

Marriage and Treaty in the Book of Mormon: The Case of the Abducted Lamanite Daughters

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Marriage seemingly receives little attention in the Book of Mormon. The earliest notice, that of the marriage of the sons of Lehi and Sariah to the daughters of Ishmael, rates no more than a single verse (see 1 Nephi 16:7). In the following generation, the prophet Jacob condemns certain men in his society for seeking to introduce the practice of plural marriage (see Jacob 2:22–35), a practice that seems not to have continued.¹ The regent Lamanite king, Lamoni, in a much later scene, proposes to marry his daughter to Ammon, a Nephite prince, a proposal that Ammon respectfully declines (see Alma 17:22–25). In a celebrated case, the traitorous Nephite Amalickiah deceitfully “obtain[s] the kingdom” of the Lamanites and takes the queen “unto him to wife” (Alma 47:35).² Oddly, perhaps, the most interesting, complex, and complete account of marriage in the Book of Mormon is that of the fugitive priests of King Noah to Lamanite “daughters” whom they abducted (see Mosiah 20:3–5), rupturing a treaty in the process.

These priests of Noah, part of a Nephite colony in the midst of Lamanites, had abandoned their homes and families in an effort to avoid death at the hands of an invading Lamanite army (see Mosiah 19:9–23). Two years later (see Mosiah 19:29), the priests crept back to the outskirts of their former colony and, presumably in order to stay alive, “carried off [fellow colonists’] grain and many of their precious things,” coming “by night,” which made their thievery potentially a capital crime (Mosiah 21:21).³ It was while they were in the neighboring wilderness that they stumbled upon “a place in Shemlon where the daughters of the Lamanites did gather themselves” (Mosiah 20:1). After discovering “the daughters of the Lamanites, they laid and watched them; And when there were but few of them gathered together to dance, they came forth out of their secret places and took them and carried them into the wilderness” (Mosiah 20:4–5).

The sudden disappearance of the young women led to an immediate rupture in the treaty—a suzerain-vassal relationship between Lamanite overlords and the subject Nephite colony, then under the leadership of Limhi—a rupture that brought military reprisal against the Nephites (see Mosiah 20:6–11).⁴ The Lamanite king and his people suspected that the Nephites were responsible for the wrong.⁵ When both parties grasped that it was the renegade priests who had kidnapped these young women (see Mosiah 20:17–19, 23–24), they set out to discover the whereabouts of the priests and their captives in order to punish the priests, without success.⁶ When a disoriented Lamanite army accidentally located them many months later, the priests craftily escaped punishment by obliging their “wives” to intercede on their behalf, thereafter easing themselves into Lamanite society, even taking positions of responsibility (see Mosiah 23:30–24:1, 4).⁷

A number of legal and social issues stem from the narrative. The most important is the fact that, at the end of this series of events, the women are called “wives” and the priests “husbands” (Mosiah 23:33–34). The terms are most significant, for they establish the legal framework for the outcome of the story. Perhaps just as important is the observation that the editor of the account, Mormon, has accepted the terminology of his source. Plainly, by so doing he demonstrates that in his culture—although he lived much later—the women were thought of as legally married. One of the complicating issues that does not arise in the narrative has to do with the legal status of the priests’ previous wives whom they had abandoned, although clear evidence exists for laws dealing with children in such a circumstance.⁸

The terminology not only interprets the outcome of the situation but also invites us to enter the world of the Old Testament where laws deal rather extensively with marriage, including that of a master to a captive woman. As we shall soon see, a number of elements in the account can be understood best in light of either the Mosaic code or Old Testament events that established legal norms.⁹

In the situation at hand, the text stands with verbs that point to the captive status of the Lamanite women: the priests “took them and carried them” away (Mosiah 20:5; cf. Mosiah 20:15, 23).¹⁰ But the captivity was illegal, for those who subsequently accused the priests said that they had “stolen” the young women—a term with severe legal implications (Mosiah 20:18; 21:20–21).¹¹

Two issues come immediately to the fore: (1) making the daughters captives—an illegal act in both Lamanite and Nephite societies, as the responses illustrate (see Mosiah 20:6, 16)—and (2) on a social level, the consequent depriving of each woman of a marriage performed with the “consent” of her parents, particularly of her father—“there is a complete break with her family.”¹²

In this latter instance, such marriages were allowed between Israelite males and foreign women whose city, lying at a distance “very far off,” had been sacked by an Israelite army (Deuteronomy 20:15; see Deuteronomy 20:10–15). But, of course, the Lamanite daughters were not foreigners in the sense that they were non-Israelites—hence, the enormity of the priests’ actions: abducting the young women, forcibly separating them from their families while intending to take them as wives, forcing their will on Israelite women, and carrying out marriages that were inappropriate under the Mosaic code because they did not result from war. But in the end, astonishingly, the marriages were honored, at least by Lamanite society.

The decree of death to the priests, issued by both the Lamanite king and the Nephite ruler Limhi (see Mosiah 20:7, 16), strongly suggests that some of the young women were already betrothed to be married—and therefore were considered to be under a marriage obligation—and that their kidnapers were thought of as rapists. In such a situation, the men would be sentenced to die.¹³ In contrast, in the case of an unmarried virgin, biblical law holds that the rapist must pay a fine, marry the woman, and never divorce her (see Deuteronomy 22:28–29). Hence, had none of the young women been engaged—that is, if none were under a marriage contract—the severity of the reprisal sought by the Lamanite king might be thought of as excessive,¹⁴ unless one could demonstrate that he acted solely on emotion and not according to law.¹⁵

Another possible legal component is at play here, that of “humiliating” a woman.¹⁶ In the Bible, this issue is closely associated with that of a woman forced to marry without the consent of her father. The meaning of the humiliation remains an open question. Daube believes that the matter is identical to taking a woman “without the correct formalities” and arises when a woman is treated as if she comes from a class that does not deserve a wedding with all the trimmings, so to speak.¹⁷ But the humiliation may rather have to do with treating a woman as a harlot, as was done when Shechem forced Dinah, daughter of Jacob and Leah. It was this defiling of Dinah that led to the murderous response of her two brothers against Shechem and his fellow townsmen (see Genesis 34).¹⁸ According to this view, even though the Lamanite women were later reckoned as wives of the renegade priests, the route to their marriages was through defiled beds, thus humbling the women.¹⁹ In fact, it is the story of Dinah that provides some of the most striking parallels with the experience of the Lamanite daughters, except that Dinah did not marry the man who “took her, and lay with her, and defiled her” (Genesis 34:2).²⁰

The broken treaty, at least as it was perceived by the Lamanite king, next draws our attention, not only because much space is granted to it—underscoring its value to both sides, including mention of the treaty ceremony itself²¹—but also because its apparent rupture lay at the heart of the king’s decision to send his armies “to destroy the people of Limhi” (Mosiah 20:7). It also is important to the story to note that “even the king himself went before his people” into battle (Mosiah 20:7). Quite obviously the king felt that he had invested a good deal of effort in bringing the treaty about²² and, as a result, was hurt and angered that the agreement had apparently been broken by Limhi—his negotiating partner—and the Nephite colonists.²³

The making of the treaty is to be understood as a very serious and sacred matter.²⁴ On the human side, it was the basis for an era of peace, even though the peace chiefly benefited the Lamanites (see Mosiah 19:25–27, 29).²⁵ According to Old Testament law, the breaking of an agreement between two parties led to whatever consequences were spelled out in the “curses” of the oaths—the classic example being the one between the Israelites, who were about to possess the promised land, and the Lord.²⁶ As is plain from his response, the Lamanite king’s promise that “his people should not slay” the people of Limhi (Mosiah 19:25) was reversed as one of the penalties for breaking the treaty.

In the end, the king’s decision “to destroy” the Nephite colony must have rested on a combination of considerations, one of which was his feelings of anger. In general, when a treaty has evidently been broken, the question is, “How flagrant must a violation be before the sovereign could legitimately muster his military forces and attack the recalcitrant vassal?”²⁷ The Lamanite king must have seen a series of misdeeds in the abduction of the young women. First, an act of stealing was a clear breach of law; the people were not in a state of war or national tension. Second, any marriages that might result would consequently be illegal or, at the very least, extremely odious. Third, the kidnapping was evidence, as he perceived the matter, of broken solemn pledges made only two years earlier.²⁸ It would appear that he had no choice except to bring down the weight of the Lamanite army on the Nephite colonists.

Now we come to a key question. Why were these marriages between the priests and the abducted women recognized? Clearly the priests broke the law and thus distanced themselves from custom as understood in both the Nephite and Lamanite societies. Yet in the end the marriages not only were more or less legitimized according to the terminology in a Nephite record—*wives* and *husbands*—but were also allowed to stand in Lamanite society, where the couples came to live and raise families.

The answer has to be that an array of factors brought about a favorable resolution of the issue for the priests. First, on the legal side, we have already seen that under Mosaic law a man can marry a captive woman if certain procedures are followed, particularly because the marriage takes place without the consent of her father and without the normal wedding celebrations (see Deuteronomy 21:10–14). The law stipulates that the woman must be a prize of war and a citizen of a city “very far off” (see Deuteronomy 20:15), but for the renegade priests, such stipulations—even if honored in the larger society²⁹—would have made little difference. Moreover, it was evidently possible in Book of Mormon society, as in societies in the ancient Near East,³⁰ to make a woman a wife by intercourse—an action particularly repugnant to the woman’s family. Hence, the priests may have been partially, if weakly, justified—in their own eyes, at least—in holding onto the Lamanite daughters as wives.

One cannot prove directly that the particular stipulations of the Deuteronomic code, noted above, were known and observed among Book of Mormon peoples. But the account does exhibit clues of a serious legal difficulty in

resolving the status of the marriages, clues that invite one to examine the only legal texts that were available to Book of Mormon societies early on.³¹

The second set of circumstances has to do with what happened when the wandering Lamanite army came upon the new settlement founded by the priests and their wives. Essentially the priests made a deal. We note before anything else that typical soldiers in antiquity would not be literate and therefore acquainted with legal niceties.³² But the army that discovered the settlement was well aware that these priests—known kidnappers—were deserving of death.³³ As a result, the priests did everything to escape being killed. The leader of the group, a man named Amulon,³⁴ adopted a two-pronged approach. First, he himself “did plead with the Lamanites” that they not destroy the members of the settlement. Then “he also sent forth their wives, who were the daughters of the Lamanites, to plead with their brethren, that they should not destroy their husbands” (Mosiah 23:33). His own efforts seem to have failed. But the efforts of the women paid off: “And the Lamanites had compassion on Amulon and his brethren, and did not destroy them, because of their wives” (Mosiah 23:34).³⁵ Simply stated, Amulon’s tactic to throw himself and his fellow priests on the mercy of the Lamanite army worked because it spared their lives. But there is more. To all appearances, the wives were willing to intercede for their husbands. There was no visibly abusive compulsion on the part of the former priests, forcing the women to come forward and beg on their behalf in a demeaning way, an action that would surely have given the Lamanite soldiers an excuse to execute the husbands.

However, negotiations also meant that the priests evidently were required to abandon their new settlement, to return to the homeland of the Lamanites, and to “join the Lamanites,” although the text does not specify what this latter means (Mosiah 23:35).³⁶ The results for the priests were that they would keep both their lives and their wives—a decision not subsequently overturned by the Lamanite king because, afterward, he appointed Amulon to serve as a regent king over the colony of Alma, “his people” (Mosiah 23:39).

Epilogue: The Fate of the Children of the Priests

In a sad aftermath, we learn of the terrible fate of the former priests and their sons.³⁷ A generation after the priests were allowed to keep their wives, and following a series of remarkable successes by Nephite missionaries preaching among the Lamanites, which led to a split in the society along religious lines, a Lamanite army—chiefly out of frustration—attacked the Nephite frontier city Ammonihah and destroyed all life in it (see Alma 16:1–3).³⁸ Of events that followed, we possess two accounts. One is that of the Nephite army which tracked the Lamanite force “into the wilderness” because this latter group had taken captives from neighboring settlements whom the Nephites sought to rescue. Rescue them they did. The commanding general consulted with Alma, the prophet in the church, who gave inspired instructions as to where the Nephite army could intercept the Lamanites with their captives, which they did without loss of life to any of the prisoners. The first account ends with the notation that the former prisoners “were brought by their brethren to possess their own lands” (Alma 16:4–8).

It is the second account that fills in the picture about the fate of the priests and their sons who, as it happened, were part of the invading Lamanite army that destroyed the city of Ammonihah. This record originated with the sons of King Mosiah, whose success as missionaries had raised anger and fear in certain Lamanite circles, an anger that spilled over into a civil conflict between nonbelievers and newly won believers in the message of Mosiah’s sons. Because believers, who were called the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi (see Alma 23:17), refused to take up arms in self-defense and because their attackers became frustrated and angry with themselves for slaughtering fellow citizens who were believers, the nonbelievers “swore vengeance upon the Nephites” and subsequently attacked

the city of Ammonihah. It was this force that the Nephite army intercepted, freeing the prisoners. But there was more. When the Nephite force ambushed the Lamanite army, it both killed “almost all the seed of Amulon and his brethren, who were the priests of Noah,” and drove the remainder deeper into the wilderness where a rift occurred among the Lamanite soldiers. Some had begun to doubt the worthwhile prospects of making war, having seen the pacifistic stance of their fellow countrymen, the Anti-Nephi-Lehis. At this point, the remaining priests and “the children of Amulon” executed those who had begun “to disbelieve the traditions of their fathers, and to believe in the Lord” (Alma 25:6). After an ensuing mutiny, termed a “contention in the wilderness,” “the Lamanites” began “to hunt” and kill “the seed of Amulon and his brethren” (Alma 25:8).³⁹ In a mournful ending to this episode, the record sadly observes that “they are hunted at this day by the Lamanites” (Alma 25:9).

In a postscript, other “descendants of the priests of Noah” (Alma 43:13)—presumably not only children of the priests who were too young to participate in the attack on Ammonihah but also grandchildren of the former priests⁴⁰—participated in the protracted wars between the Lamanites and Nephites (see Alma 43–44 and 49–62). From this point on, we lose sight of them in the record. But we last view them as they rejoin those whose hatred for the Nephites was almost insatiable and dealt in death.

Notes

1. Legalized polygamy is not commented on again, with one possible exception. It concerns Amulek who, in referring to blessings received during the extended visit of Alma to his home, said, “he hath blessed me, and my women” (Alma 10:11). However, the reference may be to his wife and his mother, not to two or more wives. Even though Amulek mentions “my father and my kinsfolk,” the nature of the text does not allow a decisive judgment.
2. The legal and social dimensions of this case are intriguing, but go beyond the scope of the present study.
3. The unnecessary notation of the night as the time of crime demonstrates Nephite knowledge of this stipulation of the Mosaic code. On theft “by night” (Mosiah 21:21) as a capital crime, see J. Coert Rylaarsdam, *The Book of Exodus* (New York: Abingdon, 1952), 1002–3; and Samuel Greengus, “Law,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 4:249 (hereafter *ABD*). According to Exodus 22:2, a thief who comes by night can be killed without “blood-guilt” penalty to the executioner, but only if caught at night.
4. For a discussion of this treaty and its connections to the Bible and the ancient Near East, see Mark Davis and Brent Israelsen, “International Relations and Treaties in the Book of Mormon” (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1988), 14–16.
5. The Lamanites were aware that the crime was kidnapping, and possibly worse, for the king told Limhi that “thy people did carry away the daughters of my people” (Mosiah 20:15). Hence, as I understand this passage, either there were witnesses, or one or more of the young women successfully escaped the priests.
6. At first the kidnapers’ identity remained unknown (see Mosiah 20:1); according to Mosiah 21:21, the punishment was to be for other crimes, such as theft of grain. For the crime of kidnapping, the punishment was to be death; compare Mosiah 20:7 wherein the Lamanite king seeks to “destroy” Limhi’s people for the kidnapping and Mosiah 21:23 wherein Limhi, thinking “Ammon and his brethren” to be “priests of Noah,” would have “put [them] to death.”

7. For one approach to the theft of the Lamanite daughters, see Alan Goff, “The Stealing of the Daughters of the Lamanites,” in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, ed. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1991), 67–74. Goff draws attention to connections between this story and accounts in the book of Judges about the people of the tribe of Benjamin. John W. Welch, in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992), 139–41, suggests that the dancing formed an annual event. Not incidentally, the narrative in Mosiah 20–23 gives the impression of a significant passage of time.

8. There must have been laws that governed the standing of a wife who found herself in such straits, possibly allowing her to divorce the man who had abandoned her and their children and not to be responsible for his debts (cf. the Code of Hammurabi, nos. 135–36). Concerning the status of abandoned children, in the case at hand we read that the children adopted a patronymic that would not identify them with their biological fathers: “the children of Amulon and his brethren, who had taken to wife the daughters of the Lamanites, were displeased with the conduct of their fathers, and they would no longer be called by the names of their fathers, therefore they took upon themselves the name of Nephi, that they might be called the children of Nephi” (Mosiah 25:12). It is not clear how this sort of action might affect, for instance, the legal claim of the children to property of their fathers. In later Jewish law these kinds of issues were dealt with, for instance, in the Mishnah, *Yebamoth* 10:1–5; 15:1–16:7; *Shebuoth* 7:7, etc.

9. We know that Nephites appealed to biblical events for legal and social precedents. See Jacob’s spirited condemnation of those who appealed to “things which were written concerning David, and Solomon his son” (Jacob 2:23–24).

10. Understanding the verb *to take* as meaning “to take under one’s control” (as Hebrew *lāqa*) or “to take away by theft” (as Hebrew *gānav*); and *to carry* as connoting “to carry away that which does not belong to one” or, in a broadly legal sense, “to deprive.” The Hebrew verb *lāqa*, of course, also appears with the meaning “to take [a wife]” (e.g., Genesis 4:19; 6:2; cf. 1 Nephi 7:1; 16:7). See David Daube, *The Exodus Pattern in the Bible* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), 73.

11. According to Mosaic law, kidnapping an Israelite was to be punished by death (see Exodus 21:16; Deuteronomy 24:7). See Muhammad A. Dandamayev, “Slavery: Old Testament,” in *ABD*, 6:63.

12. Daube, *Exodus Pattern*, 65; see also Phyllis A. Bird, “Women: Old Testament,” in *ABD*, 6:956. The account presumes something like the law found in Deuteronomy 21:10–14. Compare also Exodus 22:17 and Numbers 30:16.

13. For biblical law, see Deuteronomy 22:23–27: “In the case of the betrothed . . . woman, the penalty is death for the rapist and the woman goes free if one can presume that she struggled and was coerced.” Greengus, “Law,” 4:247.

14. The “excessive” character of the reprisal must have to do with the fact that two peoples were living side by side under a treaty and the fact that kidnapping was involved. If events had taken place entirely within either the Lamanite society or the Nephite colony, and if all the young women were not betrothed, a more measured response would be expected. But when a treaty is involved, the king of the wronged party would see himself pursuing the interests of his people and their god by gathering an army and pursuing the breaker of the treaty (according to Deuteronomy 28:20–22, even the Lord punishes “with the sword” of another; cf. Jeremiah 1:13–16). See Michael L. Barré, “Treaties in the Ancient Near East,” in *ABD*, 6:655.

15. Speaking of the Lamanites in general, the text does say that “they were angry with the people of Limhi” (Mosiah 20:6). Further, the Lamanite king admits that “in my anger I did cause my people to come up to war” (Mosiah 20:15). But there is nothing to suggest that the warlike response did not conform to established custom or law. See Barré, “Treaties,” 6:655, who maintains that “In suzerain-vassal treaties, this [effort to punish] often took the form of a punitive campaign by the suzerain against the transgressor.”

16. See, for example, Deuteronomy 21:14 and 22:24, 29.

17. See Daube, *Exodus Pattern*, 65–66.

18. Compare also Lamentations 5:11.

19. One must keep in mind that, according to some, in the ancient world women and children were often treated as a man’s possessions, though not strictly as property (cf. Exodus 20:17 and Deuteronomy 5:21); see Bird, “Women,” in *ABD*, 6:956.

20. For example, Dinah was initially spotted by Shechem in the company of other women (see Genesis 34:1); he in effect abducted her (“he took her,” Genesis 34:2); his act was judged to be a wrong that needed a strong response, a wrong that had “humbled”—e.g., Deuteronomy 22:29—Dinah (“which thing ought not to be done,” Genesis 34:7; “Should he deal with our sister as with an harlot?” Genesis 34:31); in this light, the brothers of Dinah sought death for Shechem and those who harbored him (see Genesis 34:25–26); a deal was struck—deceitfully, in this case (see Genesis 34:13)—that would allow Shechem to retain Dinah as wife (note the proposed fine in Genesis 34:11–12, and the required circumcision in Genesis 34:14–17; in the present case, the priests of Noah were required to abandon their new settlement [see Mosiah 23:31] and to “join the Lamanites” [Mosiah 23:35]). For further information on the legal situation of Dinah, see James R. Baker, *Women’s Rights in Old Testament Times* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 171–73.

21. Indicated by the term *granted* (see Mosiah 19:15, 22; cf. Genesis 9:12; 17:2 [Hebrew *nātan*, “give” or “grant”; KJV renders “make”]; on words used to describe ceremonies, see Barré, “Treaties,” 6:654); also present are the terms of the treaty, confirmed by oaths of ratification on both sides (see Mosiah 19:15, 25–26); the elevation of Limhi—“having the kingdom conferred upon him”—who then represented the Nephite colonists in making the agreement (see Mosiah 19:26); the Lamanite effort to assure compliance—the stationing of guards (see Mosiah 19:28); the benefits of the agreement—peace for two years (see Mosiah 19:29); the complaint of breaking the treaty (see Mosiah 20:14–15); the Lamanite response to the apparent breaking of the treaty—sending an invasion force “to destroy” the colonists (Mosiah 20:7); and the Nephite military response (see Mosiah 20:8–11). Nothing is known of the place where the treaty was concluded—possibly the temple—or whether a written copy was made.

22. The tribute of “one half of all” was to be paid “unto him” personally (Mosiah 19:26). Clearly the king was a major figure in the negotiations, providing more than merely the expected oath (see Mosiah 19:25).

23. The colonists would eventually break the treaty by flight and—in an echo of the Israelite exodus—by taking their “flocks” and “herds,” in addition to “all their gold, and silver, and their precious things, which they could carry” (Mosiah 22:11–12), half of which belonged to the Lamanites under the agreement. But the Nephites had law on their side: they had been vassals for a number of years. Hence, their Lamanite-Israelite masters owed them freedom and gifts (see Deuteronomy 15:12–15); compare also Jacob and Laban (see Genesis 29–31). See Daube, *Exodus Pattern*, 47–61.

24. God becomes involved in the language of oaths sworn in making treaties. Regularly in treaties of the ancient Near East, “The deities before whom the oath was taken were thought to act as guarantors of the treaty.” Barré, “Treaties,” 6:654.

25. According to Mosiah 19:15, the agreement held that the lives of the colonists would be spared and they would be allowed to “possess the land” again. In Mosiah 19:25–26, the Lamanite king pledged “that his people should not slay” the Nephites, but Limhi promised that “his people should pay tribute . . . [of] one half of all they possessed.” This level of payment had been established in an earlier accord (see Mosiah 7:22 and 19:15, 22).

26. Deuteronomy 28:1–13 enumerates the “blessings” of the covenant from the Lord, and Deuteronomy 27:15–26 and 28:15–68 list the “curses.” One of the consequences of Israelite disobedience to the covenant is “thou [shalt] serve thine enemies . . . until [they] have destroyed thee” (Deuteronomy 28:48). Please note the additional phrase, “which the Lord shall send against thee,” clear proof that the Lord is the guarantor of the agreement.

27. George E. Mendenhall and Gary A. Herion, “Covenant,” in *ABD*, 1:1182.

28. In a moving scene, after he had learned that the guilt rested on the renegade priests, the Lamanite king restores the oath that he thought had been broken and then “did bow himself down” before his army, pleading that they “not slay [the Nephite] people” (Mosiah 20:24–26).

29. Lamanites do not seem to have married their female prisoners of war. For example, in the exchange of letters between Moroni and Ammoron about swapping prisoners of war, Moroni seems to expect that he can get all the women back (see Alma 54).

30. In both biblical and Near Eastern law a dichotomy apparently existed between the divine imperative that an adulterer be punished by death and the right of pardon that could be exercised by the injured husband or, one infers, the injured fiancé. (Joseph acts thus for Mary; see Matthew 1:18–19). See Elaine A. Goodfriend, “Adultery,” in *ABD*, 1:82–83. In the present case of the abducted daughters who were betrothed, such a dichotomy in Lamanite law would have allowed their former fiancés to forgive them, thus freeing them from penalty. One must remember, of course, that at least three years had passed before the women, now “wives,” were discovered by the Lamanite army (see Mosiah 23:30–31); some of the former fiancés must have married other women in the meantime.

31. The later legal reforms of King Mosiah do not come into play here (so Alma 1:1, 14). The Nephite system then current is described as “the law which has been given to us by our fathers” (Mosiah 29:15, 25); in addition, “the law [of Moses] was engraven upon the plates of brass” (1 Nephi 4:16), which the Nephites possessed.

32. An entire complex of issues has to do with literacy in the wider Nephite and Lamanite societies. To make reasonable judgments about Lamanite levels of education is especially difficult because of the nature of the sources. The Lamanites’ regular acceptance of Nephite dissenters and the elevation of them to high places in Lamanite society, particularly in the military, may well stem from the higher levels of education that Nephites seem to have enjoyed.

33. The verb *to destroy*, meaning “to kill,” appears twice in Mosiah 23:33–34.

34. In an obvious coloration from the exodus story, Amulon is usually mentioned in the phrase “Amulon and his brethren” (Mosiah 23:34–35; 24:1; 25:12; Alma 25:4, 8; cf. Mosiah 24:4–5), who stand as substitutes for

“Pharaoh and his people” whom God punishes, even their children eventually being slain (see Exodus 12:29–30; Alma 25:4, 8). On the opposite side stands “Alma and his brethren” (Mosiah 23:35–37; 24:8, 15), or “Alma and his people” (Mosiah 24:12, 17–18, 20, 23), who recall “Moses and his people” whom the Lord delivers from bondage by leading them “into the wilderness,” onto God’s path, all preparations having been made the previous night (Exodus 12:1–13, 21–23; and Mosiah 24:18–20). See Daube, *Exodus Pattern*, 75–77. In this vein, in a source with a decided Lamanite connection, Amulon and his followers are routinely called “Amulonites” (Alma 21:3–4; 23:14; and 24:1, 28–29). In one passage, one finds the phrase “the people of Amulon” (Alma 21:2), which seems to designate this group before it became well established. Goff, “Stealing,” 71–73, misses this set of nuances in discussing the people of Amulon.

35. The successful pleading of the women continues a pattern found elsewhere in the Book of Mormon (see 1 Nephi 7:19 and Mosiah 19:13–15) that finds echoes in the exodus story (see Exodus 3:21–22 and 11:2–3). See Daube, *Exodus Pattern*, 55–61.

36. It is very likely that the men, who were Nephites, were obliged to swear an oath of allegiance to the Lamanite nation. For they were to go with the army to the “land of Nephi,” the Lamanite homeland, when they were diverted by the discovery of the people of Alma (see Mosiah 23:35–38). Moreover, they raised their children within the Lamanite society—establishing a colony in cooperation with Lamanites and other dissident Nephites, as later notices indicate (see Alma 21:2–3 and 25:4). On an oath of allegiance administered by Nephites, see Terrence L. Szink, “An Oath of Allegiance in the Book of Mormon,” in *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and William J. Hamblin (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 35–45.

37. Abinadi, the first Nephite martyr who was convicted unjustly of crime by King Noah and these same priests (see Mosiah 17:6, 12), had prophesied that both the priests and their “seed” (Mosiah 17:15) would “be smitten on every hand, and shall be driven and scattered to and fro. . . . And in that day ye shall be hunted, . . . and then ye shall suffer . . . the pains of death by fire” (Mosiah 17:17–18).

38. The “utter destruction” of the city had been prophesied by Alma the Younger, former chief judge of the country (see Alma 9:12, 18, 24; cf. Alma 10:18, 22). The complete ruin was so devastating that the date is repeated twice in introducing the account (see Alma 16:1). Evidently, it was a date remembered for decades afterward.

39. The distinction between “the Lamanites” and “the seed of Amulon and his brethren” (Alma 25:8) must reflect accurately the Lamanite point of view in this matter (see especially Alma 24:29; also the pointed phrase “his people,” meaning Nephites, in Mosiah 23:39). As one might infer, the children of the priests must have looked different from other Lamanites because they came from a Nephite father and a Lamanite mother. One can surmise that, unhappily, these children had also suffered certain kinds of discrimination as they grew up. Of course, the whole issue of social discrimination has yet to be explored.

40. Over time, people settled a “land of Amulon” (Alma 24:1) in Lamanite territory, a place-name that must go back to the leader of the defrocked priests. One can reasonably assume that it was descendants and family members of these former officials who were among the prominent colonists who came to live in this area.