

**Class Member Reading: Mosiah 29; Alma 1-4**

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**Mosiah 29**

1 Now when Mosiah had done this he sent out throughout all the land, among all the people, desiring to know their will concerning who should be their king. *Why did he do this after all his sons rejected the monarchy? Were there other options? Was this a formality? Is he just setting up the people for his pitch for judges? It kind of feels like that is what he is doing.*

2 And it came to pass that the voice of the people came, saying: We are desirous that **Aaron** thy son should be our king and our ruler.

3 Now Aaron had gone up to the land of Nephi, therefore the king could not confer the kingdom upon him; **neither would Aaron take upon him the kingdom; neither were any of the sons of Mosiah willing to take upon them the kingdom.** *They rejected the highest status and comfort possible in order to preach to their enemies... as Mormon emphasizes, truly their hearts had been transformed.*

4 Therefore king Mosiah sent again among the people; yea, even a written word sent he among the people. And these were the words that were written, saying:

5 Behold, O ye my people, or my brethren, for I esteem you as such, I desire that ye should consider the cause which ye are called to consider—for ye are desirous to have a king.

6 Now I declare unto you that he to whom the kingdom doth rightly belong has declined, and will not take upon him the kingdom.

7 And now **if there should be another appointed in his stead**, behold I fear there would rise **contentions** among you. And who knoweth but what my son, to whom the kingdom doth belong, should **turn to be angry** and draw away a part of this people after him, which would cause wars and contentions among you, which would be the cause of shedding much blood and perverting the way of the Lord, yea, and destroy the souls of many people. *As Mosiah says explicitly in verse 9, he is concerned his son will return to his wicked ways.*

8 Now I say unto you let us **be wise** and **consider** these things, for we have no right to destroy my son, neither should we have any right to destroy another if he should be appointed in his stead.

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9 And if my son should turn again to his **pride** and **vain things** he would recall the things which he had said, and claim his right to the kingdom, which would cause him and also this people to commit much sin.

10 And now let us **be wise** and **look forward** to these things, and do that which will make for the peace of this people. **Looking forward and considering potential consequences is a good way to “be wise”.**

11 Therefore I will be your king the remainder of my days; nevertheless, **let us appoint judges**, to judge this people according to our law; and we will newly arrange the affairs of this people, for we will appoint wise men to be judges, that will judge this people according to the commandments of God. **This would result in something like a democratic theocracy.**

12 Now it is better that a man should be judged of God than of man, for the judgments of God are always just, but the judgments of man are not always just.

13 Therefore, if it were possible that you could have **just men to be your kings**, who would establish the laws of God, and judge this people according to his commandments, yea, if ye could have men for your kings who would do even as my father Benjamin did for this people—I say unto you, if this could always be the case then it would be expedient that ye should always have kings to rule over you. **Humility: He holds up his father as a standard, not himself. Note how he embraces a theocracy—God judges perfectly, so men who pass on the judgments of God are the ideal. Unfortunately, it doesn’t work out so well in practice.**

14 And even **I myself have labored** with all the power and faculties which I have possessed, to **teach you the commandments of God**, and to **establish peace** throughout the land, that there should be no wars nor contentions, no stealing, nor plundering, nor murdering, nor any manner of iniquity;

15 And whosoever has committed iniquity, him have I **punished according to the crime which he has committed**, according to the law which has been given to us by our fathers.

16 Now I say unto you, that because all men are not just it is not expedient that ye should have a king or kings to rule over you. **Interesting argument. He just said that his father and he have been just, and you could encourage the finding of just men, rather than throwing out kingship.**

17 For behold, **how much iniquity doth one wicked king cause to be committed**, yea, and what great destruction! **Mosiah makes an argument of risk avoidance: Because**

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humans have a tendency to be wicked, and one wicked king can do a disproportionate amount of damage, better not to have a king.

18 Yea, remember king **Noah**, his wickedness and his abominations, and also the wickedness and abominations of his people. Behold what great destruction did come upon them; and also because of their iniquities they were brought into bondage.

19 And were it not for the interposition of their all-wise Creator, and this because of their sincere repentance, they must unavoidably remain in bondage until now.

20 But behold, he did deliver them because they did humble themselves before him; and because they cried mightily unto him he did deliver them out of bondage; and thus doth the **Lord work with his power in all cases among the children of men**, extending the **arm of mercy** towards them that put their trust in him.

21 And behold, now I say unto you, ye cannot dethrone an iniquitous king save it be through much contention, and the shedding of much blood.

22 For behold, he has his **friends in iniquity**, and he keepeth his guards about him; and he teareth up the laws of those who have reigned in righteousness before him; and he trampleth under his feet the commandments of God;

23 And he enacteth laws, and sendeth them forth among his people, yea, laws after the manner of his own wickedness; and whosoever doth not obey his laws he causeth to be destroyed; and whosoever doth rebel against him he will send his armies against them to war, and if he can he will destroy them; and thus an unrighteous king doth pervert the ways of all righteousness. *Vicious cycles and virtuous cycles.*

24 And now behold I say unto you, it is not expedient that such abominations should come upon you.

25 Therefore, **choose you by the voice of this people, judges**, that ye may be judged according to the laws which have been given you by our fathers, which are correct, and which were given them by the hand of the Lord.

26 Now it is not common that the voice of the people desireth anything contrary to that which is right; but it is common for the lesser part of the people to desire that which is not right; therefore this shall ye observe and make it your law — to do your business by the voice of the people. *Pretty sound argument for democracy. Unfortunately, it is common for the majority to care about issues that influence them, and not to care about issues that impact the minority.*

27 And if the time comes that the voice of the people doth choose iniquity, then is the time that the judgments of God will come upon you; yea, then is the time he will visit you

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with great destruction even as he has hitherto visited this land. [This is definitely an appropriate time for a Trump joke.](#)

28 And now if ye have judges, and they do not judge you according to the law which has been given, ye can cause that they may be **judged of a higher judge.**

29 If your higher judges do not judge righteous judgments, ye shall cause that a small number of your lower judges should be gathered together, and they shall judge your higher judges, according to the voice of the people. [Checks and balances.](#)

30 And I command you to do these things in the fear of the Lord; and **I command you to do these things, and that ye have no king;** that if these people commit sins and iniquities they shall be answered upon their own heads. [Mosiah is really pushing this no king idea, and the Nephite vs. Mulekite tension makes a great deal of sense of this. Note that much of the conflict in the book of Alma comes from people wanting to have a king.](#)

31 For behold I say unto you, the sins of many people have been caused by the iniquities of their kings; therefore their iniquities are answered upon the heads of their kings.

32 And now I desire that this **inequality should be no more in this land,** especially among this my people; but I desire that this land be a **land of liberty,** and **every man may enjoy his rights and privileges alike,** so long as the Lord sees fit that we may live and inherit the land, yea, even as long as any of our posterity remains upon the face of the land. [One has to ask what would happen if his sons had reformed but still been willing to be king... I am guessing Mosiah would not be giving this speech.](#)

33 And many more things did king Mosiah write unto them, unfolding unto them all the trials and troubles of a righteous king, yea, all the travails of soul for their people, and also all the murmurings of the people to their king; and he explained it all unto them.

34 And he told them that these things ought not to be; but that the **burden should come upon all the people,** that every man might bear his part.

35 And he also unfolded unto them all the disadvantages they labored under, by having an unrighteous king to rule over them;

36 Yea, all his iniquities and abominations, and all the wars, and contentions, and bloodshed, and the stealing, and the plundering, and the committing of whoredoms, and all manner of iniquities which cannot be enumerated — telling them that these things ought not to be, that they were **expressly repugnant to the commandments of God.** [Mosiah is pushing his argument as hard as he can. He says that there are problems with a righteous king, because he is so burdened, and problems with a wicked king, because](#)

then everyone else is burdened. Then he adds God hates kings anyway. Well, he makes it sound like that, by emphasizing how awful a wicked king is.

37 And now it came to pass, after king Mosiah had sent these things forth among the people they were **convinced of the truth of his words**.

38 Therefore they **relinquished their desires for a king**, and became **exceedingly anxious that every man should have an equal chance throughout all the land**; yea, and every man expressed a **willingness to answer for his own sins**. Certainly sounds great. And these are important principles, and this is a good form of government... we just need to dig a bit deeper into Mosiah’s motivations.

39 Therefore, it came to pass that they assembled themselves together in bodies throughout the land, to **cast in their voices concerning who should be their judges**, to judge them according to the law which had been given them; and they were **exceedingly rejoiced because of the liberty which had been granted unto them**.

40 And they did **wax strong in love towards Mosiah**; yea, they did **esteem him** more than any other man; for they did not look upon him as a tyrant who was seeking for gain, yea, for that lucre which doth corrupt the soul; for he had not exacted riches of them, neither had he delighted in the shedding of blood; but he had **established peace** in the land, and he had granted unto his people that they should be delivered from all manner of bondage; therefore they did esteem him, yea, exceedingly, beyond measure.

Interesting juxtaposition— they just were convinced why kings are a bad idea, but have an increased devotion to their king. Likely because Mosiah is so humble, realizes the risks of being a king, compensates for them, including giving up the idea of kingship eventually. So he is like an “unking” or perhaps “king lite”. It is rewarding to find the complexity in the scriptures— Mosiah was likely motivated by self-interest in pushing for judges (he would have supported his sons as king, but is now avoiding Mulekites pushing for a king from their own people), but even so, the outcomes are initially very positive. Mormon also seems to be strongly supporting this move as well. I agree that Mosiah and Alma both seem like fantastic human beings, but we can still remain aware of bias in the narrative.

41 And it came to pass that they did appoint judges to rule over them, or to judge them according to the law; and this they did **throughout all the land**. Local judges. Of course, kings have local administrators as well.

42 And it came to pass that **Alma was appointed to be the first chief judge**, he being **also the high priest**, his father having conferred the office upon him, and having given

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him the charge concerning all the affairs of the church. [So power ends up being concentrated in one man anyway.](#)

43 And now it came to pass that Alma did walk in the ways of the Lord, and he did keep his commandments, and he did judge righteous judgments; and there was continual peace through the land.

44 And thus commenced the reign of the judges throughout all the land of Zarahemla, among all the people who were called the Nephites; and Alma was the first and chief judge. [And over the Mulekites as well...](#)

45 And now it came to pass that his father died, being eighty and two years old, having lived to fulfil the commandments of God.

46 And it came to pass that Mosiah died also, in the thirty and third year of his reign, being sixty and three years old; making in the whole, five hundred and nine years from the time Lehi left Jerusalem. [I wonder what Mosiah died from... sixty three seems young for natural causes.](#)

47 And thus ended the reign of the kings over the people of Nephi; and thus ended the days of **Alma**, who was the founder of their church. [Alma and Mosiah were both revered leaders. I love the way we get attached to characters in books.](#)

#### **Alma 1**

1 Now it came to pass that in the first year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi, from this time forward, king Mosiah having gone the way of all the earth, having warred a good warfare, walking uprightly before God, **leaving none to reign in his stead**; nevertheless he had **established laws**, and they were acknowledged by the people; therefore they were obliged to abide by the laws which he had made. [Interesting how Mormon speaks in terms of kingship even after Mosiah’s vehement rejection of the institution.](#)

2 And it came to pass that in the first year of the reign of Alma in the judgment-seat, there was a man brought before him to be judged, a man who was large, and was noted for his much strength.

3 And he had gone about among the people, preaching to them **that which he termed to be the word of God**, bearing down against the church; declaring unto the people that every priest and teacher ought to become popular; and they ought not to labor with their hands, but that they **ought to be supported by the people**.

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4 And he also testified unto the people that **all mankind should be saved at the last day**, and that they need not fear nor tremble, but that they might lift up their heads and rejoice; for the Lord had created all men, and had also redeemed all men; and, in the end, all men should have eternal life. [This sounds like some mix between Christian Universalism and Humanism.](#)

5 And it came to pass that he did teach these things so much that many did believe on his words, even so many that they began to support him and give him money.

6 And he began to be lifted up in the **pride** of his heart, and to wear very costly apparel, yea, and even began **to establish a church after the manner of his preaching**. [Nehor seems to fit better into 19<sup>th</sup> century America than antiquity...](#)

7 And it came to pass as he was going, to preach to those who believed on his word, he met a man who belonged to the church of God, yea, even one of their teachers; and he began to contend with him sharply, that he might lead away the people of the church; but the man withstood him, admonishing him with the words of God. [I am not saying Nehor was a good guy, but we also need to remember that Mormon is a biased narrator here.](#)

8 Now the name of the man was Gideon; and it was he who was an instrument in the hands of God in delivering the people of Limhi out of bondage.

9 Now, because Gideon withstood him with the words of God he was wroth with Gideon, and drew his sword and began to smite him. Now Gideon being stricken with many years, therefore he was not able to withstand his blows, therefore he was slain by the sword. [So sad.](#)

10 And the man who slew him was taken by the people of the church, and was brought before Alma, to be judged according to the crimes which he had committed.

11 And it came to pass that he stood before Alma and **pled for himself** with much boldness.

12 But Alma said unto him: Behold, this is the first time that priestcraft has been introduced among this people. And behold, thou art not only guilty of priestcraft, but hast endeavored to enforce it by the sword; and were priestcraft to be enforced among this people it would prove their entire destruction. [This doesn't seem like an accurate summary of what happened. Nehor got upset and probably challenged Gideon to a duel or something... he preaches his views through persuasion rather than violence.](#)

13 And thou hast shed the blood of a righteous man, yea, a man who has done much good among this people; and were we to spare thee his blood would come upon us for vengeance. [This is a valid accusation.](#)

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14 Therefore thou art condemned to die, according to the law which has been given us by Mosiah, our last king; and it has been acknowledged by this people; therefore this people must abide by the law.

15 And it came to pass that they took him; and his name was Nehor; and they carried him upon the top of the hill Manti, and there he was caused, or rather did acknowledge, between the heavens and the earth, that what he had taught to the people was contrary to the word of God; and there he suffered an ignominious death. *Interesting wording. I believe the first description. They forced him to recant (which he would not have done on his own) and then executed him. Seems pretty heavy handed, especially in a culture that likely would have allowed for things like duels.*

16 Nevertheless, this did not put an end to the spreading of priestcraft through the land; for there were many who **loved the vain things of the world**, and they went forth preaching false doctrines; and this they did for the sake of riches and honor.

17 Nevertheless, they durst not lie, if it were known, for fear of the law, for liars were punished; therefore they **pretended to preach according to their belief**; and now the law could have no power on any man for his belief. *Impressively enlightened view... remember we only have Mormon's word that they were pretending. We need to remain aware of our biases.*

18 And they durst not steal, for fear of the law, for such were punished; neither durst they rob, nor murder, for he that murdered was punished unto death.

19 But it came to pass that whosoever did not belong to the church of God began to **persecute** those that did belong to the church of God, and had taken upon them the name of Christ.

20 Yea, they did persecute them, and **afflict them with all manner of words**, and this because of their humility; because they were not proud in their own eyes, and because they did impart the word of God, one with another, without money and without price. *Or other reasons, like they thought investing in religion or failing to live life fully is a waste of time. They probably preached a form of hedonism.*

21 Now there was a strict law among the people of the church, that there should not any man, belonging to the church, arise and persecute those that did not belong to the church, and that there should be **no persecution** among themselves.

22 Nevertheless, there were many among them who began to be **proud**, and began to **contend warmly with their adversaries**, even unto blows; yea, they would smite one another with their fists. *Sounds like duels perhaps. I always found this wording amusing.*



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23 Now this was in the second year of the reign of Alma, and it was a cause of much **affliction** to the church; yea, it was the cause of **much trial** with the church.

24 For the hearts of many were hardened, and their names were blotted out, that they were remembered no more among the people of God. And also any withdrew themselves from among them. *Why do people leave the Church? This is a vital question. One complication is that we cannot understand someone else’s perspective, especially one that overlaps or challenges our own, without being changed in the process.*

25 Now this was a great trial to those that did stand fast in the faith; nevertheless, they were **steadfast and immovable in keeping the commandments of God**, and they **bore with patience** the persecution which was heaped upon them.

26 And when the priests left their labor to impart the word of God unto the people, the people also left their labors to hear the word of God. And when the priest had imparted unto them the word of God they **all returned again diligently unto their labors**; and the priest, not esteeming himself above his hearers, for the preacher was no better than the hearer, neither was the teacher any better than the learner; and **thus they were all equal**, and **they did all labor, every man according to his strength**. *Beautiful description of community that Mormon is contrasting against the Nehorites.*

27 And they did **impart of their substance**, every man according to that which he had, to the poor, and the needy, and the sick, and the afflicted; and they **did not wear costly apparel**, yet they were **neat and comely**. *Modesty.*

28 And thus they did **establish the affairs of the church**; and thus they began to have continual peace again, **notwithstanding all their persecutions**. *Could the church even have been better off for having been challenged by the unbelievers?*

29 And now, because of the **steadiness of the church** they began to be exceedingly rich, having abundance of all things whatsoever they stood in need — an abundance of flocks and herds, and fatlings of every kind, and also abundance of grain, and of gold, and of silver, and of precious things, and abundance of silk and fine-twined linen, and all manner of good homely cloth. *This is some good life/financial advice here.*

*“Steadiness” — the ability to apply effort consistently over time — proves more valuable than brilliance or other gifts. They also lived within their means rather than seeking extravagance. Note the focus on clothing in the Book of Mormon, which was often a primary sign of wealth in antiquity.*

30 And thus, in their **prosperous circumstances**, they did not send away any who were naked, or that were hungry, or that were athirst, or that were sick, or that had not

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been nourished; and they did not set their hearts upon riches; therefore they were liberal to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, whether out of the church or in the church, having no respect to persons as to those who stood in need. *\*This\* is the ideal that God wants. Everyone has what they need. The people of God not only have their needs met, but are even prosperous. But that prosperity does not prevent them from continuing to work hard or helping those in need.*

31 And thus they did prosper and become far more wealthy than those who did not belong to their church.

32 For those who did not belong to their church did **indulge themselves** in sorceries, and in idolatry or idleness, and in babblings, and in envyings and strife; wearing costly apparel; being lifted up in the pride of their own eyes; persecuting, lying, thieving, robbing, committing whoredoms, and murdering, and all manner of wickedness; nevertheless, the law was put in force upon all those who did transgress it, inasmuch as it was possible. *On the other hand, the Nehorites live wastefully and so never can have enough.*

33 And it came to pass that by thus exercising the law upon them, every man suffering according to that which he had done, they became **more still**, and durst not commit any wickedness if it were known; therefore, there was much peace among the people of Nephi until the fifth year of the reign of the judges. *But not a sustainable peace.*

#### **Alma 2**

1 And it came to pass in the commencement of the fifth year of their reign there began to be a contention among the people; for a **certain man**, being called **Amlici**, he being a very **cunning** man, yea, a **wise man as to the wisdom of the world**, he being after the order of the man that slew Gideon by the sword, who was executed according to the law—

2 Now this Amlici had, by his cunning, drawn away much people after him; even so much that they began to be very powerful; and they began to endeavor to establish Amlici to be a king over the people. *Quite plausible that Amlici was a Mulekite. That hypothesis makes the rest of the narrative make more sense (The Nephite heirs left a vacuum, then the Nephites switched the government around to shut out the Mulekites, but then the Mulekites took matters into their own hands, first trying to use this new democratic method, but then turning to war when that failed.*

3 Now this was alarming to the people of the church, and also to all those who had not been drawn away after the persuasions of Amlici; for they knew that according to their

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law that such things must be established by the voice of the people. [Mormon also remains strongly biased.](#)

4 Therefore, if it were possible that Amlici should gain the voice of the people, he, being a wicked man, would deprive them of their rights and privileges of the church; for it was his intent to destroy the church of God. [I don't know that I am persuaded by this “intent to destroy the church of God” motivation that is being thrown around.](#)

5 And it came to pass that the people assembled themselves together throughout all the land, every man according to his mind, whether it were for or against Amlici, in separate bodies, having **much dispute and wonderful contentions** one with another. [Hmm, sounds familiar this election year...](#)

6 And thus they did **assemble themselves together to cast in their voices** concerning the matter; and they were laid before the judges.

7 And it came to pass that the voice of the people came against Amlici, that he was not made king over the people.

8 Now this did cause much joy in the hearts of those who were against him; but Amlici did stir up those who were in his favor to anger against those who were not in his favor.

9 And it came to pass that they gathered themselves together, and **did consecrate Amlici to be their king.**

10 Now when Amlici was made king over them he commanded them that they should take up arms against their brethren; and this he did that he might subject them to him.

11 Now the people of Amlici were distinguished by the name of Amlicites, being called Amlicites; and the remainder were called Nephites, or the people of God. ([“in other words, those who are on the right side”](#)) [Could there have been another resolution to this conflict? They DID begin with voting.](#)

12 Therefore the people of the Nephites were aware of the intent of the Amlicites, and therefore they did prepare to meet them; yea, they did arm themselves with swords, and with cimeters, and with bows, and with arrows, and with stones, and with slings, and with all manner of weapons of war, of every kind.

13 And thus they were prepared to meet the Amlicites at the time of their coming. And there were appointed captains, and higher captains, and chief captains, according to their numbers.

14 And it came to pass that Amlici did arm his men with all manner of weapons of war of every kind; and he also appointed rulers and leaders over his people, to lead them to war against their brethren.

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15 And it came to pass that the Amlicites came upon the hill Amnihu, which was east of the river Sidon, which ran by the land of Zarahemla, and there they began to make war with the Nephites.

16 Now Alma, being the chief judge and the governor of the people of Nephi, therefore he went up with his people, yea, with his captains, and chief captains, yea, at the **head of his armies**, against the Amlicites to battle. *This is crazy impressive. Not only is Alma a religious and government leader, he is a military leader as well!*

17 And they began to slay the Amlicites upon the hill east of Sidon. And the Amlicites did contend with the Nephites with **great strength**, insomuch that many of the Nephites did fall before the Amlicites.

18 Nevertheless the Lord did strengthen the hand of the Nephites, that they slew the Amlicites with great slaughter, that they began to flee before them. *Notice how many ways Mormon makes the point that the Nephites are on the right side, backed by God. Perhaps they are/were, but we can still highlight Mormon’s rhetoric and assumptions.*

19 And it came to pass that the Nephites did **pursue the Amlicites all that day**, and did slay them with much slaughter, insomuch that there were slain of the Amlicites twelve thousand five hundred thirty and two souls; and there were slain of the Nephites six thousand five hundred sixty and two souls. *The Nephites went on the offensive? Usually that is a bad thing in the Book of Mormon.*

20 And it came to pass that when Alma could pursue the Amlicites no longer he caused that his people should pitch their tents in the valley of Gideon, the valley being called after that Gideon who was slain by the hand of Nehor with the sword; and in this valley the Nephites did pitch their tents for the night.

21 And Alma sent spies to follow the remnant of the Amlicites, that he might know of their plans and their plots, whereby he might guard himself against them, that he might preserve his people from being destroyed. *Lots of justification here, but doesn’t it sound like Alma is working to wipe the Amlicites completely out?*

22 Now those whom he had sent out to watch the camp of the Amlicites were called Zeram, and Amnor, and Manti, and Limher; these were they who went out with their men to watch the camp of the Amlicites.

23 And it came to pass that on the morrow they returned into the camp of the Nephites in great haste, being greatly astonished, and struck with much fear, saying:

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24 Behold, we followed the camp of the Amlicites, and to our great astonishment, in the land of Minon, above the land of Zarahemla, in the course of the land of Nephi, we saw a numerous host of the Lamanites; and behold, the **Amlicites have joined them**;

25 And they are upon our brethren in that land; and they are fleeing before them with their flocks, and their wives, and their children, towards our city; and except we make haste they obtain possession of our city, and our fathers, and our wives, and our children be slain. **Horrifying situation. Whatever got them to this point, the Amlicites are a severe threat.**

26 And it came to pass that the people of Nephi took their tents, and departed out of the valley of Gideon towards their city, which was the city of Zarahemla.

27 And behold, as they were crossing the river Sidon, the Lamanites and the Amlicites, being as numerous almost, as it were, as the sands of the sea, came upon them to destroy them.

28 Nevertheless, the Nephites being strengthened by the hand of the Lord, having prayed mightily to him that he would deliver them out of the hands of their enemies, therefore the Lord did hear their cries, and did strengthen them, and the Lamanites and the Amlicites did fall before them.

29 And it came to pass that **Alma fought with Amlici with the sword, face to face**; and they did contend mightily, one with another.

30 And it came to pass that Alma, being a man of God, being exercised with much faith, cried, saying: O Lord, have mercy and spare my life, that I may be an instrument in thy hands to save and preserve this people.

31 Now when Alma had said these words he contended again with Amlici; and he was strengthened, insomuch that he slew Amlici with the sword.

32 And he also contended with the king of the Lamanites; but the king of the Lamanites fled back from before Alma and sent his guards to contend with Alma.

33 But Alma, **with his guards**, contended with the guards of the king of the Lamanites until he slew and drove them back.

34 And thus he cleared the ground, or rather the bank, which was on the west of the river Sidon, throwing the bodies of the Lamanites who had been slain into the waters of Sidon, that thereby his people might have room to cross and contend with the Lamanites and the Amlicites on the west side of the river Sidon.

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35 And it came to pass that when they had all crossed the river Sidon that the Lamanites and the **Amlicites began to flee before them**, notwithstanding they were so numerous that they could not be numbered.

36 And they fled before the Nephites towards the wilderness which was west and north, away beyond the borders of the land; and the **Nephites did pursue them with their might, and did slay them**.

37 Yea, they were met on every hand, and slain and driven, until they were scattered on the west, and on the north, until they had reached the wilderness, which was called Hermounts; and it was that part of the wilderness which was infested by wild and ravenous beasts. *The Amlicites were indeed dangerous, but I am intrigued by what seems like a philosophy of annihilation on the part of the Nephites.*

38 And it came to pass that many died in the wilderness of their wounds, and were devoured by those beasts and also the vultures of the air; and their bones have been found, and have been heaped up on the earth. *As opposed to those times when even the enemies were buried... was this an example to dissuade the Mulekites from rebellion?*

#### **Alma 3**

1 And it came to pass that **the Nephites who were not slain by the weapons of war**, after having buried those who had been slain—now the number of the slain were not numbered, because of the greatness of their number—after they had finished burying their dead they all returned to their lands, and to their houses, and their wives, and their children. *The wording suggests that only a minority survived. This was an exceptionally costly battle.*

2 Now many women and children had been slain with the sword, and also many of their flocks and their herds; and also many of their fields of grain were destroyed, for they were trodden down by the hosts of men. *It looks like both sides were trying not only to win, but annihilate.*

3 And now as many of the Lamanites and the Amlicites who had been slain upon the bank of the river Sidon were cast into the waters of Sidon; and behold their bones are in the depths of the sea, and they are many.

4 And the Amlicites were distinguished from the Nephites, for they had marked themselves with red in their foreheads after the manner of the Lamanites; nevertheless they had not shorn their heads like unto the Lamanites.

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5 Now the heads of the Lamanites were shorn; and they were naked, save it were skin which was girded about their loins, and also their armor, which was girded about them, and their bows, and their arrows, and their stones, and their slings, and so forth.

6 And the skins of the Lamanites were dark, according to the mark which was set upon their fathers, which was a curse upon them because of their transgression and their rebellion against their brethren, who consisted of Nephi, Jacob, and Joseph, and Sam, who were just and holy men.

7 And their brethren sought to destroy them, therefore they were cursed; and the Lord God set a mark upon them, yea, upon Laman and Lemuel, and also the sons of Ishmael, and Ishmaelitish women.

8 And this was done that their seed might be distinguished from the seed of their brethren, that thereby the Lord God might preserve his people, that they might **not mix** and believe in incorrect traditions which would prove their destruction.

**Rationalization for Nephite endogamy (only marrying within their group).**

9 And it came to pass that whosoever did mingle his seed with that of the Lamanites did bring the same curse upon his seed.

10 Therefore, whosoever suffered himself to be led away by the Lamanites was called under that head, and there was a mark set upon him.

11 And it came to pass that whosoever would not believe in the tradition of the Lamanites, but believed those records which were brought out of the land of Jerusalem, and also in the tradition of their fathers, which were correct, who believed in the commandments of God and kept them, were called the Nephites, or the people of Nephi, from that time forth—

12 And it is they who have kept the records which are true of their people, and also of the people of the Lamanites.

13 Now we will return again to the Amlicites, for they also had a mark set upon them; yea, **they set the mark upon themselves**, yea, even a mark of red upon their foreheads.

14 Thus the word of God is fulfilled, for these are the words which he said to Nephi: Behold, the Lamanites have I cursed, and I will set a mark on them that they and their seed may be separated from thee and thy seed, from this time henceforth and forever, except they repent of their wickedness and turn to me that I may have mercy upon them.

15 And again: I will set a mark upon him that mingleth his seed with thy brethren, that they may be cursed also.

16 And again: I will set a mark upon him that fighteth against thee and thy seed.

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17 And again, I say he that departeth from thee shall no more be called thy seed; and I will bless thee, and whomsoever shall be called thy seed, henceforth and forever; and these were the promises of the Lord unto Nephi and to his seed.

18 Now the Amlicites knew not that they were fulfilling the words of God when they began to mark themselves in their foreheads; nevertheless they had come out in open rebellion against God; therefore it was expedient that the curse should fall upon them. This reading has made me thoughtful... I doubt that Mormon is a reliable narrator here. There is something fishy about this battle.

19 Now I would that ye should see that they brought upon themselves the curse; and even so doth every man that is cursed bring upon himself his own condemnation. I do agree that we are usually punished by the consequences of our actions.

20 Now it came to pass that not many days after the battle which was fought in the land of Zarahemla, by the Lamanites and the Amlicites, that there was another army of the Lamanites came in upon the people of Nephi, in the same place where the first army met the Amlicites. I would suspect that the Lamanites were trying to use this opportunity to wipe out the Nephites, since they experienced such devastating losses earlier.

21 And it came to pass that there was an army sent to drive them out of their land.

22 Now Alma himself being **afflicted with a wound** did not go up to battle at this time against the Lamanites;

23 But he sent up a numerous army against them; and they went up and slew many of the Lamanites, and drove the remainder of them out of the borders of their land.

24 And then they returned again and began to establish peace in the land, being troubled no more for a time with their enemies.

25 Now all these things were done, yea, all these wars and contentions were commenced and ended in the fifth year of the reign of the judges.

26 And in one year were thousands and tens of thousands of souls sent to the eternal world, that they might reap their rewards according to their works, whether they were good or whether they were bad, to reap eternal happiness or eternal misery, according to the spirit which they listed to obey, whether it be a good spirit or a bad one. These wars were such a tragedy that Mormon can only make it sound better by emphasizing the afterlife.

27 For every man receiveth wages of him whom he listeth to obey, and this according to the words of the spirit of prophecy; therefore let it be according to the truth. And thus endeth the fifth year of the reign of the judges.



### Alma 4

1 Now it came to pass in the sixth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi, there were no contentions nor wars in the land of Zarahemla;

2 But the people were afflicted, yea, **greatly afflicted for the loss of their brethren**, and also for the loss of their flocks and herds, and also for the loss of their fields of grain, which were trodden under foot and destroyed by the Lamanites. *So many people were killed that it threatened the functioning of society.*

3 And so great were their afflictions that every soul had cause to mourn; and they believed that it was the judgments of God sent upon them because of their wickedness and their abominations; therefore they were **awakened to a remembrance of their duty**. *Difficult moments put life in perspective and can “wake us up” to what is most important.*

4 And they began to **establish the church more fully**; yea, and many were baptized in the waters of Sidon and were joined to the church of God; yea, they were baptized by the hand of Alma, who had been consecrated the high priest over the people of the church, by the hand of his father Alma.

5 And it came to pass in the seventh year of the reign of the judges there were about three thousand five hundred souls that united themselves to the church of God and were baptized. And thus ended the seventh year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi; and there was continual peace in all that time.

6 And it came to pass in the eighth year of the reign of the judges, that the people of the church began to **wax proud**, because of their exceeding riches, and their fine silks, and their fine-twined linen, and because of their many flocks and herds, and their gold and their silver, and all manner of precious things, which they had obtained by their industry; and in all these things were they lifted up in the pride of their eyes, for they began to wear very costly apparel.

7 Now this was the cause of much affliction to Alma, yea, and to many of the people whom Alma had consecrated to be teachers, and priests, and elders over the church; yea, many of them were **sorely grieved** for the wickedness which they saw had begun to be among their people.

8 For they saw and beheld with **great sorrow** that the people of the church began to be lifted up in the pride of their eyes, and to set their hearts upon riches and upon the vain things of the world, that they began to be **scornful**, one towards another, and they began

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to **persecute those that did not believe according to their own will and pleasure**. Scorn or contempt is the single most destructive emotion we can have for another human being. Even hate can engage with someone, but contempt demeans them.

9 And thus, in this eighth year of the reign of the judges, there began to be great **contentions** among the people of the church; yea, there were **envyings**, and **strife**, and **malice**, and **persecutions**, and **pride**, even to exceed the pride of those who did not belong to the church of God. Fascinating and sobering—the Church becomes a vehicle not for redemption, but for damnation as it fosters pride. It seems clear that Church is actually increasing rather than checking the pride and wickedness of its members.

10 And thus ended the eighth year of the reign of the judges; and the wickedness of the church was a great stumbling-block to those who did not belong to the church; and thus **the church began to fail in its progress**.

11 And it came to pass in the commencement of the ninth year, Alma saw the wickedness of the church, and he saw also that the **example of the church began to lead those who were unbelievers on from one piece of iniquity to another**, thus bringing on the destruction of the people.

12 Yea, he saw great **inequality** among the people, some lifting themselves up with their pride, despising others, turning their backs upon the needy and the naked and those who were hungry, and those who were athirst, and those who were sick and afflicted. The Book of Mormon teaches that failing to care for those in need, or becoming wealthy at the expense of others, are both serious sins.

13 Now this was a great cause for lamentations among the people, while others were **abasing themselves, succoring** those who stood in need of their succor, such as **imparting their substance** to the poor and the needy, **feeding** the hungry, and suffering all manner of afflictions, for Christ’s sake, who should come according to the spirit of prophecy;

14 Looking forward to that day, thus **retaining a remission of their sins**; being filled with great joy because of the resurrection of the dead, according to the will and power and deliverance of Jesus Christ from the bands of death. Look carefully at the bad example vs. good example. Same formula as in King Benjamin’s sermon: By caring for others we retain a remission of our sins. In other words, we live within a saved/redeemed state.

15 And now it came to pass that Alma, having seen the afflictions of the humble followers of God, and the persecutions which were heaped upon them by the **remainder**

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of his people, and seeing all their **inequality**, began to be very sorrowful; nevertheless the Spirit of the Lord did not fail him. **This wording suggests that the majority were sinful.**

16 And he selected a wise man who was among the elders of the church, and gave him power according to the voice of the people, that he might have power to enact laws according to the laws which had been given, and to put them in force according to the wickedness and the crimes of the people. **Interesting—Alma chooses a man (almost certainly his brother, since we are told in Alma 50 that he turned down the records from Alma), and then that top-down decision is ratified by the people. Mormon fails to mention the relationship, probably in order to make it sound more democratic. Note that even though the Nephites have a voting system, the leadership suspiciously passes down Alma’s dynasty.**

17 Now this man’s name was **Nephihah**, and he was appointed chief judge; and he sat in the judgment-seat to judge and to govern the people.

18 Now Alma did not grant unto him the office of being high priest over the church, but he **retained the office of high priest unto himself**; but he delivered the judgment-seat unto Nephihah.

19 And this he did that he himself might **go forth among his people**, or among the people of Nephi (**another admission of the deep divisions among the people**), that he might **preach the word** of God unto them, to **stir them up in remembrance of their duty**, and that he might **pull down, by the word of God**, all the **pride** and **craftiness** and all the **contentions** which were among his people, seeing no way that he might **reclaim them** save it were in bearing down in **pure testimony** against them.

20 And thus in the commencement of the ninth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi, Alma delivered up the judgment-seat to Nephihah, and **confined himself wholly to the high priesthood of the holy order of God**, to the testimony of the word, according to the spirit of revelation and prophecy.

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**Additional Reading:** None

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**Scripture Chain:**     **N/A**

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