

Chapter Three

CONFLICTING INTERPRETATIONS OF ISAIAH IN ABINADI'S TRIAL

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INTRODUCTION

The writings of Isaiah play an important role in the Book of Mormon. As Victor Ludlow has explained, “Of all the prophetic writings available on the plates of brass, Isaiah is the major resource used throughout the Book of Mormon.”¹ As an example, of the amount of material that Nephi wrote, over 40 percent of it was used “to quote, paraphrase, or explicate the prophet (almost 50 of 117 pages in the 1981 edition).”² Extensive portions of the book of Isaiah were quoted by both Nephi and Jacob, and entire chapters were quoted by Abinadi as well as Jesus himself.³ Importantly, when these sections of the book of Isaiah are quoted in the Book of Mormon, they are often followed by an interpretation of those verses.⁴ For example, after Nephi quoted from Isaiah 48–49 in 1 Nephi 20–21, he followed his quotation with an explanation of the Isaiah passages he just quoted (1 Nephi 22).⁵ Jacob and Abinadi did similarly.⁶ This paper will

focus on one such quotation from Isaiah—Isaiah 52:7–10—and contrasting interpretations from the priests of Noah and Abinadi.

When Abinadi was presented in Noah’s court, the priests of Noah asked the following question to their prisoner: “What meaneth the words which are written, and which have been taught by our fathers?” (Mosiah 12:20). They then quoted Isaiah 52:7–10:

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings; that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good; that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth;

Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye when the Lord shall bring again Zion;

Break forth into joy; sing together ye waste places of Jerusalem; for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem;

The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God? (Mosiah 12:21–24)

The priests of Noah felt that by asking Abinadi the meaning of these verses, “they might cross him, that thereby they might have wherewith to accuse him” (Mosiah 12:19). Abinadi, on the other hand, countered by asking them, “Are you priests, and pretend to teach this people, and to understand the spirit of prophesying, and yet desire to know of me what these things mean?” (Mosiah 12:25). The meaning of these verses, however, is not always self-evident to modern readers of the Book of Mormon. What was the interpretation of Isaiah 52:7–10 according to the priests of Noah that made them suppose they could cross and accuse Abinadi by asking him about it? Further, what were Abinadi’s and the priests of Noah’s contrasting interpretations of these verses that caused him to rebuke the priests for “perverting the ways of the Lord” and not applying their “hearts to understanding” (Mosiah 12:26–27)? Previous studies of Isaiah 52:7–10 in the Book of Mormon have provided excellent background and analyses of these verses in order to answer the above questions.⁷ This study,

however, seeks to advance the scholarly discussion by assessing additional issues having to do with the relationship between the Messiah and the Law from the perspectives of Abinadi and the priests of Noah.

This paper will therefore explore this fundamental issue: the contrast between how Isaiah 52:7–10 was understood by the priests of Noah and Abinadi. First, I will review the important features of the story of Abinadi in the court of King Noah in order to place the quotation of Isaiah 52:7–10 in the specific context in which it was employed when Abinadi was interrogated. Second, I will discuss the function of Isaiah 52:7–10 within the broader context of the book of Isaiah, explaining the overall message of the passage as well as identifying a feature which has been variously interpreted both by scholars and by Abinadi and the priests of Noah—namely, the identity of the servant of Jehovah. Third, I will explore how the priests of Noah likely understood the overall message and application of Isaiah 52:7–10 according to their own peculiar ideology and why they felt they could “cross” Abinadi by appealing to it. The most important contribution of this study, however, will be a discussion of how Abinadi as well as the priests of Noah interpreted the identity of the servant of Jehovah and how these contrasting interpretations may have contributed to the priests’ conclusion that they could accuse Abinadi after their questioning. I will present the evidence that two fundamental points of doctrinal conflict between the priests of Noah and Abinadi and their understanding of Isaiah 52:7–10 concerned not only their interpretation of the situation of the people of Noah, but also the saving role of the Messiah.

SETTING

At the conclusion of the account of his reign, which most likely occurred around 160 BC, King Zeniff expressed a hopeful desire concerning his people: “And now I, being old, did confer the kingdom upon one of my sons; therefore, I say no more. And may the Lord bless my people. Amen” (Mosiah 10:22). That son was Noah (Mosiah 11:1). We do not have any information concerning who Zeniff’s other sons were, what they were like, nor why the king chose Noah as his successor instead of his other sons. But the editor Mormon matter-of-factly informs the reader that “Noah

began to reign in his stead; and he did not walk in the ways of his father” (Mosiah 11:1).⁸

Noah’s reign, as it turned out, was a far cry from the blessing of the Lord that Zeniff had longed for his people.⁹ The subsequent account outlines not only how Noah and his priests were steeped in wicked behavior themselves, but also that they “did cause his people to commit sin” (Mosiah 11:2). Thus, the new king fundamentally “changed the affairs of the kingdom” (Mosiah 11:4). Later, King Mosiah concluded that a wicked king “teareth up the laws of those who have reigned in righteousness before him; and he trampleth under his feet the commandments of God” (Mosiah 29:22). Mosiah may have been referring to the many wicked kings among the Jaredites, since he had just recently translated those records (Mosiah 29:11–18). But Mosiah may also have been thinking of Noah, about whom he had learned from the records of Zeniff as well as of Alma (Mosiah 25:5–6).

Noah had deposed all the priests who served in the administration of his father, Zeniff, and appointed new ones who supported his own wicked and excessive lifestyle and ideology (Mosiah 11:5–7). The king and his priests not only taught “vain and flattering words” to the people (Mosiah 11:7) but also laid a heavy tax of one-fifth upon all their substance (Mosiah 11:3) in order that Noah, his priests, and their families might be supported “in their laziness, and in their idolatry, and in their whoredoms” (Mosiah 11:6).

It was into this unstable environment that Abinadi inserted himself when he arrived in the city of Nephi to preach “to the people” (Mosiah 11:27) an ominous message from the Lord: “Wo be unto this people, for I have seen their abominations, and their wickedness, and their whoredoms. . . . And except they repent and turn to the Lord their God, behold, I will deliver them into the hands of their enemies; yea, and they shall be brought into bondage; and they shall be afflicted by the hand of their enemies” (Mosiah 11:20–21). The people of Noah naturally did not appreciate this announcement. They were understandably angry with Abinadi and attempted to take him by force (Mosiah 11:26). Noah himself viewed Abinadi’s words as sedition—an attempt “to stir up my people to anger one with another, and to raise contentions among my people” (Mosiah

11:28)—and desired to have him executed. These attempts against the life of Abinadi were to no avail, however, for “the Lord delivered him out of their hands” (Mosiah 11:26).

Two years later, Abinadi returned to the city Nephi in disguise.¹⁰ Instead of merely repeating the previous divine pronouncement—the result of which he had said could be avoided if they would sincerely “repent and turn to the Lord their God” (Mosiah 11:21)—Abinadi this time pronounced the judgment of the Lord upon the people of Noah as a foregone conclusion: “They have repented not of their evil doings; therefore, I will visit them in my anger, yea, in my fierce anger will I visit them in their iniquities and abominations” (Mosiah 12:1). The people were again angry with Abinadi, but this time “they took him and carried him bound before the king” (Mosiah 12:9). Noah cast Abinadi into prison and conspired with his priests, who proceeded to “question him, that they might cross him, that thereby they might have wherewith to accuse him” (Mosiah 12:19). This is the setting for the question from the priests concerning Isaiah 52:7–10. It will be helpful for our discussion to place this quotation from Isaiah in its proper context within the book of Isaiah.

ISAIAH 52:7-10 IN CONTEXT

The opening verse of Isaiah chapter 1 identifies the author, the time period, and the setting of the prophet's ministry and preaching among the people: “The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah” (Isaiah 1:1). Isaiah lived and ministered within the Southern Kingdom of Judah, particularly in and around the city of Jerusalem, during the second half of the eighth century BC. At this period of time, the Assyrian Empire had already conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel (2 Kings 16:4–23) and was now threatening Judah (2 Kings 18:13–16).¹¹

The book of Isaiah is extremely complex, but many scholars have concluded that this collection of writings can generally be organized into three basic sections. Although the precise chapter divisions vary from scholar to scholar, the following proposal is the most common.¹² The first section comprises chapters 1 through 39 and is noteworthy in its focus on the theme of judgment and its connection to important events from the

days of Isaiah. The second section comprises chapters 40 through 45 and is distinctive for its thematic concentration on reconciliation and its reference to the exile of Judah in Babylon. Finally, the third section comprises chapters 56 through 66 and is set apart for its emphasis on vindication and its link to a postexilic setting.

Some Isaian scholars have sensed such a dramatic contrast between these three divisions that they have proposed three separate authors for these sections of the book of Isaiah. These hypothetical authors are commonly referred to as First Isaiah, Second Isaiah, and Third Isaiah.¹³ One of the major obstacles, according to such scholars, is accepting that a single individual could predict events so accurately and so far into the future. For example, Richard R. Losch has concluded: “The Book of Isaiah presents a bit of a problem to scholars, because to take it literally would require either that the prophet lived for over two hundred years or that he had a view of the future that would pale the legend of Nostradamus.”¹⁴

As Kent P. Jackson has observed, “even conservative scholars who argue for the unity of the entire book note some stylistic differences” between the various divisions within the book of Isaiah.¹⁵ For Latter-day Saints, however, it is problematic to automatically use this admission as a basis for denying that the information contained in later chapters originated with the prophet Isaiah.¹⁶ This is primarily, as Terryl Givens has noted, “because the Book of Mormon’s Isaiah portions—including extensive parts of Isaiah 40–55—allegedly derive from brass plates that predate 600 B.C., they could not have been written by the post exilic ‘Deutero-Isaiah’ of conventional wisdom.”¹⁷ In addition, the Book of Mormon text emphasizes the worldview that ancient prophets knew and wrote about future events—itsself being composed and compiled in antiquity by those who understood future issues that would be of concern to later generations.¹⁸ This perspective is expressed most notably, for example, by Moroni when completing the record of his father Mormon: “Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing” (Mormon 8:35).

The quotation in question, Isaiah 52:7–10, falls within the second section of Isaiah (chapters 42 to 53), specifically within material sometimes referred to as the Servant Songs.¹⁹ These chapters contain four

songs which poetically proclaim the coming and mission of the servant of Jehovah who is called to lead the nations. The first song (Isaiah 42:1–4) is Jehovah declaring that he delights in his servant who will bring justice to the people, not by force but through truth. The second song (Isaiah 49:1–6) is the servant announcing that he has been called by Jehovah to restore Israel, but so far without success. The third song (Isaiah 50:4–9) is the servant describing how he has followed the difficult path given to him by Jehovah, which includes being smitten and abused and hoping for vindication from Jehovah. The fourth and final song (Isaiah 52:13–53:12) concerns the suffering servant, who bears the iniquities and sickness of others, who dies, and who ultimately receives posthumous vindication from Jehovah.²⁰

Isaiah 52:7–10 precedes the fourth servant song. The setting is during the Babylonian exile. These verses announce that the holy city Jerusalem, which had been in ruins since its destruction at the hand of the Babylonians, will be redeemed and restored to its former glory by Jehovah himself. The herald brings the good news that “Thy God reigneth!”—which message is received with rejoicing: “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings” (Isaiah 52:7). The watchman, whose responsibility it was to be on the lookout for approaching danger, lifts up his voice to sing at the news that Jehovah “shall bring again Zion” (Isaiah 52:8).²¹

The image of a watchman observing a herald who was delivering an important message by foot is aptly illustrated by the events narrated in 2 Samuel 18. In this account, Ahimaaz, who was the son of Zadok the priest, made the following request after a successful battle: “Let me now run, and bear the king tidings, how that the Lord hath avenged him of his enemies” (2 Samuel 18:19). As Ahimaaz approached the city, “David sat between the two gates: and the watchman went up to the roof over the gate unto the wall, and lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold a man running alone” (2 Samuel 18:24). The watchman observed the man running toward the city and remarked: “Me thinketh the running of the foremost is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok” (2 Samuel 18:27). King David, who was hoping for good news from the herald, responded: “He is a good man, and cometh with good tidings” (2 Samuel 18:27). The Hebrew phrase

that is translated as “good tidings” is identical in both 2 Samuel 18:27 and Isaiah 52:7.²²

Unlike the tragic news received by David, which announced the death of his son Absalom (2 Samuel 28:32–33), however, the “good tidings” heralded in Isaiah 52:7 were to be celebrated: “Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem” (Isaiah 52:9). In addition, it is important to note, as Dana Pike has clarified, that in this verse “the messenger announces the *beginning*, not the completion, of the process of redemption and comfort.”²³ This redemption begins precisely because Jehovah “has made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations,” with the result that “all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God” (Isaiah 52:10). Thus, in context, Isaiah 52:7–10 rejoices in the announcement that the power of Jehovah will be revealed and Jerusalem will be redeemed.

One of the major issues of differing interpretation within the second section of the book of Isaiah involves identifying the servant of Jehovah. This issue is also very complex, but there are essentially two schools of thought with regard to the identification of this entity: the servant either represents a group of people or it refers to an individual. In chapters 41 to 55 there are numerous references to the servant being a symbol for the nation of Israel. For example, at the beginning of this second section of Isaiah, Jehovah declares, “Thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend” (Isaiah 41:8).²⁴ Yet, as Shalom Paul has concluded, the identification of the servant who is mentioned in the four servant songs is “very ambiguous.”²⁵ This is partly because the servant is described as providing a future state that includes salvific elements both for Israel and also for non-Israelites.²⁶ It is also because the servant is referred to as being mistreated²⁷ as well as, in the fourth servant song in particular, suffering for the sins of others.²⁸

The above background discussion helps one begin to understand the uses of Isaiah 52:7–10 by both the priests of Noah as well as by Abinadi. The identity of the servant of Jehovah may have been one of the important points on which Abinadi and the priests of Noah had differing interpretations. The next section of this paper will outline how the priests of Noah

probably understood Isaiah 52:7–10 and what they were likely trying to accomplish by asking Abinadi concerning these verses.

THE PRIESTS OF NOAH AND THE GOOD TIDINGS

According to the account of Mormon, when the priests confronted Abinadi in the court of King Noah, their intent was “that they might cross him, that thereby they might have wherewith to accuse him” (Mosiah 12:19). During the proceedings, the priests of Noah made multiple attempts to accomplish their design, but without success, for Abinadi “did withstand them in all their questions, and did confound them in all their words” (Mosiah 12:19). Finally, the priests asked Abinadi concerning Isaiah 52:7–10, “What meaneth the words which are written”? (Mosiah 12:20). The transparent insincerity of the priests’ desire leads one to inquire what specifically about Isaiah 52:7–10 could possibly be used as a justification for an accusation against Abinadi. An answer may be in the way that Noah, his priests, and his people may have interpreted these verses. Note that the emphasis of the priests was not only “the words which are written” (Mosiah 12:20) in Isaiah 52:7–10, but also the way in which those words had been interpreted or “taught by [their] fathers” (Mosiah 12:20). How might they have interpreted Isaiah 52:7–10?

The situation in which the people of Noah found themselves as Abinadi came among them may function as a clue. Recall that during the reign of Noah’s father, King Zeniff, he was very concerned that the Lamanites might be able to defeat his people and bring them “into bondage” (Mosiah 9:10–12). On three separate occasions, Zeniff narrated that he was able to defeat the invading armies of the Lamanites because his people trusted in the strength of the Lord (Mosiah 9:17–18; 10:10, 19–20). This is the setting for King Zeniff’s final plea: “May the Lord bless my people” (Mosiah 10:22). And without question they had been blessed with victory over their enemies and with freedom from the threat of bondage at the hands of the Lamanites. But the memory of how the Lord had earlier delivered and blessed Zeniff and his people was eventually forgotten by those who followed.

After Noah became king, the Lamanites continued to threaten this group of Nephites, sometimes killing those who were tending their flocks in the field (Mosiah 11:16). In response to this dangerous circumstance, Noah dispatched a small military guard for protection, but it too was attacked and overwhelmed by the Lamanites (Mosiah 11:17–18). This compelled Noah to launch a military campaign in which his armies temporarily drove back the Lamanites and as a result “returned rejoicing in their spoil” (Mosiah 11:18). The editor Mormon informs the reader that because of this military triumph, Noah’s people became arrogant, bragging that “their fifty could stand against thousands of the Lamanites” (Mosiah 11:19). He went so far as to say that “they did boast, and did delight in blood, and the shedding of the blood of their brethren” (Mosiah 11:19).²⁹

It is at this point in the narrative that Abinadi “went forth among them, and began to prophesy” (Mosiah 11:20). Abinadi’s message, of course, did not reflect what Noah, his priests, and his people perceived as their current circumstances. From their perspective, they were doing quite well. They had recently defeated their enemies in battle. King Noah and his priests, at least, were living a lavish lifestyle as a result of the extensive revenues they received through taxation (Mosiah 11:13–15). From their point of view, they were living the life of prosperity and blessing afforded by their superiority over the Lamanites. It is possible, at least, that Noah perceived that he had achieved the blessings for which his father, Zeniff, had expressed hope.

It may be relevant as well that Nephi himself had made it a practice to read the words of Isaiah to the Nephite people, and encouraged them to “liken all scripture” unto themselves “that it might be for [y]our profit and learning” (1 Nephi 19:23). Concerning the writings of Isaiah in particular, Nephi explicitly encouraged his people to listen to them and then liken them unto themselves “that ye may have hope as well as your brethren from whom ye have been broken off; for after this manner has the prophet [Isaiah] written” (1 Nephi 19:24). It is possible that this is essentially what the priests of Noah were doing with Isaiah 52:7–10. They may have been likening these verses unto their own situation and were filled with the hope that was expressed to the Jews in exile concerning Jerusalem so long before.³⁰

Perhaps the priests of Noah viewed their own people as the chosen people to whom Jehovah was directing his message in Isaiah 52:7–10. These verses taught that Jehovah had victoriously “made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations” (Isaiah 52:10). Because of this, the people were to “break forth into joy, sing together, . . . for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem” (Isaiah 52:9). The priests of Noah may have felt that these words of Isaiah could be “likened” unto their impressive victory over the Lamanites and their subsequent rejoicing and prosperity.³¹ When the people took Abinadi and presented him to Noah, they concluded, “Behold, we are strong, we shall not come into bondage, or be taken captive by our enemies; yea, and thou hast prospered in the land, and thou shalt also prosper” (Mosiah 12:15). Recall the original promise of the Lord to Nephi: “Inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper” (1 Nephi 2:20). Interestingly, Jarom later connected this prosperity directly to military victory over the Lamanites: “And thus being prepared to meet the Lamanites, they did not prosper against us. But the word of the Lord was verified, which he spake unto our fathers, saying that: Inasmuch as ye will keep my commandments ye shall prosper in the land” (Jarom 1:9). It seems plausible that the priests of Noah had a similar outlook on this covenant.

In addition, according to Isaiah's words, the herald of Jehovah was to be praised as “beautiful upon the mountains” because he “bringeth good tidings” and “publisheth peace” as well as “publisheth salvation” (Isaiah 52:7). It would have been evident to the priests of Noah that Abinadi was fulfilling a role as messenger of Jehovah as he prophesied to the people of Noah and declared “thus saith the Lord” (Mosiah 11:20). Abinadi's message, however, was certainly not one of good tidings, peace, or salvation. Rather, he condemned the people and instructed them that God had “seen their abominations, and their wickedness, and their whoredoms” and that if they did not repent God would “visit them in [his] anger” (Mosiah 11:20). That divine visitation would include that God would “deliver them into the hands of their enemies” and bring them “into bondage” and allow them to “be afflicted by the hand of their enemies” (Mosiah 11:21).

In sum, the priests of Noah were seeking to expose an issue of conflict “that thereby they might have wherewith to accuse him” (Mosiah 12:19).

If the priests indeed viewed themselves as those to whom Jehovah was directing his message of peace, prosperity, and divine protection, then Abinadi's pronouncement came into direct opposition with this interpretation and application of Isaiah's prophecy.³² Of what did they think Abinadi was guilty so that they might accuse him? Brant Gardner has suggested that from their point of view, "Abinadi [was] denying and rejecting scripture."³³ Similarly, John Welch concluded that the priests were intending to "convict him of false prophecy—a capital offence under the Law of Moses."³⁴ The law of Moses stipulated that "the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak . . . even that prophet shall die" (Deuteronomy 18:20). This makes sense, especially in light of the fact that when the people brought Abinadi before King Noah, they exclaimed, "And now, O king, behold, we are guiltless, and thou, O king, hast not sinned; therefore, this man has lied concerning you, and he has prophesied in vain" (Mosiah 12:14).³⁵ The next section will discuss how Abinadi interpreted the identity of the suffering servant and also how the priests of Noah may have understood the role of the Messiah in bringing salvation.

ABINADI, THE PRIESTS OF NOAH, AND THE SUFFERING SERVANT

Another issue of conflict concerning Isaiah 52:7–10, besides the context of the message of good tidings, may have involved the identity of the suffering servant and the salvific role of the Messiah. After the priests of Noah asked Abinadi concerning the meaning of Isaiah 52:7–10, Abinadi responded by chastising them: "Are you priests, and pretend to teach this people, and to understand the spirit of prophesying, and yet desire to know of me what these things mean?" (Mosiah 12:25). He further accused them: "Ye have not applied your hearts to understanding" (Mosiah 12:27). What did Abinadi perceive that they did not understand about Isaiah 52:7–10? It is possible that at the heart of the issue is the identity of the suffering servant and the role of the Messiah in salvation.

From his instruction to the priests, it is evident that Abinadi understood a connection between Isaiah chapter 52 and chapter 53. Following the priests' inquiry concerning Isaiah 52:7–10, Abinadi initially lectured

them concerning the law of Moses, specifically the Ten Commandments, or Decalogue, and accused them of not actually keeping the law of Moses (Mosiah 12:28–37). In response, King Noah decided he was finished listening and commanded his priests, “Away with this fellow, and slay him” (Mosiah 13:1). But Abinadi forbade anyone from touching him, declaring, “I have not delivered the message which the Lord sent me to deliver; neither have I told you that which ye requested that I should tell” (Mosiah 13:3) concerning the meaning of Isaiah 52:7–10. The Lord sent Abinadi to deliver a message to the priests of Noah about keeping the commandments in the law of Moses³⁶—which message he then completed (Mosiah 13:11–32). The priests of Noah, however, had originally asked Abinadi about Isaiah 52:7–10. Abinadi’s explanation of these passages included a quotation of Isaiah chapter 53 in its entirety and a subsequent interpretation (Mosiah chapters 14–16).

Abinadi introduced his quotation of Isaiah chapter 53 by explaining to the priests that Moses had prophesied “concerning the coming of the Messiah, and that God should redeem his people” (Mosiah 13:33). The Nephites understood that Jehovah was both God as well as the Messiah who would come to earth and offer himself in behalf of his people.³⁷ Abinadi taught that “God himself”—who was both “the Son of God” and “the Father”—would suffer temptation, be mocked and scourged, and “as Isaiah said” (Mosiah 15:6) be led as a sheep to be crucified and make intercession for humankind (see Mosiah 15:1–8).

According to Abinadi, Moses was not the only one to prophesy concerning the coming of God as the Messiah, but “all the prophets who have prophesied ever since the world began” (Mosiah 13:33) have done the same—declaring that “God himself should come down among the children of men . . . and go forth in mighty power upon the face of the earth” and that “he should bring to pass the resurrection of the dead” (Mosiah 13:34–35). Certainly, “all the prophets” would include the prophet Isaiah. Thus, Abinadi connected the coming of the Messiah with messages that would qualify as the herald’s “good tidings of good” (Isaiah 52:7)—God redeeming his people, coming among the children of men, going forth in mighty power, and bringing to pass the Resurrection. In this way, Abinadi

also connects the salvific mission of the Messiah with the message of Isaiah 52:7–10 as well as with the suffering servant of Isaiah chapter 53.

In Mosiah chapter 14, Abinadi quoted Isaiah chapter 53. Although Abinadi did not quote the verse directly, this chapter of Isaiah is preceded by Jehovah introducing “my servant” (Isaiah 52:13), who seems to be the subject of the following chapter—the individual who will be despised, will be afflicted, and will bear the sins of others. Isaiah prophesied that the servant of Jehovah would be “despised and rejected” (Isaiah 53:3) and that he would be “wounded for our transgressions” and “bruised for our iniquities” (Isaiah 53:5). Within the chapter, Abinadi quoted Isaiah 53:10, which says that when “thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed” (Isaiah 53:10). Abinadi interpreted this verse for the priests of Noah. When the Messiah makes his soul an offering for sin, he will see his seed.³⁸ But what is the identification of this “seed” to which Isaiah referred?

According to Abinadi, his seed includes “whosoever has heard the words of the prophets . . . who have prophesied concerning the coming of the Lord . . . and believed that the Lord would redeem his people, and have looked forward to that day for a remission of their sins” (Mosiah 15:11). Earlier, King Mosiah, son of Benjamin, similarly taught, “Because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you” (Mosiah 5:7). For Abinadi, however, the seed of the Messiah included not only those who hearken to the prophets, but also the prophets themselves: “every one that has opened his mouth to prophesy” (Mosiah 15:13). Abinadi concluded, “These are they who have published peace, who have brought good tidings of good, who have published salvation; and said unto Zion: Thy God reigneth!” (Mosiah 15:14). Thus, the message of peace and good tidings in Isaiah 52:7–10 is heralded by those who accept and rejoice in this message as well as by the prophets of the Lord who prophesy to the people concerning the salvific mission of the Messiah.³⁹

But Abinadi supplied an additional interpretation for the priests of Noah. He continued: “This is not all. For O how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that is the founder of peace, yea, even the Lord, who has redeemed his people; yea, him who

has granted salvation unto his people” (Mosiah 15:18). Thus, according to Abinadi, “God breaketh the bands of death, having gained the victory over death . . . , having broken the bands of death, taken upon himself their iniquity and their transgressions, having redeemed them, and satisfied the demands of justice” (Mosiah 15:8–9). In other words, Abinadi taught that the ultimate fulfillment of the herald who will declare good tidings is the suffering servant, the Messiah, the Lord God himself, who will “publish salvation,” who has “comforted his people” because “he hath redeemed Jerusalem” (Isaiah 52:7, 9). Because of this, “all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God” (Isaiah 52:10).⁴⁰

The priests of Noah had originally asked Abinadi concerning these verses so that they might “cross him” and “accuse him” (Mosiah 12:19). Abinadi, on the other hand, tells the priests: “Ye have not applied your hearts to understanding” (Mosiah 12:27) this passage, and as a result “ye have perverted the ways of the Lord” (Mosiah 12:26). What was the issue of interpretation upon which Abinadi and the priests of Noah disagreed? One scholar has suggested that “Abinadi, *and probably also the priests*, viewed the prophesied Messiah as the messenger with glad tidings.”⁴¹ While this was explicitly true for Abinadi, of course, it may not have reflected the understanding of the priests of Noah. It is possible that Abinadi and the priests of Noah actually understood the idea of a prophesied Messiah quite differently, with the result that it was a point of conflict rather than contact.

In the end, the priests of Noah found Abinadi guilty because he taught that “God himself”—who Abinadi had explained was the Messiah—“should come down among the children of men” (Mosiah 17:8). Mormon’s account here may just be a one-statement summary of the charges, for Noah’s son Limhi later explained to his people that Abinadi was executed “because he said unto them that Christ was the God, the Father of all things, and said that he should take upon him the image of man . . . and that God should come down among the children of men, and take upon him flesh and blood, and go forth upon the face of the earth” (Mosiah 7:27). Thus, Abinadi was put to death because he taught that Jehovah—in other words, God himself—was the Messiah. But the point of conflict may have been more than simply the priests not believing that Jehovah was the

Messiah. The priests seem to have denied the salvific role of the Messiah in general.

After the priests of Noah asked Abinadi to explain the meaning of Isaiah 52:7–10, Abinadi asked them, “Doth salvation come by the law of Moses?” (Mosiah 12:31). The priests responded affirmatively. Abinadi, however, twice accused them of not properly teaching or keeping the law of Moses (Mosiah 12:37 and 13:25–26). He then instructed them, “Salvation doth not come by the law alone; and were it not for the atonement, which God himself shall make for the sins and iniquities of his people, that they must unavoidably perish, notwithstanding the law of Moses” (Mosiah 13:28). The priests of Noah, apparently, did not teach or understand the role of the Messiah with respect to the law of Moses, especially that “all these things were types of things to come” (Mosiah 13:31).

It is at this point in the narrative that Abinadi explained to the priests that all the prophets prophesied of the mission of the Messiah, and he then subsequently quoted and explained Isaiah chapter 53. It may be that Abinadi focused his message on the role of God as the Messiah and connected it to the suffering servant precisely because the priests of Noah did not believe, understand, or teach concerning the saving mission or role of the Messiah. This would help explain Abinadi’s heartfelt plea to the priests: “Repent of your sins, and remember that only in and through Christ ye can be saved[.] Therefore, if ye teach the law of Moses, also teach that it is a shadow of those things which are to come—teach them that redemption cometh through Christ the Lord, who is the very Eternal Father” (Mosiah 16:13–15). This prophetic appeal would make best sense in context if the priests of Noah were not teaching that the law of Moses symbolically pointed to the Messiah and were also not teaching that salvation came only through the Messiah.

Brant Gardner has suggested possible similarities between Mormon’s account of the trial of Abinadi before the priests of Noah and Jacob’s account of Sherem before Jacob.⁴² Sherem came among the Nephites, and “he began to preach among the people, and to declare unto them that there should be no Christ” (Jacob 7:2). When he spoke directly with Jacob, Sherem accused him and other Nephite teachers, saying that “they pervert the right way of God, and keep not the law of Moses which is the right way;

and convert the law of Moses into the worship of a being which ye say shall come many hundred years hence" (Jacob 7:7). From the perspective of the priests of Noah, Abinadi's message about the law of Moses being symbolic of the Messiah, through whom salvation comes (Mosiah 16:13–15), could also be considered an attempt "to convert the law of Moses into the worship of a being which ye say shall come" (Jacob 7:7).

Jacob responded to Sherem in a manner similar to the way Abinadi responded to the priests of Noah. Jacob accused Sherem of not understanding the scriptures and explained that the scriptures "testify of Christ" (Jacob 7:11). Further, according to Jacob, "none of the prophets have written, nor prophesied, save they have spoken concerning this Christ" (Jacob 7:11), and "if there should be no atonement made all mankind must be lost" (Jacob 7:12). Abinadi taught the priests of Noah essentially the same thing, accusing them of not understanding the scriptures (Mosiah 12:25–27), saying that "all the prophets who have prophesied ever since the world began—have they not spoken more or less concerning these things?" (Mosiah 13:33) and that "were it not for the redemption which he hath made for his people . . . all mankind must have perished" (Mosiah 15:19).

In light of this interesting parallel between the teachings of Sherem and the priests of Noah, it should be noted that Mormon makes another possible connection between the priests and the belief system that denied the existence of the Messiah. The chief priest of Noah was a man named Amulon (Mosiah 23:32). Thus, the Amulonites were the descendants of the priests of Noah (Alma 25:4). Interestingly, three times Mormon described the Amulonites as being of "the order of Nehor" (Alma 21:4; 24:28–29), even though Amulon was Noah's chief priest over a half century before Nehor began teaching in Zarahemla.⁴³ Brant Gardner has proposed that Mormon viewed Nehor and his teachings as archetypal of "a particular set of competing religious ideas that were already part of Nephite society and which continued to be the cause of what Mormon terms 'contentions' throughout Nephite history;" and therefore Mormon attached Nehor's name to it even though some of those who professed these beliefs lived before the time of Nehor himself.⁴⁴ John Sorenson has further suggested that "Nehor had come up with a more sophisticated scheme of beliefs that

the Amulonites and the Amalekites used to further their own exploitation of the people.”⁴⁵

What is the connection between the priests of Noah, Nehor, and the denial of a Messiah? When Nehor began teaching in Zarahemla during the first year of the reign of Alma as Nephite chief judge, he instructed the Nephites that “all mankind should be saved at the last day, and that they need not fear nor tremble, but that they might lift up their heads and rejoice; for the Lord had created all men, and had also redeemed all men; and, in the end, all men should have eternal life” (Alma 1:4). If God had already saved and redeemed all people so that all people should have eternal life, then logically there is no need for an atoning Messiah. This particular core belief may have been one of the reasons why Mormon referred to the Amulonites as being of “the order of Nehor” (Alma 21:4; 24:28–29).

It may also be important that because of this doctrine of universal salvation, Nehor taught that no person should fear and that all people should rejoice because of God’s power to create, save, redeem, and give all people eternal life. If the priests of Noah held this Nehorite view, then this may be another reason why they felt they could find an accusation against Abinadi by appealing to Isaiah 52:7–10. In those verses, the herald of Jehovah brings good tidings of the power of God: “Thy God reigneth!” (Isaiah 52:7). People should “break forth into joy” because the Lord has brought comfort and redemption (Isaiah 52:9). Ultimately, the power of God has been manifest in his ability to bring salvation to all people: “The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God” (Isaiah 52:10). While Abinadi definitely understood this role to be fulfilled by the Messiah (Mosiah 13:33), the priests of Noah may have understood this to refer to God alone providing universal salvation, apart from the need for an atoning Messiah.

Thus, though it is evident that the priests of Noah accepted the legitimacy of the law of Moses, it may be that they, just as Sherem and Nehor, denied that the law was symbolic of the mission of the Messiah and that the Messiah played a primary role in the salvation of humankind. When the priests of Noah accused Abinadi of teaching that “God himself should come down among the children of men” (Mosiah 17:8), the issue of conflict may not have been merely the identification of Jehovah with the

Messiah, but the actual role of the Messiah in salvation as well. Concerning their interpretations of Isaiah 52:7–10, Abinadi explicitly taught that the “good tidings” had to do with the salvation from God through the Messiah, whereas the priests of Noah, on the other hand, did not seem to accept the saving role of the Messiah or that God would assume the role of the Messiah.⁴⁶ If this is the case, then, as Brant Gardner has postulated, the priests of Noah would “expect Abinadi to interpret this text messianically, and condemn Abinadi for his ‘false’ interpretation.”⁴⁷ In the minds of the priests, then, this perceived conflict of interpretation could also qualify as false prophecy, which according to the law of Moses was a crime that merited execution (Deuteronomy 18:20).

CONCLUSION

The Book of Mormon contains numerous examples of quotations from the book of Isaiah and subsequent interpretations of those verses. The story of Abinadi before the court of Noah contains an important instance of this phenomenon. Concerning Isaiah 52:7–10, the priests of Noah asked Abinadi, “What meaneth the words which are written?” (Mosiah 12:20). In this case, however, there is an important interplay between competing interpretations of the same passage. Both Abinadi and the priests of Noah seem to have had differing views on the meaning of Isaiah 52:7–10. As has been shown above, the priests of Noah may have understood the “good tidings” of Isaiah 52:7–10 to apply to their current state of prosperity, while Abinadi brought a message of condemnation from the Lord. In addition, Abinadi interpreted the “good tidings” to refer to the message and mission of the Messiah, who would come to earth to save his people. The priests of Noah, on the other hand, do not seem to have accepted the role of the Messiah in salvation. Both of these issues of conflict may have been construed as false prophecy by the priests of Noah, which under the law of Moses was a capital crime, ultimately leading to the execution of Abinadi.

NOTES

1. Victor L. Ludlow, “Isaiah in the Book of Mormon,” in *Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, ed. Dennis L. Largey (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 344. For more detailed data on passages of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon, see Victor L.

- Ludlow, *Unlocking Isaiah in the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), esp. 8–18.
2. Terry L. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture That Launched a New World Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 136.
 3. Nephi quotes Isaiah 48–49 in 1 Nephi 20–21, and Isaiah 2–14 in 2 Nephi 12–24. Jacob quotes Isaiah 50–51 in 2 Nephi 7–8. Abinadi quotes Isaiah 53 in Mosiah 14. The Savior quotes Isaiah 54 in 3 Nephi 22.
 4. Bruce R. McConkie stated: “The Book of Mormon prophets interpreted the passages [of Isaiah] they used, with the result that . . . the Book of Mormon is the world’s greatest commentary on the book of Isaiah. . . . No one, absolutely no one, in this age and dispensation has or does or can understand the writings of Isaiah until he first learns and believes what God has revealed by the mouths of his Nephite witnesses as these truths are found in that volume of holy writ.” See Bruce R. McConkie, “Ten Keys to Understanding Isaiah,” *Ensign*, October 1973, 81. On this, see also John W. Welch, “Getting through Isaiah with the Help of the Nephite Prophetic View,” in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 19–45.
 5. See Andrew C. Skinner, “Nephi’s Lessons to His People: The Messiah, the Land, and Isaiah 48–49 in 1 Nephi 19–22,” in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, 95–122. Another example is Nephi quoting from Isaiah 2–14 in 2 Nephi 12–24, followed by an extended explanation in 2 Nephi 25–27. On this, see David Rolph Seely, “Nephi’s Use of Isaiah 2–14 in 2 Nephi 12–30,” in Parry and Welch, *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, 151–69.
 6. In 2 Nephi 7–8, Jacob actually interspersed his explanatory comments among his various quotations of Isaiah 50–51. See John S. Thompson, “Isaiah 50–51, the Israelite Autumn Festivals, and the Covenant Speech of Jacob in 2 Nephi 6–10,” in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, 123–50. Abinadi quoted Isaiah 53 in Mosiah 14 and followed it with his own commentary in Mosiah 15–16. On this, see Monte S. Nyman, “Abinadi’s Commentary on Isaiah,” in *A Book of Mormon Treasury: Gospel Insights from General Authorities and Religious Educators* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 223–45.
 7. See, for example, the excellent studies by Dana M. Pike, “‘How Beautiful upon the Mountains’: The Imagery of Isaiah 52:7–10 and Its Occurrences in the Book of Mormon,” in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, 249–91, and Joseph M. Spencer, *An Other Testament: On Typology* (Salem, OR: Salt Press, 2012), 105–72.

8. For a discussion of possible sources for as well as the authorship of the story of Abinadi in the court of Noah, see John W. Welch, *Legal Cases in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: BYU Press, 2008), 140–45.
9. On the reigns of these two kings, see Kent P. Jackson and Morgan W. Tanner, “Zeniff and Noah,” in *Studies in Scripture*, vol. 7, *Book of Mormon: 1 Nephi to Alma 29*, ed. Kent P. Jackson (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987), 230–39.
10. Some may wonder why Abinadi entered the city by disguise, only to then publicly announce his identity: “Thus has the Lord commanded me, saying—Abinadi . . .” (Mosiah 12:1). Brant Gardner has proposed that the disguise was only necessary for Abinadi to gain access to the city of Nephi. The ultimate purpose of the Lord, however, was for Abinadi to testify before King Noah and his priests, which was then accomplished precisely by revealing his true identity in public. See Brant A. Gardner, *Second Witness: Analytical & Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2007), 3:264.
11. For an in-depth examination of the historical background, see J. Maxwell Miller and John H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah*, 2nd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 360–420. For a brief overview of the life of Isaiah and the historical setting of his life from an LDS perspective, see Victor L. Ludlow, *Isaiah: Prophet, Seer, Poet* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982), 1–6, 19–30.
12. See a discussion of the various options in Shalom M. Paul, *Isaiah 40–66: Translation and Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 1–12.
13. An early and influential proponent of this view was Bernhard Duhm, *Das Buch Jesaia* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1892). For a more recent assessment, see John J. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 325–27.
14. Richard R. Losch, *All the People in the Bible: An A–Z Guide to the Saints, Scoundrels, and Other Characters in Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 172.
15. Kent P. Jackson, “Isaiah in the Book of Mormon,” in *A Reason for Faith: Navigating LDS Doctrine and Church History*, ed. Laura Harris Hales (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2016), 74. For other treatments of this issue, see Kent P. Jackson, “Authorship of the Book of Isaiah,” in *Studies in Scripture*, vol. 4, *1 Kings to Malachi*, ed. Kent P. Jackson (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1993), 80–85; and John W. Welch, “Authorship of the Book of Isaiah in Light of the Book of Mormon,” in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, 423–37.

16. It is interesting that the Book of Mormon quotes from the material in First and Second Isaiah, but not from the material in Third Isaiah.
17. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon*, 136. See also Grant Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon: A Reader's Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 166–70, and Spencer, *An Other Testament*, 58–59.
18. Note especially the conclusion of Ezra Taft Benson, “The Book of Mormon . . . was written for our day. The Nephites never had the book; neither did the Lamanites of ancient times. It was meant for us. Mormon wrote near the end of the Nephite civilization. Under the inspiration of God, who sees all things from the beginning, he abridged centuries of records, choosing the stories, speeches, and events what would be most helpful to us.” Ezra Taft Benson, *A Witness and a Warning: A Modern-Day Prophet Testifies of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 19.
19. See “Servant Songs,” in *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd rev. ed., ed. F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1497–98.
20. See the respective commentary on each of these sections in Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).
21. Some Latter-day Saint sources and interpreters have drawn a distinction between Zion and Jerusalem, applying the term “Zion” to the New Jerusalem and the term “Jerusalem” to the old Jerusalem (cf. Article of Faith 1:10: “We believe . . . that Zion (the New Jerusalem) will be built upon the American continent”). See the discussion of these terms in Pike, “How Beautiful upon the Mountains,” 250–52. While this application can be useful in appreciating the Latter-day Saint perspective of events associated with the latter days, it is likely, as one Latter-day Saint scholar has noted, that “many, if not most, of Isaiah’s contemporaries would have viewed his use of the names Zion and Jerusalem . . . as a function of the interchangeability of a poetic pair of terms both of which referred to Jerusalem in Judah.” Pike, “How Beautiful upon the Mountains,” 250.
22. Recall also the King James Version of the words of the angel to the shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem: “Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people” (Luke 2:10).
23. Pike, “How Beautiful upon the Mountains,” 253; emphasis in original.
24. See also Isaiah 41:9; 42:19; 43:10; 44:1–2, 21, 26; 45:4; 48:20; 50:10; and 54:17.
25. See Paul, *Isaiah 40–66*, 18.
26. For example, “a covenant of the people” (Isaiah 42:6 and 49:8) and “a light to the Gentiles” (Isaiah 42:6 and 49:6).

27. See Isaiah 42:2–3; 49:7; 50:6–7; 52:17; and 53:3, 7.
28. See Isaiah 53:4–6, 10–11.
29. Contrast this assessment with what Mormon says about Captain Moroni and his people during their wars with the Lamanites: “They were sorry to take up arms against the Lamanites, because they did not delight in the shedding of blood” (Alma 48:23).
30. As Joseph Spencer has concluded, “Zeniff may well have also attempted to reintroduce Nephi’s interpretive strategy of likening Isaiah.” See Spencer, *An Other Testament*, 144.
31. See Welch, *Legal Cases*, 176.
32. Joseph McConkie and Robert Millet rephrased the perceived conflict this way: “Why is it that you bring a message of gloom, a message of rebuke, given that Isaiah taught that the servants of the Lord would bring glad tidings?” Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 2:208.
33. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 3:271.
34. John W. Welch, “Isaiah 53, Mosiah 14, and the Book of Mormon,” in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, 294.
35. Joseph Spencer has suggested that if Zeniff and his people had interpreted Isaiah 52:8–10 to refer to the refounding of the land of Nephi, then they could have interpreted Isaiah 52:7 to mean that prophets were no longer needed because God had restored peace and salvation to his people, and they could now exclaim: “God reigneth!” (Isaiah 52:7). If so, then the priests of Noah would have disagreed with Abinadi’s prophetic intervention simply because he claimed to be a prophet when prophets were no longer necessary. See Spencer, *An Other Testament*, 144–45.
36. Mormon records that when Abinadi delivered the Ten Commandments to the priests of Noah, his “face shown with exceeding luster, even as Moses’ did while in the mount of Sinai, while speaking with the Lord” (Mosiah 13:5). Interestingly, Moses’s “face shone” (Exodus 34:29) when he delivered the Decalogue to the children of Israel. For an examination of Abinadi as a type of Moses, see Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon: A Reader’s Guide*, 156–60, and David Rolph Seely, “Abinadi, Moses, Isaiah, and Christ,” in *The Book of Mormon: The Foundation of Faith*, ed. Joseph Fielding McConkie, David M. Whitchurch, and Fred E. Woods (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1999), 202–4.

37. On this, see Jared T. Parker, “Abinadi on the Father and the Son: Interpretation and Application,” in *Living the Book of Mormon: Abiding by Its Precepts*, ed. Gaye Strathearn and Charles Swift (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2007), 136–40.
38. For a discussion of the meaning of this passage, see Frank F. Judd Jr., “Jesus Christ: The Savior Who Knows,” in *Celebrating Easter*, ed. Thomas A. Wayment and Keith J. Wilson (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, 2007), 125–26.
39. Note the conclusion of Dana Pike: “It seems more likely to me that *they* refers to the saints and the prophets to which Abinadi has just made reference in verses 11–13, since he describes both groups as the spiritual ‘seed’ of Christ.” Pike, “How Beautiful upon the Mountains,” 263; emphasis in original.
40. Dana Pike has pointed out that Abinadi connects Isaiah 52:7 to the Savior’s merciful Atonement, wrought during his first coming (Mosiah 15:8–24), and he connects Isaiah 52:8–10 to the Lord exercising judgment “to save or destroy” at his second coming (Mosiah 15:26–31). See Pike, “How Beautiful upon the Mountains,” 265.
41. Pike, “How Beautiful upon the Mountains,” 264; emphasis added.
42. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 3:271. For a more in-depth analysis of Sherem and his teachings, see the study by Robert L. Millet, “Sherem the Anti-Christ,” in *The Book of Mormon: Jacob through Words of Mormon, To Learn with Joy*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, 1990), 175–91.
43. The incident of Abinadi before Amulon and the other priests of Noah occurred approximately 148 BC (see the chronology note for Mosiah 12:1, marked by an asterisk in the LDS printed edition). Nehor, on the other hand, began teaching in Zarahemla fifty-eight years later, during the first year of Alma’s reign as Nephite chief judge (Alma 1:2), approximately 90 BC (see the chronology note for Alma 1:23, marked by an asterisk in the LDS printed edition).
44. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 4:42.
45. John L. Sorenson, “Religious Groups and Movements among the Nephites, 200–1 B.C.,” in *Disciple as Scholar: Essays on Scripture and the Ancient World in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2000), 191.
46. The priests of Noah may not have denied that God could save his people, only that he needed a mediator to accomplish that goal or to come to earth as that mediator himself.
47. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 3:271.