

Comments on Mosiah 13

1 AND now when the king had heard these words, he said unto his priests: Away with this fellow, and slay him; for what have we to do with him, for he is mad. 2 And they stood forth and attempted to lay their hands on him; but he withstood them, and said unto them: 3 Touch me not, for God shall smite you if ye lay your hands upon me, for I have not delivered the message which the Lord sent me to deliver; neither have I told you that which ye requested that I should tell; therefore, God will not suffer that I shall be destroyed at this time. 4 But I must fulfil the commandments wherewith God has commanded me; and because I have told you the truth ye are angry with me. And again, because I have spoken the word of God ye have judged me that I am mad. 5 Now it came to pass after Abinadi had spoken these words that the people of king Noah durst not lay their hands on him, for the Spirit of the Lord was upon him; and his face shone with exceeding luster, even as Moses' did while in the mount of Sinai, while speaking with the Lord.

6 And he spake with power and authority from God; and he continued his words, saying: 7 Ye see that ye have not power to slay me, therefore I finish my message. Yea, and I perceive that it cuts you to your hearts because I tell you the truth concerning your iniquities. 8 Yea, and my words fill you with wonder and amazement, and with anger. 9 But I finish my message; and then it matters not whither I go, if it so be that I am saved. 10 But this much I tell you, what you do with me, after this, shall be as a type and a shadow of things which are to come.

v1-6 After castigating them for their materialistic idolatry, the king accuses Abinadi of being mad and then tells his priests to kill him (v. 1). When the priests move to take him, Abinadi defies them and warns them to not touch him (v. 2) or God will strike them down. Abinadi has not delivered the message God has sent him to deliver, so He will not permit him to be killed before he does (v. 3). The king and priests have called him mad because he has spoken the truth (v. 4) and they hate him for it, but the Spirit of the Lord protects Abinadi from them (v. 5).

Abinadi states flatly that they have no power to kill him as they would like to do, so he will deliver his message (v. 6-7). And while his words perplex and anger them because it convicts them of their sins (v. 8), he warns them whatever they do to him will be perpetuated (v. 9-10).

v1-2 "he said unto his priests, Away with this fellow.... And they stood forth and attempted to lay his hands upon him", it is the priests who try to mob Abinadi, not the soldiers as depicted in Friberg's painting.

v1 "what have we to do with him, for he is mad", instead of confessing he is right and repenting or responding in some rational manner, they instead resort to personal attacks. What exactly they mean by "mad" isn't clear, they may be accusing him of being a religious fanatic, out of touch with reality, or

insane.

The king's rationale is probably that they observe the Law of Moses and do not have any literal idols, so they are not idolaters. Since they have no literal idols, then Abinadi must be crazy. However, they do love their gold and precious things, as Abinadi points out in v. 11-12, which is spiritual idolatry.

v4 Compare 1 Ne. 16:1-3.

v6-7 The empirical evidence of the truth of Abinadi's testimony is placed before them as they try to mob him, and yet are miraculously restrained from doing so. However, this sign does not change their murderous intentions.

v9 It is unclear what Abinadi is saying. He may be saying it doesn't matter to him if they kill him after he delivers his message, and is therefore a statement of defiance. Or, is he saying that he knows he is spiritually confident of his exaltation so he doesn't care what they do to him?

11 And now I read unto you the remainder of the commandments of God, for I perceive that they are not written in your hearts; I perceive that ye have studied and taught iniquity the most part of your lives. 12 And now, ye remember that I said unto you: Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of things which are in heaven above, or which are in the earth beneath, or which are in the water under the earth. 13 And again: Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generations of them that hate me; 14 And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.

15 Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. 16 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. 17 Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work; 18 But the seventh day, the sabbath of the Lord thy God, thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; 19 For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is; wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it. 20 Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. 21 Thou shalt not kill. 22 Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. 23 Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor. 24 Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's.

25 And it came to pass that after Abinadi had made an end of these sayings that he said unto them: Have ye taught this people that they should observe to do all these things for to keep these commandments? 26 I say unto you, Nay; for if ye had, the Lord would not have caused me to come forth and to prophesy evil concerning this people.

v11-26 Despite their accusation of madness in his statement

that they are idolatrous, Abinadi continues his argument against them of loving their graven images more than God (v. 11-2), who is an impassioned God who is actively both just and merciful (v. 13-14).

He then recites the rest of the Ten Commandments (v. 15-24) and tells them plainly they are neither living them nor teaching people to live them (v. 25). If they had, then the Lord wouldn't have told him to call them to repentance (v. 26).

v11 "and now I read unto you...the commandments...for I perceive that they are not written in your hearts", the usage of "read" is unusual as it doesn't seem likely Abinadi has a copy of the Torah with him he is literally reading from. However, when taken in context with the imagery he is using, it becomes more clear what he is referring to. He says he will "read" them the commandments because they are not "written" upon their hearts. So, what he is alluding to is the commandments being "written" upon his own heart, so he may therefore "read" them from his heart to them.

The "heart" is the seat of ones emotions and desires in Semitic thought. If the Law is not upon their "hearts", then what it means is they do not desire to know or live it.

v12-24 Abinadi's rendition follows the KJV Exod. 20:3-17 version almost verbatim.

v26 Abinadi's comment in v. 13-14 sets up the comment in this verse. The Lord is impassioned about His people, and he is actively both just and merciful, thus he sends prophets to warn His people to repent and accept His mercy or continue in sin and face His justice.

They must be sinning, or the Lord wouldn't have sent him. And it is plain the Lord has sent him, because the Lord is at present actively protecting him from their trying to murder him.

27 And now ye have said that salvation cometh by the law of Moses. I say unto you that it is expedient that ye should keep the law of Moses as yet; but I say unto you, that the time shall come when it shall no more be expedient to keep the law of Moses. 28 And moreover, I say unto you, that salvation doth not come by the law alone; and were it not for the atonement, which God himself shall make for the sins and iniquities of his people, that they must unavoidably perish, notwithstanding the law of Moses.

29 And now I say unto you that it was expedient that there should be a law given to the children of Israel, yea, even a very strict law; for they were a stiffnecked people, quick to do iniquity, and slow to remember the Lord their God; 30 Therefore there was a law given them, yea, a law of performances and of ordinances, a law which they were to observe strictly from day

to day, to keep them in remembrance of God and their duty towards him. 31 But behold, I say unto you, that all these things were types of things to come. 32 And now, did they understand the law? I say unto you, Nay, they did not all understand the law; and this because of the hardness of their hearts; for they understood not that there could not any man be saved except it were through the redemption of God.

33 For behold, did not Moses prophesy unto them concerning the coming of the Messiah, and that God should redeem his people? Yea, and even all the prophets who have prophesied ever since the world began--have they not spoken more or less concerning these things? 34 Have they not said that God himself should come down among the children of men, and take upon him the form of man, and go forth in mighty power upon the face of the earth? 35 Yea, and have they not said also that he should bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, and that he, himself, should be oppressed and afflicted?

v27-35 Abinadi argues the purpose of the Law of Moses is to teach intractable people concerning the redemption which God Himself will make. He tells them they do need to obey the Law of Moses to be saved, but the Law itself will be done away (v. 27) and does not in and of itself have the power to save (v. 28).

The Law had to be given to Israel because of their rebelliousness (v. 29), so as to teach them daily how to keep a godly walk (v. 30). But it was also intended to teach them concerning the coming of the redeeming Messiah (v. 31), which they refused to understand (v. 32).

Moses taught plainly concerning the prophet whom the Lord would raise up, as did all the Israelite prophets (v. 33). All of them have testified the Lord Himself would come down incarnate (v. 34) and bring about the resurrection of the dead and forgiveness of sins (v. 35).

v27 Abinadi's point is to show that just as the Law of Moses had a point of origination, it will also have a point of cessation. The Law of Moses is a set of dictates given to Israel by the Lord, and is not above the Lord and does not have saving power aside from the Lord's. When the Lord comes and performs the atonement, the Law will be finished, cf. 3 Ne. 9:17.

v28, 34 The statements Abinadi makes in these two verses concerning the Lord's incarnation and atonement are exceptionally direct. There are no statements in the OT, as we have it, that are so blunt. However, there are passages in Isaiah which do make such implications, cf. Isa. 43:23-24.

v29-32 The implication is Noah's priests are no different than

the rebellious Israelites of old when it comes to their relationship with the Lord and understanding of the Law.

v33 Abinadi is probably referring to Deut. 18:15, although he might be referring to some other extra-biblical text not presently available to us.

v35 Abinadi uses this to segue into the quotation of Isa. 53. The priests attempting to use a quotation from Isaiah in ch. 12 has backfired on them. In using a quotation from him, they have to admit his writings are authoritative, so they cannot reject Abinadi's quotation of Isaiah.

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