

General Comments on Jarom

The text occurs as a single literary unit, so it was probably written fairly late in Jarom's life prior to turning the record over to Omni.

Whether Jarom took over as high priest with the death of his father Enos, we are left to speculate because the text contains no personal information on the author at all. However, from the contents of v. 2, 3-5, and v. 11-12 Jarom must have been at least involved with the Priesthood in some manner.

There are a number of interesting sociological points revealed in the brief section of text. The Nephite society is relatively complex with specialized tradecraft and division of church and state. Meanwhile, the Lamanite society has apparently simplified to tribal hunter-gatherers. Jarom's comments on these matters imply he must have had a quite sophisticated view of the role of religion in society. He observes two competing populations, recognizes fundamental differences, and draws conclusions.

The book of Jarom can be arranged as a loose synthetical (i.e., same thesis) parallelism based upon subject, as follows:

A - 1 Now behold, I, Jarom, write a few words according to the commandment of my father, Enos, that our genealogy may be kept.

B - 2 And as these plates are small, and as these things are written for the intent of the benefit of our brethren the Lamanites, wherefore, it must needs be that I write a little; but I shall not write the things of my prophesying, nor of my revelations. For what could I write more than my fathers have written? For have not they revealed the plan of salvation? I say unto you, Yea; and this sufficeth me.

C - 3 Behold, it is expedient that much should be done among this people, because of the hardness of their hearts, and the deafness of their ears, and the blindness of their minds, and the stiffness of their necks; nevertheless, God is exceedingly merciful unto them, and has not as yet swept them off from the face of the land.

D - 4 And there are many among us who have many revelations, for they are not all

stiffnecked. And as many as are not stiffnecked and have faith, have communion with the Holy Spirit, which maketh manifest unto the children of men, according to their faith.

E - 5 And now, behold, two hundred years had passed away, and the people of Nephi had waxed strong in the land. They observed to keep the law of Moses and the sabbath day holy unto the Lord. And they profaned not; neither did they blaspheme. And the laws of the land were exceedingly strict.⁶ And they were scattered upon much of the face of the land, and the Lamanites also. And they were exceedingly more numerous than were they of the Nephites; and they loved murder and would drink the blood of beasts.

F - 7 And it came to pass that they came many times against us, the Nephites, to battle. But our kings and our leaders were mighty men in the faith of the Lord; and they taught the people the ways of the Lord; wherefore, we withstood the Lamanites and swept them away out of our lands, and began to fortify our cities, or whatsoever place of our inheritance. 8 And we multiplied exceedingly, and spread upon the face of the land, and became exceedingly rich in gold, and in silver, and in precious things, and in fine workmanship of wood, in buildings, and in machinery, and also in iron and copper, and brass and steel, making all manner of tools of every kind to till the ground, and weapons of war--yea, the sharp pointed arrow, and the quiver, and the dart, and the javelin, and all preparations for war.

F - 9 And thus being prepared to meet the Lamanites, they did not prosper against us. But the word of the Lord was verified, which he spake unto our fathers, saying that: Inasmuch as ye will keep my commandments ye shall prosper in the land.

E - 10 And it came to pass that the prophets of the Lord did threaten the people of Nephi, according to the word of God, that if they did not keep the commandments, but should fall into transgression, they should be destroyed from off the face of the land.

D - 11 Wherefore, the prophets, and the priests, and the teachers, did labor diligently, exhorting with all long-suffering the people to diligence; teaching the law of Moses, and the intent for which it was given; persuading them to look forward unto the Messiah, and believe in him to come as though he already was. And after this manner did they teach them.

C - 12 And it came to pass that by so doing they kept them from being destroyed upon the face of the land; for they did prick their hearts with the word, continually stirring them up unto repentance. 13 And it came to pass that two hundred and thirty and eight years had passed away--after the manner of wars, and contentions, and dissensions, for the space of much of the time.

B - 14 And I, Jarom, do not write more, for the plates are small. But behold, my brethren, ye can go to the other plates of Nephi; for behold, upon them the records of our wars are engraven, according to the writings of the kings, or those which they caused to be written.

A - 15 And I deliver these plates into the hands of my son Omni, that they may be kept according to the commandments of my fathers.

The parallelism is arranged so the center (v. 7-9) deals with physical and political matters, and is bracketed by the spiritual and religious matters. Their physical and political well-being is directly tied to their spiritual well-being. Had the Nephites not had leaders that were mighty in faith and not kept the commandments, then they would fall victim to the Lamanite aggression.

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1 NOW behold, I, Jarom, write a few words according to the commandment of my father, Enos, that our genealogy may be kept. 2 And as these plates are small, and as these things are written for the intent of the benefit of our brethren the Lamanites, wherefore, it must needs be that I write a little; but I shall not write the things of my prophesying, nor of my revelations. For what could I write more than my fathers have written? For have not they revealed the plan of salvation? I say unto you, Yea; and this sufficeth me.

v1-2 Jarom takes over the plates from his father Enos (v. 1), and only writes a little bit as he feels he would just be repeating what his predecessors have already written (v. 2).

v2 "these things are written for...the Lamanites", the authors of the plates understood very clearly what their importance was, and who their target audience was. This was a result of Nephi's revelations concerning the fate of the Lehites (cf. 1 Ne. 12-13). Given Jarom's tone, this knowledge appears to have made them rather fatalistic.

3 Behold, it is expedient that much should be done among this people, because of the hardness of their hearts, and the deafness of their ears, and the blindness of their minds, and the stiffness of their necks; nevertheless, God is exceedingly merciful unto them, and has not as yet swept them off from the face of the land. 4 And there are many among us who have many revelations, for they are not all stiffnecked. And as many as are not stiffnecked and have faith, have communion with the Holy Spirit, which maketh manifest unto the children of men, according to their faith. 5 And now, behold, two hundred years had passed away, and the people of Nephi had waxed strong in the land. They observed to keep the law of Moses and the sabbath day holy unto the Lord. And they profaned not; neither did they blaspheme. And the laws of the land were exceedingly strict.

v3-5 The Nephite society has grown and prospered, but is not particularly spiritual. God has been merciful to them as they have not as yet been killed by the Lamanites (v. 3). Those among

the Nephites who are not heard-hearted do have spiritual experiences (v. 4), and the laws of the Land are based upon the Law of Moses, which are enforced strictly (v. 5).

Verses 3-4 echo the contents of Enos 1:22-23. It seems likely the reason the Lord has spared the Nephites thus far is because the enforcement of the Law of Moses, by those who are spiritual, has kept the society from degrading entirely.

6 And they were scattered upon much of the face of the land, and the Lamanites also. And they were exceedingly more numerous than were they of the Nephites; and they loved murder and would drink the blood of beasts. 7 And it came to pass that they came many times against us, the Nephites, to battle. But our kings and our leaders were mighty men in the faith of the Lord; and they taught the people the ways of the Lord; wherefore, we withstood the Lamanites and swept them away out of our lands, and began to fortify our cities, or whatsoever place of our inheritance. 8 And we multiplied exceedingly, and spread upon the face of the land, and became exceedingly rich in gold, and in silver, and in precious things, and in fine workmanship of wood, in buildings, and in machinery, and also in iron and copper, and brass and steel, making all manner of tools of every kind to till the ground, and weapons of war--yea, the sharp pointed arrow, and the quiver, and the dart, and the javelin, and all preparations for war. 9 And thus being prepared to meet the Lamanites, they did not prosper against us. But the word of the Lord was verified, which he spake unto our fathers, saying that: Inasmuch as ye will keep my commandments ye shall prosper in the land.

v6-9 Conflict between the Nephites and Lamanites is open and widespread, but the Nephites enjoy a technological edge when it comes to combat (v. 8). Jarom indicates the reason they have survived and prospered is because they have kept the Law of Moses (v. 9).

v6 "loved murder and would drink the blood of beasts", both practices are explicitly forbidden in the Law of Moses (cf. Gen. 9:4-5). Jarom is using this to show the Lamanites have abandoned the Law of Moses, hence the parallel of the Nephites keeping the commandments in v. 9. Where the Lamanites have abandoned the Law of Moses, the Nephites have not.

v7-8 The implicit message is a society that is spiritually strong will also be physically strong, such that enemies will have no power against them, cp. Alma 43:19-21, Alma 49.

v7 "our kings and our leaders were mighty men", the division of church and state which Nephi started (cf. Jacob 1:9, 18) continues as Jarom differentiates between the political rulers and the "prophets, and the priests, and the teachers" (v. 11).

v8 Note the emphasis placed on the Nephite technology in v. 8. This technology affords them the military edge (quite literally with arrow heads and swords) when it comes to defending themselves from the Lamanites, a theme persistent through the wars, cp. Alma 43:38. The Nephite society is complex, allowing for skilled artisans to pursue their trade while others produce food through domesticated agriculture to subsidize the society (cp. 2 Ne. 5:11, Enos 1:21). This while the Lamanite society appears to have reverted to hunter-gathers (cf. Enos 1:20), which presumably would not have access to metal weapons (cf. Alma 17:36-37). But, aside from the military application of metal work, the Nephites are clearly using them for agricultural purposes as well, which makes it more efficient, thus supporting a complex society of specialized trades.

v9 The promise given to Lehi (cf. 2 Ne. 1:9) is echoed throughout the Book of the Mormon, cp. 1 Ne. 2:20, Omni 1:6, Mosiah 1:7, Alma 9:13, Hela. 3:20.

10 And it came to pass that the prophets of the Lord did threaten the people of Nephi, according to the word of God, that if they did not keep the commandments, but should fall into transgression, they should be destroyed from off the face of the land. 11 Wherefore, the prophets, and the priests, and the teachers, did labor diligently, exhorting with all long-suffering the people to diligence; teaching the law of Moses, and the intent for which it was given; persuading them to look forward unto the Messiah, and believe in him to come as though he already was. And after this manner did they teach them. 12 And it came to pass that by so doing they kept them from being destroyed upon the face of the land; for they did prick their hearts with the word, continually stirring them up unto repentance. 13 And it came to pass that two hundred and thirty and eight years had passed away--after the manner of wars, and contentions, and dissensions, for the space of much of the time.

v10-13 The combination of continuous wars and religious leaders constantly warning them serves to keep the Nephite society in line (v. 10-12), at least over the roughly 40 years of Jarom's responsibilities concerning writing in the plates (v. 13).

14 And I, Jarom, do not write more, for the plates are small. But behold, my brethren, ye can go to the other plates of Nephi; for behold, upon them the records of our wars are engraven, according to the writings of the kings, or those which they caused to be written. 15 And I deliver these plates into the hands of my son Omni, that they may be kept according to the commandments of my fathers.

v14-15 Jarom completes his portion on the smaller plates, but

refers the reader to the larger set of plates for more details (v. 14). He then hands the plates off to his son, explicitly identifying him as such (v. 15).

v15 In explicitly identifying the recipient of the plates, that forces the son to do something with them. As Omni apparently isn't doing all that well (v. cf. Omni 1:2), Jarom was probably concerned about his stewardship over them so he sets him to task by identifying him.

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