

BOOK OF MORMON LESSON #17
“A SEER . . . BECOMETH A GREAT BENEFIT
TO HIS FELLOW BEINGS”

[Mosiah 7:1-12:18]

by Ted L. Gibbons

QUOTE OF THE WEEK:

Behold what wonders God hath wrought! Truth springs out of the earth; the gold plates are translated by the gift and power of God; and the voice we hear is one that whispers from the dust. It is the voice of all the Nephis, of Alma and Amulek and Abinadi, of Ether and Mormon and Moroni -- of all the Nephite and Jaredite prophets. It is the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ, who ministered among the Nephites, inviting them to feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet and to thrust their hands into his riven side. It is the voice of doctrine and testimony and miracles. It is the voice of God speaking to men through the Book of Mormon.

Knowing beforehand what should come to pass in the last days, the Lord Jehovah spoke by the mouth of Isaiah relative to the Nephite peoples who should "be visited of the Lord of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire." Because they forsook the Lord and fought against Zion, it should be with them "as when an hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he

drinketh; but he awaketh, and, behold, he is faint, and his soul hath appetite." Because they rejected the gospel and fought against the truth, they should be destroyed.

But a record would be preserved, and through it the great things revealed to their prophets would be known again. "And thou shalt be brought down," the prophetic word intones, "and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust." The spirit and tone and tenor of the message shall be familiar. A like account, one dealing with the same truths, the same laws, and the same ordinances, is found in the Bible. (Bruce R. McConkie, *The Millennial Messiah*, p.151 - p.152)

INTRODUCTION: In the book of Mosiah, there are people all over the place. Groups of Nephites among the Lamanites; groups of Lamanites wandering around lost in the wilderness. Wicked kings and wonderful kings. Wicked priests and seers and martyrs and flashbacks within flashbacks. The doctrine of Mosiah is wonderful, but without some understanding of the history, the book can be confusing.

The following are the most significant movements of people in the book of Mosiah:

1. A group of Nephites attempts to return and live in the Land of Nephi from Zarahemla there (Omni 1:27,28; Mosiah 9:1,2).
2. A second group, under the leadership of Zeniff returns to the land of Nephi and settles there (Omni 1:29,30; Mosiah 9:3-7,ff).
3. Alma and a group of believers flee into the wilderness. They finally settle in Helam (Mosiah 18; 23:1-5,18).
4. Noah' s wicked priests under the leadership of Amulon flee into the wilderness (Mosiah 19:20,21). They steal Lamanite wives (Mosiah 20:1-5), and settle in a place called Amulon (Mosiah 23:31).
5. Limhi sends men to search for the land of Zarahemla. They become lost in the wilderness, wander for many days, and find Jaredite ruins and 24 gold plates. (Mosiah 21:25-27; Ether 1:1,2).
6. Mosiah II sends 16 men under the leadership of a man named Ammon to look for the colony of Zeniff (Mosiah 7:1-5,ff).
7. Ammon leads King Limhi, son of Noah, and his people, out of bondage and back to Zarahemla (Mosiah 22:11-13).
8. The Lamanite army that pursues Limhi becomes lost, and then discovers Amulon and his people (Mosiah 23:30-32). Then they stumble upon the land of Helam; Alma and his people are placed in bondage.
9. Alma and his people escape from the Lamanites and are led by the Lord to Zarahemla (Mosiah 24:16-25).

**1. AMMON AND HIS BRETHREN FIND LIMHI AND HIS PEOPLE.
AMMON TEACHES THE PEOPLE OF LIMHI OF THE IMPORTANCE**

OF A SEER (Mosiah 7,8)

One of the best definitions of a seer found anywhere in the scriptures is given by Ammon. What question did Limhi ask of Ammon that caused Ammon to speak of seers? (Mosiah 8:12)

What other titles are associated with the title of seer according to Ammon? (Mosiah 8:16) Which men do we sustain today as prophets, seers, and revelators? (First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve)

Can you identify the role of a seer as described by Ammon (Mosiah 8:17,18) How do our present prophets, seers, and revelators fulfill these vital functions? Ponder the following illustration from President Boyd K. Packer.

The ultimate purpose of the adversary . . . is to disrupt, disturb, and destroy the home and the family. Like a ship without a rudder. Without a compass, we drift from the family values that have anchored us in the past. Now we are caught in a current so strong that unless we correct our course, civilization as we know it will surely be wrecked to pieces . . .

This crisis of the family is no surprise to the Church. We have certainly known what was coming

The scriptures speak of prophets as “watchmen] upon the tower” who see “the enemy while he [is] yet afar off” (D&C 101:54) and who have “beheld things which are not visible to the natural eye . . . [for] a seer hath the Lord raised up unto his people.” (*Moses 6:36)

Thirty-three years ago the brethren warned us of the disintegration of the family and told us to prepare . . .

The weekly family home evening was introduced by the First Presidency . . .

Parents [were] provided with excellent materials for teaching their children, with a promise that the faithful will be blessed.

. . . all agencies of the Church have been reshaped in their relationship to one another and to the home.

. . . The entire curriculum of the Church was overhauled—based on scriptures.

And years were spent preparing new editions of the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price . . .

We can only imagine where we would be if we were just now reacting to this terrible redefinition of the family. But that is not the case. We are not casting frantically about trying to decide what to do. We know what to do and what to teach.

The course we follow is not of our own making . . . (Elder Boyd K. Packer, *Ensign*, May 1994, p. 20)

What Ammon said to Limhi about 200 B.C. is certainly true in our day: “A seer can know of . . . things which are to come.” (Mosiah 8:17)

What traits or behaviors does Limhi recognize in people which make a seer a great benefit to them? (Mosiah 8:20,21)

Ponder the recent conference addresses. Were some based on topics that are concerns for you. Can you think of experiences in which the counsel of a seer has provided a great benefit to you?

2. THE RECORD OF ZENIFF PROVIDES A BRIEF HISTORY OF ZENIFF’S PEOPLE (Mosiah 9,10)

Zeniff encountered difficulties in establishing his colony among the Lamanites. One of the causes of this difficulty was that the Lamanites felt they had been “wronged,” were therefore “wroth,” and consequently taught their children to “hate” the Nephites (Mosiah 10:12-17)). How do the traditions of the past stir people up to hate each other? Why are such traditions perpetuated? Can you think of examples of similar situations happening in families, communities, nations, or the world in the year 2000?

Note what the record of Zeniff suggests that we do to overcome this problem? (Mosiah 9:1–“when I saw that which was good among them . . .”) How will looking for the good in others help cure the problems of hatred and animosity? How did Zeniff try to avoid conflict? (By talking with the King. See Mosiah 8:5,6) What steps could we take in our lives to develop this quality of looking for the good in others? I have noticed that in my own family, when the children arouse me to feelings of frustration and anger, that those feelings can be controlled if I take the time to reflect on all the good things they do.

In what ways was the experience of the story of the sons of Mosiah similar to the experience of Zeniff? (Alma 26:23-26) What suggestion did some Nephites make for dealing with the Lamanites? What action did the sons of Mosiah take to overcome the hatred between the Nephites and Lamanites? (They preached the gospel to them)

3. ABINADI WARNS THE PEOPLE, BUT THEY ARE BLIND TO NOAH’S WICKEDNESS (Mosiah 11; 12:1-18.)

What did King Noah do to “change the affairs of the kingdom.” (Mosiah 11:1-19) Because of the rapid degeneration of the Nephites under King Noah, the Lord sent a prophet to call them to repentance. Where was Abinadi from? (Mosiah 11:20: he was a “man *among* them” (*emphasis added*)).

As you reflect on the monarchy of Noah, think of how he compares with Benjamin. Placing these two leaders side by side teaches a great lesson about great leadership.

Use the following verses to compare King Benjamin and King Noah:

1. WICKEDNESS

NOAH

For behold, he did not keep the commandments of God, but he did walk after the desires of his own heart. And he had many wives and concubines. And he did cause his people to commit sin, and do that which was abominable in the sight of the Lord. Yea, and they did commit whoredoms and all manner of wickedness 1.(Mosiah 11:2.

BENJAMIN

Neither have I suffered that ye should be confined in dungeons, nor that ye should make slaves one of another, nor that ye should murder, or plunder, or steal, or commit adultery; nor even have I suffered that ye should commit any manner of wickedness, and have taught you that ye should keep the commandments of the Lord, in all things which he hath commanded you—(Mosiah 2:13)

2. RICHES

NOAH

And he laid a tax of one fifth part of all they possessed, a fifth part of their gold and of their silver, and a fifth part of their ziff, and of their copper, and of their brass and their iron; and a fifth part of their fatlings; and also a fifth part of all their grain. And all this did he take to support himself, and his wives and his concubines; and also his priests, and their wives and their concubines; thus he had changed the affairs of the kingdom 1.(Mosiah 11:3 - 4)

BENJAMIN

I say unto you that as I have been suffered to spend my days in your service, even up to this time, and have not sought gold nor silver nor any

manner of riches of you; And even I, myself, have labored with mine own hands that I might serve you, and that ye should not be laden with taxes, and that there should nothing come upon you which was grievous to be borne—and of all these things which I have spoken, ye yourselves are witnesses this day (Mosiah 2:12,14).

3. RELIGION

NOAH

For he put down all the priests that had been consecrated by his father, and consecrated new ones in their stead, such as were lifted up in the pride of their hearts. Yea, and they also became idolatrous, because they were deceived by the vain and flattering words of the king and priests; for they did speak flattering things unto them (Mosiah 11:5,7).

BENJAMIN

And it came to pass that after there had been false Christs, and their mouths had been shut, and they punished according to their crimes; And after there had been false prophets, and false preachers and teachers among the people, and all these having been punished according to their crimes; and after there having been much contention and many dissensions away unto the Lamanites, behold, it came to pass that king Benjamin, with the assistance of the holy prophets who were among his people—(Words of Mormon 1:15 - 16).

4. SERVICE

NOAH

Yea, and thus they were supported in their laziness, and in their idolatry, and in their whoredoms, by the taxes which king Noah had put upon his people; thus did the people labor exceedingly to support iniquity (Mosiah 11:6)

BENJAMIN

But I am like as yourselves, subject to all manner of infirmities in body and mind; yet I have been chosen by this people, and consecrated by my

father, and was suffered by the hand of the Lord that I should be a ruler and a king over this people; and have been kept and preserved by his matchless power, to serve you with all the might, mind and strength which the Lord hath granted unto me (Mosiah 2:11).

5. MOTIVES

NOAH

And it came to pass that he placed his heart upon his riches, and he spent his time in riotous living with his wives and his concubines; and so did also his priests spend their time with harlots (Mosiah 11:14).

BENJAMIN

Yet, my brethren, I have not done these things that I might boast, neither do I tell these things that thereby I might accuse you; but I tell you these things that ye may know that I can answer a clear conscience before God this day (Mosiah 2:15).

As the Nephites in Nephi spiraled down into wickedness, the Lord sent Abinadi to try and halt the descent. He came twice and his messages were very different.

Long years ago I was living in Logan, going to school, working full time, raising a family. I always had too much to do and too little time to do it. One day as I raced west on 10th North from USU to my home, I flew past a policeman with his radar running. He was after me in a heartbeat and I pulled over and waited for him. I was exceeding the speed limit by a large margin, and expected to be hit with a financial liability of federal proportions. But for some reason he gave me a warning only, enjoined me to go easy on gas pedal, and drove away. I offered a quiet prayer of gratitude and went home to tell my wife how good the Lord had been.

Notice the nature of Abinadi's first warning to the people of Noah. He mentions judgements that will come upon them "except they repent . . ." (Mosiah 11:20,21,23,25). Abinadi is giving the people of Noah a *warning*

ticket, warning them to change their ways. What was the response of the people to this warning of Abinadi? (Mosiah 11:26; 12:9) Why were the people angry with Abinadi but not with Noah? (Mosiah 11:29) What parallels can you see today? How do wicked people react to the words of a prophet? Why would so many rather follow the example of a man who leads them in wickedness? Consider the teaching of Samuel the Lamanite about this matter.

. . . as the Lord liveth, if a prophet come among you and declareth unto you the word of the Lord, which testifieth of your sins and iniquities, ye are angry with him, and cast him out and seek all manner of ways to destroy him; yea, you will say that he is a false prophet, and that he is a sinner, and of the devil, because he testifieth that your deeds are evil. But behold, if a man shall come among you and shall say: Do this, and there is no iniquity; do that and ye shall not suffer; yea, he will say: Walk after the pride of your own hearts; yea, walk after the pride of your eyes, and do whatsoever your heart desireth--and if a man shall come among you and say this, ye will receive him, and say that he is a prophet. Yea, ye will lift him up, and ye will give unto him of your substance; ye will give unto him of your gold, and of your silver, and ye will clothe him with costly apparel; and because he speaketh flattering words unto you, and he saith that all is well, then ye will not find fault with him.(Helaman 13:26-28))

After two years, Abinadi came again among the people, this time in disguise, to deliver a second message (Mosiah 12:1) Notice that the nature of his message has changed. The judgements he enumerates are not conditional. Again and again Abinadi employs phrases like, “I will visit them in mine anger”, or “it shall come to pass” or “they shall be smitten.” (See Mosiah 12:1-7) The only conditional warning of this message is the final one:

And it shall come to pass that except they repent I will utterly destroy them from off the face of the earth . . . (Mosiah 12:8)

Just one week after my first meeting with the policeman on 10th North in Logan, I met him again, in the same place and for precisely the same reason. He remembered me, and I am quite confident that the thought of a *warning ticket* never crossed his mind on this second occasion. He wrote me up and he wrote me up hard! And I deserved a significant pain in my pocketbook because I had utterly ignored the first warning.

For the Spirit of the Lord will not always strive with man. And when the Spirit ceaseth to strive with man then cometh speedy destruction, and this grieveth my soul. (2 Nephi 26:11)

Sooner or later, the Lord will stop writing warning tickets, as he did with the Nephite colony in the land of Nephi.

When Abinadi gave his second warning, what did the people say in defense of Noah? (Mosiah 12:13-15)

What would cause a person to reject an Abinadi in favor of a Noah? Who are the *Noahs* in our lives? Who are the *Abinadis* of our lives? How might one justify rejecting an Abinadi to follow a Noah?

Since we are in the season of General Conference [I am writing this one week after April Conference], perhaps you will pardon one additional observation on this matter.

When Jehoshaphat, king of Judah traveled to visit Ahab, king of Israel, Ahab invited Jehoshaphat to join him in a campaign against Syria to retake Israelite possessions that had been captured by the Syrians (1 Kings 22:2-4) Jehoshaphat was willing, but he wanted to know that the Lord thought about it and asked Ahab to enquire before the battle. Ahab

brought in 400 *false prophets* who encouraged the battle and predicted success (1 K. 22:6).

Jehoshaphat was still not satisfied. “Is there not here a [true] prophet of the Lord besides, that we might enquire of him?” (1 K. 22:7) The answer of Ahab to this question teaches a wonderful lesson about prophets.

And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, [There is] yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may enquire of the LORD: *but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.* (1 K. 22:8, emphasis added)

Consider why Ahab and Noah hated the prophets that spoke to them and of them, and then consider the lesson. How ought we to react when the prophets say things we do not like to hear? *It seems to me that if a message comes to us from the prophets and seers that we do not like, that message is probably one we desperately need to hear.* At least that was true for Noah and his people.

Ahab rejected the words of Micaiah, and died as Micaiah had prophesied (see 1K22:34,35). Noah rejected the words of Abinadi, and died as Abinadi had prophesied. What statement did the Lord inspire Abinadi to make about the way in which Noah would eventually be valued? (Mosiah 12:3) Who would place that value on him? (Mosiah 19:18-20: the same people who earlier defended him)

CONCLUSION

Find a pair of glasses and take a look at them and through them. Glasses correct physical problems with vision. Sometimes need spiritual help in order to see the good in others as did Zeniff, and in order to distinguish between the Noahs and Abinadis that we meet in our lives. The Lord counseled:

I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou

mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and *that* the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and *anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see* (Revelation 3:18, emphasis added).

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