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The Deaths of Abinadi and Noah

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Chapter 2

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Timing of the Sacrifice of Abinadi in Relation to Hebrew Festivals and the Maya Festivals

The Hebrew Pentecost was a pilgrimage festival that took place in the spring, the fiftieth day after Passover, which celebrated the giving of the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai (see Exodus 34:22; Deuteronomy 16:10). Pentecost was a time when all the people gathered at the temple to celebrate the first grain harvest and to commemorate the deliverance from bondage in Egypt as well.

John W. Welch, Gordon C. Thomasson, and Robert F. Smith (1992) have pointed out that:

Both of Abinadi's speeches deal with the themes of Pentecost. He reversed the festival's blessings and rejoicing, and turned them into curses and predictions of gloom. At the time when a bounteous grain season would have been at hand, Abinadi cursed the crops . . . (Mosiah 12:6). While Israel's deliverance from bondage was traditionally being celebrated, Abinadi called upon Exodus terminology to proclaim the bondage and burdens would return to the wicked people in the city of Nephi. (Mosiah 11:21, 23)

Welch (2008) also identified a number of parallels between Abinadi's prophetic mission and the festival of Pentecost, including the following:

- The giving of the Ten Commandments
- Abinadi's prophecies being directly contrary to the purpose of the celebration
- Abinadi's shining face compared to Moses on Sinai (Mosiah 13:5, compare Exodus 34:29–30)
- Abinadi's sacrifice postponed three days, the same length as Pentecost (see Exodus 19:11)
- Parallels between Psalms 50 and 8 likely sung at Pentecost and Abinadi's words.

Pentecost is known as Shabuot in Hebrew and is celebrated seven weeks after the beginning of the barley harvest and marks the time period from the beginning of the barley harvest until the end of the wheat harvest. In the valleys and coastal plains of Israel the barley harvest would normally commence at the beginning of May. The period from the beginning of the barley harvest in the valleys or on the coastal plain and the conclusion of the wheat harvest in the mountains before the end of June more or less covers a seven-week interval (Wagenaar 2005, 33). Thus Pentecost was generally celebrated anciently around the end of June.

The pre-exilic calendar year in Israel was independent of the agricultural cycle and began around the autumnal equinox (September 21–22). The Sukkot, or festival of ingathering, is considered a New Year festival, and initially occurred during the month after the autumnal equinox. Calendar reforms by Jeroboam (931 to 910 BC) transferred the festival from the month after the autumnal equinox to two months after the autumnal equinox (Wagenaar 2005, 23–24).

The main corn harvest is mid-November for the Maya (Christenson 1991). Maya world renewal rituals associated with the Maya New Year were celebrated in August in the late fifteenth century and in July during the sixteenth century (due to the precession of the haab against the tropical year) (Vail et al. 2013, 392).

As previously mentioned, the year count in the Book of Mormon existent at the time of king Noah was not a solar year but was an uncorrected 12-lunar month year of 354.367 days/year (Grover 2015) so the new year would have occurred over time at different times of the year.

Fray Bartolomé de las Casas (c. 1484 – 18 July 1566) was a 16th-century Spanish historian, social reformer and Dominican friar. He became the first resident Bishop of Chiapas and like Landa, documented ceremonies of the Maya, especially in the Guatemala highlands. Las Casas indicated that the ritual sacrifices were typically conducted on the last day of the Wayeb', so this may also be the rationale that Abinadi's sacrifice was delayed for three days (Mosiah 17:6)(Christenson 2016, 98).

We do not know whether the calendar timing of Pentecost and/or Hebrew New Year's festivals were modified by the Nephites to match the New World situation, but would seem likely.

These Maya rituals and Pentecost, although not yet possible to demonstrate calendrically, are a likely example of the syncretic incorporation of the Maya religious ritual into the religious practices of the Nephites or vice versa. Elements of these Maya rituals closely match and contrast the prophecies and sacrifice of Abinadi, king Noah, and the seed of the priests of king Noah as illustrated in the Book of Mormon.

Manner of Death and Prophecies at the time of Abinadi's Death

The description of Abinadi's manner of death is contained in Mosiah 17: 1, 12–20:

1 And now it came to pass that when Abinadi had finished these sayings, that the king commanded that the priests should take him and cause that he should be put to death.

12 But the priests lifted up their voices against him, and began to accuse him, saying: He has reviled the king. Therefore the king was stirred up in anger against him, and he delivered him up that he might be slain.

13 And it came to pass that they took him and bound him, and scourged his skin with faggots, yea, even unto death.

14 And now when the flames began to scorch him, he cried unto them, saying:

15 Behold, even as ye have done unto me, so shall it come to pass that thy seed shall cause that many shall suffer the pains that I do suffer, even the pains of death by fire; and this because they believe in the salvation of the Lord their God.

16 And it will come to pass that ye shall be afflicted with all manner of diseases because of your iniquities.

17 Yea, and ye shall be smitten on every hand, and shall be driven and scattered to and fro, even as a wild flock is driven by wild and ferocious beasts.

18 And in that day ye shall be hunted, and ye shall be taken by the hand of your enemies, and then ye shall suffer, as I suffer, the pains of death by fire.

19 Thus God executeth vengeance upon those that destroy his people. O God, receive my soul.

20 And now, when Abinadi had said these words, he fell, having suffered death by fire; yea, having been put to death because he would not deny the commandments of God, having sealed the truth of his words by his death.

Important physical elements of Abinadi's sacrifice are:

1. He was sacrificed under the direction of the king and also under the religious authority of the priests.
2. He was first bound.
3. His skin was then scourged with faggots "even unto death."
4. When the flames began to scorch him he spoke briefly.
5. After speaking, he fell, having suffered death by fire.

Mormon quoted Abinadi saying, “What ye shall do unto me shall be a type of things to come” (Alma 25:10), indicating that “many should suffer death by fire.” Abinadi’s original statement was, “But this much I tell you, what you do with me, after this, shall be as a type and a shadow of things which are to come” (Mosiah 13:10).

Thus it is incumbent to determine what actually happened to Noah, his priests, and their seed.

Abinadi and King Noah’s Death and Maya Sacrificial Rituals

There are a few details in the description of the sacrifice of Abinadi that provide clues as to the likely method of sacrifice. The first is the description that they “bound him, and scourged his skin with faggots, yea, even unto death” (Mosiah 17:13). Second, his death was immediately after making his final statement, so was relatively quick. Third, “he fell, having suffered death by fire” (Mosiah 17:20).

Landa documented various forms of human sacrifice practiced during the New Year’s ceremonies. They included stripping victims, painting them blue, and then shooting them with arrows in the heart marked with a white mark. If the heart was to be removed they placed the victim on his back on a blue stone holding his arms and legs; they then struck the victim beneath the ribs on the left side with a knife of stone, and the priest plunged his hand in and seized the heart and placed it on a plate. The victim was then flayed with the exception of the hands and feet. The victim was often eaten, with the feet, hands, and head reserved for the priest and his officials. Some sacrifices were made by throwing living victims into wells or cenotes (Tozzer 1941, 115–20).

If a New Year Bearer feast sacrificial practice at the time of conquest was to have been followed with Abinadi, he would have been sacrificed as follows:

They built in the court of the temple a great pile of stones, and they placed the man or dog whom they were going to sacrifice on something higher than it, and throwing down the bound victim from the height on to the stones, those officials seized him and took out his heart with great quickness, and carried it to the new idol and offered it to him between two platters. (Tozzer 1941, 142–43)

Consistent with the etymological meaning of the name *Abinadi*, and with his sacrifice occurring in a Kan year, his sacrifice likely involved him falling onto a great pile of stones.

Landa (Tozzer 1941, 162) describes two ancient Maya rain ritual ceremonies that occurred in the spring months of *Mac* and *Pax* called the *Tup Kaak* (which means “to put out the fire”) rain rituals. Landa (Tozzer 1941, 165) also describes a variant ceremony of the *Tup Kaak* called *Pacum Chac* (translated as “recompense the rain god”), which occurred in mid-May during festivals occurring in the month *Pax*, which was likely held to bring rain. Taube (1988) notes:

The fire offering in Pax, however, occurred after five days and nights dedicated to ceremonies of war and to the Cit Chac Coh, ‘Father-red-puma’ (Landa [Tozzer] 1941, 164). During the five days, a dance called the *holcan okot*, or ‘dance of the warriors,’ was performed. This was possibly the dance in which trophy parts of slain foes were worn “as tokens of victory” (Landa [Tozzer] 1941, 120). After the five days, and before the fire offering, a major ceremony was performed. Although Landa does not describe the event, he notes that it was a somber affair, “as it concerned matters of war and gaining victory over their enemies (Landa [Tozzer] 1941, 165).

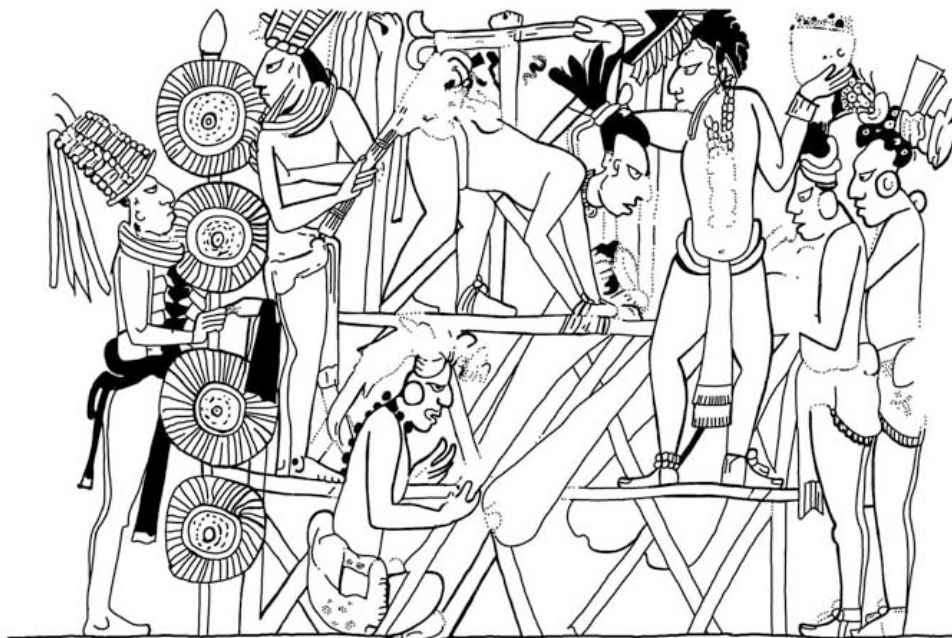
The ceremony held during *Mac* began with a hunt in the woods for “all the animals and creatures of the field.” After the game was collected, their hearts were removed and cast upon a large faggot of sticks set upright. After the hearts were burned, water was poured on the smoldering remains, consistent with the term *Tup Kaak*, “to put out the fire” (Tozzer 1941, 162–63).

In the variant fire offering ceremony during *Pax* described by Landa, he did not specify what was actually offered up. As this ceremony involved “matters of war and gaining victory over their enemies” and based on other corroborating evidence, Taube (1988, 334) has convincingly determined that the *Pax* sacrifice did not entail the hunting of animals but involved the capture and sacrifice of men. According to Taube, the likely form of the human sacrifice is a form of the Scaffold Sacrifice known as the deer-man sacrifice documented at least back to Classic times (AD 250–900).

The deer-man sacrifice is depicted on what Taube (1988, 333) refers to as the Scaffold Vase (with Kerr identifier number K2781) in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection (see figures 4 and 5). The victim has hair pulled up in the form of antlers. There are flanking attendants holding lances, which in other Mesoamerican depictions were utilized to spear the flesh of the victim. Another detail on the depiction is the burning of the deer-man’s back cloth.



Figure 4. Scaffold Vase depicting deer-man sacrifice (Kerr, 2016)



2781draw Drawing by Alexandre Tokovinine

Figure 5. Drawing of the Scaffold Vase depicting deer-man sacrifice (Tokovinine 2016)

There are other figurines from Jaina, Campeche, Mexico, that depict the deer-man sacrifice with, instead of hair shaped as antlers, the victim wears a deer headdress. A figurine from a private collection from Jaina shows the victim with a deer headdress; he is also posed and bound in a quadruped stance (see figure 6)(Taube 1988, 333).

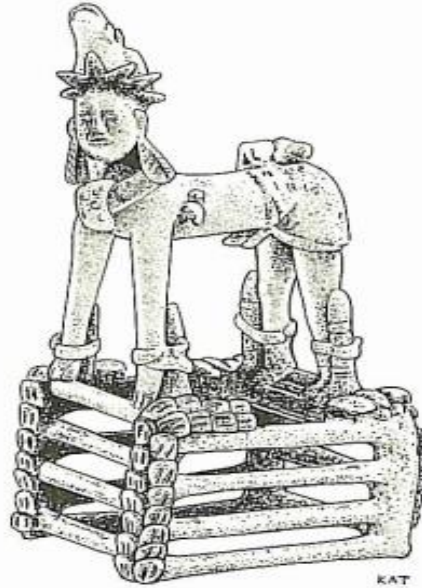


Figure 6. Deer-man sacrificial figurine from Jaina, Campeche (Taube 1988, 335).

Similar to burning the deer-man's backcloth, a Campeche figurine with a bundle of faggots on his back (see figure 7) indicates that victims were burned to death or tortured by burning during the Classic period by method of strapping faggots to their chest and lighting them on fire (Henderson 2013, 177).



Figure 7. Campeche figurine showing captive to be burned with faggots strapped to his back (Schele and Miller 1986, Pl.94)

The identification of victims with the hunt, and specifically the hunting of deer is found in the proto-Yucatec as well and is mentioned in the Chilam Balam of Chumayel where the victim, after being bound, is struck with arrows from hunters, with the intent of gathering the blood of the victim before death (Taube 1988, 334).

The sacrifice may involve a series of elements, consisting of binding the victim, stabbing, spearing or impaling the victim, and burning the victim. In the case where the victim is placed in a quadruped stance, the victim would have also necessarily fallen from that position.

In the case of Abinadi, he was first “delivered up,” then the priests took him, and then bound him, implying that he was not bound initially, consistent with being bound to something. While “delivered up” might be figurative, it certainly would be consistent with being placed on an elevated scaffold or frame. They then “scourged his skin with faggots, yea, even unto death.” This is consistent with the piercing portion of the sacrificial ritual. Likely simultaneously to the end of the scourging, his back was set on fire. As the flames began to scorch him, he spoke his final words and then “he fell, having suffered death by fire” (Mosiah 7:12–20).

Royal Skousen (2006, 1362–64) has objected to the term “scourged” indicating that it was likely a misspelling and should have been “scorched” with the principle argument that it is difficult to conceive of someone being whipped with a bundle of sticks “even unto death.” However, in the Maya sacrificial ritual, with one of the primary purposes to collect blood from the victim, it is not that difficult to imagine the scourging of the victim causing them to essentially bleed almost unto death, and while bleeding lighting the victim on fire. In Abinadi’s case he is described as dying almost immediately after speaking and concurrently with falling, not slowly burning to death.

Abinadi is described as having suffered “death by fire” but it was described as a multi-method torture and death, so “death by fire” may have been the name for the entire ceremony, including those elements that did not involve fire, as did the Maya sacrificial practice. Based on the description and in a Maya context, the actual cause of death may have been bleeding to death, fire, or falling from height onto stones, or a combination of some or all.

King Noah’s Death

King Noah’s death likely included some elements of torture prior to burning as well, as it indicates that the persons who fled with him—who turned into his executioners—were angry and “caused that he should suffer, even unto death by fire.” Some element of hunting or pursuit was likely required to capture Noah as his priests successfully “fled before” their would-be executioners (Mosiah 19:20–21). Abinadi prophesied that “in that day ye shall be hunted” (Mosiah 17:18). King Noah’s death is implied to be part of a larger “ceremony” that was “ended” at the time that the men of Gideon encountered these executioners (Mosiah 19:23–24).

That king Noah’s death was also a ritualistic death is consistent with Abinadi’s prediction that “what you do with me, after this, shall be as a type and a shadow of things which are to come” (Mosiah 13:10), since Abinadi’s death was also ritualistic. In addition, Abinadi prophesied “that thy life shall be as a garment in a furnace of fire,” and burning of cloth in a sacrificial manner was a part of Maya ritual.

It is clear that the Lamanite king had given instructions that he wanted king Noah taken and delivered to him:

Mosiah 19:15

Therefore the Lamanites did spare their lives, and took them captives and carried them back to the land of Nephi, and granted unto them that they might possess the land, under the conditions that they would deliver up king Noah into the hands of the Lamanites, and deliver up their property, even one half of all they possessed, one half of their gold, and their silver, and all their precious things, and thus they should pay tribute to the king of the Lamanites from year to year.

It was also clear to king Noah's son, Limhi, that delivering up his father to the Lamanites and their king meant not only simple death to his father but that king Noah would be “destroyed.” It appears that perhaps he was hoping that he could somehow warn his father as men were sent “secretly” to look for Noah:

Mosiah 19:16–18

16 And now there was one of the sons of the king among those that were taken captive, whose name was Limhi.

17 And now Limhi was desirous that his father should not be destroyed; nevertheless, Limhi was not ignorant of the iniquities of his father, he himself being a just man.

18 And it came to pass that Gideon sent men into the wilderness secretly, to search for the king and those that were with him. And it came to pass that they met the people in the wilderness, all save the king and his priests.

The delivery of king Noah conforms precisely with what is expected in the Maya culture. Landa and Antonio de Herrera (Tozzer 1941) indicate that victims of human sacrifice were individuals who were either orphans, slaves, or captives taken in war. Herrera (Tozzer 1941, 217) reports that important captives were sought because as sacrifices they were of greater quality in service to the gods. King Noah qualified as just that type of captive. The description that he would be “destroyed” by the Lamanites was certainly appropriate given the wide variety of torture and sacrifice that existed among the Maya including disemboweling, decapitation by a slow cutting procedure, removal of the heart while living, or of course, being burned alive. Maya sacrifice was a highly ceremonial affair in which prolonged death and torture were standard features (Schele 1984, 9).

The use of the term *ceremony* has other connotations here in addition to a ritualistic death, as immediately after the ceremony the king of the Lamanites made an oath unto the Limhites, with Limhi also making an oath unto the king of the Lamanites, and Limhi “having the kingdom conferred upon him” (Mosiah 19:25–27). While Limhi was the king who ascended and likely did not utilize the sacrifice of his father as the means to ascension, Noah’s ritual death may have been necessary for the Lamanite king to accept Limhi as the new king.

The sacrificial scaffold was a well-known structure of terror and power over much of ancient Mesoamerica. Studies show that in the Postclassic Mixtec, in El Tajin (likely just north of Nephite territory), in Piedras Negras, and noted in the *Annals of the Cakchiquels* of the Maya, the Scaffold Sacrifice of a captive was part of the ceremony for the accession of lords or royalty (Taube 1988, 340–46), including burning by fire. Many directly involve hunting of the victim, the burning of faggots, and the burning of cloth on the back of the victim. It appears from various Maya depictions at the highland Maya site of Chinkultic that a standing king or lord appears to be dropping his own blood to mix with the blood of the victim (Taube 1988, 348).

When Gideon and his men encountered the persons who had just put Noah to death by fire, they then “ended the ceremony” (Mosiah 19:24). Based on Maya practice, in order to ultimately satisfy the Lamanites, they likely did some ritual involving idolatry to Lamanite gods and likely drew and used blood from the body of king Noah, perhaps even bringing blood back to the Lamanite king for a blood-letting ceremony utilizing the blood of king Noah.

Skousen (2006, 1389–95) has asserted that the word *ceremony* must also be a mistake because it did not seem “appropriate” suggesting that perhaps *sermon* would work better. Skousen states that “if we hunt long enough we can always find some culture somewhere with a practice that will support virtual every given reading.” While that statement may be true, given the totality of the consistency shown here, the use of the word *ceremony* is exactly consistent and expected within Mesoamerican culture practice. No reversion to an assumed Book of Mormon spelling error is necessary.

Potential elements of the prophecy by Abinadi just prior to his death related to the future death of king Noah and his priests are:

1. Noah's and his priest's seed will cause that other believers in Christ will suffer death by fire because of this belief.
2. "Ye" (potentially interpreted as Noah and his priests) will be afflicted with diseases.
3. Noah (and his priests?) shall be smitten, driven, scattered, and then shall be hunted, taken and suffer death by fire.

The fulfillment of this prophecy for Noah occurred as follows:

1. No mention is made of Noah being afflicted with diseases.
2. Noah was smitten by and fled before Gideon (Mosiah 19:4–5).
3. Noah fled before and was hunted by the Lamanite army (Mosiah 19:9).
4. The people who fled with Noah turned on him in the wilderness, thus becoming enemies, and "caused that he should suffer, even unto death by fire" (Mosiah 19:20).
5. The people who fled with Noah, after meeting with men of Gideon sent out to find them, "ended the ceremony" and returned to the land of Nephi (Mosiah 19:23–24).

Fate of the Priests of King Noah

The priests of king Noah were first hunted by the Lamanite army and fled from them along with others (leaving their own wives and children) (Mosiah 19:9), and then were hunted by those that they fled with, escaping for fear of their lives from them (Mosiah 19:21). They later kidnapped twenty-four "daughters of the Lamanites" (Mosiah 20:1–5). The leader of the priests of Noah was Amulon (Mosiah 23:32) and where they had settled in the wilderness was called the land of Amulon (Mosiah 23:31).

Amulon and his people were discovered by the Lamanites but made peace with them on account of their Lamanite wives, and ended up joining the Lamanites (Mosiah 23:30, 33–35). Deciding to return with the Lamanites to the land of Nephi, en route, the Amulonites and the Lamanites discovered the land of Helam, which was occupied by Alma₁ and his people. The Lamanites asserted authority over the land of Helam and made Amulon the vassal king of the land of Helam (Mosiah 23:38–39). Later the king of the Lamanites made Amulon and his priests teachers over the people in the lands of Shemlon, Shilom, and Amulon (Mosiah 24:1). Alma and his people then escaped from under Amulon to Zarahemla (Mosiah 24:23–25).

Many years later it is noted that the people of Amulon, the Amalekites, and the Lamanites built a great city called Jerusalem (Alma 21:2). The Amulonites were "after the order of Nehor" (Alma 21:4). The Amulonites later rebelled against their king (the father of king Lamoni) because he had converted to the Nephite religion along with a good portion of his people (Alma 24:1–3) and took up arms against this newly converted people (now called the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi).

The Lamanites (including the Amulonites and the Amalekites) attacked and slaughtered some of the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi who put up no defense. Some of the Lamanites (excluding the Amulonites and the Amalekites) regretted what they had done and joined the religion of the Nephites (Alma 24). The rest of the Lamanites (including the Amulonites) turned their anger on the Nephites and battled the Nephites with many Lamanites slain with "almost all the seed of Amulon and his brethren, who were the priests of Noah, and they were slain by the hands of the Nephites" (Alma 25:1–4).

At this point in time Amulon and the rest of the priests of Noah are no longer mentioned, just their seed, so the presumption would be that they are no longer alive. There are no specific accounts of their deaths. Whether the priests themselves were all deceased at this point in time is unknown.

The fulfillment of this prophecy for the priests of Noah occurred as follows:

1. No mention is made of the priests of Noah being afflicted with diseases.
2. The priests of king Noah fled before and were hunted by the Lamanite army (Mosiah 19:9).
3. The Amulonites (which consisted of the priests of king Noah who took Lamanite wives and their descendants) slaughtered the righteous Lamanite converts to Christ known as the Anti-Nephi-Lehies (Alma 24:28).
4. In an ensuing war, nearly all of the seed of Amulon and his brethren (the priests of Noah) were killed by the Nephites (Alma 25:3–4).

Based on the description given in the Book of Mormon, there is no evidence that the priests of king Noah suffered death by fire, so that portion of the prophecy would not have applied to them. They certainly were hunted and were perhaps slain, so to the extent that their experience “a type of things to come” they did experience the equivalent of the hunting portion of Abinadi’s ritual sacrifice.

Fate of the Seed of the Priests of King Noah

There are two branches of the descendants of the priests of Noah. The first branch is the wives and children that they abandoned when they fled from the Lamanite army. This branch made its way to the land of Zarahemla with the rest of the Limhites and abandoned the heritage of its fathers and they took upon themselves the name of Nephi and became Nephites (Mosiah 25:12). The prophecies did not appear to apply to this branch of descendants of the priests of Noah as they had renounced their heritage.

The second branch would be the Lamanite wives they took and the children that were born from the Lamanite wives. This group is assumed to comprise the “people of Amulon” (Alma 21:2). As mentioned previously, nearly all descendants of the priests of Noah were killed by the Nephites in war (Alma 25:3–4). The remainder of the Amulonites fled into the east wilderness and usurped authority over the Lamanites there, where some of the Lamanites had embraced the religion of the Nephites (Alma 25:5–7). The “remnant of the children of Amulon” caused that many of these converted Lamanites were put to death by fire (Alma 25:5–7). This angered the other Lamanites who then hunted and slayed this “remnant of the children of Amulon” and continued to hunt them up until the time of Mormon (Alma 25:8–10).

The fulfillment of this prophecy for the seed of the priests of Noah occurred as follows:

1. In war, nearly all of the seed of Amulon and his brethren (the priests of Noah) were killed by the Nephites (Alma 25:3–4).
2. The Amulonites who escaped being slain by the Nephites in the war, fled to the east wilderness and gained power and authority over the Lamanites. They proceeded to cause that the Lamanites there who had converted to Christ to “perish by fire” (Alma 25:4–7). This fulfilled a portion of Abinadi’s prophecy at his death in that “thy seed shall cause that many shall suffer the pains that I do suffer, even the pains of death by fire; and this because they believe in the salvation of the Lord their God.”
3. Putting the Lamanites to death angered others of the Lamanites, who then “hunted the seed of Amulon and his brethren and began to slay them,” and continued apparently to hunt them until the time of Mormon (Alma 25:8–9).

Mormon provided a commentary of the fulfilling of the prophecy of Abinadi with respect to the seed of the priests of Noah, commenting that they were scattered and slain, “even as a sheep without a shepherd is driven and slain

by wild beasts;" "they were driven by the Lamanites;" and "they were hunted, and they were smitten" (Alma 25: 10–12).

Like the priests of king Noah did not suffered death by fire, neither did their seed, so that portion of the prophecy would not have applied to them. They certainly were hunted and the majority slain, so to the extent that their experience "a type of things to come" they did experience the equivalent of the hunting portion and to a great extent, the killing portion of Abinadi's ritual sacrifice, even though not by fire. Being hunted and slain by wild beasts is certainly a "type" of the deer-man sacrificial ritual.

Likely Candidates for the Pagan Gods of Noah

Mosiah 12:36

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing in heaven above, or things which are in the earth beneath.

Mosiah 13:12

And now, ye remember that I said unto you: Thou shall not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of things which are in heaven above, or which are in the earth beneath, or which are in the water under the earth.

"Graven image" means an object of worship carved of wood or stone. "Likeness" would seem to include gods painted in the form of a mural, or possible engravings on a building façade or in other forms that would not be considered an object. It may also include masks and apparel mimicking gods.

Itzamna was the creator of humankind, and also the father of the Bacabs (Francisco Hernandez, quoted by Las Casas [1875–1876] and Diego López de Cogolludo) (Mazariegos 2017, 106). Itzamna was a skygod, and the Bacabs were the skybearers and gods of the earth and the waters under the earth. It is fairly apparent that Abinadi was talking about these gods (or their manifestations at a minimum).

Christenson (2016, 46) translated the work *Apologética historia* of Las Casas which indicates some Maya elders claimed to have worshipped "a trinity of Gods parallel to the Christian trinity and that the Son was named Bacab, the god of the Wayeb' rites as described by Landa:"

There had been found a principal lord who, upon inquiring concerning his beliefs and ancient religion while he resided in his ancient kingdom, said that that (sp?) they knew and believed in God and that he was in the sky, and that this God was the Father and Son and Holy Spirit, and that the Father was called Izone, who had created mankind and all things ... Bacab was the Son, and they say that he was killed by Eopuco, who whipped him and placed on him a crown of thorns, and hung him from a tree, for they understood that he was bound to it rather than nailed (and this is how they indicated that his arms were outstretched), and there he finally died; he was there dead three days, and on the third day he came to life again and rose up into the sky with his Father. After this came Echuac, who is the Holy Spirit, and he filled the earth with all that it had need for. Upon asking what Bacab or Bacabab meant, he said that he was the Son of the Great Father and that the name Echuac meant merchant. (Las Casas 1967, I: 648–49, translated by Christenson)

The later Maya enveloped the three gods of Christianity into their religion with God the Father as Itzamna, the Bacab as the Son, and Echauc as the Holy Spirit. This is exactly consistent with the reverse incorporation of Itzamna and the Bacab into the Hebrew version of Christianity at the time of king Noah.

One of the songs entitled Kiliz Tuup Yk Uitz ("the extinguishing of the old wealthy man upon the hill"), Song 12 from the colonial Yucatec manuscript called the Cantares de Dzitbalché, describes the celebration of a nighttime vigil to bring in the New Year (Vail et al 2013, 116–17). One section is as follows:

Father God [*yum ku*] has decreed that we have passed the evil days here in the town, because there are going to come other days, other months, other years, other Katuns.

The syncretization of a Father God is apparent.

Recognizing this fact makes certain elements of Abinadi's preaching easier to understand.

Mosiah 15:1–5

1 And now Abinadi said unto them: I would that ye should understand that God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people.

2 And because he dwelleth in flesh he shall be called the Son of God, and having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, being the Father and the Son—

3 The Father, because he was conceived by the power of God; and the Son, because of the flesh; thus becoming the Father and Son—

4 And they are one God, yea, the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth.

5 And thus the flesh becoming subject to the Spirit, or the Son to the Father, being one God, suffereth temptation, and yieldeth not to the temptation, but suffereth himself to be mocked, and scourged, and cast out, and disowned by his people.

Remembering that the Maya gods in general, and specifically Itzamna and the Bacabs (including the Pawatuns and Mams), consist of the god and its various manifestations, Abinadi seems to be attempting to contrast and differentiate the correct concept of God the Father being the same in power and purpose with Jesus and having godly flesh provided to Jesus by God the Father with what must have happened with the syncretization of God the Father and the Son of God into a Maya system that looks at a particular god as having various different forms but still being the same god.

Abinadi attempts to explain (while being careful to preserve the common elements of Jesus and God the Father) that Jesus is not a Maya-type manifestation of God the Father, but is a separate god in his own right. Because he has a body that consists of a combination of godly flesh (on account of God the Father) and earthly flesh, although a separate being in the flesh, his body incorporated the divine power of God the Father together with earthly flesh so also has elements of God the Father, but is not a manifestation of God the Father. One must keep in mind that the audience here is not modern-day persons, but rather was directed at those with a particular religious understanding. The issue before Abinadi was not to distinguish that there was more than one god and that a god could be separate one from another; they already understood that under the Maya religious concept. What was not correct in their understanding of Itzamna, the Bacabs, the Pawahtuns and the Mams was that these separate manifestations of the God the Father equivalent were not the same god. Abinadi was explaining that God and his Son were the same manifestation in some respects (power and purpose, and both with godly flesh) but were different individual beings, which is not the case in the Maya theology. The concept of God the Father and Jesus being one god is, of course, not a confusion limited to the Maya-Noah Nephite syncretic religion, as it is still an issue within Christianity today although with a different angle.

The Maya religion had the additional belief that the method of a god taking on the flesh was through the instrument of the king or priest, so Abinadi appeared to also be attempting to clarify that the Son of God would actually appear in his own right, not through some other intermediary. This “divine king” concept was one of the principal doctrinal reasons that Abinadi was put to death as discussed previously.

Analysis of the Rationale for the Execution of Abinadi

Depending on the individuals making the accusations against Abinadi, there are different reasons given for the conviction and ultimate execution of Abinadi.

The People's Rationale

On the initial prophetic foray:

Mosiah 11:26

Now it came to pass that when Abinadi had spoken these words unto them they were wroth with him, and sought to take away his life; but the Lord delivered him out of their hands.

On the second prophetic foray:

Mosiah 12:9–16

9 And it came to pass that they were angry with him; and they took him and carried him bound before the king, and said unto the king: Behold, we have brought a man before thee who has prophesied evil concerning thy people, and saith that God will destroy them.

10 And he also prophesieth evil concerning thy life, and saith that thy life shall be as a garment in a furnace of fire.

11 And again, he saith that thou shalt be as a stalk, even as a dry stalk of the field, which is run over by the beasts and trodden under foot.

12 And again, he saith thou shalt be as the blossoms of a thistle, which, when it is fully ripe, if the wind bloweth, it is driven forth upon the face of the land. And he pretendeth the Lord hath spoken it. And he saith all this shall come upon thee except thou repent, and this because of thine iniquities.

13 And now, O king, what great evil hast thou done, or what great sins have thy people committed, that we should be condemned of God or judged of this man?

14 And now, O king, behold, we are guiltless, and thou, O king, hast not sinned; therefore, this man has lied concerning you, and he has prophesied in vain.

15 And behold, we are strong, we shall not come into bondage, or be taken captive by our enemies; yea, and thou hast prospered in the land, and thou shalt also prosper.

16 Behold, here is the man, we deliver him into thy hands; thou mayest do with him as seemeth thee good.

King Noah's Rationale

On the initial prophetic foray:

Mosiah 11:27–28

27 Now when king Noah had heard of the words which Abinadi had spoken unto the people, he was also wroth; and he said: Who is Abinadi, that I and my people should be judged of him, or who is the Lord, that shall bring upon my people such great affliction?

28 I command you to bring Abinadi hither, that I may slay him, for he has said these things that he might stir up my people to anger one with another, and to raise contentions among my people; therefore I will slay him.

Mosiah 12:25–37, 13:1

25 And now Abinadi said unto them: Are you priests, and pretend to teach this people, and to understand the spirit of prophesying, and yet desire to know of me what these things mean?

26 I say unto you, wo be unto you for perverting the ways of the Lord! For if ye understand these things ye have not taught them; therefore, ye have perverted the ways of the Lord.

27 Ye have not applied your hearts to understanding; therefore, ye have not been wise. Therefore, what teach ye this people?

28 And they said: We teach the law of Moses.

29 And again he said unto them: If ye teach the law of Moses why do ye not keep it? Why do ye set your hearts upon riches? Why do ye commit whoredoms and spend your strength with harlots, yea, and cause this people to commit sin, that the Lord has cause to send me to prophesy against this people, yea, even a great evil against this people?

30 Know ye not that I speak the truth? Yea, ye know that I speak the truth; and you ought to tremble before God.

31 And it shall come to pass that ye shall be smitten for your iniquities, for ye have said that ye teach the law of Moses. And what know ye concerning the law of Moses? Doth salvation come by the law of Moses? What say ye?

32 And they answered and said that salvation did come by the law of Moses.

33 But now Abinadi said unto them: I know if ye keep the commandments of God ye shall be saved; yea, if ye keep the commandments which the Lord delivered unto Moses in the mount of Sinai, saying:

34 I am the Lord thy God, who hath brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

35 Thou shalt have no other God before me.

36 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing in heaven above, or things which are in the earth beneath.

37 Now Abinadi said unto them, Have ye done all this? I say unto you, Nay, ye have not. And have ye taught this people that they should do all these things? I say unto you, Nay, ye have not.

Mosiah 13:1

And now when the king had heard these words, he said unto his priests: Away with this fellow, and slay him; for what have we to do with him, for he is mad.

Mosiah 17:1

And now it came to pass that when Abinadi had finished these sayings, that the king commanded that the priests should take him and cause that he should be put to death.

King Noah's Midtrial Rationale

Mosiah 13:1

And now when the king had heard these words, he said unto his priests: Away with this fellow, and slay him; for what have we to do with him, for he is mad.

King Noah and His Priests' Rationale

Mosiah 12:19–24

19 And they began to question him, that they might cross him, that thereby they might have wherewith to accuse him; but he answered them boldly, and withstood all their questions, yea, to their astonishment; for he did withstand them in all their questions, and did confound them in all their words.

20 And it came to pass that one of them said unto him: What meaneth the words which are written, and which have been taught by our fathers, saying:

21 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings; that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good; that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth;

22 Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye when the Lord shall bring again Zion;

23 Break forth into joy; sing together ye waste places of Jerusalem; for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem;

24 The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God?

Mosiah 17:5–8

5 And it came to pass that the king caused that his guards should surround Abinadi and take him; and they bound him and cast him into prison.

6 And after three days, having counseled with his priests, he caused that he should again be brought before him.

7 And he said unto him: Abinadi, we have found an accusation against thee, and thou art worthy of death.

8 For thou hast said that God himself should come down among the children of men; and now, for this cause thou shalt be put to death unless thou wilt recall all the words which thou hast spoken evil concerning me and my people.

Mosiah 17:11–12

11 And now king Noah was about to release him, for he feared his word; for he feared that the judgments of God would come upon him.

12 But the priests lifted up their voices against him, and began to accuse him, saying: He has reviled the king. Therefore the king was stirred up in anger against him, and he delivered him up that he might be slain.

King Noah's Rationale for Attempting to Slay Alma

Mosiah 17:2–3

2 But there was one among them whose name was Alma, he also being a descendant of Nephi. And he was a young man, and he believed the words which Abinadi had spoken, for he knew concerning the iniquity which Abinadi has testified against them; therefore he began to plead with the king that he would not be angry with Abinadi, but suffer that he might depart in peace.

3 But the king was more wroth, and caused that Alma should be cast out from among them, and sent his servants after him that they might slay him.

Limhi's Analysis of the Basis for the Slaying of Abinadi

Mosiah 7:26–28

26 And a prophet of the Lord have they slain; yea, a chosen man of God, who told them of their wickedness and abominations, and prophesied of many things which are to come, yea, even the coming of Christ.

27 And because he said unto them that Christ was the God, the Father of all things, and said that he should take upon him the image of man, and it should be the image after which man was created in the beginning; or in other words, he said that man was created after the image of God, and that God should come down among the children of men, and take upon him flesh and blood, and go forth upon the face of the earth—

28 And now, because he said this, they did put him to death; and many more things did they do which brought down the wrath of God upon them. Therefore, who wondereth that they are in bondage, and that they are smitten with sore afflictions?

Discussion of Basis of Accusations

The Charge of Blasphemy

The first reaction to Abinadi during his first prophetic foray was that both the people and king Noah called for his immediate execution and there appeared to be no discussion of a trial. The second time he was taken, the people brought him to king Noah and indicated that he should “do with him as seemeth thee good” (Mosiah 12:16). King Noah in turn brought the priests together that “he might hold a council with them what he should do with him” (Mosiah 12:17). The priests then began to “cross him, that they might cross him, that thereby they might have wherewith to accuse him” (Mosiah 12:19).

So what was different about the first prophetic foray and the second such that the first foray would trigger an immediate death, while the second only warranted imprisonment, with additional questioning in hopes that Abinadi would say something worthy of death?

First, it is apparent that the initial call for Abinadi's death after his first prophetic foray was no longer enforceable following the second prophetic foray, possibly because after two years witnesses may no longer have been present. Most likely, the king was no longer subject to the Hebrew tradition of kingship, but was exerting the discretionary rights of divine kingship originating from the Maya tradition. Noah attempted to exert the same unilateral power mid-trial but failed because of the actual divine intervention that protected Abinadi, demonstrating to all there who really had the authority and right to act in the name of God on earth, and is certainly was not Noah.

Assuming that there may have been additional underlying law outside of the rights of divine kingship necessary to put Abinadi to death, it is useful to analyze elements that were in the first prophetic foray but not in the second. The principal differing element is the multiple references by Abinadi involving the requirement that the people recognize the Lord their God:

1. “And except they repent and turn to the Lord their God” (Mosiah 11:21)
2. “. . . they shall know that I am the Lord their God” (Mosiah 11:22)
3. “. . . except this people repent and turn unto the Lord their God” (Mosiah 11:23)
4. “. . . none shall deliver them, except it be the Lord the Almighty God” (Mosiah 11:23)
5. “. . . except they repent . . . and cry mightily to the Lord their God, I will not hear their prayers” (Mosiah 12:24)

In the second foray, the only mention of the Lord is that the Lord told Abinadi to prophesy and he prefaced the prophecies with “thus saith the Lord” (Mosiah 12:2). In the second foray there was no direct challenging of the idolatrous gods that were being worshipped that would constitute blasphemy. He did recite to the priests two of

the Ten Commandments involving the priority of God and the prohibition of graven images (Mosiah 12:35–36). It is not clear that he was addressing king Noah or just the priests, but in any event, he had not defamed deity, but had only accused the priests of not following two of the commandments. John Welch (2008) analyzed the trial of Abinadi from a legal context considering Mosaic law, determining that there were potentially four legal charges against Abinadi: lying, false prophecy, blasphemy, and reviling against the king.

The attack or blasphemy on the concept of the king Noah syncretic Maya/Hebrew religion and their god(s) is the consistent rationale given for the execution Abinadi. In his first foray, his insistence that the Lord is their God, and that they must seek repentance and pray to the Lord the Almighty God was sufficient for both the people and king Noah to sentence him to death. Although it might appear from Mosiah 17:12 that reviling the king may have been what was the final charge that brought execution, it appears from the context that it was merely a method utilized by the priests to cause king Noah to enforce the capital judgment of blasphemy, but was not a capital crime on its own. The apparent blasphemy coming out of the trial indicated was Abinadi's assertion that God himself should come down among the children of men (Mosiah 17:7).

Limhi later expanded the charge of blasphemy as including Abinadi's assertion "that Christ was the God, the Father of all things," that he would "take upon him the image of man," that is was "the image after which man was created in the beginning," "that man was created after the image of God," and "that God should come down among the children of men, and take upon him flesh and blood, and go forth upon the face of the earth."

With regards to Alma, it is noteworthy that there was no attempt to turn Alma over to the priests for execution as happened to Abinadi, but king Noah commanded his servants to kill Alma for challenging his decision, unlike Abinadi who was turned over to the priests to be executed—an indication that Abinadi's execution was clearly religious in nature.

Alma's death sentence by the king seemed a little extreme based on Mosiah 17:2–3 as initially he simply plead with the king not to be angry with Abinadi and to let him "depart in peace." However, it is clarified later that Alma was driven out because he had actually "believed the words of Abinadi" (Mosiah 24:9), which admission would constitute blasphemy. Challenging the divine kingship may also have been in play.

Blasphemy in the Itzamna/Bacab god belief complex context

The Popol Vuh begins by describing the universe before the appearance of the earth and before the creation of human beings. In this primordial age, there was a vast sea of fresh water with a sunless and starless sky above it. This sea was the source of all water, and within it lived Xpiyacoc and Xmucane, the creator grandparents. After a series of different creations, Xmucane ground some of this corn/bone into a dough and mixed it with water, and the creator grandparents modeled it into the first human beings. Itzamna and Ix Chel were the lowland Maya parallels of Xpiyacoc and Xmucane (Bassie-Sweet 1996, 53). Itzamna is a father to the maize god, which in the New Years ceremonies is depicted as being beheaded and then reborn or resurrected (Vail et al. 2013, 77). Hunab ku was a title used for Itzamna prior to the Spanish conquest, and was, at least by some Maya, worshiped as the only god (Christenson 2016, 61).

A main reason that Abinadi's statements regarding the nature of God as well as the creation would be considered blasphemous is that what he was teaching would demand worship of one God and not the multiple Maya idol gods. The story of the creation and the creator itself is also different. The *Madrid Codex* year bearer pages are linked directly to Classic period creation events and specifically with the creation of humans (Vail et al. 2013, 368, 371, 375–76, 385), so these statements made during a Maya New Year's festival would be considered even that much more blasphemous.

A second reason that Abinadi's statements would have been considered blasphemous and destructive under the Maya religion is the assertion that the Son of God would come down in the flesh and go forth upon the face of the earth. In the Maya construct, the Bacabs, as the sons of Itzamna their father, are the sky bearers and should any one of them leave their post, it would trigger the destruction of the world as the Bacab had already done before in the Maya mythology.

Making Sense of the Trap Question from the Priests of Noah

In an attempt to trap Abinadi into some sort of blasphemy, one of the priests quoted Isaiah 52:7–10.

Mosiah 12:19–24

19 And they began to question him, that they might cross him, that thereby they might have wherewith to accuse him; but he answered them boldly, and withstood all their questions, yea, to their astonishment; for he did withstand them in all their questions, and did confound them in all their words.

20 And it came to pass that one of them said unto him: What meaneth the words which are written, and which have been taught by our fathers, saying:

21 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings; that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good; that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth;

22 Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye when the Lord shall bring again Zion;

23 Break forth into joy; sing together ye waste places of Jerusalem; for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem;

24 The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God?

In order to attempt to entrap Abinadi into blaspheming against the gods of the king Noah Maya/Hebrew syncretic religion, the priest quoted a section of scripture that they must have applied in support of their blended religion and its blended god(s). This is the very nature of syncretic religion; it tries to incorporate foreign elements into the existing religious structure to make them familiar.

The Popol Vuh refers to the measuring out of the earth's surface into a quadrilateral space (D. Tedlock 1985, 244). The earth visually appears to be a flat disk, but the Maya believed that on this flat disk was a quadrilateral space (Bassie-Sweet 1996). The points where the solstice sun rises and sets defined the corners of this quadrilateral world, while the sides were demarcated by four mythological mountains.

Each of the four mythological mountains was inhabited by a grandfather deity (God N) who was thought to be the embodiment of the mountain. When the great mountains were asked to come from the sea, it was these mountain deities who were, in effect, being asked to come forth.

Four old men marked with the *kawak* elements were the manifestations of God N as the four great mythological mountains of the cardinal directions (Taube 1992, 92–99). According to Landa, the Bacabs were "four brothers whom God placed, when he created the world, at the four points of it, holding up the sky so that it should not fall" (Tozzer 1941, 136). This is an appropriate description of the four mythological mountains at the horizon. The turtle, spiral shell and mountain manifestations of God N are all shown as bearers holding up serpent sky bands in Maya iconography.

The identification of God N as the four great mountains of the world provides important insights into the creation of the world as described in the Popol Vuh. The passage "the mountains were asked to come from the water,

straightaway there were great mountains” is followed by “it was merely their spirit essence (*nawal*), their miraculous power that brought about the creation of the mountains and the valleys” (Christenson 2000). So when the great mountains were asked to come forth, it was, in effect, the mountain manifestations of the creator grandfather who were asked to come forth (Bassie 2002).

In order to create a safe human space, the Maya replicated the quadrilateral world model. For example, in Postclassic Yucatan the town was a quadrilateral space with four ritual entrances located on the sides of the town. These entrances were marked by piles of stone that represented the mountains of the grandfather deities. Idols representing these gods were found on top of these symbolic mountains. In addition to man-made locations, the Maya believed that the mountains and caves in the vicinity of the community also represented the four mythological mountains. These mountains and their deities defined the safe space of the community. By replicating the mountains of the horizon in their towns and designating sites in the natural landscape, the Maya created locations where offerings could be made to the deities to ensure the safe continuation of life. This ritual activity was not only structured according to the cosmological model but constantly validated that model (Sosa 1985).

Since it was necessary for Abinadi to explain the true meaning of the scripture, it is apparent that the priests of king Noah had another meaning in mind than that provided to them by Abinadi. They must have presumed that Abinadi was going to respond in a manner that would entrap him into blasphemy contradicting their concept of God. Welch (2008), Pike (1998), and Warby (2003) proposed that the attempt to find something upon which to accuse him was the premise that the beautiful and true prophet brings good tidings and publishes peace, not prophecies of doom and gloom. This explanation is lacking in many regards. First, the pre-Exilic Old Testament has many prophecies that do not bring good tidings, including many in Isaiah and even Noah of the Old Testament. This type of question is easily rebutted without defaulting to blasphemy. Second, since many witnesses had already documented that Abinadi preached this very thing, why would this additional question be necessary in order to trap him? Third, after the question he proceeded to discuss more doom and gloom prophecies, yet this concept is never raised as a basis for Abinadi’s death. This concept is thus not supported by the actual Book of Mormon record. In addition, it assumes that king Noah and his priests were operating completely under the law of Moses. We know, and Abinadi knew, that they were not, so it is not reasonable to assume that there would not be differences in the religion and the administration of the religion from the Hebrew tradition or even the Nephite tradition.

Importantly, when Abinadi answers the question, he does not address that issue at all; he provides a lengthy sermon defining who “the feet of him” is talking about that is standing on the mountain, concluding that this refers to the prophets testifying of the Son of God and the Son of God himself. Abinadi also provides an explanation of who the Son of God is in relation to the Father and talks about the following topics:

1. God redeems his people
2. Coming of the Messiah where the Son of God would come down and take upon him the form of a man
3. God would bring about the resurrection
4. The Son of God would be oppressed, afflicted, sacrificed and slain
5. The carnal nature of man

Curiously, the only item deemed to be blasphemous in this sermon from Abinadi, according to Limhi, is that man was created in the image of God and that God should come down in flesh and blood among men and go forth upon the face of the earth.

A comparison of what and was not blasphemous with the Maya religion, especially in light of the New Year event, is illustrative as to the nature of the syncretic Noah-Maya religion. There does not seem to be a conflict with God and his manifestation as the Son, or the fact that there is a Father and a Son. Abinadi ends the sermon with the

statement that “redemption cometh through Christ the Lord, who is the very Eternal Father” (Mosiah 16:15) which has a reasonable textual interpretation of the god-manifestation concept in the Maya religion. Thus the Itzamna-Bacab god complex is consistent with that premise.

There is no issue with regards to the carnal nature of man with redemption by God, as this is not inconsistent with the Noah-Maya syncretic religious thought. The concept of the sacrifice of the Son of God is not problematic, which is consistent with Maya religious concepts of god-figures being killed or sacrificed as happened to Hun Hunahpu and Vucub Hunahpu, the father and uncle of the Maya mythological Hero Twins. Hun Huanahpu is equated to the Maya maize god. As previously mentioned, in the Maya New Year’s ceremonies the maize god is depicted as being beheaded and then reborn or resurrected. Resurrection of a god would clearly not be blasphemous, especially in light of the concept that the rebirth of the whole world was a principal purpose for the Maya New Year rituals. While the Maya belief does not include resurrection of persons, Abinadi’s references to that may have been considered wrong but would not have been considered blasphemy as they did not directly involve a god.

The two areas which were considered blasphemous were the contradiction of the creation stories of the Nephite and the Noah-Maya religion, and the coming down of the Son of God going upon the face of the earth. As has been mentioned, with the Bacab being equivalent to the Son of God, for such a thing to occur (Bacab leaving their post) would mean the destruction of the world.

It would seem that the priest of Noah who posed the Isaiah question referencing the “feet of him” that was “upon the mountains” was interpreting that portion of the scripture to be referring to the skybearer Bacabs and the mythical mountains at the cardinal points where the Bacabs stood supporting the heavens. The later scriptural reference that the “holy arm” was “in all nations, and all the ends of the earth” could also reasonably be attributed to the dominion of the Bacab. Thus the posing of the scripture in Isaiah by the priest of Noah was successful in providing sufficient contradiction to the syncretic Noah-Maya religion to constitute blasphemy to justify the killing of Abinadi.

Migration of Zeniffite Nephite/Maya Syncretic Religion to a Full Maya/Lamanite Religion

The pathway from the Nephite/Maya syncretic religion later among the priests of king Noah completely to the local Maya religion is made apparent in the Book of Mormon. The priests of king Noah settled in the land of Amulon, led by the leader of the priests himself named Amulon (Mosiah 23:31–32). They then joined the Lamanites, thereafter Amulon was made a vassal king over the land of Helam (Mosiah 23:39).

After the departure of the Limhites to Zarahemla, Amulon and his brethren priests were appointed by the Lamanite king as teachers over all the people in the lands of Shemlon, Shilom, and Amulon, as a result the people there were no longer taught about the Lord their God, the law of Moses, nor the teachings of Abinadi (Mosiah 24:1–5). It is clear that the resulting religion was a form of the local Maya religion, which was later referred to as the “order of Nehor” as many of the Amulonites were later identified as belonging to the order of Nehor (Alma 2:4).

The meaning of the name *Amulon* as a king is also indicative of the divine king representation of the Principal Bird Deity manifestation of Itzamna in the Maya religion as potential Sumerian roots for the name are:

am: a bird
ul: vault of heaven, firmament
lu: person, ruler
un: to arise, to be high
 (ePSD 2006)

The meaning of the name *Amulon* would approximately mean “High Bird Ruler of Heaven” which is consistent with the sky god Itzamna manifested as a bird under the Maya divine king concept.