

# MOSIAH 11–17

John W. Welch Notes



## Overview

These chapters in the Book of Mormon, giving an account of the message, trial, and death of the prophet Abinadi, are quite well known. The stark contrast between the righteous dedication of Abinadi and the stubborn wickedness of King Noah and his priests is unforgettable. The sheer number of details found in this account is impressive, even if the significance of each individual point is not always appreciated. The account is long. By comparison, it is the longest trial transcript and narrative found in the Bible, if not in ancient literature anywhere. The account is specific, filled with important and interesting information about *who* was involved, *what* they said and did, *when* this transpired, *how long* this all took, *where* it occurred, and most importantly *why* things happened the way they did.

As we read and process this tragic account, many things unfold about the people involved: Abinadi, the general citizens in the city of Nephi, and King Noah and his priests. Alma, a young man, is the only one of the priests who courageously refuses to go along with the other priests, who were intent on convicting and executing Abinadi. As a result, Alma almost loses his life, but instead begins the direct line of righteous leaders, passed down from father to son, who will guide the Nephites for the next four hundred and fifty years.

Enough is said in these chapters to allow readers to clearly reconstruct what was done, who said what, what passages of scripture from Exodus and Isaiah were recited and interpreted by Abinadi, and what legal charges were raised by the priests, were rebutted

by Abinadi, retracted and revised, and which legal accusation the priests ultimately acted upon.

The season when this happened appears to have been around the time of Pentecost. Abinadi returned a second time, having been rejected on a similar occasion two years earlier. He was held in solitary confinement for three days, which may have been symbolically meaningful, recalling the three days of thick darkness that covered Egypt (Exodus 10:22), Jonah being in the grasp of the death monster for three days (Jonah 1:17; Matthew 12:40), and other times this number has customary meaning.

Readers can easily imagine where these events occurred, in the temple-city of Nephi, in the sumptuous administrative palace of Noah, and in the pure waters of Mormon, where Alma took refuge. Readers can readily grasp why Abinadi was sent, what the problems were, why Noah had been doing what he was doing, and especially what rules constrained the priests' decisions, influenced their arguments, deliberations and decision, and determined the mode of Abinadi's execution.

The account as it is found in the Book of Mormon today was probably compiled from contemporaneous notes recorded by Alma the Elder (the young priest who was expelled by Noah from Abinadi's trial) and also from records or memories provided by King Limhi (Noah's son and successor). Although it is possible to read that story of Abinadi from many perspectives, that composition almost certainly began primarily as a legal report, recounting the trial of the prophet Abinadi from a judicial point of view. Therefore, striving to understand the trial of Abinadi in light of ancient principles of jurisprudence makes good sense, and that fundamental legal perspective should undergird and inform any reading or interpretation of this classic scriptural episode.

Just as the scriptural account of Abinadi can serve as a tale of warnings for people today, it was originally a foundational story in the history of the Nephites themselves. Mormon, the main compiler of that history, lamented the wickedness of the people in his own day (about AD 325) and saw the resurgence of those disastrous conditions in his time as "the fulfilling of all the words of Abinadi" (Mormon 1:19). It is one of the most iconic tales of wo in all of human history.

### Further Readings

John W. Welch, "[The Trial of Abinadi](#)," in *The Legal Cases in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: BYU Press, 2008), 139–209. On Pentecost, see pp. 188–193.

Shon D. Hopkin, ed., *Abinadi: He Came among Them in Disguise* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, 2018).

## Mosiah 11

### Mosiah 11:1 — Why Would Zeniff Have Named His Son Noah?

The name *Noah* is mentioned twice in this verse. Why would Zeniff name his son *Noah*? Let us assume that Noah was born in the City of Nephi, which makes sense chronologically.

When parents in the Nephite culture gave a royal son a name like this, they were probably hoping that he would be like Noah in a positive sense. Noah had cried repentance, and King Noah's father, Zeniff, certainly would have appreciated that. In addition, Noah in Genesis was given a promise. After the flood, the rainbow symbolized God's promise, "I will not destroy this land again" (Genesis 8:21–22, 9:14–15). God had given a new covenant; he started them over with a whole new world. Zeniff must have seen himself in this role as well: redeeming the land of Nephi and starting over. I wonder if King Noah thought of himself in that mode as starting over. And perhaps God's ancient promise may have given him great confidence, which he turned into overconfidence. Perhaps he wrongly reasoned that, because God had promised his namesake that He would never again destroy the world by flood, he and his people could be confident that they would not be destroyed. But, unfortunately, he did not walk in the ways of his father, Zeniff, and he did not correctly keep the commandments of the Lord. As a result, tragedy befell him. He should have learned from his namesake, Noah of old, to heed the warnings and follow the commandments of the Lord, in spite of any false sense of security.

### Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, "[How Does The Book of Mormon Use a Hebrew Pun on King Noah's Name? \(Mosiah 11:6\)](#)," *KnoWhy* 406 (February 8, 2018).

Matthew L. Bowen, "['This Son Shall Comfort Us': An Onomastic Tale of Two Noahs](#)," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 23 (2017): 263–298.

### Mosiah 11:2 — Noah Had Many Wives and Concubines

In Noah's mind, the question may well have been, when Lehi commanded his sons not to have more than one wife, was that binding on all of Lehi's posterity forever, or was it only binding on his sons? In the ancient world, fathers had the right to arrange marriages and to lay down the conditions of marriage for their sons and daughters. Any righteous person following Lehi as a prophet would certainly say that Father Lehi did not think this was a good idea, unless God should command otherwise, and thus people generally should not do this either (Jacob 2:27). However, if Noah wanted to justify himself, he could certainly have argued that Lehi was only speaking as a father binding his immediate sons, not his distant posterity.

In fact, under the Law of Moses—which Noah’s priests said they were strictly obeying—the book of Deuteronomy makes it is very clear that an Israelite man could have more than one wife. If a man was married and his brother died, he could be required under the law of levirate marriage to take his deceased brother’s wife as a second wife. The law also goes on to provide that the oldest son of a first wife was to be privileged and protected in getting a double portion in the distribution of his deceased father’s inheritance among all his sons. Thus, for example, a man could not prefer the first son of his second wife in his estate planning and give that son a double portion of the standard share of the inheritance (Deuteronomy 21:15–17).

Noah, however, was an expert at rationalizing his behavior. I am certainly not trying to justify Noah’s inappropriate conduct, but it can be instructive to imagine what reasoning he might have used to explain away his sins. When Abinadi asked what he and his priests taught the people, they did not answer that they lived Lehi’s law; rather, they replied, “We teach the Law of Moses.” Noah apparently kept many of his large group of priests (likely 24 of them) busy finding ways to justify his behavior or to locate loopholes in selected parts of the written law.

#### **Further Reading**

Book of Mormon Central, [“What Does the Book of Mormon Say About Polygamy? \(Jacob 2:30\),”](#) *KnoWhy* 64 (March 28, 2016).

#### **Mosiah 11:3–4 — King Noah Imposed a Tax on His People**

Deuteronomy 17:14–20 is known as the paragraph of the king. It is a provision in the Law of Moses that says what the king can and cannot do. For example, in verse 16 it says, “He shall not multiply horses to himself.” That does not mean he cannot have any horses, but rather that he cannot have an excessive amount, such as Solomon’s thousands of horses. It also says, “Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold” (Deuteronomy 17:17). How might a king like Noah have interpreted this? The law prohibits him from amassing too much gold and silver, but who decides what is too much? Noah imposed a twenty percent flat tax. While twenty percent may not seem excessive to us today, to people in the ancient world it was quite a lot. And, might the general population have considered twenty percent to be a prohibited “multiplying”? Twenty percent is, after all, twice a tithe. But, perhaps it is possible Noah saw this as providing ten percent for the Lord—for the priests to run the temple and religious practices—and then he allocated the other ten percent for himself, the king, for public needs. There is actually some precedent in ancient Israel for each—the king and the temple—to receive ten percent on some occasions. Similarly, Noah may have

rationalized that his right to collect and receive these funds was as great as the right of the priests.

As far as wives are concerned, we have clear indication in Mosiah 11:2 that Noah “had *many* wives and concubines.” Whatever additional regulations or commandments Lehi may have given concerning marriage, Noah’s problem, at least under the prohibition in Deuteronomy 17:16, was that he had *too many* wives. His excess in this regard was clearly not acceptable in the eyes of Abinadi, who was commissioned by the Lord to preach repentance to Noah and his people. It appears that Noah also rationalized his lavish building program (Mosiah 11:8, 13). We do not have the details on all the other ways he and his priests apparently had interpreted the law that had allowed or caused himself and his people to commit sins.

### **Mosiah 11:7 — The Nephites Became Idolatrous**

Somehow the Nephites also became idolatrous in some way. Idolatry is defined in the Law of Moses at the beginning of the Ten Commandments, in Exodus 20:4, “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water underneath the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them.” Abinadi quoted the Ten Commandments to the priests.

What behaviors constitute committing idolatry? This legal subject always raised debatable questions in Jewish law. Is it okay to make a statue of a fish just for decoration, to put on your mantelpiece? Is it acceptable to make a tree, to carve a nice wood tree? Is it the making of the image that is problematic, or was it the worshipping of such images, bowing down and serving them? How far can a person go before he or she has committed the offense of idolatry which was punishable by death? My guess is that Noah had commissioned the making of many statues or stelae, likely including images of himself or of other people or things, and that he quite likely worshipped those images in his heart. He was probably smart enough not to actually bow down publicly in front of them or to put sacrifices at their feet, but there are plenty of traditions within Judaism that say making a statue, in and of itself, is idolatry, and that the other elements of worshipping those images were separate additional offenses.

In ancient Israelite archaeology, one does not find many elaborate statues like the ancient Greeks and Romans made, but some early Israelites actually did make and use small statues. But statues of human images were prohibited by orthodox Jews. Clearly, whatever their conduct in this regard, Abinadi believed that Noah and his priests had gone too far. Noah may have employed so many priests because his propensity was to get as close to the line as possible, and so he needed many advisors to rationalize his behavior.

## Mosiah 12

### **Mosiah 12:1 — Where Was Abinadi during Those Two Years?**

Was Abinadi sitting out in the wilderness by himself for two years? That is a long time to spend alone out with the jaguars and the boa constrictors. The only other known Nephite settlement at this time was in Zarahemla. If Abinadi was an older prophet and had come back with the original settlers who re-inherited the land of Nephi, he would have known at least approximately where the land of Zarahemla was. I suspect that Abinadi went back to Zarahemla for spiritual and textual reinforcements. This could account for some of the similarities in language between words found in Mosiah 3 (King Benjamin) and the end of Mosiah 15 (Abinadi), although the two of them could have drawn independently on Nephite doctrines and teachings. But more than that, it seems quite possible that Abinadi went back to Zarahemla to consult the Law of Moses and the words of Isaiah recorded on the plates of brass. When he returned to the land of Nephi, he was certainly well prepared with a knowledge of the law and commandments. King Benjamin and Abinadi were both prophets of the Lord. They could well have worked and consulted together. We usually think of Abinadi as a solo operator, but he may have had connections with other prophets. He may have gone to Benjamin as an established royal priesthood leader to seek guidance from the Lord and to gather wisdom by memorizing the scriptures.

### **Mosiah 12:1 — Why Did Abinadi Come in Disguise?**

There has been a fair amount of debate about the question of when, where, and how Abinadi returned to the City of Nephi. It appears humorous that he would come to the city in disguise, but almost immediately identify himself as Abinadi. However, I think he came in disguise for a limited purpose. Because there was an arrest warrant still outstanding against him (Mosiah 11:29), he needed a way to covertly enter the city. But once he was in the right place within the city center, he was ready to identify himself and deliver his message.

### **Further Reading**

Book of Mormon Central, "[Why Did Abinadi Use a Disguise? \(Mosiah 12:1\)](#)," *KnoWhy* 310 (May 8, 2017).

Alan Goff, "[Abinadi's Disguise and the Fate of King Noah](#)," *Insights: A Window on the Ancient World* 20, no. 12 (2000): 2.

### **Mosiah 12:3 — Abinadi Prophesied against Noah**

Abinadi's words, "*It shall come to pass that the life of King Noah shall be valued even as a garment in the furnace*" constitute a very interesting form of prophecy. It is a Hebrew poetic form called a *simile curse*. Such statements conveyed actual predictions and real curses. They portrayed very severe consequences to the listeners. Such curses, to ancient people, were very serious and were considered to have numinous powers to bring evil upon people. We might even say that curses such as Abinadi's words were deadly serious.

#### **Further Reading**

John A. Tvedtnes, "As a Garment in a Hot Furnace," in *Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon: The FARMS Updates of the 1990s*, ed. John W. Welch and Melvin J. Thorne (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), 127–131.

### **Mosiah 12:9 — Abinadi Was Brought before the King**

King Noah had commanded his people "to bring Abinadi hither, that I may slay him (Mosiah 11:28)." Noah likely wanted Abinadi brought before him for a hearing, because simply ordering him to be killed would have only given Abinadi's cause legitimacy. In Mosiah 17 Noah desperately wanted Abinadi to retract his prophecies to avoid incrimination. But Abinadi said, "I will not recall my words, and they shall stand as a testimony against you. And if ye slay me ye will shed innocent blood, and this shall also stand as a testimony against you at the last day" (Mosiah 17:10). Noah wanted to engage in a little plea-bargaining at that point, but Abinadi would not go for it.

Under ancient Near Eastern law, there were several bodies of statutory material giving the king the exclusive right to put anyone to death in his kingdom. Others in authority could execute punishments, such as giving forty stripes, but they could not kill him unless ordered by the king. That tradition persists all the way through 3 Nephi 6, when the text says that the governor of the land in Zarahemla was the only one who could authorize the death penalty.

We may wonder why so many of the people in the city of Nephi went along with Noah. One reason might have been economic security. Noah's large building campaigns would have produced high rates of employment. Life was good in that sense. Presumably there was upward mobility in this relatively small society and those opportunities encouraged people to not want to rock the boat. When Abinadi came to preach repentance, the people did not agree with Abinadi's ominous condemnations. There may have been some heavy rationalizations going on in their minds, as we mentioned in Mosiah 11.

Here is a lesson for us—we must always be on our guard that we are not rationalizing away our misconduct. Instead, it helps us to have bishops, stake presidents, teachers and ministering brothers and sisters to help us see how we can do better than we have been doing.

### **Mosiah 12:17 — How Many Priests Did King Noah Have?**

We will later learn that King Noah’s wicked priests later kidnapped the Lamanite daughters, and we can assume that they took one each. Since twenty-four of the Lamanite daughters were abducted, that becomes one evidence that King Noah had 24 priests (Mosiah 20:1–5).

Several other evidences support that conclusion, as I argue in my chapter “The Trial of Abinadi.” For example, in Israel, the seventy members of the Sanhedrin sat in three rows, and seventy divided by three is twenty-three and a third. One of the rows had twenty-four and the other two rows had twenty-three. For the big cases, you had to have the full Sanhedrin, all seventy. For a minor case, or for a case tried outside of Jerusalem, you just had to have one row: twenty-three or twenty-four. So that number seems to me to be at least plausible.

#### **Further Reading**

John W. Welch, “[The Trial of Abinadi](#),” in *The Legal Cases in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: BYU Press, 2008), 170–173.

### **Mosiah 12:20–24 — The Priests Questioned Abinadi**

The priests decided that they would try to trap Abinadi with questions. They read him a scripture and asked how he interpreted the passage. That passage is from Isaiah 52. Knowing that fact is very important because Abinadi answered by reciting the messianic Isaiah chapter 53 (see Mosiah 14). Thus, his real answer was, “If you want to understand Isaiah 52, you have to keep reading on into Isaiah 53.” I often tell my law students that the first rule of statutory construction is read on, keep reading, and so it is with the first rule of scripture interpretation: *read on*. Do not take a scripture out of context. Do not stop reading too quickly. If you don’t understand a scripture, keep reading scripture.

But one must wonder, why did the priests think they could prove Abinadi to be a false prophet by quoting this passage from Isaiah 52? It is, at first glance, the strangest kind of approach by an accusing prosecutor we can imagine. However, they must have seen something in Isaiah 52 that other readers don’t. Indeed, they may have believed that Isaiah 52 was a prophecy about the city of Nephi and their greatness.

Look at it from their point of view. The passage begins, “How beautiful upon the mountains.” Ah, *mountains*! The city of Nephi is up in the mountains. “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of ... who?” The feet of a person who brings *good tidings*.



However, Abinadi had not brought good tidings, but rather condemnations and woes. “Thy *watchmen* shall lift up the voice.” One of the major projects of King Noah was the construction of a tower. He has watchmen all over. “With the voice together shall they sing ... for the Lord hath *comforted* his people, he hath *redeemed* Jerusalem.” (Mosiah 12:21–24, quoting Isaiah 52:7–10). Zeniff’s and Noah’s people believed they had gone back to the city of Nephi and redeemed the land. I will bet they used this very scripture to reinforce their city’s creation story. This is their main scripture. It justifies building watchtowers; it justifies redeeming the land; it glorifies living in comfort! It probably was one that they cited many times saying, “The Lord is with us,” for as the true prophet said, “Thy God reigneth!” (Isaiah 52:7). That is why they asked Abinadi how to explain this scripture. This, they thought, was talking about them and all was well.

### Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, “[Why Would Noah’s Priests Quiz Abinadi on Isaiah? \(Mosiah 12:20–21\)](#),” *KnoWhy* 89 (April 29, 2016).

Dana M. Pike, “[‘How Beautiful upon the Mountains’: The Imagery of Isaiah 52:7–10 and Its Occurrences in the Book of Mormon](#),” in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 261–265.

### **Mosiah 12:29 — The Priests of Noah Claim to Keep the Law of Moses**

Abinadi was a little like Paul, in that he was well trained in the scriptures and may have served in a leadership capacity. He himself may have been one of the older priests that Noah had kicked out (Mosiah 11:5), being among those who condemned the things Noah had begun doing. Yet, as we saw above in Mosiah 11:7, the law of idolatry was open to interpretation. As in our world today, there were laws and loopholes in Noah’s world. The question was, how strict were they going to be in keeping the law of Moses? The priests could well have claimed that they were keeping the law of Moses, at least their interpretation of it. There is a lesson for all of us in this kind of misreading and misconduct. It is not hard to see where it leads if you do not follow both the spirit and the letter of the scriptures with diligence.

### **Mosiah 12:33–36, 13:11–24 — Abinadi Taught the Basic Ten Commandments of the Law of Moses**

It is interesting that the feast of Pentecost was thought of as the festival celebrating the giving of the law. When Moses went up the Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments, he went alone (Exodus 19:20). He offered to take the people up into the presence of the Lord, but they were probably afraid. When they looked up at the mountain it was on fire with lightning and smoke, making it appear a very dangerous place. Boundaries were set about the mount, so that unworthy people would not gaze

upon the glory of the Lord and perish (Exodus 19:21, 23). “And the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a *furnace*” (Exodus 19:18). The Israelites did not want to become like a garment in that furnace (cf. Mosiah 12:3).

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, however, his face shone with luster (Exodus 34:29), as did the face of Abinadi (Mosiah 13:5), as he began to recite to the priests all ten of the basic commandments of the law that Moses had received on that original day of Pentecost.

Moreover, if Abinadi’s appearances in fact occurred around the time of the feast of Pentecost, the general population would not have been in the fields, but rather gathering at the temple as the Law of Moses specifically required (Exodus 23:16–17; Deuteronomy 16:16). It was an ideal situation for Abinadi to deliver his message to a maximum number of people. His message was a strong one. He declared that “You will have burdens lashed upon your backs” (Mosiah 12:5), meaning they would become slaves, and also he said that Noah’s life would be valued as a *garment in the furnace*. That would have been frightening, threatening, and terrifying.

### Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, “[Did Abinadi Prophecy During Pentecost? \(Mosiah 13:5\)](#),” *KnoWhy* 90 (May 2, 2016).

John W. Welch, Gordon C. Thomasson, and Robert F. Smith, “[Abinadi and Pentecost](#),” in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch (Provo and Salt Lake City, UT: FARMS and Deseret Book, 1992), 135–138.

## Mosiah 14

### Mosiah 14:1 — Abinadi Went on to Quote Isaiah 53

Abinadi, of all the people we meet in the Book of Mormon, came the closest to actually experiencing what Jesus went through in terms of making a suffering sacrifice, and thus it is appropriate that he held the attention of the priests by rehearsing the chapter in Isaiah that addresses the suffering of the servant of the Lord. Abinadi most likely recited Isaiah 53 from memory. It was a classic text. Abinadi may or may not have anticipated that the priests would turn to Isaiah 52, and he may well not have known that they were going to charge him with false prophecy. He likely had no time to prepare for this trial, and no defense lawyers were used in ancient Israelite criminal cases. He most likely had not anticipated that he would need to use Isaiah 53 in his defense, but he was prepared nonetheless.

### Further Reading

Monte S. Nyman, "Abinadi's Commentary on Isaiah," in *The Book of Mormon: Mosiah, Salvation Only Through Christ*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1991), 161–186.

Ann N. Madsen, "'What Meaneth the Words that Are Written?' Abinadi Interprets Isaiah," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 10, no. 1 (2001): 4–15.

### Mosiah 14:3–12—Abinadi Presented Isaiah's "Suffering Servant" Text Messianically

The prophets knew a lot more than most people give them credit for. How could Isaiah have known with such specificity what was going to happen to Jesus Christ? One reason may be that the original language in the ancient texts was a little clearer than it is in our modern translations. Some of the literary nuances would have been easier for them to pick up on, such as the suffering servant being wounded. It says, "He would be *marred*" (Isaiah 52:14), but in the Isaiah scroll from Qumran, the word for *marred* is not there—one letter had been added to that word and it changed the word from *marred* into *anointed*. He shall be *anointed* beyond our recognition. In other words, he will be so much greater. And the word for *anointed* in Greek is *Christos*. Abinadi must have had this version because he says, "even until the resurrection of Christ—for so shall he be called" (Mosiah 15:21).

### Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, "Why Did Abinadi Talk About the Suffering Messiah? (Mosiah 14:4)," *KnoWhy* 91 (May 3, 2016).

John W. Welch, "Isaiah 53, Mosiah 14, and the Book of Mormon," in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 293–312.

## Mosiah 15

### Mosiah 15:1–5 — The Ancient Perspective on Monotheism

In the Old Testament, the *Shema* was a main priestly blessing that is pronounced by Jews even today. Deuteronomy 6:4 declares, "Hear O Israel, our Lord God is one Lord, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart..." The word "one" can be understood in several ways. For the most part, people think of it in terms of monotheism—there is only one God numerically—but the ancient text was thinking in terms of there being only *one true and faithful God*. Almost all ancient people believed or supposed that there were many other gods, but each nation felt that their God was

preeminent. So the primacy of the one Lord may have much less to do with monotheism than the supremacy of their God, Jehovah, over all others. One was not allowed to bow down and worship other gods. Theirs was the one and only God that they loved and served with all their heart, might, minds, and strength.

In the Book of Mormon, the issue of monotheism comes up here in Mosiah 15, and again in Alma 11 when Zeezrom and others challenged the Nephite teaching that Jesus and God the Father are two beings, with there being just one Eternal God (Alma 11:44). While the careful wordings of these sacred statements about the awesome nature of deity are in some ways intentionally mysterious, a lot of how these statements should be understood comes back to the question of how the *Shema* in Deuteronomy should be understood. It has more to do with exclusive loyalty than numerical counting.

### **Mosiah 15:1–5 — Is Abinadi Teaching Jesus and God Are the Same Personage?**

In Isaiah 52:7, Abinadi switched out “Thy God reigneth” with “The Son reigneth” (Mosiah 15:20), and thereby emphasized that the Son is the Messiah who will come, will redeem, will reign, and will do the things that Isaiah prophesied about in chapters 52 and 53. Having focused on *the Son*, Abinadi needed to explain in what sense Christ is *the Son* and also *the Father*. King Benjamin made a similar statement when he declared, “And he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning” (Mosiah 3:8).

Christ will be the Son because He will come down be born to a human mother in a miraculous way. However, he will also be the Father, because he is the creator of heaven and earth (Mosiah 3:8), and because we are spiritually born again as Christ’s sons and daughters (Mosiah 5:7).

Abinadi explained this concept by highlighting aspects of the *spirit* and the *flesh* when talking in terms of the Father and the Son. If you replace the word *son* with the word *flesh* and the word *Father* with the word *spirit* in these passages, things start to become clearer in what Abinadi was saying. In Mosiah 15:1 Abinadi said, “I would that ye should understand that God himself shall come down among the children of men.” This refers to Mosiah 14:2 (Isaiah 53:2) passage that he recited: “He shall grow up before *him* as a tender plant.” The “he” in this passage is the Son. The “him” is God the Father. One God will come among the children of men and shall redeem his people.

Then in Mosiah 15:2 Abinadi explains, “Because he dwelleth in the flesh, he shall be called the Son of God.” Because of the flesh, he is the Son, but because he has made the flesh subject to the will of the Father, he will be the Father and the Son. “The Father because he

was conceived by the power of God” (15:3), so he is spiritual, and the Son in the sense that “he is of the flesh” (15:3), that is because he will condescend and come as a mortal.

In Mosiah 15:4, The Fatherhood refers to Christ’s immortality and his divine origin with the Father and his oneness with the Father. “They,” meaning both functions or attributes constitute one, premier God. The word “heaven” means the sky. Thus, Christ is the very Eternal Father of Heaven and Earth, but not of the whole cosmos. That is God the Father.

Mosiah 15:5 reads, “and thus the flesh becomes subject to the spirit.” In other words, the Son becomes subject to the will of the Father, being that one God who suffers temptations, suffers mockery, and is disowned by his people. And after mighty miracles, even as Isaiah says, he shall be taken “as a sheep before the shearer.” He remains dumb, and he will die for us.

Abinadi had to start here because the priests of Noah likely had a hard time understanding how God could come down and leave the heavens empty. This would be the basis for the blasphemy charge brought against Abinadi, that he had said that Christ would come down, and thus that God would somehow abandon his throne, the leadership, and rule of the world. That would certainly be considered unbecoming of God who is the King of Heaven. We can see how Abinadi was trying to lead the priests of Noah to see a little more clearly how Christ could still be God and the Father could still be in heaven.

Abinadi also had to be careful to be sure that he said that “they are one,” so that he did not contradict the first of the Ten Commandments, “Thou shalt have no other god before me.” That is usually where monotheism is thought to stem from, but in fact, there are two divine beings already mentioned in Isaiah 53:2 (“he shall grow up before him”) and 53:10 (“Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him”). When you read Abinadi’s explanation of that, along with what Isaiah had said, and further with our understanding of the Godhead in mind, all of this becomes very clear.

### Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, “[How is Christ Both the Father and the Son? \(Mosiah 15:2\)](#),” *KnoWhy* 92 (May 4, 2016).

Paul Y. Hoskisson, “[The Fatherhood of Christ and the Atonement](#),” *Religious Educator* 1, no. 1 (2000): 71–80.

Jared T. Parker, “[Abinadi on the Father and the Son: Interpretation and Application](#),” in *Living the Book of Mormon: Abiding by Its Precepts*, ed. Gaye Strathearn and Charles Swift (Salt Lake City and Provo, UT: Deseret Book and Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2007), 136–50.

### **Mosiah 15:6–8 — Christ Will Be Led as a Sheep before the Shearer**

Sheep were an important image here because Christ's suffering and death was likened to the sacrifice of the Passover lamb. Isaiah had prophesied that this suffering Lord would be sacrificed, like the sheep killed in the temple. If the priests of Noah understood what that meant, Abinadi could have proven his case that this was a shadow of things to come.

It is also clear from Isaiah 53 that the Savior will have power to make intercession, and Abinadi explained the nature of that intercession by using the phrase that he will "stand betwixt them and justice" (Mosiah 15:9). The word "intercession" (v. 8) literally means "to sit between." Christ will sit between us and justice to hold off execution of our punishments while giving us time to repent. Mercy will not be inconsistent with justice, because justice will occur eventually, but not before the time of intercession. There will be an interceder who will facilitate the redemption that Isaiah referred to in Mosiah 12:23. The one who will intercede is Christ.

### **Mosiah 15:10–14 — Abinadi Asks, "Who Shall Declare His Generation?"**

"Who shall declare his generation?" This probably means, "Who will declare his birth, and who will declare where he has come from? Who will declare his origin, his beginning in the heavens before his coming to earth, and his instatement as the eternal Son generated by the Father?" His true genesis began back in eternity. In the premortal council, the plan of salvation was laid from the foundation of the world. The Nephites knew about this council and would hear more about it in Alma 13. In speaking to Noah's priests, Abinadi said that, first, the prophets will declare his generation. The priests then asked Abinadi who the ones were who would "publish peace" (Mosiah 12:21). Abinadi's answer was, "The ones who will declare his generation." Abinadi went on to say that, second, anyone who accepts the Atonement of Christ can declare his generation. Anyone who believes in that divine plan can declare this good news. We too can declare it and declare his generation.

The priests of Noah likely thought that Isaiah's prophecy concerning those who publish peace was referring to them, or, at the very least, that it included them. After all, they were declaring the great tidings of riotous and lavish living. However, that is not what the good tidings are all about. The good tidings (the good news, the gospel) are about salvation, that the Son now reigns, and that he has redeemed his people. The word "peace" in Hebrew is *shalom*, which can also mean love and reconciliation. When the people have kept their covenants, the prophets can then declare that God and His people were now at peace one with another again, because his people have been redeemed and he has provided intercession for them.

Next, Mosiah 14:10 (Isaiah 53:10) declared, “Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him.” In a way, it pleased the Father that the Son was bruised for us, because “when *thou* shalt make his soul an offering for sin, *he* shall see his seed.” The pronoun “*thou* (you)” in this scripture refers to *us*. The prophet explained that it pleased the Lord to bruise the Messiah, so that *we* have the opportunity to make *his* soul an offering. Then there will not be a lamb offering anymore; the Son fulfilled that symbolic act. However, now we can make his soul an offering for our sins. This will reconcile us in atonement with him, and then *he* [God the Father] will see *his* [the Son’s] seed. For we are now his seed, his sons and daughters, and that makes us reconciled as family members with the Father once again.

“*He* [the Father] shall then prolong his days and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand” (Mosiah 14:10; Isaiah 53:10). Abinadi applied that couplet to the resurrection of Christ, for after Christ’s death, “the Lord will prolong his days,” and he will come back to life and “shall prosper in his hand.” That prosperity will then allow us to receive a division of the spoil, the goods captured in battle, that is talked about in in Isaiah 53:12. In this way, Abinadi said, every nation will see and know. And that, of course, goes back to and answers the question the priests had asked about the “generation” or the full becoming of this deified servant.

### **Mosiah 15:22–28 — The Significance of the Lord Making His Holy Arm Bare**

The final verse in Abinadi’s declaration is, “The Lord had made bare his holy arm” (30). Noah and his priests might have thought of this baring or manifesting of the holy arm of the Lord as the way in which they had won all their victories. But Abinadi declared that the way in which God will make bare his holy arm is through the salvific labor of his right hand man, namely his Son, who will be seen in the eyes of all nations.

All of this explanation began, back in Mosiah 12:21–24, when the priests had asked, at the end of their quotation, what does it mean to “make bare his arm in the eyes of all nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.” In Mosiah 15:22–28, Abinadi ended his extended testimony by concluding: “I say unto you that the time shall come that the salvation of the Lord shall be declared to every nation, kindred, tongue and people, and people shall see [God] eye to eye and shall confess before God that his judgments are just” (Mosiah 16:1), referring to the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ that will be delivered to all and the final judgment that will then justly confront all mankind.

With all of that, Abinadi not only successfully rebutted the accusation of the priests that he had prophesied falsely, but he implicitly counterclaimed against them of their own

wickedness, for “then shall the wicked be cast out, . . . they [who are] are carnal and devilish, . . . and persist in the ways of sin” (16:2, 3, 5).

## Mosiah 16

### **Mosiah 16:6 — Why Did Abinadi Speak in the Past Tense?**

In Mosiah 16:6, Abinadi said, “And now if Christ *had not come* into the world, speaking of things to come as though they had already come, there could have been no redemption.” This usage of the past tense is known as the *prophetic perfect* tense. In Mosiah 14 (Isaiah 53), for example, where Isaiah is speaking messianically, he uses present, future, and past tense verbs! One thing that is rather confusing about reading Isaiah is that the translations flip around from past, to present, and future. We often cannot tell whether Isaiah is giving a report of something that actually had happened to a servant who was treated badly, something that is currently happening, or something that is yet to occur.

This problem is caused by the fact that Hebrew verbs are not always crystal clear in their tense. Sometimes the verbs are not even expressed, so they and their tenses have to be implied from their contexts. But, in fact, it was common for prophets to speak about future things in the past tense. Even though this may seem odd, Hebrew grammar texts call this the *prophetic past* or *prophetic perfect*. Perhaps this is because, once the prophets had the future revealed to them, it was as though they had seen the preview of the coming attraction, and now they were talking to their audiences about what had happened in the preview. They were talking about what they had seen spiritually in the vision, but they expressed it in the past, even though it had not yet occurred physically and temporally.

There is no better description of the *prophetic past* than the one here in Mosiah 16:6, when Abinadi says that he is “speaking of things to come as though they had already happened.” We do not know who put that little aside in there. Abinadi, when he said, “And now if Christ had not come into the world,” probably did not stop and say, “Oops, let me just remind you that I am talking about things as if they have happened but they are still to happen.” Maybe he did, but it may also have been Alma the Elder, or Alma the Younger as an editor, or Mormon as an abridger, or someone else saying, “This was expressed in the past tense, but I know that the meaning is future.” In any event, that is how the *prophetic perfect* actually works.



### Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, "[Why Did Book of Mormon Prophets Speak of Future Events as if They Had Already Happened? \(Mosiah 16:6\)](#)," *KnoWhy* 95 (May 9, 2016).

### Mosiah 16:8–12 — The Sting of Death is Swallowed Up in Christ

Mosiah 16:8 says, "But there is a resurrection, and therefore the grave hath no victory and the sting of death is swallowed up *in Christ*." Isaiah 25:8 had said, "He will swallow up death *in victory*," and now Abinadi glosses that by saying "swallowed up *in Christ*." Similar language also occurs later in Alma 22:14, when Ammon is speaking to King Lamoni: "... the grave shall have no victory, and that the sting of death should be swallowed up *in the hopes of glory*" (Alma 22:14). Death, then, is being swallowed up in *victory*, in *Christ*, and in *hope*.

Interestingly, the word in Hebrew in the Isaiah passage that underlies all these passages is *netsach* (*ntsach*). The word *netsach* can indeed mean *victory*. It can also mean *the victor*, the one who is preeminent, or the leader who brings about the victory. It can also mean *the hope* for victory, not referring just to a past victory, but also to the sense of optimism that there will be a victory. So, all three of these meanings, *victory*, *Christ* (the victor), and *hope* are contained in that word. Abinadi may well have known the passage in Isaiah 25 that he was using, and understood it as a reference to being swallowed up in *Christ*, just as Abinadi had modified the line in Isaiah 52 to read, "the *Son* reigneth." In quoting Isaiah 25:8, Abinadi may have realized that the priests would not have drawn that similar meaning out of the word *netsach* alone, and so he glossed it to render it as "*death is swallowed up in Christ*." That would be a perfectly legitimate translation or comment on that word. The plan of the priests was obviously to try to catch Abinadi in some inconsistency with the words of Isaiah the prophet, but they could not. Abinadi knows what he is talking about. I hope this information helps you to appreciate Abinadi's masterful rebuttal and interchange with the priests of Noah.

### Further Reading

David. Larsen, "[Death Being Swallowed Up in Netzach in the Bible and the Book of Mormon](#)," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 55, no. 4 (2016): 123–134.

Neal Rappleye, "['Swallowing Up' Death in Isaiah, 1 Corinthians, and the Book of Mormon](#)," *Book of Mormon Central Blog* (September 3, 2019).

## Mosiah 17

### Mosiah 17:2 — Alma the Elder Was Converted: A Great Line of Descendants

The conversion of Alma the Elder was the prize jewel of the family history of his descendants for the next 450 years:

- Alma the Elder, while still a young man, was converted by the testimony and teachings of the prophet Abinadi.
- Alma the Elder's son was Alma the Younger.
- Alma the Younger's son was Helaman the First, who was the head of the stripling warriors.
- His son was Helaman the Second, the one after whom the book of Helaman was named.
- Helaman the Second's sons were Nephi the Second, and Lehi, who went to the Land of Nephi. Helaman sent them off saying, "Remember, remember my sons, the words that Benjamin spoke." They were to carry the words of Benjamin's speech with them, and they converted many Lamanites.
- Nephi's son was Nephi the Third. Which Nephi was that? He became the lead disciple of the Twelve.
- His son was another Nephi. This was the one after whom the book of 4 Nephi was named. When that Nephi died.
- His son Amos kept the record in his stead (4 Nephi 1:19). When Amos died, it was an hundred and ninety and four years from the coming of Christ.
- His son Amos the Second kept the record in his stead (4 Nephi 1:21). Then the second Amos died.
- His *brother*, Ammaron, kept the record in his stead (4 Nephi 1:47). Ammaron was the one who eventually gave the plates into the charge of Mormon.

Mormon was not a son of Ammaron, so that was the end of Alma's line, which began with Alma's conversion by Abinadi. As far as we know, Alma was Abinadi's only direct convert. He may have thought he was a failure. He had no idea how far and wide his influence would extend.

Likewise, Noah had no idea the effect Abinadi's testimony would have on the Nephite people. Abinadi's testimony was the great warning to all the rest of the Nephites and to the whole world as well. If we are not meticulous in keeping the law, if we are not faithful, looking forward to the coming of Christ, we will not have claim to blessings any more than Noah and his people.

The Book of Mormon is what Professor John Sorenson and the archaeologists have called a *lineage history*. What we are really being told from this point on is the history of the lineage of this man, Alma the Elder. The creation account of that lineage begins with Abinadi. It has a second phase, and that is with the conversion of Alma the younger, and those two stories will combine to be the main characteristics of this lineage. That is a great lesson on planting the seeds when you have no idea how the crop will eventually be harvested.

This is Alma the Elders' equivalent of Paul's road to Damascus. For the Nephite people, this beginning was what Latter-day Saints might understand as a Sacred Grove experience—a foundational spiritual event that moved forward God's purposes among the people.

#### Further Reading

John W. Welch and Greg Welch, "Life Spans of Alma's Lineage," in *Charting the Book of Mormon: Visual Aids for Personal Study and Teaching* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), chart 28.

#### **Mosiah 17:2—Alma the Elder Was a Young Man When He Heard Abinadi**

When introducing Alma the Elder, the text just says that he was "a young man" (17:2). He probably had to be at least twenty to be counted as a young man. In Hebrew, the word for *young men* is *bu-khar-im*. In order to be old enough to serve military duty, the young men had to be twenty years old, and so the soldiers are called the *bu-khar-im*, the *young men*. From the age of twenty to thirty, they would be called young men. At the age of thirty, they could hold public office. Alma, being called a young man, was probably somewhere on the lower end of that, in his early twenties. He was bright enough that he has been made a priest of Noah. Why, though, as a young man had he been put on this body of very elite aristocratic priests? All I can suggest there is that he might have been the son of a prominent priest in the city of Nephi, and therefore had been placed as a young man on the court. His father may have been one of the leaders who came from Zarahemla down to the city of Nephi.

Is his youth significant? On the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem (and this is coming from a later time period in Jewish law), there were 70 people. After the members of the court had heard all the evidence and had discussed the options, they voted in order of age and seniority, starting with the youngest. The Talmud explains why, "So that the young men will not be intimidated by the opinions of the older, more powerful of the court." We do something similar today in our high councils, where the youngest high councilor will speak first followed by the rest, in order.

Alma's speaking first, then, was at least consistent with that scenario. Maybe he knew that as the youngest man he was going to have to speak and cast his vote first. That may be why he was paying close attention throughout this event, and why it affected him so much.

When Alma spoke out in Abinadi's favor, Noah told his guards to get rid of him. Alma fled. Presumably Noah then brought in an alternate priest and filled the vacancy so they could continue. It may have taken them a couple of days to do that; perhaps that took place during their three-day recess.

We can learn some lessons here for our own lives in terms of the courage of young people. For example, our own missionaries courageously put themselves in harm's way. The youth factor, I think, is always an important and interesting one.

### Further Reading

John W. Welch, "[The Trial of Abinadi](#)," in *The Legal Cases in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: BYU Press, 2008), 185.

### Mosiah 17:2 — Alma's Name

The word *Alma* in Hebrew actually means *young man*, so, for some reason, Alma was named *young man*. You have here an interesting play on words. It says, "there was one among them whose name was Alma, he also being a descendant of Nephi. And he was a young man." (Mosiah 17:2).

A few years ago a Hebrew manuscript was discovered among the Bar Kochba scrolls down by the Dead Sea. They are not part of the Dead Sea scrolls, these were buried about 50 years after the Dead Sea Scrolls, during the Second Jewish revolt. It was a partnership sharing agreement between some owners of an orchard to divide up the harvest. One of the signators to this is a man named *Alma Ben Yahudah*, Alma, the son of Judah. This document was the first historical evidence found in which the name *Alma* was used for a man.

### Further Reading

Matthew L. Bowen, "[Alma — Young Man, Hidden Prophet](#)," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 19 (2016): 343–353.

Paul Y. Hoskisson, "[What's in a Name? Alma as a Hebrew Name](#)," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 7, no. 1 (1998): 72–73.

### Mosiah 17:4 — Alma Writes the Words of Abinadi

There have been many very interesting and yet tragic studies of Jewish holocaust victims, and there is a whole syndrome of psychological responses to knowledge that you are inevitably going to die. Over and over again, the holocaust victims went to

extraordinary lengths to just find some way of leaving a record—some kind of a track, even if it was just a little paper written and rolled up and stuck into a crack in a cell, or a diary. They desired to let it be known that they suffered that. It is called *the survivor witness*. Or *the will to survive* through witnessing. Abinadi was certainly going to die, and Alma may have wondered if he would be next. Alma, then, was driven by the need to leave a record. Mormon, at the very end of the Book of Mormon, when he knew that his people were done for, he said, “All I can do is stand as an idle witness, but I will leave a record.” Alma may have been driven by the same motive.

**Further Reading**

Book of Mormon Central, “[How Can the Book of Mormon Survivors Give Us Hope?](#) (Mormon 8:3),” *KnoWhy* 393 (December 26, 2017).

**Mosiah 17:5–6 — King Noah and His Priests Discuss How to Respond Next**

Abinadi was on trial for his life, and his defense had turned out to be very persuasive. His response caused the king and the priests to call a three-day recess to consider his words (17:6). Why might the priests have needed a three-day recess? One possibility is that Abinadi’s trial, as discussed above, may have occurred during the Feast of Pentecost, and traditionally the Feast of Pentecost was a three-day festival. They could not have trials on Sabbath days, and the three days of Pentecost are all considered holy days. This recess, therefore, may indicate that these priests—they claimed to live the Law of Moses—may be going through some of the motions required by the law. About a dozen Pentecost elements can be identified in the trial of Abinadi (see Table 1).

**Table 1 Did Abinadi Prophecy Against King Noah on Pentecost?**

Israelite Pentecost	Abinadi
Celebrating the first grain harvest	Cursed their grain (Mosiah 12:6)
Rejoicing in bounty	Sent hail, winds, insects (12:6)
Remembering deliverance from bondage in Egypt	Prophesied that the people would be brought back into bondage (11:21)
“Taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens” (Exodus 1:11)	“I will cause that they shall have burdens lashed upon their backs” (12:5)
Celebrating the giving of the Ten	Sternly recited the Ten Commandments

Commandments to Moses (Exodus 20)	given to Moses (12:34–36; 13:15–24)
Moses's face shone (Exodus 34:29)	Abinadi's face shone (13:5)
Mount Sinai became like a furnace (Exodus 19:18)	Prophesied that Noah's life would be like a garment in a furnace (12:3)
Stern condemnation of abominations	Stern condemnation of iniquity (12:2, 37)
A three-day festival (Exodus 19:11)	Cast into prison three days (17:6)
"The Lord will come down in the sight of all the people" (Exodus 19:11)	The Lord will come among the children of men (15:1)
Liturgical use of Psalms 50 and 82	Use of elements from Psalms 50 and 82
"Our God shall come" (Psalm 50:3)	"God . . . shall come down" (15:1)
"What hast thou to do to declare my statutes?" (Psalms 50:16)	"What teach ye this people?" (12:27)
"[Thou] hast been partaker with adulterers" (Psalms 50:18)	"Why do ye commit whoredoms?" (12:29)
"I will testify against thee" (Psalm 50:7)	Abinadi testified against them (17:10)
Thanksgiving and devotion are better than sacrifice (Psalm 50:8–14)	Having the commandments "written in your hearts" is better than sacrifices (13:11, 30)
Sacrifices are not for nourishment (Psalm 50:12)	Sacrifices are to signify "types of things to come" (13:31)
In day of trouble, if righteous call upon him, he will deliver them (Psalm 50:15)	God will not hear the prayers of the wicked (11:25)
Qualifications required to "declare my statutes" (Psalm 50:16)	"If ye teach the law of Moses why do ye not keep it?" (12:29)
Condemn those who wrongfully become rich	Condemn those who wrongfully become rich

and commit whoredoms (Psalm 50:18)	and commit whoredoms (12:29)
“Tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver” (Psalm 50:22)	“Shall devour their flesh” and “none shall deliver them” (Mosiah 12:2; 11:23)
“Shew the salvation of God” (Psalm 50:23)	Showing “salvation” of God (12:21, 24, 31, 32; 13:27, 8; 15:14, 18, 24–31; 16:1)
“Children of the most High” (Psalm 82:6)	“His seed” (15:10)
Death (Psalm 82:7)	Death (15:19–20)
Judged by God (Psalm 82:8)	Judgment by God (15:21–16:12)

### Further Reading

John W. Welch, Gordon C. Thomasson, and Robert F. Smith, “Abinadi and Pentecost,” in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City and Provo, UT: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992), 135–38.

John W. Welch and Greg Welch, “Did Abinadi Prophecy against King Noah on Pentecost?,” in *Charting the Book of Mormon: Visual Aids for Personal Study and Teaching* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), chart 124.

John W. Welch, “The Trial of Abinadi,” in *The Legal Cases in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: BYU Press, 2008), 188–193.

### Mosiah 17:8–20 — The Conviction and Execution of Abinadi

When the final hour of his trial arrived, Abinadi was accused of yet another crime—that he had spoken blasphemously against God, for which he would be put to death, unless he retracted the curses that he had place upon the king and the people (17:8). When Abinadi refused and offered to undergo an ordeal to validate his testimony (17:10), Noah was about to withdraw all accusations against Abinadi (17:11). But then the priests advanced a fourth charge—having previously charged him with the offenses of lying, false prophecy, and blasphemy—they now accused Abinadi of having “reviled” against the king (17:12), which indeed was against the law in Exodus 22:28, which states: “Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people” (see Table 2).

Because offending the king would have been considered a “matter of the king” (2 Chron. 19:11), the law gave Noah the final say. He delivered Abinadi up to be killed (17:12).

Abinadi was put to death by fire, mirroring the fact that he had spoken insolently about the king by saying that Noah's life would be valued as a garment in a fiery furnace. But death by burning was a rare form of execution under biblical law. Thus, it was seen as particularly aberrational and contrary to normal legal rules and order.

As he died, Abinadi aimed his final prophetic judgment against the priests who had largely influenced the outcome of Abinadi's case. His predictions that the priests' "seed shall cause many to suffer even the pains of death by fire" (17:15), and that they themselves would be "taken by the hand of your enemies, and then . . . shall suffer, as I suffer, the pains of death by fire" (17:18), apparently soon came to pass. Regarding Noah's death by fire, see Mosiah 19:20. Regarding the fulfillment of the prophecy that the seed of these priests, led by Amulon, would cause other believers to be put to death by fire, see Alma 25:7, 12. Regarding the deaths of some of the priests of Noah, see Alma 25:4; and on the continued hunting of the remainder, see Alma 25:9, 12. In this violent aftermath of the death of Abinadi, many people died, and at least some of them died by fire, all of which was seen as fulfilling these final prophecies of Abinadi (see Alma 25:9, 11).

A true martyr, Abinadi was "put to death because he would not deny the commandments of God," and he "sealed the truth of his words by his death" (17:20). His horrific death casts a long shadow throughout the Book of Mormon and adds to the world's chronicles of consecrated righteousness.



**Table 2**                      **Legal Charges Brought Against Abinadi**

Charge	Evidence	Mosaic Law in Question
Lying (Mosiah 12:14)	Abinadi had said that the people had hardened their hearts and had committed evil abominations (Mosiah 12:1)	“Thou shalt not bear false witness” (Exodus 20:16) “Thou shalt not raise a false report” (Exodus 23:1) “Ye shall not . . . lie” (Leviticus 19:11)
False prophecy (Mosiah 12:14)	“He pretendeth the Lord hath spoken it” (Mosiah 12:12)	“The prophet [who] shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, . . . shall die” (Deuteronomy 18:20)
Blasphemy (Mosiah 17:7-8)	Abinadi had said that God himself would come down (Mosiah 7:26–28; 15:1–8)	“He that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death” (Leviticus 24:16)
Reviling against the king (Mosiah 17:12)	With a simile curse, Abinadi said that Noah’s life would be as a garment in a hot furnace (Mosiah 12:3, 10–12)	“Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people” (Exodus 2:28)

**Further Reading**

John W. Welch, “The Trial of Abinadi,” in *The Legal Cases in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: BYU Press, 2008), 201–209.