

In any event, we must be talking here about relatively short distances. Limhi's exploring party would have had an approximate estimate of how far they needed to be traveling to get to Zarahemla, their desired destination. They would not have continued traveling for many months and going 3,000 miles thinking, "Zarahemla has to be over the next hill." And when they found the 24 plates, they were able to retrace their steps fairly easily to find their way back to the city of Nephi. So again, we're talking a fairly small

geographical region in which the land of Zarahemla and the land of Nephi were located. This event, of the return of this exploring party, is mentioned again in Mosiah 21:27, when the telling of the story of Limhi's people is resumed.

### **Mosiah 8:13 — A Gift from God**

Surely, one must think of Joseph Smith when reading Ammon's response to King Limhi, "I can assuredly tell thee, O king, of a man that can translate the records; for he has wherewith that he can look, and translate all records that are of ancient date; and it is a gift from God." To this day, scholars argue about what kind of symbols Joseph Smith translated to produce the Book of Mormon. If such scholars as Samuel Mitchill and Charles Anthon, to whom Martin Harris took copies for their examination in the winter of 1828, were unable to define exactly what the symbols were and what they said, imagine how Joseph Smith must have felt upon first seeing them! In Mormon 9:34, Moroni prophesied:

But the Lord knoweth the things which we have written, and also that none other people knoweth our language; and because that none other people knoweth our language, therefore he hath prepared means for the interpretation thereof.

Joseph's ability to translate ancient records, like the case of Mosiah's ability mentioned in this chapter (8:13), was a gift from God and only worked when God enabled the prophet and seer to do His will. The gift of "the interpretation of languages" (Moroni 10:16), like all spiritual gifts, "come[s] by the Spirit of Christ; and they come unto every man severally, according as [Christ] will" (Moroni 10:17). Like Joseph Smith and Mosiah, we all have gifts from the Lord that can only be used properly to build up the kingdom of God. On his own, with what limited education he had, Joseph Smith would have been completely unable to translate the record without divine aid. While the Prophet may have initially sought the assistance of scholars in making sense of the characters on the plates, the result of Harris's meeting with Anthon made it clear that Joseph himself would ultimately have to be responsible for the translation. Ammon's statement that "whosoever is commanded to look in them [the interpreters], the same is called seer" (8:13) emphasizes the need for divine assistance and authority in translating such material of ancient origin. This is exactly how the Prophet Joseph Smith claimed it was done.

### **Further Reading**

Book of Mormon Central, "[Why Did the Book of Mormon Come Forth as a Miracle?](#)" *KnoWhy* 273 (February 10, 2017).

Book of Mormon Central, "[What Do We Know About the "Anthon Transcript"?](#)" *KnoWhy* 515 (May 9, 2019).

### **Mosiah 8:15–19 — Greater Than a Prophet?**

King Limhi was apparently highly impressed that King Mosiah, in Zarahemla, had such a great gift as to be able to translate the twenty-four Jaredite plates. The great joy that knowing this gave to Limhi is mentioned twice (8:19; 21:28), because he sensed that "a great mystery is contained within these plates."

Ammon repeated a statement that had been made by King Mosiah back in Zarahemla and that is often repeated: "[A] seer is greater than a prophet" (8:15). We should also note Ammon's explanation, which then delineates a distinction between prophethood and seership:

[A] seer is a revelator and a prophet also; and a gift which is greater can no man have, except he should possess the power of God, which no man can; yet a man may have great power given him from God. But a seer can know of things which are past, and also of things which are to come, and by them shall all things be revealed, or, rather, shall secret things be made manifest, and hidden things shall come to light, and things which are not known shall be made known by them, and also things shall be made known by them which otherwise could not be known. (8:16–17)

With divine authority, a prophet, who is a spokesperson for God, can foretell what would, could, or should occur if people behave in certain ways. This may include foretelling promised blessings for keeping the commandments or promised woes for falling into apostate behavior. While each dispensation has great Prophets (capital P) who stand with priesthood keys at the head of God's covenant people or God's church, individuals (both men and women) can act as prophets or prophetesses (lowercase p) in their respective lives, families, and ecclesiastical roles.

In distinguishing between a prophet and a seer, Ammon explained that a seer is one who uses "means" (divine instruments) prepared by God and "through faith, might work mighty miracles." Ammon stated that seership is greater than prophethood because a seer unlocks the meanings of what happened in the past as well as in the future (8:17)—which would include past mysteries, secrets, obscured teachings, lost scripture, and hidden knowledge. As Limhi acknowledged, the instruments of seership are "doubtless prepared for the purpose of unfolding all such mysteries to the children of men." According to Joseph Smith's 1838 history, the angel Moroni indicated to the

boy prophet that “the possession and use of [seer stones] were what constituted ‘seers’ in ancient or former times” (Joseph Smith—History 1:35).

With the restoration of God’s ancient order in our time came the restoration of the gift of seership. Members of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles are sustained as prophets, seers, and revelators who direct the Church by means of divine revelation (Bible Dictionary, “Seer”).

### Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, “[Why is a Seer Greater than a Prophet?](#)” *KnoWhy* 86 (April 26, 2016).

Ralph A. Britsch and Todd A. Britsch, “Prophet: Prophets,” in *The Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 vols., ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York, NY: Macmillan Publishing, 1992), 3:1164–1167.

David Noel Freedman, “Prophet: Biblical Prophets,” in *The Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 3:1167–1170.

Steven C. Walker, “Seer,” in *The Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 3:1292–1293.

## Mosiah 9–10 The Record of Zeniff

### Mosiah 9:1–7 — Zeniff Tells How He Led a Group of Nephites to the Land of Lehi-Nephi

The story of Zeniff actually begins back in Omni 1:27–30, where Amaleki mentioned two expeditions to the land of Lehi-Nephi and added that he had a brother who went, presumably with the second party. Amaleki had not heard anything about the second group since then. His entire record is two short chapters long.

There actually were two trips or expeditions of Nephites to the land of Lehi-Nephi, which at the time was occupied by Lamanites. Zeniff first recorded the surprising events that transpired during the first of these expeditions. As their group got close to the land of Nephi, Zeniff was sent to scout out the situation so that their army could “destroy” the Lamanites (9:1). Zeniff was chosen for this mission because he was prepared. He had done his homework: (1) he knew the language, and (2) knew the land. When he “saw that which was good among [the Lamanites],” he recommended that they make a treaty with the Lamanites rather than try to conquer them. But the leader of this trip was “stiffnecked” and contentious, which caused a fight and bloodshed among the expeditioners. All but fifty were slain. The survivors, including Zeniff, returned home to Zarahemla.

Zeniff, “being over-zealous to inherit the land of [his] fathers,” set out on a second expedition to the land of Lehi-Nephi. This group suffered “famine” and “sore affliction,” recognizing that the problems were rooted in their behavior, “for we were slow to remember the Lord our God” (9:3). Zeniff then led a small delegation with four men from his group to meet with the king of the Lamanites to see if they could “possess the land in peace” (9:5). Preferring peace, and as he had recommended making a treaty before, Zeniff went to the king who agreed and even moved his people out of that area. Trusting the king, Zeniff and his people were given the lands of Lehi-Nephi and Shilom, and they began to repair walls, build buildings and plant crops, not realizing that the Lamanite king had designs to put them into bondage or oppressive servitude (9:10).

### **Mosiah 9:9 — Pre-Columbian Barley in America**

As the people of Zeniff began to settle in the land, they engaged in agricultural activities, planting a list of crops that included barley and wheat. At one time, both of these crops were assumed to have been entirely absent from the pre-Columbian New World. However, that assumption regarding barley has been found to be incorrect. There are actually three types of wild barley native to the Americas—something scientists have now been aware of for a long time. Archaeologists first uncovered a domesticated form of barley native to the Americas in a pre-Columbian (ca. AD 900) context in the state of Arizona in 1983—more than 150 years since the publication of the Book of Mormon. Since then, pre-Columbian barley has been found in several other places, including in the mid-west and eastern United States.

Evidence from what is called archaeobotany (the study of plant-remains at archaeological sites) now confirms that a species of barley was highly important to some cultures in the Americas during this pre-Columbian time period. This has important implications for the Book of Mormon. In the second and first centuries BC, barley played a significant role in Nephite society, not only as food, but as a measurement of exchange (Alma 11:1–19), just as it did in ancient Near Eastern economic systems.

John L. Sorenson commented, “That such an important crop could have gone undetected for so long by archaeologists justifies the thought that wheat might also be found in ancient [American] sites.” No matter how few anachronisms are thought to exist in the Book of Mormon, patience and faith are rewarded every time another one is disposed of.

### **Further Reading**

Book of Mormon Central, “[How Can Barley in the Book of Mormon Feed Faith?](#) (Mosiah 9:9),” *KnoWhy* 87 (April 27, 2016).

John L. Sorenson and Robert F. Smith, “*Barley in Ancient America*,” in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon: A Decade of New Research*, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City and Provo, UT: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992), 130–132.

### **Mosiah 9:14–16 — The Lamanites Grew Uneasy and Greedy**

Twelve years later, after settling in the land assigned to them by the Lamanites, the people of Shilom were attacked by the Lamanites, who were worried that “they could not overpower” the growing group of settlers and who wanted to take their produce. The people of Shilom fled into the city of Nephi, seeking protection from Zeniff. They made preparations to fight back against the Lamanites.

### **Mosiah 9:16 — How Tools of Defense Can Become Weapons of Rebellion**

President Spencer W. Kimball once warned:

We are a warlike people, easily distracted from our assignment of preparing for the coming of the Lord. When enemies rise up, we commit vast resources to the fabrication of gods of stone and steel—ships, planes, missiles, fortifications—and depend on them for protection and deliverance. When threatened, we become anti-enemy instead of pro-kingdom of God (Spencer W. Kimball, “The False Gods We Worship,” *Ensign*, June 1976).

It is wise to be prepared for the future—natural disasters and potential physical dangers from those of ill will. Prophets ancient and modern have and will continue to counsel us how to more fully prepare and protect ourselves in a way that is consistent with the principles and covenants of the Gospel. But the Book of Mormon warns us how easily the tools of our defense can become the weapons of our rebellion (see also Alma 23:7).

### **Mosiah 9:16 — With Swords and with Cimeters**

The simple weapons made by the Nephites included bows, arrows, swords, cimeters, clubs, and slings. People have wondered about the cimeters. The word “cimeter” is an old spelling of the word “scimitar,” which is a curved sword that usually has a cutting edge on the convex or outer side of the sword, but many ancient scimitars had a sharpened interior curve in addition to or in place of the exterior curve. It used to be thought that this weapon was first developed during the rise of the Muslims. However, it is now known that scimitars were used in both the Old World and the New, in both biblical and Book of Mormon times. Thanks to the Dead Sea Scrolls, scholars now know that the ancient Hebrew term “kidon” refers to a scimitar. In 1 Samuel 17:45, when David faced Goliath, he declared, “You come against me with a sword [hereb] and spear [hanit] and scimitar [kidon], but I come against you with the name of Yahweh Sabaoth, god of the ranks of Israel.” Some writers have thought it strange that the Lamanite

chieftain Zerahemnah would carry both a sword and a cimeter, but as Paul Hoskisson has observed, the biblical text says the same about Goliath.



Figure 4 Egyptian Sword. Image via Wikimedia Commons

### Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, “[Why Does the Book of Mormon Mention Cimicers?](#)” *KnoWhy* 472 (October 2, 2018).

Matthew Roper, “[Swords and ‘Cimeters’ in the Book of Mormon](#),” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 8, no. 1 (1999): 35–43.

Paul Y. Hoskisson, “Scimitars, Cimicers! We have scimitars! Do we need another cimicer?” in *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and William B. Hamblin (Salt Lake City and Provo, UT: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 352–359.

William J. Hamblin and A. Brent Merrill, “Notes on the Cimicer (Scimitar) in the Book of Mormon,” in *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and William B. Hamblin (Salt Lake City and Provo, UT: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 360–364.

### Mosiah 9:17–18 — In the Strength of the Lord

Zeniff recorded that as the Nephites went to tackle the Lamanite insurgency, they turned to the Lord: “[F]or I and my people did cry mightily to the Lord that he would deliver us out of the hands of our enemies, for we were awakened to *a remembrance* of the deliverance of our fathers.” They succeeded, sorrowfully counted and buried all the dead, and were freed from bondage by turning to the Lord—at least for now!

President Spencer W. Kimball was fond of teaching that one of the most important words in the dictionary is “*remember*.” Remembering the goodness of God and the deliverance of their ancestors turned the hearts of these Nephites to the Lord. Their prayers were answered and they were able to go forth “in his might.”

### Further Reading

Steven L. Olsen, “Memory and Identity in the Book of Mormon,” *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 22, no. 2 (2013): 40–51.

Louis Midgley, “To Remember and Keep: On the Book of Mormon as an Ancient Book,” in *The Disciple as Scholar: Essays on Scripture and the Ancient World in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks, Donald W. Parry, and Andrew H. Hedges (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2000), 95–137.

### Mosiah 10:1–2 — Preparations of Protection

Zeniff recorded that he and his people prepared in two ways to protect themselves against attack: (1) they made weapons, and (2) they kept guards posted so that they would not be surprised and taken “unawares.” Being prepared with tools and equipment is always a first step of safety. Also, being on guard, not being taken by surprise, is something everyone should do in realizing that challenges and even attacks may come. We can’t always anticipate every future need, but we can know ourselves, know our strengths and weakness, and can take steps to protect against our points of spiritual vulnerability.

### Mosiah 10:12–17 — The Causes of Lamanite Animosity

Interestingly, Zeniff recorded in his record the reasons why the Lamanites, generations later, were hostile against the Nephites. Knowing the other side’s point of view is always important in diplomacy, political arguments, or interpersonal misunderstandings. From the outset, Laman and Lemuel unfortunately had seen things differently from Nephi, and they passed on a tradition perpetuating their perspective on these events. As stated in KnoWhy 559, while “full understanding of their point of view is impossible, since no Lamanite record is directly available today,” we can at least appreciate the efforts of Nephites to understand the Lamanite position, as the Nephite record engages “in at least five places in the Book of Mormon (see 1 Nephi 16:35–38; 17:17–22; Mosiah 10:12–17; Alma 20:10, 13; 54:16–17, 20–24).” This attention to Lamanite concerns undoubtedly helped efforts by people like the sons of Mosiah (Alma 17–26) as well as Nephi and Lehi, the two sons of Helaman (see Helaman 5), as they carried the Gospel to their kindred. Being diligent record keepers can help all people understand the past, which can often be helpful in averting outright warfare and ill-will.

### Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, “What Can Readers Learn from Lamanite Traditions? (Mosiah 10:12–16),” *KnoWhy* 559 (April 28, 2020).

**Mosiah 10:10, 17–18 — Success Only Comes in the Strength of the Lord**

Finally, in the end, Zeniff recorded that as the Nephites went to tackle the Lamanite insurgence, they all—every able-bodied man, including the aged Zeniff—turned to the Lord. This was the key to their success: “We did go up in the strength of the Lord, . . . putting their trust in the Lord” (10:10, 19). After declaring that he “did confer the kingdom upon one of [his] sons,” even Noah, Zeniff ended his record with one last heartfelt prayer that undoubtedly had guided him throughout the challenges of his life: “May the Lord bless my people” (10:22).