

Section 8

Money

in the Book of Mormon

Charts 110–13

King Mosiah's Monetary System

Key Scripture Alma 11:1–19

Explanation King Mosiah's system of weights and measures established equivalencies between amounts of silver, gold, and grains. This chart compares the precious metals with their grain equivalents, as described in Alma 11. These measurements for the most part increase exponentially, much like the ancient Egyptian system of measurement (see chart 113). In King Mosiah's system, the limnah or onti, worth "the value of . . . all" measurements (Alma 11:10), was worth the sum of the gold senine, seon, and shum or the silver senum, amnor, and ezrom.

Source Robert F. Smith, "Weights and Measures in the Time of Mosiah II" (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1983).

King Mosiah's Monetary System

Alma 11:1–19

Silver Measure	Gold Equivalent	Grain Equivalent	Math Ratio
leah		$\frac{1}{8}$ measure	1, or 2^0
shiblum		$\frac{1}{4}$ measure	2, or 2^1
shiblon		$\frac{1}{2}$ measure	4, or 2^2
senum	senine	1 measure	8, or 2^3
	antion	$1\frac{1}{2}$ measures	12
annor	seon	2 measures	16, or 2^4
ezrom	shum	4 measures	32, or 2^5
onti	limnah	7 measures	

The Utility of the Gold Antion

Key Scripture Alma 11:19

Explanation Under King Mosiah's monetary system, the gold antion was worth one and a half measures of silver or other commodities (see Alma 11:15, 19). It functioned as a useful commercial unit since it allowed more measures of grain or other items to be purchased with fewer units of precious metal, as this chart shows. Using as few monetary units as possible in the marketplace was most likely an advantage.

Source John W. Welch, "Weighing and Measuring in the Worlds of the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 8/2 (1999), 36–46.

The Utility of the Gold Antion

Computing Half Measures	With the Gold Antion Value = 1.5	Without the Gold Antion*	With the Silver Shiblon Value = .5
1.5	1 weight	impossible	2 weights 1 + .5
2.5	2 weights 1 + 1.5	impossible	2 weights 2 + .5
3.5	2 weights 2 + 1.5	impossible	3 weights 2 + 1 + .5
4.5	3 weights 1 + 2 + 1.5	impossible	3 weights 2 + 2 + .5
5.5	2 weights 4 + 1.5	impossible	3 weights 4 + 1 + .5
6.5	3 weights 4 + 1 + 1.5	impossible	3 weights 4 + 2 + .5

*If payment was to be in gold only

The Utility of the Onti and Limnah

Key Scripture Alma 11:1–19

Explanation While the Nephite system of weights and measures was not based on a decimal system, as are all modern currencies, it was more efficient, for example, than the system of coinage used today in the United States. As this chart shows, under Mosiah's system (see Alma 11:1–19) the ontis and limnahs were worth seven times a shekel of silver or shekel of gold. This enabled consumers in Nephite society to use fewer weights to weigh out or purchase more measures of grain than if they had been using the decimal system.

The Utility of the Onti and Limnah

Measures	Nephite Currency		American Currency	
	Number of Weights Required Using Senum/Senine, Amnor/Seon, Ezrom/Shum, Onti/Limnah		Number of Coins Required Using Pennies, Nickels, Dimes	
1	1		1	
2	1		2	1+1
3	2	2 + 1	3	1+1+1
4	1		4	1+1+1+1
5	2	4 + 1	1	
6	2	4 + 2	2	5+1
7	1		3	5+1+1
8	2	7 + 1	4	5+1+1+1
9	2	7 + 2	5	5+1+1+1+1
10	3	7 + 2 + 1	1	
11	2	7 + 4	2	10+1
12	3	7 + 4 + 1	3	10+1+1
13	3	7 + 4 + 2	4	10+1+1+1
14	2	7 + 7	5	10+1+1+1+1
15	3	7 + 7 + 1	2	10+5
16	3	7 + 7 + 2	3	10+5+1
17	4	7 + 7 + 2 + 1	4	10+5+1+1
18	3	7 + 7 + 4	5	10+5+1+1+1
19	4	7 + 7 + 4 + 1	6	10+5+1+1+1+1
20	4	7 + 7 + 4 + 2	2	10+10
Average	2.4		3.05	

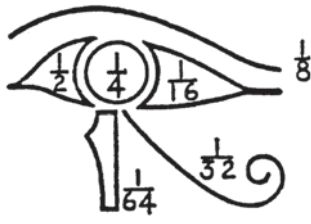






Egyptian Hieroglyphs for Grain Measurement

Key Scripture Alma 11:1–19

Explanation Egyptian hieroglyphs offer a parallel to King Mosiah’s monetary system. The grain measure in ancient Egypt was represented by the eye of Horus. Each part of the eye represented a fraction of the grain measure. There were six parts. The smallest measure was $1/64$, represented by the tear duct; the next was $2/64$, represented by the eyelash; and so on. The sum of all the parts equaled $63/64$, which was considered the full measure. Mosiah’s weights and measures were similarly exponential, with the largest equaling “the value of . . . all” (Alma 11:10) of the main lesser amounts. Although the Nephite system is not exactly the same as the Egyptian, the similarities corroborate the report that the Nephite kings studied “the language of the Egyptians” (Mosiah 1:4) and drew on their Old World backgrounds well after their arrival in the New World.

Sources Alan H. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), 197–99; and Richard J. Gillings, *Mathematics in the Time of the Pharaohs* (New York: Dover, 1986), 210.

Egyptian Hieroglyphs for Grain Measurement

Full Measure		$\frac{63^*}{64}$
Half Measure		$\frac{32}{64}$
Quarter Measure		$\frac{16}{64}$
Eighth Measure		$\frac{8}{64}$
Sixteenth Measure		$\frac{4}{64}$
Thirty-Second Measure		$\frac{2}{64}$
Sixty-Fourth Measure		$\frac{1}{64}$

*Compare Alma 11:10: "the value of them all"