

General comments on Mosiah 19-22

In these chapters Gideon is a prominent character, and the text sometimes seems to be told from his point of view (e.g., 19:4-8, 19:18, 20:17-22, 22:3-9). Perhaps Gideon kept a record, or even the main record, which Mormon later made use of in his abridgement. This would explain his prominence in the various narratives.

Comments on Mosiah 19

1 AND it came to pass that the army of the king returned, having searched in vain for the people of the Lord. 2 And now behold, the forces of the king were small, having been reduced, and there began to be a division among the remainder of the people. 3 And the lesser part began to breathe out threatenings against the king, and there began to be a great contention among them.

4 And now there was a man among them whose name was Gideon, and he being a strong man and an enemy to the king, therefore he drew his sword, and swore in his wrath that he would slay the king. 5 And it came to pass that he fought with the king; and when the king saw that he was about to overpower him, he fled and ran and got upon the tower which was near the temple. 6 And Gideon pursued after him and was about to get upon the tower to slay the king, and the king cast his eyes round about towards the land of Shemlon, and behold, the army of the Lamanites were within the borders of the land.

7 And now the king cried out in the anguish of his soul, saying: Gideon, spare me, for the Lamanites are upon us, and they will destroy us; yea, they will destroy my people. 8 And now the king was not so much concerned about his people as he was about his own life; nevertheless, Gideon did spare his life.

v1-8 The army returns unsuccessful from its mission of destroying the alleged rebellion (v. 1), only to have an insurrection break out among themselves (v. 2-3). One of the stronger men among the army is determined to kill king Noah (v. 4) and ends up fighting him. Noah flees to a tower and climbs it (v. 5), and sees invading Lamanites armies (v. 6). He then uses this as an excuse to be spared (v. 8), so he can save the people (v. 7).

One would have to assume the dissent among the ranks was brewing for some time given the apparent lack of support Noah had among the army. Verse 3 says there was great contention among the army, but once Gideon takes it upon himself to kill Noah there is nothing in the text suggesting anyone did anything to stop him or protect Noah.

We might assume dissent was because "the forces of the king were small, having been reduced" (v. 2). Whether they were reduced by conflict with the Lamanites, through desertion, or

the king was too cheap to financially support them, morale would have been low regardless.

v2 "the remainder of the people", the people of the army that is, cp. 23:1-2 where "the armies" are set in parallel to "the people" in the same fashion as it is here in v. 1 and 2.

v4 "Gideon", while Gideon may have been the captain of the army at this point, he is not explicitly identified as such until 20:17 when Limhi is king. His activities in v. 18-23 suggest he was the leader of the dissenters having men following him, but that doesn't necessarily preclude his being captain.

If he was captain at that point it might explain why nobody intervened when he faced off against the king, as that would have represented a sort of coup d'état.

9 And the king commanded the people that they should flee before the Lamanites, and he himself did go before them, and they did flee into the wilderness, with their women and their children. 10 And it came to pass that the Lamanites did pursue them, and did overtake them, and began to slay them.

11 Now it came to pass that the king commanded them that all the men should leave their wives and their children, and flee before the Lamanites. 12 Now there were many that would not leave them, but had rather stay and perish with them. And the rest left their wives and their children and fled. 13 And it came to pass that those who tarried with their wives and their children caused that their fair daughters should stand forth and plead with the Lamanites that they would not slay them. 14 And it came to pass that the Lamanites had compassion on them, for they were charmed with the beauty of their women. 15 Therefore the Lamanites did spare their lives, and took them captives and carried them back to the land of Nephi, and granted unto them that they might possess the land, under the conditions that they would deliver up king Noah into the hands of the Lamanites, and deliver up their property, even one half of all they possessed, one half of their gold, and their silver, and all their precious things, and thus they should pay tribute to the king of the Lamanites from year to year.

16 And now there was one of the sons of the king among those that were taken captive, whose name was Limhi. 17 And now Limhi was desirous that his father should not be destroyed; nevertheless, Limhi was not ignorant of the iniquities of his father, he himself being a just man.

v9-17 Noah, having been spared, takes command of the people and tells them to flee (v. 9). They do so, but the Lamanites begin overtaking them (v. 10), so Noah tells the men to abandon the women and children and run (v. 11). Many of the men, including Gideon and his followers, refuse to abandon their families (v. 12), so when the Lamanites overtake them they have their wives and daughters plead with the Lamanites not to kill them (v. 13) and it works (v. 14). The Lamanites agree not to kill them if

they return to the land and forfeit half of all they have to them and turn over the king (v. 15). Limhi, one of the sons of Noah (v. 16), being a just man, doesn't want to see his father executed (v. 17).

18 And it came to pass that Gideon sent men into the wilderness secretly, to search for the king and those that were with him. And it came to pass that they met the people in the wilderness, all save the king and his priests. 19 Now they had sworn in their hearts that they would return to the land of Nephi, and if their wives and their children were slain, and also those that had tarried with them, that they would seek revenge, and also perish with them. 20 And the king commanded them that they should not return; and they were angry with the king, and caused that he should suffer, even unto death by fire. 21 And they were about to take the priests also and put them to death, and they fled before them. 22 And it came to pass that they were about to return to the land of Nephi, and they met the men of Gideon. And the men of Gideon told them of all that had happened to their wives and their children; and that the Lamanites had granted unto them that they might possess the land by paying a tribute to the Lamanites of one half of all they possessed. 23 And the people told the men of Gideon that they had slain the king, and his priests had fled from them farther into the wilderness. 24 And it came to pass that after they had ended the ceremony, that they returned to the land of Nephi, rejoicing, because their wives and their children were not slain; and they told Gideon what they had done to the king.

v18-24 After they have been spared by the Lamanites, Gideon secretly sends some men to find king Noah. They find the men who fled with Noah back in v. 11 (v. 18), but they are told Noah was executed by them (v. 20) and the priests fled because they feared the same fate (v. 21, 23). When the men who had fled are told their wives and families are still alive (v. 23) they rejoice because they assumed they were dead (v. 24) and were about to return to go and die with them in battle against the Lamanites (v. 19).

v19 Why the men fled and then swore they would return is not clear. Perhaps they thought Noah was attempting a retreat to organize an assault on the Lamanites, or more likely they were just stung by their own cowardice.

v20 "death by fire", per Abinadi's prediction, cp. 12:3. It would have been particularly ironic if the people who put Noah to death here were the same ones in 12:10 who said such things as Abinadi had predicted would never happen. Perhaps they were even driven by Abinadi's prediction to fulfil it literally. Had Gideon killed Noah on the tower, Abinadi's prediction would have been only been fulfilled figuratively and not literally.

v24 "the ceremony", presumably referring to the execution of the king in v. 20. It couldn't have been Limhi being made king (cf.

v. 26) because this group is separate and doesn't return to the land of Nephi until after "the ceremony".

The word "ceremony" doesn't ever appear anywhere else in the LDS canon, so what exactly is meant by it is difficult to discern. The word "ceremonies" does appear once in Num. 9:3, but that is in reference to the rites associated with the Feast of Passover, so that clearly has no relevant connection.

Perhaps what is meant is that just as Abinadi was subjected to a trial and execution, no matter how unjustifiable, these people subjected Noah to the same thing, and considered it a "ceremony" as it had been instituted by Noah himself as a means of execution.

25 And it came to pass that the king of the Lamanites made an oath unto them, that his people should not slay them. 26 And also Limhi, being the son of the king, having the kingdom conferred upon him by the people, made oath unto the king of the Lamanites that his people should pay tribute unto him, even one half of all they possessed. 27 And it came to pass that Limhi began to establish the kingdom and to establish peace among his people. 28 And the king of the Lamanites set guards round about the land, that he might keep the people of Limhi in the land, that they might not depart into the wilderness; and he did support his guards out of the tribute which he did receive from the Nephites. 29 And now king Limhi did have continual peace in his kingdom for the space of two years, that the Lamanites did not molest them nor seek to destroy them.

v25-29 Limhi takes over as king and they have peace again for a couple of years, but are in bondage to and surrounded by the Lamanites, ct. 12:15.

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