The Book of Mormon was written specifically for the last days. As my wife and I were reading in Alma 61 the other day I was brought up short. As she read the first eight verses of the chapter, in my mind's eye I was actually seeing not the interchange between Moroni and Pahoran, but the government situation here in the United States of America. It kind of set me back for a few minutes.

I want to make a comparison between what we read in Alma and what is happening in the U.S. today. Please note that I recognize that our situation is not identical to that described in The Book of Mormon. We haven't gotten to the point of full-on insurrection and bloodshed. But the principle behind what is happening in this part of book is pretty close to the same as the modern equivalent. I have always wondered why the war chapters were included in this book of scripture. Why on earth would we need to know about the strategies they employed to win back their cities lost to their enemies? Why do we need to know about their civil unrest? This is the first time I have begun to see a direct parallel between one of the stories in this part of The Book of Mormon and real life today.

Setting the scene

Helaman has written to Moroni, the head of all the Nephite armies, and reported what had been going on in his quarter of the land. He especially related the amazing stories of his stripling warriors that came from the Ammonites. He recounts how the faith of these young men had kept them safe and enabled their armies to recapture many of the cities they had previously lost to the Lamanite invasion.

Next, Moroni wrote to Pahoran asking for assistance in the form of supplies (food) and men to help Helaman and himself in fighting for the freedom of the whole country. But how did they get into this mess in the first place? In the past when the Lamanites attacked them they were able to repel them and keep their lands safe. Why were they now not only failing to repel the invaders, but losing the war miserably in many ways? Here is Moroni's description of the source of their problem. Read these three verses from Alma 60 then I'll recap them.

> 15 For were it not for the wickedness which first commenced at our head, we could have withstood our enemies that they could have gained no power over us.
>
> 16 Yea, had it not been for the war which broke out among ourselves; yea, were it not for these king-men, who caused so much bloodshed among ourselves; yea, at the time we were contending among ourselves, if we had united our strength as we hitherto have done; yea, had it not been for the desire of power and authority which those king-men had over us; had they been true to the cause of our freedom, and united with us, and gone forth against our enemies, instead of taking up their swords against us, which was the cause of so much bloodshed among ourselves; yea, if we had gone forth against them in the strength of the Lord, we should have dispersed our enemies, for it would have been done, according to the fulfilling of his word.
>
> 17 But behold, now the Lamanites are coming upon us, taking possession of our lands, and they are murdering our people with the sword, yea, our women and our children, and also carrying them away captive, causing them that they should suffer all manner of afflictions, and this because of the great wickedness of those who are seeking for power and authority, yea, even those king-men.

There was a wickedness that began in their seat of power, their head. The name of this wickedness was the king-men, those who didn't want a representative form of government. They wanted a sovereign ruler, a king (in our case think of those who want socialism, which is government concentrated into one head, just like a king). They wanted a king because those who were pushing this agenda sought for power, which they believed they could get with a king. They used flattery (lies) to convince the people that life would be better with a king. (How many people are urging us to adopt a socialist form of government, promising equality and ease that capitalism has supposedly stripped from us, as if we had equality and ease under King George?) They openly espoused rebellion against the authority of the land in order to destabilize the government.

Their big opportunity came when the Lamanites attacked. They figured that if they not only withheld their support, but actually rose up in rebellion at the time their support was needed most to maintain their freedoms, that they could achieve their objectives of overthrowing the government. Note here that the king-men don't care about who gets hurt, as long as it isn't them. They are sitting in positions of leadership and authority in Zarahemla, so they feel physically safe. In the ensuing insurrection they drove the Chief Judge of the land, Pahoran out of the capitol city of Zarahemla, and set up a temporary king to rule over the city until the Lamanites could win the war.

In the following verses Pahoran goes on to tell Moroni that the king-men had even opened a correspondence with their enemies and promised to maintain control over Zarahemla, the capital of the Nephite nation, hoping that when the Lamanites won the war they would be put into positions of power over their own people. Pure selfishness. As long as they got power they didn't care who got hurt or what happened to their own people in the process. They were traitors in every sense of the word.

Moroni and Helaman knew about the king-men, but knew nothing of the success of this insurrection in the capitol city. They only knew they were starving and weren't getting any help with the defense of their country in their respective quarters of the land. It was only their faith in God that was keeping them alive at this point, for they were men of great faith.

An answer to a prayer

As my wife and I read Alma 59 we ran into an odd comment made by Moroni in verse 33.

> 33 Ye know that ye do transgress the laws of God, and ye do know that ye do trample them under your feet. Behold, the Lord saith unto me: If those whom ye have appointed your governors do not repent of their sins and iniquities, ye shall go up to battle against them. [emphasis added]

This initial letter from Moroni to Pahoran was meant to be heard by all the governors of the land. This was not a personal letter just to Pahoran. This was a general letter to all the political leaders of the Nephite people. But here in the middle of his letter he announces that he has received specific instructions from the Lord that if the governors of the land don't repent he is to march on his own capitol city and do what is necessary

to cleanse the government so they can maintain their freedom. That includes killing anyone who has taken up arms against their own countrymen to gain power and authority over them.

At this point in the story this comment seems out of place, because Moroni has no idea what is going on currently in Zarahemla. He knows about the king-men and the insurrection, but he is not aware they have driven out Pahoran from his judgment seat and that Pahoran is currently in hiding in another city. He is not aware of just how bad the situation is in Zarahemla.

Trusting that Pahoran is still in control of the government, Moroni sends off his letter and begins preparations for his next assault on the Lamanites who have invaded their land. It is only when there is a massive influx of Lamanite warriors, and great slaughter among the Nephite people (including women and children) that Moroni finally writes Pahoran and threatens him in genuine earnest in chapter 60.

What Pahoran's response reveals

When we read Pahoran's response to Moroni we normally focus on what a good man Pahoran is. Though he was heavily censured by Moroni, his chief general over all their armies, Pahoran wasn't offended in the least. In fact, he rejoiced in all his generals and their love for freedom. It was a comfort to him that they were still faithful to the cause of freedom. Now let's move past his initial response and look at his description of what has been happening while Moroni and Helaman have been away from the capitol.

> 2 I, Pahoran, who am the chief governor of this land, do send these words unto Moroni, the chief captain over the army. Behold, I say unto you, Moroni, that I do not joy in your great afflictions, yea, it grieves my soul.
>
> 3 But behold, there are those who do joy in your afflictions, yea, insomuch that they have risen up in rebellion against me, and also those of my people who are freemen, yea, and those who have risen up are exceedingly numerous.
>
> 4 And it is those who have sought to take away the judgment-seat from me that have been the cause of this great iniquity; for they have used great flattery, and they have led away the hearts of many people, which will be the cause of sore affliction among us; they have withheld our provisions, and have daunted our freemen that they have not come unto you.

Though Pahoran is grieved by the sacrifices his armies are making for the welfare of their country, he informs Moroni that there are those who DO "joy in your afflictions." They take such delight in their difficulties that these king-men, who want to overthrow the government for the sake of their own power, have used flattery (lies) to lead away the hearts of many people. With their new followers in tow they have managed to prevent the provisions and extra soldiers from being sent to the armies. This was done so their country would lose the war against the Lamanites and they would be made rulers over their own people.

Do you see this same spirit of dissension alive in our own country? There are those who don't want our free government. They use lies to flatter and attract people to their way of thinking and they do everything in their power to prevent those who rule our country from being able to do their jobs. Think harassing government officials in public places, physically attacking anyone who supports the government or any of our duly elected leaders. Think about those who, for rewards, are working with our country's enemies to destabilize our government to make it easier to take over for their cause of gaining power for themselves. Consider the judges in seats of power who try to prevent the duly elected head of our government from acting in his office by countering every move he makes to do his job as he sees fit. And what about the college professors who are indoctrinating the rising generation against our way of life, that life we believe was given to us by God so we could live in a free country.

The people have not risen in rebellion using weapons to kill each other, as they did in the book of Alma, but the spirit of their behavior is alive and well in the United States of America.

> 5 And behold, they have driven me out before them, and I have fled to the land of Gideon, with as many men as it were possible that I could get.
>
> 6 And behold, I have sent a proclamation throughout this part of the land; and behold, they are flocking to us daily, to their arms, in the defence of their country and their freedom, and to avenge our wrongs.
>
> 7 And they have come unto us, insomuch that those who have risen up in rebellion against us are set at defiance, yea, insomuch that they do fear us and durst not come out against us to battle.
>
> 8 They have got possession of the land, or the city, of Zarahemla; they have appointed a king over them, and he hath written unto the king of the Lamanites, in the which he hath

> joined an alliance with him; in the which alliance he hath agreed to maintain the city of Zarahemla, which maintenance he supposeth will enable the Lamanites to conquer the remainder of the land, and he shall be placed king over this people when they shall be conquered under the Lamanites.

Note here that the dissenters were still in the minority. They were able to take over the capitol of their country, but there were still so many freedom-loving people that the dissenters dared not go out against them in open battle. And from where Pahoran was hiding, the call for those who valued their freedom went out and the citizens were flocking to the standard of liberty from all over that part of the land.

Final Thoughts

Please let me be clear about this. I am NOT saying that the situation described in these final chapters of Alma are equal to what is happening in the United States of America today. But the spirit of what is happening IS very similar to what is happening today. One of the key components to the king-men movement is the flattery they were able to use to trick the people into following them. Only open lies could convince people that it would be better to have a king (or in our case a socialist head of government) than a representative form of government.

Their system of judges was given to them by the Lord because of their righteousness, and because they each wanted to take responsibility for their own behavior and freedom. You can read about how their judges were set up in the end of the book of Mosiah. But now they were being convinced that this blessing from God was a hindrance and an impediment to their own happiness. The only reason they believed these lies was because they were no longer following the prophets the Lord had sent among the people.

Fortunately for them they had some mighty men of valor the Lord had reserved to come at a time when they would be needed most. It was because of their faith and faithfulness that they were able to save their people from certain disaster.

So I ask you, am I mistaken in my comparison between the condition of the Nephites at this time in their history, or does this ring true as a comparison to modern times and circumstances? I welcome your input and comments. What does this mean for us? What can we do to save our own country if we are, in fact, being flattered into seeking

to discard our freedoms we believe God has given to us for a form of government where only a few powerful have say in how we live our lives? What say ye?

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