

# ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM

---



Edited by  
Daniel H. Ludlow

*The History, Scripture, Doctrine, and Procedure  
of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

Macmillan Publishing Company  
New York

Maxwell Macmillan Canada  
Toronto

Maxwell Macmillan International  
New York Oxford Singapore Sydney



Copyright Brigham Young University, 1992.

Archived at Book of Mormon Central by Permission.

---

## MOSIAH<sub>2</sub>

Mosiah<sub>2</sub> (c. 153–91 B.C.) ruled as a Nephite king during almost thirty-three years of Book of Mormon history. His reign was marked by an innovative separation of religious and civic functions and a popular political reform, reflecting the increased pluralism of Nephite society during this historical period.

Mosiah's people consisted of two groups, Nephites and Mulekites, who had voluntarily united under his grandfather, MOSIAH<sub>1</sub>. They appear, to some extent, to have retained their separate identities (Mosiah 25:4). The Mulekites were the more numerous group, but the Nephite leaders were able to rule effectively, relying on COVENANT and commitment rather than force. The people entered into a sacred covenant by which they were promised deliverance and prosperity if they would keep their king's commandments, "or the commandments of God," which he would give them (Mosiah 2:312)—a commitment they honored during all of Mosiah's reign.

Mosiah learned the languages and regard for the sacred records of his ancestors from his father, BENJAMIN, and was a wise and patient man who knew the laws and prophecies contained in the Nephite records (Mosiah 1:2–3). Mosiah became king (c. 124 B.C.) three years before his aged father's death. The coronation, described in detail in Mosiah 1–6, exhibits several features similar to ancient Near Eastern coronations. The account of the coronation also provides valuable information about the religious and political patterns of the time (*see* BENJAMIN). Mosiah was in his thirtieth year when he began to reign. He walked "in the ways of the Lord," and like his father, he provided for his own temporal needs so that he would not become a burden to his people (Mosiah 6:6–7).

Challenges soon arose for Mosiah. Limhi's people arrived in Zarahemla and had to be assimilated into Nephite society. They brought with them the twenty-four PLATES of Ether, which Mosiah, being a SEER, translated (Mosiah 28:10–19). This Jaredite record revealed an ominous lesson, for wickedness, oppression, and violence had led to the extinction of a people. In contrast, Mosiah promoted righteousness, equality, and harmony in his kingdom. When another group led by ALMA<sub>1</sub> arrived in Zarahemla, Mosiah authorized Alma to organize churches and gave him control over them, including the power to admit members

to, or expel members from, that covenant community. The creation of this subgroup comprised of seven churches in Nephite society (Mosiah 25:23) allowed Alma's followers to live as they wished, but it also appears to have sowed seeds of civic tension.

At this time, an opposition group formed. Under a strident leader named Nehor, it rejected Alma's teachings and advocated the creation of a publicly supported priesthood. Mosiah's sons, Ammon, Aaron, Omner, and Himni, together with ALMA<sub>2</sub> and a rising generation that had been too young at the time of Mosiah's coronation to understand the words of King Benjamin (Mosiah 26:1), joined these dissenters. They engaged in systematic religious persecution of the church, wreaking havoc among the Nephite community and with Mosiah's family and reputation. Mosiah dealt with the problem by prohibiting acts of religious persecution (Mosiah 27:2). He also sought divine help through fervent prayer and fasting to reform his sons. Angelic intervention (Mosiah 27:10–32) led to the spiritual transformation of these rebellious souls. Deeming it better soon thereafter to proclaim the gospel than to rule over the kingdom, none of his four sons would accept the Nephite throne.

Under these circumstances and near the end of his life, Mosiah effected a political reform that abolished Nephite kingship. His final speech in 91 B.C. justified righteous monarchs such as his father and himself, but warned against the overriding threats posed by wicked rulers (Mosiah 29:13–21).

In place of kingship, Mosiah created a unique system of judges subject to the voice of the people. From what is known about this legal reform, it appears that each judge was chosen by popular voice, "that every man should have an equal chance"; higher judges judged the lower judges, and a selected body of lower judges judged the higher judges (Mosiah 29:25–29, 38). This law set new precedents by providing that judges should be paid; it also established an Egyptian-style system of measures for exchanging various grains and precious metals (Alma 11:1, 4–19), prohibited all forms of slavery (Alma 27:9), imposed a severe punishment on those who would not pay their debts (Alma 11:2), and granted liberty of belief (Mosiah 29:39; Alma 30:11). The people accepted the law of Mosiah and selected their judges, including Alma<sub>2</sub> as the first chief judge. The equity and justice of this prophet-king won for him the love of his people:

And they did wax strong in love towards Mosiah; yea, they did esteem him more than any other man; for they did not look upon him as a tyrant who was seeking for gain, . . . for he had not exacted riches of them, neither had he delighted in the shedding of blood; but he had established peace in the land, and he had granted unto his people that they should be delivered from all manner of bondage; therefore they did esteem him, yea, exceedingly, beyond measure [Mosiah 29:40].

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- "The Coronation of Kings." *F.A.R.M.S. Update*. Provo, Utah, July 1989.  
 "The Law of Mosiah." *F.A.R.M.S. Update*. Provo, Utah, March 1987.

PAUL RYTTING

---

## MOTHER IN HEAVEN

Latter-day Saints infer from authoritative sources of scripture and modern prophecy that there is a Heavenly Mother as well as a Heavenly Father.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints rejects the idea found in some religions that the spirits or souls of individual human beings are created *ex nihilo*. Rather it accepts literally the vital scriptural teaching as worded by Paul: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." This and other scriptures underscore not only spiritual sibling relationships but heirship with God, and a destiny of joint heirship with Christ (Rom. 8:16–18; cf. Mal. 2:10).

Latter-day Saints believe that all the people of earth who lived or will live are actual spiritual offspring of God the Eternal Father (Num. 16:22; Heb. 12:9). In this perspective, parenthood requires both father and mother, whether for the creation of spirits in the *PREMORTAL LIFE* or of physical tabernacles on earth. A Heavenly Mother shares parenthood with the Heavenly Father. This concept leads Latter-day Saints to believe that she is like him in glory, perfection, compassion, wisdom, and holiness.

Elohim, the name-title for God, suggests the plural of the Caananite *El* or the Hebrew *Eloah*. It is used in various Hebrew combinations to describe the highest God. It is the majestic title of the ultimate deity. Genesis 1:27 reads, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, *male and female* created he them"

(emphasis added), which may be read to mean that "God" is plural.

For Latter-day Saints, the concept of eternal family is more than a firm belief; it governs their way of life. It is the eternal plan of life, stretching from life before through life beyond mortality.

As early as 1839 the Prophet Joseph SMITH taught the concept of an eternal mother, as reported in several accounts from that period. Out of his teaching came a hymn that Latter-day Saints learn, sing, quote, and cherish, "O My Father," by Eliza R. SNOW. President Wilford WOODRUFF called it a *REVELATION* (Woodruff, p. 62).

In the heav'ns are parents single?  
 No, the thought makes reason stare!  
 Truth is reason; truth eternal  
 Tells me I've a mother there.  
 When I leave this frail existence,  
 When I lay this mortal by,  
 Father, Mother, may I meet you  
 In your royal courts on high? [Hymn no. 292]

In 1909 the *FIRST PRESIDENCY*, under Joseph F. SMITH, issued a statement on the origin of man that teaches that "man, as a spirit, was begotten and born of heavenly parents, and reared to maturity in the eternal mansions of the Father," as an "offspring of celestial parentage," and further teaches that "all men and women are in the similitude of the universal Father and Mother, and are literally the sons and daughters of Deity" (Smith, pp. 199–205).

Belief that there is a Mother in Heaven who is a partner with God in creation and procreation is not the same as the heavy emphasis on Mariology in the Roman tradition.

Today the belief in a living Mother in Heaven is implicit in Latter-day Saint thought. Though the scriptures contain only hints, statements from *PRESIDENTS OF THE CHURCH* over the years indicate that human beings have a Heavenly Mother as well as a Heavenly Father.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Wilcox, Linda P. "The Mormon Concept of a Mother in Heaven." In *Sisters in Spirit*, ed. Maureen U. Beecher and Lavina F. Anderson. Urbana, Ill., 1987.  
 Woodruff, Wilford. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, ed. G. Homer Durham. Salt Lake City, 1968.

ELAINE ANDERSON CANNON