

Law

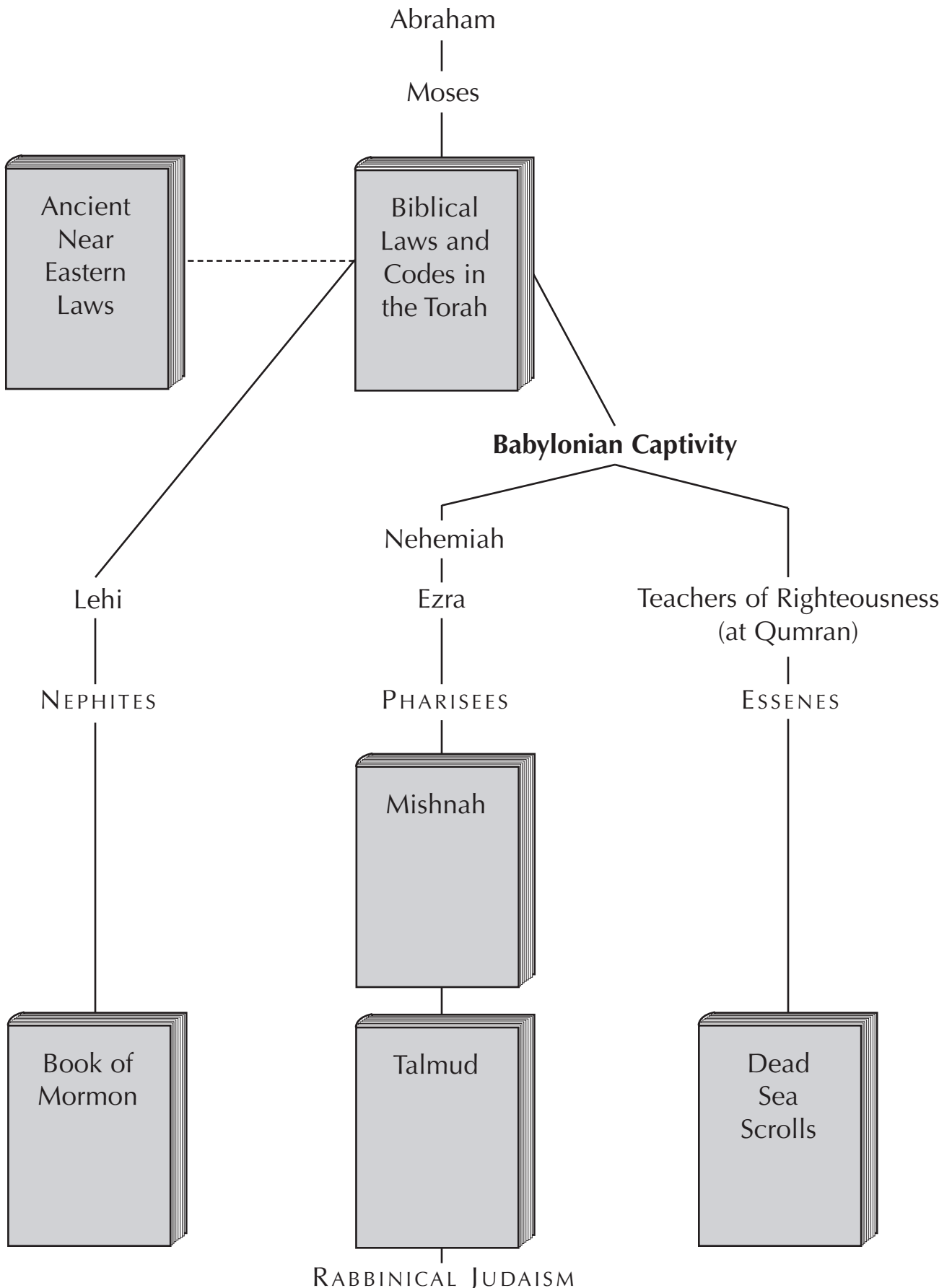
in the Book of Mormon

Legal Traditions Related to Biblical Law

Key Scripture 2 Nephi 25:25

Explanation This chart can be seen as a genealogy of law. As part of the brass plates brought to the Americas by Lehi and his family, the Torah (the five books of Moses containing the Mosaic law) governed Lehi's seed until Jesus Christ fulfilled the law and established his higher law. The Jewish Mishnah and Talmud, as well as the Dead Sea Scrolls of the Essenes, were also based on the law of Moses. Originally, some critics faulted the Book of Mormon because it did not depict the Nephites as following the law of Moses in a way that perfectly cohered with the law of Moses as interpreted under rabbinical Judaism. The Dead Sea Scrolls, however, indicate that the Essenes also interpreted the law of Moses differently than the Pharisees did, showing that the law of Moses was interpreted in more than one way in antiquity and that the independent Nephite tradition could have adhered to the law of Moses while not following all of the laws in the same manner as did the Jews.

Legal Traditions Related to Biblical Law



When Is It Better for One Man to Perish Than an Entire Nation?

Key Scriptures 1 Nephi 4; 2 Samuel 20; 2 Kings 24

Explanation The Spirit told Nephi that the Lord had delivered Laban into Nephi's hands and that it was better for Laban to die than for an entire nation to perish because of unbelief (see 1 Nephi 4:11–13). Though this case is extremely rare, ancient Israelite law authorized the slaying of a particular man at least two other times. This chart compares Nephi's situation with two similar incidents found in the Bible: the beheading of the rebel Sheba and the execution of King Jehoiakim. Five conditions were present in each of these instances: The (1) recognized leader of Israel pronounced judgment upon a (2) specifically named person (3) guilty of some form of rebellion or disobedience that (4) would result in the destruction of at least part of Israel (5) unless the innocent people turned the traitor over for execution. Under these special circumstances, the law sanctioned the death of one instead of requiring innocent people to perish or be destroyed.

Source John W. Welch and Heidi Harkness Parker, "Better That One Man Perish," FARMS Update, *Insights* (June 1998): 2.

When Is It Better for One Man to Perish Than an Entire Nation?

	Five Conditions	Sheba 2 Samuel 20 ca. 1000 B.C.	Jehoiakim 2 Kings 24 ca. 598 B.C.	Laban 1 Nephi 4 ca. 597 B.C.
1	Judgment issued by the recognized leader of Israel	David (king of Israel)	Nebuchadnezzar (king of Judah)	Jehovah (king of all)
2	Person already guilty of offense against the leader	rebellion	treason	disobedience
3	Person specifically identified for death	Sheba named	Jehoiakim named	Laban delivered
4	Those surrendering person are innocent	city of Abel innocent	the council innocent	Nephi innocent
5	People face inevitable destruction if they refuse to surrender person	city of Abel attacked by Joab	Jerusalem threatened	nation would perish
	Result	Sheba beheaded	Jehoiakim taken to Babylon and presumably executed	Laban beheaded

Did Lehi Organize His Posterity into Seven Tribes?

Key Scriptures Jacob 1:13; 4 Nephi 1:36–38; Mormon 1:8; Genesis 49

Explanation Before his death, Lehi gave blessings and counsel to his posterity (see 2 Nephi 4:1–11). At this time, he may have organized them into seven tribes: Nephites, Jacobites, Josephites, Zoramites, Lamanites, Lemuelites, and Ishmaelites (see Jacob 1:13; 4 Nephi 1:38; Mormon 1:8). While Nephite and Lamanite governments came and went, the tribal structure of their society endured, suggesting that Lehi’s children considered his organization of tribes binding and constitutional. The patriarch “father Lehi,” as he is called by Enos, Benjamin, Alma, Helaman, Nephi, and Mormon, parallels Jacob/Israel in many respects, for both organized a people of God in a new land of promise by dividing their children into groups.

Sources John L. Sorenson, John A. Tvedtnes, and John W. Welch, “Seven Tribes: An Aspect of Lehi’s Legacy,” in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992), 93–95; see John W. Welch, “Lehi’s Last Will and Testament: A Legal Approach,” in *Second Nephi: The Doctrinal Structure*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1989), 68–70.

Did Lehi Organize His Posterity into Seven Tribes?

1. Nephites*

2. Jacobites

3. Josephites

4. Zoramites

5. Lamanites

6. Lemuelites

7. Ishmaelites

*Sam's lineage was numbered by Lehi with Nephi's

Ancient Sealed, Doubled Documents

Key Scriptures 2 Nephi 27:7–15; Jeremiah 32:10–14

Explanation In formal Israelite legal documents, there were two parts, as documented by Jeremiah: one part that was sealed, and one part that was open (see Jeremiah 32:10–14). Seals were placed on the closed portion, and witnesses signed the end of the document, attesting to its authenticity. Finally, the sealed doubled documents were placed in containers and preserved. The pictures at the bottom of this chart show the process by which ancient manuscripts containing one closed part and one open part were folded and sealed.

The Book of Mormon, as 2 Nephi 27:7–15 indicates, followed this ancient process of sealing and authenticating a text. The plates of Nephi had two parts: one open and one closed. Seals kept the closed part secure, and as promised anciently, witnesses were provided who signed the Book of Mormon after it was translated. Interestingly enough, the testimonies of the Three and Eight Witnesses were originally placed at the back of the Book of Mormon, at the end of the document, just as ancient Hebrew law would have required. The plates were preserved in a stone container until the Lord directed Joseph Smith to translate them.

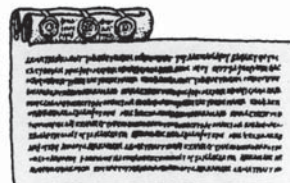
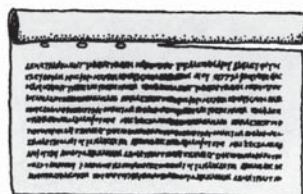
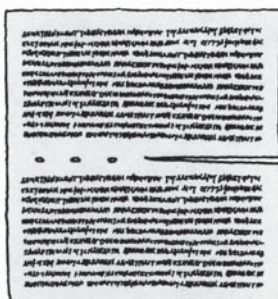
Source John W. Welch, “Doubled, Sealed, Witnessed Documents: From the Ancient World to the Book of Mormon,” in *Mormons, Scripture, and the Ancient World: Studies in Honor of John L. Sorenson*, ed. Davis Bitton (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1998), 393–94, 402.

Ancient Sealed, Doubled Documents

Jeremiah 32:10–14

2 Nephi 27:7–15

	Jeremiah took the deed (scroll)	Nephi describes the plates (book)
part sealed	<p>“that which was sealed according to the law and custom” (v. 11)</p> <p>part “which is sealed” (v. 14)</p>	<p>“the things which are sealed” (v. 8)</p> <p>“the words which are sealed” (v. 10)</p>
part open	<p>“and that which was open” (v. 11)</p> <p>part “which is open” (v. 14)</p>	<p>“he shall deliver the words” (v. 9)</p> <p>“these words which are not sealed” (v. 15)</p>
seals	“and sealed it” (v. 10)	“the book shall be sealed” (v. 7)
witnesses	“and took the witnesses” (v. 10)	<p>“three witnesses” (v. 12);</p> <p>“many witnesses” (v. 14)</p>
preserved	“put them in an earthen vessel that they may continue many days” (v. 14)	“kept in the book until the own due time of the Lord” (v. 10)



Sealed or Sealed-Up Documents

Key Scriptures 2 Nephi 27; Ether 3–5

Explanation Nephi, the brother of Jared, and Moroni all commented on sealed or sealed-up portions of the Book of Mormon, the brother of Jared’s vision, and Moroni’s abridgment of the brother of Jared’s writings. *Sealed* (*hatom*), as used in Jeremiah 32, has various meanings. *Hatom* means literally that a seal has been placed on a document, but it also implies that the document may be “unavailable” or “complete.” Similarly, in their discussions of the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon, Book of Mormon prophets generally used the term *sealed* to express that a document was literally closed with a seal and *sealed up* to indicate that a document was unavailable. Knowing these definitions can help readers follow the accounts in 2 Nephi 27 and Ether 3–5.

Source John W. Welch, “Doubled, Sealed, Witnessed Documents: From the Ancient World to the Book of Mormon,” in *Mormons, Scripture, and the Ancient World: Studies in Honor of John L. Sorenson*, ed. Davis Bitton (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1998), 432–33.

Sealed or Sealed-Up Documents

2 Nephi 27

Nephi's conception of the Nephite record

Ether 3–4

Instructions to the brother of Jared concerning his record

Ether 4–5

Moroni's comments on his abridgment of the writings of the brother of Jared

Will the document be in a sealed format?	Yes. The book itself will be "sealed"	No. The record will be "sealed up"	Not indicated
Will the document be in two distinct parts?	Yes, words that are "not sealed" and words that are "sealed"	No	Yes
Will the document be supported by witnesses?	Yes, three and a few others	Not indicated	Yes, three, joined by the Godhead
When will the document come forth?	"The own due time of the Lord"	Part when Jesus comes in the flesh, part in due time	When the Gentiles repent and become clean and have faith
What does the document contain?	"A revelation from God, from the beginning of the world to the ending"	Vision of the pre-mortal Christ and "all the inhabitants of the earth"	Things the brother of Jared saw
Is there a curse associated with rejecting the record?	Yes	Not indicated	Yes
Is the document to be sealed or sealed up again?	Yes, after the text has been read	Not expected	Yes, so it would not be destroyed
Was anything else sealed up with the record?	No	Two stones	The interpreters

How Do You Say “Law” in Hebrew?

Key Scriptures 2 Nephi 5:10; Mosiah 6:6; Alma 8:17; 30:3; 58:40; Helaman 3:20; 15:5; 1 Kings 2:3

Explanation The Hebrew language uses at least six different words that are translated into English as the word *law*. *Torah* refers to the law, especially the law of Moses, while *mishpat* signifies judgment or standards based on the law. *Huqqah* and *hoq* are similar in meaning, suggesting not only formal ordinances but also general codes of behavior. *Mitzvah* denotes divine commandments in general, and *edut*, while a more ambiguous term, often signifies a written law. For example, King David counseled Solomon to keep God’s “statutes [*huqqot*], and his commandments [*mitzvot*], and his judgments [*mishpatim*], and his testimonies [*edut*], as it is written in the law [*torah*] of Moses” (1 Kings 2:3). Similarly, Nephi states that his people observed “the judgments, and the statutes, and the commandments of the Lord in all things, according to the law of Moses” (2 Nephi 5:10). The striking similarities between these texts reveal that the Hebrew-speaking Nephites and the ancient Israelites conceived law in much the same way.

Source John W. Welch, “Statutes, Judgments, Ordinances, and Commandments,” in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992), 62–65.

How Do You Say “Law” in Hebrew?

Hebrew	Usual translation	Meanings and contexts
<i>torah</i>	law, law of Moses	teachings, instructions
<i>mishpat</i>	judgment	pronouncement of a verdict, standards of behavior
<i>huqqah</i>	statute, ordinance	custom, manner, decree, portion, order, prescription, limit
<i>hoq</i>	statute, ordinance	the masculine form of <i>huqqah</i> , used in place of <i>huqqah</i> (note: <i>statute</i> and <i>ordinance</i> do not appear together in the Book of Mormon)
<i>mitzvah</i>	commandment	frequently signifies divine commandments, <i>bar mitzvah</i> = “son of the commandment”
<i>edut</i>	testimony, witness	often a monument, stele, or book of the law

Jacob's Ten Woes and the Ten Commandments

Key Scripture 2 Nephi 9

Explanation In 2 Nephi 9, Jacob pronounces a “wo” or curse upon the people of Nephi who do not keep the commandments. This chart shows that the specific sins he denounces are similar to several of the sins committed when the Ten Commandments are broken. The two lists are not identical, but it is evident that they are related at several levels. Both give ten warnings, woes, commands, or prohibitions. The fourth commandment (addressing the Sabbath day) and the eighth commandment (prohibiting stealing) are not on Jacob’s list, possibly because they were not a problem for Jacob’s isolated audience to keep. (Note that each item in the chart is numbered according to its order in the scriptural passage it appears in.)

Source John W. Welch, “Jacob’s Ten Commandments,” in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992), 69–72.

Jacob's Ten Woes and the Ten Commandments

2 Nephi 9:27, 30–38

Compare Exodus 20:3–17

1. Wo unto them who knowingly transgress God's commandments	1. Thou shalt have no other gods before me
2. Wo unto the rich who despise the poor and make their treasure their god	10. Thou shalt not covet
3. Wo unto the deaf who will not hear	5. Honor (hear) thy father and thy mother
4. Wo unto the blind who will not see	
5. Wo unto the uncircumcised of heart	3. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain
6. Wo unto the liar	9. Thou shalt not bear false witness
7. Wo unto the murderer who deliberately kills	6. Thou shalt not kill
8. Wo unto them who commit whoredoms	7. Thou shalt not commit adultery
9. Wo unto those who worship idols	2. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image
10. Wo unto all those who die and remain in their sins	

Legal Cases and Procedures in the Book of Mormon

Key Scripture Mosiah 29:25–29

Explanation The main purpose of the Book of Mormon is, of course, religious; but its pages also report more than a dozen important lawsuits or legal procedures. This chart helps a person to appreciate the number and variety of legal procedures reported in the Book of Mormon. These accounts provide significant information about aspects of the Nephite legal system, such as accusations, arrests, imprisonments, executions, judges, witnesses, and rules of law. Most of these legal cases arose during the reign of the judges, when the role of the judicial system had been greatly expanded. That period in Nephite history saw great internal turmoil. Those problems teach how important it is for a free and open society to honor, obey, and sustain the law in order to survive, let alone thrive.

Legal Cases and Procedures in the Book of Mormon

The Case of Sherem against Jacob	Jacob 7
The Arrest of Ammon	Mosiah 7:6–16
The Trial of Abinadi	Mosiah 12–17
The Trial of Nehor	Alma 1:1–15
The Trial of Alma and Amulek	Alma 14
The Imprisonment of Aaron and Brethren	Alma 21:12–14
The Trial of Korihor	Alma 30
The Political Imprisonment of King-Men	Alma 51:19
The Trial of Pachus’s Men and the King-Men	Alma 62:9–10
The Case of Paanchi	Helaman 1:1–10
The Imprisonment of Nephi and Lehi	Helaman 5:21–22
Gadianton Trials of Their Defectors	Helaman 6:24
The Trial of Seantum	Helaman 9
The Execution of Zemnarihah	3 Nephi 4:28–33
The Trial of Captured Robbers	3 Nephi 5:4–5
Corrupt Execution of Inspired Prophets	3 Nephi 6:20–24
Complaint against the Corrupt Judges	3 Nephi 6:25–30

Three Diverse Opponents of the Nephites

Key Scriptures Jacob 7; Alma 1; 30

Explanation The trials of three major opponents of Nephite leadership—Sherem, Nehor, and Korihor—are documented in the Book of Mormon (see Jacob 7; Alma 1; 30). The situations and outcomes of those trials are compared in this chart. Although each of these men had his own style and persuasive tactics and each case is historically unique and distinctive, they were similar in their attempt to lead people down various “broad roads”—away from Christ and to spiritual death.

Three Diverse Opponents of the Nephites

	Sherem	Nehor	Korihor
Date	ca. 500 B.C.	91 B.C.	ca. 74 B.C.
Location	Land/city of Nephi	Land/city of Zarahemla	Zarahemla/Jershon/ Gideon/Antionum
Labeled anti-Christ	No	No	Yes
Theology	Theist, traditionalist	Theist, universalist	Atheist
Politics	Reactionary, royalist	Populist	Radical
View on priest	Should keep law	Should be paid	Oppress the poor
Religion	Pro law of Moses	Law irrelevant	Opposed law of Moses
Impact of preaching	Led away hearts	Many believed, gave money	Led away hearts; sin and whoredoms
Nature of legal action or offense	Blasphemy, false prophecy, falsely accused Jacob of leading people into apostasy	Killed Gideon; convicted of enforcing priest-craft with the sword	Reviled against priests and God, committed blasphemy
Arrested	No	Yes	Yes
Status	Plaintiff	Defendant	Defendant with counterclaims
Court	Divine justice	One judge	Several judges
Accepted scriptures	Yes	Unclear	No
Warned	Indirectly	No	Yes
Requested sign	Yes	No	Yes
Sign-giver hesitancy	Yes, tempting God	Not applicable	No, better one perish
Divine sign	Smitten to the earth but could still speak	None	Struck dumb but could still write and walk
Judicial verdict	No	Yes	No
Confession	Sincere, complete	Involuntary	Incomplete
Penalty	Divine justice	Capital punishment	Ostracism, trampled
Death	Nonhuman causes	Human, legal	Human, extralegal
Publicity	Public confession	Ignominious death	Result heralded
Precendent established	Legitimized Christianization of the law of Moses	Gave original jurisdiction to chief judge under the new reign of judges	Held that speech acts were still punishable under the law of Mosiah

Legal Charges Brought against Abinadi

Key Scriptures Mosiah 12–17; Alma 13:20; Exodus 20:16; 22:28; Leviticus 24:16; Deuteronomy 18:18–22

Explanation Though the charges proved unfounded, Abinadi was accused by Noah’s priests of violating Mosaic law. This chart lists (1) the four charges brought against Abinadi, (2) the Mosaic laws on which each accusation rested, and (3) the false evidence that Noah’s priests used to accuse him. The priests of Noah knew the law of Moses thoroughly enough to twist it and use it against Abinadi when he prophesied against Noah and of Jesus Christ. Although the first three charges all failed, they were at least nominally grounded in the law. Abinadi was finally put to death for having “reviled the king” (Mosiah 17:12), which is prohibited in Exodus 22:28. Ultimately, however, these tactics worked to the priests’ own undoing. As Alma later counseled the city of Ammonihah: “Behold, the scriptures are laid before you; if ye will wrest [twist] them it shall be to your own destruction” (Alma 13:20).

Legal Charges Brought against Abinadi

Charge	Evidence	Mosaic Law in Question
1. Lying (Mosiah 12:14)	Abinadi said the people had hardened their hearts and had committed evil abominations (Mosiah 12:1)	“Thou shalt not bear false witness” (Exodus 20:16)
2. False prophecy (Mosiah 12:14)	“He pretendeth the Lord hath spoken it” (Mosiah 12:12)	“The prophet [who] shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded . . . , shall die” (Deuteronomy 18:20)
3. Blasphemy (Mosiah 17:7–8)	Abinadi said God himself would come down (Mosiah 7:26–28; 15:1–8)	“He that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death” (Leviticus 24:16)
4. Reviling against the king (Mosiah 17:12)	Abinadi said Noah’s life would be as a garment in a hot furnace (Mosiah 12:3, 10–12)	“Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people” (Exodus 22:28)

Did Abinadi Prophecy against King Noah on Pentecost?

Key Scripture Mosiah 11–17

Explanation Abinadi may very well have prophesied to King Noah and his priests on or near the day of Pentecost, as textual clues in Mosiah 11–17 suggest. Pentecost in ancient Israel was a three-day festival in May celebrating the new wheat and bounty of spring. It was also a time for carefully listening to and celebrating the law of Moses, since God gave the law to Moses on Sinai at approximately this time in the year. Abinadi's cursing of grain and sending destruction upon crops are a reversal of the themes celebrated at Pentecost. Ironically, at the same time when the priests should have been venerating the law, Abinadi rehearsed to them the Ten Commandments and chastised them for not keeping it. These and other clues listed in this chart are further evidence attesting to the Book of Mormon's roots in ancient Israel.

Source John W. Welch, Gordon C. Thomasson, and Robert F. Smith, "Abinadi and Pentecost," in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992), 135–38.

Did Abinadi Prophecy against King Noah on Pentecost?

Israelite Pentecost

Abinadi

celebrating first grain harvest	cursed grain (Mosiah 12:6)
rejoicing in bounty	sent hail, winds, insects (Mosiah 12:6)
fifty days after Passover	specific day unknown
remembering deliverance from bondage in Egypt	prophesied that the people would be brought into bondage (Mosiah 11:21)
celebrating the giving of the Ten Commandments to Moses (Exodus 20)	recited the Ten Commandments given to Moses (Mosiah 13:12–24)
Moses' face shone (Exodus 34)	Abinadi's face shone (Mosiah 13:5)
Sinai became a furnace (Exodus 19)	prophesied that Noah's life would be like a garment in a furnace (Mosiah 12:3)
three-day festival (Exodus 19:11)	cast into prison three days (Mosiah 17:6)
stern admonitions	stern admonitions
use of Psalm 50	use of ideas in Psalm 50
"Our God shall come" (Psalm 50:3)	"God . . . shall come down" (Mosiah 15:1)
"What hast thou to do to declare my statutes?" (Psalm 50:16)	"What teach ye this people?" (Mosiah 12:27)
"[Thou] hast been partaker with adulterers" (Psalm 50:18)	"Why do ye commit whoredoms?" (Mosiah 12:29)

Benjamin and the Law of the King

Key Scripture Mosiah 1–5

Explanation Deuteronomy 17:15–20 presents the requirements to be king under the law of Moses. According to this “paragraph of the king,” a righteous king must read and keep the law and fear the Lord, and he should not be lifted up above his brethren or seek for riches. King Benjamin addressed each of these themes in his great speech, explaining how he had been faithful to his people and the Lord in keeping these commandments. These parallels are especially strong in Mosiah 2:12–14, which suggests that Benjamin had read and followed the scriptures on the brass plates, of which Deuteronomy was a part. This shows that Benjamin’s concept of kingship was completely at home in ancient Israel and in accordance with God’s regulations.

Source John W. Welch, “Benjamin, the Man: His Place in Nephite History,” in *King Benjamin’s Speech: “That Ye May Learn Wisdom,”* ed. John W. Welch and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1998), 34.

Benjamin and the Law of the King

	Deut.	Mosiah
The Lord shall choose him	17:15	1:10; 2:30
He shall be one of thy brethren	17:15	2:11
He shall not return the people to Egypt	17:16	3:14
He shall not multiply to himself silver and gold	17:17	2:12
He shall have a copy of the Law	17:18	1:3
He shall read the Law all his days	17:19	1:7
He shall fear the Lord	17:19	2:37–40
He shall keep all the Law	17:19	1:5; 5:5
His heart shall not be lifted up above his brethren	17:20	2:26
He shall turn not aside to the right hand or left	17:20	5:8–10
His days shall be prolonged in the kingdom	17:20	2:31

The Law of Apostate Cities

Key Scripture Alma 9–16

Explanation In Deuteronomy 13:12–18 the Lord commands the Israelites to destroy the truly apostate cities in the land. They were to decide whether a city was wicked according to certain conditions set forth in the Law. As this chart illustrates, these conditions are similar to the conditions of Ammonihah before the Lamanites destroyed it. After this city was annihilated, it remained uninhabited for many years but was eventually built up again. The law of Moses deemed that the ruins of a wicked city should never be built up; but this prohibition apparently could be revoked or could expire after a period of time, as evidenced in the Old Testament by the authorized rebuilding of several cities. Ammonihah similarly remained uninhabited for just over seven years, a ritual cleansing period, and was then built up again. This and other evidences support the assertions that Alma, as bearer of the brass plates, knew that Ammonihah was an apostate city according to the law of Moses, and that Alma reported the destruction of that city in such a way as to show that all the legal requirements and procedures regarding the destruction of an apostate city had been satisfied.

Source John W. Welch, “The Destruction of Ammonihah and the Law of Apostate Cities,” in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992), 176–79.

The Law of Apostate Cities

Deuteronomy 13:12–18

Ammonihah (Alma 9–16)

certain men gone out from among you	Nehorites
withdrawn the inhabitants of their city	withdrew from Nephites
serve other gods	turned from God
children of Belial	Satan had great hold
inquire and search diligently	Alma visits personally
smite all inhabitants with the sword	everyone killed
destroy utterly	everything destroyed
a heap forever	bodies heaped up
abomination	desolation of Nehors

A Comparison of Nephite Law Lists

Key Scriptures 2 Nephi 26:32; Mosiah 2:13; Alma 1:32; 16:18; 23:3; 30:10; Helaman 3:14; 4:12; 6:23; 7:21; Ether 8:16; Exodus 20–23.

Explanation The law of Moses, written on the brass plates, was rigorously followed by the Nephites, whose prophets often referred directly or indirectly to it in recitations of various lists of crimes. More than ten such law lists are shown on this chart. Each of these law lists is unique. But when they are all merged into a single composite list, it becomes clear that they collectively proscribe the list of crimes found in Exodus 20–23 and some additional ones, such as power mongering and confining people to dungeons. Such striking parallels and clusters show the relatedness of the five books of Moses to the most frequently condemned crimes in the Book of Mormon.

A Comparison of Nephite Law Lists

Crimes Prohibited	2 Ne. 26:32	Mosiah 2:13	Alma 1:32	Alma 16:18	Alma 23:3	Alma 30:10	Hel. 3:14	Hel. 4:12	Hel. 6:23	Hel. 7:21	Ether 8:16	Ex. 20-23
Abominations							X					X
Adultery		X		X	X	X		X				X
Babblings			X									X
Confinement in dungeons		X										
Contentions	X							X				X
Costly apparel			X									X
Deceivings				X								X
Denying prophecy								X				X
Deserting								X				X
Envy	X		X	X								X
False witness										X		X
Idleness			X									X
Idolatry			X									X
Lasciviousness				X								X
Lying	X		X	X				X			X	X
Malice	X			X								X
Mocking the sacred								X			X	
Murder	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Taking name of God in vain	X											X
Oppressing poor								X				X
Persecuting			X									X
Plunder		X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Power mongering											X	
Pride			X					X				X
Revilings				X								X
Robbing			X	X		X	X					X
Seeking riches		X						X		X		X
Slavery		X										X
Smiting weak								X				X
Sorceries			X									X
Stealing	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X
Strife			X	X								X
Whoredoms	X		X				X		X		X	X
Wickedness		X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Withholding food								X				
Withholding clothing								X				