

General Comments on Enos

After obtaining the plates from his father Jacob, Enos has a life-changing spiritual experience wherein he prays for his own soul and for the Nephites as well. From the comment in v. 1 where Enos says "knowing my father that he was a just man", note the past tense of "was", suggesting Jacob has died.

There is no overt statement in the text as to who took over as chief priest with the vacancy Jacob's passing left. As the order of Aaronic Priesthood was not strictly being observed, none of them being the lineage of Aaron, the reader is left to wonder if the office went from father to son.

Some of the things suggesting this was the case is the transfer of the small plates to Enos wherein Jacob elicits a promise from Enos to maintain the record (v. Jacob 7:27). He was educated regarding religious matters (cf. v. 1). Enos was quite humble (v. 4), accurately perceived God's nature (v. 6), and had considerable faith in Christ (cf. v. 8).

The deciding factor on whether or not Enos is now the Nephite high priest is his appeal to the Lord on behalf of the Nephites (v. 9-10) and later the Lamanites (v. 12-13), both of which resulted in promises from the Lord cf. (v. 10, 13). This is precisely the sort of appeal a high priest would make in behalf of his people, on account of his stewardship, and the Lord would respond with a promise. Anybody could have prayed for the Nephites and Lamanites, but the Lord would only respond with a covenant promise to the anointed high priest at that time.

As Enos was very probably the high priest, his assumption of office would have been with Jacob's death. The resulting call appears to have made Enos uncomfortable and not feeling worthy to fulfil that calling, hence his humiliation and pleading before the Lord in v. 3-4. Combine this with the relatively recent death of his father, and you have the very natural setting of him wanting to be alone (i.e., leaving to go hunting) and his being particularly contemplative and introspective as is in v. 3.

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1 Behold, it came to pass that I, Enos, knowing my father that he was a just man--for he taught me in his language, and also in the nurture and admonition of the Lord--and blessed be the name of my God for it-- 2 And I will tell you of the wrestle which I had before God, before I received a remission of my sins. 3 Behold, I went to hunt beasts in the forests; and the words which I had often heard my father speak concerning eternal life, and the joy of the saints, sunk deep into my heart. 4 And my soul hungered; and I kneeled down before my Maker, and I cried unto him in mighty prayer and supplication for mine own soul; and all the day

long did I cry unto him; yea, and when the night came I did still raise my voice high that it reached the heavens.

5 And there came a voice unto me, saying: Enos, thy sins are forgiven thee, and thou shalt be blessed. 6 And I, Enos, knew that God could not lie; wherefore, my guilt was swept away. 7 And I said: Lord, how is it done? 8 And he said unto me: Because of thy faith in Christ, whom thou hast never before heard nor seen. And many years pass away before he shall manifest himself in the flesh; wherefore, go to, thy faith hath made thee whole.

9 Now, it came to pass that when I had heard these words I began to feel a desire for the welfare of my brethren, the Nephites; wherefore, I did pour out my whole soul unto God for them. 10 And while I was thus struggling in the spirit, behold, the voice of the Lord came into my mind again, saying: I will visit thy brethren according to their diligence in keeping my commandments. I have given unto them this land, and it is a holy land; and I curse it not save it be for the cause of iniquity; wherefore, I will visit thy brethren according as I have said; and their transgressions will I bring down with sorrow upon their own heads.

v1-10 Enos introduces himself as being the son of Jacob, who brought him up right (v. 1). Enos recounts the experience he had with the Lord which subsequently defined the rest of his life (v. 2, also cp. v. 26). After his father's death (v. 1), Enos went out into the forest and thought a great deal about the things his father had taught him (v. 3). This caused him to humble himself before the Lord in prayer all day and into the night (v. 4). The voice of the Lord came to him telling him he was forgiven (v. 5). Enos' guilt is swept away (v. 6), and he asks the Lord how it is accomplished (v. 7). The Lord informs him it is because of his faith in Christ, and tells him to "go to" (v. 8).

Instead of being worried only about himself, he disregards the Lord's suggestion to "go to" and turns his attention to the Nephites as well (v. 9). During his prayers in their behalf, the voice of the Lord comes to him and explains the only thing that will bring about their demise is their own iniquity (v. 10). After this, Enos does "go to".

v1 "nurture and admonition of the Lord", Smith borrowed this phrase from the KJV on Eph. 6:4, a modern translation of which is "discipline and instruction of the Lord" (New American Standard).

v2 "remission of my sins", as Enos is completely ambiguous as to what these sins might be, it leaves the reader to speculate. Overall, they couldn't have been serious, as had they been it seems unlikely Jacob would have passed the plates to him by eliciting a promise (cf. Jacob 7:27). If Enos was not of the character to keep a promise, it is unlikely Jacob would have bothered to elicit one. And, after the lengthy petition (v. 4)

the Lord forgives his "sins" on the spot and commends him for his considerable faith (v. 8). Contrast this with the repentance process of Alma the younger and it is likely whatever Enos' sins were they were probably relatively minor or well into his past and already abandoned.

v6 "God could not lie", cp. Ether 3:12. Enos knows full well that God does not trifle with words, so if He says you are forgiven, then you are forgiven.

v9 Upon becoming the high priest after Jacob's death Enos' duty and responsibility becomes the welfare of the Nephites. However, it is plain he doesn't have that desire in his heart until he repents of his sins and is changed by the Spirit. Enos goes into the forest with the responsibility of high priest, but leaves the forest with the desire to serve as a high priest.

What was formerly his duty becomes his desire with this repentance. This gives the reader a key as to how to transform their attitude with respect to religious obligations. If one views their religious obligations as a duty and does them grudgingly, then one needs to repent of one's sins and then their religious obligations become their desire. The transforming act is humbling oneself, confessing one's sins, and confessing one's nothingness before God (cf. Mosiah 4:11). Then the person's desires will change because they understand the necessity and benefit of religious obligations. Granted, the calling of a high priest is one of great responsibility, but the formula should work in any case.

11 And after I, Enos, had heard these words, my faith began to be unshaken in the Lord; and I prayed unto him with many long strugglings for my brethren, the Lamanites. 12 And it came to pass that after I had prayed and labored with all diligence, the Lord said unto me: I will grant unto thee according to thy desires, because of thy faith. 13 And now behold, this was the desire which I desired of him--that if it should so be, that my people, the Nephites, should fall into transgression, and by any means be destroyed, and the Lamanites should not be destroyed, that the Lord God would preserve a record of my people, the Nephites; even if it so be by the power of his holy arm, that it might be brought forth at some future day unto the Lamanites, that, perhaps, they might be brought unto salvation-- 14 For at the present our strugglings were vain in restoring them to the true faith. And they swore in their wrath that, if it were possible, they would destroy our records and us, and also all the traditions of our fathers. 15 Wherefore, I knowing that the Lord God was able to preserve our records, I cried unto him continually, for he had said unto me: Whatsoever thing ye shall ask in faith, believing that ye shall receive in the name of Christ, ye shall receive it. 16 And I had faith, and I did cry

unto God that he would preserve the records; and he covenanted with me that he would bring them forth unto the Lamanites in his own due time. 17 And I, Enos, knew it would be according to the covenant which he had made; wherefore my soul did rest. 18 And the Lord said unto me: Thy fathers have also required of me this thing; and it shall be done unto them according to their faith; for their faith was like unto thine. 19 And now it came to pass that I, Enos, went about among the people of Nephi, prophesying of things to come, and testifying of the things which I had heard and seen.

v11-18 When writing the record, Enos turns his attention towards the Lamanites. In a fashion similar to that of v. 9-10, Enos prayed many times for the Lamanites as well (v. 11). After many prayers and great diligence, which diligence is discussed in the parenthesis of v. 14-18, the Lord makes promises to him concerning the Lamanites (v. 12). The promise made is that if the Nephites are annihilated, then the records they have written will go to the Lamanites as a means of their salvation (v. 13, 15-16). This is because at the present time their efforts to teach the Lamanites are futile and all the Lamanites want is to destroy the Nephites and their records (v. 14). This promise is the same one all of his fathers, presumably Lehi, Nephi, and Jacob, have prayed for as well (v. 18). Jacob teaches the Nephites concerning the covenants the Lord has made, and testifies of the things he has learned firsthand (v. 19).

Whereas v. 1-10 are connected in time and location, occurring at the particular point of Enos' prayer, these verses are a summation of years of effort and many prayers over those years regarding the Lamanites.

v19 When Enos learns something, he take his calling seriously and teaches the Nephites what he has learned. What does he teach them? The substance of v. 15-18.

20 And I bear record that the people of Nephi did seek diligently to restore the Lamanites unto the true faith in God. But our labors were vain; their hatred was fixed, and they were led by their evil nature that they became wild, and ferocious, and a blood-thirsty people, full of idolatry and filthiness; feeding upon beasts of prey; dwelling in tents, and wandering about in the wilderness with a short skin girdle about their loins and their heads shaven; and their skill was in the bow, and in the cimeter, and the ax. And many of them did eat nothing save it was raw meat; and they were continually seeking to destroy us.

21 And it came to pass that the people of Nephi did till the land, and raise all manner of grain, and of fruit, and flocks of herds, and flocks of all manner of cattle of every kind, and goats, and wild goats, and also many horses. 22 And there were exceedingly many prophets among us. And the people were a

stiffnecked people, hard to understand. 23 And there was nothing save it was exceeding harshness, preaching and prophesying of wars, and contentions, and destructions, and continually reminding them of death, and the duration of eternity, and the judgments and the power of God, and all these things--stirring them up continually to keep them in the fear of the Lord. I say there was nothing short of these things, and exceedingly great plainness of speech, would keep them from going down speedily to destruction. And after this manner do I write concerning them. 24 And I saw wars between the Nephites and Lamanites in the course of my days.

v20-24 Enos changes the subject to cover some of the history of the Nephites. The Nephites attempt to teach religion to the Lamanites, but they are a wild and ferocious bunch of hunter-gatherers (v. 20). In contrast to this is the Nephite society centered on agriculture and domesticated livestock (v. 21). There were many prophets among the Nephites, because the people were hard-headed (v. 22) and a great deal of preaching and warning in very plain terms was necessary to keep them from self-destruction (v. 23). There were also battles between the Nephites and Lamanites (v. 24).

Note Enos' sociological characterization of the Lamanites and Nephites. He presents the Lamanites as hunter-gatherers and the Nephites as agrarians with domesticated plants and animals. The Lamanite abandonment of religion has resulted in their society deteriorating. The Nephites are living in a more organized society, but only because they are constantly chastened by the Lord their God. The truly imminent threat being slaughter at the hands of the Lamanites.

v20-21 These verses read like a comparison between Esau and Jacob (cp. Gen. 25:27), whom parallel the present Lamanites and Nephites quite well.

v22 "hard to understand", i.e., it was difficult to make them understand.

25 And it came to pass that I began to be old, and an hundred and seventy and nine years had passed away from the time that our father Lehi left Jerusalem. 26 And I saw that I must soon go down to my grave, having been wrought upon by the power of God that I must preach and prophesy unto this people, and declare the word according to the truth which is in Christ. And I have declared it in all my days, and have rejoiced in it above that of the world. 27 And I soon go to the place of my rest, which is with my Redeemer; for I know that in him I shall rest. And I rejoice in the day when my mortal shall put on immortality, and shall stand before him; then shall I see his face with pleasure, and he will say unto me: Come unto me, ye blessed, there is a place prepared

for you in the mansions of my Father. Amen.

v25-27 Enos is approaching the end of his natural lifetime (v. 25). But, he has lived a life of preaching the gospel and has chosen that over worldliness (v. 26), so he is confident he will be redeemed by Lord (v. 27).

These verses suggest Enos wrote his portion on the small plates near the end of his life.

v26 "having been wrought upon...preach and prophesy unto this people", referring to the contents of v. 2-8.

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