



Type: Magazine Article

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## The Book of Mormon: Ammon and His Brethren

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Source: *Relief Society Magazine*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (April 1930), pp. 202–206

Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

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**Abstract:** No abstract available.

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# Guide Lessons For June

## LESSON 1

### Theology and Testimony

(First Week in June)

AMMON AND HIS BRETHREN

#### *The Outline*

1. Conversion.
  1. Who Ammon and his associates were.
  2. Their opposition to the Church.
  3. Heavenly manifestation to them.
  4. Result to Alma and Ammon.
  5. Purpose to preach to Lamanites.
    - a. Why this mission chosen.
    - b. Consultation with king.
    - c. Promises of the Lord to him.
2. The Journey.
  1. Dangers involved.
  2. Conditions among the Lamanites.
  3. Preparations for journey.
  4. Breaking up of the party.
3. Ammon's Experiences.
  1. First apprehension by Lamanites.
  2. The Waters of Sebus.
  3. Conversations with King Lamoni.
  4. Results of conversations.
  5. Controversy with Lamoni's father.
4. Aaron's Experiences.
  1. Imprisonment.
  2. Release through Ammon's influence.
  3. Meeting with the head king.
  4. Subsequent successes.
5. Anti-Nephi-Lehi Church.
  1. Influence of the old king.
  2. The new name.
  3. Rise of Opposition.
    - a. Who opposition were.
    - b. Position of Lamoni.

c. Results to both parties to the war.

6. Removal of new converts to Zarahemla.

#### *The Story*

ALTHOUGH the material for this lesson covers 35 pages, there is almost nothing in it but narrative. But it is narrative of a most thrilling sort, unusual even in the Book of Mormon.

When the angel appeared to Alma and Ammon that time, the same impression was made on Ammon and his brothers, sons of the King, as on Alma. For with Alma these men had been engaged in tearing down the church and faith which Alma's father and the King had labored to establish. But now the King's sons decided to undertake a mission to the Lamanites, while Alma stayed at home engaged in the work we have seen him do.

They were promised that many would believe on their word and that they would be preserved from the hands of their enemies. They were gone fourteen years. But when they returned they brought many thousand converts with them. And such converts!

On reaching Lamanite territory the party separated, each man going a different way. Ammon's fortunes lay in the land of Ishmael. He distinguished himself there and attracted the attention of King Lamoni. This led to conversations with the King and Queen, with the result that they and their people were converted.

Meantime Aaron had gone to another land, Jerusalem, where he was imprisoned. Later, after a set-to with Lamoni's father, who was the general ruler of the Lamonites, Ammon had secured the old monarch's promise to have Aaron and his companions released. After this Aaron and his friends converted the old King and thousands of his subjects and this led to a proclamation that opened the way for preaching the word throughout all the Lamanite territory.

THEN opposition developed. The Amulonites and Amalekites, apostates and children of apostate Nephites, stirred up enmity against the converts. The old King died after giving these a new name, and was succeeded by a son who had a less strong arm than he. The people of Lamoni were attacked, but refused to take up arms in self-defense.

In the end the Lamanite converts, many thousands in number, were removed to Zarahemla, where they were set apart by themselves and given protection by the nation.

This story, a very wonderful story, is complete by itself, and forms one of the episodes of the Nephite people, in which that nation must have abounded.

#### *Observations*

1. The Lamanites at this period: From all accounts the Lamanites were far more numerous than the Nephites. This was due partly, it seems to the fact that they hung together better than their civilized neighbors. For the Nephites were always at loggerheads with one another. And then, too, disgruntled Nephites went over to the Lamonites, whereas no Lamanites ever defected into the ranks of the Nephites.

THE Lamanites therefore covered more territory than the Nephites. The historian says that they almost surrounded the country occupied by the Nephites. And they had many "lands" and cities. Twelve of these are mentioned by name—Ishmael, Middoni, Jerusalem, Mormon, Nephi, Shilom, Shemlon, Lemuel, Shimmilon, Amulon, Helma, Midian.

Their government was simpler than that of their neighbors. They had a "king" over each of these lands, as in the case of Lamoni, who ruled over Ishmael, all of whom seem to have been more or less responsible to a head king. It was a sort of feudalism, such as we find in Mediaeval Europe, only not perhaps so well knit together.

In habits and customs the Lamanites were far inferior to the Nephites. While many of them lived in houses—built perhaps mostly by the Nephites before their migration north—still some of them dwelt in tents. Especially was this true of those who lived in what was known as The Wilderness. They had no literature. They neither wrote nor read. They knew nothing of God or revealed religion. The historian describes them as "a wild and a hardened, and a ferocious people; a people who delighted in murdering the Nephites, and robbing and plundering them; and their hearts were set upon riches, or upon gold and silver, and precious stones." An idle and indolent race, they worshipped idols.

2. An heroic undertaking: We must bear in mind that this missionary enterprise of Ammon and his fellow workers was undertaken about eighty-five years before Christ. The Nephites and the Lamanites had gone on in their separate ways for nearly five hundred years, each de-

veloping along a different line. Moreover, the Lamanites, on the one hand, had acquired and cultivated an intense bitterness of feeling towards their neighbors, the spirit of hatred and revenge and murder. And the Nephites on their part, had developed a fear and distrust of the Lamanites. And there you were. During these hundreds of years of separation the Nephites had never even attempted, so far as we know, to conquer their foe by means of the only power that ever does really conquer—the power of Christ, the power of love.

ALL of a sudden there rises among the Nephites a man who has the idea that these barbarians can be converted to the truth of revealed religion. And what is more, he is willing to risk his life in the undertaking. It is a grand idea. It is like a League of Nations only greater, because dominated by love, not fear. Doubtless if it succeeded, it would be the biggest piece of work done on the continent in five hundred years.

But what shall we say of the man who conceived this huge plan in the first place? Men are to be judged by the ideas they have and their success in executing them. Remember "the glory of God is intelligence." There is room here for the imagination to revive the man Ammon.

And here once more we come upon the most wonderful thing in life—the immense power of love. For here was Ammon trying to outdo himself in breaking down the barriers of faith and truth, all of a sudden, like Paul facing in the opposite direction, and becoming even more determined and active in building what he had been trying to tear down. And then, when he had got the idea firmly embedded in his soul, nothing else counted—not

father and mother, not former associates, not ties of home and homeland, not even life itself, to say nothing of possible hardship and suffering by the side of which death itself would be sweet. Here is life on the grand scale, where men can utterly abandon themselves in the larger good, can abnegate self to the uttermost. Such an instance as this is a luminous comment on that profound saying of Jesus, that if we would save our life we must lose it. For if Ammon had not carried out this great plan of love and sacrifice, the chances are not only that we would never have heard of him but that he himself would have been lost to himself.

THAT was the effect of conversion on a man of cultivated intelligence. The results of conversion were just as powerful on the simple-minded Lamanite. And it was even more striking. Once Lamoni and his people became aware of the meaning of truth, their lives took on a new significance. They sluffed their old habits of sin. So great had suddenly become their horror of taking human life—a thing that theretofore had given them no compunction whatever—that they would not even take up arms in self-defense; and in order that they might not be tempted to break their vow, they buried all their weapons of war in the earth. It was a simple enough act in itself and one that we are inclined to undervalue, but it was a sublime act all the same and showed the hold that truth may have on the human heart.

3. Perhaps this is as good a place as any in which to call attention to two matters—one of substance and one of form—that go to show the divine origin of the Book of Mormon.

The Book of Mormon, as you know, claims to be a translation, not

an original production by Joseph Smith. This requires that everything must be in keeping with that idea.

The Nephite Record being an inspired translation, its spirit throughout should be the most wholesome. Now the essence of goodness is that there must be service. The "work and the glory" of even God is "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man." That is, to serve. Now this is the very heart and core of the Book of Mormon. There can be no doubt of this in the mind of anyone who will read that volume with an open mind. In a word, the Nephite Record abounds in such instances as this of Ammon and his companions—a willingness to make any personal sacrifice in order to bring about the larger service or good. Nephi, Benjamin, the two Mosiahs, the two Almas, Abinadi, and now Ammon and his friends. No mere deceiver or religious fraud would be likely to compose and publish a work of this character.

**A** SECOND observation concerns the form of the work. If the Book of Mormon is an inspired translation, as the Saints claim, then its literary form should be in keeping with that hypothesis. In a previous lesson attention was called to the fact that the Small Plates of Nephi—the first one hundred fifty-seven pages of our present editions—is in the first person. This is the case because it is not an abridgment at all like the rest of the book—except actual quotations. And that fact agrees with the assumption that it is an inspired translation.

In the present and the preceding lesson we have a similarly strong point. In Alma the eleventh chapter we have an account of the Nephite coins. This is in agreement with the claim that Mormon had before

him the record of Alma, of which he was making an abridgment. It is hardly probable that Alma would set down in his account, which was not intended to fall into strange hands, a statement of the coins then in use. There would be no reason for that. But there was the best of reasons why Mormon should do so in his record, because it was intended to be read by persons hundreds of years then in the future, and by those who would not be familiar with the coins used by the Nephites.

Exactly the same line of reasoning holds good of Mormon's description of the Lamanites of the period in which Ammon lived. Alma knew their condition. His readers, if he ever had any, would have the same information. But not so with Mormon and his readers. He was making an abridgment for a generation yet in the future.

The force of this argument will be seen at once if the conditions were reversed—if the Small Plates were in the third person, and so on.

### *Questions*

1. Why was the mission to the Lamanites such a hazardous undertaking?
2. Why is the burying of their weapons of war by Lamoni's people such a sublime act?
3. How would you justify the statement found in Alma 24, verse 30?
4. Why did it seem necessary for Ammon to display the power given him in the way he did?
5. What personal qualities do you find in Ammon?
6. Compare Alma and Ammon.

### *References*

- Book of Alma, chs. 17-28, inclusive.  
 "Dictionary of the Book of Mor-

mon" (Reynolds) under Ammon, Lamoni, Aaron, Amalekites, Amulonites.

"Message and Characters of the Book of Mormon" (Evans) pp. 188-217.

## LESSON 2

### Work and Business

(Second Week in June)

#### TEACHER'S TOPIC

##### *Summary*

During the past year we have considered characteristics which are fundamental in character-building and absolutely necessary for success and happiness in life.

The following points may be emphasized:

1. The burden of responsibility in character development is on the parents—in the home.

2. Parents need to be guided by intelligent understanding of child nature.

3. Our aim should be the ultimate good of the child, not yielding to whims nor seeking the easiest way out for the moment.

4. Example is the best teacher. We must be what we wish them to become.

5. Moral qualities are built up through practice, and not by being "talked at or preached at." The home must furnish the right conditions for the formation of these habits. There are wonderful opportunities in the simplest situations of everyday life.

"When we talk about building character, the essence of this building is learning. \* \* \* It is learning of life that I am talking about, and I would give you this definition of learning: learning is conduct that has been so acquired that when the time comes it carries itself."

—William Kilpatrick—Columbia University.

##### *Cooperation of Parents*

#### I. Social Standards.

1. As members of the human

race, we must share a common social life.

2. This social life is necessary to our development.

3. Though we disapprove of some community standards, we cannot withdraw our children from group life. It is their environment. They must venture forth.

4. Young people are governed largely by group standards.  
a. Children often resist on the ground that similar requirements are not made of neighbors' children.

5. Lacking in experience and undeveloped mentally and spiritually youth needs help in forming right standards.

#### II. Parents' responsibility.

1. In shaping character in the home.

2. In modifying community standards.

a. Get acquainted with parents of children's friends.

b. Seek united action. More cooperative work on the part of parents. Parents' maxim should be—decide what is best for the ultimate welfare of the child and then work together toward that end.

III. Some community standards which can be modified only through cooperation of parents.

Late hours.

Numerous and expensive parties—encourage parties at home—have them simple.