

# MOSIAH 18-25

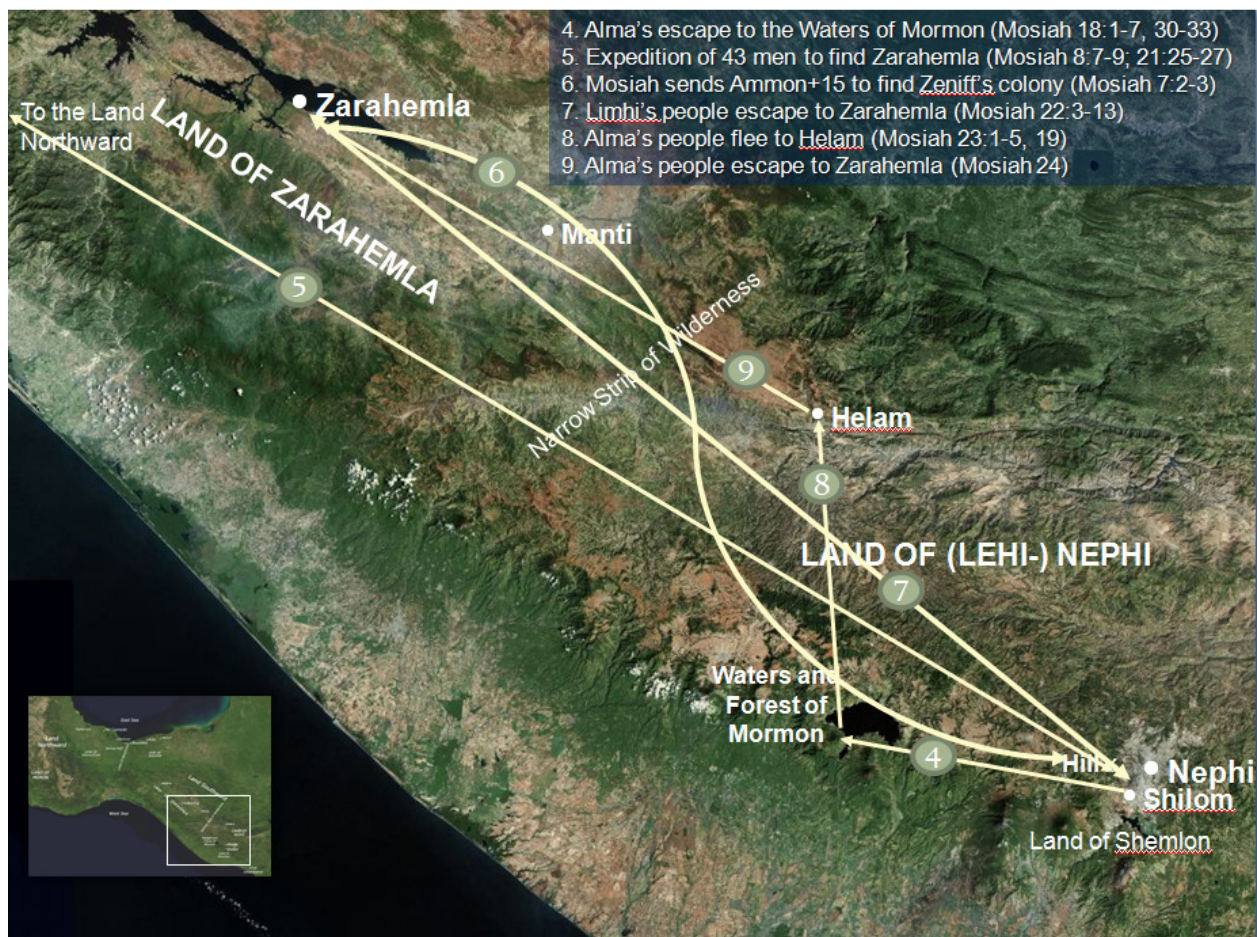
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## INTRODUCTION

With Abinadi's death, Alma was converted and began preaching to whoever would listen. Fleeing Noah's persecution, he hid in the wilderness, drawing followers to his location. Meanwhile, the Lamanites decided this was the time to launch another attack against the people of Zeniff. This was a moment for leadership for Noah and his priests, but they made all the wrong choices and lost their positions—or their lives. Noah's son, Limhi, became the new king and tried to find a way out of their bondage, until Ammon showed up, bringing our story back to where it began two weeks ago.

The map below shows the various journeys mentioned in this lesson.



## MOSIAH 18 ALMA BEGINS HIS MINISTRY

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1 **Alma...repented of his sins and iniquities.** Though Alma was a priest of Noah (Mosiah 24:9), he is not specific about the nature of his sins. Given his age (25) and with no mention of him being a “high priest,” he may have been a lower-level priest and not fully involved in the harlotry and other significant sins of the court.

1-2 **teach the words of Abinadi.** Alma had carefully written those words down while he was hiding (Mosiah 17:4). Now he began to teach them to the people of the city, at a great danger to his own life. And what did he teach. A little bit about “that which was to come,” probably referring to Abinadi’s prophecies about the people being taken captive. But most of it was about “redemption...through the power, and sufferings, and death of Christ, and his resurrection and ascension into heaven.” What touched Alma’s heart and what he preached to the people was the gospel—the message of Jesus’ atonement and victory over death.

3 **as many as would hear his word he did teach.** What intrigues me here is that Alma must surely have been trying to teach many who would *not* hear his words, yet he seemed to do so without fear, even as “he taught them privately,” to avoid being caught by the king.

4 **go forth to a place which was called Mormon.** Mormon, interestingly being named by “the king,” (Noah?), must not have been far, because Alma was able to easily go back and forth between the city, Nephi, and his hiding place at Mormon. As he taught people in the city, they came out to hear more in the wilderness.

**Infested...by wild beasts.** Not only was Alma in danger of arrest, he took refuge in a place where wild beasts were also a concern. Perhaps that was why he went there in the first place—who in the city would think to look at Mormon with all those beasts.

5 **did hide himself in the daytime.** This may explain why Alma was able to teach people in the city without being seen—he did it at night, heading back to Mormon to hide and sleep off the day. But that didn’t last forever—soon they were coming to him by day in increasing numbers (v. 7).

7 **after many days.** One of the challenges of Alma’s story is to track the passage of time. Until they get to Zarahemla, dates are vague and uncertain. But it is certain that much time passed with all of these events, aging Alma by many years from age 25 when Abinadi is killed.

8-10 **here are the waters of Mormon.** Alma points out several desires and attitudes that are important for someone who wants to be baptized:

- “desirous to come into the fold of God” – Following the metaphor of Jesus as the good shepherd, Alma invited them to go into the safe fold and be protected by Jesus.
- “called his people” – Though Alma had not heard King Benjamin’s sermon, he understood one of that sermon’s key points—that we take upon ourselves Jesus’ name through the covenant of baptism and thus come into his family, with all the responsibilities and blessings associated with that change.
- “bear one another’s burdens” – As Jesus later taught, “My yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:30). So when we share the burdens of life with other believers, our burdens are lighter.

- “mourn with those that mourn; yeah, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort” – Related to bearing each other’s burdens, being willing to support, sustain, love, and be with those going through hard times is part of the covenant.
- “stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things” – To be a witness of God is to bear testimony of his goodness and mercy in your life—and Alma says we have to do that everywhere we go and in all things in which we are involved.

The blessings we can receive from committing to the above include to be redeemed (freed from prison and bondage), take part in the first resurrection (a key teaching of Abinadi), have eternal life, and have “his Spirit more abundantly” with us.

11 ***clapped their hands for joy***. Bonnie Parkin stated, “Do you remember what happened when Alma invited his people to make these covenants? They celebrated! They “clapped their hands with joy.” I wonder why our covenants so often feel more like obligations than privileges. How did you feel the last time you partook of the sacrament? Did you ponder those covenants made in fonts and within temples? The sacrament enables us to renew our covenants. Thus, if we keep those covenants with honor and exactness, we can feel as fresh and as pure as we did when we were first baptized. We can feel as committed to a temple sealing as we did as a new bride or groom.... Covenants keep us new. Do those covenants change the actions of our daily lives? They should. Even though it may be a struggle to keep them” (*Ensign*, May 1995, 78).

12 ***Helam, he being one of the first***. We don’t know much about Helam, but he must have been very important to Alma. Not only did he baptize him first (because he was “one of the first,” presumably to believe Alma’s words) but he later named their city after Helam.

***pour out they Spirit upon thy servant***. Before Alma baptized Helam, he offered a vocal prayer that he (Alma) might be prepared by the Spirit to have “holiness of heart.”

13 ***I baptize thee***. The prayer Alma uses is more similar to our sacrament prayer today, reminding us of the covenant and asking for a blessing of the Spirit.

14-15 The first time Alma went down under the water with Helam (“buried in the water”), but with the rest of the baptisms, he simply baptized them. “When Alma baptized himself with Helam that was not a case of Alma baptizing himself, but merely as a token to the Lord of his humility and full repentance” (Joseph Fielding Smith, quoted in McConkie and Millett, 2:258).

16 ***two hundred and four souls***. This was a very long day and Alma must have been exhausted but jubilant. Abinadi’s testimony had now converted more than 200 people—and more kept coming (v. 17).

17 ***the church of God, or the church of Christ***. In the early part of the Book of Mormon, the word “church” appears to represent not so much a formal organization as we have today as a collection of those who made baptismal covenants. The church becomes a more organizational institution under Alma, and then later in 3 Nephi when Jesus organizes the church in his day.

18 ***Alma, having authority from God***. We do not know from the Book of Mormon where Alma received his authority. Daniel Peterson of BYU states strongly, “[Alma] was ordained validly by Noah, who was ordained validly by his father, as discussed above” (“Authority in the Book of Mormon,” *FARMS Review*: Volume – 18, Issue – 1).

**one priest to every fifty.** Alma ordained others to help as the work grew. If it was one for every fifty, that means he probably ordained 4-6 men. These were not priests in the Aaronic Priesthood, as we use the term in the Church today, but more like bishops might function today.

19-20 **the things which he had taught.** This group apparently had no scriptures—they were working from an oral tradition, except for Abinadi’s teachings which Alma had written down. So he cautiously had them keep their teachings to his words—which would mostly be Abinadi’s words—focused on faith, repentance, and the redemption.

21 **no contention...hearts knit together.** Alma was very successful in his efforts, his people being so united that even when they went to Zarahemla and merged in with that much larger population, they kept their identity.

22 **they became the children of God.** This is told us to show that these people are the fulfillment of Abinadi’s teachings that the righteous become the “seed” of Christ (Mosiah 14:10; 15:11).

23 **observe the Sabbath day...every day they should give thanks.** Alma emphasized the need to keep the Sabbath day, but that it was not the only day to remember God and his goodness and blessings.

24 **priests...should labor with their own hands.** Perhaps Alma remembered a day when priests (and kings) had supported themselves, but if not, he had the opposite example before him every day for the last several years in Noah’s court. He made it clear that his church would not be supported on the backs of the people but by their own efforts, but that for their efforts to serve in the church, “they were to receive the grace of God” (v. 26).

25 **gather themselves together.** The context makes it sound like they had ‘wards’ of about 50 people with a priest leading each one, and that these groups met at least weekly (or “as often as it was in their power”) to be taught.

27-28 **the church should impart of their substance.** Though he would not have the priests supported, he “commanded” his followers to care for each other, “and to him that had not should be given,” that “every needy, naked soul” should be cared for.

30 **all this was done in Mormon.** Mormon, our editor here, almost appears embarrassed that his name figures so prominently in the story (carefully explaining the origin of the name (verses 4 and 8). Yet here he also lets us know that pretty much everything in the area was called “Mormon,” including the waters, the forest, and the place. I sense some emotion from him as he describes how Alma’s converts felt about this area, because here they came to know God.

32 **the king, having discovered a movement.** It would be hard to miss hundreds of people coming and going from the city out to Mormon, as hard as the converts surely worked to keep it quiet. At some point, someone brought it to Noah’s attention, and he sent some spies out to see what was happening.

33 **he sent his army to destroy them.** Paranoid about this own slippery power, Noah interpreted Alma’s intentions incorrectly as gathering a following to take away Noah’s throne, and sent his army after them.

34 ***Alma and the people of the Lord were apprised.*** The record doesn't say how they learned of the coming of Noah's army (though in 23:1, it is attributed to the Lord). Perhaps someone in the city saw the army gathering and knew or guessed the intent, then ran to tell Alma. In this case, there doesn't appear to be a divine source to the knowledge. However they learned it, though, they quickly packed up their little settlement at Mormon and went further into the wilderness away from Noah.

35 ***four hundred and fifty souls.*** Alma's following had grown considerably now. It is interesting to ponder how this many people, with animals and provisions, could have escaped from Mormon into the wilderness in a way that the Lamanites could not easily track them. But that is indeed the case, and the people of Alma safely got away.

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## MOSIAH 19 THE END OF NOAH

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2 ***the forces of the king were small, having been reduced.*** What caused the reduction? The Lamanites were picking them off as they guarded farmers and villagers, as recorded in Mosiah 11:17.

3 ***lesser part began to breathe out threatenings.*** Noah's approval ratings began to drop, with a minority of the population at first, but growing over time.

4 ***Gideon...swore in his wrath that he would slay the king.*** Gideon appears here for the first time, but will figure in several episodes in the future.

5 ***he fought with the king.*** It's not clear where the king's guards were or how Gideon got him alone. Perhaps he was a trusted person at court for a time so had access to the palace. But whatever happened, Noah was no match for Gideon, and fled, climbing the tower near the temple.

6 ***the army of the Lamanites were within the borders.*** Noah climbed quickly to the top. As Gideon was coming up, Noah spotted a Lamanite army attacking, and point this out to Gideon.

7-8 Noah "cried out in the anguish of his soul" for Gideon to let him go warn the people of the attacking army. But, as Mormon wryly notes, he was not concerned with the welfare of the people, just his own.

9 ***the king commanded the people that they should flee.*** Out of calculation or cowardice (or both), Noah led the people away from the city into the wilderness, hoping they could outrun and hide from the attacking Lamanites.

10 ***began to slay them.*** Unfortunately, Noah's plan was a failure from the beginning. The Lamanites quickly caught up with the people, who were fleeing with their wives and children, and began to kill those in the rear.

11 ***men should leave their wives and their children.*** Noah's strategy worsens, commanding the men to leave their families behind, because the women and children were slowing them down. This shows his complete self-centeredness.

12 ***many that would not.*** Those who would not leave their families ignored the king and stayed behind.

13-14 **caused that their fair daughters should stand forth.** Hoping to calm the Lamanites by the beauty of their daughters, these families took a desperate gamble, but which paid off, at least in the short run.

15 **took them captives.** The Lamanites did let them live, but the price was heavy: captivity, a requirement to deliver up Noah to them, and one half of all of their possessions.

16 **Limhi.** One of those who stayed behind with the families was Noah's son, Limhi. Thus we are 're-introduced' to him again, the story starting to come full circle back to Mosiah 8.

17 **Limhi was not ignorant of the iniquities of his father.** Limhi is described as "a just man," who wants to do right. He doesn't desire to see his father killed by the Lamanites or anyone else, but also recognizes that his father's sins have brought this upon him.

18 **Gideon sent men into the wilderness secretly.** Presumably this was kept from the king, or at least the Lamanites. They knew which direction the people had fled, so went off in that same direction to find them, which they did.

19 **they would seek revenge, and also perish with them.** Desiring to see their families again, they returned to the city of Nephi. They decided that if their families were dead, they would attack the Lamanites to avenge the deaths, even though they had little chance of surviving the encounter.

20 **they were angry with the king.** We get a little back-story here. The men are explaining what happened to them. First, Noah forbid them to return to their families. Clearly they were questioning his judgment, which is what started the conversation. When he denied them, they had had enough. They took Noah and burned him to death.

21 **the priests...fled before them.** Somehow the priests escaped Noah's fate—for now.

22-23 Gideon's men explained what had happened to them, including the 50% tribute. The men told Gideon's men their story about killing Noah and returning, and that the priests had fled into the wilderness.

24 **after they had ended the ceremony.** Some have seen the ceremony mentioned in this passage relating to the death of Noah. But Royal Skousen, in a lengthy examination (Skousen, 3:1389-1395), sees instead a scribal error. He proposes that the original manuscript must have said "cermon," meaning 'sermon.' This makes sense in the context—the two parties have ended their discussion (an archaic meaning of 'sermon'). Then when Oliver Cowdery transcribed the printer's manuscript, he accidentally changed it to "cerimony," which is the reading in the printer's manuscript. What is interesting about this change is that "sermon" did not have the intended meaning in Joseph Smith's day, but it did in the 1500s. This is thus another example of Book of Mormon vocabulary being older than Joseph Smith and often more reflective of vocabulary at the time of William Tyndale, who first translated the Bible into English from Hebrew and Greek.

25 **the king...made an oath unto them.** Laman's son, the leader of the Lamanites (and whose name we do not know), promised that neither he nor his people would kill the Nephites. A fairly easy oath to keep, it did not keep them out of persecution and suffering.

26 **his people should pay tribute.** Having no choice, Limhi promises to pay the 50% tribute in exchange for their lives. Thus the covenant was made.

28 ***set guards round about the land.*** Like the Berlin Wall, the Lamanite guards were there not to protect the people but to keep them from leaving. Their salaries were fully funded by the Nephite tribute.

29 ***peace in his kingdom for the space of two years.*** Limhi and his people lived in this situation for two years without a problem. But with the opening of chapter 20, that peace comes to an end, through the fault of another group—the priests of Noah.

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## MOSIAH 20 LAMANITE DAUGHTERS

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1-2 ***the daughters of the Lamanites did gather.*** Shemlon was a Lamanite land near the land of Nephi-Lehi where Zeniff and his people had settled. It does not appear to be the Lamanite capital, but rather the area bordering the Nephite lands. The Lamanite women must have felt safe to be there unescorted, singing and dancing, perhaps because of their large numbers.

3 ***being ashamed to return to the city of Nephi.*** Amulon and the other priests were both ashamed and fearful about going back to their former homes and families. So instead they devised a plan to capture some new wives—these Lamanite daughters.

5 ***twenty and four of the daughters of the Lamanites.*** Waiting until there were just a few left, the priests of Noah jumped out and grabbed 24 of them, which probably indicates about how many priests there were.

6-7 ***they were angry with the people of Limhi.*** After two years of peace, the Lamanites understandably but incorrectly assumed it was Limhi's people who had stolen their daughter, so they made ready to attack, led by the king himself.

8 ***Limhi had discovered them from the tower.*** The tower in Shilom overlooked the Lamanite lands best, so it was probably from here that guards saw the Lamanites preparing. This advanced warning gave Limhi enough time to organize his people and hide in the fields and forests.

11 ***fought for their lives, and for their wives, and for their children.*** Mormon attributes their success to their righteous motivation, even though they were outnumbered more than two to one.

12-13 ***wounded and left upon the ground.*** The Lamanite king himself, leading his soldiers, had been left for dead by the retreating army. But he was not dead, as the Nephites discovered. They brought him to Limhi after binding up his wounds. Ironically, they gave him first aid, then immediately proposed killing him for this perceived crime.

14 ***why should ye break the oath.*** Limhi just wanted to know why the Lamanite king had violated the 2-year-old oath between them, because Limhi knew his people had done nothing.

15 ***thy people did carry away the daughters.*** The Lamanite king clearly felt justified in his attack, based on his conclusion that Limhi's people were the guilty party.

16 ***I will search among my people.*** Limhi obviously knew nothing about these daughters, but vowed that he would get to the bottom of it and kill whoever had done this crime.

17 ***Gideon...being the king's captain.*** Gideon must have been a military man before or else was promoted for amazing bravery. Here was the man that tried to kill his father promoted to the head guard of the king himself.

18 ***the priests of thy father.*** Gideon correctly surmises that if Limhi's people didn't do it, it must have been those runaway priests!

19 ***they are already preparing to come against us.*** The Lamanites may have lost the battle but they had not given up. Gideon pointed out that the Nephites needed the king to calm his people down, so he should be told about the priests. He acknowledged their fortune in winning last time, but concedes that they may not be so privileged next time.

21 ***the words of Abinadi fulfilled.*** That Gideon knew the words of Abinadi is another hint that his trial may have been more public than the traditional image.

22 ***better that we should be in bondage.*** Fearing that the advancing Lamanite army would destroy them, Gideon chose the lesser of two evils.

23-24 ***my people shall not slay thy people.*** The Lamanite king believed Limhi (he was, after all, at his mercy) and proposed going to meet the Lamanite army unarmed to show their sincerity.

25 ***bow himself down...and plead in behalf of the people of Limhi.*** This is an interesting interchange. The king could have stood before his people and commanded them to stand down—he was their leader. But instead to perhaps get their full attention and to show the precariousness of his situation, he bowed down before them and beg his armies not to attack.

26 ***returned with their king in peace.*** Everyone believed the story, and the king and his army returned home.

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## MOSIAH 21 THE ARRIVAL OF AMMON

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This chapter is a type of man's dependence on the arm of flesh to solve his problems and deliver himself from the mess he created. The lesson is powerfully taught that we cannot do so, and are only successful when we rely on God. The people of Limhi are thus a type of the carnal man who must abandon the arm of flesh and turn to God to be saved. They were powerless to save themselves, just as we must rely wholly on the grace of God to be saved.

2 ***after many days the Lamanites began again to be stirred up in anger.*** The record doesn't say why the Lamanites became angry again, but like many cultures with subservient people, the Lamanites began to abuse the people of Limhi.

3 ***they durst not slay them, because of the oath.*** Remember that the Lamanite king only promised not to slay them, but never said they couldn't make the Nephites' lives miserable.

5 ***no way that they could deliver themselves.*** The Nephites realized that they were slaves to the Lamanites and powerless to do anything about it. At first this humbled them, but they quickly saw it as an excuse to complain, then fight. But that strategy proved to disastrous for them.



6 **the people began to murmur.** Unlike Alma's people (later in the lesson), the people of Limhi did not bear their situation with patience, but sought to deliver themselves by their own efforts, and wearied king Limhi with their desires.

7-9 **the Lamanites did beat them.** The battle went poorly and many lost their lives.

10 **cry mightily from day to day.** Not in prayer but in fear of the Lamanites did the widows of the lost soldiers cry.

11-12 **went again to battle...even the third time.** Two more attempts to rid themselves of the Lamanites by force failed, with even more death and suffering.

13 **they did humble themselves.** After three failed attempts to get out from under Lamanite control, the Nephites finally were humbled. The verbs used here are worth remembering, because they are often the situation we must find ourselves in before we can be born again, changed, converted, and redeemed: "subjecting themselves"; "submitting"; "smitten"; "driven"; "burdened."

14 **cry mightily to God.** Finally, they turned to God for relief, crying out for his help "all the day long."

15 **the Lord was slow to hear their cry.** Just as Abinadi had said (Mosiah 11:24), the Lord did not immediately answer their prayers. It was not that he didn't 'hear' their cries, but that the time had not yet come to deliver them. This is another important aspect of the type here: we must patiently wait on the Lord's blessings, because they may not come in our desired timeframe. But if we are obedient, we can be assured that they will come.

**soften the hearts of the Lamanites.** The Nephites recognized even the small blessings in their new-found humility: just having the Lamanites be a little nicer was cause for rejoicing and gratitude, even if they did not yet have the full blessing of deliverance.

16 **began to prosper by degrees.** This phrase, "by degrees," is only used twice in scripture—here and in Alma 47:18, where poison is administered "by degrees" to Lehonti by a treacherous Amalickiah. In both cases, the result came slowly but was eventually noticeable. In this verse, it is a demonstration of the people's patience that they could wait and see the small, daily improvement.

17 **a great number of women, more than there was of men.** Because of the many battles in the previous years, there were a large number of widows and single women. So Limhi wisely commanded all men to share with these single sisters and their children, who would otherwise starve for lack of someone to provide for them.

19 **the king himself did not trust his person without the walls.** Limhi was not safe outside of the city walls because of Lamanite incursions and skirmishes, so if he did go out he always took a bodyguard.

20-21 **watch the land round about.** Limhi's people were surely on the lookout for Lamanites, but they also watched for any sign of Noah's priests, in order to bring them to justice for all the trouble they had caused. Not only had these men stolen the Lamanite daughters and caused much death and suffering as a result, but they also stole food from the Nephites.

22 **until the time that Ammon and his brethren came.** With this verse, we come full circle back to where our story left off in Mosiah 8.

23 **supposing them to be priests of Noah.** Now that we know the full back-story, we can appreciate that Limhi had mistaken Ammon and his companions for the thieving priests—who else would it be? They believed Zarahemla destroyed, and these men were not Lamanites.

24 **filled with exceedingly great joy.** There can be few more powerful earthly examples of the saying, “And the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). Learning Ammon’s true identity and mission was the beginning of the liberation of the people of Zeniff.

25 **a small number of men.** Mosiah 8:7 says the number was 43, and gives more details than this overlapping version. But Mormon reminds us of that story because it fits back into the context now.

26 **not many days before the coming of Ammon.** What we did not get from Mosiah 8 was the timing of this group, who had returned to Nephi shortly before Ammon’s arrival. Interesting that this group of 43 was able to sneak out between the Lamanite defenses and sneak back in, as were Ammon and his men. This is no doubt due to the calming of conflicts between the two peoples, mentioned in verse 22.

27 **a record.** This was Ether’s record, which later became the Book of Ether, included in the Book of Mormon by Moroni.

28 **Mosiah had a gift from God.** Everyone was happy to know that a righteous king in Zarahemla would be able to translate these plates. But now they had to get the plates to Mosiah.

29 **sorrow because so many of their brethren had been slain.** The failed rebellions had dramatically hurt the people, but also humbled them and prepared them for God’s blessings.

30 A nice one-verse summary of the events of the last 13 chapters.

31 **they knew not whither they had fled.** Limhi’s people had not heard from Alma or the hundreds who followed him into the wilderness. We don’t have a good sense of the timeframe here, but it could well have been 20 years or more since Alma left.

**would have gladly joined with them.** Though too late to be baptized by Alma (at least for now), the people finally realized the importance of covenant and obedience, having learned faith in God by their suffering.

32 **entered into a covenant.** They had already made a covenant with God, but now they renewed or strengthened it with Ammon’s arrival.

33 **none in the land that had authority from God.** This verse reminds me of stories of believers in Africa, who for years waited patiently for the ability to be baptized and join the kingdom. Until 1978, no one in the land had authority to do that.

34 **did not at that time form themselves into a church.** They knew enough about Alma’s activities to know he had created a church among his people, but without proper priesthood authority, they recognized they had no way to do that, and waited for that day to come.

35 **an account of their baptism shall be given hereafter.** See Mosiah 25:17-18.

36 **all the study of Ammon..and king Limhi.** Both groups dedicated themselves to discovering a plan to move the entire population out of Nephi and to Zarahemla. But how can you move

hundreds, perhaps thousands of people, without getting caught by the Lamanite armies all around them?

## MOSIAH 22 ESCAPE TO ZARHEMLA

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1 ***consult with the people***. Ammon and Limhi talked to many others, looking for any ideas that might help them find the right way out of this situation.

2 ***could find no way***. Fighting back wouldn't work, diplomacy had probably been tried and failed, and no doubt other efforts were considered and rejected. The only way out was just to gather everyone and leave—but the guards were everywhere and surely wouldn't just let them walk out without a fight.

3-4 ***Gideon went forth and stood before the king***. Our friend, Gideon, came back, with a bold proposal, one that he was sure would “deliver this people out of bondage.”

6 ***the back pass, through the back wall, on the back side***. Why did no one think of this before? All the way in the back of everything was a little-used, poorly guarded exit.

7 ***we will pass through the secret pass***. Not only is it on the back, but it's a secret that even the Lamanite guards don't seem to know about.

8 ***around the land of Shilom***. Shilom appears to have been south from Nephi, while Zarhemla is north. Wouldn't they want to move as quickly as possible away from the Lamanites? Perhaps one reason to divert was to pick up the rest of the people that lived in this second city of the people of Limhi—no family left behind.

9-10 Limhi did exactly as Gideon had proposed, sending a large portion of wine to the guards. They took the bait (and probably paid for it with their lives) and got completely drunk.

11 ***did depart by night into the wilderness***. Perhaps there was a helpful full moon or they felt comfortable taking lamps or firebrands. However it was done, they traveled through the night. What a sight—men, women, children, and animals by the hundreds, all moving as quietly as possible through the wilderness, wondering when the Lamanite guards would awake or that they might be discovered by another band who is not drunk.

12 ***all their gold, silver, and their precious things***. Not only their animals, but the wealth they had accumulated during their lives—what was left of it after the Lamanite 50% tax, anyway.

13 ***they arrived in the land of Zarhemla***. This long journey and the subsequent uniting of their people with the people of Mosiah, and all the amazing logistics involved—feeding, clothing, finding shelter, etc., is all summed up in one verse.

14 ***Mosiah received them with joy...and also the records***. This must have been a substantial addition to his kingdom—both a burden and a blessing. Mosiah choose to see it only as a joy, perhaps especially because they brought both records of their own experiences, the plates of Zeniff (see Mosiah 9 heading), and the plates of Ether, which he later translated.

15-16 **pursued them two days**. The Nephites had a head start, but the Lamanites chased them for two days. How they could lose the trail of hundreds of people with animals, children, and more, is a baffling mystery, and certainly reflective of the hand of the Lord.

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## MOSIAH 23-24 THE ACCOUNT OF ALMA

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At this point, the record jumps back a number of years, back to the time when Alma was still at the waters of Mormon teaching his new converts. The two stories—the people of Limhi and the people of Alma—come together in these two chapters.

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### MOSIAH 23 ALMA'S PEOPLE ARE DISCOVERED BY THE LAMANITES

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1 **been warned of the Lord**. See Alma 18:34, where we last left Alma and his people.

3 **fled eight days' journey**. This gives us a sense of the distance that they may have traveled. With a large group of people and animals, it is estimated that a group like this would travel somewhere between 6 and 25 miles a day, with 11 being the most common amount (Sorenson, 8-9). That means that Alma and his people probably traveled about 80-90 miles from the waters of Mormon to their new home. The direction was away from the Lamanites, so generally northward, towards Zarahemla.

4-5 **a very beautiful and pleasant land**. The place they found had good water, good soil, and resources to support their group.

6-7 **desirous that Alma should be their king**. Everyone loved Alma and correctly determined that he would be a righteous king, but he would not accept it. His experience with kings gave him a negative view of the institution overall. Coupled with a teaching of the Lord that “Ye shall not esteem one flesh above another,” Alma taught that it was “not expedient” that a king should rule over them.

8 **have just men to be your kings**. He doesn't reject the role of kings completely, leaving the door open that righteous kings could be good for society. But Alma's words are remarkably similar to those of Mosiah later (see Mosiah 29), showing the possible influence he had when he did arrive in Zarahemla.

9 **remember the iniquity of king Noah**. They didn't need to look far for an example of a king who abused his office and power.

**which caused me sore repentance**. Acknowledging his time in Noah's court, Alma called his sins “abominable.” We don't know the depth of his activities, but once he accepted Abinadi's words, he saw his former life in those terms. So we should find all attributes of the natural man abominable.

10 **the Lord did hear my cries**. Alma must have felt very alone for a time. But he quickly found people who loved the Lord to join him, building a following of hundreds in a short time. Even when society as a whole looks wicked, it has plenty of people of good heart, ready to hear the gospel.

12 **bound with the bands of iniquity**. He wasn't the only one in sin, but he allows that the people were “in bondage” to Noah and “brought into iniquity by them.”

13 ***delivered by the power of God.*** The people of Alma had been delivered both out of the mortal hands of Noah and his priests, and out of the hands of Satan by the grace and power of God.

***stand fast in the liberty wherewith ye have been made free.*** The phrase “stand fast” appears first here in the Book of Mormon and is only used this once in Mosiah but 6 times in Alma. In the New Testament, it is only found in the writings of Paul, with one occurrence being similar to this one: “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage” (Galatians 5:1).

14 ***except he be a man of God.*** Teachers and ministers should be righteous people, examples of obedience, susceptible to the Spirit.

15 ***love his neighbor.*** Alma’s teachings went beyond Abinadi’s words. Inspired by the Spirit and perhaps relying on some scriptural learning that may have been available in the palace, he taught the Lord’s doctrine to his little group and kept them united.

16 ***Alma was their high priest.*** Though not their king, he was their spiritual leader, the head of their church.

17 ***he consecrated all their priests.*** The Book of Mormon uses “consecrated” like we would today use “ordained” or “set apart.” Alma held the keys of authority to manage the affairs of the church in his day (McConkie and Millet, 2:282).

18 ***watch over...and did nourish them.*** Leaders are always called both to care for and to teach the people. There is never a righteous priesthood leader who is not also a righteous teacher.

19-20 ***called the land Helam.*** We wish we knew more of this Helam. Alma’s first baptism, probably one of the first priests he ordained over a group of fifty, the people loved him so much that they named their new home after him, both the land and the city.

21-22 ***the Lord seeth fit to chasten his people.*** Mormon is foreshadowing the next events. Like the people of Limhi, Alma and his people will be tried. But in contrast, they will show their faith and trust in God through the difficulty, not looking to the arm of flesh to deliver them.

23 ***I will show unto you...none could deliver them but the Lord.*** So we don’t miss the lesson in the next chapter, Mormon calls it out now. It’s the same lesson Limhi’s people learned, but those in the land of Helam were more prepared up front. See comment by Elder Orson F. Whitney, *Institute Manual*, 161.

25-26 ***an army of the Lamanites.*** Working peacefully in the fields, the people spotted Lamanites coming into their valley, and fled into the city for protection.

27 ***remember the Lord their God and he would deliver them.*** Alma calmed the crowd and reminded them to trust in God.

28 ***began to cry unto the Lord.*** Alma led them in prayer, seeking the Lord’s blessings in this situation.

29 ***the Lamanites took possession of the land.*** Though the people submitted to the Lamanite army, it was a peaceful surrender with no loss of life.

30 **had followed after the people of king Limhi.** Now we get the story of this army; they were the same ones that tried to track Limhi and his people after they escaped from Nephi.

31-32 **they had found those priests of king Noah.** They didn't find Limhi's group, but they did find the elusive priests, who had established themselves with their stolen Lamanite daughters and named their land after one of their own, Amulon, who was the high priest.

33-34 **sent forth their wives.** Hoping to appease the Lamanite army, they put their Lamanite wives out in front. It worked.

### Nephite and Lamanite Kings, circa 200-50 B.C.

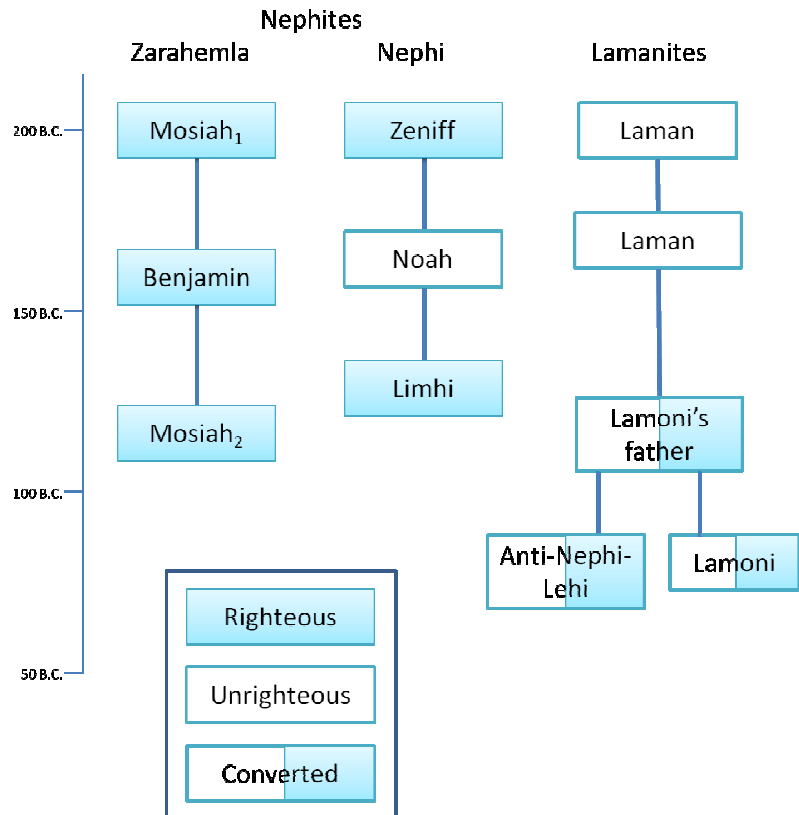
#### 35 **in search of the land of Nephi.**

After hearing that Limhi's people had left Nephi, Amulon no doubt recognized a great opportunity. If he partnered with this Lamanite army, he could return to his former home and take possession of the lands, buildings, and farms there—no more living in the wilderness. But they were a bit lost when they stumbled upon the land of Helam.

36-37 **if they would show them the way.** The Lamanites promised Alma and his people their freedom if they would lead them back to Nephi. But it was merely a trick, for once Alma showed them how to get home, they maintained their control over the people.

38 **brought with them the wives and the children of the guards.** The Lamanites were settling in as permanent residents.

39 **granted unto Amulon that he should be a king.** Amulon somehow flattered the Lamanite king to give him authority over Alma and his people. The Lamanite system of a head king with subservient kings in surrounding lands is an ancient pattern but one the Nephites never followed.



## MOSIAH 24 THE LORD DELIVERS THE PEOPLE

1-2 **they should be appointed teachers.** Amulon and the priests quickly gained influence. Not only was Amulon king of the land of Helam, but the Lamanite king was so impressed with their learning that he made them teachers over all those in Shilom and even Shemlon, a Lamanite city. It is interesting to note how quickly the Lamanites moved into the abandoned Nephite land of Shilom, else there would be no one for Amulon to teach.

**3 *the name of the king of the Lamanites was Laman.*** We have to update the chart in a previous lesson slightly (right). Until this point, this king had been nameless, but now we know his name, like his father's, was Laman.

**4 *the language of Nephi began to be taught.*** A side benefit of appointing Amulon and the other priests as teachers was that it fostered the learning of the Nephite language among the Lamanites. Though they clearly didn't realize it at the time, this change enabled the sons of Mosiah later to have greater success among the people, because language was less of a barrier.

**5-6 *they should keep their record.*** Now we see why Laman wanted the priests to teach his people. It wasn't that Amulon and his brethren taught them religion in any way, but they were making the Lamanites literate, which they had not been before.

**7 *increase in riches, and began to trade.*** Under the influence of the priests, the Lamanites began to take on many economic attributes of Nephite society, except that they still delighted in the "plunder" of their neighbors—just not other Lamanites.

**8 *Amulon began to exercise authority of Alma.*** These former acquaintances now became enemies as Amulon took advantage of his position over Alma and his people, even having his own children persecute their children (which shows the passage of time—their children were not very young).

**9 *Alma...had been one of the king's priests.*** Amulon and Alma knew each other at court. Amulon was clearly one of the leaders in Noah's palace, if not the chief priest then as well. We don't know Alma's position, but he was at least known to Amulon and hated by him, no doubt for his support of Abinadi.

**10 *they began to cry mightily to God.*** Unlike the people of Limhi, Alma and his people did not need to first try doing it their own way. They immediately turned to the Lord for their relief.

**11 *whosoever should be found calling upon God should be put to death.*** Like Daniel in the Old Testament, Alma's people were even forbidden to pray.

**12 *did pour out their hearts.*** Unable to pray vocally, they nevertheless continued praying silently, assured that God "did know the thoughts of their hearts." Notice that to the Nephites, thoughts came from their hearts, just as it was with the children of Israel in the Old Testament.

**13-14 *the voice of the Lord came to them.*** Probably to Alma but perhaps to the people collectively. Just as they prayed in their hearts, the Lord could have spoken to them in the same way. The Lord promised to deliver them, but in the meantime would ease their burdens. Then he taught them the whole purpose of this trial: "that ye may stand as witnesses for me hereafter, and that ye may know of surety that I, the Lord God, do visit my people in their afflictions."

**15 *submit cheerfully and with patience.*** You have to think that it baffled Amulon and the Lamanites to see this people happily bearing the burdens placed on them, being made strong even as they the burdens got heavier. See comments by Elder Richard G. Scott, *Institute Manual*, 161-162.

**16 *on the morrow I will deliver you.*** After some unstated period of time, the Lord revealed to them that the time had come.

**17 *I will go with thee and deliver this people.*** The record is clear this time that when it was time to act, the Lord spoke directly to Alma that he might lead them.

18 ***gathered their flocks together, and also their grain.*** They spent the whole night preparing to leave, somehow escaping the notice of Amulon and the Lamanite guards.

19 ***the Lord caused a deep sleep.*** Unlike the people of Limhi who had the great idea to get the guards drunk, Alma and his people completely relied on God to deliver them, and the Lord made the Lamanites so sleepy that hundreds of people carrying supplies and all of their animals could slip out without waking one of them.

20 ***traveled all day they pitched their tents.*** They must have been exhausted, staying up all night then traveling quickly all day. Continuing to trust in God and Alma, who led them, they set up tents for a well-deserved night's sleep—but not until they symbolically named the valley after their leader, Alma.

21-22 And not before they poured out their hearts in gratitude to God for delivering them.

23 ***Haste thee and get thou and this people out.*** One night's rest was all they apparently got, because the Lamanites were on the move. But God promised them safe passage.

24-25 ***in the wilderness twelve days they arrive in the land of Zarahemla.*** None of them had ever been to Zarahemla, nor did they even know for sure if it was still there (Alma and the people left before Ammon came to Limhi), so continuing their pattern of trusting, the Lord must have led them to Zarahemla, where Mosiah welcomed them with open arms, just as he had done with Limhi's people, who had probably arrived only a short time before Alma.

The passage of twelve days gives us a sense of the distance from Nephi to Zarahemla. Alma and his people to eight days to journey to Helam, then one day to get to the valley of Alma, then twelve days to reach Zarahemla. Using our earlier calculations, that means the distance they traveled was about 230 miles. Of course, we don't know how direct their course was—in fact, it probably wasn't because of their long stop in Helam. So we might estimate a distance of 200 miles or so from Nephi to Zarahemla.

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## MOSIAH 25 THE MERGING OF THE PEOPLES

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1-3 ***not so many of the children of Nephi.*** We get a sense in these verses of the relative size of the populations. The Nephites are the smallest group, even with the return of the descendents of Zeniff who had been in the land of Nephi for three generations, led by Limhi and Alma. There were many more of the people of Zarahemla. But the Lamanites were far bigger still—twice as large at least than the people of Nephi and Zarahemla combined.

2 ***Zarahemla, who was a descendent of Mulek.*** This is the first mention of the name Mulek. We learn from Helaman 6:10 that he was a son of Zedekiah and that the Lord brought him and others into the northern part of the land while he brought Lehi into the south. The Book of Mormon never uses the term "Mulekites," though many Latter-day Saints refer to these people by that name. In the text, they are only called "the people of Zarahemla," after their leader at the time they were discovered by Mosiah and his people.

4 ***gathered together in two bodies.*** The two groups still kept their unique cultural identities at this point.



5 **Mosiah did read, and caused to be read, the records of Zeniff.** All of Mosiah's people heard the story that we have just concluded, from when Zeniff left Zarahemla to reclaim the former Nephite home, and about Noah, and about Limhi and their escape from the Lamanites.

6 **he also read the account of Alma.** Record keeping was very important to the Nephites. We know Alma had written the words of Abinadi, but here we also learn that he kept a history of his own people.

7-8 **wonder and amazement.** The stories seemed incredible to them, but here were the living witnesses before them, and it filled them with joy.

9 **shed many tears of sorrow.** The histories also made them sad when they realized how many had died before this group was able to come to Zarahemla.

10 **give thanks to God.** But in all of it they could see the hand of God, and gave him thanks.

11 **pain and anguish for the welfare of their souls.** They could have been angry with the Lamanites for killing so many of their brethren. They could have called for war and mounted an army to seek revenge. But instead, they were overcome with sadness that the Lamanites did not have the gospel of Jesus Christ. This feeling would carry over for many years and be the motivating force behind the great missions to the Lamanites in a few years.

12 **the children of Amulon and his brethren.** Here is a fascinating comment—when Alma left Helam, many of the children of Amulon and the priests went with them! Earlier, we were told that these people were persecuting Alma and his children (24:8). But the children saw through the hypocrisy of their fathers, and were converted by Alma and his people's faith. Leaving their heritage behind, they called themselves Nephites.

13 **all the people of Zarahemla were numbered with the Nephites.** The people of Zarahemla were now willing to change their name also, and simply be known as Nephites, perhaps influenced by the arrival and stories of those from the land of Nephi. Thus the many years of two separate peoples came to an end on this momentous day.

14 **he desired that Alma should also speak.** Most of the people did not know Alma—only the few hundred that had come with him. But Mosiah recognized a great leader and put him before the people also.

15 **he went from one body to another.** The people were far too numerous to be in one place, so Alma went from group to group and taught them of the Lord.

16 **he did exhort the people of Limhi.** One of the groups Alma taught was his former neighbors, though he had not seen them in twenty years or more.

17 **Limhi was desirous that he might be baptized; and all his people.** They had wanted to be baptized earlier but there was no one with the proper authority. Now with Alma, they could have their desires fulfilled.

18 **he did baptize them.** Just as he had done with the hundreds who followed him at the waters or Mormon, Alma personally baptized all the people of Limhi who desired it.

19 **Mosiah granted unto Alma.** Mosiah saw Alma as a great partner and gave him full authority over the church, to set up congregations, ordain priests and teachers, and teach the people.

21 **different bodies, being called churches.** The Nephite term “church” is apparently equivalent to our term “ward” today, or perhaps “stake.”

22 **they were all one church.** Though separate geographically, they were united in their doctrines and beliefs.

23 **seven churches in the land of Zarahemla.** The number is not without symbolism, as seven is an ancient number representing perfection.

24 **they were called the people of God.** Politically they had a united name—Nephites. But they were even more united by their religious name—the people of God.

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