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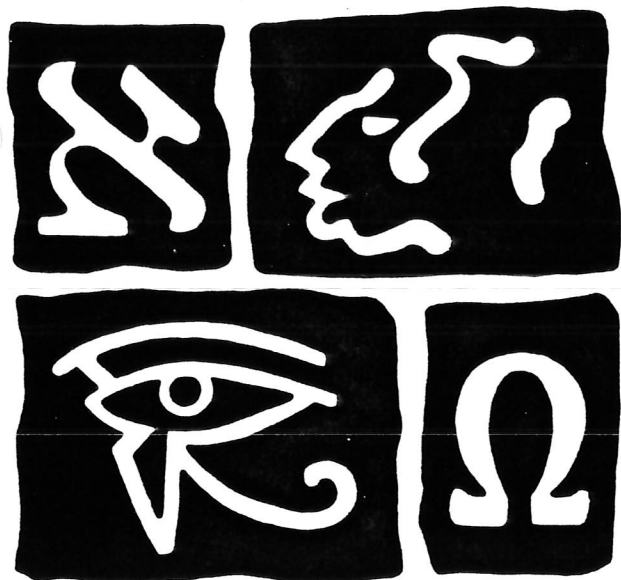
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International Relations and Treaties in the Book of Mormon

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D&I-82

Preliminary Report

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International Relations and Treaties

in the Book of Mormon

The Book of Mormon chronicles the wars and other relations between the
two major nations of Ancient America. This paper identifies certain prin-
ciples evident in the relations between these nations and compares the
principles found in the Book of Mormon with international practice of
Ancient Israel in the old world. This paper is not meant to be a study of
the law of nations of the ancient Near East; rather, our purpose is to iden-
tify, if possible, principles of the law of nations in the Book of Mormon.
Comparisons to the culture of the ancient Near East are not meant to function
as proof (or disproof) of the old-world origin of the Book of Mormon culture.
They should be taken as interesting illuminations of the principles of
international relations which appear in the history of the ancient
American nations.

The Book of Mormon is primarily religious history, compiled by a
prophet whose purpose was to convey theological lessons rather than
political principles.[1] Consequently, international principles are not
specifically explicated in the text, but must be derived from the practices
of the nations which were included in the narrative for a fundamentally
different purpose. First to be considered will be the principles of
Nephite-Lamanite statehood and followed by a discussion of apparent inter-
national principles dealing with the purposes of war, treatment of prisoners,
international treaties and tributary relations.

1.   Statehood

Very early in their history, soon after Lehi's death, the family of
Lehi split up into two groups -- the followers of Nephi and the followers

of Laman. These groups became almost immediately radically different, and developed national political and cultural identities.[2] Nephi was made king over his people and they at once went to work arming themselves, illustrating that these were in fact distinct nations, possessing a sovereign right to rule over their territory and protect themselves.[3] And they promptly exercised their sovereignty and their weapons; during Nephi's reign the Nephites "had already had wars and contentions with their brethren," the Lamanites.[4]

These groups became "national states," that is, political entities representing cultural or ethnic nations. A national state is different from a tribal or imperial state. The Nephite and Lamanite nations had various subgroups sometimes called tribes, but both had strong central governments -- headed by a king or judge. They were each basically homogenous culturally and religiously, whereas an empire would have united various heterogenous national cultural groups under a common political rule.[5]

This national system corresponds to that of Israel and Judah prior to Lehi's departure in 600 B.C. While earlier in their history Israel had been composed of fairly autonomous tribes, for several centuries Israel had been a national state. Israel never became an empire like neighboring Egypt or Assyria.[6]

The sovereignty of the Nephite-Lamanite nations was generally vested in a king who exercised broad powers -- to tax,[7] wage war, enter alliances,[8] grant property,[9] punish criminals,[10] make law[11] and organize religious worship.[12] This list of powers parallels the description of the Israelite kings.[13] The Lamanite kingship appears to have persisted throughout their history on the model of the semitic kings, but the Nephites, in the last century B.C., developed a rather innovative representative government based

on the rule of law.[14] Nevertheless, sovereignty continued to be vested in a central government.

The boundaries of state sovereignty were limited by military ability. At times groups of one nation would come under the political control of the other. This was usually the result of military activities; for example, the people of Limhi[15] and the people of Alma[16] were conquered by the Lamanites. The Anti-Nephi-Lehis[17] and a group of believing Zoramites[18] fled their native lands when threatened with military destruction. Voluntary alliances in war time were set up between the Zoramites and Lamanites,[19] and between the Lamanites and the dissident Nephite Kingmen.[20]

The most interesting alliance was apparently not military, and was not between the Nephites and Lamanites. This occurred about 200 B.C., when Mosiah, a prophet among the Nephites in the traditional land of Nephi, led a group of believers north to the land of Zarahemla, where the separate Hebrew nation of the Mulekites had been prospering for 400 years.[21]

The record seems to reflect a voluntary, bilateral alliance. It says that there was "great rejoicing" among the Zarahemlites at Mosiah's coming -- and gives as a reason the fact that Mosiah had brought the scriptures of the Jews. However, a closer look raises some questions. The people of Zarahemla were descendants of refugees of the same destruction of Jerusalem that Lehi had fled, but they had lost all contact with their past; they "had brought no records with them," and their language was incomprehensible to the Nephites.[22] Further, they had abandoned their religion and "denied the being of their Creator."[23] This all tends to render a bit suspect the Nephite characterization of the original encounter as "great rejoicing among the people of Zarahemla" and their king "because the Lord had sent the people of Mosiah with the plates of brass."[24]

Instead, the encounter looks more like a conquest or occupation by one invading nation of another, perhaps less developed, nation. The Nephites took over as the political, cultural and religious leaders of the Mulekite nation. As a first step, "Mosiah caused that they should be taught in his [Nephite] language." The Nephite "immigrants" did not learn the language of their host, but vice versa.[25] Then, the record states blandly, "the people of Zarahemla, and of Mosiah, did unite together."[26] There certainly was more to the union of two strange and probably hostile nations than that, especially since the ruler of the new state is not King Zarahemla, but Mosiah, the leader of the less numerous Nephites.[27]

The Nephite dynasty over the united people was apparently never broken, even after the replacement of the kings with judges.[28] In the reign of Benjamin, Mosiah's son, the Nephite church was established among all the people.[29] Though after that time mention is occasionally made of the people of Zarahemla, the united country is clearly called Nephite.[30] The only explicit references to the former culture is the name of the land of Zarahemla, and the name of the land northward, "Mulek," representing the last and first indigenous rulers of the people of Zarahemla, and the fact that politically the Mulekites meet once as a separate body from the Nephites.[31]

If this characterization of the imposition of Nephite rule over the land of Zarahemla is correct, it is not without Israelite precedent, notably the conquest of Canaan. The ancient Israelites had to conquer their Promised Land "by force of arms and with the help of God."[32] Mosiah's people were also led by God to Zarahemla, their promised land, although there is no record of the Nephites resorting to arms against the Mulekites. The Israelites also "infiltrated in a peaceful manner whenever they could."[33]

2. Citizenship

Since the two main Book of Mormon countries were "national states," membership in one or other of the nations was generally determined by the national culture and race of the individual. This is similar to the practice of Israel and Judah; the citizens of "political Israel" were united by common religion, history, and language as well as politically.[34] But as was also the case among the Israelites, there was considerable population exchange -- emigration and immigration -- among the Book of Mormon peoples.[35] We will next address three topics related to population exchange: 1) the rights of an alien in a foreign state, 2) the right of a citizen to leave his country, and 3) the tendency of foreign groups to be assimilated into the majority culture.

A.   Alien's Rights

Since during most of their history the Nepihtes and Lamanites were belligerents, it appears tht there was little courtesy accorded to visiting aliens. For example, when Ammon, son of Mosiah, went into the land of the Lamanite king Lamoni, the frontier guards "took him and bound him, as was their custom" to treat foreigners, and brought him to the king.[36] The king had four options for dealing with strangers: "It was left to the pleasure of the king [1] to slay them, or [2] to retain them in captivity [that is, to make them slaves], or [3] to cast them into prison, or [4] to cast them out of his land."[37] There was apparently a fifth option: the king might invite the strnager to become a member of the king's household. That was likely a rare invitation perhaps reserved for the sons of foreign royalty like Ammon. In any case, Ammon decline it. Instead he suggested to the king he would prefer one of the other alternatives -- to become a servant of the king.[38] But it seems he did not have the option of becoming an equal citizen.

There is another example of an alien's lack of rights, this one among the Nephites. Another Ammon led a group of adventurers to find out what happened to a long-neglected Nephite colony. When they were discovered by the royal guard, they were arrested and brought to the king.[39] He told them that he could have put them to death, and it was his curiosity alone that saved them.[40] However, when the king discovered that they were actually descendants of the same nation, the strangers were welcomed, but not until then. Ammon made it clear that summary detention was a punishment reserved for foreigners, stating that if the king had known who he was and their common nationality the king "would not have suffered that [he] should have worn these bands."[41]

In time, the king of the separated Nephite colony expressed his desire to return to the land of Zarahemla. Though his people were Nephites, he seemed willing to accept the same principles of alien rights that were discussed above: if the Nephites would let them live in Zarahemla, they would "be slaves to the Nephites."[42] Thus it seems safe to say that strangers were generally afforded very restricted rights in a foreign land.

This principle is similar to that practiced by the Israelites. Though Israel was told "if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him,"[43] foreigners were not accorded the full rights of citizenship and were not protected by law.[44]

B. Emigration

A related question is the right of a citizen or subject to leave his land for another. There is some evidence that a person was not free to emigrate. Some of this can be justified as a necessary precaution during wartime, but certain situations belie that explanation.

For example, it was necessary for Ammon and his sixteen co-travelers to get permission from their king in order to go to the land of Lehi-Nephi

and search for Zeniff's people. Nor was it easily given. The king did not grant them permission until the people "had wearied him with their teasings."[45] This same procedure was followed by the other Ammon and his brethren. "They did plead with [the king] many days that they might go up to the land of Nephi," before permission was finally granted. The king was also the father of Ammon, and perhaps he was reluctant to allow his son to go to the land of the Lamanites out of a paternal concern for his safety. But there were several other men requesting permission to go as well, and it seems they were asking his permission as king.[46]

Evidence of the absence of free emigration is very clear in situations where a people is subject to a hostile king. The Lamanite king had placed guards around the land of Lehi-Nephi "that [the people of Limhi] might not depart into the wilderness."[47] They finally had to escape by night. When Alma and his group of believers fled the kingdom of Noah, the king sent an army after them to destroy them.[48] Later these same people of Alma were discovered by an army of Lamanites that was searching for the fleeing people of Limhi. They were made subject to a Lamanite puppet-king. Only with the help of a divinely-caused unconsciousness which came upon their taskmasters did the people of Alma manage to escape, this time reaching Zarahemla.[49] Hostility insues when the Ammonites leave Lamanite territory and relocate in the land of Jershon and when the righteous Zoramites leave Antionum.[49A]

Even during the democratic reign of the judges, the Nephites were not allowed to emigrate freely during wartime. The case of the dissenter Amalakiah is certainly understandable -- he and his followers wanted to join forces with the enemy. Captain Moroni headed them off on their way to the land of the Lamanites. He killed all he captured who would not pledge loyalty to the Nephite government.[50] However, the story of Morianton

shows that the emigration restriction was not strictly a wartime precaution. The tragedy occurred in an otherwise peaceful time. Because of a territorial dispute with a neighboring province, Morianton and his people desired to flee Zarahemla and "take possession of the land which was northward." They were denied the right to leave even though the land they wanted to go to was uninhabited, and they were not planning to ally themselves with an enemy. Captain Moroni sent an army to "stop their flight" to the land northward. In the ensuing battle, Morianton was killed and his people were forced to covenant to "keep the peace" and return to their former lands.[51]

However, about 60 B.C., ten years after the Morianton incident, whatever reasons had formerly restricted emigration were no longer felt to be compelling. Thousands of people moved into the unsettled land in the north.[52] And thirty years later, when the political peace was coupled with a religious conversion of the Lamanites, the restrictions on travel between the nations were abolished, and the Nephites and Lamanites were free to "go into whatsoever part of the land they would."[53]

C. Assimilation

Occasionally whole groups of one nation were absorbed into another. In general, the new people were accepted by and assimilated into their new homeland as equals. But in certain cases specific traits and characteristics were preserved over several generations. In time, this reduced somewhat the cultural homogeneity of the nations, but it seems that overall, the Nephite and Lamanite nations remained national states.

The converted Lamanite people of Ammon (the "Anti-Nephi-Lehis") were accepted into the Nephite nation, and given land and a promise of protection by the voice of the people. They lived segregated in the land of Jershon, distinguished by their culture and race, and especially by their pacifist pledge.[54] Yet they were members of the Nephite nation entitled to its protection,

their sons went to war to defend their new homeland, "and they called themselves Nephites."[55] When a group of believing Zoramites were cast out of their own land, they went to Jershon, where the people of Ammon treated them as they themselves had been treated, and "did nourish them and did clothe them, and did give unto them lands for their inheritance."[56] This group of Zoramites, like the people of Alma and Limhi, lost their separate identity after they became united with the Nephites.[57]

The three main Nephite groups which became Lamanites were the Amulonites, the Zoramites and the Amalekites. The Amulonites were descendants of the priests of King Noah.[58] The Amalekites were extremely hostile toward the Nephites but whose origin is not given; they affiliated with the Lamanites early in the reign of the Judges.[59] The Zoramites were inhabitants of a province of the Land of Zarahemla. They separated themselves from the Nephites and soon afterward "became Lamanites."[60] Members of these three groups remained ethnically distinct while becoming part of the political Lamanite nation. They were known for their particular brutality and for that reason were often appointed leaders of Lamanite armies.[61] They were also exceptionally hard hearted, and when thousands of ethnic Lamanites were converted, very few of them were.[62]

In sum, occasionally groups of one nation became disillusioned and migrated to the other. Thus, the national character became one of culture, religion, and disposition, rather than of race or ancestry. Although the immigrating groups often retained some of their characteristic traits, in time they were generally assimilated into the whole as equals, just as in ancient Judah immigrants of the same ancestry and religion were easily and completely assimilated.[63]

3. Diplomacy

The "diplomatic" relations between the two major Book of Mormon nations were, for most of their history B.C., ad hoc and informal. It appears that the nations generally ignored each other, except in time of war. During war, epistles or embassies between generals of opposing forces were exchanged proposing prisoner exchange or demanding concessions.[64]

There are few instances of communications from one leader to another in peacetime. In one example, the chief ruler of the independent Zoramite nation (just before its union with the Lamanites) sent a letter to the leader of the people of Ammon in the Nephite land of Jershon, complaining of the Ammonites' hospitality towards the expelled Zoramite Christians and demanding that they refuse to give them further help.[65] When the Nephites ignored this request the united Zoramites and Lamanites invaded the land of Zarahemla.[66]

In other instances, Zeniff, who was desirous to move his people to the land of Lehi-Nephi, sent to the king of the Lamanites to get his approval.[67] Amalekiah as part of his plan to become leader of the Lamanites, sent an "embassy" to the rebel king.[68] Finally, in anticipation of their immigration to Zarahemla, the Anti-Nephi-Lehis set up a correspondence with the Nephites and eventually sent Ammon to "try the hearts" of the leaders of the Nephites.[69] All these exchanges were quite clearly ad hoc. There was no continual inter-governmental dialogue. However, after the conversion of the Lamanites in 29 B.C. the traditional barriers seem to have been lowered and there was much trade, communication and travel between the nations.[70] It is possible that a more permanent relationship between the governments was established at this time, but there is no mention of it; at any rate this peaceful state did not last long. Soon the Gadianton Robbers took over "the sole management of the government" and the national system began to disintegrate.[71]

4.   War

Much of the Book of Mormon is a chronicle of wars. War was the central
relationship between the Nephites and the Lamanites. This is an inevitable
condition in a system where states claim absolute sovereignty. A nation
claiming absolute sovereignty is limited only by its strength relative to
its neighbor. For this reason there was no "international law" as such
in the Book of Mormon. International law presupposes the existence of a
higher rule to which nation states are subject. Even in our day, international
law has grown slowly, as nations have been reluctant to give up their sovereignty
and to recognize the existence of laws above their own.

The Lamanites and their confederates clearly recognized no law above
their own, and often waged brutal, aggressive wars to "usurp great power over
[the Nephites] and bring them into bondage."[72] The Nephites, however, did
not embrace so extreme a view of absolute sovereignty. They were a relatively
believing people and recognized general rules of law which they had to obey.
First of all, they claimed they would not wage an aggressive war. "We would
not shed the blood of the Lamanites if they would stay in their own land."[73]
The record often stresses that the Nephite wars were defensive.[74] The
Nephites also claimed that they "would subject [them]selves to the yoke of
bondage if it were requisite with the justice of God, or if he should command
[them] so to do."[75] But instead "the Lord had said unto them, and also unto
their fathers, that: Inasmuch as ye are not guilty of the first offense,
neither the second, ye shall not suffer yourselves to be slain by the hands
of your enemies . . . . Ye shall defend your families even unto bloodshed."[76]
As long as the war was defensive war, the Nephites "thought it no sin" to
use whatever means of war possible, including stratagem," spies, deceptive
tactics and armor.[77]

During the course of the wars, many prisoners were taken. The Nephites seem to have captured prisoners to keep them off the battlefield and weaken the enemy. They were not taken to be enslaved as spoils of war, though some were put to work fortifying their prisons. It was contrary to the law of the Nephites to hold slaves.[78] The record emphasizes that the Nephites only took captive actual combatants: "There was not a woman or child among all the prisoners" taken by the Nephites.[79]

Because both the Nephites and the Lamanites kept their prisoners of war alive, the drain on resources caused by feeding prisoners was an incentive to exchange prisoners.[80] But the Lamanite practice otherwise differed from that of the Nephites. A major purpose of the Lamanite wars was to bring the Nephites into captivity. And when prisoners were captured, they were often taken back to the land of the Lamanites as spoils of war.[81] Prisoners of war in the ancient east were generally sold or kept as slaves, but the practice of enslaving fellow Israelite prisoners of war was "abhorred by right-thinking men." Israelites could be "enslaved" only to force repayment of a debt.[82] Thus it appears that the Israelite practice was generally carried over into Nephite law, while the Lamanites followed the customs of the non-Israelite ancients.

5.   Treaties

In ancient Israel, peace, the friendly relations between nations, was established by a pact or treaty. Because in ancient Israel as in ancient America the usual relationship between nations was war, the peace treaty was usually a result of the end of war. In fact, in Hebrew, "to return in peace" from a campaign is a synonym for "to return victorious."[83] To establish "peace" was to establish rule or control over conquered peoples.[84]

These Israelite traditions have some parallels among the Lamanites and Nephites. First, it seems that most treaties were part of war, and were generally imposed by the victors on the conquered nation. Treaties not entered into as a settlement of a dispute apparently had little binding authority. This may be explained by the fact that until there has been a military test there is no exchange of consideration, as it were. An enforceable treaty was in the form "A will cease killing and destroying B, and B will perform certain services -- tribute, labor, etc. -- for A."[85] In the absence of reasonably sure superior military power to enforce a treaty, it was apparently not binding or at least not adhered to.[86]

For example, when the Lamanite army discovered the people of Alma in the land of Helam, they made a treaty -- or agreement -- that Alma would show the Lamanites the way to the land of Nephi, in return for which the Lamanites would grant Alma's people their liberty. However, the Lamanites did not keep their promise, perhaps because there had not yet been a military test to validate or enforce the treaty.[87] This may also explain why the king of the Lamanites felt no compunction about breaching his agreement with Zeniff just twelve years after he had "covenanted" that Zeniff's people could possess the land in peace.[88]

The idea that agreements not entered into as part of a settlement after a conquest have no validity may also help explain Captain Moroni's seeming breach of a wartime agreement. The Lamanite king Ammoron offered to exchange prisoners with Moroni. Moroni counteroffered, proposing that one Lamanite be exchanged for a family of Nephites.[89] Ammoron agreed to this proposal, and added to it a proposal for a final peace treaty. Moroni was angry with the way Ammoron couched his letter, and accusing him of "fraud," withdrew his offer after acceptance. In this episode, Moroni seems to be acting inconsistently, if not hypocritically.[90] But perhaps under his understanding

of international obligations, there was no binding force in agreements before victory of one of the combatants. Perhaps this is why when the separatist Zoramites threatened to join forces with the Lamanites, the Nephite strategy was not to attempt to get a non-military treaty or agreement. Instead the Nephites sent missionaries to try to convert the Zoramites. "The preaching of the word had . . . a more powerful effect on the minds of the people than the sword, or anything else," including a treaty.[91] The theory that pre-victory or nonmilitary treaties were not binding seems especially plausible in light of the gravity accorded treaties entered into as part of a military defeat.[92]

The outcome of war in the ancient Near East was generally vassaldom. The peace treaty which ended the seige or war included the duty to pay tribute to the victorious king.[93] In addition, the conquered people were often made to perform forced labor for the conqueror.[94] Zedekiah, the last of the kings of Judah known by Lehi's family, was himself a vassal king to Nebuchadnezzar.[95] These tribute or forced labor provisions were also common in Hittite vassal-treaties. These treaties are called suzerainty treaties, where the victorious king imposed his will on the defeated nation.[96]

The outcome of war in the Book of Mormon was often a treaty very much like those of the ancient Near East. As noted above, the original treaty between Zeniff and King Laman was not respected by the Lamanites.[97] When Zeniff's son Noah was king over the Nephite enclave in Lehi-Nephi, the Lamanites imposed a new treaty on the defeated Nephites, this time a suzerainty treaty, in which the Lamanites agreed to allow the Nephites to live and remain in their land if the Nephites would pay a tribute. The treaty is in the classic form mentioned above ("A will stop killing B if B will perform certain services for A"):

> This king of the Lamanites made an oath unto them that his people should not slay them. And also Limhi [the king] . . . made oath unto the king of the Lamanites that his people should pay tribute unto him, even one half of all they possessed.[98]

The next verse specifically calls this situation "peace" -- the term used in Israel to denote the imposition of a treaty on a conquered people.[99] However, the fact that the conquering Lamanites bound themselves by oath seems atypical of traditional Near Eastern treaty practice, since in a suzerainty treaty, the superior party was not required to give an oath; only the inferior party was bound by an oath.[100] Yet this was clearly a suzerainty treaty not a parity treaty, as the original treaty between Zeniff and Laman may have been, since parity treaties did not involve any duty to pay tribute.[101] Thus the mutual oaths exchanged in this case seem to depart from the traditional patterns of treaty formation in antiquity.[102]

The treaty between Limhi and the Lamanite king has, however, other parallels with Israelite practice. Two years after the conclusion of this "peace," the Lamanites attacked again. In Israel, to break the agreement of tribute was to invite the resumption of war. This was understood by Limhi as well. Since his people had not broken their covenant to pay tribute, he demanded of captured King Laman, "Behold my people have not broken the oath that I made unto you; therefore why should ye break the oath which ye made unto my people?"[103] The Lamanite king had acted on the mistaken belief that Limhi's people had broken their oath. When he discovered his mistake he withdrew his army and swore again "with an oath that [his] people should not slay" the Nephites.[104] In Israel, when a rebellion by a vassal nation was put down, it ended in the renewal of the treaty.[105] This one did as well.

Other treaties in the Book of Mormon show these same traits. When the Lamanites breached their promise to allow the people of Alma to live in peace, they took possession of the land. Though there is no mention of an

actual treaty, the Lamanites set up a vassal king to rule the people of Alma, and they "exercised authority over them, and put tasks upon them, and put task-masters over them."[106] Thus, the more severe of the Israelite options after defeat, forced labor, was imposed upon the people of Alma.

While Alma's people were virtual slaves to their "taskmasters," their "king" Amulon was in fact a vassal king to the Lamanites. Amulon had "no power to do anything contrary to the will of the king of the Lamanites."[107] This relationship grew out of the discovery and capture of Amulon and his people (ex-priests of Noah) by the Lamanites some time earlier. The Lamanite wives of Amulon's people convinced the Lamanite king not to destroy their husbands, but apparently as part of the treaty, Amulon was made subject to the Lamanite king.[108]

In fact Amulon was only one of several vassal kings subject to King Laman. The Lamanites had taken control of the lands of Shilom and Shemlon as well as the land of Amulon, and King Laman "had appointed kings over all these lands."[109] Several generations later the Lamanite kingdom was still organized with a "main" king with vassal or tributary kings subject to him.[110]

The treaty between Captain Moroni and the amalgamated Lamanite leader Zerahemnah is interesting in this context. The Nephites were victorious in battle and could have destroyed all the enemy. As was his right as victor, Captain Moroni proposed the terms of the surrender and treaty. Instead of the typical tribute arrangement, he demanded only that Zerahemnah and his army surrender their arms and depart with an oath that they would never come again to war against the Nephites.[111] This type of treaty, called a negative covenant, was common in the ancient Near East, often imposed by a conqueror upon a defeated army. Hittite treaty oaths required a conquered nation or people to take an individual oath of allegiance to the king of

the prevailing people and a vow not to return to war.[112] In several Egyptian treaties, the lives of the defeated people were spared, as here, only in return for their oath.[113]

The soldiers of Zerahemnah were willing to surrender their weapons but would not take an oath renouncing further war, which they knew they would break.[114] Moroni would not accept these alternate terms offered by the defeated general, and so he returned their weapons, determined to "end the conflict." At this point Zerahemnah rushed at Moroni with his sword to kill him. But he was stopped by a soldier who cut off Zerahemnah's scalp, and repeated the terms of the peace treaty, holding the scalp in the air on the tip of his sword.[115] Many soldiers took the oath at that point and, after another battle, Zerahemnah himself also entered into the covenant of peace and departed into the wilderness.[116]

This account demonstrates an interesting aspect of Nephite-Lamanite treaties. As was usually the case in the ancient Near East, these treaties were apparently primarily personal covenants.[117] The Nephites were willing to release any Lamanite soldier who would take the oath of peace, and some did, even before their leader did. And then when Zerahemnah also agreed to the peace treaty, it was not enough that he covenanted for his nation, but each of the soldiers apparently individually had to take the oath.[118]

This procedure was followed in a later war between the Nephites and Lamanites. Four thousand Lamanite prisoners were released upon their acceding to the covenant "that they would no more take up their weapons of war" against the Nephites. These people joined the people of Ammon, who were themselves former Lamanites.[119]

The people of Ammon (Anti-Nephi-Lehis) also had entered into a covenant never again to bear arms. This covenant was not with the Nephites, but was unilateral, or rather was a covenant with God. This also is consistent with

the concept of national treaties being concluded by personal covenants by the people rather than by their leader.[120]

The personal covenant no longer to bear arms which was made by the people of Ammon is significant since, although it was a covenant made with God, it had the effect of establishing peace between two nations previously enemies.[121] This is similar to the concept that the covenant between Yahweh and Israel was, in a sense, the constitution of early Israel.[122] Although the 12 Israelite tribes were joined together in a federation,[123] it was the covenant with God which constituted the basis of the law and dealings between the tribes. The bond that held the different tirbes together and governed their interactions was their common covenant relationship with God.

> There was no trace of a pact with a common human leader; Israel was not in covenant with Moses or Joshua. Nor do we find a wide-spread pattern of pacts between the tribes and clans, of Judah with Benjamin and so on. What we do find presupposed in all our sources, is Judah with Benjamin and the rest, first of all, in league with Yahweh, and through this, bound to one another.[124]

It is possible that the covenant entered into by King Benjamin's people had a similar effect, especially as an effort to weld the Nephites and Mulekites at Zarahemla more completely together. Part of Benjamin's covenant required that "ye will not have a mind to injure one another, but to live peaceably, and to render to every man his due . . . . love one another and . . . serve one another. . . . succor those that stand in need of your succor. . . . and administer[] to their relief, both spiritually and temporally, according to their wants."[125] So, although the covenant was a personal covenant made with God, it governed the relations of the Mulekites and Nephites as though they had covenanted with each other.

6. Conclusion

The Book of Mormon is a religious record, the mission of which is not to enlighten the modern reader concerning the political relations among its

subject peoples. The Book of Mormon is also a Nephite record, and what principles of international relations do appear are cast in items of a continual defense by the Nephites against Lamanite lawlessness and hatred. Despite all this, it is still possible to derive some basic principles of international relations from historical events chronicled for a fundamentally different purpose.

[1] Nephi specifically mentioned that his record would omit the "account of the reign of the kings, and the wars and contentions" of his peoples. Mormon's purpose was similarly religiously motivated. See Title Page.

[2] 2 Ne. 5:5-10, 21, 22. This paper is concerned primarily with the political relations of groups in the Book of Mormon from about 580 B.C. to about 20 A.D. In the last few years before the coming of Christ in 34 A.D., the national system collapsed and the people reverted to their tribal organization, which was constantly threatened by a strong secret organization of "robbers." After 34 A.D. a unified "Zion Society" was set up which in time degenerated into fraticidal warfare. In general, the historical narrative in the later sections is more sketchy and not helpful in formulating principles of international relations.

[3] 2 Ne. 5:14; 6:2.

[4] 2 Ne. 5:34.

[5] There are, as will be discussed below, often acquisitions by both Lamanites and Nephites of groups of other cultures, but the groups are, for the most part, assimilated into the whole.

[6] Roland DeVaux, Ancient Israel, Vol. I., (New York: McGraw Hill, 1965), p. 92.

[7] Mos. 2:14; Mos. 11:13.

[8] Alma 35:6; 43:4, 5.

[9] Mos. 9:6.

[10] Mos. 17:1; 26:11; 29:15.

[11] Mos. 29:21-23; Alma 1:1; 11:1; 27:9.

[12] Mos. 26:8.

[13] DeVaux, p. 69.

[14] Mos. 29.

[15] Mos. 19:15, 28.

[16] Mos. 23:36, 37.

[17] Alma 27:2, 14, 22, 23.

[18] Alma 35:6.

[19] Alma 43:4, 5.

[20] Alma 61:8. Compare Judah's alliance with the coastal states, Egypt, and Babylon. DeVaux, p. 249.

[21] Omni 13-15.

[22] Omni 14-17.

[23] Omni 17.

[24] Omni 14.

[25] Omni 18.

[26] Omni 19.

[27] Omni 19.

[28] Many years later, it is noted that "all the people of Zarahemla were numbered with the Nephites, and this is because the kingdom had been conferred upon none but those who were descendants of Nephi (Mos. 25:13). Mosiah's grandson Mosiah instituted the judgeships. Alma, the first chief judge was a descendant of Nephi (Mos. 17:2; 29:44). His successor was Nephihah whose lineage is not specified, though perhaps it can be guessed from his name. But after the death of Nephihah's sons in civil war, Alma's grandson Helaman, son of Helaman, took the judgment seat (Helaman 2:2, 3 Ne. 1: headnote). His son Nephi reigned as chief judge until 30 B.C. when "they who chose evil were more numerous than they who chose good," (Helaman 5:2) and he lost re-election. In 29-30 A.D. the chief judgeship was overthrown and the nation was destroyed and the people separated into tribes (3 Nephi 7:1-2).

[29] Mos. 1:10, 11.

[30] Omni 24; Mosiah 1:18; Mosiah 25:2, 3.

[31] Helaman 6:10; Mos. 25:4. The question of how successfully the peoples of Nephi and of Zarahemla actually blended into one group goes beyond the scope of this paper.

[32] DeVaux, p. 247.

[33] Omni 13; DeVaux, p. 247.

[34] DeVaux, p. 93.

[35] Ibid., p. 74. Various Book of Mormon peoples became numbered among or called by the name of new political groups. See, e.g., Mos. 25:12.

[36] Alma 17:18-20.

[37] Alma 17:20.

[38] Alma 17:24, 25.

[39] Mos. 7:7, 8.

[40] Mos. 7:11. There were reasons for the king's hostility to strangers, since his kingdom was in bondage to the Lamanite kings, and there were criminal ex-priests of Noah wandering the wilderness.

[41] Mos. 7:13, 14.

[42] Mos. 7:15. See also Alma 27:8, where the Ammonites are prepared to become slaves in the land of Zarahemla.

[43] Lev. 19:33; Deut. 10:19.

[44] DeVaux, pp. 74-75.

[45] Mos. 7:1, 2.

[46] Mos. 28:1, 5, 8.

[47] Mos. 19:28.

[48] Mos. 23:1.

[49] Mos. 23:30, 39; 24:20, 25.

[49A] Alma 28:1, 35:8.

[50] Alma 46:30, 35.

[51] Alma 50:25-36. Mormon in his narrative states that the success of Morianton's emigration would have been a lamentable cause with "serious consequences." Alma 50:30, 32.

[52] Alma 63:4-10; Hel. 3:3.

[53] Hel. 6:6-8.

[54] Alma 27:21-24; 35:13; 56:6-8.

[55] Alma 53:16, 17.

[56] Alma 35:9.

[57] They are never mentioned again in the Book of Mormon.

[58] Alma 25:4.

[59] Alma 21:2-5.

[60] Alma 31:2, 3; 43:4, 5.

[61] Alma 43:5, 6, 44.

[62] Alma 21:3, 4; Alma 24:29.

[63] DeVaux, p. 75.

[64] Alma 47:10; 52:20; 54:1, 4; 3 Ne. 3:1.

[65] Alma 35:8, 9.

[66] Alma 35:10.

[67] Mos. 9:5.

[68] Alma 47:10-12.

[69] Alma 23:18; 27:15-20.

[70] Hel. 6:6-9. A similar phenomenon had occurred earlier within the Lamanite nation. Mos. 24:7.

[71] Hel. 6:38-39.

[72] Alma 43:8. DeVaux says of the Israelite war practice: "The laws of war were crude," allowing the total destruction of captured cities, often pillage and the torture, captivity or extermination of the people. DeVaux, p. 255-56. Cf. the destruction of Ammonihah, Alma 16:7-11.

[73] Alma 61:10. The Israelites were also given rules of war by the Lord, but it doesn't seem that they were limited to defensive war. See Deut. 20:10-20; DeVaux, pp. 236, 237, 254-261. The Lamanites seem to have followed the pre-Davidic tradition of wars of conquest, while the Nephites limited themselves to defensive war. DeVaux, 247, 250. Jehovah fought the wars of righteous Israel and of the righteous Nephites.

[74] Alma 35:14; 43:9; 61:14.

[75] Alma 61:12.

[76] Alma 43:46, 47.

[77] Alma 43:30-38.

[78] Alma 27:9; 55:24-27.

[79] Alma 54:3. However these battles were fought on Nephite territory. Thus the absence of Lamanite women and children in the invading army could explain the absence of women and children among the prisoners.

[80] Alma 54:2, 20.

[81] In Alma 16:2-4 the Lamanites destroyed the city of Ammonihah, and carried the captives back into their own land.

[82] DeVaux, p. 81, 83; II Chron. 28:8-15.

[83] DeVaux, p. 254.

[84] Ibid., pp. 254-55.

[85] Ibid., p. 254.

[86] Treaties which could not be enforced still provides a semblance of international order, but binding treaties were a reflection of the ability of the superior power to enforce them militarily. See D. Lorton, The Juridical Terminology of International Relations in Egyptian Texts Through Dyn. XVII, pp. 176-181. See also M. Tsevat, "The Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian Vassal Oaths and the Prophet Ezekial," Journal of Biblical Literature 78 p. 199.

[87] Mos. 23:35-37.

[88] Mos. 9:11.

[89] This may reflect the Israelite practice of exchanging one man for a man plus his property.

[90] Alma 54:1-4, 11, 20; 55:1, 2.

[91] Alma 31:5.

[92] An example of the deference given to the oath is demonstrated in the relationship between the Lamanites and King Limhi's people. The people of Limhi in bondage to the Lamanites were required to pay tribute. Note that the Lamanites were afraid to slay the Nephites because of the oath which their king had given to King Limhi. They would smite the Nephites on their cheeks, put heavy burdens on their backs and drive them like animals. Yet the Lamanites dared not slay them, because that would be a breach of the oath. Mos. 21:3.

[93] DeVaux, p. 254-255.

[94] Ibid., p. 141.

[95] Ibid., p. 254.

[96] Mendenhall, Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East, (Pittsburgh, 1955) p. 33; McCarthy, Covenant in the Old Testament, Catholic Biblical Quarterly 27 (1965) p. 288n.

[97] See note 88, above.

[98] Mos. 19:15, 25, 26.

[99] Mos. 19:27; DeVaux, p. 254.

[100] D. Hillers, Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea (Baltimore, 1969) p. 35; Mendenhall, p. 30; McCarthy, "Three Covenants in Genesis," 26 Catholic Biblical Quarterly (1964) p. 180.

[101] Mendenhall, p. 29.

[102] McCarthy, Three Covenants in Genesis, Catholic Biblical Quarterly 26 (1964) p. 184.

[103] Mos. 20:7-14.

[104] Mos. 20:24-26. Interestingly, although the captive people were
apparently prevailing in the battle, their aim was not to abolish the former
treaty, but to reinstate it.

[105] DeVaux, p. 254.

[106] Mos. 24:9.

[107] Mos. 23:39.

[108] Mos. 23:31-39.

[109] Mos. 24:1-3.

[110] Alma 20:4-8; 22:1.

[111] The oath extracted by Moroni was more limited than the usual Near
Eastern practice of imposing tribute or requiring future allegiance. However,
this may be the result of the Nephites' insistence that their wars were
purely defensive and not for material or political gain. See Alma 61:9-13.

[112] Mendenhall, p. 30.

[113] For example:

> Lo, they (the defeated princes at Megiddo) were standing
> on their walls praising his majesty in return giving them "the
> breath of life." Then his majesty caused that they be caused
> to sdf3 a tryt-oath, saying "we shall not repeat the evil
> against (nn whmnr bin hr) Mn-hpr-R'-may he live forever!-our
> Lord, during our lifetimes: for we have seen his power, and
> he has given us 'breath' as he desires.

URK IV 1235, 14-1236, 1:Thurmosis III in Lorton, p. 132.

[114] Alma 44:1-8.

[115] Alma 44:12-14.

[116] Alma 44:15-20.

[117] I. Gelb, The Vassal-Treaties of Esarhadon, Bibliotheca Orientaus
XIX (1962) pp. 159-162; C. Fensham, Clauses of Protection in Hittite
Vassal - Treaties and the Old Testament, 13 Vetus Testamentum pp. 133-143;
J. Fitzmyer, The Aramaic Suzerainty Treaty, Catholic Biblical Quarterly 20
p. 444; McCarthy, Three Covenants in Genesis pp. 179-89.

[118] Alma 44:15, 19-20.

[119] Alma 62:15-17.

[120] Alma 24:6; 27:28, 29. Their covenant was made when they were still resident with the Lamanites. If it had been a national covenant only presumably their obligation would have disappeared when they became Nephites.

Even the treaty of Limhi and the Lamanites, discussed above, has personal elements. When the king of the Lamanites was convinced that Limhi was in fact not in breach of their covenant, it was not enough for him to reswear the oath. The king had to "plead [with his people] in behalf of the people of Limhi." Mos. 20:24.

[121] As a result of this covenant the Nephites gave the people of Ammon a land for their inheritance and provided protection. In turn, the Anti-Nephi-Lehis were free in their trade with the Nephites, provided food and substance for their armies, and eventually provided 2,000 of their sons to fight with the Nephite armies. This relationship has aspects of both parity and suzerainty treaties of the ancient Near East. See Fitzmyer, The Aramaic Suzerainty Treaty pp. 444-51; McCarthy, Covenant in the Old Testament pp. 217-25; Harner, Exodus, Sinai and Hittite Prologues pp. 233-36; Gelb, The Vassal-Treaties of Esarhaddon pp. 159-62; McCarthy, Three Covenants in Genesis pp. 180-184; Mendenhall, pp. 26-41; Hillers, pp. 25-45; Pensham, p. 40.

[122] Hillers, p. 87.

[123] Id. at 78; see also McCarthy, Covenant in the Old Testament pp. 219-20, 223; Kittel, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, V. 2, p. 114.

[124] Hillers, pp. 68-69.

[125] Mos. 4:13-28.