

AMULEK CONTENDS WITH ZEEZROM

(Alma 8:48-96)

V48-55

Verse 48 begins the explanation of the way the lawyers got gain. This odd little side trip into Nephite economy is Mormon's preface to verse 69 where the value of an ontie becomes important.

The value of a days wage is based on verse 52 which very clearly states that it is one senine or senum that is the wage.

V56-63

Another interesting facet of the Nephite monetary system is the replication of values for silver and gold, but with different names. The value remains the same, but the name of the value includes the metal of which the "piece" is made. In the case of the Nephite monetary system, these are symbolic equivalencies based on a bushel of barley, and for some reason the nomenclature required a different description for the unit based on the metal the piece was made of.

V64-78

It is interesting that Mormon is clearly antipathetic to the lawyers and judges in Ammonihah. He shows no such antipathy to judges in any other location, and we hear of the lawyers only in Ammonihah, and then later in 3 Nephi. (v.64-66) Amulek agrees to answer questions, and the first thing Zeezrom does has nothing to do with asking questions. He asks how serious Amulek is about the message he is delivering. Had Amulek accepted the money, the questioning would be over, and the controversy effectively ended. (v.67-70)

Amulek now exposes Zeezrom's ploy. Amulek tells Zeezrom (and not coincidentally, the crowd) that Zeezrom had no intention of paying off the bribe had Amulek accepted it. To translate the situation into one that makes more cultural sense to us, we might have a modern Zeezrom who is well-to-do, but certainly not a multi-millionaire, and an Amulek, who is also well-to-do. When the modern Zeezrom offers a million dollars, those who know him would understand that he really didn't have the wherewithal to make good on the offer. What he would be doing is tricking Amulek into saying that he accepted, whereupon he would be arrested on other grounds, such as false preaching, or whatever other law the modern Zeezrom might find. (v.71-78)

V79-96

Zeezrom is going to lay two accusations at Amulek's feet in verse 89. He sets up the second accusation there. Zeezrom opens one of what must have been a great theological issue between the Nephite religion and that of the order of Nehor. The question about the function of the Messiah is one that had been debated by Abinadi before Noah's priests. The need for an Atoning Messiah was called into question by the man Nehor himself:

Zeezrom now tries to trap Amulek with his words in verse 93. Zeezrom is saying that while Amulek believes in one God, he nevertheless believes in two Gods because he believes in a Son of God, and therefore must believe in a Father for that Son. Thus there would be two Gods, and Amulek has lied.

The second accusation is that Amulek has like about the mission of the Atoning Messiah. Amulek claims that the Son of God is the "coming one" and yet he is not coming to save us in our sins. Zeezrom claims this a another contradiction in Amulek's logic, an Atoning Messiah who doesn't atone.