

Comments on Omni

1 Behold, it came to pass that I, Omni, being commanded by my father, Jarom, that I should write somewhat upon these plates, to preserve our genealogy-- 2 Wherefore, in my days, I would that ye should know that I fought much with the sword to preserve my people, the Nephites, from falling into the hands of their enemies, the Lamanites. But behold, I of myself am a wicked man, and I have not kept the statutes and the commandments of the Lord as I ought to have done. 3 And it came to pass that two hundred and seventy and six years had passed away, and we had many seasons of peace; and we had many seasons of serious war and bloodshed. Yea, and in fine, two hundred and eighty and two years had passed away, and I had kept these plates according to the commandments of my fathers; and I conferred them upon my son Amaron. And I make an end.

4 And now I, Amaron, write the things whatsoever I write, which are few, in the book of my father. 5 Behold, it came to pass that three hundred and twenty years had passed away, and the more wicked part of the Nephites were destroyed. 6 For the Lord would not suffer, after he had led them out of the land of Jerusalem and kept and preserved them from falling into the hands of their enemies, yea, he would not suffer that the words should not be verified, which he spake unto our fathers, saying that: Inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye shall not prosper in the land. 7 Wherefore, the Lord did visit them in great judgment; nevertheless, he did spare the righteous that they should not perish, but did deliver them out of the hands of their enemies. 8 And it came to pass that I did deliver the plates unto my brother Chemish.

9 Now I, Chemish, write what few things I write, in the same book with my brother; for behold, I saw the last which he wrote, that he wrote it with his own hand; and he wrote it in the day that he delivered them unto me. And after this manner we keep the records, for it is according to the commandments of our fathers. And I make an end.

10 Behold, I, Abinadom, am the son of Chemish. Behold, it came to pass that I saw much war and contention between my people, the Nephites, and the Lamanites; and I, with my own sword, have taken the lives of many of the Lamanites in the defence of my brethren. 11 And behold, the record of this people is engraven upon plates which is had by the kings, according to the generations; and I know of no revelation save that which has been written, neither prophecy; wherefore, that which is sufficient is written. And I make an end.

v1-11 These verses document a general Nephite slide into apostasy attended by a fairly persistent state of conflict with the Lamanites, as earlier predicted (cf. 1 Ne. 2:24, 2 Ne. 5:25). Four different authors say little more than their names and things are not going well at all (v. 1-11).

Contrast the contents and quality of v. 1-11 with the preceding books of Jacob, Enos, and Jarom. The preceding books are composed of eloquent speeches, have highly structured rhetorical style, and very spiritual content. The present verses have none of that. Also in the preceding books all of the authors state the Nephites are hard-headed and stiff-necked, but the constant preaching keeps the wickedness in check. These verses suggest prophets are not preaching anymore and the people who are supposed to keep the spiritual record aren't spiritual. Thus, this small record reflects the spirituality of the Nephite society and becomes an example of "by their fruits ye shall know them".

v1 "I of myself am a wicked man", assuming the priestly line of Jacob was from father to son, that line appears to have been broken with Omni.

12 Behold, I am Amaleki, the son of Abinadom. Behold, I will speak unto you somewhat concerning Mosiah, who was made king over the land of Zarahemla; for behold, he being warned of the Lord that he should flee out of the land of Nephi, and as many as would hearken unto the voice of the Lord should also depart out of the land with him, into the wilderness-- 13 And it came to pass that he did according as the Lord had commanded him. And they departed out of the land into the wilderness, as many as would hearken unto the voice of the Lord; and they were led by many preachings and prophesyings. And they were admonished continually by the word of God; and they were led by the power of his arm, through the wilderness until they came down into the land which is called the land of Zarahemla.

14 And they discovered a people, who were called the people of Zarahemla. Now, there was great rejoicing among the people of Zarahemla; and also Zarahemla did rejoice exceedingly, because the Lord had sent the people of Mosiah with the plates of brass which contained the record of the Jews. 15 Behold, it came to pass that Mosiah discovered that the people of Zarahemla came out from Jerusalem at the time that Zedekiah, king of Judah, was carried away captive into Babylon. 16 And they journeyed in the wilderness, and were brought by the hand of the Lord across the great waters, into the land where Mosiah discovered them; and they had dwelt there from that time forth.

17 And at the time that Mosiah discovered them, they had become exceedingly numerous. Nevertheless, they had had many wars and serious contentions, and had fallen by the sword from time to time; and their language had become corrupted; and they had brought no records with them; and they denied the being of their Creator; and Mosiah, nor the people of Mosiah, could understand them. 18 But it came to pass that Mosiah caused that they should be taught in his language. And it came to pass that after they were taught in the language of Mosiah, Zarahemla gave a genealogy

of his fathers, according to his memory; and they are written, but not in these plates. 19 And it came to pass that the people of Zarahemla, and of Mosiah, did unite together; and Mosiah was appointed to be their king.

v12-19 Amaleki obtains possession of the small plates and he recounts a shift in the fortunes of the Nephites under the hands of kings Mosiah and Benjamin. A righteous prophet-king by the name of Mosiah sits on the Nephite throne, and is warned by the Lord to flee their lands. The Nephite faithful who believe in prophecy follow him (v. 12). Those who leave are led by preaching and prophesying until they are ultimately led to meet another group of people (v. 13).

These new people rejoice when they find out the Nephites have the Law of Moses (v. 14), and Mosiah discovers the people were in fact led out of Jerusalem to the promised land when Babylon was sacked (v. 15-16). When Mosiah discovers them they were a numerous people, but had gone through wars and slid into secularism (v. 17). Their spoken language had also corrupted, such that initially they cannot communicate. But, after teaching them they can communicate, and the leader gives Mosiah a history of his people (v. 18).

These people of Zarahemla and the Nephite remnant join together with Mosiah as king (v. 19).

v12-13 The state of Nephite society had deteriorated badly, so much so the more righteous among them have to flee. It is safe to assume those who did not flee with Mosiah were ultimately annihilated by the Lamanites (cf. v. 10, 24) as nothing is ever heard about them again.

v12 The Nephites who follow Mosiah flee the land of Nephi, the land of their national origin. This is the same land Zeniff and the others attempt to return to in v. 27, cp. Mosiah 9. In Mosiah 9:8 it says they began repairing the walls of two cities and quickly started agriculture, so it is safe to assume the land of Nephi at the time they left was fairly well developed and fortified with defenses.

v14 While the Mulekite culture had secularized, it is plain some of the fragments of their Jewish roots persisted as they still knew what the Law of Moses was and knew they were of Jewish extraction. They deferred to Mosiah as king (v. 19) even though they were the larger population (cf. Mosiah 25:2), recognizing him as both a spiritual and political leader.

As the Mulekites had secularized according to v. 17, one might conclude their rejoicing over the Brass Plates was more out of obtaining a record of the Jews, since the Mulekites were of Jewish origin, and their genealogy than obtaining a copy of the

Law of Moses. But, it is possible there were some among them that had clung to the Law, by oral tradition as they could remember it, and were genuinely interested in a comprehensive written set.

v17-19 The decline of the Mulekite society illustrates the importance of Lehi's group obtaining the plates prior to leaving Jerusalem. Written religious records preserve language and provide a means of stabilizing the society.

The Mulekite society had deteriorated badly, apparently so bad that communication even amongst themselves had even become problematic. If the society had effectively failed and deteriorated to the point where there was no social order, then that would explain why Mosiah was appointed king. Mosiah and his group would have represented a restoration of social order through a cohesive well-ordered group with an institutionalized political tradition. The more spiritual core remnant of Nephites would have been able to quickly reconstitute a complex society of skilled artisans, domesticated agriculture, and legal order. The war ravaged Mulekites would have remembered what it was like in the "good old days" and would have been eager to have them back.

20 And it came to pass in the days of Mosiah, there was a large stone brought unto him with engravings on it; and he did interpret the engravings by the gift and power of God. 21 And they gave an account of one Coriantumr, and the slain of his people. And Coriantumr was discovered by the people of Zarahemla; and he dwelt with them for the space of nine moons. 22 It also spake a few words concerning his fathers. And his first parents came out from the tower, at the time the Lord confounded the language of the people; and the severity of the Lord fell upon them according to his judgments, which are just; and their bones lay scattered in the land northward.

v20-22 Some time later, a stone bearing foreign inscriptions is brought to Mosiah and he interprets the writing on it (v. 20). It contains a brief synopsis of the history of the Jaredites including mention of their fathers who left the tower of Babel and the final Jaredite who ended up living with the people at Zarahemla for some time (v. 21-22, cp. Ether 13:19-20).

v20 "he did interpret the engravings by the gift and power of God", presumably referring to the Urim and Thummim.

23 Behold, I, Amaleki, was born in the days of Mosiah; and I have lived to see his death; and Benjamin, his son, reigneth in his stead. 24 And behold, I have seen, in the days of king Benjamin, a serious war and much bloodshed between the Nephites and the Lamanites. But behold, the Nephites did obtain much advantage

over them; yea, insomuch that king Benjamin did drive them out of the land of Zarahemla.

25 And it came to pass that I began to be old; and, having no seed, and knowing king Benjamin to be a just man before the Lord, wherefore, I shall deliver up these plates unto him, exhorting all men to come unto God, the Holy One of Israel, and believe in prophesying, and in revelations, and in the ministering of angels, and in the gift of speaking with tongues, and in the gift of interpreting languages, and in all things which are good; for there is nothing which is good save it comes from the Lord; and that which is evil cometh from the devil.

26 And now, my beloved brethren, I would that ye should come unto Christ, who is the Holy One of Israel, and partake of his salvation, and the power of his redemption. Yea, come unto him, and offer your whole souls as an offering unto him, and continue in fasting and praying, and endure to the end; and as the Lord liveth ye will be saved.

27 And now I would speak somewhat concerning a certain number who went up into the wilderness to return to the land of Nephi; for there was a large number who were desirous to possess the land of their inheritance. 28 Wherefore, they went up into the wilderness. And their leader being a strong and mighty man, and a stiffnecked man, wherefore he caused a contention among them; and they were all slain, save fifty, in the wilderness, and they returned again to the land of Zarahemla. 29 And it came to pass that they also took others to a considerable number, and took their journey again into the wilderness. 30 And I, Amaleki, had a brother, who also went with them; and I have not since known concerning them. And I am about to lie down in my grave; and these plates are full. And I make an end of my speaking.

v23-30 Amaleki briefly recounts some historical detail. King Mosiah's son Benjamin takes over as ruler of the people (v. 23). And the Nephites and Mulekites repel an attack by the Lamanites (v. 24). Amaleki is getting old, and having no children he hands the plates off to king Benjamin, as he knows he is a god fearing man (v. 25). Amaleki then testifies concerning the Christ and exhorts the reader to draw near to the Lord (v. 26). Amaleki then closes his portion of the record (v. 30, with some final historical details.

v23-24 Amaleki indicates the kingship passes from Mosiah to his son Benjamin (v. 23). Under Benjamin the Nephites successfully route the Lamanites, who were trying to expand into the territory of Zarahemla (v. 24).

The Nephite remnant combined with the people of Zarahemla would create a more formidable army, particularly after both groups had recovered from their moral decay and the Mulekites had retooled with Nephite metal and weapon technology.

v24 If the Lamanites continued to expand their territory up to the point they ran into Zarahemla, then those Nephites who failed to heed Mosiah's warning to flee in v. 12 were probably overrun.

v25-26 Amaleki is one of the authors following the tradition of Nephi, Jacob, and Enos. Unlike the intervening group of Omni et al.

v27-30 Amaleki closes out his record with a brief synopsis of the events surrounding Zeniff and his followers, among whom was one of Amaleki's brothers, where they attempt to re-occupy the land of their father's nativity, which account is detailed in Mosiah 9-22.

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