

Comments on Mosiah 25

This chapter resumes the historical timeline from ch. 22, and informs the reader concerning the political (v. 1-13) and religious (v. 14-24) status of the Nephites.

At this point the remnants of the Nephite splinter group who left with Zeniff some 80 years earlier have returned in two separate groups, one following Ammon and Limhi (cf. 22:11-14) and one following Alma (cf. 24:23-25).

1 AND now king Mosiah caused that all the people should be gathered together. 2 Now there were not so many of the children of Nephi, or so many of those who were descendants of Nephi, as there were of the people of Zarahemla, who was a descendant of Mulek, and those who came with him into the wilderness. 3 And there were not so many of the people of Nephi and of the people of Zarahemla as there were of the Lamanites; yea, they were not half so numerous. 4 And now all the people of Nephi were assembled together, and also all the people of Zarahemla, and they were gathered together in two bodies. 5 And it came to pass that Mosiah did read, and caused to be read, the records of Zeniff to his people; yea, he read the records of the people of Zeniff, from the time they left the land of Zarahemla until they returned again. 6 And he also read the account of Alma and his brethren, and all their afflictions, from the time they left the land of Zarahemla until the time they returned again.

7 And now, when Mosiah had made an end of reading the records, his people who tarried in the land were struck with wonder and amazement. 8 For they knew not what to think; for when they beheld those that had been delivered out of bondage they were filled with exceedingly great joy. 9 And again, when they thought of their brethren who had been slain by the Lamanites they were filled with sorrow, and even shed many tears of sorrow. 10 And again, when they thought of the immediate goodness of God, and his power in delivering Alma and his brethren out of the hands of the Lamanites and of bondage, they did raise their voices and give thanks to God. 11 And again, when they thought upon the Lamanites, who were their brethren, of their sinful and polluted state, they were filled with pain and anguish for the welfare of their souls.

12 And it came to pass that those who were the children of Amulon and his brethren, who had taken to wife the daughters of the Lamanites, were displeased with the conduct of their fathers, and they would no longer be called by the names of their fathers, therefore they took upon themselves the name of Nephi, that they might be called the children of Nephi and be numbered among those who were called Nephites.

13 And now all the people of Zarahemla were numbered with the Nephites, and this because the kingdom had been conferred upon none but those who were descendants of Nephi.

v1-13 King Mosiah has all of the people who are in the land of Zarahemla gather together (v. 1-4) to hear what has happened to the two groups of people who have been recently reunited with them while they were separated (v. 5-6).

When the people at Zarahemla hear of all that has happened to these people they are overwhelmed by a mix of emotions for these people and for the Lamanites as well (v. 7-11). The children of Noah's priests are disgusted over what their fathers did, so they reject their namesake and adopt the name "Nephites" (v. 12). The Mulekites are also considered "Nephites" since the kings have been of the lineage of Nephi (v. 13).

v1 We would assume Mosiah wanted the entire population at Zarahemla to be informed concerning the recent influx of these two groups of Nephites so as to apprise them of their religious conversions, as well as to smooth their adoption into the population at large.

He probably also saw it as a proselytizing event as there were clearly people among them who were not particularly religious (cf. v. 23 and 26:1-4).

v2-3 These two verses are a parenthetical comment concerning relative population sizes of Nephites, Mulekites, and Lamanites. Among the "Nephite" population are Nephites and Mulekites, and the Mulekites are in the majority (v. 2). But, even when you add up the Nephites and Mulekites, there are still twice as many Lamanites (v. 3).

The implicit message is the various Nephite apostasies and rebellions have caused them great destruction at the hands of the Lamanites. It is not necessarily that the Lamanites are so prosperous, it is that the Nephites are being cursed for their iniquities. Another factor would be Nephite desertions to the Lamanites, cf. WofM 1:16.

v4 This verse suggests the Nephites and Mulekites were still keeping somewhat separate at a social level even though there was political unity.

v5-6 Mosiah translates and reads the Jaredite record to the people in 28:11-17.

v7 "his people who tarried in the land", i.e., the descendants of those who did not go with Zeniff down to the land of Nephi.

v12 Given Amulon and the other priests of Noah joined the Lamanites (23:35) to become teachers (cf. 24:1-4) and taught their children to hate Alma and the others (cf. 24:8), it is surprising any of them ended up joining up with the Nephites. It seems likely the phrase "who had taken to wife the daughters of the Lamanites" is a parenthetical comment meant to explain that the Amulonites abandoned their original families in favor of their new families with their new Lamanite wives. So, this verse is referring to the children from the original families who stayed with Limhi, and they now reject their father's names and take the name of Nephites. If this is the case, this implies the Amulonite priests whom Noah set up in the place of Zeniff's priests were Mulekites, not Nephites.

14 And now it came to pass that when Mosiah had made an end of speaking and reading to the people, he desired that Alma should also speak to the people. 15 And Alma did speak unto them, when they were assembled together in large bodies, and he went from one body to another, preaching unto the people repentance and faith on the Lord. 16 And he did exhort the people of Limhi and his brethren, all those that had been delivered out of bondage, that they should remember that it was the Lord that did deliver them. 17 And it came to pass that after Alma had taught the people many things, and had made an end of speaking to them, that king Limhi was desirous that he might be baptized; and all his people were desirous that they might be baptized also. 18 Therefore, Alma did go forth into the water and did baptize them; yea, he did baptize them after the manner he did his brethren in the waters of Mormon; yea, and as many as he did baptize did belong to the church of God; and this because of their belief on the words of Alma.

v14-18 While the people are gathered together Mosiah has Alma preach to them, reminding them it has always been the Lord who has delivered them (v. 14, cp. 11:23, 21:5, 24:16). Limhi and his people want to be baptized (cp. 21:32-35) so they have Alma do that (v. 17-18).

19 And it came to pass that king Mosiah granted unto Alma that he might establish churches throughout all the land of Zarahemla; and gave him power to ordain priests and teachers over every church. 20 Now this was done because there were so many people that they could not all be governed by one teacher; neither could they all hear the word of God in one assembly; 21 Therefore they did assemble themselves together in different bodies, being called churches; every church having their priests and their teachers, and every priest preaching the word

according as it was delivered to him by the mouth of Alma. 22 And thus, notwithstanding there being many churches they were all one church, yea, even the church of God; for there was nothing preached in all the churches except it were repentance and faith in God. 23 And now there were seven churches in the land of Zarahemla. And it came to pass that whosoever were desirous to take upon them the name of Christ, or of God, they did join the churches of God; 24 And they were called the people of God. And the Lord did pour out his Spirit upon them, and they were blessed, and prospered in the land.

v19-24 The gathering by Mosiah is the impetus for organizing the "church" among them, because the population is too large for a single group (v. 20). Alma acts as the high priest (v. 19) and organizes priests and teachers for the different groups (v. 21). They form seven bodies of believers, all of whom enjoy the same Spirit of God as they are one "church" (v. 22-24).

King Benjamin had set up additional priests to minister to the new converts in 6:3, why then does Mosiah select Alma to reorganize the religious organization? Perhaps the influx of a new population was the catalyst to make necessary changes. One would think the existing priests might resent this new group. Perhaps the religious order under Mosiah was becoming lax. Or, perhaps the priests set up under Mosiah were dedicated to temple worship and did not organize as a church/synagogue among the people to educate and provide religious support the way Alma appears to have done.

v19 The text signals a clear separation of church and state (cp. 26:11-12 and 27:2-3). Mosiah remains king and Alma acts as high priest. Prior to this Benjamin appears to have been both king and high priest, with a three year hiatus from being king when he turned over the kingdom to Mosiah, but apparently still retained the Urim and Thummim until his death. With Benjamin's death Mosiah appears to have taken over the role of both king and high priest until Alma is made high priest. However, from 28:11-17 it appears Mosiah did not turn the Urim and Thummim over to Alma as one might have thought he would do.

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