

Comments on Mosiah 28

1 NOW it came to pass that after the sons of Mosiah had done all these things, they took a small number with them and returned to their father, the king, and desired of him that he would grant unto them that they might, with these whom they had selected, go up to the land of Nephi that they might preach the things which they had heard, and that they might impart the word of God to their brethren, the Lamanites-- 2 That perhaps they might bring them to the knowledge of the Lord their God, and convince them of the iniquity of their fathers; and that perhaps they might cure them of their hatred towards the Nephites, that they might also be brought to rejoice in the Lord their God, that they might become friendly to one another, and that there should be no more contentions in all the land which the Lord their God had given them.

3 Now they were desirous that salvation should be declared to every creature, for they could not bear that any human soul should perish; yea, even the very thoughts that any soul should endure endless torment did cause them to quake and tremble. 4 And thus did the Spirit of the Lord work upon them, for they were the very vilest of sinners. And the Lord saw fit in his infinite mercy to spare them; nevertheless they suffered much anguish of soul because of their iniquities, suffering much and fearing that they should be cast off forever.

5 And it came to pass that they did plead with their father many days that they might go up to the land of Nephi. 6 And king Mosiah went and inquired of the Lord if he should let his sons go up among the Lamanites to preach the word. 7 And the Lord said unto Mosiah: Let them go up, for many shall believe on their words, and they shall have eternal life; and I will deliver thy sons out of the hands of the Lamanites. 8 And it came to pass that Mosiah granted that they might go and do according to their request. 9 And they took their journey into the wilderness to go up to preach the word among the Lamanites; and I shall give an account of their proceedings hereafter.

v1-9 After the sons of Mosiah had preached among all the Nephites and Mulekites at Zarahemla, they go to their father and ask permission to go and preach to the Lamanites (v. 1). Their desire is to teach them concerning the Lord and to end their hatred of the Nephites so as to end the long-standing conflict between them (v. 2).

Mormon pauses for a parenthetical comment (v. 3-4) to explain to the reader their underlying motive was purely religious. The sons of Mosiah want to preach the gospel to all people so none will have to suffer damnation (v. 3). Thus had the Spirit of the Lord changed them from the worst sinners to the most zealous of missionaries. And while the Lord spared them in His mercy, they did wade through much tribulation fearing that

the Lord might damn them (v. 4), which they did not want to happen to anyone else.

Mormon resumes the main theme by turning to the reaction of their father, king Mosiah. After his sons plead with him (v. 5), Mosiah goes and asks the Lord if his sons should go among the Lamanites to preach (v. 6). The Lord responds in the affirmative, saying many will believe on their words and obtain eternal life. The Lord also says He will deliver them out of the hands of the Lamanites (v. 7), obviously referring to any of the Lamanites which might be hostile to them. After hearing this from the Lord, Mosiah grants them permission to go (v. 8), and they go (v. 9)

v1 As king Mosiah still had the Urim and Thummim, even though Alma was the high priest, he must have held some position of religious and spiritual authority in addition to being their father. Thus, it doesn't seem unlikely his sons asking his permission was an implicit request for divine approval and support for the desired mission.

v5 The nature of this pleading is left ambiguous in the present text, but the text of Alma 26:23-25 might be a distillation of the conversation that was occurring over these "many days".

v6-7 Oddly enough, king Mosiah apparently did not tell his sons what the Lord said to him. Some time later Ammon recounts the rather bumpy start to their missionary service among the Lamanites, as he indicates they were depressed and about to give up (cf. Alma 26:23-27), but then the Lord comforted them with His Spirit (cf. Alma 17:9-11) and they continued on with their journey. Had Mosiah told his sons what the Lord says here in v. 7 it seems unlikely they would have gone through the doubt, depression, and subsequent uplift via the Spirit. Perhaps Mosiah intended as much, so they would have such strong converting experiences to prepare them for such a difficult ministry.

These events show the humanity of these people. The sons of Mosiah are not superhuman zealous stalwarts who never flinch in the face of difficult odds. They are naturally discouraged in the face of what they know will be difficult labors, and only after the Lord sends the Spirit do they commence their efforts in earnest.

v7 "they shall have eternal life", who this "they" is referring to is unclear. Will the Lamanites who believe on their words have eternal life, or will the sons of Mosiah have eternal life? The chapter summary in the 1981 edition BofM says "The sons of Mosiah shall have eternal life". However, this is not necessarily the case. It is just as likely, if not more likely,

the subsequent phrase is referring to the Lamanites who will be converted.

v9 "I shall give an account", that account given in Alma 17-26.

10 Now king Mosiah had no one to confer the kingdom upon, for there was not any of his sons who would accept of the kingdom. 11 Therefore he took the records which were engraven on the plates of brass, and also the plates of Nephi, and all the things which he had kept and preserved according to the commandments of God, after having translated and caused to be written the records which were on the plates of gold which had been found by the people of Limhi, which were delivered to him by the hand of Limhi;

12 And this he did because of the great anxiety of his people; for they were desirous beyond measure to know concerning those people who had been destroyed. 13 And now he translated them by the means of those two stones which were fastened into the two rims of a bow. 14 Now these things were prepared from the beginning, and were handed down from generation to generation, for the purpose of interpreting languages; 15 And they have been kept and preserved by the hand of the Lord, that he should discover to every creature who should possess the land the iniquities and abominations of his people; 16 And whosoever has these things is called seer, after the manner of old times. 17 Now after Mosiah had finished translating these records, behold, it gave an account of the people who were destroyed, from the time that they were destroyed back to the building of the great tower, at the time the Lord confounded the language of the people and they were scattered abroad upon the face of all the earth, yea, and even from that time back until the creation of Adam. 18 Now this account did cause the people of Mosiah to mourn exceedingly, yea, they were filled with sorrow; nevertheless it gave them much knowledge, in the which they did rejoice. 19 And this account shall be written hereafter; for behold, it is expedient that all people should know the things which are written in this account.

20 And now, as I said unto you, that after king Mosiah had done these things, he took the plates of brass, and all the things which he had kept, and conferred them upon Alma, who was the son of Alma; yea, all the records, and also the interpreters, and conferred them upon him, and commanded him that he should keep and preserve them, and also keep a record of the people, handing them down from one generation to another, even as they had been handed down from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem.

v10-20 Mosiah had no heir apparent, as none of his sons would accept the role of king (v. 10). So, Mosiah collects all of the written records in his possession, including the Brass Plates, the plates of Nephi, and the Jaredite plates (v. 11), and he turns them and the Urim and Thummim over to Alma. He also

commands Alma to preserve and write the record of the people so they may continue to be handed down from generation to generation (v. 20).

v12-19 This section of text is a large parenthesis by Mormon on the translation of the Jaredite plates and the general purpose of the Urim and Thummim and such records as this one. Mormon's intent is to illustrate the importance of keeping the plates, and how God works through such records to teach people.

The people are very curious about the record found by Limhi's search party, which is from some extinct people (v. 12). So, Mosiah translates them using the Urim and Thummim (v. 13), which were prepared by God from the beginning for the very purpose they are now being used (v. 14), so the Lord may reveal the wickedness of those now extinct (v. 15). Whoever uses the Urim and Thummim is called a "seer" (v. 16, cp. 8:13-18).

The translated record gives an account of people on this land who were there from the Tower of Babylon down to their destruction (v. 17). When the people hear the account of the record they have mixed feelings over it as the destruction of the people is depressing, but obtaining knowledge from them is good (v. 18).

The contents of the Jaredite record will be given later because it is important that all people should know the things within it (v. 19, cp. book of Ether).

Verses 12-18 form a loose parallelism based upon subject, as follows:

- A - (v. 12) Curiosity and lack of knowledge
- B - (v. 13) Urim and Thummim
- C - (v. 14) Handed down from past to present
- C - (v. 15) Present learns of the past
- B - (v. 16) Seer by virtue of the Urim and Thummim
- A - (v. 17-18) Informed and knowledgeable

v13 The description of the Urim and Thummim sounds something like our modern glasses. Anciently, the Mayans are known to have something similar to glasses, although the symbolism and use is unclear. The picture to the right is of one Yax K'uk Mo' of Copan, who is estimated to have been a Mayan king circa 500AD. The various additional references to the Urim and Thummim in the BofM do little to shed light on specific design and function of the device. Few modern historical references regarding Joseph Smith Jr's use of the Urim and Thummim exist, and suggest



either glasses or some kind of a breastplate with the stones affixed to them in some manner. Smith described them as "two transparent stones set in the rim of a [silver] bow fastened to a breast plate" (cf. HofC 4:537; JS-H 1:35). All other modern descriptions of the Urim and Thummim are second hand, so we are left to speculate over the specific design and function.

v18 Compare 25:5-8 for a similar reaction to Zeniff's and Alma's records.

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