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## The Testimony of Amaleki

Author(s): Gary R. Whiting

Source: *The Book of Mormon: Jacob Through Words of Mormon, To Learn With Joy*

Editor(s): Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr.

Published: Provo, UT; Religious Studies Center, 1990

Page(s): 295-306

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# *The Testimony of Amaleki* 17

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Gary R. Whiting

**T**he Book of Mormon is a book of truth and also a book of mystery. God has given this record to all who love the truth. However, he expects each reader to be a diligent seeker of its pages. When the Book of Mormon is explored with the Holy Spirit as the reader's guide, many treasures are discovered and many mysteries are revealed.

There is a key to the study of all scripture and especially to the Book of Mormon. This key is a very simple idea called the "Purpose Principle." It states that everything in the Book of Mormon is there for a reason. God has not placed any "filler" pages in the Book of Mormon. Because everything is there for a purpose, serious students must begin their study by asking God, "Why have these things been included in the scriptures?" In asking questions and searching for answers, we prepare ourselves to allow God to lead us to deeper understanding and increased insight. When we fail to ask questions or look for answers, we leave the Book of Mormon a mystery to us. Those who fail to seek lose many valuable insights into the deep things of God.

The book of Omni is a prime example of a scripture that remains a mystery to many readers of the Book of Mormon, not because it is difficult to understand, but because it is often overlooked. A small book written by five different authors, it covers several hundred years of Nephite history with barely a comment. The first four writers did not write much. The fifth

writer is Amaleki, and although he wrote only 17 verses, his contribution to the Book of Mormon is substantial.

Amaleki's work and the book of Omni take on greater significance when we recognize that they are there for a purpose. God arranged for these writings to come to us and promises that they will go to the house of Israel. I will share what I have discovered to be important contributions made by Amaleki. A careful study of these writings will open our eyes to the great things God can do through small means.

### An Overview of Amaleki's Record

Amaleki is the last writer on the small plates of Nephi. Approximately the same size as the book of Enos, the record exists as he wrote it, for it was not abridged. Mormon included the small plates of Nephi with his abridgment of the other plates because God commanded him to, though he did not tell Mormon all the reasons why. We now know that one reason is that it covered the same time period as the pages lost by Martin Harris. Therefore, what is written on the small plates is vital to the mission of the Book of Mormon (see D&C 10:38-44).

Amaleki's record in the book of Omni is a very important part of the Book of Mormon because the historical information he includes gives insight into and background for the rest of the Book of Mormon account. He speaks of the Nephite people under king Mosiah, of the people of Zarahemla, and of the Jaredites. In a very few words Amaleki adds to our understanding of each of the three major groups of the Book of Mormon record. He also speaks of another group of people who followed Zeniff, who became their king. This is particularly significant because it is in Zeniff's/Amaleki's record that we see these groups linked together. Many portions of Mosiah, Alma, and Helaman are clearer because of the information presented by Amaleki, who also confirms the book of Ether and Ether's prophecies.

In addition to giving important historical elements, Amaleki presents a strong testimony of the power of God and the gospel of Christ. This alone would make his writings worthy of our study. He shows us how God rescues his people by revelation and feeds them by the preaching of his word. He is shown to be a faithful preacher of the gospel in the short exhortation near the end of his writing.

### Amaleki's Background

Amaleki was a descendant of Jacob, the brother of Nephi. That lineage had the responsibility of keeping the records of the Nephites. It appears that Amaleki was the last of this family to keep the plates.

Nephi had been given specific instructions by the Lord concerning what writing should be in these plates.<sup>1</sup> When he grew old and was about to die, he gave the plates to Jacob with equally specific instructions:

Nephi gave me, Jacob, a commandment concerning the small plates, upon which these things are engraven. And he gave me, Jacob, a commandment that I should write upon these plates a few of the things which I considered to be most precious; that I should not touch, save it were lightly, concerning the history of this people which are called the people of Nephi. For he said that the history of his people should be engraven upon his other plates, and that I should preserve these plates and hand them down unto my seed, from generation to generation. And if there were preaching which was sacred, or revelation which was great, or prophesying, that I should engraven the heads of them upon these plates, and touch upon them as much as it were possible, for Christ's sake, and for the sake of our people (Jacob 1:1-4).

Jacob was obedient and when he passed the plates to his son Enos, he gave him the same kind of commandments concerning the plates. Enos was also obedient (Jacob 7:27), and as he

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<sup>1</sup> The commandments given to Nephi concerning the plates can be found in 1 Nephi 9:2-5, 1 Nephi 19:1-3, and 2 Nephi 5:29-33. Nephi also records that he was obedient to this command in 2 Nephi 4:14. In two places Nephi states that he will command his seed concerning the keeping of these plates. These commands are given in 1 Nephi 6:3-6 and 1 Nephi 19:4.

passed the plates on to his son Jarom, he counseled him to obey the Lord's commandments regarding the keeping of the record (Jarom 1:1, 2). The plates were subsequently passed on to Omni, Amaron, Chemish, Abinadom and then to Amaleki. All of these men kept the plates according to the commandment that God had first given Nephi.

Amaleki's testimony of obedience shows the importance of keeping all of the commandments of God, even if we feel that we have no great thing to contribute to his work. He grew up with a heritage of obedience, and we have his record today, in large part, because his father and others before him were obedient to the command of God. This is the context in which we should view the writings of Amaleki.

Very little is known about Amaleki the man. From a quick reading of Omni 1:25-26, we know that he had great faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We also know that he had a brother whom he loved very much. In verse 30 Amaleki mentions this brother who went into the wilderness with Zeniff. There is a sense of sadness in the way he says he has "not since known concerning" his brother and those who went with him. It seems as though Amaleki felt that the expedition was foolish and wished his brother had stayed in the land of Zarahemla.

We have to assume that he had no sons because he says he had no seed to whom he could give custody of the plates. This is why he gave them to king Benjamin. This all tells us that he was born during the life of Mosiah and died sometime during the reign of king Benjamin. We do know he was a man of God, perhaps a prophet, with a gift for writing the things of God.

## The Journey to Zarahemla

Amaleki begins his record in Omni 1:12 by describing the migration of a group of Nephites from their homes in the land of Nephi to the land of Zarahemla under the leadership of Mosiah. This was not just an expedition, but it was an escape from

conditions and people that posed an immediate danger to the Nephites. The urgency of this move is implied by Amaleki's use of the word *flee*.

It is likely that the Nephites, who had a history of wandering from the ways of the Lord, were in danger of being attacked by the Lamanites. When all other attempts to humble them failed, the Lord let the Lamanites scourge them. God revealed this principle through Jacob (Jacob 3:3, 4) and Amaleki recorded an example of it in action.

Mosiah was warned by the Lord that he must leave the land of Nephi. He took all of the people who would "hearken unto the voice of the Lord" with him into the wilderness (Omni 1:12). During the journey, Mosiah and his people were led by the word of God. Amaleki writes that through "many preachings and prophesyings" (v 13) the people were admonished continually by the word of God. Because of their willingness to obey his word, God led them by the power of his arm into a new land to meet a new people and begin a life where they could again serve him freely.

### The People of Zarahemla

When Mosiah and his people came into the new land, they found it populated by a people who had been there for many years. They called themselves the people of Zarahemla, after the man who led them. They are also known as Mulekites because they were descendants of Mulek, who was a son of king Zedekiah in Jerusalem.

By including the story of Zarahemla and his people in his record, Amaleki gives a significant witness of truth. The presence of the Mulekites in the Western Hemisphere is a witness that the Biblical record is prophetically and historically accurate. It shows that the prophecies in Ezekiel 17:22 and 37:16-20 are true. A twig of Judah has been transplanted to the promised land, and the

records of Judah (the Bible) and Joseph (the Book of Mormon) have run together and become one book.

Mulek and his followers came from Jerusalem after it had fallen to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. They had witnessed the fall of mighty Jerusalem to Babylon. This testimony confirmed the many prophecies and visions concerning the destruction of Jerusalem. In particular, their witness confirmed Lehi's and Nephi's prophecy that Jerusalem would be destroyed if her people did not repent of their wickedness. The truth of their testimony had been a point of much disagreement from the earliest days of Lehi's migration. Laman and Lemuel frequently murmured against their father and his prophecies, and succeeding generations of Lamanites continued to speak of the Nephites' "foolish traditions." The Mulekites removed all doubt concerning the truthfulness of Lehi's prophecies (see Hel 8:21) and confirmed the truth of the Book of Mormon. They were also involved in the fulfillment of a third series of prophecies, which will be mentioned later.

Amaleki wrote more about the Mulekites than any other Book of Mormon author. Using his record and the fragments given by others, we see that the Mulekites were essentially contemporary with the Lehites and appeared to have been in the promised land almost as long. Their histories were parallel in many ways. They both had multiplied greatly and had suffered many contentions and wars. Their histories differed dramatically in the matter of records, however. The people of Zarahemla had not brought any records with them from Jerusalem and rejoiced because Mosiah's people had (Omni 1:14). The lack of records had been a stumbling block for the Mulekites, in that without them to stabilize their language it had become corrupt, and they had also lost their religious knowledge and denied the being of their Creator (see Omni 1:17).

Over a period of years, relying only on oral traditions, and coming from a line of kings who generally disregarded the word of the Lord, it is not surprising to find that they had lost their faith in Christ. The Nephites, on the other hand, had records. They

knew their heritage and the proper form of religion and belief. Although the Nephites had difficulty obeying the scriptures, they did have the written standard against which they could be measured. The Nephites knew the gospel as well as the history of God's dealings with Israel and the religion of their fathers was preserved.

Zarahemla and his people were not able to communicate with Mosiah because of the language difference. After a period of time the people of Mosiah taught the people of Zarahemla to speak the Nephite language. When they could communicate, the Mulekites shared their oral history with Mosiah. Later they formed an alliance and became one people, and Mosiah was their king. This was evidently more than a political alliance, because by selecting Mosiah they had picked a prophet of God to be their king. This would seem to imply that the Mulekites accepted the Nephites' religious faith as well.

These few words written by Amaleki, describing the union of the Nephites and Mulekites, are very significant as an example of a divine pattern of operation that could be called the "Separation Principle." The end result of every divine call to separation is a gathering. The Nephites were separated from their less righteous brothers in the land of Nephi and gathered with the people of Zarahemla. This resulted in the salvation of both the Nephites and the Mulekites.

### The Jaredite Link

After introducing the people of Zarahemla, Amaleki unfolds more jewels of information. After the Mulekites had lived among the Nephites for a period of time and become accustomed to them, they brought a stone tablet to Mosiah with peculiar writing on it. Mosiah interpreted the writing by the power of God. The stone told the story of Coriantumr, in what seems to be the first reference in the Book of Mormon, as we have it, to the Jaredite people.



Coriantumr was the leader of one of two great armies of Jaredites that had fought for years to the total annihilation of the Jaredite people. Coriantumr had eventually killed the leader of the other army and was the sole survivor of the Jaredites. In the beginning of that war, Ether had been told by the Lord to call Coriantumr and his people to repentance with the promise that if they repented Coriantumr would be made king and his people would live. However, if they refused to repent all would be killed except Coriantumr, and he would live only long enough to see another group of people come into the land as had been prophesied earlier (Ether 11:20, 21; 13:21, 22).

There was no repentance and the war dragged on for many more years, but Ether's words were fulfilled and finally only Coriantumr was left alive (Ether 15:29-32). At this point the record of Ether was closed, and we can not tell whether the rest of his words were fulfilled or not. Amaleki finishes the story with the simple statement, "Coriantumr was discovered by the people of Zarahemla" (Omni 1:21), showing the fulfillment of the divine prophecy. Without Amaleki's record, we would not have this evidence.

Coriantumr lived for nine moons (nine months) with the Mulekites and then died. He was buried by these people and thus another part of Ether's prophecy was fulfilled. Once again we find God moving through the writings of Amaleki to confirm the word he had given through another prophet, this time Ether. Amaleki shows us that no word of God is left unfulfilled. As the Lord said through Isaiah, "My word . . . that goeth forth out of my mouth . . . shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isa 55:11).

## Zeniff and His Followers

Just before he closes his record, Amaleki mentions two groups of people that departed into the wilderness. He is affected personally by this story because his brother is among the second

group of these people. Although Amaleki does not give any names, he does give enough detail that we know he is speaking about Zeniff (see Omni 1:27-30). As opposed to the migration of Mosiah and the Nephites out of the land of Nephi, Zeniff's expeditions were not divinely commanded. It was a private desire of men to find the lands of their inheritance, and the expeditions ended in disaster, twice. Amaleki closes his record not knowing what had become of his brother or the others on the second journey. The complete story of these two journeys is told in Mosiah 9-22, but by mentioning it, Amaleki provides yet another link that ties the small plates to the later records of the Nephites.

### Amaleki, Witness for Christ

History is seldom personal to us. We may read and understand it, but it rarely concerns us. Amaleki bridges the gaps of time and culture by testifying of the Lord Jesus. He gets personal with each reader as his voice rises "as if from the dust" to speak to each of us about things to which we can relate today, the eternal Christ and the salvation of souls.

Although the record doesn't state this, it is my feeling that Amaleki's purpose in adding the gospel exhortation found in Omni 1:25-26 was that he was nearing the end of his life and was preparing to turn the plates over to king Benjamin. He knew that Jesus Christ was the center of the message written on the small plates and wanted to add his witness. Amaleki knew the Lord Jesus very well. Inspired by the written word and by his family, he sought out the Lord and found him, as all men can. Jesus was real to him and not simply a theoretical Savior. It is from this perception that Amaleki wrote his exhortation. He makes three points in these two verses of scripture, each centering on the Lord Jesus.

First, he calls everyone to come to God, the Holy One of Israel, and then identifies Jesus as the Holy One of Israel. To any Israelite who has studied the Old Testament scriptures, the title

*Holy One of Israel* would be very familiar. Amaleki has said, in a way that no Israelite should miss, that Jesus is the God of the Old Testament and the Savior of the world. Putting this truth together with qualities and titles associated with the name *Holy One of Israel* in the Old Testament, the house of Israel has another witness of the divinity of Jesus. The Book of Mormon is a special testimony to the Jew, and Amaleki seals this testimony in his declaration of Christ as the Holy One of Israel.

Second, Amaleki says that to serve Christ we must give ourselves as an offering to him. The words of the Apostle Paul to the Romans parallel this idea. Paul wrote, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (JST Rom 12:1). There is no halfway in the service of Christ. We are called to give ourselves without reserve to the Master. The references by Amaleki and Paul are to the sacrifices of the Old Testament. These offerings were acts of submission to God that revealed the nature of the sacrifice Christ would make in the flesh and also the completeness of the obedience we are to show to God. We live in sacrifice through prayer, fasting, and enduring to the end. Just as the burnt offering was entirely consumed our lives must be consumed by a passionate service of God, given as a daily tribute for the grace of God given through Jesus to us (McConkie 2:116).

Finally, Amaleki calls us to a power-filled belief. He lists some of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and then exhorts us to believe in “all things which are good” (Omni 1:25). He asks us to come to Christ expecting to see such miracles as prophecy, tongues, interpretation of tongues, and the other good gifts of God (Omni 1:25). Through prayer, fasting, study, and obedience, we can develop the faith and discernment required for the exercise of these gifts. Amaleki gives us the key to discerning the good things of God: they will testify of the Lord Jesus. The presence of these gifts glorifies Christ and should humble us. False presentations will testify of selfishness, not sacrifice, and will lead us away from

Christ and the scriptures. Mormon gives additional testimony on this point. He says,

For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that they may know good from evil; wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God. But whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do evil, and believe not in Christ, and deny him, and serve not God, then ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of the devil; for after this manner doth the devil work, for he persuadeth no man to do good, no, not one; neither doth his angels; neither do they who subject themselves unto him (Moroni 7:16, 17).

Amaleki makes a powerful plea for all mankind to come to Jesus Christ, for in Christ is redemption and salvation. Every reader is challenged to live wholly for Christ and the house of Israel is specifically called to see Jesus as the Savior. By this testimony, Amaleki joins the testimony of the Old Testament scriptures with the Book of Mormon record.

A testimony like this strikes right to our hearts. As we read it, Amaleki seems to be standing before us, looking into our eyes and asking, “How deep is your love for the Christ? How close are you walking with Jesus?” It is relevant and timeless. Amaleki has given us an eternal testimony of the living Christ.

## Conclusion

Although his record is small and is hidden inside a book commonly considered insignificant, Amaleki makes a great contribution to the Book of Mormon. It is plain that he was obedient to the commandments concerning the keeping of the records. He was faithful to his heritage.

His record contributes to the history, prophecy and to the spiritual message of the Book of Mormon. Historically, Amaleki describes the joining of two great nations, the Nephites and Mulekites. He reports the story of the Mulekites and the end of the Jaredites. Because of Amaleki, we know about the life and character of king Benjamin, and we can understand the record of

the first chapters of Mosiah more clearly. Prophetically, Amaleki ties the records of the Bible and the Book of Mormon together. The Old Testament scriptures are confirmed and fulfilled. He also confirms the calling of Lehi, Nephi, Jacob, and Ether as faithful prophets of God. Spiritually, Amaleki teaches us to love, worship, and serve the Lord Jesus. He also testifies of the power of the gospel of Christ and its necessity in our lives.

His 17 verses are an excellent example of how to make the most of a small opportunity. We have been blessed by his fine effort. The time spent reading Amaleki's writings is truly a time of joy and learning.

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