

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM



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officers (Alma 11:2) and lawyers who assisted, but their official functions are not clear. It appears that ordinary citizens had sole power to initiate lawsuits (otherwise, the judges would have brought the action against Nephi₂ in Helaman 8:1).

The trial of Nehor was an important precedent, establishing the plenary and original jurisdiction of the chief judge (Alma 1:1–15). It appears that under the terms of Mosiah 29, the higher judges were intended only to judge if the lower judges judged falsely. But in the trial of Nehor, Alma₂ took the case directly, enhancing the power of the chief judge.

The reform also protected freedom of belief, but certain overt conduct was punished (Alma 1:17–18; 30:9–11). The case of Korihor established the rule that certain forms of speech (blasphemy, inciting people to sin) were punishable under the Nephite law even after the reform of Mosiah.

All this time, the underlying Nephite law remained the law of Moses as interpreted in light of a knowledge of the gospel. Public decrees regularly prohibited murder, plunder, theft, adultery, and all iniquity (Mosiah 2:13; Alma 23:3). Murder was defined as “deliberately killing” (2 Ne. 9:35), which excluded cases where one did not lie in wait (on Nephi’s slaying of Laban, cf. Ex. 21:13–14 and 1 Ne. 4:6–18). Theft was typically a minor offense, but robbery was a capital crime (Hel. 11:28), usually committed by organized outsiders and violent and politically motivated brigands, who were dealt with by military force (as they were typically in the ancient Near East).

Evidently, technical principles of the law of Moses were consistently observed in Nephite civilization. For example, the legal resolution of an unobserved murder in the case of Seantum in Helaman 9 shows that a technical exception to the rule against self-incrimination was recognized by the Nephites in the same way that it was by later Jewish jurists, as when divination detected a *corpus delicti* (Welch, Feb. 1990). The execution of Zemnarihah by the Nephites adumbrated an obscure point attested in later Jewish law that required the tree from which a criminal was hanged to be chopped down (3 Ne. 4:28; Welch, 1984). The case of the Ammonite exemption from military duty suggests that the rabbinic understanding of Deuteronomy 20 in this regard was probably the same as the Nephites’ (Welch, 1990, pp. 63–65).

One may also infer from circumstantial evidence that the Nephites observed the traditional

ritual laws of Israelite festivals. One example might be the assembly of Benjamin’s people in tents around the temple and tower from which he spoke. There are things in the account that are similar to the New Year festivals surrounding the Feast of Tabernacles and the Day of Atonement (Tvedtnes, in Lundquist and Ricks, *By Study and Also by Faith*, Salt Lake City, 1990, 2:197–237).

With the coming of the resurrected Christ, recorded in 3 Nephi, the law of Moses was fulfilled and was given new meaning. The Ten Commandments still applied in a new form (3 Ne. 12); the “performances and ordinances” of the law became obsolete (4 Ne. 1:12), but not the “law” or the “commandments” as Jesus had reformulated them in 3 Nephi 12–14.

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NOEL B. REYNOLDS

BOOK OF MORMON, HISTORY OF WARFARE IN

Much of the Book of Mormon deals with military conflict. In diverse, informative, and morally instructive accounts, the Book of Mormon reports a wide variety of military customs, technologies, and tactics similar to those found in many premodern societies (before A.D. 1600–1700), especially some distinctive Israelite beliefs and conventions as adapted to the region of Mesoamerica.

The Book of Mormon teaches that war is a result of iniquity. Wars and destructions were brought upon the Nephites because of the contentions, murderings, idolatry, whoredoms, and abominations “which were among themselves,” while those who were “faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord were delivered at all times” from captivity, death, or unbelief (Alma 50:21–22).

The Book of Mormon implicitly condemns wars of aggression. Until their final calamity, all Nephite military objectives were strictly defensive. It was a mandatory, sacred obligation of all able-bodied Nephite men to defend their families, country, and religious freedoms (Alma 43:47; 46:12), but only as God commanded them (*see WAR AND PEACE*).

WARFARE. In the Book of Mormon, aside from the Ammonite converts who swore an oath against bloodshed and a remarkable period of peace following the visitation of Christ, armed conflict at different levels of intensity was a nearly constant phenomenon. Several prophets and heroes of the Book of Mormon were military men who fought in defense of their people, reflecting the grim realities of warfare in ancient history.

Religion and warfare were closely connected in the Book of Mormon. Certain elements of the Israelite patterns of “holy war” were continued in the Book of Mormon, such as the important ancient idea that success in war was due fundamentally to the will of God and the righteousness of the people (Alma 2:28; 44:4–5; 50:21; 56:47; 57:36; 58:33; Morm. 2:26). Nephite armies consulted prophets before going to battle (Alma 16:5; 43:23–24; 3 Ne. 3:19) and entered into covenants with God before battle. On one occasion, the Nephite soldiers swore a solemn oath, covenanting to obey God’s commandments and to fight valiantly for the cause of righteousness; casting their garments on the ground at the feet of their leader and inviting God to cast themselves likewise at the feet of their enemies if they should violate their oath (Alma 46:22; cf. 53:17). A purity code for warriors may be seen in the account of the stripling warriors of Helaman (Alma 56–58).

As was the case in all premodern situations, warfare in the Book of Mormon was closely bound to the natural environment and ecology: weather, altitude, terrain, food supply, seasonality, and agricultural cycles. Geography determined some of

the strategy and tactics in Book of Mormon warfare (Sorenson, 1985, pp. 239–76). The favorable times for campaigns in the Book of Mormon appear to have been between the eleventh and the fourth months, which has been compared with the fact that military action often took place during the cool and dry post-harvest months from November through April in Mesoamerica (see Alma 16:1; 49:1; 52:1; 56:27; Ricks and Hamblin, pp. 445–77).

Animals, either used as beasts of burden or ridden into battle, evidently were not widely available or practical in the Nephite world: No animal is ever mentioned as being used for military purposes in the Book of Mormon.

Technologically, Nephite soldiers fought, in one way or other, with missile or melee weapons in face-to-face, hand-to-hand encounters, frequently wearing armor. They used metallurgy for making weapons and armor, and engineering for building fortifications. In the Book of Mormon, Nephi taught his people to make swords modeled after the sword of Laban (2 Ne. 5:14–15). Innovations described include a proliferation of fortifications (once thought absent in ancient America) and Nephite armor in the first century B.C. (Alma 43:19; 48), soon copied by the Lamanites (Alma 49:24). It has been pointed out that the weapons (swords, scimitars, bows, and arrows) and armor (breastplates, shields, armshields, bucklers, and headplates) mentioned in the Book of Mormon are comparable to those found in Mesoamerica; coats of mail, helmets, battle chariots, cavalry, and sophisticated siege engines are absent from the Book of Mormon and Mesoamerica, despite their importance in biblical descriptions (Ricks and Hamblin, pp. 329–424).

The ability to recruit, equip, train, supply, and move large groups of soldiers represented a major undertaking for these societies, often pressing them beyond their limits and thereby ultimately contributing to their collapse. As the story of MORONI₁ and Pahoran illustrates, warfare exerted terrible social and economic pressure on Nephite society (Alma 58–61). Nephite army sizes coincided with general demographic growth: Armies numbered in the thousands in the first century B.C. and in the tens of thousands in the fourth century A.D.

It appears that Book of Mormon military organization was aristocratic and dominated by a highly trained hereditary elite. Thus, for example, military leaders such as Moroni₁, his son Moronihah,

and MORMON each became the chief captain at a young age (Alma 43:17; 62:39; Morm. 2:1).

Book of Mormon armies were organized on a decimal system of hundreds, thousands, and ten thousands, as they typically were in ancient Israel and many other ancient military organizations.

The book of Alma chronicles the grim realities, strain, and pain of war, vividly and realistically (*CWHN* 7:291–333). Preparations for war were complex; provisioning, marching, and countermarching are frequently mentioned. Manpower was recruited from the ordinary ranks of the citizenry; soldiers had to be equipped and organized into units for marching and tactics and mobilized at central locations.

Some battles were fought at prearranged times and places, as when Mormon met the Lamanites at Cumorah (Morm. 6:2; cf. 3 Ne. 3:8). But much was typified by guerrilla warfare or surprise attacks: The Gadianton robbers typically raided towns, avoided open conflict, made terrorizing demands, and secretly assassinated government officials.

Actual battlefield operations usually represented only a small portion of a campaign. Scouts and spies reconnoitered for food, trails, and the location of enemy troops. Battle plans were generally made shortly before the enemy was encountered and frequently took the form of a council, as Moroni held in Alma 52:19.

When actual fighting began, controlling the army undoubtedly proved difficult. Soldiers generally fought in units distinguished by banners held by an officer. Moroni's banner, or "title of liberty," apparently served such functions (Alma 43:26, 30; 46:19–21, 36).

As far as one can determine, attacks typically began with an exchange of missiles to wound and demoralize the enemy; then hand-to-hand combat ensued. The battle described in Alma 49 offers a good description of archery duels preceding hand-to-hand melees. When panic began to spread in the ranks, complete collapse could be sudden and devastating. The death of the king or commander typically led to immediate defeat or surrender, as happened in Alma 49:25. The death of one Lamanite king during the night before the New Year proved particularly demoralizing (Alma 52:1–2). Most casualties occurred during the flight and pursuit after the disintegration of the main units; there are several examples in the Book of Mormon

of the rout, flight, and destruction of an army (e.g., Alma 52:28; 62:31).

Laws and customary behavior also regulated military relations and diplomacy. Military oaths were taken very seriously. Oaths of loyalty from troops and oaths of surrender from prisoners are mentioned frequently in the Book of Mormon, and treaties were concluded principally with oaths of nonaggression (Alma 44:6–10, 20; 50:36; 62:16; 3 Ne. 5:4–5). Legally, robbers or brigands were considered to be military targets, not common offenders (Hel. 11:28). Further elements of martial law in the Book of Mormon included the suspension of normal judicial processes and transferral of legal authority to commanding military officers (Alma 46:34), restrictions on travel, warnings before the commencement of hostilities (3 Ne. 3; cf. Deut. 20:10–13), the extraordinary granting of military exemption on condition that those exempted supply provisions and support (Alma 27:24; cf. Deut. 20:8; Babylonian Talmud, *Sotah* 43a–44a), and requirements of humanitarian treatment for captives and women.

WARS. Eighty-five instances of armed conflict can be identified in the Book of Mormon (Ricks and Hamblin, pp. 463–74). Some were brief skirmishes; others, prolonged campaigns. Some were civil wars; others, intersectional. Causes of war varied, and alliances shifted accordingly. The main wars include the following:

In the early tribal conflicts (c. 550–200 B.C.), social, religious, and cultural conflicts led to repeated Lamanite aggression after the Nephites separated from the Lamanites. The Nephites did not flourish under these circumstances, and to escape further attacks they eventually left the land of Nephi, moving northward to Zarahemla.

King Laman's son (c. 160–150 B.C.), envious of Nephite prosperity and angry at them for taking the records (especially the plates of brass, Mosiah 10:16), attacked both the people of Zeniff (Nephites who had returned to the land of Nephi) and the people of BENJAMIN (Nephites and Mulekites in the land of Zarahemla). As a result of these campaigns, Zeniff became a tributary to the Lamanites; Benjamin's victory more firmly united the land of Zarahemla under his rule (W of M; Mosiah 9–10).

The war of Amlici (87 B.C.) was a civil war in Zarahemla, sparked by the shift of government

from a kingship to judgeship and by the execution of Nehor. Amlici, a follower of Nehor, militated in favor of returning to a kingship. This civil war was the first recorded time Nephite dissenters allied themselves with Lamanites; it resulted in an unstable peace (Alma 2–3).

The sudden destruction of Ammonihah (81 B.C.), a center of the recalcitrant followers of Nehor, was triggered by Lamanite anger toward certain Nephites who had caused some Lamanites to kill other Lamanites (Alma 16; 24–25).

The Ammonite move (77 B.C.) from Lamanite territory to the land of Jershon to join the Nephites led to a major Lamanite invasion of Nephite lands (Alma 28).

Three years later, many Zoramite poor were converted by the Nephites and moved from Antionum (the Zoramite capital) to Jershon (the land given to the Ammonites with guarantees of protection by the Nephites). The loss of these workers ignited the Zoramite attack allied with Lamanites and others against the Nephites (Alma 43–44). New forms of armor introduced by the Nephites figured prominently in this war.

During this turbulent decade, a politically ambitious man named Amalickiah, with Lamanite allies, sought to reestablish a kingship in Zarahemla after the disappearance of ALMA₂. Amalickiah was defeated (72 B.C.), but he swore to return and kill Moroni₁ (Alma 46–50). A seven-year campaign ensued (67–61 B.C.), fought in two arenas, one southwest of Zarahemla and the other in the seaboard north of Zarahemla. Outlying towns fell, and the capital city was plagued with civil strife. At length, a costly victory was won by the Nephites (Alma 51–62).

In the short war of Tubaloth (51 B.C.), Ammoron's son Tubaloth and Coriantumr (a descendant of King Zarahemla) captured but could not hold the land of Zarahemla during the political chaos that followed the rebellion of Paanchi after the death of the chief judge Pahoran (Hel. 1). In the aftermath, the Gadianton robbers rose to power, and some Nephites began migrating to the north.

The war of Moronihah (38, 35–30 B.C.) followed the appointment of NEPHI₂ as chief judge (Hel. 4). Nephite dissenters, together with Lamanites, occupied half of the Nephite lands, and Nephi₂ resigned the judgment seat.

The wars of Gadianton and Kishkumen (26–19

B.C.) began with the assassinations of two consecutive chief judges, Cezoram and his son; greed and struggles for power brought on conflicts with the Gadianton robbers around Zarahemla. Lamanites joined with Nephites against these robbers until a famine, called down from heaven by the prophet Nephi₂, brought a temporary Nephite victory (Hel. 6–11).

Giddianhi and Zemnarihah (A.D. 13–22) led menacing campaigns against the few righteous Nephites and Lamanites who remained and joined forces at this time (3 Ne. 2–4). Low on supplies, the Gadianton robbers became more open and aggressive; they claimed rights to Nephite lands and government. The coalition of Nephites and Lamanites eventually defeated the robbers.

The final Nephite wars (A.D. 322, 327–328, 346–350) began after heavy population growth and infestation of robbers led to a border dispute, and the Nephites were driven to a narrow neck of land. The Nephites fortified the city of Shem and managed to win a ten-year peace treaty (Morm. 1–2), but the Nephites eventually counterattacked in the south. Gross wickedness existed on both sides (Morm 6; Moro. 9), until at a prearranged battleground the Nephites met the Lamanites and were annihilated (c. A.D. 385).

Many chapters in the Book of Mormon deal with war, and for several reasons.

1. The inevitability of war was a fundamental concern in virtually all ancient civilizations. Disposable economic resources were often largely devoted to maintaining a military force; conquest was a major factor in the transformation and development of Book of Mormon societies, as it was in the growth of most world civilizations.
2. The Book of Mormon is a religious record, and for the people of the Book of Mormon, as in nearly all ancient cultures, warfare was fundamentally sacred. It was carried out in a complex mixture of religious ritual and ideology.
3. Mormon, the compiler and abridger of the Book of Mormon, was himself a military commander. Many political and religious rulers in the Book of Mormon were closely associated with, if not the same as, their military commanders or elites.
4. Important religious messages are conveyed through these accounts. Wars in Nephite history

verify the words of their prophets such as ABINADI and SAMUEL THE LAMANITE (Morm. 1:19). Wars were instruments of God's judgment (Morm. 4:5) and of God's deliverance (Alma 56:46–56). Ultimately they stand as a compelling witness to warn people today against falling victim to the same fate that the Nephites and Jaredites finally brought upon themselves (Morm. 9:31; Ether 2:11–12).

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WILLIAM J. HAMBLIN

BOOK OF MORMON AUTHORSHIP

Many studies have investigated Book of Mormon authorship because the book presents itself as a composite work of many ancient authors. Those who reject Joseph SMITH's claim that he translated the book through divine power assume that he or one of his contemporaries wrote the book. Various claims or arguments have been advanced to support or discount these competing positions.

Disputes about the book's authorship arose as soon as its existence became public knowledge. The first general reaction was ridicule. Modern minds do not easily accept the idea that an angel can deliver ancient records to be translated by an untrained young man. Moreover, most Christians in 1830 viewed the CANON of scripture as complete with the Bible; hence, the possibility of additional scripture violated a basic assumption of their faith. Opponents of Joseph Smith, such as Alexander Campbell, also argued that the Book of Mormon was heavily plagiarized from the Bible and that it reflected themes and phraseology current in New York in the 1820s. Many critics have speculated that Sidney RIGDON or Solomon Spaulding played a role in writing the book (*see* SPAULDING MANUSCRIPT). It has also been suggested that Joseph Smith borrowed ideas from another book (*see* VIEW OF THE HEBREWS). Though these varieties of objections and theories are still defended in many

quarters, they are not supported by modern authorship studies and continue to raise as many questions as they try to answer (e.g., *CWHN* 8:54–206).

Some have suggested that Joseph Smith admitted that he was the author of the Book of Mormon because the title page of the first edition lists him as "Author and Proprietor." This language, however, comes from the federal copyright statutes and legal forms in use in 1829 (1 *Stat.* 125 [1790], amended 2 *Stat.* 171 [1802]). In the preface to the same 1830 edition, Joseph Smith stated that he translated Mormon's handwriting "by the gift and power of God" (*see* BOOK OF MORMON TRANSLATION). The position of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has invariably been that the truth of Joseph Smith's testimony can be validated through the witness of the HOLY GHOST.

Scholarly work has produced a variety of evidence in support of the claim that the texts of the Book of Mormon were written by multiple ancient authors. These studies significantly increase the plausibility of Joseph Smith's account of the origin of the book.

The internal complexity of the Book of Mormon is often cited as a strong indication of multiple authorship. The many writings reportedly abridged by MORMON are intricately interwoven and often expressly identified (*see* BOOK OF MORMON PLATES AND RECORDS). The various books within the Book of Mormon differ from each other in historical background, style, and distinctive characteristics, yet are accurate and consistent in numerous minute details.

Historical studies have demonstrated that many things either not known or not readily knowable in 1829 about the ancient Near East are accurately reflected in the Book of Mormon. This body of historical research was expanded by the work of Hugh W. Nibley (*see* BOOK OF MORMON STUDIES), who has recently discovered that ancient communities, such as Qumran, have many characteristics parallel to those of Book of Mormon peoples (*CWHN* 5–8). The Jews at Qumran were "sectaries," purists who left Jerusalem to avoid corruption of their covenants; they practiced ablutions (a type of baptism) before the time of Christ and wrote one of their records on a copper scroll that they sealed and hid up to come forth at a future time. One of Nibley's analyses demonstrates that King BENJAMIN's farewell speech to his people