

Comments on Mosiah 17

1 AND now it came to pass that when Abinadi had finished these sayings, that the king commanded that the priests should take him and cause that he should be put to death. 2 But there was one among them whose name was Alma, he also being a descendant of Nephi. And he was a young man, and he believed the words which Abinadi had spoken, for he knew concerning the iniquity which Abinadi had testified against them; therefore he began to plead with the king that he would not be angry with Abinadi, but suffer that he might depart in peace. 3 But the king was more wroth, and caused that Alma should be cast out from among them, and sent his servants after him that they might slay him. 4 But he fled from before them and hid himself that they found him not. And he being concealed for many days did write all the words which Abinadi had spoken.

v1-4 Having finished his speech, Noah commands the priests to take and kill him (v. 1). However, one of the priests argues in favor of releasing Abinadi, believing his testimony (v. 2). The king is angry with the priest and throws him out and sends people to kill him (v. 3), but he successfully flees and hides and writes down everything Abinadi said (v. 4).

v1 "commanded that the priests should take him", as in 13:1 Noah first attempted to have the priests take Abinadi. It is not until v. 5 that the guards are told to take Abinadi.

v2 "Alma, he also being a descendant of Nephi. And he was a young man, and he believed the words", the text sets up Alma as not being like the others in that he believes Abinadi. But, it also adds the descriptors of being a Nephite and younger, suggesting the other priests were in general Mulekites and older, suggesting the Nephites were more likely to accept Messianism and the Mulekites were less likely.

v4 "he...did write all the words", we would presume this is how we got such a detailed record of Abinadi's confrontation with Noah and his priests. Alma was a first-hand witness of the entire proceedings and he documented it, subsequently making it available to Mormon. Other details were probably filled in by record keeping derived from Limhi and others who survived and ultimately rejoined the Nephites.

5 And it came to pass that the king caused that his guards should surround Abinadi and take him; and they bound him and cast him into prison. 6 And after three days, having counseled with his priests, he caused that he should again be brought before him. 7 And he said unto him: Abinadi, we have found an accusation against thee, and thou art worthy of death. 8 For

thou hast said that God himself should come down among the children of men; and now, for this cause thou shalt be put to death unless thou wilt recall all the words which thou hast spoken evil concerning me and my people.

v5-8 The guards surround Abinadi and throw him in jail (v. 5). Three days pass and Abinadi is brought back before the king (v. 6) where he is accused of blasphemy and will be executed unless he withdraws his words (v. 7-8).

v5 Alma's pleading results in Abinadi not being killed on the spot, but it only delays the inevitable. Perhaps Alma's advocacy for Abinadi pricked some of the other priests sense of justice, necessitating deliberation to maintain the guise of being practitioners of the Law of Moses.

v6-8 It takes the priests three days to fabricate an accusation against Abinadi that they are hoping will cause him to recant. The primary interest here is to get him to recant, so they want to use an accusation that is religiously based so as to appeal to his strong religious convictions. And, they are attempting to cast doubt on his previous statements concerning the Messiah, so they are seeking to undercut his logic so he will doubt himself in the moment his life is in jeopardy. They are hoping his fear of death in combination with their counter argument that it is blasphemy to suggest God will condescend to flesh will raise enough doubt in him to get him to recant.

9 Now Abinadi said unto him: I say unto you, I will not recall the words which I have spoken unto you concerning this people, for they are true; and that ye may know of their surety I have suffered myself that I have fallen into your hands. 10 Yea, and I will suffer even until death, and I will not recall my words, and they shall stand as a testimony against you. And if ye slay me ye will shed innocent blood, and this shall also stand as a testimony against you at the last day.

v9-10 Abinadi refuses to recant, because he knows everything he has said is true (v. 9). And, if they kill him, they will shed innocent blood, which will condemn them (v. 10).

v10 Note Abinadi threatens them with two witnesses against their wickedness: first, his words; and second his murder. The Law requires two or three witnesses to condemn a man (cf. Deut, 17:6.), and he lets them know there are two witnesses condemning them if they follow through with their threat. Abinadi is showing them they do not follow the Law of Moses, because it

requires two witnesses to put a man to death, and they don't have two witnesses. Instead, there will be two witnesses against them if they do put him to death.

11 And now king Noah was about to release him, for he feared his word; for he feared that the judgments of God would come upon him. 12 But the priests lifted up their voices against him, and began to accuse him, saying: He has reviled the king. Therefore the king was stirred up in anger against him, and he delivered him up that he might be slain.

v11-12 Noah initially backs off from the threat of execution because of Abinadi's warning (v. 11). However, when the priests realize he is backing down they appeal to his pride and arrogance and get him to follow through with it (v. 12).

These two verses do a great deal to show the real character of these people and what their relationship was really like. Noah is extremely prideful, and the priests are using this as a means of manipulation to get what they want. The priests are a group of self-promoters who have learned to get what they want by manipulating the king by catering to his ego.

13 And it came to pass that they took him and bound him, and scourged his skin with faggots, yea, even unto death. 14 And now when the flames began to scorch him, he cried unto them, saying: 15 Behold, even as ye have done unto me, so shall it come to pass that thy seed shall cause that many shall suffer the pains that I do suffer, even the pains of death by fire; and this because they believe in the salvation of the Lord their God. 16 And it will come to pass that ye shall be afflicted with all manner of diseases because of your iniquities. 17 Yea, and ye shall be smitten on every hand, and shall be driven and scattered to and fro, even as a wild flock is driven by wild and ferocious beasts. 18 And in that day ye shall be hunted, and ye shall be taken by the hand of your enemies, and then ye shall suffer, as I suffer, the pains of death by fire. 19 Thus God executeth vengeance upon those that destroy his people. O God, receive my soul. 20 And now, when Abinadi had said these words, he fell, having suffered death by fire; yea, having been put to death because he would not deny the commandments of God, having sealed the truth of his words by his death.

v13-20 Abinadi is burned to death at the stake (v. 13-14). Abinadi prophesies many will die by fire as a result of this because they are believers like him (v. 15). The result is Noah's people will be cursed by the Lord because of their

wickedness, and Noah will die in the same manner (v. 16-19). Abinadi then dies, sealing his testimony with his death (v. 20).

v13 "scourged his skin with faggots", as indicated in the next verse this is a death by fire. The term "faggots" refers to bundles of dry twigs bound together. They are used to start fires as they caught fire easily and burned quickly when compared to split logs.

v15-18 Abinadi continues his warning from 13:10 that what they do to him will be indicative of what happens to them. This was ultimately fulfilled with Noah's death by fire in 19:20, and the death of the priests and their children in Alma 25:4-12. The other threats are standard covenant curses from Lev. 26 and Deut. 28.

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