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## Evidence of the Nehor Religion in Mesoamerica

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**Abstract:** The prophecies of Abinadi in the Book of Mormon, his sacrificial death, and the deaths of his murderers all correlate with Maya rituals and ceremonies. The later order of Nehor, having common elements with the king Noah syncretic religion, also correlates with known Mesoamerican religious practices, one correlation being the Principal Bird Deity and its manifestations. Two other religious traditions, the "Great Spirit" and Amalekites, are derivatives of the Nephite religion.

# EVIDENCE of the NEHOR RELIGION in MESOAMERICA



*Jerry D. Grover Jr., PE, PG*

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**by**

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**Peer Review:** This book has undergone third-party blind review and third-party open review without distinction as to religious affiliation. As with all of my works, it will be available for free in electronic format on the open web, so hopefully there will be ongoing peer review in the form of book reviews, etc. One comment of interest from a professional academic during review was "you should receive tenure for this piece of work."

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**On the front cover:**

Scaffold Vase depicting deer-man sacrifice, image from Maya Vase Database, Justin Kerr, 2016.

**On the back cover:**

Depiction of Horus, Wikipedia Commons, 2017; Principal Bird Deity from the San Bartolo West Wall Murals, image from Taube et al., 2010.

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# Introduction

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The Book of Mormon has received tremendous scrutiny as a religious text. But the religions in the Book of Mormon have received little attention. In addition to the normative prophetic religion in the Book of Mormon, reflected by its authors, there are marginal and dissident sects. When these sects, their beliefs, and their practices are given a close reading, they reveal the complex religious interplay between Nephite culture and indigenous Mesoamerican religious cultures. And what the Book of Mormon tells us of dissident and marginal groups displays elements of indigenous Mesoamerican, and particularly Maya, religion.

This book will examine what the Book of Mormon reveals about the interaction of prophetic, Judaic religion and dissident, syncretic religion in the conflict between Abinadi and the priests of Noah, in the rise of the order of Nehor (including among the Amalekites), and in the survival of “Great Spirit” religion among Lamoni’s people.

To compare religions in the Book of Mormon with Mesoamerican religions requires detailed knowledge of both. Many readers will bring a fair amount of background knowledge about the Book of Mormon’s narrative and teachings. But as most will bring little knowledge of Maya myth and ritual, the latter will be described in some detail.

We will begin by looking at the setting of story of Abinadi and by examining the syncretic Mayan-Judaic religion of king Noah and his priests and the prophecies Abinadi made against Noah and his priests. We will then turn to a detailed examination of certain Maya rituals, such as the rituals surrounding the New Year and the deer-man sacrifice. This will then allow us to compare details from the Book of Mormon with Maya ritual, revealing how Abinadi’s prophecies played on their ritual context, how Abinadi’s preaching would have offended Mayan religious sensibilities, and how Abinadi’s murder fit into the Maya culture of human sacrifice.

Among the insights these comparisons will reveal are the Maya calendar in use during Abinadi’s life, the Maya year in which Abinadi was killed, the specific sacrificial practices to which Abinadi was subjected, and how the Maya-Judaic syncretic religion of the priests of Noah was eventually abandoned for full-blown Maya religion.

We will next examine what the Book of Mormon discloses about another dissident religion, the order of Nehor, demonstrating how the order of Nehor has essentially nothing in common with the normative Judaic religion of the Nephite prophets and is, in fact, an indigenous religion secondarily adopted by Nephites. Comparing the Book of Mormon’s descriptions of the order of Nehor with Maya religion of the time and place will enable us to identify it with a specific Maya worship system. In conjunction with this discussion we will also explore the mysterious origin of the Amalekites, a group that partially practiced the Nehor religion.

Lastly, we will also examine the “Great Spirit” religion among Lamoni’s people, offering evidence from the text that this was a survival of Nephite religion among Lamanites with a measure of Nephite ancestry.



# Chapter 1

## Abinadi and Noah: Normative Judaic Nephite Religion versus Syncretic Mayan-Judaic Dissident Religion

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### The Setting of the Land of Nephi at the Time of Abinadi

According to the Sorenson model (2013) the land of Nephi was located in the current Valley of Guatemala, with one of the principal archaeological sites being the ancient city of Kaminaljuyu. The known parts of Kaminaljuyu lie on a broad plain beneath roughly the western third of modern Guatemala City. Unfortunately, large portions of this archaeological site were destroyed or covered by the urbanization of Guatemala City, so a complete archaeological representation of the city is now impossible.

The calendar system for year-counts in the Book of Mormon up until nine years after the coming of Christ was the 12 lunar month year of 354.367 days/year. Some additional dates are now also known from the “Caractors” Document (Grover 2015). Using this calendar count, the basic timeline involving this area, and the Book of Mormon calculated up to the time of king Noah and the order of Nehor is:

- circa 179 BC – Zeniff departs Zarahemla
- circa 166 BC – Conflict between Lamanites and Nephites within the Valley of Guatemala; Lamanites described as an idolatrous people; Lamanites described as a wild, ferocious, and blood-thirsty people
- circa 155 BC – King Noah comes to power (estimated)
- circa 145 BC – Abinadi put to death (estimated)
- circa 93 BC – First year of the reign of the judges

After becoming king, Noah had many wives and concubines, and “did cause his people to . . . commit whoredoms and all manner of wickedness” (Mosiah 11:2). He laid a tax on the people, taking a portion of their ownership of various items, which he used to support himself and his wives as well as his priests and their wives and concubines (Mosiah 11:4). He engaged in “riotous living” with his wives and concubines, as did his priests with their harlots (Mosiah 11:14).

Notably, the prophet Abinadi, who reprimanded king Noah and was eventually put to death by him, specifically noted two areas of wickedness: worshiping graven images and sexual lasciviousness amongst the priest class, which was then extended to the general population. In addition to general greed, Abinadi specifically identified these two main areas where they had deviated from the law of Moses (Mosiah 12:29, 34–35, 13:12–13). Noah and his priests were apparently practicing a version of religion that they thought somewhat consistent with the law of Moses (Mosiah 12:28). Their religious practices were evidently incorporating some elements of indigenous Mesoamerican religious practices. This type of incorporation of surrounding religious practices is called syncretization and is found in other situations of Nephite apostasy in the Book of Mormon (Wright et al. 2012). It seems apparent that the elements of the Mesoamerican religion being incorporated shared consistency with some corrupted elements of the law of Moses.

The incorporation of native religious beliefs by an enclave of a different religion is a common occurrence, even in the modern world. I have witnessed Chinese Catholic churches that allow the traditional worshipping of ancestors involving the burning of incense, where only saints were worshiped before. Statues of Christ often had Asian facial features.

The syncretization and modification of the enclave religion is easier when it involves slight modifications or incorporates parallel practices that do not completely change the religious ceremony or practice. This makes it much easier for practitioners of the modified religion to claim that they are still essentially practicing the “old time” religion. Thus priests of Noah could still claim they were still practicing the law of Moses without compunction.

The Southern Maya Region, which includes the Valley of Guatemala, has been classified by most archaeologists during the Late Preclassic period (400 BC–AD 250, which includes the time of king Noah) as having a mix of cultures and ethnicities present, with the Maya culture being one of the dominant cultures (Love 2011). There is much disagreement among archaeologists as to the cultural and geographical source of the Maya. The Book of Mormon itself reflects that at least two groups existed at that time, the Nephites and the Lamanites. Since political and religious affiliations are only two elements of a culture group, it would not necessarily be expected that the other basic ways of life and culture (agricultural practices, dwelling type, etc.) were extremely different between these groups.

It would not be expected that any significant portion of the Maya culture in the Valley of Guatemala would have incorporated many cultural elements of the original Lehi group. The Maya as a culture group at the time of king Noah extended geographically far beyond the Southern Maya Region. In addition, it would not be expected that the culture of the original small group of Lehiites arriving in the sixth-century BC would be existent in its exact original form 400 years later at the time of king Noah.

While the original culture of king Noah would be classified as Nephite, it seems clear from the religious practices (graven images, human sacrifice, etc.) that there was a significant deviation on the level of the king and the priests to a different religious practice and that they were incorporating the religious practices of adjacent cultural groups. Within a decade or so of Zeniff’s arrival, he described the Lamanites as “idolatrous” (Mosiah 9:12), so the Lamanites are identified as a likely source of the later idolatry practiced by king Noah. It would be reasonable to assume that the cultural group from which they were borrowing was the Maya, which would be equivalent to the Lamanites in this respect. Since the adjacent group that the Book of Mormon refers to are the Lamanites, it would seem reasonable that the Lamanites belong to the Maya cultural group of the local area.

### **Religious Syncretization by King Noah with the Maya**

Since the setting for the location of king Noah in the Land of Nephi has been identified as the area of the Valley of Guatemala, a look at aspects of what we know of the area in relation to the syncretization of the Nephite religion by king Noah might be of interest. Specifically the large archaeological site of Kaminaljuyu in the valley can provide us some information.

Also notable is the fact that Abinadi emphasized that God would come down to earth and take upon himself the form of a man (Mosiah 13:34), which offended king Noah and his priests greatly and was one of the principal religious doctrines for which they condemned Abinadi to death (Mosiah 17:8). There are various possible reasons why this may have been an offense worthy of death.

1. The political position of king may also have been perceived as constituting a divine power, such that no intervention was needed by deity.

2. The form of worship that was being engaged in involved worshiping of graven images, “or any likeness of any thing in heaven above, or things which are in the earth beneath” (Mosiah 12:36) that were not in human form, so the description given by Abinadi would have been contrary to their belief in the form of God.

### King as a Divine Individual on Earth

Among the Maya during the Classic period, the inherently human nature of kings contrasted against their ability to manifest the divine, a phenomenon described as “concurrency” by several authors (Houston and Stuart 1996, 297–300; Houston et al. 2006, 270, 275), meaning the king’s human body became simultaneously occupied by divine presence(s) during ritual performances (see also Schele and Freidel 1990, 70; Schele and Miller 1986, 302; Stone 1991).

Sculpture 11 at Kaminaljuyu (see figure 1) has been interpreted in a similar fashion as the regalia of a king representing the god known as the Principal Bird Deity (“PBD”) (Henderson 2013, 335). Sculpture 11 is thought to be from roughly the same period as king Noah. The setting in this respect is consistent with the hostile reaction to Abinadi’s statement that God would come to the earth and walk among men, which would have been perceived as a direct challenge to king Noah’s position of being the manifestation of the divine on earth.

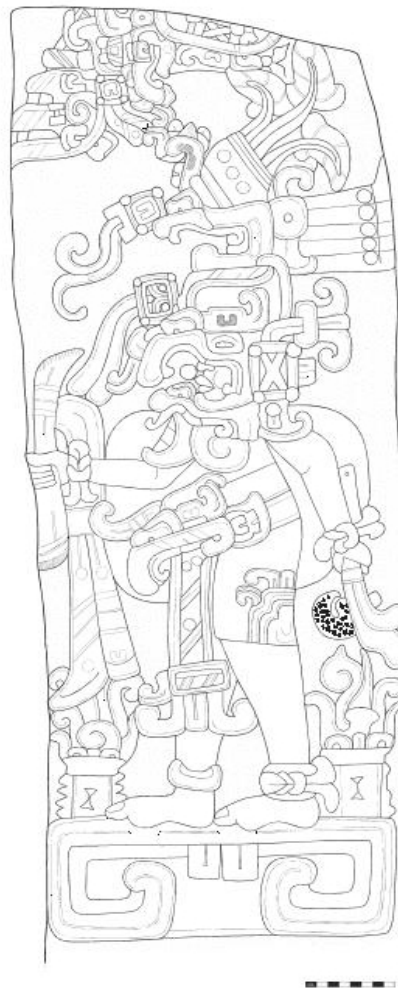


Figure 1. Sculpture 11 at Kaminaljuyu (Henderson 2013, 539)

It has been pointed out that king Noah is contrasted in many details with king Benjamin, with Benjamin the paragon of righteous leadership, while Noah is the epitome of wicked kingship (Donaldson 1991). King Benjamin, while not specifically referring to king Noah, makes clear that the practice of divine kingship is common and that he is not that type of king:

Mosiah 2:10

I have not commanded you to come up higher than ye should fear me, or that ye should think that I of myself am more than a mortal man.

### **Candidate Gods for King Noah graven images in Kaminaljuyu**

The following Maya gods have been potentially identified based on iconography that has been found at Kaminaljuyu and all had what would qualify as “graven images” present at Kaminaljuyu. Most would be considered a local god or a local form of a regional Maya god.

- Goddess O
  - Trefoil eye god
  - Antecedent God N
  - Old God (Sculpture 17 at Kaminaljuyu)
  - Kaminaljuyu Rain God
  - Horned water deity
  - Witz Eyed Earth
  - Crocodile earth deity
  - Bracket Beaked Deity
  - Feathered serpent
  - Principal Bird Deity
  - Foliated Jester God
- (Henderson 2013)

Henderson (2013, 268) asserts that “some kind of fusion or mixing took place among the trefoil-eyed god, God N, and the Principal Bird Deity to engender the later, standardized form known as Itzamna.” There may of course be other gods whose likeness or figures have yet to be unearthed.

### **Prophecies Regarding King Noah and His People Made by Abinadi Previous to Those of His Death**

During Abinadi’s first foray among the people of Noah he prophesied in relation to the future fate of the people that should they not repent, they would:

1. Be “delivered into the hand of their enemies”
  2. “Be brought into bondage”
  3. Be “smitten by their enemies”
  4. Their prayers will not be heard neither will they be delivered from their afflictions
- (Mosiah 11:20–26)

Though the people wanted to kill Abinadi, he was “delivered out of their hands.” He returned two years later prophesying that “this generation” would be:

1. “Brought into bondage”
2. “Smitten on the cheek”
3. “Shall be driven by men and shall be slain”

4. The vultures, dogs, and the wild beasts “shall devour their flesh”
5. Specifically, that the life of king Noah will be “valued even as a garment in a hot furnace,” or “as a garment in a furnace of fire.” Noah will also be as a stalk trodden underfoot and as a thistle which is driven forth upon the face of the land when blown by the wind.
6. The people would be smitten with sore afflictions, famine and pestilence.
7. The people “shall howl all the day long.”
8. The people “shall have burdens lashed upon their backs” and shall “be driven before like a dumb ass.”
9. Hail will be sent among them, and it shall smite them. They shall be smitten with the east wind, and insects shall pester their land and devour their grain.
10. The people shall be smitten with great pestilence.  
(Mosiah 12: 1–12)

### Maya Ritual and Ceremony

The Valley of Guatemala culture in which the Zeniffites were embedded was Maya, so it is useful to look into the Maya culture to determine if there are rituals or ceremonies that would be consistent with the incorporation of Maya elements into the Abinadi story. This section will describe many details of Maya New Year beliefs, rites, and practices. These details will provide the basis for the comparison of Maya practices with the Abinadi narrative. Readers who wish to understand Maya religion in its specifics and be able to make the comparisons for themselves will want to read this section closely. On the other hand, readers who are less interested in the details of Maya religion and mainly want to see the result of the author’s comparisons of it with the Book of Mormon text may wish to skim much of the description of Maya ritual.

In trying to postulate elements of the Late Pre-Classic (400 BC–AD 100) Maya religious practices one has to rely on later recounting of the Maya practices at the time of the Spanish conquest, on any Maya monumental or codex texts that may have existed, and iconographic depictions on buildings, stelae, or pottery.

#### Maya Bacab New Year Rituals and Prophecies

Diego de Landa (AD 1524–1579) was a Spanish bishop of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Yucatán, who compiled much valuable information on pre-Columbian Maya civilization, and specifically discussed New Year’s ceremonies and festivals.

The Maya Haab' calendar is comprised of eighteen months of twenty days each, plus an additional period of five days (“nameless days”) at the end of the year known as the Uayeb (Wayeb’ under current orthography). Because of the way that the Haab' calendar cycle plays out, there are four particular Maya days which must always be the first day of the Maya year. These New Year day names (“Year Bearers”), which identify the year, are, in order, Kan, Muluc, Ix, and Cauac. The five Wayeb’ days are linked to the perceived death of the world preceding its rebirth on New Year’s Day. During this time normal life is suspended and the people are susceptible to disease, misfortune, and death and have been referred to as “Utuz Kin” (Days of Lies or Deception), and “Ulobol Kin” (Days of Harm or Ruin) (Christenson 2016, 25–26).

Tozzer (1941), Love (1986, 169–71) and Taube (1988a, 272–73) have all indicated that Landa outlined three different rites that took place during the New Year’s festival. Taube defined them as (1) the death of the old year, corresponding with the termination of Cumku (Kumk’u under current orthography), which is the last twenty day month; (2) following Kumk’u, during the Wayeb’ period of the last five unlucky days of the year, transitional rituals; and (3) the rituals relating to the first day of Pop (the first month of the year; Pohp under current orthography). Love prefers to divide the rituals into two periods, the first during the Wayeb’, and the second the rituals relating to

the Pohp. Love labels the Pohp rituals as “New Year Ceremonies to Avert Calamities.” Pharo (2014, 179) has proposed a structure similar to Taube expanding on the first element which is:

1. The three preliminary veintena (month) rites (*Pax*, *K’ayab*, *Kumk’u*) of *Sabacil Than* of separation.
2. The transition five-day *Wayeb’* rites.
3. The incorporating, renovation and renewing rites of Pohp.

Preliminary Month Rites of Death of the Old Year; *Pax*, *K’ayab*, and *Kumk’u* rites

*Sabacil Than* was celebrated within towns and families as a diversion before the unlucky five day *Wayeb’* period in each of the last three veintenas of the calendar year. The wealthy arranged feasts with dancing and “excessive drinking” (Pharo 2014, 179). Landa reports that these ceremonies lasted until Pohp, the first veintena of the New Year.

The etymological meaning of “*Sabacil Than*” is a dye or ink from the burned soot of the *sabac-che* tree (Sp. *Exostema*), *than* is a word for “speech,” “word,” or “language,” but also “ordenanzas” or “law.” Tozzer proposed that this expression alludes to a rule or law to paint oneself black during the rituals of the last three veintenas of the year. Tozzer quotes Roman and Zamora indicating that the Indigenous people of Guatemala “each time they (the priests) sacrifice they blacken themselves. The men commonly do not bathe but blacken themselves and this is a kind of silicon and ornament of penance.” During the later Pohp rituals certain fasting persons are described as removing their black “*tizne negra*” with the arrival of the New Year. Landa indicates that this black soot was cleansed in a purification ceremony (Pharo 2014, 179–80). They were at this stage of the rite of passage ornamented with red ointment (Tozzer 1941, 152).

Fasting and celibacy were practiced from up to three veintenas beforehand among the lords, the religious specialists, the “principal people,” and “those who wished to do so on account of their devotion.” Thus, two ritual strategies were executed in preparing for the *Wayeb’* period: (1) drunken and excessive festival of the wealthy and elite; and (2) fasting, penance, and celibacy of certain religious specialists and devotees.

One of the sacrificial rituals that occurred during *Pax* is discussed later in relation to the sacrifice of *Abinadi*.

#### Wayeb’ Rituals

The veneration of four gods called the *Bacabs* occurred during the *Wayeb’* and involved the Year Bearers and their prognostics. The primary ritual inaugurating each New Year takes place during the five unlucky year ending days of the previous year. According to Landa, each *Bacab* ruled one of the directions and the associated Year Bearer day (one of four New Year days), as shown in table 1.

The Year Bearer correlation to cardinal directions documented by Landa has been disputed by Thomas (1882, 68–69), Thompson (1934, 212), and Tozzer (1941, 136–37n635). They agree that *Kan* should be associated with the east, *Mulek* with the north, *Ix* with the west, and *Kawak* with the south.

The general features of the *Wayeb’* ritual abstracted from Landa’s account are that each of the four entrances to a town had two heaps of stone “facing each other” according to the cardinal directions (Coe 1965). A hollow clay image of the god of the *Wayeb’* days with the correct color association was made, carried to the entrance at the appropriate direction, and placed on one of the stone heaps, with the facing heap still having the *Wayeb’* god from the previous year’s ceremony.



**Table 1. Maya Year Bearer Days and Associated Bacabs, Directions, and Color in the 1500s (Coe 1965)**

<i>Ceremony for year</i>	<i>in Uayeb days of</i>	<i>Color</i>	<i>Direction</i>	<i>Bacab</i>	<i>Chac</i>
Kan	Cauac	Yellow ( <i>Kan</i> )	South	Kanal Bacab (Hobnil)	Kan-xib Chac
Muluc	Kan	Red ( <i>Chac</i> )	East	Chacal Bacab	Chac-xib Chac
Ix	Muluc	White ( <i>Sac</i> )	North	Sacal Bacab	Sac-xib Chac
Cauac	Ix	Black ( <i>Ek</i> )	West	Ekel Bacab (Hosan Ek)	Ek-xib Chac

An official (referred to as a principal) was chosen by the nobles and the priest. He was in charge of the ceremony and in his house the festival was celebrated. A second image of another god was then made and placed in the house of the principal. The nobles, priests, and townspeople then gathered at his house and formed a procession over a road, which had been cleaned and adorned with arches and greenery and which led directly to the appropriate entrance and to the image of the Wayeb' god for the coming year.

The priests performed various rituals before the image of the god. The image was censed with *pom* (cobal resin) ground up with maize; a bird was sacrificed by decapitation (usually a turkey hen), and the idol was then placed on a standard representing one of the world direction trees matching the appropriate color.

The image was then carried back in a recessional to the house of the principal. Once back in the principal's house, the Wayeb' image was placed opposite that of the second god, and offerings of food and drink were made to both, which then were divided among those present. The participants then drew blood from their ears with which they anointed a third image called *Acantun* (*acan* "set up"; *tun* "stone"). The Wayeb'god and the second god were sensed and the Wayeb' god was regularly fed until the end of the Wayeb' days.

At the end of the Wayeb' days, on the eve of the New Year, the second god's image was carried out to the rock pile at the entrance located at the next cardinal point in a counterclockwise direction from that in use during that year's ceremony and placed there. Each year to come had its own omens (both good and bad), called by the Bacab for that year. The effect of the rituals was to "avert calamities."

A diagram of the movement of the idols was created by Coe (1965) (see figure 2).

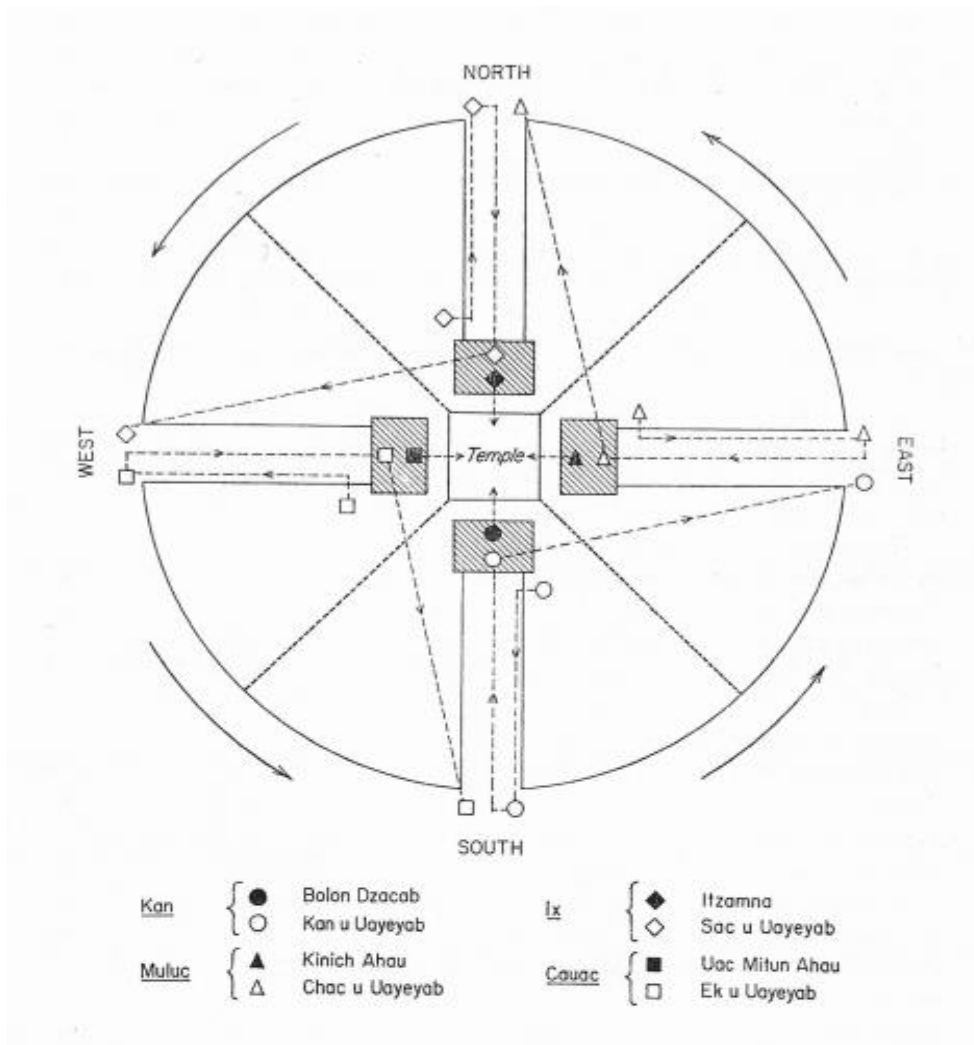


Figure 2. Diagram of ceremonial circuits in the Wayeb' rites. The shaded oblongs represent the houses of the *principales*. Hollow symbols stand for the images of the Wayeb' gods, and solid symbols stand for the images of other gods that were eventually carried into the temple. (Coe 1965, 101)

The four Bacabs were invoked in connection with rain and agriculture, since they were intimately associated with the four Chaacs, or rain deities, and the four Pawahtuns, or wind deities, and all sets of these gods are associated with the four cardinal directions. *Bacab* may simply be another term for *pawatun*. The four Bacabs are described as part of the earth and also supporters of the sky:

They gave other names to each one of them [Bacabs] and designated by them the part of the world where God had placed him, bearing up the heavens, and they appropriated to him and to the part where he stands one of the four dominical letters [year bearers]. And they distinguished the calamities and fortunate events which they said must happen during the year of each one of them, and other the letters, which must accompany them. (Tozzer 1941, 136)

The Pawahtuns have also been identified as an aspect of the God N deity (Vail et al 2013, 357). The four Mams are one of the deity sets identified in the year bearer pages of the Maya codices, and is an epithet of the Pawahtuns

(Vail et al. 2013, 79) and are also associated with the four cardinal directions and are said to live in the mountains and the Underworld.

In many polytheistic religions, a deity's epithets generally reflected a particular aspect of that god's essence and role, for which his influence may be obtained for a specific occasion. Alternatively the epithet may identify a particular and localized aspect of the god. Often the epithet is the result of fusion of one form of the deity with an older one.

According to Karl Taube's (1989) analysis, the Mams, Bacabs, and the Pawahtuns were different aspects of the same underlying deity and are also tied to God N.

It is interesting corollary to king Noah, that on Maya ceramics, God N is very often portrayed as a drunk and a lecher. Since the Bacabs were Year Bearer patrons, and also because of their meteorological qualities, the Bacabs were important in divination ceremonies; they were approached with questions about crops, weather, or the health of bees.

According to Landa and the *Chilam Balam de Chuymayel* (a mythic history from the town of Chuymayel), the Bacabs were created by the creator deity Hunab Ku when the gods made the universe in the third age and were placed at the four corners of the universe. Itzamna was worshiped as a creator deity at least as far back as the Classic period. Christenson (2016, 40–41) indicates:

The *Relación de Valladolid* refers to him [Itzamna] as the ah tepal (supreme ruler) of the sky, while the *Relación de Ekbalom* declares that “[the Maya] worshipped only one god, whose name was Hunab [Junab’, meaning “alone, sole, singular”] and Zamna [Itzamna].” (Taube 1992, 35–36)

A deluge destroyed the third age, but the Bacabs escaped destruction, were given new names, and then were again placed at the four corners of the earth to support the sky during the current age (Read et al. 2002). According to the *Chilam Balam de Chuymayel* the Bacab were the ones who caused the flood and the destruction of the prior age. Presumably, the destruction of the world would again occur if the Bacabs failed to perform this function (Christenson 2016, 28) or leave their posts as the pillars holding up the sky. As Landa indicated, if the Bacabs were not there to sustain the heavens, the heavens would fall (Tozzer 1941, 136).

According to the *Chilam Balam de Chuymayel* and the *Dresden Codex*, after the flood, the four Bacabs were responsible to put the new world in order by being responsible through the erection of four Imix trees at the cardinal points and one in the center and are referred to as “pillars of the skies” (Vail et al. 2013, 55).

The Bacabs have been identified as a manifestation of God N from the *Madrid Codex* (Thompson 1970, 278–79). Inscriptions on Panel I from Pomona show four God Ns holding the day associated with the seating of the first month of the calendar year (Stuart 2005, 4).

As well as being skybearers, the Bacabs are considered the gods of the underground, terrestrial water, and thunder. The word *bakab* can be translated as “first in the world” and the term was a commonly used title for rulers (and occasionally their wives) during the Maya Classic period (Vail et al. 2013, 71).

After the five days are past, according to Landa, there are four gods separate from the Bacabs who then rule over the rest of each of the years respectively: Bolon Czacab (a god of rain and regeneration); Kinich Ahau (a sun god); Itzamna; and Uac Mitun Ahau (an underworld deity). During the five days of Wayeb’ these gods are removed from their temples and offerings that would normally go to them are had by the Bacabs.

The Mam are thought of as evil, and are used to refer to an aged god of thunder. At times other than the Wayeb' the Mam is contained in the Underworld and bound in cords, the sound of thunder is believed to be his attempt to escape. López de Cogolludo recounts that the Wayeb' period rituals included an "idol" of the deity Mam (López de Cogolludo 1971, 4, VIII, 255). Pio Pérez (Craine and Reindrop 1979, 170–71) associates the "idol" of Mam with the ceremonies of the Wayeb' period (Stephens 1843, 281).

In present day Maya communities, the Mam "grandfather" comprises deities of rain and the mountains assigned to color and cardinal directions (Tozzer 1941, 138n639). There are four bearers of time (Year Bearers), Ik', Kiej, Ee, and Noj, called Alcalde or Mam in the K'iche' calendar of Momostenango, Guatemala. These are the deities of the cardinal directions and are each associated with the four mountains, El Tamanco, El Kilajá, Zocop, and Pipilj (Pharo 2014, 216). From various contemporary Maya groups are examples of Mams operating as Year Bearers where they are associated with mountains. In postclassic New Year rituals mounds of stone represent symbolic mountains, which were the place of the Uayeyab figure, also known as Mam, Bacab, and Pawahtun (Taube 1988a, 285–88). The Mam is a deity of evil that is feared among the Maya, who comes out of his dwelling beneath the surface of the earth during the Wayeb' (Christenson 2016, 50).

While Landa records the New Year Bearer ritual system in the 1500s among the Maya of the Yucatan, there is evidence that the New Year Bearer system was practiced in the Classic (AD 250 to AD 900) and Late Pre-Classic (300 BC to AD 250)(Stuart 2005), which extends back to the time of Abinadi. Stuart (2005) finds evidence that rituals involving the New Year Bearer system remained consistent through time. Shifts or adjustments in calendars causing changes in the four day names would not have made any change to the underlying ritual. Karl Taube has identified murals from the first century BC at San Bartolo, Peten, Guatemala with identical effigy World Trees and four offerings that match exactly those in the *Dresden Codex*, showing consistency of Maya New Year ritual practice for over 1,500 years (Taube 2010, 12–13, 25–29; Christenson 2016, 42).

There were a few other sets of New Year Bearer day names that were used in earlier times. The likely calendar at the time of Abinadi in the Valley of Guatemala was the Kaminaljuyu calendar, which utilized the Ik series of New Year Bearer days (Edmonson 1988, 6–8; Rice 2007, 36) which consisted of:

Day Name	Meaning	Associated God
Ik	Wind	God B
Manik	Deer	Earth
Eb	Grass	Destructive rain god
Caban	Quake	Youthful earth, rain goddess

The New Year Bearer rituals were tied to specific directions as the rituals described by Landa involved placing idols upon one of four sets of piles of stones situated around the town, with the piles located on the four cardinal directions of the town.

The Maya colors and direction pairs are correlations that were closely connected whereas the day names are not (Thompson 1934, 152) so when the Year Bearer observance occurs on days different than the series Landa described (Kan-Muluk-Ix-Cauac), the color, direction, and the rituals associated with each of the Landa series days would occur in association with the different series. It is not known which of the Year Bearer days utilized at the

time of Abinadi would correspond to the Ix day ceremonies documented by Landa, but all the rituals, colors, and directions would be expected to all remain the same as a group for whichever day it was.

#### New Year Ceremonies to Avert Calamities

Landa (Tozzer 1941, 136) described a portion of the New Year Bearer rituals and ceremonies related to prophecy as follows:

(T)hey distinguished the calamities and fortunate events which they said must happen during the year of each one of them [Bacabs], and of the letters [year day sign], which accompany them. And the devil, who deceived them in this as in everything else, informed them of the worships and offerings, which they were to make to him in order to escape the calamities. And so the priests said, when no calamity happened to them, that it was on account of the services which they had offered to him; and in case misfortunes came, they made the people understand and believe that it was owing to some sin or fault in the services or in those who performed them.

When comparing each of the New Year Bearer calamity prophecies with the initial calamity prophecies made by Abinadi, the Ix year ceremonies are striking. In the Ix year, certain calamities may occur if the New Year Bearer ritual ceremonies performed by the religious priests are not successful:

This year, in which the dominical letter was Ix in which the Bacab Sac cimi ruled, they considered as a mean year, since they said they had to suffer during it many misfortunes for they said there would be a great want of water, and many hot suns, which would follow a great famine, and from the famine thefts, and from the thefts slaves and selling those who stole. And from this would follow discords, and wars between themselves and with other towns. And they also said that there would be sure to be a change in the rule of the lords and the priests as a consequence of the wars and discords. They had also a prediction that some of those who wished to be lords would not arrive at their end. They said that they would also have locusts and that many of their towns would be depopulated by famine. That which the demon ordered them to do as a remedy for these calamities, all of which or some of which they believed would befall them, was to make an idol which they called Kinich Ahau Itzamna, and to place it in the temple, where they incensed it often and offered many offerings and prayers and shedding of blood which they anointed the stone of the idol Sac Acantun. . . . at this festival they built anew a little oratory to the idol or renovated it, and they assembled in it to make sacrifices and offerings to the idol, and to make a solemn orgy all together, for this festival was general and obligatory. There were also some fanatics, who of their own free will and through devotion, made another idol like that which has been spoken of above, and they placed in in other temples, where they made offerings and got intoxicated. They considered these orgies and sacrifices as very pleasing to their idols and as remedies to free themselves from the calamities of the prediction. (Tozzer 1941, 146-147)

A summary of the imminent relevant Maya calamities identified by Landa for Ix are:

1. Want of water and heat which would destroy the crops, followed by famine.
2. War between themselves and other towns which would trigger a change in the rule of the lords and priests as a result.
3. Locusts would come causing famine.
4. As mentioned, each of the New Year Bearer rituals involved the entrance to the town that corresponded with the direction of the New Year Bearer. Each of these four entrances may be protected by Maya markers (typically crosses for the contemporary Yucatec Maya) that protect the community from *k'ak'as* "bad winds." A specific ritual held in the past was performed to protect the community from the calamity of evil winds that had either already entered the community or caused sickness or from those that threatened (Vail et al. 2013, 360).

These crosses are thought to be representations of World Trees. From the description of Landa, two effigies trees are venerated during the Wayeb' which represent the World Trees. World Trees are symbolic of the creation or regeneration of the world (Christenson 2016, 35).

The recent Maya people of San Antonio, Belize, celebrate a ritual that is similar and is tied to the New Year Wayeb' ceremony described by Landa (Taube 1988a, 281–82). It involves worship to the four Mams (a counterpart of the Bacab), the gods of pestilence, and the ceremony protects the community from sickness and wild beasts.

It is noted also that sexual lasciviousness and drunkenness, according to Landa, were involved in the New Year's festival. Each year of the New Year's ritual also entailed the building of buildings (Love 1986, 177).

In the *Madrid Codex* (one of three surviving pre-Columbian Maya books dating to the Postclassic period of Mesoamerican chronology, circa AD 900–1521), prophecies are represented both visually and iconographically, and included portions related to the New Year Bearers. In one register are birds whose meanings are not specifically known. It is common for birds to serve as omens for particular time periods in Maya iconography, specifically a vulture in the *Dresden Codex* signifies an evil omen (Vail et al. 2013, 361). The *Dresden Codex* is a pre-Columbian Maya book of the eleventh or twelfth century of the Yucatecan Maya in Chichén Itzá and is believed to be a copy of an original text of some three or four hundred years earlier. The vulture is also known to have an important symbolic role within the Classic scaffold human sacrifice renewal ceremony (Taube 1988, 343).

Landa also indicated the sacrifices of dogs and men as part of the Kan year rituals (Tozzer 1941, 143). The dog figure and attacking wild beast figures are also featured on New Year ceremony pages of the *Madrid Codex*. A dog figure is featured on the Kan page.

The *Madrid Codex* also features dogs and garments as integral parts of the New Year's ritual. While both are more indicated as part of the Muluc ceremony, one of the dog figures bears the Kan sign. Thomas (1882) noted that there are many striking correspondences between the Madrid New Year pages and Landa's account of the 16th century Yucatec New Year rites. Thomas noted that according to Landa, for the year Muluc there was a stilt dance and another with small pottery dogs and, in addition, the sacrifice of a spotted dog (*Madrid Codex*, pg. 36). All three features are present in the Madrid Muluc scenes. Thus in the upper portion, there is a figure standing upon stilts. In the lower section, two small dogs are placed upon human feet, clearly a reference to the dance with pottery dogs. Just to the right, there is a spotted dog. Although this dog is not explicitly being sacrificed, it carries a Kan tamale affixed with Imix sign upon its back. Thomas noted that in Landa's account, the small pottery dogs were said to have carried "breads" or burdens on their backs. On page 37 of the *Madrid Codex* is a dog with human hands beating on a drum and howling (Vail et al. 2013, 363). Thomas also suggested that the garment just to the right of the stilt dancer represents the undecorated cloth woven by old women as a Muluc offering to Yax Coc Ah Mut (Taube 1988a).

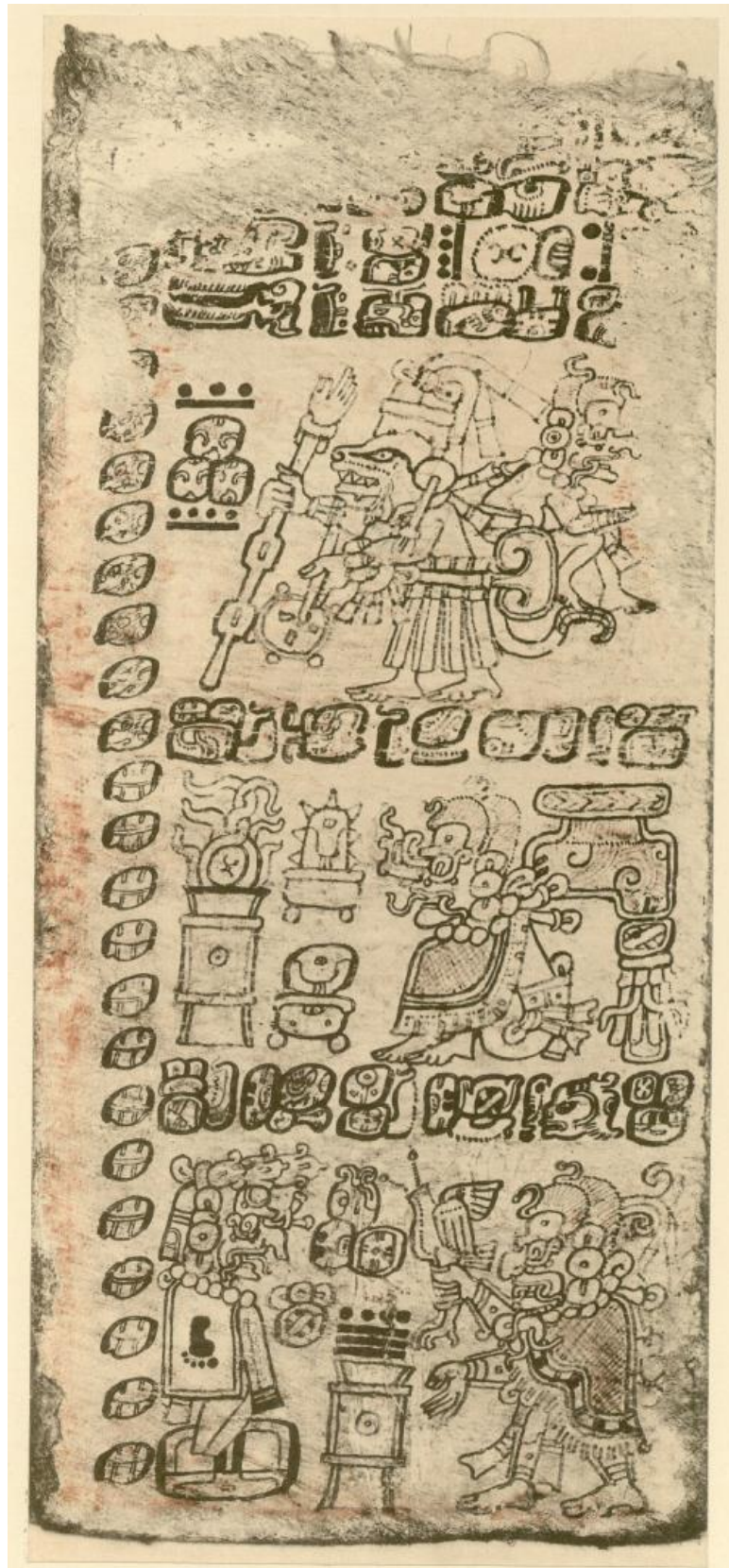


Figure 3a. *Dresden Codex*, page 25 ([www.Famsi.org](http://www.Famsi.org) 2016; *Dresden Codex* [www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/3\\_dresden\\_fors\\_schele\\_pp25-35.pdf](http://www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/3_dresden_fors_schele_pp25-35.pdf))

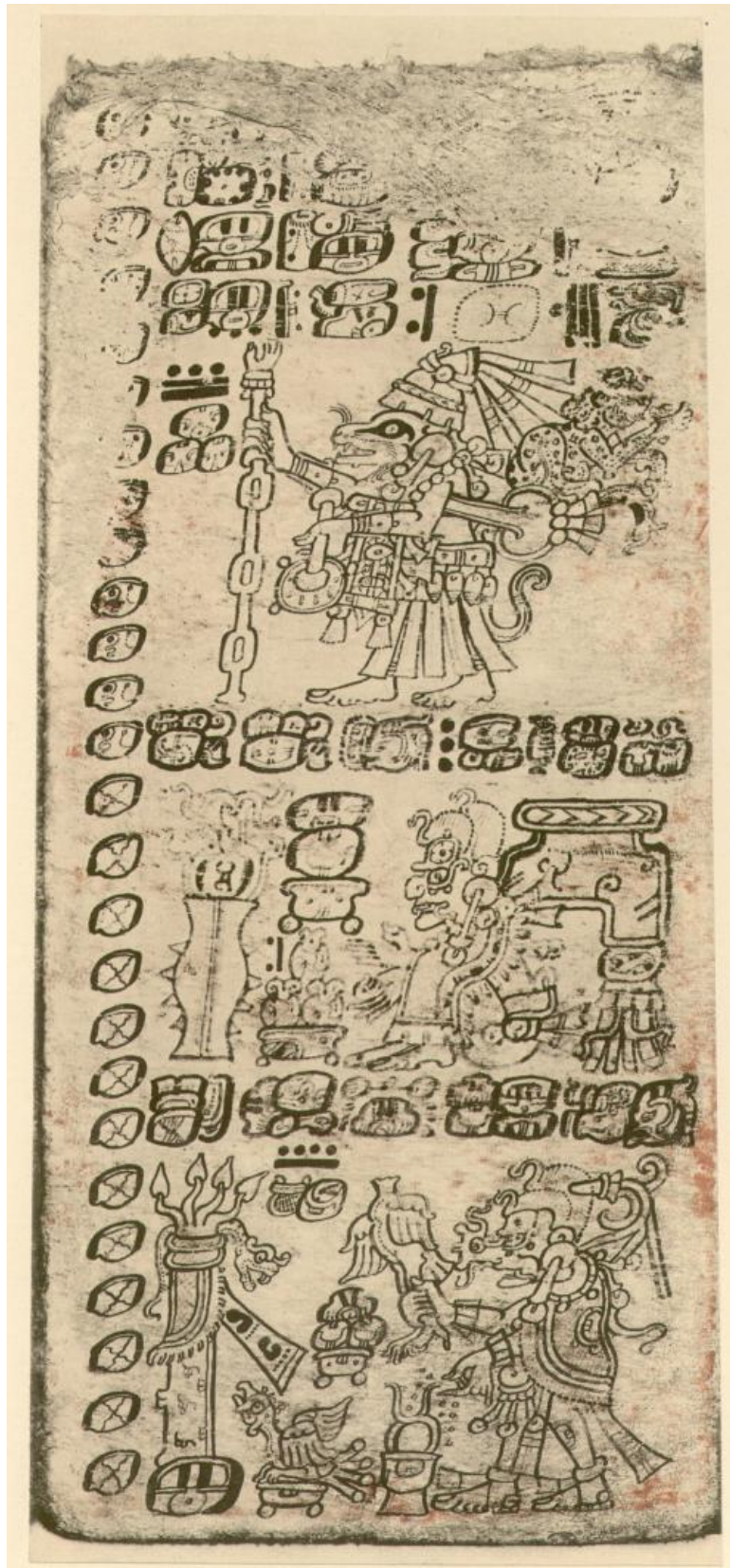


Figure 3b. *Dresden Codex*, page 26 ([www.Famsi.org](http://www.Famsi.org) 2016; *Dresden Codex* [www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/3\\_dresden\\_fors\\_schele\\_pp25-35.pdf](http://www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/3_dresden_fors_schele_pp25-35.pdf))



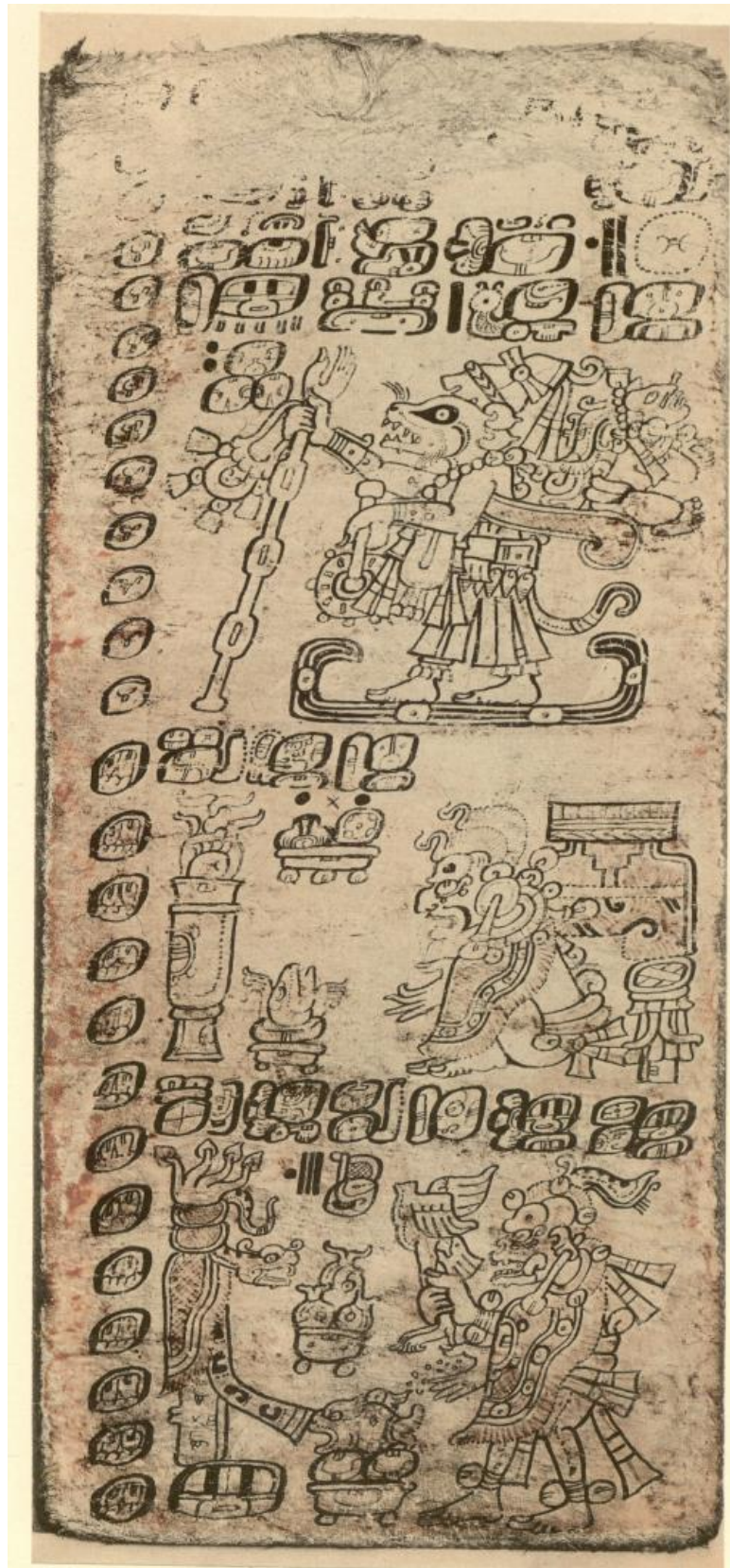


Figure 3c. *Dresden Codex*, page 27 ([www.Famsi.org](http://www.Famsi.org) 2016; *Dresden Codex* [www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/3\\_dresden\\_fors\\_schele\\_pp25-35.pdf](http://www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/3_dresden_fors_schele_pp25-35.pdf))

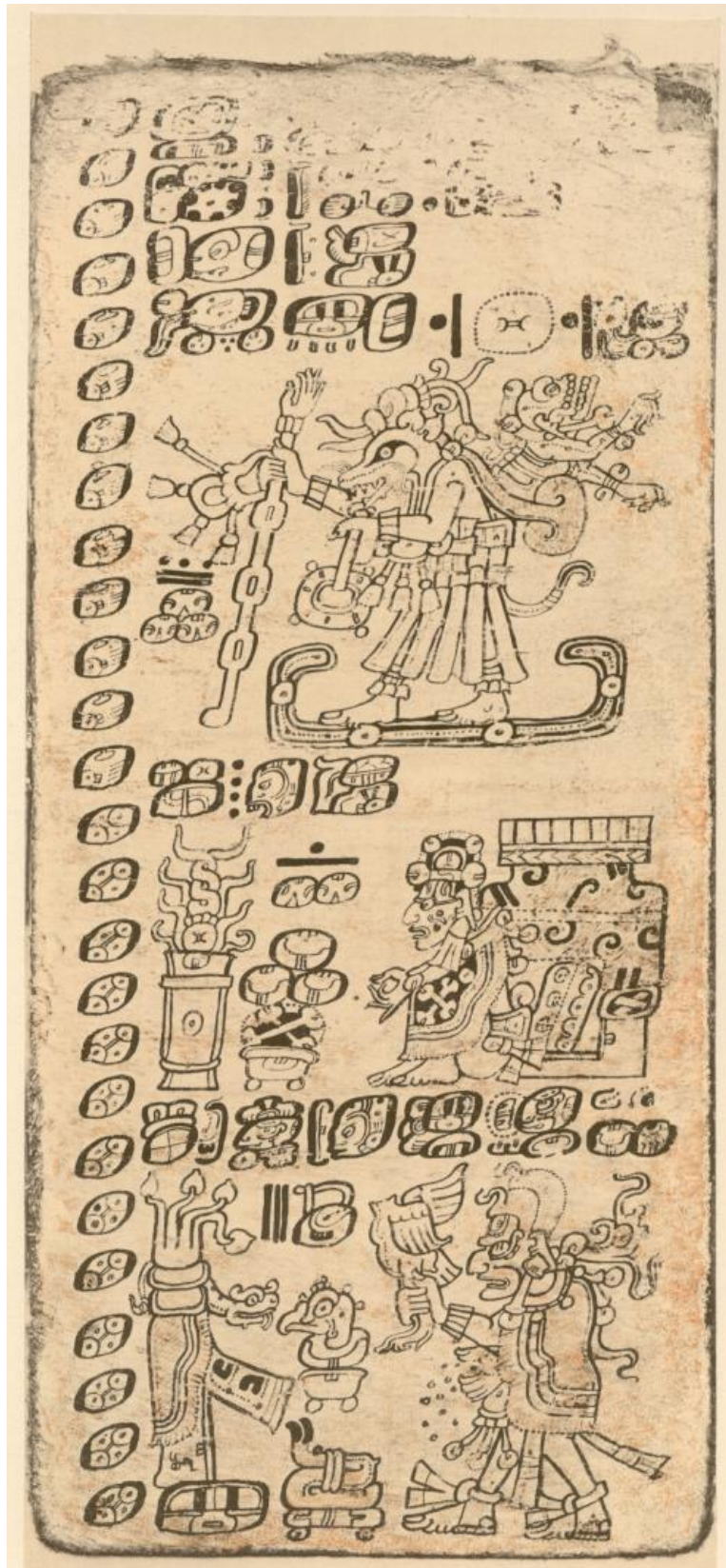


Figure 3d. *Dresden Codex*, page 28 ([www.Famsi.org](http://www.Famsi.org) 2016; *Dresden Codex* [www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/3\\_dresden\\_for\\_schele\\_pp25-35.pdf](http://www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/3_dresden_for_schele_pp25-35.pdf))



Figure 3e. *Madrid Codex*, page 34 ([www.Famsi.org](http://www.Famsi.org) 2016; *Madrid Codex* [www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/2\\_madrid\\_rosny\\_bb\\_pp22-56.pdf](http://www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/2_madrid_rosny_bb_pp22-56.pdf))



Figure 3f. *Madrid Codex*, page 35 ([www.Famsi.org](http://www.Famsi.org) 2016; *Madrid Codex* [www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/2\\_madrid\\_rosny\\_bb\\_pp22-56.pdf](http://www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/2_madrid_rosny_bb_pp22-56.pdf))

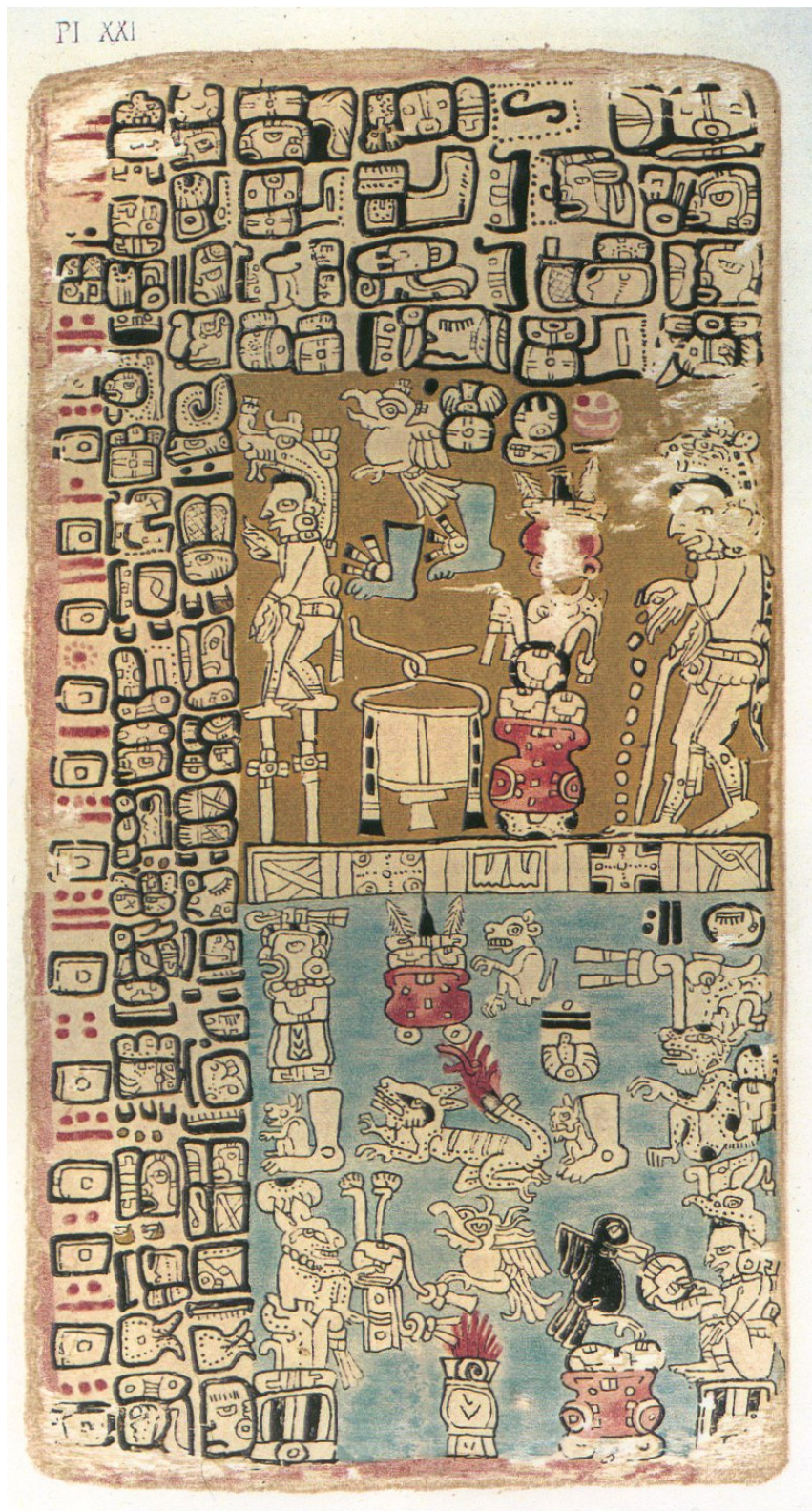


Figure 3g. *Madrid Codex*, page 36 ([www.Famsi.org](http://www.Famsi.org) 2016; *Madrid Codex* [www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/2\\_madrid\\_rosny\\_bb\\_pp22-56.pdf](http://www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/2_madrid_rosny_bb_pp22-56.pdf))



Figure 3h. *Madrid Codex*, page 37 ([www.Famsi.org](http://www.Famsi.org) 2016; *Madrid Codex* [www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/2\\_madrid\\_rosny\\_bb\\_pp22-56.pdf](http://www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/2_madrid_rosny_bb_pp22-56.pdf))

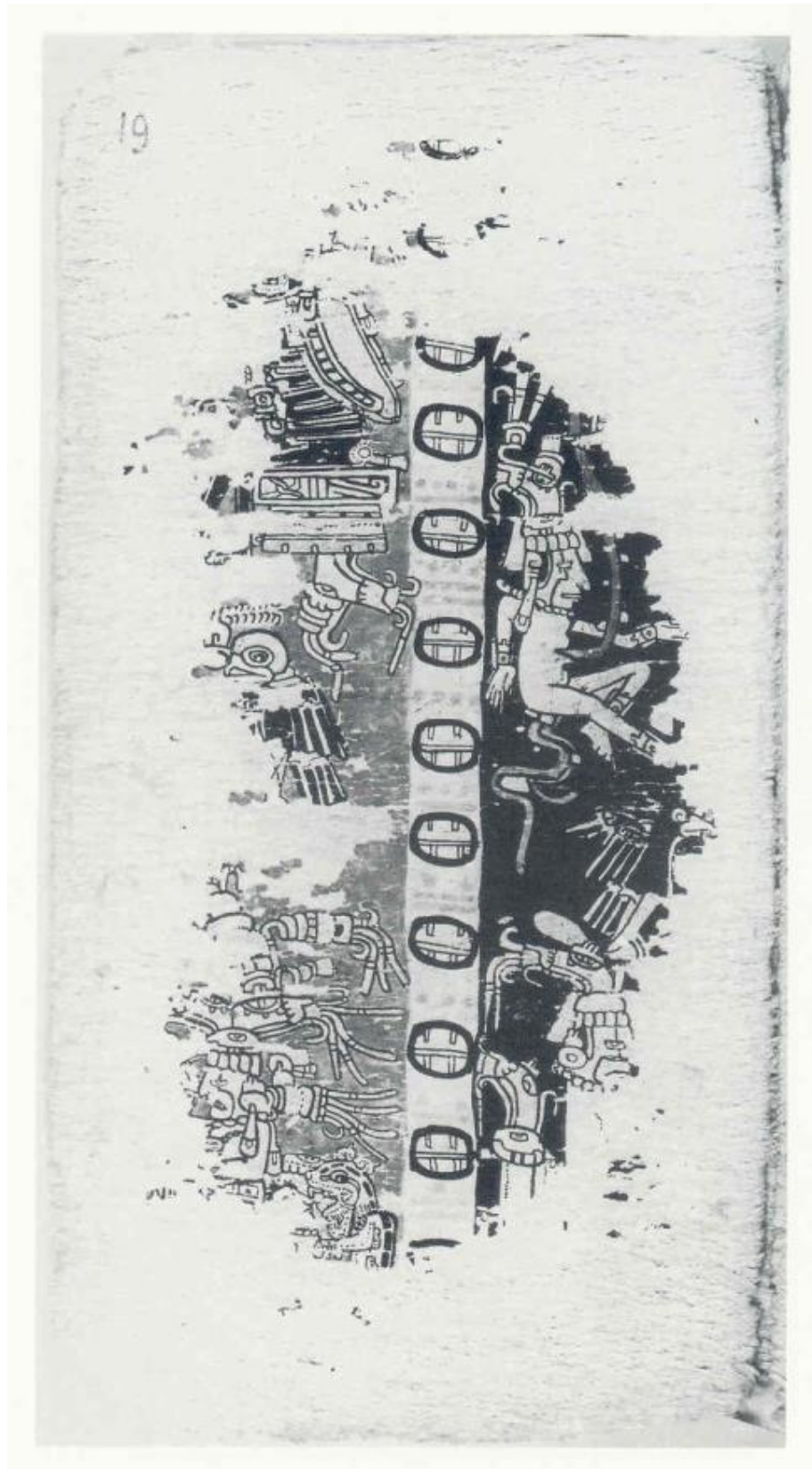


Figure 3i. *Paris Codex*, page 19 ([www.Famsi.org](http://www.Famsi.org) 2016; *Paris Codex* [www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/paris\\_love.pdf](http://www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/paris_love.pdf))

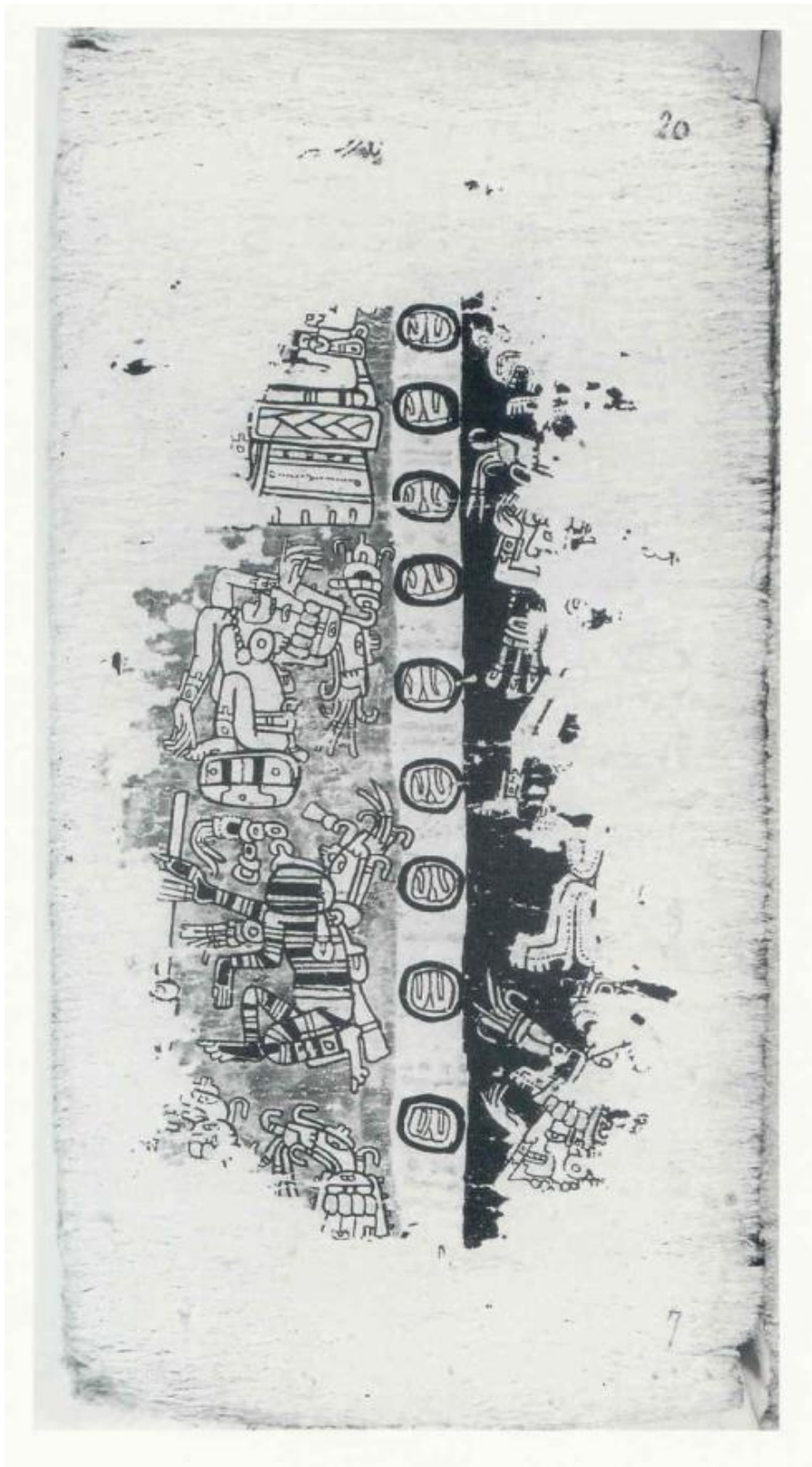


Figure 3j. *Paris Codex*, page 20 ([www.Famsi.org](http://www.Famsi.org) 2016; *Paris Codex* [www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/paris\\_love.pdf](http://www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/paris_love.pdf))



The *Paris Codex*, like the *Madrid Codex*, is another Late Post Classic Codex (AD 1250–1521) which features year bearer scenes, although it is considered to be earlier than the Madrid. In association with the Year Bearers the *Paris Codex* features wild beasts and vultures (Taube 1988a, 248–49). Pío Perez describes wild beasts and dangers that threaten the society during the Wayeb' period (Pharo 2014, 227).

Landa also noted that in the Kan year, the old women of the town, whom they had chosen for this purpose, danced clothed in certain garments. They said that an angel descended and received this sacrifice (Tozzer 1941, 142–43). The *Madrid Codex*, related to the Year Bearer, indicates a cloth without embroidery is offered to an idol (Love 1986, 236).

In the Maya religion Maya deities bore what is called the Burden of Time throughout all eternity and beyond. The ancient Maya calendar was closely bound up with religion and the involved tracking the gods who carried the Burden of Time on their backs, each deity picking up the burden laid down by the preceding deity. Specifically, throughout Mesoamerica the Year Bearers are depicted with a burden upon their backs, often with the burden itself depicted as the New Year glyph (Miller et al. 1993, 193).

The burden can represent guilt, a public office, or a heavy weight (Taube 1988a, 187). The Maya conceived the Year Bearer as carrying the year as a burden on his back, a load that he passes on to his successor at the end of the time period, thence derives the term “Year Bearer” (Thompson 1978, 125).

### Corroborative Parallels

In Mosiah it is noted that the armies of Noah “did delight in blood, and the shedding of the blood of their brethren” (Mosiah 11:19). It is clear from the text that the “delight in blood” was an addition and involved much more than the mere killing of persons. Not only did the New Year Bearer rituals involve the shedding and spreading of blood, but it is fair to say that the religious practices of the Maya specifically and Mesoamerica in general encompassed a full scale veneration of blood in the form of sacrifice and various forms of human and animal bloodletting from numerous locations of the body (Miller et al. 1993, 46–47).

Another corroborative parallel, which also has elements in relation to blood, is the mention of the metal *Ziff* in the Book of Mormon in relation to king Noah and the construction of his spacious buildings (Mosiah 11:3, 8). The word *Ziff* was capitalized in the Printer’s Manuscript of the Book of Mormon, and a previous analysis of capitalization of item names shows that it likely indicated a religious connotation in the Book of Mormon (Grover 2016, 3).

The most likely candidate for *Ziff* in the Book of Mormon was the Pre-Columbian alloy known as tumbaga. Tumbaga appears to have had religious and symbolic qualities for some peoples of the New World. It has been pointed out:

What is the point of making objects from surface-enriched tumbaga? It cannot be to economize the gold, for the gold below the surface is ‘wasted’, and a golden appearance could be achieved more cheaply by applying gold foil. Perhaps ... the ‘essence’ of the object required it to contain gold throughout, or it may have been the reddish color that was valued, or even the distinctive smell of tumbaga. (Bray 1985)

Bray further cites other direct sources from certain Columbian tribes who viewed the metals and their colors as related to reproductive creative forces and associated religious connotations.

An extensive analysis of *Ziff* was completed in a recent book, *Ziff, Magic Goggles, and Golden Plates* (Grover 2016), which established a likely Aramaic and Biblical Hebrew etymology involving the Aramaic and Arabic word *zyf*. The determination there was that it was a gold gilded metal with religious significance, specifically because of its reddish color, likely indicative of the Mesoamerican religious significance of blood.

The meaning of the word *zyf* in the Old World was “a counterfeit gold coin,” with one reference indicating that it was used as the coinage in Abqar, which is a city or a town in the invisible world of the Jinns. In addition to being a location, Abqar is the highest rank given to demons, Satan being the lowest—Ifrīt is one step higher, Marid is another step higher, and Abqar is the highest.

The definition of *zyf* from the Arabic lexicons also consistently referred to building or architectural features specifically including or concerned with the upper portion or top of walls (battlements, upper part of walls, steps of a staircase, molding on the top of walls, jumping over a wall, and a top that protects a wall). The additional definition for *zyf* related to a variety of animals and animal positions/movements would also be consistent with the use of animal figures in the ancient Arabic world that were placed on various places on buildings (top of domes, walls, thresholds) in a religious or magical context as talismans or *apotropia*. One of the principal animals identified in this definition of *zyf* is a pigeon.

The relationship of the definition of *Ziff* to the evil practices of king Noah is fairly transparent, as his religious practices would be considered false, related to demons, and involving manifestations of various idol gods, with a primary likelihood of a bird-themed god.

Additional research into the Sumerian roots of *Ziff*, which language has been identified as the source of the Jaredites, indicated a meaning that matches the description of tumbaga, with the condition that the “ff” is reflected as a “b” sound (Grover 2017). With the Sumerian compound word taken together, *Ziff* literally means “the color of life,” which in a Mesoamerican content would mean “blood.”

*zib*: a mark; mark, token; color, paint

Additional etymological units for or related to the religious significance of *Ziff* from Sumerian are:

*zi*: life

*zi-ba* (form of *zi*)

*zi-bi* (form of *zi*)

*i*: oil; container for oil (royal or priestly anointing)

*i<sub>3</sub>-be<sub>6</sub>* (form of *i*)

*i<sub>3</sub>-bi* (form of *i*)

Constructed Compound Sumerian Word: ***zib***

Although not specifically identified in the New Year Bearer ceremony, the Bacabs were also invoked in Maya healing incantations for such things as seizures, wasp-poisoning, and obstruction of breathing passages (Roys 1965, 143).

The elements of the IX New Year’s Bearer ceremony are a clear match to the Abinadi’s prophecies made during his second visit. The first prophecy made two years previously by Abinadi was limited to the people being taken by their enemies and placed into bondage. In the *Madrid Codex*, the maize god of the Year Bearer IX is shown as a bound captive (Taube 1988a, 261–62).

Themes of creation and world renewal or resurrection are an integral part of the Maya New Year’s ceremony (Vail et al. 2013, 385; Christenson 2016, 86), and Abinadi made central these themes (especially the resurrection) in his defensive sermon, with specificity as to the Lord being the god of creation and resurrection (Mosiah 13:19; 37; 15:8; 20–24; 16: 6–11).

The New Year festival was a public event that functioned as a normative code of the community by reinforcing the social and moral values through purification of the corruption of the old New Year days (Taube 1988a, 310). The five day Wayeb’ period was reported by various sources to be a period of affliction and anxiety (Pharo 2014, 227).

Abinadi essentially takes the prophecies and rituals of the New Year Bearer rituals and ceremonies and turns them on their heads, directing them by prophecy directly back onto the wicked Noah, his wicked priests, and the wicked people. A summary comparison of the prophecies of Abinadi against the condition of Noah and his priests and the Maya Ix ritual and other related elements are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Comparison of Maya Rituals with Abinadi Episode**

<b>Maya Rituals and Prophecies</b>	<b>Abinadi Prophecies/Noah Comparison</b>	<b>Book of Mormon Reference</b>
Sexual Perversion	Noah and his priests had multiple wives, concubines, harlots, and practiced whoredoms	Mosiah 11: 2, 4, 14, 20
Prophecies	Noah and his priests “understand the spirit of prophesying” (or so they claimed)	Mosiah 12: 25
Drunkenness	Noah and his people were winebibbers	Mosiah 11: 15
Worship of idols	Noah and his people practiced idolatry	Mosiah 11: 6, 7
Blood	Noah’s armies delighted in blood	Mosiah 11:19
Buildings of buildings	Noah constructed elegant, spacious buildings	Mosiah 11: 8–13
Creation and Resurrection as central themes of New Year rituals	Central themes of Abinadi’s defense are Creation and Resurrection	Mosiah 13:19; 37; 15:8; 20–24; 16: 6–11
Use of the temple in idol worship	Noah constructed ostentatious temple and spacious buildings	Mosiah 11: 8–11
Prophetic famine	People will be smitten with famine	Mosiah 12:4
Prophetic invasion of locusts	Insects to pester the land and devour grain	Mosiah 12:4
Wars	People would be smitten, driven, slain and delivered into the hands of their enemies	Mosiah 11:21; 12:2
Slavery	People will be placed in bondage with burdens on their backs	Mosiah 11:21; 12:2, 5
Leaders deposed	Noah valued as a garment in a hot furnace; shall be run over and trodden underfoot; blown by the wind like blossom of a thistle	Mosiah 12:3, 10–12
Reference to wind (the Pawahtuns, or wind deities)	Noah will be blown by the wind like blossom of a thistle; people smitten with the east wind	Mosiah 12:6, 12
Wind of sickness	People to be smitten with the east wind; people to be smitten with pestilence (sickness)	Mosiah 12:6–7

<b>Maya Rituals and Prophecies</b>	<b>Abinadi Prophecies/Noah Comparison</b>	<b>Book of Mormon Reference</b>
Protection from sickness, pestilence	People to be smitten with pestilence (sickness)	Mosiah 12:6–7
Fear and protection from wild beasts	Wild beasts will devour the flesh of Noah’s people	Mosiah 12:2
Dogs are featured	Dogs will devour the flesh of Noah’s people	Mosiah 12:2
Vulture as evil omen	Vultures mentioned as devouring the flesh of the people	Mosiah 12:2
Garments burned by fire in sacrifice	Noah’s life is valued as a garment in a hot furnace of fire	Mosiah 12:3, 10
Muluc/Kan day ceremony direction is East with corresponding wind God	People smitten with the east wind	Mosiah 12:6
Year bearer carries burden lashed on his back	People will bear burdens lashed on their backs	Mosiah 12:5
Year Bearer Bacab gods are part of the earth and supporters of the sky, and have manifestations as gods of the waters under the earth	Noah, his priests and people worshiped graven images that were in the sky, in the earth beneath, or were in the water under the earth	Mosiah 12:36; 13:12
Bacab invoked in healing incantations	People to be smitten with pestilence (sickness)	Mosiah 12:6–7

The citing of the Ten Commandments included the instruction on graven images (Mosiah 13:12), essentially mirroring that found in Exodus 20:4, with the difference that Exodus indicates the “likeness of any thing” as opposed to the plural form “of things”:

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.

Although use of the plural may not be precisely definitive of a set of Maya gods, it is a unique match for all of the god manifestations associated with the Maya New Year, namely, Itzamna (sky god), Pawahtuns (wind gods), Bacabs (skybearers who stand on the earth), and Mams (gods of the earth and waters under the earth).

Abinadi’s prophecies in the context of the Maya ritual directly challenged and threatened the authority and power of Noah and his priests, especially given the fact that Abinadi was likely a priest himself. As Landa indicated, when no calamity happened it was on account of the services of the Maya priests; but, when misfortunes came, it was blamed on some sin or fault in the ritual services or in those who performed them. Abinadi’s prophecies were in line with the calamities that the performance of the New Year Bearer ritual was supposed to prevent. If Abinadi’s prophecies were correct, than the fault lay directly with Noah and his priests and Abinadi thus became a direct challenge to their authority, especially given the fact that one of the Maya prophecies was that there would be a change in the rule of the current lords and priests.

Meaning of King Noah's name in the Maya cultural context

It has been determined that many Book of Mormon names have multiple levels of meaning in Biblical Hebrew, Sumerian, and sometimes Egyptian (Grover 2017). In Biblical Hebrew one of the individuals named Noah as found in the Bible derives from the root-verb נוּע (*nu'a*), which means to shake, stagger, quiver, tremble, etc. Psalms 107:27 is an example where it is used of drunks who stagger. The Biblical Hebrew meaning of staggering as a drunkard nicely fits the Book of Mormon description of king Noah and also matches God N.

Many Book of Mormon names consist of constructed compound words from Sumerian and are metonymic, meaning the names match the characteristics or story line of the individual or place (Grover 2017). The Sumerian roots of the name Noah—which fit his Maya role as the divine representative on earth of Itzamna in its Principal Bird Deity manifestation, along with the corresponding themes of the Maya creation also associated with the Maya New Year ceremony (the abatement of the flood and the world tree often constructed of polished stone, see Christenson 2016, 42, 44), and including his reputation among the Nephites—are:

*nu*: creator  
*nu*: night bird  
*U*: type of stone  
*U*: tree  
*ua*: owl; a bird  
*ah*: scum; spittle; poison  
*he*: be it, be he  
 (*The Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary*, 2006)

The phonetic “u” in Sumerian dictionaries may also indicate an historical “o” sound in Sumerian that is not reflected in modern Sumerian dictionaries. The constructed Book of Mormon names indicated that in the compounding of the individual words they often overlap (likely reflecting the underlying glyph). Thus the name Noah would be composed of all of the words listed here (*nu*, *nu*, *u*, *u*, *ua*, *ah*, *ah*, and *he*) with a combined meaning of something on the order of “He who is Night bird (owl), stone tree, scum.”

The bird and stone tree elements of the name of Noah are consistent with his affiliation with the Principal Bird Deity religion.

The name Abinadi

Since the Book of Mormon name *Abinadi* is metonymic, his constructed name in Sumerian and Biblical Hebrew is:

Sumerian  
*a*: strength; power  
*a<sub>2</sub>-bi*, *a<sub>2</sub>-ba*, *a<sub>2</sub>-da* (form of *a*)  
*abba*: old (person); witness; father; elder; an official  
*ab-a* (form of *abba*)  
*i*: clothing, garment  
*i*: (vocative exclamation), hey!  
*i*: oil; container for oil  
*i<sub>3</sub>-ni* (form of *i*)  
 (indicative of anointed status)  
*in*: abuse  
*in-na*, *in-a* (form of *in*)  
*na*: man  
*na*: pestle; a stone

*na*: stone; stone weight

*na<sub>4</sub>-da* (form of *na*)

*ad*: (to be) crippled

*ad*: voice; cry; noise

*di*: go

*di*: to shine

*di*: non-finite imperfect stem of *dug* [to speak]

*na-di* (form of *di*)

(*The Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary*, 2006)

Constructed Compound Name: **Abinadi**

#### Biblical Hebrew

'*ab*: father, an elder; position of authority; a counselor

*bin*: perceive, discern

'*b*: father

*nd'*: to cast down

'*bn*: stone

'*d*,: father

([www.abarim-publications.com](http://www.abarim-publications.com) 2015)

Based on the Sumerian etymology, the name *Abinadi* would mean “Powerful anointed elder, father, and witness; abused and crippled by stone; he who shone and spoke.” The correlation of “shone” comes from the reference that when Abinadi withstood the priests “his face shone with exceeding luster, even as Moses did” (Mosiah 13:5). The Biblical Hebrew provides similar meanings with the addition of “cast down.”

Based on the meaning of his name, there is some indication that Abinadi was in a position of some authority. Perhaps he was one of the original priests of Zeniff that was “put down” by Noah (Mosiah 11:5). As such he was probably well known among the people even prior to his first prophetic preaching event, and a disguise was needed to avoid being arrested.

#### **Abinadi’s Disguise**

It is also worth noting that Abinadi, in his second prophetic venture, “came among them in disguise” but when he commenced prophesying he announced exactly who he was. It is clear that the disguise was only so that he could place himself in a position to prophesy “many things” “against the people” (Mosiah 12:1, 8). Maya New Year’s celebrations consisted of music, pageantry, processions, ritual songs, dances, pantomimes, and dramatic performances (Christenson 2016, 100). It is likely that Abinadi utilized a mask for his disguise so that he could present himself and deliver his message. The Maya used masks for a variety of reasons and occasions including to adorn (decorate) the faces of the dead, to be worn during battle, and in Abinadi’s case, to be worn at important events. Iconography of Pre-classic Kaminaljuyu shows the use of masks, at least in a religious context (Henderson 2013).

#### **Source of the Nephite Religion in the Land of Nephi**

The people of Zeniff were apparently a mixed population of the people of Mulek and Nephites, as evidenced by Alma (and Abinadi) being differentiated as “also being a descendant of Nephi” (Mosiah 17:2). Zeniff himself and at least some of the founding group appears to be Nephites as Zeniff had a “knowledge of the land of Nephi, or the land of our fathers’ first inheritance” (Mosiah 9:1). The people of Mulek in Zarahemla that Mosiah<sub>1</sub> found “denied

the being of their Creator” (Omni 1:17). It is interesting that the wording does not necessarily indicate that they denied a Creator altogether, just the “being of their Creator” which can be reasonably interpreted that the form or identity of the Creator was different.

Since the people of king Noah were just a few generations removed from the merging of the Nephites and the people of Mulek, it is reasonable that the this original native religion to which the people of Mulek had devolved was still present among some of the people of Zeniff and then Noah. Zeniff himself had indicated that the initial founding group had been “slow to remember the Lord our God” (Mosiah 9:3). As a result, the apparent de-evolution of the people of Noah to a Maya religion was equally likely to have been an assimilation of the surrounding Lamanite religion as it was to have been a resurgence of the latent (or continuing) practice of the native religion. Since Noah did a wholesale replacement of his father’s priests with idolatrous priests and “had changed the affairs of the kingdom” (Mosiah 11:4) it seems apparent that there were those among the people of Zeniff that were available for Noah to utilize who did not substantially follow the Nephite religion but instead practiced a portion of a native religion that had incorporated some elements of Nephite religion.





# Chapter 2

## The Deaths of Abinadi and Noah

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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).

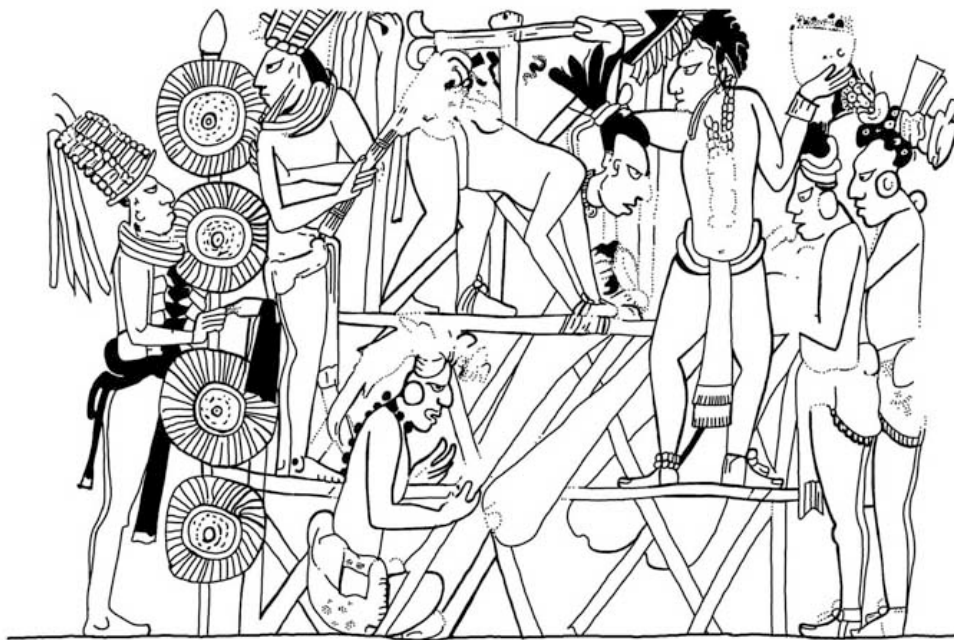
The ceremony held during *Mac* began with a hunt in the woods for “all the animals and creatures of the field.” After the game was collected, their hearts were removed and cast upon a large faggot of sticks set upright. After the hearts were burned, water was poured on the smoldering remains, consistent 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).

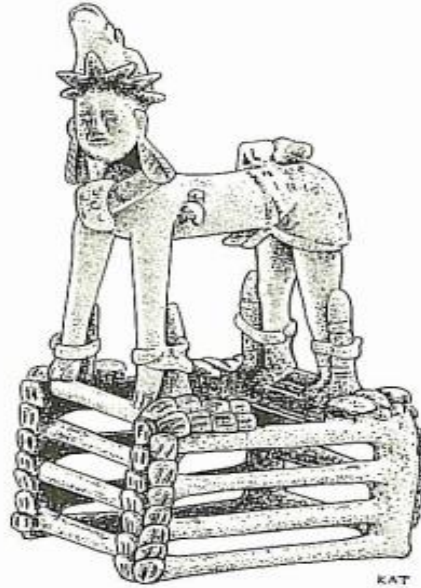


Figure 6. Deer-man sacrificial figurine from Jaina, Campeche (Taube 1988, 335).

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 Alma<sub>1</sub> 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.

# Chapter 3

## The Order of Nehor

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Nehor is first mentioned chronologically very early in Jaredite history in reference to the land and city of Nehor (Ether 7:4, 9). Etymologically the land and city of Nehor has Hebrew meanings consistent with both a river and area associated with burning and volcanic activity:

*hwr*: to bend or turn; hollow or depressed ground between hills

*nāhār*: a stream or river

*harer*: parched place

*hor*: hole or cavern

*nh*: blow fiercely

*hori*: a burning

*hara*: to burn or ignite

*hur*: something white, or white stuff

([www.abarim-publications.com](http://www.abarim-publications.com) 2015)

Although the land of Nehor is not mentioned after that very early Jaredite reference, it likely continued to exist and perhaps expanded through at least some point in Jaredite history and perhaps existed within the land of Desolation. This might be correlated by the later Book of Mormon reference to the fate of the destruction of the city of Ammonihah where “every living soul” in the city was killed by a Lamanite army, and their bodies “heaped up upon the face of the earth” (Alma 16:9-11). As a result of the scent and perhaps other factors, the land remained desolate and was referred to as the “Desolation of Nehors.” This is apparently a comparison or reference to the demise of the Jaredites in the land of Desolation, as Desolation is the place where the Jaredites according to the record were annihilated down to the last man and their bones were scattered over the land northward. Although the use of *Nehor* in the term “Desolation of the Nehors” was based on the practice of the religion of the order of Nehor found in Ammonihah, it is also consistent as a tie to the Jaredite land Nehor and perhaps the likely place anciently of the religion that the Nephites referred to as the order of Nehor.

### The Order of Nehor as an Indigenous Religion

From the description provided in the Book of Mormon, it is apparent that the order of Nehor is not an apostate Nephite religion, but is a separate indigenous religion. Competing religions to the Nephite Christian religion based on or inclusive of the law of Moses mentioned in the Book of Mormon include Sherem (Jacob 7) and some of what was practiced by Noah and his priests (Mosiah 11–13). The description of the Zoramite religion also implies that it migrated out of the Nephite religion (Alma 31).

Descriptions of the Nehor religion provide indications that it was not initially derived from the Nephite religion. The individual named Nehor who initially preached the religion (Alma 1) had a doctrine that indicated that “the Lord” had created all men, but that is just the recognition of a creator god, as he clearly was in denial of Christ (Alma 1:19). Nehor “bore down against the church” and was declared by Alma to be the first to introduce “priestcraft” among the people (Alma 1:12).

It has been established that most of the Book of Mormon names are metonymic, meaning that the names were created or interpreted based on the characteristics of the individual or his/her exploits. The meaning of *Nehor* in this respect will be discussed later, but it should be noted that though the individual named Nehor was the first to

introduce the religion to the Nephites of Zarahemla and he became its namesake among the Nephites, the religion was apparently established prior to Nehor's appearance.

Nehor was brought before Alma in the first year of the reign of the judges; he was apparently preaching for some period of time as he had gathered some number of followers. Although Nehor was executed, that was not the end of the Nehor religion as it seems clear that the crux of the religion continued amongst the Nephites through the fifth year of the reign of the judges:

Alma 1:32

For those who did not belong to the 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. More enforcement was added to prosecute those things that were against the law, so there was much peace among the people of Nephi until the fifth year of the reign of the judges.

Mention of idolatry here is an indicator of a specific religious following, not just general wickedness. The religion is next mentioned (Alma 2:1) just four years after the execution of Nehor, when a certain man named Amlici who was after "the order" of the man Nehor, drew away people after him to become king, thus clearly indicating that it was a significantly organized religion, with a significant following such that an election of sorts was held "throughout all the land" (Alma 2:5).

A mere eight years after the original Nehor was mentioned, the city and land of Ammonihah were ruled by a "chief judge of the land" who physically abused and imprisoned Alma and Amulek and was described as being "after the order and faith of Nehor" (Alma 14:14–16). There is little doubt that Ammonihah was politically and religiously dominated by the order of Nehor as "many lawyers, and judges, and priests, and teachers" in Ammonihah were described as being "of the profession of Nehor" (Alma 14:18). The people of Ammonihah were also characterized as being "of the profession of Nehor" (Alma 15:15) indicating that they were followers as differentiated from the "order of Nehor" more indicative of the elite priest level practitioners of the religion.

The people in Ammonihah indicated that they recognized that Alma was the high priest over the church which he had established in many parts of the land according to "your [Alma's] traditions," declaring that "we are not of thy church, and we do not believe in such foolish traditions," and stating that "because we are not of thy church we know that thou hast no power over us" (Alma 8:11–12). The people of Ammonihah did not believe that the earth would pass away, and were not even familiar with this concept of the Nephite religion (Alma 9:2–3). It is fairly clear that most of the people in Ammonihah were not ever a part of the church and did not share those traditions, indicating a long-standing practice of the Nehor religion.

The sons of Mosiah performed missionary work concurrent with the mission of Alma. They encountered the order of Nehor deep in Lamanite territory in the land of Nephi at the city of Jerusalem. Although no year dates are indicated, the sons of Mosiah likely left a few years before the first year of the reign of the judges and one of the sons of Mosiah, Aaron, on his first missionary foray, encountered the Nehor religion, which had well established synagogues (Alma 21). The Nehor religion was already well established in Jerusalem around the first year of the reign of the judges. According to most geographic models, Ammonihah was located north or northwest of Zarahemla (on the order of 90 miles in the Sorenson model) and Jerusalem was well to the south or southwest of Zarahemla (on the order of 120 miles in the Sorenson model). So the religion was geographically widespread and located outside of or on the confines of Nephite lands. While it is possible that it may have incorporated some residual religion from the time of king Noah, there is little to indicate that it had much in common with the Nephite

religion. One would not have expected the religion to have been established in Ammonihah as well as in the land of Nephi should such have been the case.

The Nehor religion was widespread and well entrenched at the time that the individual Nehor came before Alma, so it is apparent that it is a non-Nephite religion. The indication that Nehor “established a church after the manner of his preaching” (Alma 1:6) is an indication of the establishment of a church in the central area of the Nephites, not necessarily of its lack of presence elsewhere. The religion is not referred to as a church, but as an “order,” so Nehor’s establishment of a church does not mean that his church was the origination of the religious order. There may be some Nephite religious elements (i.e., the law of two witnesses) that were borrowed locally into the order of Nehor in Ammonihah (Wright and Gardner, 2012), but they appear to be very minimal and appear to have to do more with civil procedure than religion. Based on the extensive discourses of Alma and Amulek in Ammonihah dealing with the very most basic of doctrines, it is apparent that the people encountered there were not very familiar with the teachings of the church of Alma and Amulek (Alma 9–13).

In addition, the Amlicites (led by Amlici of the order of Nehor) joined with the Lamanites to attack the Nephites (Alma 2:24), implying perhaps a common religious base with the Lamanites as well as political affiliation. The Amlicites had marked themselves with red in their foreheads after the manner of the Lamanites, but had not shorn their heads like the Lamanites did (Alma 3:4). It is noteworthy that marking of red is part of the Maya year end initiation ceremony previously discussed and also appears to be an initiation into the Lamanite religion and polity.

There were at least some individuals at Ammonihah who had Lehite lineage, although it seems that they had not practiced the religion in the near past. Alma said “how have ye forgotten the tradition of your fathers” and also forgotten the commandments of God (Alma 9:8 et al). It seems as if they may not have been of the individual tribe of Nephi (as opposed to the term for Nephite which encompassed multiple tribes), and were perhaps one of two other tribes that had affiliated with the original Nephite tribe. These would have been the Jacobites and Josephites (Zoramites are known to be located elsewhere) and would be consistent with the attempt by Alma of appealing to them using what was spoken to Lehi. Amulek provides additional clarity that one tribe being addressed at Ammonihah was the Josephites, as, in an attempt to establish his credibility, Amulek proclaims his lineage back to Lehi and then beyond to Joseph who was sold into Egypt (Alma 10). As previously mentioned when Alma<sub>1</sub> confronted king Noah, Alma was of the lineage of Nephi, one reason perhaps that he had little initial success in Ammonihah as he had no real tribal kinsmen there.

Alma does say (Alma 13:20), “Now I need not rehearse the matter; what I have said may suffice. Behold, the scriptures are before you; if ye will wrest them it shall be to your own destruction.” After Alma spoke unto the people, some did believe, repented and began to search the scriptures (Alma 14:1). This does provide evidence that at least some of the persons in Ammonihah had the religious scriptures of the Nephites, and later they and their scriptures were burned (Alma 14:8).

The wording of the different references to the Nehor religion is curious. In Ammonihah, it is referred to as “the order of the Nehor,” but in Jerusalem it is referred to as “the order of the Nehors” (Alma 21:4, two times; Alma 24:28). The plural may be describing the individuals or perhaps priests that make up the religion. It is also possible that it may reflect a plurality of the gods in the religion or at least multiple aspects of a god, or it may just be a Book of Mormon textual spelling error.

### **Nehor Religion Has Virtually Nothing in Common with the Nephite Religion.**

As discussed, the Nehor religion had virtually nothing to do with the Nephite church. Its members burned the Nephite holy scriptures without compunction (Alma 14:8). They did not have any problem killing others who did not

follow their religion, even causing painful death by ritual burning, which has all the markings of a native Mesoamerican religion. While they did have a creator belief it is clear that the “foolish traditions” of the Nephites had little in common with the character of their creator. Based on the description and name of the Nehor religion, it may be possible to identify a probable Mesoamerican worship system that matches the Nehor religion.

We only see certain elements of the order of Nehor in the Book of Mormon, and it is mostly in the interaction with Nephite missionaries. Certain order of Nehor religious tenets present themselves. A few of these already presented themselves as part of Abinadi and his interaction with the apostate religion, and are presented again in the context of the order of Nehor, namely the belief in multiple gods (Alma 11:28, 14:5); idolatry (Alma 1:32); the issue of their version of the Son of God being a manifestation of God the Father (Alma 11:38); the priests should be “popular” (implying some political influence or power) and paid by the people (Alma 1:3); and that the Son of God would not be coming down among men (Alma 11:35, 14:5, 21:7–8).

The order of Nehor presents a few new religious tenets that were not present (or at least not clearly mentioned) in the Noah-Maya syncretic religion. One is the concept that in the order of Nehor religion, God will save all men and “in the end all men should have eternal life” (Alma 1:4, 14:5, 21:6).

Not all elements of the Maya afterlife concept are currently determined, and with variation within the Maya world, it may not be possible to pinpoint the exact tradition of belief being referenced by the order of Nehor here. However, it does look to be consistent with the Maya forms of afterlife from certain Maya groups as we know them.

Among much of the Maya exists the concept of “co-essence” of spirit or soul where the soul partially consists of a *way* or *wayhel* spirit which constitutes the unruly or compulsive side of behavior and are beings of darkness and the Underworld.

Whereas the bestial *way* spirits directly relate to one’s personal behavior and fate in the mortal world, there is another spirit that continues after death. Thus for the Tzotzil of Chenalhó, the *wayhel* dies with the individual, but the soul known as the *ch’ulel* ascends to the solar paradise of Winahel. (Taube 2004a, 70)

The *ch’ulel* is related to the Classic Mayan words for divinity *k’uh* and sacred *k’uhul* and is “the impalpable essence of the individual” (Guiteras-Holmes 1961, 296). The soul essence is “breath” which continues after death as the soul. Among the Chorti Maya the wind gods blow life-giving breath into the newborn child and remove it at death (Taube 2004a, 72). The breath spirit corresponded to a celestial paradise of flowers and beautiful birds. This Classic Maya realm consists of the “Flower World” and its related “Flower Mountain.” “Flower Mountain” is a celestial place the concept of which is found throughout Mesoamerica as the eternal resting place of gods, ancestors, and celestial assent (Taube 2004a, 92).

Among the sixteenth century Yucatec Maya also exists this concept of a paradisiacal garden of vegetation and flowers under the shade of the ceiba tree, however they do believe in a hell called *Metnal* where the bad would suffer (Tozzer 1941, 131–32). Some Mesoamerican traditions believed that one could travel through and climb out of *Metnal*, eventually reaching paradise.

Thus Maya belief is consistent with the order of Nehor assertion that “in the end all men should have eternal life.”

Second, under the order of Nehor they “knew not that the earth would pass away” (Alma 9:3).

As previously discussed, the religious beliefs of the Maya are intricately bound up in cycles. All of existence carried on eternally in the great cycle of time. As time was an eternal god, bound up in, outside of, and manifesting itself



through the workings of the universe, it could never end. The world brought into being through the operation of time as represented by the gods could never end, as that would contradict the very nature of existence as understood by the Maya. As previously discussed, at the end of each year and at the end of longer time cycles, the world did need to be periodically renewed, but the Maya did not believe that as part of the necessary future that “the earth would pass away.”

Third, there is at least some indication, in addition to the disbelief in Christ, that the order of Nehor did not include the resurrection of man (Alma 12:20). As discussed above, the Maya believed in the resurrection of certain deities, but the afterlife for man did not include the resurrection.

It has been represented that the order of Nehor did not believe in prophecy (Thompson 2017) presumably based on an exchange between Aaron and an Amalekite Nehor:

Alma 21:7–8

7 Now Aaron said unto him: Believest thou that the Son of God shall come to redeem mankind from their sins?

8 And the man said unto him: We do not believe that thou knowest any such thing. We do not believe in these foolish traditions. We do not believe that thou knowest of things to come, neither do we believe that thy fathers and also that our fathers did know concerning the things which they spake, of that which is to come.

A careful reading of this verse actually does not indicate that the order of Nehor did not believe in prophecy. It indicates that their fathers did not know. For Aaron, the reference was to his Nephite ancestors, which was also the case when the Amalekite spoke of “our fathers.” As a dissident group, the Amalekites broke away from the religion of their fathers, so it would not be surprising that they were rejecting the truth of the Nephite religion that their fathers also practiced.

As is evident, the ancient Maya religious belief is completely compatible with the order of Nehor beliefs, both in what they profess to believe in and what they do not profess to believe in.

### **Nehor and Horus**

The identity of Nehor can be independently determined by looking at the etymology of *Nehor*. According to the Book of Mormon Onomasticon (2017) the derivation of *Nehor* in Egyptian is *n-ḥr*, which means “belonging to Horus.”

Similar to the Maya religious system, the Egyptian gods were many, and their names, forms, and their images were varied because each god had more than one aspect or manifestation (Dunand et al. 2004, 6). From the earliest periods in Egypt, the Egyptian word for god, *netjer*, was depicted as a falcon perched on a standard, especially in the hieratic script.

From prehistoric times, the god Horus was represented or symbolized by a falcon. As early as the Pyramid Texts (2400–2300 BC) Horus was associated with the sky. In time every god represented as a pure falcon was regarded as Horus; while not every falcon-headed man was necessarily Horus, he was in some way related (Mercer 1942, 96, 117). Horus was worshiped in many forms and also assimilated many other gods (Wilkinson 2003, 202).



Figure 8. Depiction of Horus (Wikipedia Commons, 2017)

By the time of the Pyramid texts, Horus had become either a royal god representing the pharaoh and being identical with him, or a sun and sky god. The god Horus reigned in pre-Historic times in Egypt, but was always represented by an earthly king, who was a Horus-king. Horus is thought to have been the last of the old Gods to reign in Egypt. His successors, or Followers, as kings of Egypt, represented him, and as such were Horus gods (Mercer 1942, 54, 106, 145). The wife of Horus is usually given as Hathor, the mistress of the sky.

Horus had four sons, just like Itzamna and the Bacab, and also just like the Bacab, each son represents a cardinal direction: Amseti, the south; Hapy, the north; Duamutef, the east; and Qebehsenuf, the west. In the Pyramid Texts they are described as the “four spirits” and the souls of Horus. They are used by Horus to assist the king in Egypt, and the king (pharaoh) was considered their father, and joined himself with them and controlled them. They were not only spirits but also gods.

Nearly identical to the four Bacab, the four sons of Horus

represent . . . the four cardinal points; or the four tresses (*ḥnsktiw*) which were conceived of as binding earth and heaven, or the four pillars of heaven, which eventually became the four cardinal points. (Mercer 1942, 109)

The four sons of Horus sometimes appeared as four birds who announced to the four quarters of heaven the accession of the king as Horus. Horus himself is also associated with all four cardinal directions (Mercer 1942, 111).

The kingly display of bird masks of the Principal Bird Deity of the Maya has an interesting correlation to the etymology of the god Horus. Before discussing Egyptian etymology, it is important to remember that the vowels in

ancient Egyptian are for the most part unknown, so the words are represented only using the consonants. The name of the Egyptian God Horus initially was related to the word for face, *hr*, and secondarily with the word for falcon, which is also *hr*.

As already intimated, looking at the various Mesoamerican possibilities, the best match for the Book of Mormon god worshipped by Nehor is the Principal Bird Deity (PBD) and its various aspects and manifestations also known as "Itzamna."

Itzamna (Mayan pronunciation: [itsam'na] was, in Maya mythology, the name of an upper god and creator deity thought to reside in the sky. Although little is known about him, scattered references are present in early-colonial Spanish reports (relaciones) and dictionaries. Twentieth-century Lacandon lore includes tales about a creator god (Nohochakyum or Hachakyum) who may be a late successor to him. In the pre-Spanish period, Itzamna, represented by the aged god D, was often depicted in books and in ceramic scenes derived from them.

The early colonial sources variously connect, and sometimes identify, Itzamna with Hunab Ku (an invisible high god), Kinich Ahau (the sun deity), and Yaxcocahmut (a bird of omen).

Itzamna was an active creator god. More generally, Itzamna was the creator of humankind, and also the father of Bacab (Francisco Hernández), a fourfold deity of the interior of the earth.

In the New Year pages of the Dresden Codex, god D is given a role similar to that of Itzamna in Landa's description of these rituals. It is thus likely that in the Post-Classic codices, the aged god D represents Itzamna.

God D is sometimes dressed as a high priest, and hieroglyphically identified as the god of rulership. Speaking generally, Classic iconography confirms god D's identity as an upper god, seated on his celestial throne while governing, among other things, the affairs of agriculture and the hunt.

From the Late Postclassic Paris Codex back in time to the Pre-Classic San Bartolo murals, god D (Itzamna) has the so-called Principal Bird Deity - perhaps the Yaxcocahmut mentioned above - for a transformative shape. The bird often holds a bicephalous snake in its beak. Its head sometimes resembles that of a rain deity; at other times, it is more like that of a bird of prey, perhaps the laughing falcon believed to be a harbinger of rain. The wings are repeatedly inscribed with the signs for 'daylight' and 'night', suggesting that the bird's flight could represent the unfolding of time. The San Bartolo murals have a Principal Bird Deity seated on top of each of four world trees, recalling the four world trees (together with a fifth, central tree) which, according to some of the early-colonial Chilam Balam books, were re-erected after the collapse of the sky. These world trees were associated with specific birds. Four world trees also appear in the Mexican Borgia Codex. The shooting of the Principal Bird deity is one of the main episodes of the Classic Period Hero Twins myth; but strong arguments plead against the Principal Bird Deity's equation with Vucub Caquix, a bird demon shot by the Popol Vuh Twins.

God D and his avian transformation could be represented by human beings. Various kings of Yaxchilan, Dos Pilas, and Naranjo had Itzamnaaj as part of their names or titles. On Palenque's Temple XIX platform, a dignitary presenting the king with his royal headband wears the Principal Bird Deity's headdress, while being referred to as Itzamnaaj. In his bird avatar, god D here appears as the creator god bestowing rulership on a king. ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org), 2017a)

The Principal Bird Deity dates back to the timeframe of Alma in the Book of Mormon (post 100 BC):

The Principal Bird Deity motif is, by itself, a dynamic iconographic complex which has undergone a major developmental and stylistic evolution beginning in the Late Formative at Izapa, during the Miraflores phase (300 BC–150 AD) and ending in the Late Classic (600–900 AD). The motif does not persist into the Post Classic

though there is evidence that suggests the continuance of the concept it relates through a variation of form. (Bardawil, 1976)

The Principal Bird Deity was widespread in Mesoamerica:

[The PBD] is by no means the only supernatural theme presented on early monuments, but it easily is the most dominant and diverse in its representations. If we are to understand ideology among Late Preclassic Maya polities then we will need to take on the question of the great bird. The second is the tremendous consistency with which these ideas and their expressions are expressed throughout the Maya world. Ranging over great distances and diverse topographical and ecological zones, it displays a coherence that is not simply pan-Maya, but at root pan-Mesoamerican. (Martin 2016)

Itzamna is sometimes linked with the sun god Kinich Ahau and the moon goddess Ix Chel. Horus was considered “Lord of Heaven,” and the sun and moon were considered his eyes (Mercer 1942, 106). Like Itzamna, there were many festivals and feasts related to Horus (Mercer 1942, 197–98).

The Egyptian derivation of the name *Nehor* assigned to the native religion by the Nephites (or the divine translator of the Book of Mormon) does not imply that the Mesoamerican god or religion had an Egyptian source, although syncretization of portions of Egyptian religion may have been possible as the full cultural makeup of the Mulekite immigrants is not known. The similarities are definitely striking. The Nephites assigned the Egyptian name *Horus* to the religion because there were numerous similarities between the god and worship of Horus and the Mesoameric god(s) and religion.

In various Maya contexts the world trees are associated with the Principal Bird Deity (Vail et al. 2013, 77). As previously discussed, the land of Nephi, where the order of Nehor was found during the missionary period of the sons of Mosiah, has been identified under the Sorenson Model as including the Valley of Guatemala. The Principal Bird Deity was well represented there iconographically on Sculptures 10 and 11 determined to be from the period of Alma (200 BC–AD 1) (Parsons 1986). Sculpture 11 at Kaminaljuyu features the regalia of a king representing the Principal Bird Deity (PBD) including a bird mask (Henderson 2013, 335, fig. 1).

The Sorenson Model identifies Ammonihah as Mirador, Chiapas, Mexico. To date, no excavation there has turned up monumental art for the exact period of Alma, however a monument slightly later than Alma known as Stela 1, found in Mound 10 in Mirador, dates to the Protoclassic (50 BC–AD 250) (Agrinier 1975). Stela 1 features an individual with a bird mask, which is identified as a harpy eagle or vulture, and appears to be related to bird deities including Itzamna (see figure 9).

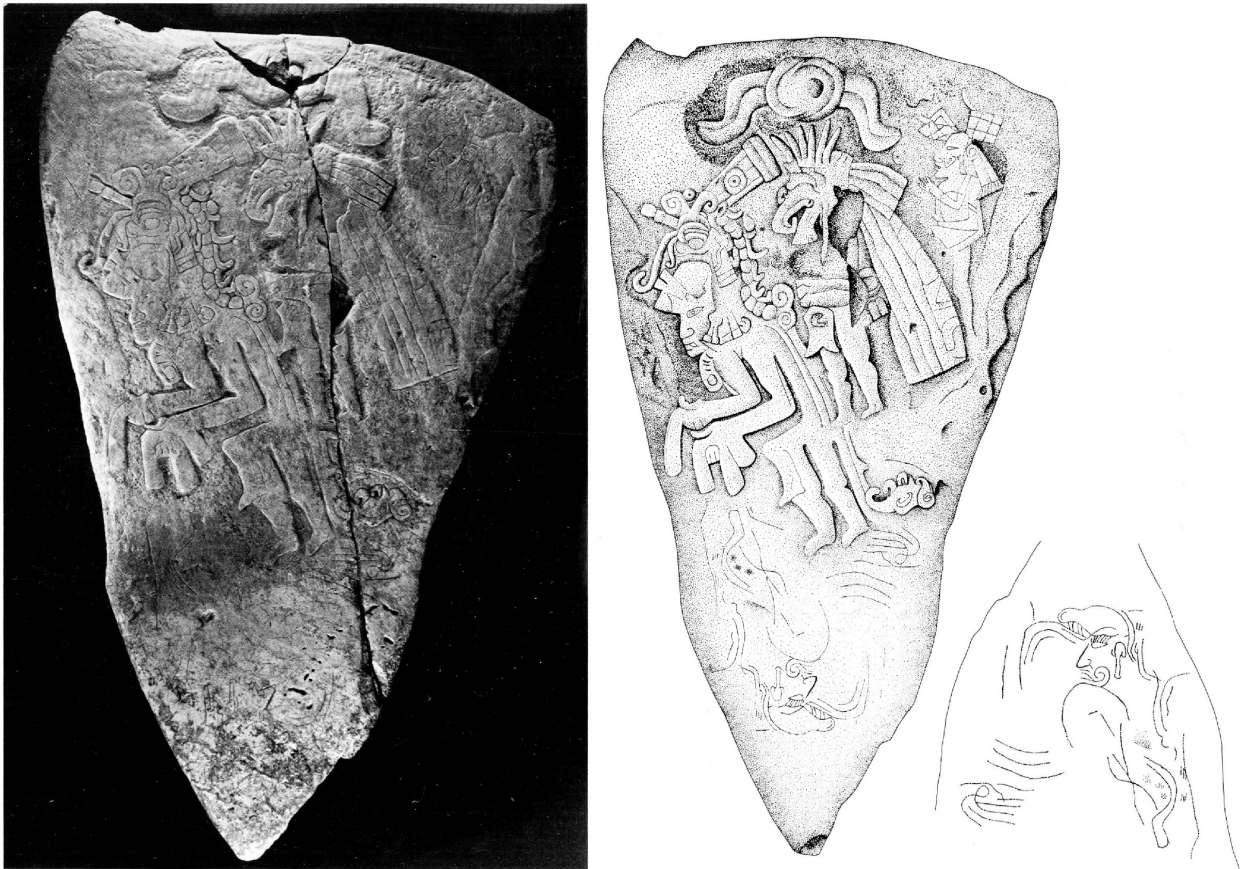


Figure 9. Stela 1 found in Mound 10 (Agrinier 1975)

An illustration reconstructing the decapitation ceremony based on the items found in Mound 10 including Stela 1, complete with the avian masks/headaddresses is shown in figure 10.

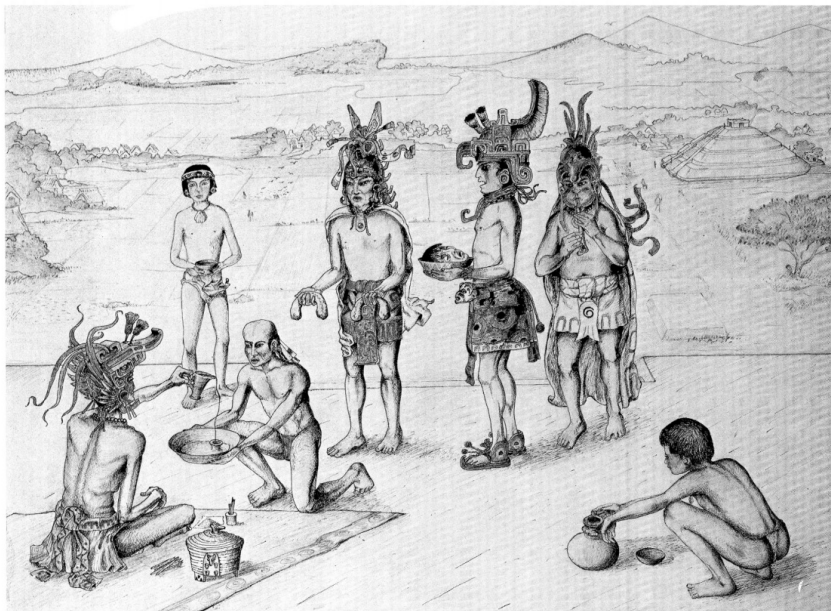


Figure 10. Reconstruction of the ceremony based on the items found in Mound 10 (Agrinier 1975)

Since there is an indication that there may be a link between the Olmec Nehor and the order of Nehor, there is some potential evidence that perhaps such a link may have existed. It has been fairly well established so far that some Olmec Gods (Old Fire God, the Fat God, the Rain God, and the Maize God) were the source of the gods of later Mesoamerican cultures. The Olmec God III called the Bird Monster is generally attributed to either the harpy eagle or the quetzal bird. An Early Formative period (900–300 BC) Olmec stone masquette which features bird profile heads may depict an especially early form of the mythical avian entity known as the Principal Bird Deity in the Maya region, and as El Ave de Pico Ancho among Zapotec specialists (Taube 2004).

While there is much discussed about the belief system, features of the Nehor religion that correspond with the Itzamna/Bacab Maya religion complex with applicable Book of Mormon references are:

1. Belief in multiple gods (Alma 14:5).
2. Belief that at least one of the gods was a creator (Alma 1:4).
3. Belief that there was no “Supreme Being” (Alma 11:22).
4. Belief in a class of priests supported financially by the people (Alma 1:5).
5. Priestcraft and combination of the religion with political power (Alma 1:2).
6. Priest leaders wore some sort of different “costly apparel” (Alma 1:6).
7. Some origination of the religion likely from Olmec times (*Nehor* is found in the Book of Ether)(Ether 7:4, 9).
8. Belief in prophecy (Mosiah 12:25).
9. All men would have eternal life (Alma 1:4, 14:5, 21:6).
10. Earth would not pass away (Alma 9:3).
11. No resurrection for men (Alma 12:20).

Utilizing the list of characteristics of the Nehor religion above, the Mesoamerican religion involving the Principal Bird Deity and the Egyptian religion involving Horus correspond as follows:

1. Belief in multiple gods (Alma 14:5).
2. Belief that at least one of the gods was a creator (Alma 1:4).
3. Belief that there was no “Supreme Being” (Alma 11:22).
4. Belief in a class of priests supported financially by the people (Alma 1:5).
5. Priestcraft and combination of the religion with political power.
6. Priest leaders wore some sort of different “costly apparel” (Alma 1:6).
7. Both sets of gods and specifically Horus and Itzamna involved bird elements, specifically birds of prey.
8. Each has four sons, aspects or manifestations (the Bacab and the Sons of Horus) who are also related to the four cardinal directions, the pillars that support the sky, and the wind gods.
9. Both Itzamna and Horus are sky gods, with correspondences with the sun and moon.
10. Both Itzamna and Horus have manifestations on earth of divine kings (pharaoh and Maya kings).
11. Both are invoked for healing spells (Horus and the Bacab).
12. Both Itzamna and Horus were represented by humans with bird heads or bird masks.
13. Both religions in general have multiple manifestations of gods.

The Egyptian religion was completely foreign to the Hebrews, from a foreign place, just as the Nehor (Principal Bird Deity) religion was completely foreign to the Nephites.

### **Itzamna and World Trees**

According to the Chilam Balam of Chumayel, after the world was destroyed, four World Trees were raised at the points of the compass, with a final green one raised in the center. In the *Dresden Codex*, World Trees are identified as columnar stone trees and are thus described as “Itzamna trees” (Vail et al. 2013, 77). To each of the tree

inscriptions is affixed the glyph for the god Itzamna. Incantations in the *Ritual of the Bacabs* links Itzamna to the World Trees (Christenson 2016, 39). The San Bartolo murals dated to the first century BC show Itzamna birds atop World Trees, indicating a linkage to the Maya New Year’s observances that go back to the Pre-Classic (Christenson 2016, 58)(see figure 11).

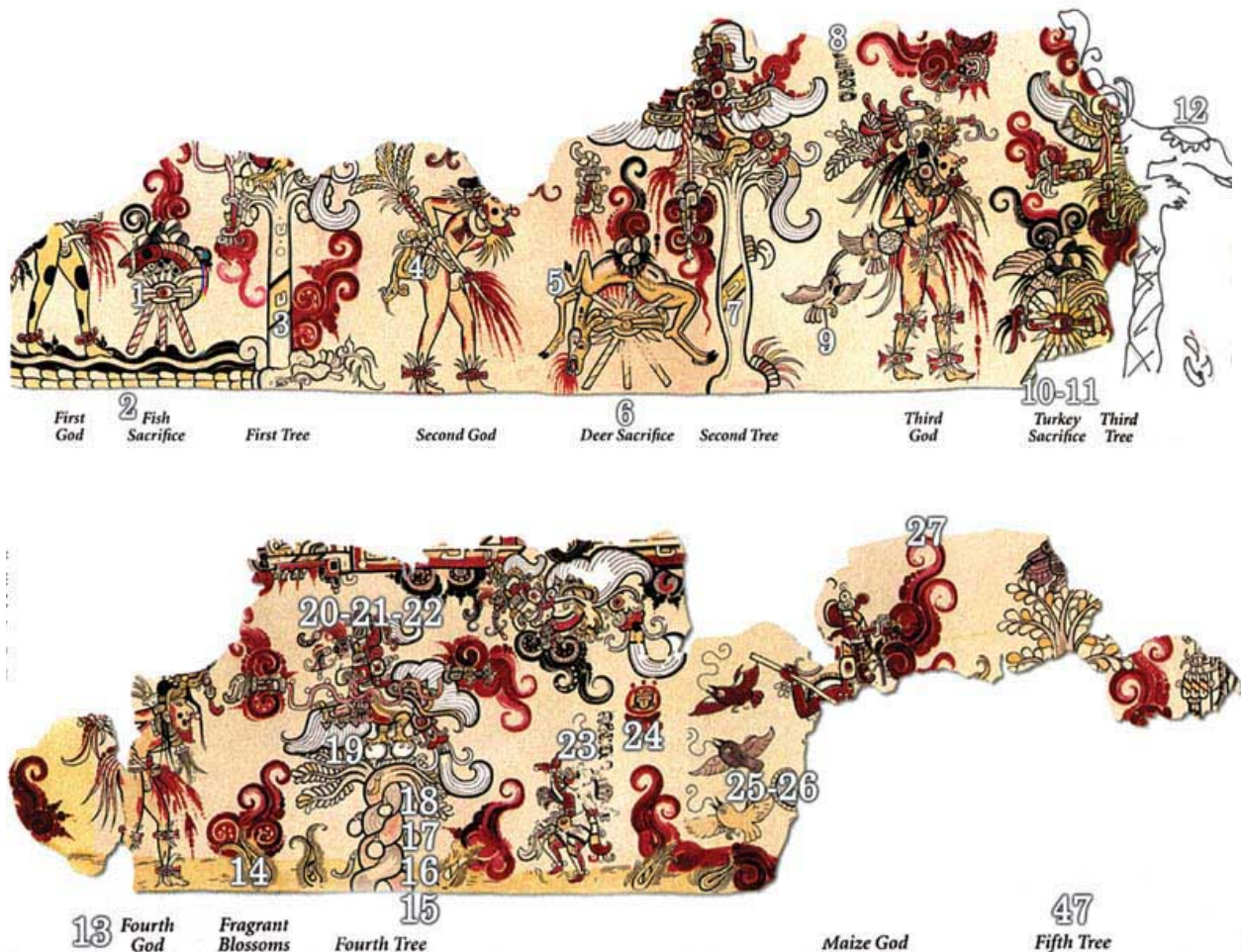


Figure 11. San Bartolo West Wall mural set showing five World Trees (www.alunajoy.com 2017)

In 1696 AD at the site of Noj Peten, Fray Andrés de Avendaño y Loyola noted a Maya stone column was worshipped by the Maya king and his family and was called *yax cheel cab*, which means “the first tree of the world” (Vail et al. 2013, 391).

**Additional Meaning of the Name *Nehor***

As previously discussed in Egyptian, *Nehor* can mean: *n hr*: belonging to (*n*) Horus (*Hr*) (Book of Mormon Onomasticon 2016). Looking at *Nehor* in light of Sumerian roots and a compound word construction, considering that the “o” phonetic sound may be represented as an “a” or a “u” in modern Sumerian dictionaries one arrives at (words in capital letters maintain the same sound but the underlying glyph is logographic):

*ne*: strength; force

*NE*: type of bird

*NE*: a designation of trees

*HAR*: a bird

*hur*: ever (again)

*u*: totality, world

*U*: type of stone

*U*: tree

*ur*: to anoint

*ur*: he; that; are corresponding to another; like (one another)

*ur*: man

(*The Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary*, 2006)

The meaning of a compound word utilizing these Sumerian roots would provide a word roughly meaning “Man that is anointed, powerful bird and world stone tree.”

### Meaning of the Names *Ammonihah* and *Amlici*

The meaning of both *Ammonihah* and *Amlici* are consistent with the order of Nehor being equivalent with the Maya religion of Itzamna, the Principal Bird Deity.

Ammonihah

As mentioned, most Book of Mormon names are metonymic, and often have multiple meanings in Egyptian, Sumerian, and Biblical Hebrew. A description of the individual Ammonihah for which the city is named is not provided, but a reasonable etymology for the founder of Ammonihah can be constructed:

*am*: a bird

*a*: arm; labor; strength; wage; power

*a<sub>2</sub>-mu*, *a<sub>2</sub>-na*, *a<sub>2</sub>-ni*, *an-na*, *an*, *a<sub>2</sub>-a-na*, *a<sub>2</sub>-a-ni* (form of *a*)

*A*: a weapon or a leather holder for a weapon

*mah*: (to be) great

*mah-a*, *ma-ha*, *mah-a-ni*, *mah-ni*, *mah-na* (form of *mah*)

*mu*: manly; young man

*un*: to arise; sky; (to be) high

*ni*: fear, aura

*i*: oil; container for oil (indicating priestly function)

*NI*, *i<sub>3</sub>-a* (form of *i*)

*ah*: scum; spittle; poison

*uh<sub>3</sub>-a*, *uh<sub>3</sub>* (form of *ah*)

*he*: be he

Constructed Compound Name: **Ammonih(e)ah**

The Sumerian meaning would be something to the effect of “Powerful, feared, high and great bird priest; he is scum/poison.”

The Hebrew meaning seems to be more applicable to the nature of the city, which is:

*'amam*: to darken or dim, and figuratively: to make secret



*hamon*: people

*-ihah*: theophoric element “Yahweh/Jehovah”, the divine name

Constructed Compound Name: (H)**amonihah**

The Hebrew combined meaning would be something like “People who darken or make secret the Lord.”

The Egyptian meaning also seems to be more applicable to the nature of the city, which is:

*Ḥm*: Egyptian city that was a center of worship of the deity Khenty-irty or Khenty-khem, a form of the god Horus.

*Ḥmn*: a local name for the falcon god Horus in Asphynis

*mn*: eternal

*ḥah*: great number

(Mercer 1942, 119, 158) (Dickson 2006) (Book of Mormon Onomasticon 2016)

The Egyptian combined meaning would be something like the “Great city of the eternal Horus.” This is an interesting meaning given the fact that the people of Ammonihah declared that their city was a “great city” (Alma 9:4, 16:9).

There is also an alternate meaning of Sumerian construction that describes the final destruction and burning of the residents of the city of Ammonihah:

*a*: arm; strength; wage; power

*a<sub>2</sub>-mu, a<sub>2</sub>-na, a<sub>2</sub>-ni, an-na, an, a<sub>2</sub>-a-na, a<sub>2</sub>-a-ni* (form of *a*)

*ma*: to burn

*mah*: (to be) great

*mah-a, ma-ha, mah-a-ni, mah-ni, mah-na* (form of *mah*)

*mu*: to crush, mangle

*mun*: (to be) brackish

*a-mun<sub>4</sub>* (form of *mun*)

*u*: abuse

*u*: to bray, bellow, bawl, voice, cry, noise

*u*: defeat

*un*: (to be) high

*ni*: fear

*ah*: phlegm, mucus, sputum; foam, scum; saliva, spittle; poison

*uh<sub>3</sub>-a, uh<sub>3</sub>* (form of *ah*)

*he*: be it

Constructed Compound Name: Am(u)monih(e)ah

The Sumerian combined meaning would be something like “Great, high and powerful; fear and screaming; crushed and mangled, defeated and burned; place of scum.” That is a very fitting description of the quick destruction (Alma 16:2, 7–11), even down to the detail of the “mangled” bodies described in the Book of Mormon.

In summary, the name of the city Ammonihah also provides evidence that it was a primary location for the worship of Itzamna, the Principal Bird Deity as viewed and interpreted by the Nephites.

Amlici

*a*: arm; labor; wing; horn; side; strength; wage; power

*a<sub>2</sub>-mu* (form of *a*)

*a*: a bird-cry

*A*: a weapon or a leather holder for a weapon

*am*: a bird

*li*: to press

*i*: oil; container for oil (indicating priestly function)

*ki*: place, ground, earth, land, toward, underworld, lower, down below

Constructed Compound Name: **Amliki**

The Sumerian combined meaning would be something like “Powerful underworld bird priest; press with a weapon.”

Based on multiple lines of evidence, it is abundantly clear that the native portion of the Noah syncretic religion and the entire order of Nehor are the Itzamna-Bacab complex of Maya gods, religious practice, and religious ritual. The Nephite description of this religious complex as being “of Horus” is an accurate description of the Itzamna-Bacab complex.

# Chapter 4

## Nephite “Great Spirit” Religion and the Amalekite Religion

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### “Great Spirit” Religion

Ammon’s missionary efforts to the land of Ishmael (so called after the “sons of Ishmael,” an individual tribe within the Lamanite tribe), precipitated a discussion of the “Great Spirit” religion.

Alma 18:2–6

2 And when they had all testified to the things which they had seen, and he had learned of the faithfulness of Ammon in preserving his flocks, and also of his great power in contending against those who sought to slay him, he was astonished exceedingly, and said: Surely, this is more than a man. Behold, is not this the Great Spirit who doth send such great punishments upon this people, because of their murders?

3 And they answered the king, and said: Whether he be the Great Spirit or a man, we know not; but this much we do know, that he cannot be slain by the enemies of the king; neither can they scatter the king's flocks when he is with us, because of his expertness and great strength; therefore, we know that he is a friend to the king. And now, O king, we do not believe that a man has such great power, for we know he cannot be slain.

4 And now, when the king heard these words, he said unto them: Now I know that it is the Great Spirit; and he has come down at this time to preserve your lives, that I might not slay you as I did your brethren. Now this is the Great Spirit of whom our fathers have spoken.

5 Now this was the tradition of Lamoni, which he had received from his father, that there was a Great Spirit. Notwithstanding they believed in a Great Spirit they supposed that whatsoever they did was right; nevertheless, Lamoni began to fear exceedingly, with fear lest he had done wrong in slaying his servants;

6 For he had slain many of them because their brethren had scattered their flocks at the place of water; and thus, because they had had their flocks scattered they were slain.

Based on this passage of scripture, the “Great Spirit” religion was not a practiced religion by king Lamoni, but he simply recognized that there was a Great Spirit, an understanding that was passed to him by his father. The basis of his fear of the Great Spirit was caused by regret that he had ordered the murder of his servants for not protecting his sheep. Why this fear specifically related to the death of his servants? His first thought was also that the Great Spirit had appeared in the form of Ammon, a Nephite.

Who were these servants? They were described as being “Lamanitish”:

Alma 17:26

And after he had been in the service of the king three days, as he was with the Lamanitish servants going forth with their flocks to the place of water, which was called the water of Sebus, and all the Lamanites drive their flocks hither, that they may have water—

Abish, a servant of the Lamanite queen, was also characterized as “Lamanitish”; she was converted on account of a vision by her father.

Alma 19:16

And it came to pass that they did call on the name of the Lord, in their might, even until they had all fallen to the earth, save it were one of the Lamanitish women, whose name was Abish, she having been converted unto the Lord for many years, on account of a remarkable vision of her father—

This is the only instance in the Book of Mormon of the use of the term *Lamanitish*. The servants referred to each other as “brethren” (Alma 17:28), and Ammon referred to them as “fellow-servants” who he “termed to be his brethren” (Alma 17:29–30). He later directly called them “my brethren” (Alma 17:31). These servants were actually the first targeted choice of Ammon for missionary work, not the Lamanite king or other Lamanites, as he wanted to “win their hearts” which in turn would “lead them to believe in my words.”

Later during the conversion of king Lamoni, the unique affiliation of the Great Spirit to the Nephites was further insinuated as the Great Spirit was again thought to have come in the form of a Nephite, Ammon, or at least was sent by him. It was stated that the Great Spirit has always attended the Nephites, and was the god who had destroyed Lamanites.

Alma 19:25–27

25 And it came to pass that there were many among them who said that Ammon was the Great Spirit, and others said he was sent by the Great Spirit;

26 But others rebuked them all, saying that he was a monster, who had been sent from the Nephites to torment them.

27 And there were some who said that Ammon was sent by the Great Spirit to afflict them because of their iniquities; and that it was the Great Spirit that had always attended the Nephites, who had ever delivered them out of their hands; and they said that it was this Great Spirit who had destroyed so many of their brethren, the Lamanites.

It is abundantly clear that the “Great Spirit” religion is simply the Lamanite description for the religion of the Nephites. The fact that king Lamoni feared the Great Spirit for the actions he had taken against his servants is also an indicator that the Great Spirit had an affinity to his servants, with the implication that they were Nephites or of Nephite descent. Ammon referred to these servants as his brethren, and thought they were fertile ground for conversion (or perhaps reconversion) so this is also evidence that they were of Nephite descent. Abish was converted to the Lord based on a vision of her father. She may have had Nephite lineage, as her conversion required a religious intervention different than merely learning or assimilating religion available in the surrounding Lamanite culture.

Having established that these servants were of Nephite lineage, where did they come from? They must have been there for some generations as there was no immediate obvious affiliation to Ammon or recognition that he was a prince. The servants were described as Lamanitish, so there was some significant degree of assimilation into the Lamanite culture. The fact that they were servants is indicative that the original assimilation of the original group from which they came was not voluntary.

The Limhite and Alma groups do not appear to be candidate sources for these Nephite descendant servants located in the land of Ishmael, as the conflicts that the people of Zeniff had with the Lamanites were all based on Lamanite plundering of flocks and food, not of taking any captives. The Limhites and Alma groups left the land of Nephi by stratagem so did not leave any of their group behind (at least none are mentioned). The descendants of the priests of Noah constituting the Amulonites were their own people within the land of Nephi and were not part of the slave/servant class. The same can be said for the Amalekites.

There is conflict mentioned between the Lamanites and Nephites during the reign of king Benjamin, but none afterwards up to the mission of Ammon. In that conflict there is no mention of captive Nephites, although capture of a small number may not have warranted mention. Also under king Benjamin there is mention of “many dissensions away unto the Lamanites” from the Nephites (Words of Mormon 1:16), however it would seem unlikely that a group of Nephites would dissent over to the Lamanites only to end up in servitude although it does have some oblique precedence with the people of Zeniff. With the departure of king Mosiah<sub>1</sub> from the land of Nephi occurring approximately 115–120 years prior to the mission of Ammon, it would seem likely that the initial assimilation sufficient to later call persons Lamanitish must have occurred prior to Mosiah<sub>1</sub>’s departure, meaning that the ancestors of the Nephite servants of king Lamoni were likely those left in the land of Nephi when king Mosiah<sub>1</sub> departed. The only Nephites who followed Mosiah were “as many as would hearken unto the voice of the Lord” (Omni 1:12).

Zeniff, who was born in the land of Nephi, went back to the land of Nephi thirty-one years after Mosiah left, with the intent to destroy the Lamanites with his army. But as he went in as a spy (which in and of itself may have been indicative of some Nephitish Lamanites) he saw “that which was good” among the population of the Lamanites so decided that they should not destroy the Lamanites (Mosiah 9:1). It would seem reasonable that Zeniff was referring to some original Nephites or their descendants, since after arriving he did not characterize the Lamanites as having those that were good among them; in fact, his description of the Lamanites was just the opposite (Mosiah 9:12) calling them “lazy” and “idolatrous.” It is also of note that when Zeniff arrived, the king of the Lamanites specifically commanded “his people” to move to make way for Zeniff, leaving open the possibility that there may have been some other Nephites still present that did not have to move away. Given that the original group of Zeniff numbered sixty people (Grover 2015, 49, 203) and given that a mere thirteen years later the Zeniffite army suffered the loss of two hundred and seventy nine Zeniffites yet killed three thousand and forty-three Lamanites in one day, the Zeniffite population had to have been significantly augmented by others in addition to the offspring and population of the original group (Mosiah 9:18–19).

### **Thoughts on the Origination of the Amalekites and Their Religion**

Amalekite Religion

Some portion of the Amalekites practiced the order of Nehor, at least those that participated in a particular battle against the Nephites:

Alma 24:28

Now the greatest number of those of the Lamanites who slew so many of their brethren were Amalekites and Amulonites, the greatest number of whom were after the order of the Nehors.

However, there are indications that the Amalekites either practiced a modified form of the order of Nehor, or some of them practiced a religion different from the order of Nehor. In Ammonihah, Alma and Amulek are attacked by those of the order of Nehor for believing only in one God (Alma 14:5). The father of king Lamoni indicates that the Amalekites “say that there is a God, and I have granted unto them that they should build sanctuaries, that they may assemble themselves together to worship him” (Alma 22:7). Alma 21:6 also mentions the use of sanctuaries among the Amalekites. The only other mention of sanctuaries in the Book of Mormon involves worship among the Nephites. Those of the order of Nehor are only known to have utilized synagogues (as did the Amalekites) (Alma 21:5). After his conversion, the king of Lamanites sent a proclamation giving the sons of Mosiah access to the synagogues, houses, temples, and sanctuaries of all those under his jurisdiction, which statement is not definitive either way as to the exclusive use of sanctuaries by the Amalekites (Alma 23:2–3).

The Amalekites were dissenters from the Nephites but were not just political dissenters; they were fully vested and righteous participants in the Nephite religion prior to apostasy:

Alma 24:29–30

29 Now, among those who joined the people of the Lord, there were none who were Amalekites or Amulonites, or who were of the order of Nehor, but they were actual descendants of Laman and Lemuel.

30 And thus we can plainly discern, that after a people have been once enlightened by the Spirit of God, and have had great knowledge of things pertaining to righteousness, and then have fallen away into sin and transgression, they become more hardened, and thus their state becomes worse than though they had never known these things.

The belief in “a God” as opposed to many and the use of sanctuaries sets the Amalekites apart from the mainstream order of Nehor and a bit closer to the Nephite religion.

#### Amalekite Origins

The Amalekites are the only group in the Book of Mormon mentioned without explanation or introduction (Conkling 2005). This fact has generated various theories as to their origination. Royal Skousen has made an argument that all of the instances of Amalekite are misspellings of the Amlicites (Skousen 2006, 1605–1609). McMurtry (2017) has countered that assertion based primarily on the geographical, chronological, and religious inconsistencies of the theory. McMurtry offers the theories:

1. The Amalekites are dissident Mulekites that left for the Lamanites under king Benjamin during the conflict and dissensions previously mentioned. This theory is based primarily that the Amalekites in Alma 43 fight alongside the Zoramites and Lamanites with an Amalekite leader named Zerahemnah (Alma 43:5). As his name is close to the name *Zarahemla* this must indicate that he was also a Mulekite (presupposing *Zarahemla* is a Mulekite name).
2. The Amalekites were a very large group of people who dissented from the church and disputed points of doctrine and “were a separate people as to their faith” (Mosiah 26:4). Later the people (with no indication that this was the dissenter group) “began to scatter abroad upon the face of the earth, yea, on the north and on the south” (Mosiah 27:3, 6), the theory being that this group must have gone south and joined the Lamanites.
3. The children of Amulon that returned with Alma when he returned to Zarahemla after being in bondage desired to return to be with their fathers. No scriptural support for this premise is provided.
4. The Amalekite origin story was never recorded in the large plates of Nephi, so Mormon simply did not know what it was; or,
5. The Amalekite origin story is found in the lost 116 pages.

The Amalekites were clearly identified as a dissident group of Nephites, not Mulekites (Alma 43:13).

With regard to the name *Zarahemla* being a Mulekite name, McMurtry apparently was not aware that the place name *Zarahemla* is found in the “Caractors” Document and it is not a Mulekite name; it is a fairly straight forward Hebrew-based name (Grover, 2015, 121–22). The Mulekites had a corrupted language that was not apparently mutually intelligible (Omni 1:17–18), so it would not be expected that they spoke Hebrew. Zarahemla was thus a name assigned by the Nephites. Identifying the Amalekites as dissident Mulekites is also not likely as Mormon indicates that the Amalekites at one point were enlightened by the Spirit of God before they fell away, which does not sound like a group of Mulekites who did not believe in their Creator. In addition, there is no mention of pre-

Benjamin conversions of Mulekites. Options 2, 3, and 4 are theories that are not actually supported by any direct scriptural support.

Surprisingly, the possibility of the Amalekite origin being found in the lost 116 pages does have scriptural support. Namely that the Amalekites were dissidents at the time that Mosiah<sub>1</sub> and his followers left the land of Nephi, and the Amalekites, probably with assistance from the Lamanites, were the ones who forced the exodus from the land of Nephi of Mosiah<sub>1</sub> and his followers. Unlike the Amulonites, the Amalekites retained a few vestiges of the Nephite religion such as the belief in one God and the use of sanctuaries.

Mosiah<sub>1</sub> was warned that he should flee out of the land of Nephi and that as many as would hearken unto the voice of the Lord should also depart out of the land with him into the wilderness (Omni 1:12–13). It seems fairly clear that they left under some sort of military threat, and it seems that it was religion based, and that they left other Nephites there (at a minimum, those that would not hearken to his voice).

During the time of king Noah, a hill is mentioned north of the land of Shilom that had been a “resort” for Mosiah<sub>1</sub> and his followers just before their exodus to Zarahemla. The term for a location called a “resort” is found in three other locations in the Book of Mormon (Alma 48:5, 8; 52:6) and in each it is referring to a defensive fortified military location or a “small fort.”

Mosiah 11:13

And it came to pass that he caused many buildings to be built in the land Shilom; and he caused a great tower to be built on the hill north of the land Shilom, which had been a resort for the children of Nephi at the time they fled out of the land; and thus he did do with the riches which he obtained by the taxation of his people.

Mosiah<sub>1</sub> and his followers were forced into a military defensive position on a hill, and from there fled into the wilderness starting their exodus to Zarahemla. A few things can be logically derived from the situation. Not all of the Nephites were leaving with Mosiah<sub>1</sub>, only those that were religiously affiliated, so the situation is not the standard Book of Mormon scenario where the Lamanites are battling the Nephites as a whole. If that was the case, then all of the Nephites would have been fleeing, not just Mosiah<sub>1</sub>'s group. Mosiah<sub>1</sub> and his followers were clearly losing the battle to someone—if not to the Lamanites (or at least exclusively the Lamanites) then the only other real possibility is that they were battling a group of rival or dissident Nephites. Since the Amalekites are the only dissident group in the land of Nephi that we do not know the origination of, by a process of elimination, they are the logical group. It is likely, just like the other Nephite dissident rebellions in the Book of Mormon, that the Amalekites were in league with the Lamanites and thus remained on friendly terms with the Lamanites afterwards. Nephites who were perhaps sympathetic to Mosiah<sub>1</sub> (or at least were not in league with the Amalekites and/or Lamanites) but were not able to leave with him because of geographic location or other factors are the likely ancestors of the king Lamoni servants. The fact that the servants (unlike the Amalekites) were still favorable to the Nephite religion when Ammon arrived is a clue to their ancestry.

Further verification of the origin of the Amalekites is found in the name itself. A pattern has been identified in the Book of Mormon by S. Kent Brown called the “Exodus Pattern”:

The Israelite deliverance from Egypt serves as a type for several Book of Mormon accounts of deliverance. Book of Mormon authors and teachers such as Nephi, Alma, and Limhi allude to the Exodus and draw parallels with their own experiences. One perceives similarities not only with groups, such as Lehi's family leaving Jerusalem, but also with personal experiences, such as Alma's deliverance from the bondage of sin. (Brown, 1998, 75)

Although Brown did not mention the Mosiah<sub>1</sub> exodus as a candidate for this pattern, all of the elements are there, in fact more so. You have a prophetic leader with 20,000 followers (according to the “Caractors” Document, Grover 2015, 203) trapped in a defensive position (as was Moses against the Red Sea) against an overwhelming military force, who then escaped miraculously into and through the wilderness, arriving finally at a more friendly land. Mosiah’s followers were referred to as his “children” (Grover 2015, 178), similar to the reference to those who fled in the Exodus as the “children of Israel” (1 Kings 6:1).

A Biblical type for the Book of Mormon Amalekites is directly found with the Amalekites of the Bible. The Bible records the long-lasting feud between the Amalekites and the Israelites and God’s direction to wipe the Amalekites off the face of the earth (Exodus 17:8–13; 1 Samuel 15:2–3; Deuteronomy 25:17–19).

Deuteronomy 25:17–19

17 Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt;

18 How he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God.

19 Therefore it shall be, when the LORD thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it.

Samuel 15:2–3

2 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt.

3 Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.

The reason for the commandment to annihilate and show no mercy to the Amalekites was because they attacked the Israelites during the Exodus, laying in wait for them and killing the feeble persons (likely women and children) in the back who were weary and fainting. The Amalekites in the Book of Mormon attacked the children of Mosiah<sub>1</sub>, causing them to flee in front of them in order to escape. In the Bible, when battling the Amalekites, Moses climbs a nearby hill to watch the battle, which has some similarities to Mosiah<sub>1</sub> retreating to a hill north of Shilom.

As one of the Edomite tribes, the Biblical Amalekites were also treated as “brothers” (Deuteronomy 23:7) of the Israelites, something similar to the Nephite relationship to the Amalekites—Alma 43:14 refers to them as “brethren” of the Nephites. The nature of the Book of Mormon description of the Amalekites is similar to the Bible, as they are described as “of a more wicked and murderous disposition than the Lamanites” (Alma 43:6) and the Nephites knew that if the Lamanites led by the Amalekites defeated the Nephites, their wives and their children would be “destroyed” (Alma 43:9).

Ironically, in a later battle of Moroni<sub>1</sub> against the army led by Zerahemnah the Amalekite, Moroni<sub>1</sub> used a stratagem of laying in wait to hem in and defeat Zerahemnah, the same strategy used by the Biblical Amalekites against the children of Israel (Alma 43). When trapped, Moroni gave Zerahemnah and his army the opportunity to surrender, and if they did not, similar to the fate of the Biblical Amalekites before Saul, Moroni<sub>1</sub>’s army would “fall upon” them that they “may become extinct” (Alma 44:7).

After the exodus from Egypt, Amalekites later joined with the Canaanites and attacked the Israelites at Hormah (Numbers 14:45). As recorded in Judges, they banded with the Moabites (Judges 3:13) and the Midianites (Judges



6:3) to wage war on the Israelites. They were responsible for the repeated destruction of the Israelites’ land and food supply. The Biblical Amalekites continued to harass and plunder the Israelites in successive generations that spanned hundreds of years. First Samuel 30 reports an Amalekite raid on Ziklag, a Judean village where David held property. Much later, during the reign of King Hezekiah, a group of Simeonites “killed the remaining Amalekites” who had been living in the hill country of Seir (1 Chronicles 4:42–43). The last mention of the Amalekites is found in the book of Esther where Haman the Agagite, a descendant of the Amalekite King Agag, connives to have all the Jews in Persia annihilated by order of King Xerxes. God saved the Jews in Persia, however, and Haman, his sons, and the rest of Israel’s enemies were destroyed instead (Esther 9:5–10). The Amalekites of the Book of Mormon formed similar military coalitions over time to destroy the Nephites.



Figure 12. The Amalekites fight against the Israelites led by Joshua, with Moses pictured in the background on a hilltop. (Wikipedia Commons, 2016)

One interesting Mesoamerican correlation involving the etymology of the Amalekite name is the Hebrew *ama lak* meaning “people who lick blood.” Considering that the Lamanites early on in the Book of Mormon were characterized as loving murder and drinking “the blood of beasts” (Jarom 1:6) and generally delighting in blood (Mosiah 11:19) this might be an apt description of the religious integration of Lamanite practice among the Amalekites. Also of interest in a Mesoamerican setting is an interesting (but somewhat speculative) correlation involving the fact that the Biblical Amalekites were considered one of the tribes of the area of Edom (based on Amalek being a descendant of Esau). *Edom* means “red” in Hebrew (www.abarim-publications.com 2015) and so would also have the potential correlation with blood, and, since the color red is associated with the cardinal direction of east is fitting as under the Sorenson model, the land of Nephi where the Amalekites were lay east of the land of Zarahemla.

Based on the Sumerian etymology of the name *Zerahemnah* it seems certain that he was after the order of Nehor, which is after the Maya religion of Itzamna (the Principal Bird Deity):

*zeh*: a bird

*era*: leader (of the assembly)

*rah*: to beat, kill; to break, crush

*e-rah<sub>2</sub>, rah<sub>2</sub>-am<sub>3</sub>* (form of *rah*)

*na*: man

*ah*: phlegm, mucus, sputum; foam, scum; saliva, spittle; poison

Constructed Compound Name: **Ze(h)rah<sub>2</sub>am<sub>3</sub>nah**

Based on the Sumerian etymology the meaning of the name would be approximately “Bird leader who kills; man of scum.”

Consequently, in Biblical Hebrew the verb זָרַח (*zarah*), means to arise, or come up ([www.abarim-publications.com](http://www.abarim-publications.com) 2015) referring to the rising of the sun which occurs in the east, which is consistent with the earlier correlation of the Amalekites and the east.

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The prophecies of Abinadi in the Book of Mormon, his sacrificial death, and the deaths of his murderers all correlate with Maya rituals and ceremonies. The later order of Nehor, having common elements with the king Noah syncretic religion, also correlates with known Mesoamerican religious practices, one correlation being the Principal Bird Deity and its manifestations. Two other religious traditions, the “Great Spirit” and Amalekites, are derivatives of the Nephite religion.