

Mosiah 9 — Zeniff's Confession — Over-Zealous to Inherit, Snared by a Cunning King, Delivered by the God Who Hears

Mosiah 9: The record of Zeniff (the chapter opens the embedded Record-of-Zeniff that runs through Mosiah 9–10); Zeniff confesses he was over-zealous to inherit the land of his fathers, was deceived by King Laman, settled in the land of Lehi-Nephi and Shilom, and after thirteen years was attacked; cried mightily unto the Lord and was delivered; c. 200 BC.

Mosiah 9 begins the embedded first-person record of Zeniff — the chapter is no longer Mormon writing-about; it is Zeniff writing-himself, abridged-by-Mormon. The genre-shift is one of the BoM's most-explicit: from third-person-king-history (Mosiah 1–8) to first-person-king-confession (Mosiah 9–10). The chapter is set *eighty years earlier than chapter 8* — Zeniff is Limhi's grandfather, and the Record-of-Zeniff is what Limhi's people brought-back-with-them as their colonial-self-explanation.

Load-Bearing Texts

1. v. 1. *I, Zeniff, having been taught in all the language of the Nephites... and having had a knowledge of the land of Nephi, or of the land of our fathers' first inheritance* — the chapter's-opening establishes Zeniff as a learned-Nephite, not a wild-frontier-man
2. v. 3. *I being over-zealous to inherit the land of our fathers* — the chapter's-master self-indictment, written by the man-himself
3. v. 10. *the cunning and the craftiness of king Laman, to bring my people into bondage, that he might glut himself with the labors of their hands* — the chapter's-master diagnosis of the heathen-king's intent
4. v. 17. *we did go forth in the strength of the Lord to battle. Yea, in the strength of the Lord did we go forth* — the chapter's-master deliverance-formula, repeated for emphasis

Hebrew Word Studies

qana / yarash / zakar (קָנָה / יָרַשׁ / זָכַר) — **to be jealous, zealous / to inherit, dispossess / to remember** v. 3. The chapter's over-zeal triad. *Qana* — to be jealous, zealous, envious — the verb behind Num. 25:11's Phinehas was zealous for my sake, and behind Ex. 20:5's I the Lord thy God am a jealous God; *yarash* — to inherit, take possession, dispossess — the verb behind Deut. 1:8's go in and possess the land; *zakar* — to remember, mention — the verb behind every covenant-remembrance text. The doctrine: Zeniff's qana for the land-of-inheritance produced a yarash-attempt that lacked-zakar of the Lord; zeal-for-the-land without remembrance-of-the-Land's-Giver becomes famine. Same zeal-without-knowledge grammar as Rom. 10:2 — they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge; Phil. 3:6 — concerning zeal, persecuting the church — Paul's-own-pre-Damascus-zeal is the same disease as Zeniff's. The Restoration's D&C 58:26 — for behold, it is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant — operates by the same logic: zeal that does-not-wait-on-the-Spirit becomes either slothful-compulsion or over-zealous-pre-emption. The chapter is the BoM's clearest pre-Pauline articulation of the qana-without-zakar doctrine — zeal-for-the-thing without remembrance-of-the-Giver produces famine.

From the Chapter's Architecture

The chapter is also the BoM's-master-anatomy of how-good-people-fall-into-bondage. The mechanism: (1) right-aim (inherit the land) + (2) over-zeal-without-remembrance = (3) covenant-without-counsel-of-the-Lord → (4) twelve-years-of-fattening → (5) thirteenth-year-of-blood. The chapter is one of the BoM's clearest articulations of the anatomy-of-bondage doctrine — the pattern by-which the well-intentioned-and-competent end up enslaved.