

Mosiah 8 — The Twenty-Four Plates and the Doctrine of the Seer — Interpreters, Urim and Thummim, and a Gift Greater Than Prophecy

Mosiah 8: Ammon meets Limhi at the temple; rehearses Benjamin's words; Limhi tells of the forty-three-man expedition that found the ruins of a great people and twenty-four plates of pure gold; Ammon teaches that King Mosiah II has interpreters by which he can translate any record; the chapter is the BoM's master-text on the seer-as-revelator and the lights-and-perfections; c. 121 BC.

Mosiah 8 is the BoM's master-chapter on the doctrine of the seer. The previous chapter found-the-lost-colony and named-the-cause of its bondage; this chapter does two distinct things in one record: (1) Limhi shows-Ammon the twenty-four plates of pure-gold his expedition recovered from a destroyed-civilization northward — the Jaredite-plates, the future-Book-of-Ether; (2) Ammon teaches that the home-king Mosiah-II has a gift from God by which any-record-engraven-in-an-unknown-language can be translated, which gives Ammon occasion to lay down what is for the entire BoM the master-doctrine of the seer.

Load-Bearing Texts

1. v. 8. *they... found a land which was covered with bones of men, and of beasts, and was also covered with ruins of buildings of every kind, having discovered a land which had been peopled with a people who were as numerous as the hosts of Israel* — the chapter's-precise discovery of the Jaredite-ruins
2. v. 13. *whosoever has these things is called seer, after the manner of old times... and the things are called interpreters* — the chapter's-master definition of the interpreters
3. v. 15. *a seer is greater than a prophet* — the chapter's-master ranking of revelatory-offices
4. v. 16. *a seer is a revelator and a prophet also; and a gift which is greater can no man have, except he should possess the power of God, which no man can; yet a man may have great power given him from God* — the chapter's-master statement on the seer-revelator-prophet trinity of offices
5. v. 17. *but a seer can know of things which are past, and also of things which are to come, and by them shall all things be revealed, or, rather, shall secret things be made manifest, and hidden things shall come to light, and things which are not known shall be made known by them, and also things shall be made known by them which otherwise could not be known* — the chapter's-master function-list of the seer

Hebrew Word Studies

ro'eh / *urim ve-thummim* / *targum* (רֹאֶה / פְּתִיחַתוֹ מִירוֹא / פְּתִיחַתוֹ) — **seer (one-who-sees) / lights-and-perfections / interpretation, translation vv. 13, 15–17.** The chapter's seer-and-interpreters triad. *Ro'eh* — seer, one-who-sees — the older noun for prophet, used in 1 Sam. 9:9's beforetime in Israel... he that is now called a Prophet (*navi*) was beforetime called a Seer (*ro'eh*); *urim ve-thummim* — lights-and-perfections — the priestly-stones of Ex. 28:30, Lev. 8:8, Num. 27:21, Deut. 33:8, 1 Sam. 28:6, Ezr. 2:63 by which the high-priest inquired-of-God; *targum* — interpretation, translation — the Aramaic-noun for rendering-one-language-into-another, applied especially to the Aramaic-translations of the Hebrew-Bible read in synagogue. The doctrine: the *ro'eh* uses the *urim-ve-thummim* to make-*targum* of records-that-cannot-otherwise-be-read; the seer is the priestly-translator of God-mediated-knowledge. Same *urim-ve-thummim*-grammar as Num. 27:21 — Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the Lord; Deut. 33:8 — let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah. The Restoration's D&C 17:1 — I, the Lord, have caused you to enter into a covenant with me... for the express purpose that they (the Three Witnesses) might bear record of the truth... and the breastplate, the Urim and Thummim, which were given to the brother of Jared upon the mount — establishes the direct-multi-millennial chain: the Brother-of-Jared's-Urim-and-Thummim (Ether 3:21–28) → the Nephite-seers (Mosiah 8, 28) → Joseph Smith's-Urim-and-Thummim (D&C 17:1, JS-H 1:35, 1:42, 1:52). The chapter is the BoM's clearest articulation of the *ro'eh-by-urim-ve-thummim* doctrine — the priestly-translator-by-stones doctrine that links Ether to Joseph Smith.

From the Chapter's Architecture

The chapter is also the BoM's-direct-anchor for D&C 107:91–92's canonical seer-revelator-prophet-translator definition. The four-fold-functions of the LDS-Prophet-President's-calling come from Mosiah 8:16–17 word-for-word. The chapter is therefore one of the BoM's-most-load-bearing-restoration-texts.