

MOSIAH 29–ALMA 4

John W. Welch Notes



Mosiah 29

Transition from “Reign of Kings” to “Reign of Judges”

It might seem odd to combine the last chapter of the book of Mosiah with the first four chapters of the book of Alma. But, while the book of Mosiah can be seen as a unified composition covering the reign of Mosiah from his coronation (Mosiah 1:10; 2:30) until his death thirty-three years later (29:46), the final chapter in Mosiah is as much a beginning of a whole new era in Nephite history with “the reign of the judges” as it is the ending “of the reign of kings” (29:47). Without understanding what happened at the end of King Mosiah’s reign, and why that happened, the problems encountered at the beginning of the book of Alma would be unclear.

Mosiah 29:8–10 — Mosiah Desires to End the Kingship

The final chapter in Mosiah describes the governmental reforms of King Mosiah—a transition from a Nephite monarchy to a form of democracy. None of Mosiah’s sons were willing to succeed him on the throne as king. Wanting a peaceful transition of power following his reign, Mosiah thought carefully about the pros and cons of a monarchical form of government.

The Nephites had the record of the book of Ether. The twenty-four plates of the Jaredites had been translated by Mosiah, he himself being a seer. The following statement was made soon after the translation of the Jaredite record: “And this account [of the Jaredites] shall be written hereafter; for behold, it is expedient that all people should know the

things which are written in this account" (Mosiah 28:19). Moroni later delivered on that promise by abridging and inserting the book of Ether in the Book of Mormon.

However, in order to understand Mosiah's thinking, we should introduce the acute awareness of the Jaredite collapse into Nephite consciousness at this point. The account of the destruction of the Jaredite nation "did cause the people of Mosiah to mourn exceedingly" (Mosiah 28:18). How might that have changed King Mosiah's attitudes about himself, his society in general, and the kingship in particular?

Warring factions fighting over who should be king led to the utter destruction of the Jaredite civilization. Men fighting over the kingship divided the Jaredites into many bands swearing allegiance to one claimant or another. The Jaredite people contended viciously to the bitter end, and thereby destroyed their civilization. This contest of rulers battling to the death would have been shocking to King Mosiah and his factionalized people, realizing that they, too, could be swept off the land. It had happened to the Jaredites—and it could happen to them. The Nephites knew that the Jaredite plates had been translated by their king, who was one of God's seers and could know of things past and things to come. They may well have reasoned, "Has God given us these 24 gold plates as a warning that if we do not live righteously, this can happen to us too?" This would have been a very powerful message that would have come through loud and clear from the historical record and the religious example left by the Jaredites.

Mosiah very likely used the destruction of the Jaredite civilization as one of his arguments against having a kingship. He also may have taken the Jaredite account as a personal warning—not wanting his sons to get caught in the middle of a similar awful predicament. Mosiah was likely referring to the Jaredite infighting when he stated: "I fear there would rise contentions among you, . . . which would cause wars and contentions among you, which would be the cause of shedding much blood and perverting the way of the Lord, yea, and destroy the souls of many people" (29:7). Thus, Mosiah concluded, "Now I say unto you let us be wise and consider these things, for we have no right to destroy my son, neither should we have any right to destroy another if he should be appointed in his stead" (29:8). History had shown that serious contention over rights of kingship leads to years of ferocious infighting, dissension, murder, and bloodshed, just as their predecessors in the land had fought a violent civil war.

Most civilizations believe that they will last forever—that Rome will rule in perpetuity, or that Greece will live on. People of great societies never imagine their demise, thinking that they will remain a prominent civilization forever.

Hugh Nibley told me and a small group of others a story about D-Day. He was on Utah Beach on D-Day as an intelligence officer—Order of Battle. His military jacket had many

pockets and the contents in every pocket were registered and assigned by military and intelligence procedure. He had to keep things in the right pockets so that, if (or when) he got shot, other intelligence officers would know where to look to retrieve classified information he may be carrying. He was not to take anything with him except for authorized materials. As the troops crossed the English Channel in the middle of the night, Hugh Nibley had in his hand a copy of the Book of Mormon. As he read the Book of Mormon, and as he watched the horrific events unfold as the troops landed and stormed the beaches, he recalled: “Then and there, I received my testimony of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. It dawned on me that the story of the Jaredites, which I had always thought was sheer fiction that went beyond the wildest realities that could ever happen to a civilization, was in fact true. Annihilation of great civilizations does happen.”

The same realization would have been apparent to King Mosiah. It may have affected his decision and may have been an impetus for the changes that he implemented in Nephite government. This may also be why Mosiah abandoned his dynasty and gave up kingship. There have not been many kings in the world’s history who have voluntarily stepped aside and allowed someone else take over all privileges and powers that had been available to him and his children.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, “[What Do the Jaredites Have to Do With the Reign of the Judges?](#) (Mosiah 28:17),” *KnoWhy* 106 (May 24, 2016).

John A. Tvedtnes, *The Most Correct Book: Insights from a Book of Mormon Scholar* (Springville, UT: Horizon, 2003), 191–192.

John A. Tvedtnes, “[King Mosiah and the Judgeship](#),” *Insights: A Window on the Ancient World* 20, no. 11 (2000): 2; reprinted in *Insights: A Window on the Ancient World* 23, no. 1 (2003): 2.

Mosiah 29:26–27 — A Warning is Given to Nations that Do Not Desire to Follow God

Mosiah went on to state, “It is not common that the voice of the people desireth anything contrary to that which is right?” (29:26). That is how King Mosiah optimistically viewed his people, as he submitted to the people the change that he was voluntarily proposing and implementing. His plan was to use the voice of the people as a significant way of selecting judges and ruling the country. This was a huge transformation in government from the system of kings. Mosiah’s optimistic statement may or may not have been entirely true in Zarahemla. After all, within a couple years,

the situation there degenerated into a costly internal revolt led by Amlici. So, was Mosiah overconfident? Is it automatically true today in the United States, or anywhere else in the world, that “the voice of the people” will not usually desire anything that is not right? At the same time, is it not common for “the lesser part of the people to desire that which is not right?” (29:26) What can we do, as citizens today, to ensure that we conduct our business by the voice of the people?

It is important to note that even though Mosiah recognized that it is not common for the greater number of people to choose wrong, he allowed for the possibility that it could happen. A majority opinion might run contrary to that which is good or right for the people. Of course, if this did occur, another step would have to be taken to ensure peace and tranquility and prevent drastic disintegration of the culture and society—the law.

For a system of popular empowerment to work, there must be commitment to the rule of law. Mosiah presumed that people would need to “observe and make it your law—to do your business by the voice of the people” (29:26). This would require attentiveness, vigilance, and concerted effort. This would also require on the part of each citizen, or at the very least on the part of the majority of citizens, a sense of civic duty to be informed and to vote wisely.

Speaking of duties, I have no doubt that as legal historians look back fifty years from now on the legal accomplishments of the United States in the twentieth century, they will remember that time as an era of increased rights—women’s suffrage and civil rights for minority groups of all kinds. The focus on rights and privileges will be viewed as the great legal emphasis of that period in history. However, if rights are not also balanced with duties and responsibilities, the nation becomes a society of entitlements rather than a society of people doing their part by carrying out their civic obligations and duties to others.

Indeed, once Alma was appointed to be the first Chief Judge under the Nephites’ new reign of the judges, he went forth among his people “that he might preach the word of God unto them, to stir them up *in remembrance of their duty* . . . seeing no way that he might reclaim them save it were in bearing down in pure testimony against them” (Alma 4:19). Part of “bearing down in pure testimony” is being careful to testify only to that which one knows to be right or wrong. In some political issues, there is no right or wrong choice, and in those cases one ought not to indicate that there is. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is very careful about giving guidance on political issues. But that does not mean that individuals should not be constantly encouraged to be fully informed, to see all sides, and to listen to their conscience, or what Mosiah described as their “desire” for “that which is right” (29:26). Leaders are far more effective in instilling a sense of duty and responsibility when they themselves have integrity, model giving

preference to the public interest over their own personal benefits, and choose judiciously their agenda in selecting which political campaigns to pursue and which public battles not to fight.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, “[What is the Purpose of Democracy in the Book of Mormon?](#) (Mosiah 29–27),” *KnoWhy* 380 (November 9, 2017).

Mosiah 29:5–36 — Mosiah’s Reliance on Earlier Records

The words which Mosiah sent out among his people were “written” (29:4, 33). As his father Benjamin had done, Mosiah may have delivered orally his directive regarding the abandonment of the institution of kingship, while at the same time being sure that everyone, in their various assemblies, could read and understand the reasons behind his decision to change their form of government. Mosiah’s document is quoted from verses 4 to 32, with a concluding summary in verses 32–36. This official document is an amazing piece of political and scribal composition, although most readers of the Book of Mormon do not notice its skillful and mature effectiveness.

Mosiah’s official proclamation appeals to each of his main constituencies. Speaking to the longtime Nephite and Mulekite populations in Zarahemla, he referred to his father, King Benjamin, by name (29:13), and alluded to Benjamin’s public law warning against “contentions” (Mosiah 2:32) and prohibiting stealing, plundering, murdering, or any manner of wickedness (Mosiah 29:14; compare Mosiah 2:13). The Nephites probably needed little persuasion to convince them to accept Mosiah’s change, since they had a weak claim to kingship to begin with: Nephi was a reluctant monarch, and the Nephites in Zarahemla were guest monarchs. Mosiah’s edict also appeals to Limhi’s group by blaming, not them, but Noah and “his people” (the priests) for the failure of the efforts of Zeniff’s colony (Mosiah 29:18).

Most strongly, Mosiah appeals to and endorses Alma’s group by clearly incorporating almost all of the key words and ideas spoken by Alma when he declined the offer to become a king over his people (Alma 23:6–15). Mosiah had been given a copy of Alma’s record, which he read to all the people of Zarahemla (Mosiah 25:6), and so the verbal interconnections between Alma’s refusal and Mosiah’s abdication are plausible, prudent, and purposeful. In fact, every line in Alma’s account is repurposed by Mosiah. Many key words have been imported, almost in exact order, from Alma’s text into Mosiah’s manifesto, including:

- “esteem” one flesh (23:7); “esteem you as such” (29:5)
- “I desire that ye should” (23:13); “I desire that ye should” (29:5)
- “desirous” (23:6); “desirous” (29:5)

- “contentions” (23:15); “contentions” (29:7; 29:36)
- “if it were possible that you could always have just men to be your kings” (23:8); “if it were possible that you could have just men to be your kings” (29:13)
- “it would be well for you to have a king” (23:8), “it would be expedient that ye should always have kings” (29:13)
- “it is not expedient that ye should have a king” (23:7; 29:16)
- “remember the iniquity of king Noah and his priests” (23:9); “remember king Noah, his wickedness and his abominations, and also the wickedness and abominations of his people (29:18)
- “sore repentance” (23:9); “sincere repentance” (29:19)
- “delivered by the power of God out of these bonds” (23:13); “deliver . . . out of bondage . . . with his power” (29:20)
- “abominable” (23:9); “abominations” (29:24)
- “trust no man to be a king over you” (23:13); “I command you . . . that ye have no king” (29:30)
- “liberty” (23:13); “liberty” (29:32)
- “he [Alma] was beloved by his people” (23:6, opening point); “strong in love towards Mosiah” (29:40, closing point)

Interestingly, Mosiah’s statement contains three blocks of material that contain no parallels in Alma’s text. These blocks deal with the need to be wise to appoint judges and thereby avoid being destroyed (29:8–12), the difficulties of removing wicked kings (29:21–24), and the operation of the voice of the people (29:29:25–29).

These evidences of intertextuality are strong enough that one may well wonder whether Alma the Elder and Alma the Younger might have assisted Mosiah in the writing of his proclamation. After all, Mosiah had already entrusted Alma the Younger with the keeping of all the sacred records of his kingdom (Mosiah 28:20).

Mosiah 29:38 — “Equality” among the Nephites

The word “equality” shows up several times in this part of the Book of Mormon. However, the meaning of the word “equality” is not easily understood or straightforward. There are several ways in which two things can be said to be “equal,” and thus there are subtle nuances and differences both in the meanings and the implementations of the idea of equality. The Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution speaks about “equal protection,” and the Declaration of Independence states that all men are “created equal.” However, while this is certainly true in some crucial senses, it is not true in every possible sense. All do not have the same financial advantages when born into this world. All do not have the same health advantages or disadvantages. In what sense, then, are people created equal? Many societies and legal systems define

equality differently, and thus they provide dissimilar forms of social justice under their respective laws. For example, some systems provide justice through equal opportunity, while others provide distributive justice.

So we as readers of the Book of Mormon may well ask, What did “equality” mean to a Nephite? Under Mosiah’s reforms, all people in the land of Zarahemla were recognized as being equal in five significant areas under the law. In rapid succession, these rights of equality were delineated in the record in at least these five ways: namely,

1. eliminating the “inequality” of royal vs. ordinary status (Mosiah 29:32),
2. giving all an “equal chance” to be accountable (Mosiah 29:38),
3. having an equal “voice” (Mosiah 29:25, 39),
4. being equally protected in the freedom of “belief” (Alma 1:17), and
5. “having no respect to persons” and removing the “inequality” caused by pride, by despising others, and not sharing with all those in need (Alma 1:30, and Alma 4:12–15).

1. In most ancient societies, kings were regarded as superhuman beings. They were in no sense equal to their ordinary subjects. Pharaohs in Egypt, Kings in Babylon, Emperors in Rome—wherever one turns, to be a king meant being quasi-divine. Kings were elevated to a higher status at their coronation, and they renewed that status in year-rite festivals. They were adopted as sons of god (compare Psalms 2:7). They received instructions from heaven. Their word was law. King Benjamin had symbolically removed this awkward barrier between Nephite kings and their people, not by eliminating kingship, but by elevating all of his people to become Christ’s sons and daughters (Mosiah 5:7). Yet the appearances and temptations remained that a king would naturally abuse his powers, enacting laws “after the manner of his own wickedness,” killing at will any disobedient subjects, and using military force (Mosiah 29:23). This presumed divine essence of kings made them fundamentally unequal to the common people, and Mosiah eliminated that problem by removing the office of king altogether.

2. Next, the people were given an equal chance through “equal accountability” or “equal chance . . . to answer for [their] own sins” or crimes. As explained in Mosiah 29:38, every man expressed a willingness to answer for his own sins. By accepting personal accountability, Mosiah’s people recognized that they would be equal in that they would all stand before God to be judged.

Having a king had relieved the public from some requirements to act for themselves, because as subjects they could be compelled to believe or act under sovereign order. For these Nephites, the sins of the people would no longer be on the heads of kings, but would be upon each individual person.

This huge change in government from a monarchy to a form of democracy also relieved those who would be king from responsibility for the belief and actions of those over whom they ruled. In 2 Nephi, Jacob expressed concern that if he did not carry out his duty, the sins of his people would be upon him. King Benjamin explained that he served and taught his people “walking with a clear conscience before God . . . that I might be found blameless, and that your blood should not come upon me, when I shall stand to be judged of God of the things whereof he hath commanded me concerning you” (Mosiah 2:27). These Nephite rulers felt a keen responsibility before their people. Mosiah himself spoke of all that he had done to teach his people and “all the trials and troubles of a righteous king, yea, all the travails of soul for their people” (Mosiah 29:14, 33).

With the removal of kingship, the people of Zarahemla would no longer be compelled to believe under order of a king. That is one of the main things that “equality” meant for these people. It had little or nothing to do with personal identity. The objective was that agency would allow them to make their own choices and they would then be given equality in accountability. Ultimately, that is the underlying equality of mankind. We will all stand equally before God to be judged of our actions.

It is important to note that the removal of kingly responsibility over the people did not remove the responsibility of priesthood holders to teach and warn the people. Priesthood, however, was understood to be more egalitarian. Ordination to the Melchizedek priesthood, or the Holy Order after the Son of God, became available to greater numbers of men. Alma needed help in doing God’s work and men were called as high priests “on account of their exceeding faith and good works” to teach the commandments and to preach the coming of Christ (Alma 13:2–3). This new lack of control or collaboration between the king and his priests (as was the case in ancient Israel in general, but also with King Noah in the land of Nephi) gave rise to new, independent forms of priesthood, such as the order of Nehor, which would become a serious challenge to the new Nephite order in Zarahemla (Alma 1) as well as in Ammonihah (Alma 9–16).

Mormon also made this interesting comment about inequality in Alma 28:13: “And thus we see how great the inequality of man is because of sin and transgression.” Where there is righteousness, inequality is no longer an issue, because it is replaced by unity. Alma’s group in the wilderness emphasized their deep commitment and desire to be united, to be one. With sin, there is no equality; sinfulness undermines unity.

3. The new government reform allowed all to have a voice in government. In this way the people expressed and respected their equality in their all having “equal voice.” Mosiah instructed them to “choose you by the voice of the people, judges, that ye may

be judged according to the laws which have been given you by our fathers” (Mosiah 29:25). There is no record in the Book of Mormon that indicates that “the voice of the people” had ever been consulted prior to these reforms. However, after this precedent was set, it became an important aspect of Nephite political life throughout the reign of the judges. Immediately, the people “assembled themselves together in bodies throughout the land, to cast in their voices concerning who should be their judges” (Mosiah 29:39). Exactly how the candidates were advanced, or how those voices were expressed and counted, is never explained in the surviving Nephite records.

4. Also, the people were given complete protection of personal belief (Alma 1:17). They equally had the right to think and believe as they wanted. People were no longer compelled to belong to a particular religious cult or temple system, nor were they required to participate in religious sacrifices or celebrations. They would not be punished for what they believed. However, certain rules of social order and conduct could not be violated. They would continue to be punished for their actions in transgressing these laws, but not for what they believed.

Protection of personal belief was a huge step forward and a big change in how the whole Nephite society operated. However, it was not without its problems. One legal issue that arose was where to draw the line between “belief” and “action.” The people could be punished for what they did, but not for what they believed. There was a question as to whether preaching was a protected expression of belief or an action that was subject to public regulation. For example, the Book of Mormon dissident, Korihor, took the position that when he was speaking, he was simply expressing his belief. Therefore, Korihor thought he could say whatever he wanted about the government, about God, about priests, or about anything with impunity. He learned the hard way that not all “public speech,” especially open blasphemy, was a protected part of the sphere of “private belief” protected under the new law of Mosiah. The same problem arose with Nehor, who had his own belief system. The legal question in such cases was, how far can individuals go in publicly expressing their beliefs without having their words treated as a punishable form of “action.”

Today, Church leaders look to these Book of Mormon passages in their desire to protect personal belief. One can have private beliefs, but there is a point where beliefs are no longer private and personal—a point where personal beliefs take on a public character. When comments are submitted to the public, the public has an interest. Even “free speech” has certain limits or consequences, socially, religiously, and sometimes even legally. The concerns and lessons implicit in these Book of Mormon passages on freedom of belief can still be relevant in guiding what occurs today, particularly in the Church.

Many people minimize the importance that freedom of religious belief had in the founding of the United States. The establishment of religious freedom was not just an option or a by-product of the American Revolution. Thomas Jefferson prescribed three attributions that he wanted on his tombstone, and one of them was, “Author of the Bill of Religious Liberty for the Colony of Virginia.” Although arising out of different social and political situations, religious freedom was certainly a major part of the American Revolution and the establishment of the American Republic, as it also was in the creation of the Reign of the Judges among the Nephites.

5. A fifth way in which equality was established was to promote “equal sharing” with all those in need, as is explained in Alma 1:30: “[T]herefore they were liberal to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, whether out of the church or in the church, having no respect to persons.” In other words, people were to be treated kindly and with equal respect, regardless of their age, class, gender, or religious affiliation. For the people of Zarahemla, this may especially have meant trying to overcome generational tensions between parents and children, to recognize the needs of both the elderly and the vulnerable children, to regard and cultivate human dignity regardless of indentured or subjected conditions, to look beyond physical factors, and to break down tribal barriers or social groupings.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, “[What is the Purpose of Democracy in the Book of Mormon?](#) (Mosiah 29–27),” *KnoWhy* 380 (November 9, 2017).

Mosiah 29:41–45 — Alma Is Appointed as the First Chief Judge

At the end of the book of Mosiah and the beginning of book of Alma, we read about one of those amazing transitions in a civilization that historians like to study. In the development of culture and civilization, there are certain watershed periods in history where things change drastically. Historians want to know what led to change, how significant changes happened, and how change set the tone for things to come.

The American Revolution was one of those great watershed periods where, in a very short time, major changes occurred in the way people viewed government and human rights. This led to the birth of a new nation and a new form of government. Similarly, the French Revolution was the result of changing views on government. As you go back through history, there are great moments when things are transformed. Any Nephite, looking back at Nephite culture, would see the bloodless transformation from kingship to a reign of judges as a great turning point. It is interesting to see what lessons we might draw from this chapter in Nephite history.

To implement the Reign of the Judges, Alma the Younger was appointed Chief Judge by Mosiah and then confirmed by the voice of the people. Mosiah 29:44 simply states, “[T]hus commenced the reign of judges.” Previously, his father Alma the Elder had conferred the office of High Priest on Alma. Therefore, Alma was the Chief Judge, the official record keeper, and also the High Priest. With all of these responsibilities, his first few years in office proved to be very challenging.

First, it must have been overwhelming for Alma to be the first man in a newly-created position with the responsibility to successfully implement a new form of government largely by himself. He undoubtedly took comfort initially in knowing that he could rely on counsel and guidance from his esteemed father, the previous High Priest, and also from Mosiah, the previous king. However, what happened very soon after Alma took office? The verse immediately following the announcement of the beginning of the Reign of the Judges abruptly states that Alma’s father died, and the verse following that mentions that King Mosiah passed away. Both Alma’s father and Mosiah had long careers running the church and running the kingdom and now Alma had to assume both positions with limited experience. He had to stand alone in fulfilling his dual roles. Alma did not have counselors to assist him. Under ancient Israelite law, the Chief Priest was “chief” and did not have counselors. We do not completely know when the appointment of two counselors to a president became part of the church organization. It may have begun with Jesus taking Peter, James and John onto the Mount of Transfiguration, and three of the Nephite leaders were singled out for long service and then not tasting death (4 Nephi 1:14). Although all of these cases were somewhat different from each other, the idea of having three witnesses as leaders is something of a pattern set by Jesus in organizing his Church. And what a wise thing it is to have a leader and two counselors at the head of a Relief Society organization, head of a priesthood quorum, a ward, a stake, and the Church. The corporate and political world could perhaps benefit from this governing model. Having a presidency has a lot of value to it, especially where the counselors really do counsel. But Alma did not have that—he stood alone.

A second major challenge Alma immediately faced when assuming office as Chief Judge was deciding how to set up the new government. There was no rule book. Without a rule book, there were no guidelines, precedent, or experience to rely on. The new regime of judges was to be chosen in a different way than had been done in the past. Under Israelite law, judges were generally priests who had a hereditary right to the position. But under Mosiah’s changes, judges were to be elected by the voice of the people.

The new system of judges changed how justice would be administered, but the Reign of Judges did not change the law. The newly appointed judges were “to judge [the people]

according to the law which had been given them" (Mosiah 29:39, emphasis added). The new form of government made no provision for making new laws. There was no legislature or Congress, nor were there elected representatives to enact law. In fact, when explaining his reforms, Mosiah mentioned wicked King Noah who "enacted laws . . . after the manner of his own wickedness" (Mosiah 29:23). To the Nephites, the idea of changing the law, at least in the manner done by King Noah, was certainly viewed as detrimental to justice and good government.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, "How Were Judges Elected in the Book of Mormon?" *KnoWhy* 107 (May 25, 2016).

For an excellently detailed study of kingships and democracies in the ancient world, Gregory Steven Dundas, "Kingship, Democracy, and the Message of the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 56, no. 2 (2017): 7–58, showing that democracy was almost unknown in antiquity, where nearly all peoples assumed that kingship was the best form of government. King Mosiah's decision to implement a form of democracy (elected judges) among the Nephites was a bold and noble effort, but for many reasons it unfortunately did not thrive.

Alma 1–4

The first four chapters in the book of Alma cover the main events involving Alma that occurred during the first eight years of the reign of judges. The following chart (Figure 1) highlights the main events and social trajectories that Alma had to deal with as the leader of his people. Those years saw the death of Gideon and the execution of Nehor, followed by a cycle of pride, contention, prosperity, wickedness, and a civil war led by Amlici, who was slain by Alma in one-on-one, hand-to-hand combat. Alma had not started that war, and it is unlikely that he had received much in the way of military training, so his killing of Amlici must have seemed to many people as another David-slaying-Goliath miracle. For several reasons, both economic and ideological, those postwar conditions stimulated religious renewal and conversion, but those favorable conditions were short-lived. After eight years in office, Alma turned the chief judgeship over to Nephiah, which allowed Alma to focus his attention solely on his duties and ministry as the High Priest.

Alma as Chief Judge

Years 1–8 of the Reign of the Judges

References	Year	
Alma 1	1	Nehor is executed, but priestcrafts continue Church members are persecuted The church prohibits persecution
Alma 1	2	Pride and contention increase in the church Some are excommunicated or withdraw from the church
Alma 1	3	Church members regroup Preachers and workers are equal Church members prosper
Alma 1	4	Prosperity abounds Wickedness increases outside the church
Alma 2–3	5	Amlici revolts and is killed by Alma ₂ Alma ₂ is wounded in battle Lamanites invade again but are defeated
Alma 4	6	Postwar economic problems stimulate religious renewal
Alma 4	7	3,500 people are converted and baptized
Alma 4	8	Pride and contention increase in the church Alma turns the judgeship over to Nephiah

Figure 1 John W. Welch and Greg Welch, "Alma as Chief Judge: Years 1–8 of the Reign of the Judges," in *Charting the Book of Mormon*, chart 34.

Alma 1:2–6 — Nehor Introduces Priestcraft among the Nephites

The Book of Alma rightly begins with Alma’s first major case in his role as Chief Judge over the people. Within the first year of assuming office, Alma was faced with a third crisis—what to do about Nehor. Nehor was a dissident who began teaching incorrect doctrine among the people and gathering many followers. His ideology can be summarized by his four “alls”:

1. **All** mankind will be saved, and should lift up their heads and rejoice (have fun).
2. **All** men are created by God.
3. **All** are redeemed.
4. **All** will have eternal life (Alma 1:4).

Many things make this philosophy appealing. For one thing, it eliminates the burdens of individual responsibility and accountability. It can be said that Nehor was a master of half-truths. Surely, because of God’s Plan of Happiness, all *should* rejoice. The prophet Lehi stated that “Adam fell that men might be, and men are that they *might* have joy” (2 Nephi 2:25). However, one must read a little further to fully understand the nature of that joy and the conditions on which it becomes available to all. Lehi explained that we are here to make choices and that there is responsibility for the choices we make. We may choose the way of life or we may choose the way of death. All will have much reason to rejoice, provided you choose the way of life, and thus all *might* have joy and rejoice. Nehor’s philosophy swept away accountability and promised an easy path for everyone, from the pre-existent cradle to the post-existent grave. And based on this attractive platform, Nehor had formed a church, was preaching what he called “the word of God,” and had provided that his priests were to be supported financially by their church members (Alma 1:3).

Alma 1:7–10 — Nehor Contends with and Slays Gideon

As Nehor taught and gathered followers, he “began to establish a church after the manner of his preaching.” One day while on his way to preach to a gathering of his followers, Nehor encountered an elderly Limhite warrior named Gideon, who was a teacher in the church established by Alma the Elder. Gideon went out to withstand or warn Nehor, and their discussion quickly led to a contentious verbal argument. At this point, Gideon felt a need to admonish Nehor—probably giving a warning that put Nehor on notice.

Even though the government had been recently transformed to a system of judges rather than a king, the law remained the same. The people of Zarahemla were still following the Law of Moses and, under that law as delineated in Deuteronomy 13, a person

engaged in leading people into apostasy could be put to death. The law given by Nephi also prohibited priestcrafts: The Lord “commandeth that there shall be no priestcrafts” (2 Nephi 26:29). In other words, Nehor could be charged with a serious offense under the law.

Under Jewish tradition and Israelite law, there was a requirement that the offending person needed to be warned that he was committing a crime, to be sure that he knew that what he was doing was against the law (2 Chronicles 19:5, 10). This is likely what Gideon was doing—admonishing and warning Nehor that if he persisted in agitating the people toward apostasy, he could be charged with a capital offense and even, potentially, put to death.

In the ancient world and under the Law of Moses, there were no policemen, no attorney generals, and no public prosecutors. Any legal action had to be brought by an individual citizen. Someone had to step up and say, “This has gone far enough.” The old and noble man Gideon had seen this problem before in the City of Nephi. He knew where this could lead and the resultant devastation to societal norms. And thus Gideon, now a citizen of Zarahemla, stood forward and admonished Nehor with the words of God.

Gideon’s warning angered Nehor—he was “wroth with Gideon.” Under Israelite law, anger and hatred functioned as the equivalent of what we could call pre-meditation to commit the crime. As set forth in Numbers 35, there is a higher degree of intentionality and culpability when killing someone in anger and hatred than when someone is killed accidentally or when somebody gets hurt during a scuffle. The fact that Nehor had a sword and pulled out his sword in anger to slay Gideon made his guilty state of mind much easier to prove. Furthermore, there were witnesses to the slaying. The people who witnessed the crime, the audience at the scene, fulfilled their civic duty and immediately took Nehor into custody and brought him before Alma to be judged according to the crimes he had committed. Notice that verse 10 does not even mention Nehor by name. He was simply identified as “the man” who slew Gideon. The record does not dignify him by mentioning his name until the very end of this brief account.

Further Reading

John W. Welch, *The Legal Cases in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: BYU Press, 2008), 211–236, gives a detailed legal analysis of every step in this brief but very significant development.

Alma 1:11–15 — Nehor Is Tried and Put to Death

Alma now faced a fourth challenge during the first year of assuming office as Chief Judge. Alma stood alone as the sole judge over Nehor’s case. Nehor had taken full

advantage of the new freedom of belief provided under the law by Mosiah. Nehor must have felt confident in his legal position. It appears that he did not resist arrest, for there is no mention that he was bound. This, however, was likely a case of first impression—the legal issue being what to do about someone introducing priestcraft into the community and where to draw the line between “belief” and “action.” Under the new reforms, a person could be punished for their actions, but not for what they believed.

Nehor defended himself. We are not told what arguments he made in his defense, but there were several issues he could have raised.

This left Alma faced with making a difficult legal decision. If Nehor were not convicted of a serious crime and was released back into the community, the people of the city of Gideon would feel that justice had not been served. The blood of an innocent man would cry out from the ground. In addition, Nehor would have felt emboldened, and where would that lead?

Alma was brilliant in how he decided the case. Notice that Nehor was not convicted of homicide. He was found guilty not only of priestcraft, but for enforcing priestcraft with a sword (Alma 1:12). Until very recently, priestcraft had been viewed as destructive in Nephite culture. However, as Nehor now saw it, exercising priestcraft was no longer a crime—to him it was simply expressing his beliefs. However, when Nehor tried to enforce his views with the sword, he took action and went beyond the simple expression of belief. Alma skillfully put those two facts together and essentially created a new composite crime—enforcing priestcraft with a sword. That was the crime for which Nehor was put to death. Alma did the right thing legally, politically, and religiously in pronouncing judgment against Nehor.

Alma’s decision also set legal precedent. Notice that dissidents continue in the first half of the book of Alma to argue and fight over the ideologies introduced by Nehor. However, they did not fight with swords.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, [“Why Did Nehor Suffer an “Ignominious” Death?”](#) *KnoWhy* 108 (May 26, 2016).

Alma 1:21–23 — A Law against Contention

The aftermath of Nehor’s trial and death proved difficult. Alma, as High Priest over the church, attempted to reduce contention and promote peace, but the contention did not subside. A strict law was put in place for members of the church: “there should not any man, belonging to the church, arise and persecute those that did not belong to the church.” Furthermore, “there should be no persecution among themselves” (v. 21). Alma

saw enough contention going on. He taught church members to respond peacefully by implying, “We’re not going to contend. We will not fight back. We will not return evil for evil.”

Alma 1:26–28 — Alma Works to Build Equality in the Church

In these verses, we find three core values that Alma wanted emphasized and implemented in the church: (1) equal status and standing; (2) no slavery; and (3) equal substance imparted according to need.

Alma desired that the people in the church were accorded equal dignity and respect for one another. He didn’t want the preacher to be any better than the hearer, and he didn’t want the teacher to be any better than the learner. We all have different roles in society and serve in different positions in the Church, but no one is better than anyone else. Alma’s goals were diametrically opposed to those of Nehor, who wanted to see divisions and class distinctions among the people. Nehor was fighting essentially to bring back kings and aristocracies—classes of people who would not work because they would be supported by the people.

Alma’s position followed a deeply-rooted principle in ancient Israelite law. The ancient world was strewn with monarchical governments of kings, cultures with aristocrats, and societies built on the backs of slaves. However, the Israelites understood that God owned everyone. Every person was equal in God’s eyes. They were all slaves of God because he had bought them, delivering them out of bondage in Egypt. In other cultures, if you poked out the eye of an aristocrat, then you would get your eye poked out. However, if you, as an aristocrat, poked out the eye of a commoner, you’d only be required to pay him 15 shekels. Thus, under the legal systems of most ancient nations, there were distinctions in how justice was served, depending on the status and class of the persons involved. This, however, was not the case under ancient Israelite law where justice was administered and punishment was meted out equally among the people.

Significant is the fact that Alma would not allow members of the church to own or make slaves of one another. This was a principle that King Benjamin had implemented (Mosiah 2:13) and it was also a principle under ancient Israelite law which allowed servitude of one Hebrew by another but only for a limited time (Exodus 21:2).

Finally, Alma asked the people of the church to live a kind of united order. Remember, this was one of the covenants that Alma the Elder’s group made at the Waters of Mormon—“to bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light” (Mosiah 18:8). In other words, members of the church were to take care of one another, so that they would all be equally able to serve God and do good.

A Comparison of Nephite Law Lists

Crimes Prohibited	2 Ne. 26:32	Mosiah 2:13	Alma 1:32	Alma 16:18	Alma 23:3	Alma 30:10	Hel. 3:14	Hel. 4:12	Hel. 6:23	Hel. 7:21	Ether 8:16	Ex. 20-23
Abominations							X					X
Adultery		X		X	X	X		X				X
Babbings			X									X
Confinement in dungeons		X										
Contentions	X							X				X
Costly apparel			X									X
Deceivings				X								X
Denying prophecy								X				X
Deserting								X				X
Envy	X		X	X								X
False witness										X		X
Idleness			X									X
Idolatry			X									X
Lasciviousness				X								X
Lying	X		X	X				X			X	X
Malice	X			X								X
Mocking the sacred								X			X	
Murder	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Taking name of God in vain	X											X
Oppressing poor								X				X
Persecuting			X									X
Plunder		X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Power mongering											X	
Pride			X					X				X
Revilings				X								X
Robbing			X	X		X	X					X
Seeking riches		X						X		X		X
Slavery		X										X
Smiting weak								X				X
Sorceries			X									X
Stealing	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X
Strife			X	X								X
Whoredoms	X		X				X		X		X	X
Wickedness		X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Withholding food								X				
Withholding clothing								X				

Figure 2 John W. Welch and Greg Welch, "A Comparison of Nephite Law Lists," in *Charting the Book of Mormon*, chart 127.

Further Reading

John W. Welch, “*The Law of Mosiah*,” in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon: A Decade of New Research*, ed. John W. Welch (Provo and Salt Lake City, UT: FARMS and Deseret Book, 1992), 158–161.

Alma 1:24–25, 32–33 — Many Saints Leave the Church Because of Their Sins

Alma faced a fifth crisis in his early years as High Priest. Intense difficulty arose from people defecting and “many withdrew” from the church because of their iniquity. During this precarious time, Alma’s attitude reflected in this record was exemplary. Instead of focusing on the negative, Alma chose to count his blessings, noting that “those that did stand fast in the faith . . . were steadfast and immovable in keeping the commandments of God,” quoting Lehi’s words in 1 Nephi 2:10. He also expressed gratitude that the people who remained in the church “bore with patience the persecution which was heaped upon them” (Alma 1:25), as Alma will later commend his own son Shiblon for enduring with patience being placed in bonds and being stoned for the word’s sake (Alma 38:3–4). But the land of Zarahemla became more secular, and things began to fall apart. Prior to Mosiah’s reforms and before the people of Zarahemla were given freedom of belief and accountability for their sins, the long list of vices found in verse 32 had not been so prevalent in Alma’s world. People don’t always make appropriate choices when given freedom. Alma responded with appropriate law enforcement. If someone broke the law, then the law was enforced. Lists of laws appear on several occasions in the Book of Mormon (Figure 2). This list in Alma 1:32 and the similar list in Helaman 4:12 are the longest. Interestingly, these lists compare fairly closely with the provisions set forth in the Code of the Covenant in Exodus 21–22, showing another way in which Nephite law was consistently grounded in the basics of the Law of Moses.

Further Reading

Rex C. Reeve, Jr., “*Dealing with Opposition to the Church*,” in *Alma, The Testimony of the Word*, Book of Mormon Symposium Series, Volume 6, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1992), 15–25.

Alma 2

Alma 2:2 — Succession: A Primary Cause of Warfare in the Book of Mormon

The Book of Mormon records frequent warfare, and it is sometimes difficult to understand why these wars started. Comparing descriptions of events leading up to war

in the Book of Mormon with other historical war accounts suggests that one possible cause of contention involved people trying to take advantage of transitions that occurred at the death of a powerful figure. For example, continual crises and wars occurred just about every time a powerful Roman general or leader was killed throughout the decades of Roman civil wars. Naturally, wars happened at transition points like this in the Book of Mormon as well.

The first chapter of Alma explains what happened shortly after the death of the great leader and king, Mosiah, and very soon after the implementation of a radical new form of government where Nephite kingship was replaced by a form of democracy with judges chosen by the people. During Alma's first year as chief judge, a man named Nehor rose against Alma and the church. Nehor's opposition did not immediately lead to war, but by the fifth year of the reign of judges, the movement Nehor started led to a full-fledged war when the Lamanites supported Amlici in his attack against the Nephites.

Wars happened at other transition points in the Book of Mormon as seen in later war narratives. For example, many of the Lamanites converted to Christianity through the preaching of Ammon and his companions. "[T]he Amalekites and the Amulonites and the Lamanites who . . . had not been converted and had not taken upon them the name of Anti-Nephi-Lehi, were stirred up by the Amalekites and by the Amulonites to anger against their brethren" (Alma 24:1). Those joining in the rebellion did not like who was appointed king. Significantly, the timing of this war happened around a time of transition from one king to the next. Alma 24:3–4 explains, "Now the king conferred the kingdom upon his son, and he called his name Anti-Nephi-Lehi. And the king died in that selfsame year that the Lamanites began to make preparations for war against the people of God." The fact that an inexperienced king sat on the Lamanite throne may well have been a contributing factor in the commencement of this war.

Again, in Helaman 1:2, another succession crisis ensued when Pahoran died and Pahoran's sons contended for the judgeship. When Pahoran's son took office, Kishkumen assassinated the chief judge and the Lamanites took advantage of the chaos to invade Nephite territory.

One further example of war breaking out during a succession of power is described in Alma 45:19–20 and 46:1–3. This occurred when Helaman took over after the death or disappearance of his father, Alma. History was repeated when Amalickiah took advantage of the uncertainty caused by Alma's death to rise up against the less experienced Helaman.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, [“What Was One of the Main Causes of Warfare in the Book of Mormon?”](#) *KnoWhy* 523 (July 5, 2019).

Alma 2:1–7 — Amlici Seeks to Be King

Soon after Alma had dealt with the matter of Nehor, he faced another crisis—an even more disruptive event. A follower of Nehor, a man named Amlici, convinced a large number of rebels that democracy by the people’s choice of judges wasn’t working and that kingship should be restored. Amlici put himself forward as the choice for king. This happened during Alma’s fifth year as chief judge.

Who was Amlici and why would he be able to persuasively convince a large number of people that he should be king? In Hebrew, the written language does not have vowels. Therefore, (m-l-k), (m-li-ki) and (ma-lik) are based on the same root word in Hebrew, meaning “king.” Mu-lek may also have the same meaning of “king.” This leads to the linguistic possibility that “Mulekites” were “king-ites” and were among the “king men.”

Similarly, by removing the vowels in the word “Amlici,” we are left with (m-l-c) or “king.” Was Amlici a Mulekite? He certainly was a king-ite by ideology and his name reflects his desire and political platform. If Amlici was a Mulekite, he may well have been a descendant of King Zarahemla with a legitimate claim to be king because of his lineage. This may be why Amlici was able to convince many people that he had the right to be king and that he should be king.

The question as to whether Amlici should be king was put to a vote before the people. In effect, Amlici ran for the office of king and he lost. However, instead of the voice of the people settling the matter, Amlici gathered an army and made war against the Nephites.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, [“Why Should Readers Pay Close Attention to the Mulekites? \(Omni 1:19\),”](#) *KnoWhy* 434 (May 17, 2018).

Alma 2:9–38 — The Amlicites and Lamanites War against the Nephites

Once again, Alma faced a very grave crisis. This time Alma and his people were forced into a war. Undoubtedly, the decision to go to war caused Alma deep agony of thought. Such a decision leads to the death of many people. How many died? Alma and his men killed 12,532 people who were followers of Amlici, and 6,562 of Alma’s men died in battle. Over 19,000 people died as a result of this war, and that count didn’t include any women and children. When the men came home from the battlefield, their women, children, and animals had been slaughtered (Alma 3:2). Why the animals? Soldiers need

the food. Pillaging and plundering happens during wartime because soldiers are hungry and need to be fed.

The Amlicite death toll included Lamanites who had come forward and formed an alliance with the Amlicites. The alliance was formed in the fifth year of Alma's reign as judge. Where did those Lamanites come from? They came from the Land of Nephi. The four sons of Mosiah had recently arrived in the Land of Nephi to do missionary work among the Lamanites, and they were not particularly well-received there. In fact, these missionaries were put in prison.

The Lamanites living in the Land of Nephi may have questioned why Nephites were entering their territory and trying to influence their culture—eventually taking a group of their people (Ammonites) away. The four sons of Mosiah, desiring to do good, may have created a dynamic that caused the Lamanites grave concerns that led to their decision to join forces with the Amlicites against the Nephites. This dynamic is not directly put together for us in the Book of Mormon, but something like it was probably an underlying factor in the Amlicite-Lamanite alliance.

Alma 2:11 — Are the Amlicites and Amalekites Related?

Readers are introduced to Amlici in Alma 2, where he appears among the Nephites seeking to be their king. Amlici's ideology was similar to that of Nehor. He gathered many followers, called "Amlicites," and incited them in armed conflict with the Nephites. The Amlicites then formed an allegiance with the Lamanites to continue in their war against the Nephites. During battle, Amlici was slain in one-on-one, hand-to-hand combat with Alma. At this point in the record, the Amlicites seem to completely disappear from the Book of Mormon narrative.

However, later during Aaron's missionary work among the Lamanites, he teaches a group of people called "Amalekites." There is no introduction or explanation in the record as to the origins of the Amalekite people. Like the Amlicites, the Amalekites shared ideological connections to Nehor and were later listed as Nephite dissenters.

Many scholars have concluded that these two groups—Amlicites and Amalekites—are one and the same people. This conclusion is buttressed by Royal Skousen's work with the Original and Printer's Manuscripts of the Book of Mormon. The "Amlicites" are first mentioned in the Printer's Manuscript, with the word being spelled "Amlikites," indicating that both "Amlici" and "Amlicites" may have been pronounced using a hard "c" rather than a soft "c."

In addition, the earliest surviving references to the Amalekites in the original manuscript are spelled "Amelicites." The spelling for "Amelicites" differs from the

spelling for “Amlicites” by the addition of only one “e,” with the resultant addition of another syllable in the word (making a total of four syllables)—the same number of syllables in the word “Amalekites.” Skousen felt that the similarity in spellings in the Book of Mormon manuscripts strongly supports the conclusion that the Amalekites were followers of Amlici and the same people as the Amlicites. Furthermore, both the Amlicites and Amalekites are described as having ideological connections to Nehor with similar goals. Both groups were religious dissidents who desired a return to a monarchal form of government.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, [“How Were the Amlicites and Amalekites Related?”](#) *KnoWhy* 109 (May 27, 2016).

Alma 3

Alma 3:4–11, 18 — Nephite-Lamanite Intermarriage Discouraged

At this point in Nephite history, strife between Nephites, Lamanites, and Amlicites became so severe that war broke out. Mormon took this occasion to explain how the warriors were able to distinguish themselves from one another in battle. Similar to the red coats worn by the British army and the blue coats worn by the French to distinguish them in battle, the Lamanites and their allies, the Amlicites, marked themselves: “[T]he Amlicites were distinguished from the Nephites, for they had marked themselves with red in their foreheads after the manner of the Lamanites.” In addition, the Lamanites shaved the hair on their heads, but the Amlicites chose not to shave their heads. Verse 5 explains that the Lamanites were naked except for a skin which girded their loins. The next verse states, “[A]nd the skins of the Lamanites were dark.”

Mormon explained that a mark was set upon the Lamanites “that their seed might be distinguished from the seed of their brethren, that thereby the Lord God might preserve his people, that they might not mix and believe in incorrect traditions which would prove their destruction.” The Nephites were generally discouraged from intermarriage with the Lamanites. However, as verse 11 states, “[W]hosover would not believe in the tradition of the Lamanites, but believed . . . in the commandments of God and kept them, were called the Nephites, or the people of Nephi, from that time forth.”

Alma 3 is often cited as evidence of racism in the Book of Mormon. However, when reading ancient historical texts, such as the Book of Mormon, it is absolutely essential not to impose modern ideas of race and cultural identity onto the people of the past.

There are several explanations for the mark or curse of the Lamanites—other than racism—when reading this chapter in its entirety.

Remember that the setting for these verses was at a time when the Nephites, Lamanites, and Amlicites were involved in bloody battles against one another. At time of war, it may have been unthinkable to marry someone who is or has viciously fought against you and your people. In fact, this may have been viewed as an act of treason.

Additionally, Mormon appears to couch the issue of the Lamanite curse in terms of religious and cultural identity, not merely skin pigmentation. He records that any person who was “led away by the Lamanites” had the same “mark set upon him.” On the other hand, “whosoever would not believe in the tradition of the Lamanites . . . were called the Nephites, or the people of Nephi.” Therefore, the curse of the Lamanites included the ultimate outcome that they would believe “in incorrect traditions which would prove their destruction.” There was concern that introducing incorrect traditions and beliefs in the Nephite community by intermarriage could result in the destruction of the Nephite nation as well. These things were done to preserve a nation of people who believed in God and his commandments and had nothing to do with what we would call racism.

When chapter 3 is read in its entirety, it becomes apparent that there may be another explanation for the dark “skins” in question. The dark “skins” were possibly animal skins worn as symbolic clothing, not their normal flesh. This is seen in Mormon’s apparent description of the “skins” being garments worn by the Lamanites. In this sense, the Lamanites and Amlicites were distinguishing themselves by the things *they* chose to wear or put upon themselves. Thinking they were marking themselves courageously, they unwittingly marked themselves in a way that signaled that they had come out in rebellion, not against their political opponents but against God. Verse 11 explains, “Now the Amlicites knew not that they were fulfilling the words of God when they began to mark themselves in their foreheads [with red markings]; nevertheless they had come out in open rebellion against God; therefore it was expedient that the curse [of separation from God] should fall upon them.”

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, [“Why Did Book of Mormon Prophets Discourage Nephite-Lamanite Intermarriage?”](#) *KnoWhy* 110 (May 30, 2016).

Alma 4

Alma 4:20 — Examples of Righteous Missionaries

Back in Mosiah 28:1–10, the sons of Mosiah gave up power, privilege, and comfortable surroundings in order to preach the gospel. Each of them declined to become the next Nephite king and, instead, risked their lives to teach among the Lamanites. Similarly, while serving as the Chief Judge among the Nephites, Alma saw that the Church was starting to slip seriously into pride and iniquity. In response, he “delivered up the judgment-seat to Nephihah” and “confined himself wholly . . . to the testimony of the word, according to the spirit of revelation and prophecy” (Alma 4:18, 20).

The accounts of missionary service in the Book of Mormon, largely contained in the book of Alma, provide important examples of faith and righteousness. Just like the missionaries in the Book of Mormon, today’s missionaries make real and burdensome sacrifices as they respond to the prophet’s call to serve. This may mean giving up an academic or sports scholarship, postponing educational or career opportunities, or leaving behind family members in times of financial or emotional strain. Whatever the sacrifice, the Lord will always bless those who faithfully serve. The act of submitting papers to serve a mission and then accepting the call to serve in a specific area of the mission field is a great act of faith on the part of every missionary. The young proselyting missionaries for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints do not choose where they serve. They go not knowing beforehand where they may be sent and what they may be asked to do—much like Alma and the sons of Mosiah.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, [“How Does the Book of Mormon Prepare Missionaries to Sacrifice, Serve, and Preach?”](#) *KnoWhy* 333 (June 30, 2017).