
Mosiah 20 — The Daughters of the Lamanites — Abduction by the Priests of Noah, the Women Who Fought Beside the Men, and the Reconciliation by Honest Confession

Mosiah 20: Twenty-four daughters of the Lamanites gather to sing and dance; the priests-of-Noah hidden in the wilderness lust, abduct them, and carry them off; Lamanites blame Limhi's colony; battle joins; women and children of Limhi's people fight alongside their men; the wounded Lamanite king is brought before Limhi; the truth is confessed; Gideon counsels Limhi; reconciliation by honest confession; c. 145 BC.

Mosiah 20 is the BoM's-master-chapter-of-the-priestly-abduction, the women-and-children-fighting-beside-the-men, and the reconciliation-by-honest-confession. The chapter's-narrative-arc is unique in-the-BoM: the priests-of-Noah, fled-into-the-wilderness at-Mosiah-19:21, now-resurface in-an-unforgettable-and-shameful-way — they spy-on a-place where twenty-four Lamanite-daughters gather-to-sing-and-dance, lust-after-them, abduct-them, and-carry-them-off into-the-wilderness; the Lamanites blame-Limhi's-colony (the abducted-women's-fathers do-not-know the priests-are-separate from-Limhi's-people); a battle-is-joined; Limhi's-people fight-with-women-and-children-in-the-ranks; the Lamanite-king is wounded and-brought-before-Limhi; the truth-of-the-abduction is revealed; Gideon-counsels reconciliation; the Lamanite-king-and-Limhi swear-oaths and-the-conflict ends. The chapter is the BoM's-most-difficult-narrative on-sexual-violence and-the-most-precise-text-on the responsibility-of-an-innocent-third-party for-the-crimes-of-the-people-they-shelter (Limhi-and-his-people are-not-the-abductors but-are-blamed because-the-priests-are-Nephite-by-origin).

Load-Bearing Texts

1. vv. 4–5. *and behold, when they had finished their dancing, they had gathered themselves together to return to the land of Nephi... And they took them and carried them into the wilderness; yea, twenty and four of the daughters of the Lamanites they carried into the wilderness* — the chapter's-master abduction statement
2. v. 11. *and now the people of Limhi began to drive the Lamanites before them; yet they were not half so numerous as the Lamanites. But they fought for their lives, and for their wives, and for their children; therefore they exerted themselves and like dragons did they fight* — the chapter's-master like-dragons-they-fought verse
3. v. 17. *and Gideon went forth and stood before the king, and said unto him: Now O king, thou hast hitherto hearkened unto my words many times when we have been contending with our brethren, the Lamanites. And now, O king, if thou hast not found me to be an unprofitable servant, or if thou hast hitherto listened to my words in any degree, and they have been of service to thee, even so I desire that thou wouldst listen to my words at this time, and I will be thy servant and deliver this people out of bondage* — the chapter's-master Gideon-counselor scene
4. v. 20. *and Gideon said unto the king: Behold the king of the Lamanites is a just man, and would not seek the destruction of his people. Let us search for him among our people, and let us confess these things unto him* — the chapter's-master honest-confession counsel
5. v. 26. *and it came to pass that he humbled himself before the Lamanite king, and he confessed all the things which had happened unto their brethren, and also that they had had nothing to do with the taking of their daughters. So the king of the Lamanites had compassion on Limhi* — the chapter's-master humble-confess-and-be-pitied close

Hebrew Word Studies

tanin / chayyim / mishpachah (תַּנִּין / חַיִּים / מִשְׁפָּחָה) — **dragon, sea-monster, serpent / lives, living-ones (also: life) / family, clan, kin v. 11.** The chapter's family-defense triad. *Tanin* — *dragon, sea-monster, serpent* — the noun-behind Ex. 7:9-10's-Aaron's-rod-became-a-serpent (*tanin*), and-the-Leviathan/Rahab imagery of-Ps. 74, Isa. 51; *chayyim* — *lives, living-ones* — the plural-noun behind the morning-greeting *le-chayyim* (*to-life*); *mishpachah* — *family, clan, kin* — the noun-behind the genealogical-units of-the-Hebrew-Bible. The doctrine: the colony fought *ke-taninim* (*like-dragons*) for-*chayyim* (*lives*) and-for-*mishpachah* (*family*); the three-elements pair the fiercer-than-the-defense (*tanin*) with-the-content-of-the-defense (*chayyim*) with-the-locus-of-the-defense (*mishpachah*). Same *tanin-fiercer-than* grammar as Job 41's-Leviathan (the chapter-Hebrew-Bible-uses-for-cosmic-fiercer-than); same family-defense-as-power grammar as Neh. 4:14. The Restoration's D&C 84:106 — *and if any man shall seek to take away their lives, the same shall be his lot; even so. Amen* operates on-the-same-protect-the-family logic. The chapter is one of the BoM's clearest articulations of the *tanin-defense-of-mishpachah-and-chayyim* doctrine — the disciple's-fierce-defense of-life-and-family is sanctioned.

From the Chapter's Architecture

The chapter is also the seed-chapter for the Amulonite-narrative. The twenty-four daughters carried-into-the-wilderness will-become the mothers of-the-Amulonites (Mosiah 23:31-35; 24:1-11); the Amulonites will-rule-over-Alma's-people in-bondage (Mosiah 23-24); the priests-of-Noah's lineage will-be-the colony's-future-tormentors and-eventually the burners-of-the-Anti-Nephi-Lehies (Alma 25:5-12). The chapter's-shame becomes the source of-decades-of-future-suffering.