
JACOB 5 – WORDS OF MORMON

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INTRODUCTION

These chapters sweep us through many years of Nephite history, from the earliest days of their settlement in the promised land, to the concluding days prior to the final battle. Specifically, they cover the time of Jacob, Nephi's younger brother, to the reign of King Benjamin, who is an old man when we encounter him in the book of Mosiah. Jacob's writings are full of prophecy and testimony, and the keepers of the record after him—Jacob's posterity—capture some elements of their own struggles and triumphs on Nephi's smaller plates, true to the Lord in their own times. Finally, after including the small plates, Mormon explains why he added them.

JACOB 5 – ALLEGORY OF THE OLIVE TREE

In this chapter, Jacob quoted a lengthy allegory of Zenos, a prophet whose writings are recorded on the brass plates, but not in our present Bible. The setup for this is in chapter 4 (which in the 1830 Book of Mormon was one chapter with our present chapter 5), where he said that he wanted to preach Christ to them, to explain "the stone upon which they might build" (4:15), and said that he is going to "unfold this mystery unto you" (4:18). He also had invited his readers to be the "first-fruits of Christ" (4:11). With that introduction, he told the allegory.

There are several ways to divide the allegory up to make it easier to understand. One author (Arthur Henry King, in Ricks and Welch, 140f) follows the 1830 edition's paragraph divisions, noting first that the allegory divides naturally into two larger segments, verses 1-40 and 41-77. The paragraphs are then as follows (using our modern verse numbers and with a mix of his headings and mine):

First segment: "The Lord tells us what he's going to do and what he's doing."

- 1-9 The master determines to remove tender branches and graft in wild branches.
- 10-13 The servant follows the master's request.
- 14-15 The master hides the tender branches in the "nethermost parts."
- 16-18 The grafted wild branches bear good fruit.
- 19-20 The first scattered branch bears good fruit.
- 21-22 The location is of the Lord's choosing.
- 23 The second scattered branch bears good fruit.
- 24-25 The third branch bears fruit; the fourth bears a mixture of good and bad fruit.
- 26-28 The servant asks the Lord for more time to nourish the trees.

- 29 The Lord and servants return to the vineyard.
- 30 The tree is found bearing “all sorts of fruit.”
- 31-34 The fruit is tasted and found to be all bad.
- 35-37 The wild branches have brought forth evil fruit.
- 38-40 The trees in the nethermost parts also bear evil fruit.

Second segment: “The Lord’s crucial speech begins.”

- 41-47 The Lord’s quandary: “What could I have done more?”
- 48 The Lord’s decision: “Spare it a little longer.”
- 49-54 “ “ “ “ “ “ “
- 55-69 The Lord’s main speech of action and prophecy.
- 70-71 Bringing in the other servants.
- 72-74 “ “ “ “
- 75-77 The Lord’s final speech.

King notes that each paragraph except the first (which begins with “Behold”) starts with “And it came to pass...”

The *Institute Manual* offers a different perspective (124-125, an excellent visual mapping of the chapter). It divides the allegory up chronologically according to the interpretation, as follows:

- The Scattering of Israel, Before the Time of Christ (3-14)
- The Time of Christ (15-26)
- The Great Apostasy (29-49)
- The Gathering of Israel (50-76)

Most of these sections are divided by a phrase like, “a long time had passed away” (5:15, 29). The phrase “long time” appears nine times in Jacob 5—showing both the patience of the Lord and the actual length of the allegory in the plan of God.

Paul Hoskisson offers the following outline of Jacob 5, slightly more expanded than the *Institute Manual* (with handy illustrations of each period using olive tree images, Ricks and Welch, 76f):

1. The founding and aging of the house of Israel (3).
2. The scattering of the house of Israel (4-14).
3. The day of the Former-day Saints (15-28).
4. The great apostasy (29-49).
5. The Gathering of Israel (50-74).
6. The Millennium (75-76).
7. The End of the World (77).

The *Institute Manual* also offers the symbols and interpretations on p. 123 which are very helpful.

In its simplest form, the story is “of a man and his olive tree and the man’s efforts to restore the deteriorating tree to its former pristine condition” (Ricks and Welch, 12). To do so, he tries various combinations of grafts and cuts, between this main tree and other parts of the vineyard. In the end, he celebrates the good fruit and burns the branches with wild or evil fruit.

Zenos exhibits great knowledge of olive cultivation in this allegory, and his portrayal is accurate with three exceptions. First, you cannot graft wild (bitter) olives into a good root and get good olives (Ricks and Welch, 506). But in this allegory, the wild branches (Gentiles) are grafted in to the good root and they end up producing good fruit, something that could not happen without divine intervention. This shows the power of conversion, the Holy Ghost, and the atonement of Christ.

Second, a tame tree will not suddenly produce wild fruit (Ricks and Welch, 506-507). This represents how serious the sins and corruption of Israel were.

Third, a shoot started in excessively poor soil will not generally survive. But in the allegory, that happens, which demonstrates the “extraordinary care and power of the Lord of the vineyard” (Ricks and Welch, 507-508).

Other scriptures that have similar themes are Isaiah 5:1-5; Jeremiah 11:16; Luke 13:6-8; and Romans 11:17-24.

JACOB 6 – JACOB’S INTERPRETATION OF ZENOS

Having concluded his recitation of Zenos’ lengthy allegory, Jacob offered some words of interpretation for his people and for us, that we might not miss the reason he went to all the trouble to engrave those precious words.

6:1 **this is my prophecy.** In 4:15, Jacob said he was “led on by the Spirit unto prophesying.” Here he reminded us of that and declares that his prophecy is that Zenos’ words will come true. He declares himself a second witness to the ancient prophet’s writings.

6:2 **the second time...the last time.** This another writings from Jacob and Nephi make it clear that they understood the gathering of Israel at the last days, and knew it was a distant, future event to them, but would be relevant to the readers of their record.

6:4 **both roots and branches.** God remembers all those who makes covenants with him—one of the main points of the allegory in chapter 5.

6:5 **cleave unto God as he cleaveth unto you.** Sometimes we think “cleave” is to cut, because we associate it with a meat cleaver or something similar. But in the Old Testament, the word usually translated “cleave” is *dabaq*, meaning to stick close, stay with, or join.

6:7 **nourished by the good word of God.** Jacob interprets the efforts in the vineyard to nourish the trees with how we are to receive the good word of God—scriptures, words of prophets, teachings of the Holy Ghost, and the words of angels and God himself.

6:10 **lake of fire and brimstone.** In the Bible, this is a New Testament phrase only—in fact, it is only found in Revelation 19:20; 20:10; and 21:8. In the Book of Mormon, Jacob is the first one to use it (Jacob 9:16, 19, 26), but Nephi, King Benjamin, and Alma also use it. In several cases, the definition given here, “endless torment,” is also given. But in Jacob 3:11, he defines it as “the second death,” or the final separation of man from God—which will be endless torment to anyone who experiences it.

6:12 ***O be wise; what can I say more?*** Though 1 Nephi 2:15 is the shortest verse in the Book of Mormon, this one is probably second shortest. To be wise (Hebrew *sakal*) is to be prudent and circumspect, to exercise understanding, and to ponder and consider.

6:13 ***Finally, I bid you farewell.*** Jacob appears to have intended to close his record.

JACOB 7 – ENCOUNTER WITH SHEREM

Having concluded his record once (6:13) or perhaps even twice (3:14), Jacob added one more chapter concerning an encounter he had with a man named Sherem, who proves to be the Book of Mormon's first "anti-Christ."

7:1 ***there came a man among the people of Nephi.*** Where did Sherem come from? He is not identified as a Nephite or a Lamanite. This is another indication of interaction with other, existing cultures. Note in verse four that Jacob notes that "he had a perfect knowledge of the language of the people." This implies that either: 1) Sherem was an outsider and had to learn the language and had done so in a remarkable way; or, 3) Sherem natively spoke the same language as many of the Nephite people (who were unrelated to those who came from Jerusalem), giving him an advantage over Jacob, who had only learned their language after their arrival.

7:2 ***many things which were flattering.*** Sherem's stated purpose is to "overthrow the doctrine of Christ." He does this with three arguments. 1) In this verse, he flatters the people, telling them what they want to hear. 2) In verse 4, he uses power of speech and fine language to persuade; and, 3) In verse 7, Sherem declares that no man can "tell of things to come." We see similar tactics and arguments today against the work of God, against the scriptures, and against the truth in general.

7:5 ***I could not be shaken.*** Sherem hoped to confront Jacob and weaken his faith, but Jacob let us know that was not possible, for he had experienced revelations, angels, and the voice of the Lord.

7:6 ***I have sought much opportunity that I might speak unto you.*** Another hint that the group calling themselves Nephites had grown quite large, because if the Nephites were just the descendants of those who followed Nephi from the original group, it wouldn't have been hard to meet with any one of them. Sherem's goal in meeting with Jacob was to discredit him.

7:7 ***convert the law of Moses into the worship of a being.*** Sherem knew the scriptures well enough to know about the law of Moses and its role in Nephite society, and understood the argument that Christ fulfilled it. No doubt he equated the law of Moses with the law of the land (which it surely was among the Nephites), so his desire to promote it had nothing to do with his belief that it was true revealed truth, but simply that the things Jacob taught were prophecies that no man could know. Sherem was a humanist (McConkie and Millet, 2:85).

7:8 ***the Lord God poured in his Spirit into my soul.*** What a marvelous way to describe Jacob's experience! Like an empty cup or pot, the Spirit poured into him until he was filled.

7:9 ***I know that there is no Christ.*** We have all heard people say that because they have not experienced something, therefore it cannot be true for anyone else. They generalize their own lack of knowledge or understanding to all other people (McConkie and Millet, 2:86).

7:10-11 **Believest thou the scriptures?** Jacob's opening argument is simple—do you believe the scriptures? Sherem has no choice but to agree, for the scriptures contain the law of Moses that he is promoting. Jacob's retort is, "Then ye do not understand them; for they truly testify of Christ."

7:11 **none of the prophets have written, nor prophesied, save they have spoken concerning this Christ.** When Saul of Tarsus became a converted Christian, his entire outlook changed. Before the experience on the road to Damascus, he saw nothing in the scriptures that would convince him of the truth of Jesus' life and mission. After the vision, he saw Christ everywhere. In fact, right after his baptism, "straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God" (Acts 9:20). Jacob likewise sees Christ everywhere—every prophecy of Isaiah, Zenos, and others, points to Jesus.

7:13 **show me a sign.** See comments in the *Institute Manual*, 128.

7:14 **if God shall smite thee, let that be a sign.** Jacob doesn't request the sign, but leaves it up to the Lord, though with a hint of suggestion that smiting him (as opposed to a sign in the heavens or something) would be a great idea. See v. 22.

7:15 **he fell to the earth.** The sign was immediately given. The text doesn't describe what it was, but it could have been a stroke, heart attack, or some other sudden onset of a debilitating condition that caused him to fall and require the care of others for several days.

He was nourished for the space of many days. McConkie and Millet suggest this was spiritual as well as physical nourishment (2:89), especially considering what happened next.

7:16 **Gather together...for I shall die.** Sherem knew his condition was fatal and knew his repentance required his best attempt before his death.

7:17-18 Sherem admitted he had been deceived and acknowledged the truth of the gospel. He spoke of "the ministering of angels" but also of "hell, and of eternity, and of eternal punishment." This had all suddenly become very real to him.

7:19 **lest I have committed the unpardonable sin.** He had not, for his repentance signified that he was still within those the Savior could atone for. But his deathbed repentance would not grant him a place in the celestial kingdom (McConkie and Millet, 2:90).

7:20 **he gave up the ghost.** Sherem's death must have been a shock. One day he is a vibrant, dynamic speaker and persuasive leader. A few days later he lies stricken, then dead, after confessing that his previous teachings were lies.

7:21 **they fell to the earth.** Hearing Sherem's confession and seeing him die was astonishing, and the power of God came upon the witnesses, causing them to fall to the earth as he did. This pattern happens often in the Book of Mormon, especially with the sons of Mosiah in their missionary labors among the Lamanites, but this is the first one.

7:22 **he had heard my cry.** Jacob reveals that his secret prayer had been fulfilled.

7:23 **peace...love...searched the scriptures.** Sherem's testimony and death had the desired impact—the people turned more toward God and the scripture, resulting in an increase of peace and love, which is the eternal pattern of happiness.

7:24 **reclaim and restore the Lamanites.** It is interesting that even at this early date, the Nephites were sending missionaries to the Lamanites, but the results were not good, and would not be so until the time of the sons of Mosiah.

7:25 The Nephites prepared a defense against the aggressive Lamanites that included military equipment, diligent training, and trust in God. The result was that they were able to be victorious “as yet.”

7:26 **I, Jacob, began to be old.** We don’t know how old Jacob was when he passed away, but a safe guess might be twenty years after Nephi, which would make the date approximately 521 B.C.

we did mourn out our days. Jacob’s poetry in this verse has a tinge of sadness, and is broad but also autobiographical. His people are “lonesome” and “wanderers, cast out from Jerusalem.” Jacob himself was “born in tribulation, in a wilderness, and hated of [his] brethren.” But both descriptions can apply to the other group.

7:27 **my son Enos.** As Nephi had done, Jacob commissioned his (eldest?) son, Enos, to take charge of the plates.

ENOS – A LESSON IN PRAYER AND FAITH

1:1 **He taught me in his language.** If the Nephites all spoke the same language, why would Enos need to call this out? This is an indication of a mixed group with more than one language, and that the dominant one may even have been something other than the language Lehi’s family had spoken in Jerusalem.

1:2 **the wrestle which I had before God.** “It is not ‘cheap grace’ of which he speaks. Enos placed a proper price upon the blessings of heaven” (McConkie and Millet, 2:95).

1:3 **sunk deep into my heart.** Recalling Jacob’s many family home evening lessons, Enos ponders eternal things, and the Spirit touches him as perhaps he has never experienced before.

1:4 **all the day long.** “It is doubtful that this and like texts were intended to convey the idea that such persons involved themselves in formal and uninterrupted prayer for such extended times. Paul wrote that we ought to ‘pray without ceasing’ (1 Thessalonians 5:17). In so writing he did not intend that we never get off our knees, but rather that we retain the spirit of prayer at all times, that we have, as it were, a prayer in our hearts. Enos would have spent his day interspersing formal prayer with soul searching, lamenting, imploring God for forgiveness, and pondering the promises of the scriptures” (McConkie and Millet, 2:96-97).

1:5 The Spirit whispered to Enos that his sins were forgiven. See *Institute Manual*, 132.

1:6 **my guilt was swept away.** The lifting of the burden of sin is a very real experience for those that have paid the price. Like a flood clears away everything in its path, so the atonement can cleanse our lives of all the clutter we have accumulated and the debris of our bad choices.

1:7 **Lord, how is it done?** This demonstrates the reality of Enos’ loss of guilt. There is amazement in his question.

1:8 ***thy faith hath made thee whole***. This is the only time this phrase is found outside of the New Testament, where it appears six times. In five of those cases, the Greek word is *sōzō*, meaning safe and sound, rescued from danger, destruction, or judgment, or to be made well and healed. The atonement marvelously covers all those definitions.

1:9-10 ***I did pour out my whole soul unto God for them***. Just as Lehi's first concern after reaching the tree was his family, so Enos began to pray for his own people. The assurance that he received was a restatement of what he had surely heard from his father, Jacob, and perhaps his grandfather, Lehi (at least through Jacob's teachings).

1:11 ***I prayed...for my brethren, the Lamanites***. See *Institute Manual*, 131. It is often the case that when people are converted and feel the reality of the atonement of Christ in their lives that their thoughts and concerns turn to sharing the message that has brought them such relief with others.

1:12 ***prayed and labored with all diligence***. A careful reading of the text indicates that Enos' experiences here did not all happen in one day, as we might believe from applying verse 4 to more than just the first part. But notice he says that the first prayer was about the welfare of his own soul, which is what he says was his initial "wrestle" before God (1:2). The additional prayers for the Nephites and Lamanites make more sense if they come at later dates with additional diligence and prayer.

1:13 Enos' prayer about the Lamanites was Spirit-led and, as it turned out, a renewal of the covenant the Lord had made with Lehi and Nephi, in terms of preserving a record that would one day come to the Lamanites for their salvation (see 1:18).

1:15 ***cried unto him continually***. Again, this makes the most sense if the experience is over a long time, not just one day.

1:19 ***propheying of things to come, and testifying***. Filled with the spirit of prophecy, Enos goes among the people teaching and testifying, just as his father had done.

1:20 Like Jacob (Jacob 7:24), Enos wrote that the Nephites were still trying to teach the gospel to the Lamanites with no success. The description he gave of the Lamanites is chilling, and is interesting next to the description of the farming Nephites in the next verse.

1:22 ***exceedingly many prophets among us***. Enos was not alone, by any means. Numbers 11:29 comes readily to mind.

1:23 Lest we have a view that all was well among the Nephites, Enos assured us here that continual preaching and much effort is all that kept from rejecting God's plan and receiving certain destruction. Perhaps this is part of the reason why General Conference tends to sound very similar year after year.

1:25 ***I began to be old***. The year is approximately 417 B.C., according to the date Enos gave. Enos was indeed very old. Even if he was just a young teenager when Jacob died, he would be well over 100 years old at this point.

1:26-27 ***there is a place prepared for you***. Enos had labored diligently all this life. He didn't record sermons like his father, but he surely gave them. He didn't write stories of his labors, but he had

many. But he shared his true conversion and the voice of the Lord to him about important doctrines, and we are blessed by his brief writings.

JAROM – THE WORK CONTINUES

1:1 ***I, Jarom, write a few words.*** Like the so-called “minor prophets” of the Old Testament, Jarom’s writings are small but convey great truths, covering nearly sixty years of Book of Mormon history. He was the great-grandson of Lehi.

1:2 ***what could I write more than my fathers.*** Jarom had “revelations” and “prophesying,” but saw them as reinforcing what Lehi, Nephi, Jacob, and Enos had already taught.

1:4 ***many among us who have many revelations.*** The Spirit still communed with many Nephites, including Jarom, giving them personal guidance, comfort, and peace. The Church is in a similar state today—we are not adding to scripture monthly, as during the days of Joseph Smith, but revelation continues and the Holy Spirit guides leaders and members alike in their own journey down the strait and narrow path.

1:5 ***two hundred years.*** The approximate date is thus 396 B.C., though it’s only been three generations, according to the record, since Lehi.

1:6 ***scattered upon much of the face of the land.*** The Nephites and Lamanites have spread out since their initial separation. We don’t get geographic details from Jarom, but in two hundred years, they can certainly have spread into several new areas of settlement.

Lamanites...were exceedingly more numerous. The Lamanites may have just been more prolific in their child bearing, or they may have been better recruiters in terms of gathering supporters from the local population.

1:7 ***kings and our leaders were might men in the faith.*** A pity we don’t know their names, but these kings after Nephi and other leaders were faithful to the truths of the gospel and taught the people the same, giving them the power to protect themselves from the Lamanites.

1:8 This verse provides an interesting recitation of Nephite technology and resources:

- They had gold, silver, and other “precious things,” showing the acquired wealth of the society.
- They were craftsmen in wood, buildings, and “machinery,” demonstrating their ability to build and work.
- They worked all manner of metals, including iron, copper, brass, and steel, demonstrating a well-developed metallurgy technology.
- They created many forms of farm instruments, showing their cultural preference for agriculture.
- Their weapons of war included the sharp pointed arrow, the quiver, the dart, and the javelin, which are characteristic weapons for that period of time in ancient America.

1:9-10 The Nephites clearly understood the earlier prophesies applied directly to them—obey God and prosper in the land; break his commandments and be destroyed (see 2 Nephi 1:20).

1:11 **believe in him to come as though he already was.** The Nephites understood the law of Moses was given to point them to Christ, and their spiritual leaders taught that to them consistently.

1:13 **two hundred and thirty and eight years.** This is approximately 358 B.C.

1:15 **into the hands of my son Omni.** This is now the fourth generation since Lehi.

OMNI – THE END OF THE SMALL PLATES

The Book of Omni has several authors as the plates were passed down among Jacob’s descendents. We get only snapshots of Nephite life during this period of time, which covers well over 200 years.

OMNI 1:1-3 OMNI’S RECORD

1:2 **fought much with the sword.** Omni, like many Nephite record keepers, was also a soldier, and battled against the Lamanites.

I of myself am a wicked man. His own estimation is that he has not kept the commandments as he should have, something he may have felt more keenly after getting custody of the plates and reading them.

1:3 **two hundred and seventy and six years.** Or, approximately 320 B.C.

Two hundred and eighty and two years. Or, approximately 314 B.C.

OMNI 1:4-8 AMARON’S RECORD

1:4 **Amaron** Omni gave the records to his son, Amaron.

1:5 **three hundred and twenty years.** Or, approximately 276 B.C.

more wicked part of the Nephites were destroyed. Apparently, Omni’s confession of not keeping the commandments was widespread enough that the Lamanites began to get power over the Nephites and defeat them in battle.

1:7 **he did spare the righteous.** At least some Nephites remained, though we don’t know the number. But the sense is that they are growing smaller in numbers even as the Lamanites increase.

OMNI 1:9 CHEMISH’S RECORD

1:9 **Chemish.** Chemish was Amaron’s brother, perhaps given the plates because Amaron had no sons or at least none old enough upon his death. Chemish wrote only one verse, which merely testified that his brother had actually written the preceding words.

OMNI 1:10-11 ABINADOM’S RECORD

1:10 **Abinadom**. He was Chemish's son, recording that he saw much warfare in his life and personally took many Lamanite lives with his own sword.

1:11 **I know of no revelation**. Probably not that there was no revelation at all, but rather that the revelation received was no different than that previously known and recorded.

OMNI 1:12-30 AMALEKI'S RECORD

1:12 **Amaleki**. The most lengthy record in this book of Omni is from its last writer, Amaleki, the son of Abinadom. He provided historical narrative and spiritual counsel.

1:12 **Mosiah, who was made king over the land of Zarahemla**. This is not the Mosiah of the book of Mosiah, the son of King Benjamin, but rather Benjamin's father. This is the only record we have of this king, though the large plates and the lost 116 pages no doubt included much more information. The comment about him becoming king over Zarahemla is the eventual outcome, but the story then backtracks to the land of Nephi, the home of the Nephites up to this point.

warned of the Lord that he should flee out of the land of Nephi. The Nephites had been in the same area since Nephi was similarly warned of the Lord to leave the land of First Inheritance and flee for his life from his brothers. Now over 300 years later, the Nephites again fled under the direction of their inspired king.

1:13 **came down into the land which is called the land of Zarahemla**. "Down" in the Book of Mormon consistently refers to altitude, so they went down from the highlands of the land of Nephi to a lower area—a valley with a major river running through it, as it turns out—that was named after the leader of the people, Zarahemla.

1:14 **with the plates of brass**. The arrival of Mosiah's people caused great rejoicing among the people of Zarahemla, because Mosiah brought with him the brass plates. As we will see, the people of Zarahemla did not speak the same language as the Nephites, so it's unclear what the cause of their rejoicing might be, unless they somehow understood the importance of the plates to the Nephites.

1:15 **came out from Jerusalem at the time that Zedekiah...was carried away**. After they established some form of communication, they exchanged genealogies and histories and discovered that their ancestors had come from the same place and approximate time (Lehi and family left at the beginning of Zedekiah's reign shortly after 597 B.C., while the other group left approximately 10 years later, in 586 B.C., the year Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians).

1:16 **were brought by the hand of the Lord**. Though we know no additional details, this group of people journeyed under the direction of God to arrive on the opposite shore of the New World from Lehi and family. For over 300 years they had both lived there without any encounters, until Mosiah fled north from the land of Nephi.

1:17 **they had become exceedingly numerous**. The people of Zarahemla were far more numerous than the Nephites.

they had had many wars and serious contentions. Who were the people of Zarahemla fighting with? Not Nephites or Lamanites, who had not encountered them until this point.

their language had become corrupted. Though they started speaking the same language, with no records like the brass plates to anchor their language, after 300 years the people of Zarahemla spoke something that was unintelligible to the Nephites.

they denied the being of their Creator. Not only had they lost their language, but these people had lost knowledge of God and his plan.

1:18 ***Mosiah caused that they should be taught in his language.*** At least some of the people of Zarahemla learned the Nephite language so the two groups could communicate. One of the languages must have ended up dominating because later this barrier is a non-issue (at least it's never mentioned).

1:19 ***the people...did unite together.*** The joining of the people of Zarahemla and Mosiah is what saved the Nephites, who were dwindling and probably destined to be destroyed if the Lord had not warned them to flee. In other words, with the people of Zarahemla, the Book of Mormon record could well have ended with Amaleki.

1:20 ***a large stone brought unto him.*** Mosiah was not only a king and prophet, but a seer with the gift of interpretation. The phrase "by the gift and power of God" is the same phrase Joseph Smith consistently used to describe how he translated the Book of Mormon.

1:21-22 ***Coriantumr.*** Not only did the stone tell Coriantumr's story but we learn here that he had actually wandered in and lived with the people of Zarahemla for nine months. The next verse recounts that the stone also told of the Jaredite founders and some details of their history.

1:23 Amaleki was born in the days of Mosiah and lived to see his death and the beginning of the reign of Benjamin, Mosiah's son.

1:24 ***Benjamin did drive them out.*** Either following the Nephites north or discovering the land of Zarahemla otherwise, the Lamanites took the battle to the new Nephite homeland, but were driven back by Benjamin, rallying the forces of his new combined kingdom.

1:25 Amaleki determined to give the plates to Benjamin, who is "a just man before the Lord." Then he exhorted all of us to believe in revelations, prophecy, angels, tongues, and all good gifts from God. Thus the two sets of plates of Nephi come together with King Benjamin.

1:26 ***offer your whole souls as an offering unto him.*** Amaleki 'gets it' when it comes to the law of Moses; like the sacrifices required under the law, we must offer our whole soul to God as our burnt offering. We cannot do a partial offering—think of the couple in Acts who held back part of their offering (Acts 5:1-11).

1:27-30 ***who went up into the wilderness to return to the land of Nephi.*** This is an allusion to the journey of Zeniff and his people, as recorded in detail starting in Mosiah 9.

1:30 ***I have not since know concerning them.*** The Zeniffites were 'lost' for three generations to the knowledge of the Nephites in Zarahemla.

I make an end of my speaking. These are the last words on the small plates of Nephi.

THE WORDS OF MORMON –FROM LARGE TO SMALL PLATES

WORDS OF MORMON 1:1-8 MORMON INTRODUCES HIMSELF

1:1 **Mormon...Moroni.** With this book, we leap ahead hundreds of years to the end of the Nephite civilization. Reading the book as it is printed today, this is our first introduction to these two men. However, from a translator's perspective, this was the last thing Joseph Smith translated (except for the title page), so he's already learned of the destruction of the Nephites and is well acquainted with Mormon and Moroni—the latter from many personal encounters besides what he read! Chronologically, this little book fits between Mormon 7 and 8.

1:3 **after I made an abridgment from the plates of Nephi.** Mormon is speaking of the large plates and the abridgment he made that starts with the record of Lehi and proceeds through to his own day, the first 116 pages of which was lost by Martin Harris, but the remainder we have starting in Mosiah 1.

this small account. We consider 1 Nephi, 2 Nephi, Jacob, and Enos to be great scriptural treasures, but Mormon saw them as a "small account" (though "pleasing me" as he noted in the next verse, and "choice" in verse 6). Imagine what the large plates must have recorded, at least in terms of volume. As Nephi noted, the small plates were for the precious things of his soul, the things that are "pleasing unto God" (2 Nephi 5:32). Yes Mormon did his entire abridgment of Nephite history without them, only discovering them here at the end, too late to impact what he had already written (no backspace key on metal plates).

1:4 **prophecies of the coming of Christ.** The main reason Mormon found the small plates "pleasing" was because of the many writings about Christ. As he read them, he also saw that prophecies were recorded that had come to pass, which told him the record was true, and that the additional prophecies on these plates would thus also come to pass.

1:5 **to finish my record.** The small plates were put in the record at the end, after Mormon had completed his abridgment.

cannot write the hundredth part. Abridging 1000 years of Nephite history was a huge challenge, and so much went unwritten and was laid aside. Any historian experiences this, but for Mormon, some of the things laid aside must also have been marvelous spiritual things as well. I think we would agree that he choose well. Compare John 21:25 (who was only writing about three years).

1:7 **wise purpose, for thus it whispereth me.** Like Nephi who created the plates according to God's command for a wise purpose he didn't know (1 Nephi 9:3-5), so Mormon includes them by a spiritual prompting, though for what purpose he doesn't understand either. It was, after all, an overlapping record, though apparently not redundant. We today know the wise purpose—without this effort, our Book of Mormon would start where the lost 116 pages left off: Mosiah 1.

1:8 **they may once again come to the knowledge of God.** Mormon's greatest desire was to bring people to Christ and to the knowledge of God's eternal plan for them. For this purpose he devoted years of his life to the challenging task of abridging the plates and carefully engraving his own plates of Mormon into the book we enjoy today.

WORDS OF MORMON 1:9-18 MORMON'S COMMENTS ON BENJAMIN

1:9 ***finish out my record***. With the previous explanation, Mormon is going to offer some more details to help in the transition between his work on the large plates and these inserted small plates.

1:10 ***put them with the other plates***. When Benjamin received the small plates from Amaleki, he added them to the royal record store, which contained at least the large plates of Nephi and the brass plates.

1:11 ***until they have fallen into my hands***. As we'll read later in his own account, Mormon is the inheritor of the plates not because he is a direct descendent from Benjamin (though he is a direct descendent of Nephi; Mormon 1:5)), but because he was a "sober child [he was 10 at the time], and art quick to observe" (Mormon 1:2).

1:13 ***Benjamin gathered together his armies***. The Lamanites came down from the highlands of the land of Nephi to Zarahemla and attacked. Benjamin valiantly led his people into battle, fighting with the ancient sword of Laban which had been handed down through the line of the kings from Nephi.

1:15 ***false Christs***. Men pretending to be the fulfillment of scripture, self-proclaimed Messiahs, came among Benjamin's people. But they were punished for lying or other crimes, with the result that "their mouths had been shut."

1:16 ***false prophets, and false preachers and teachers***. It didn't end with the false Christs, however. Other men came forward teaching false doctrines, perhaps followers of these false Messiahs who had been put down. Benjamin had to deal with these, too. Fortunately, he was not alone, but was supported by other "holy prophets."

1:16 ***dissensions away unto the Lamanites***. This was the persistent challenge to the security of the Nephites. Dissenters who left the Nephite civilization and went over to the Lamanites did far more damage than did the Lamanites left to themselves, as we shall see in the book of Alma especially.

1:17 ***king Benjamin was a holy man***. We hear from Benjamin in the early chapters of Mosiah in next week's lesson, and know from that record that he was indeed a man committed to God.

1:18 ***Benjamin...and also the prophets..establish peace in the land*** Peace was nearly always the goal of the Nephites, at least when they were mostly righteous. Benjamin and his supporting prophets (about whom we know nothing other than this brief account) worked tirelessly all their lives to teach the words of Christ. They physically drove out their enemies in battle and silenced the false teachings of others, and in the end had a people prepared for the great events in Mosiah 1-6.

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