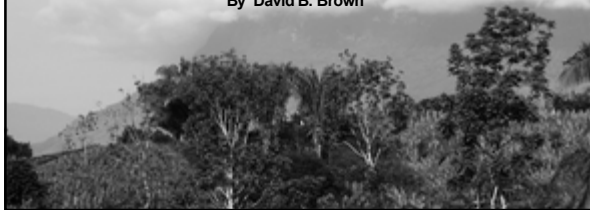


Hill Cumorah Expedition Team, Inc
Transforming Faith to Knowledge

THE CITY OF MELEK AND THE BONAMPAK MURALS

By David B. Brown

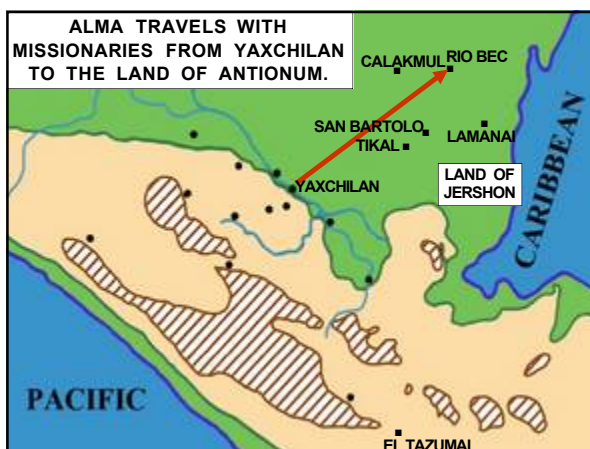


AFTER THE AMMONITES AND THE ANTI-NEPHI-LEHI MOVED INTO JERSON, THERE WAS A SHORT PERIOD OF UNMOLESTED INDUSTRY. HOWEVER, OUR RESEARCH INDICATES THAT THE NEW IMMIGRANTS IN JERSON WERE ENCROACHING ON ZORAMITE COMMERCE. THIS WAS APPARENTLY CAUSING TEMPERS TO FLARE.

ALMA UNDERSTOOD THAT IT WAS EASIER TO REASON WITH SOMEONE THROUGH THE MEANS OF THE GOSPEL AS OPPOSED TO THE USE OF FORCE.

ALMA TOOK SEVERAL MISSIONARIES WITH HIM AND TRAVELED TO THE LAND OF THE ZORAMITES (ANTIONUM) TO SEE IF THE GOSPEL COULD MAKE A POSITIVE IMPACT THERE.

WE HAVE DISCOVERED THAT THE ANTIONUM REGION IS THE CENTER OF THE RIO BEC CULTURE. THIS AREA BORDERS ON THE LAND OF JERSON AND COMPREHENDING THIS GEOGRAPHY HELPS US TO UNDERSTAND WHY ALMA WENT TO THE ZORAMITES TO INTERCEDE.



THE DESCRIPTION THAT ALMA PROVIDES OF THE SOCIAL ORDER IN ANTIONUM SEEMS TO BE A STRUCTURED ORDER WITH ONLY AN ELITE CLASS AND A WORKER CLASS. THERE APPEARS TO BE LITTLE OR NO MIDDLE CLASS.

THE WORKING CLASS INDIVIDUALS COMPLAIN THAT THEY BUILT THE TEMPLES BUT ARE NOT ALLOWED TO WORSHIP IN THEM BECAUSE THEIR CLOTHING IS TOO COARSE.

IT IS THE WORKING CLASS PEOPLE WHO ARE ATTRACTED TO THE GOSPEL THAT ALMA IS PREACHING. THIS LEADS TO DISRUPTION OF THE STATUS QUO AND THE ELITE CLASS EXPEL THE LOWER CLASSES UNTIL THEY FIND THAT THEY HAVE FEWER WORKERS AND LOWER PRODUCTION. NOW THE LOWER CLASS IS BEING THREATENED SO ALMA OFFERS THAT THEY TOO ARE ALLOWED TO RELOCATE TO JERSHON.



THE IMPLIED PROBLEM HERE IS THAT THEY ARE NOT MOVING FAR ENOUGH. IT IS STILL CLOSE ENOUGH TO THE ZORAMITE/ANTIONUM REGION AND PRODUCTION FIELDS THAT THEY ARE NOT FREE FROM PERSECUTION.

THE BOOK OF MORMON DOES NOT EXPLAIN WHY THESE ZORAMITES AND AMMONITES MOVE TO THE CITY OF MELEK, IT ONLY STATES THAT THEY ARE RELOCATED THERE.



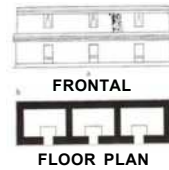
OUR RESEARCH INDICATES THAT THE CITY OF MELEK IS THE ANCIENT SITE OF BONAMPAK.

AS WE LOOK TO THE MURALS, STRUCTURES AND STELAE AT BONAMPAK, WE BEGIN TO FURTHER UNDERSTAND WHAT THE CONVERTED LAMANITES WERE EXPERIENCING AND THE TRIALS THEY HAD TO ENDURE.

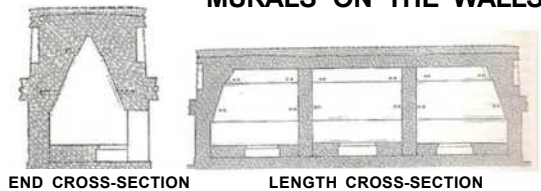
THIS IS A PHOTO OF THE MAYA SITE OF BONAMPAK; CITY OF MELEK



THIS IS THE BUILDING WHERE WE FIND THE BONAMPAK MURALS



DIFFERENT VIEWS OF THE STRUCTURE SHOW THAT IT HAS THREE SEPARATE ROOMS AND EACH WITH ITS OWN ACCESS DOOR. EACH ROOM CONTAINS MURALS ON THE WALLS.



THESE ISOMETRIC VIEWS SHOW THE SHAPE OF THE THREE ROOMS AND HOW THE MURALS COVER THE INTERIOR WALLS. NOTE THAT EACH ROOM HAS STANDING AREA FOR VIEWING.



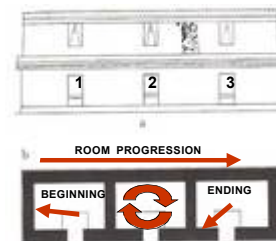
THE MURALS COMPLETELY WRAP AROUND EACH ROOM. THIS NOT ONLY MEANS THAT THE MURALS SHOULD BE READ IN A CONTINUOUS MANNER WITHIN THE ROOM, BUT THAT THE STORYLINE WILL ADVANCE FROM ROOM TO ROOM.



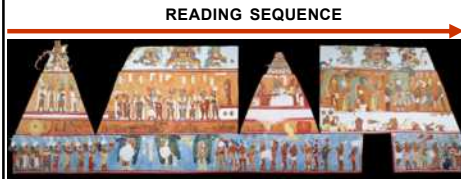
THESE TWO PHOTOGRAPHS WERE TAKEN DURING OUR LAST SITE VISIT AND ILLUSTRATE THE ORNATE MURALS. THE ROOMS ARE VERY SMALL AND HARD TO PHOTOGRAPH; THESE PHOTOS WERE ADJUSTED WITH SPECIAL COMPUTER SOFTWARE.



BECAUSE MAYA SCRIPT READS FROM LEFT TO RIGHT, WE WILL READ THE MURALS LIKEWISE. FOR THIS REASON WE WILL BEGIN IN THE LEFT ROOM.



HERE IS ROOM #1 "UNFOLDED" TO DISPLAY THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS. THIS ROOM IS ALSO "UNFOLDED" TO DISPLAY THE READING SEQUENCE THAT WILL BE USED.



UPON REACHING THIS POINT WE MOVE TO THE NEXT ROOM ON THE RIGHT.

THE VERY FIRST SCENE DEPICTS THE FOUR SONS OF MOSIAH AS THEY ENTER LAMANITE TERRITORY TO TEACH THE GOSPEL TO ALL THAT WILL LISTEN.



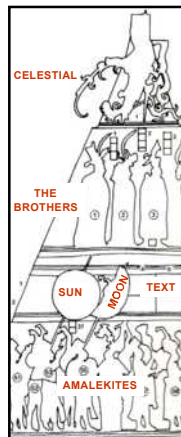
NOTE THAT THREE OF THE BROTHERS STAND TOGETHER WHILE ONE IS SLIGHTLY OFF TO THE RIGHT. THE ONE BY HIMSELF IS AMMON. HIS STORY WRAPS AROUND THE CORNER.



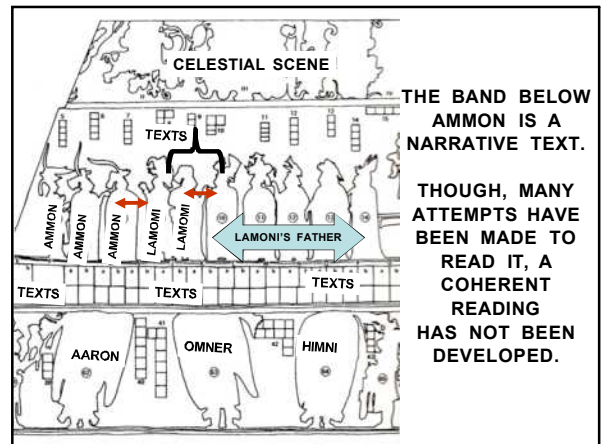
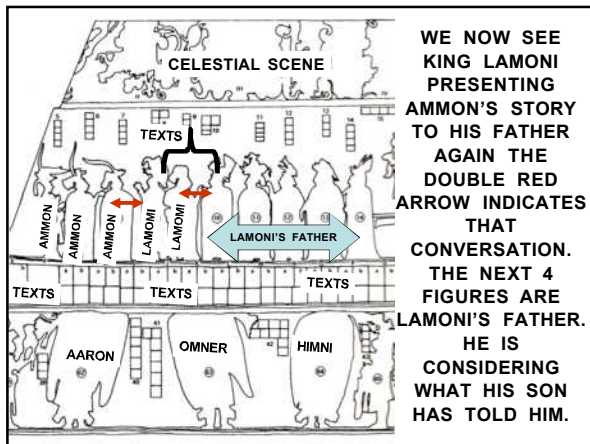
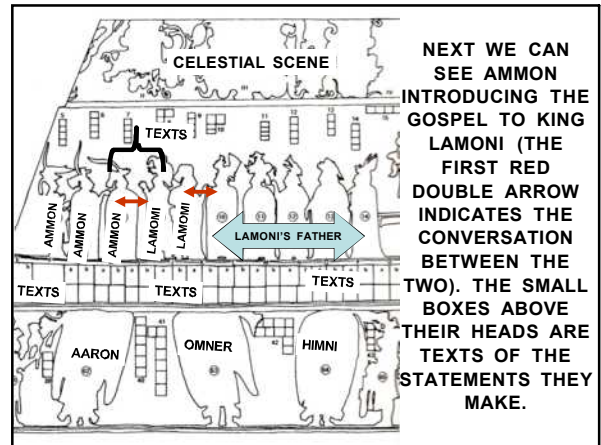
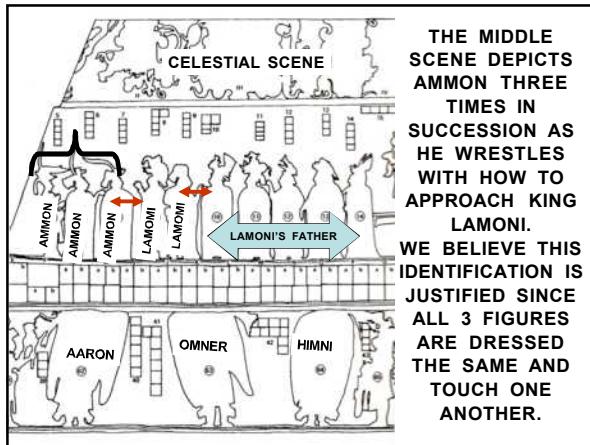
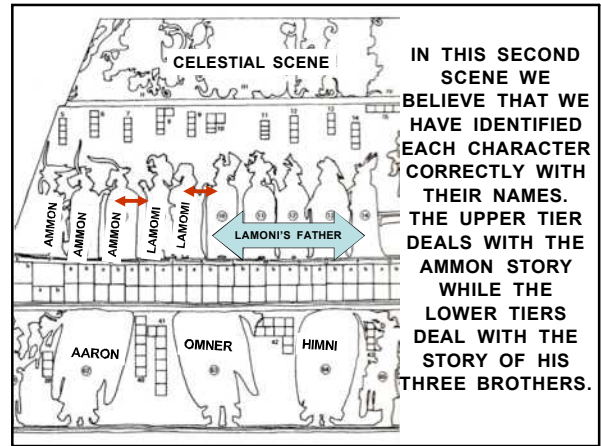
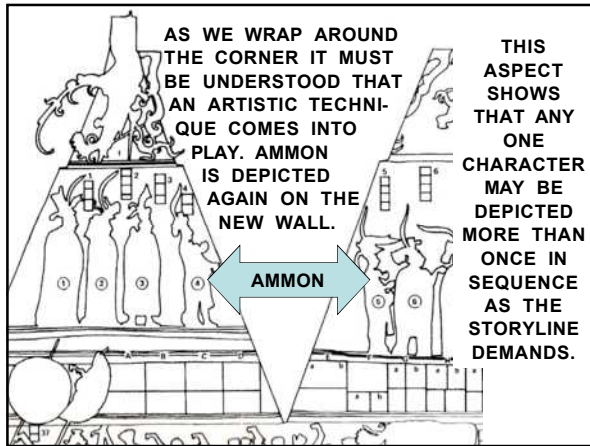
NOTICE THAT ALL ARE IN WHITE CLOAKS TO DENOTE PURITY, AND THAT ALL HAVE QUETZAL FEATHERS IN THEIR HEADDRESSES; THEY TEACH THE QUETZAL RELIGION.

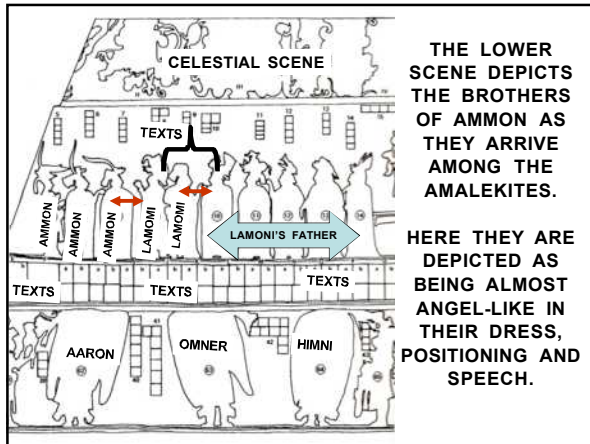


BELOW THEM STAND A SERIES OF AMALEKITE PRIESTS. THESE ARE THE PRIESTS THAT CONTROL THE LAMANITE RELIGION.



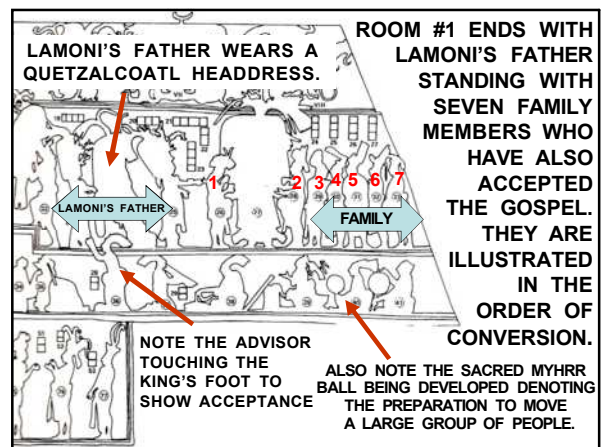
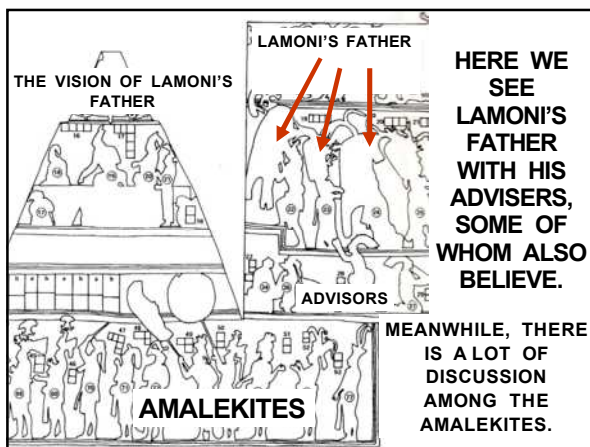
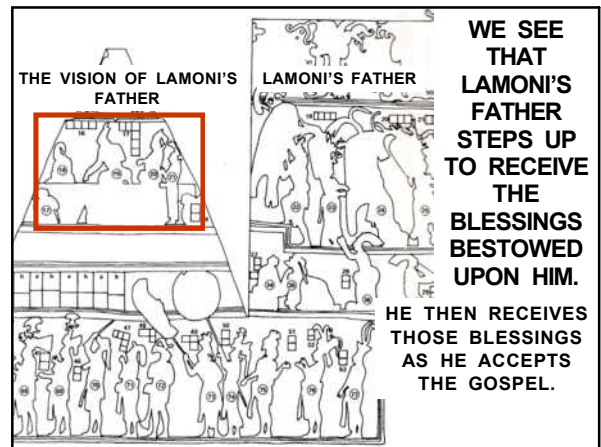
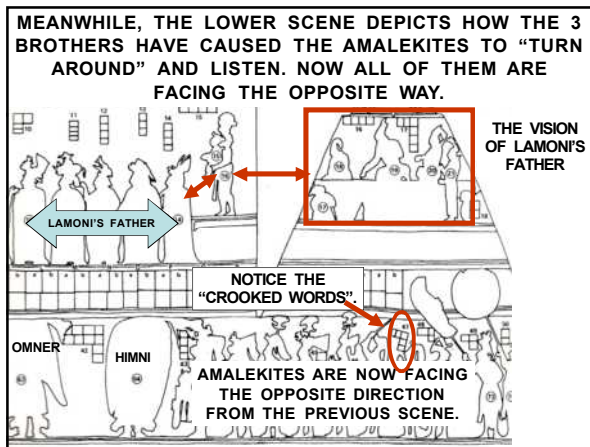
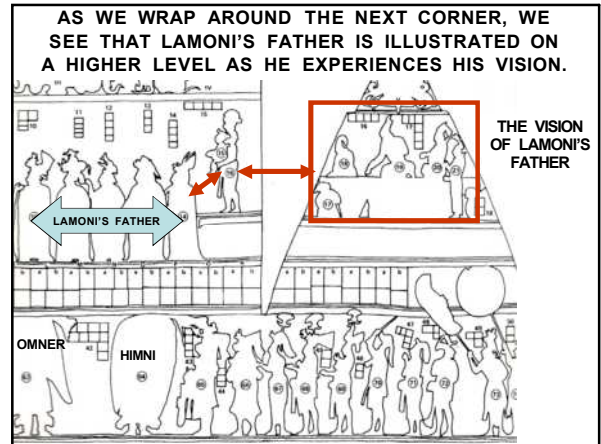
AT THIS POINT WE WILL BEGIN TO USE LINE DRAWINGS FOR THE SAKE OF CLARITY. NOTE THAT GOD IS BLESSING THE EVENT. ALSO NOTE THAT THE AMALEKITES ARE HOLDING TWO STANDARDS; ONE REPRESENTS THE SUN AND THE OTHER REPRESENTS THE MOON.





THE LOWER SCENE DEPICTS THE BROTHERS OF AMMON AS THEY ARRIVE AMONG THE AMALEKITES.

HERE THEY ARE DEPICTED AS BEING ALMOST ANGEL-LIKE IN THEIR DRESS, POSITIONING AND SPEECH.



LAMONI'S FATHER SEATS HIS SON, KING ANTI-NEPHI-LEHI ON THE NEW THRONE

NOW, KING ANTI-NEPHI-LEHI IS SEATED UPON HIS FATHER'S THRONE. MOST OF HIS FAMILY APPROVES OF THIS MOVE.

NOTE THE ADVISORS DISCUSSING THE NEW RULE THAT LAMONI'S FATHER HAS MADE.

ALSO NOTE THE SCRIBES NOW WRITE DOWN THE NEW LAW: THE YOUNGEST SON IS KING.

HERE IS ROOM #2 "UNFOLDED" TO DISPLAY THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS.

READING SEQUENCE

UPON REACHING THIS POINT WE MOVE TO THE NEXT ROOM ON THE RIGHT.

ROOM 2

THE OPENING SCENE IN THE SECOND ROOM DISPLAYS MASSIVE TURMOIL. THIS IS THE RESULT OF THOSE WHO CANNOT ACCEPT THIS NEW CONVERSION

NOW WE SEE THE AMALEKITES ARE PRESENT ON BOTH LEVELS.

Room 2

IT IS VERY APPARENT THAT THEY TOTALLY DISAGREE WITH THE CHOICE OF THIS NEW RELIGION.

THEY LOUDLY EXPRESS THEIR CONTENTION AFTER THE KING'S DEATH.

Room 2

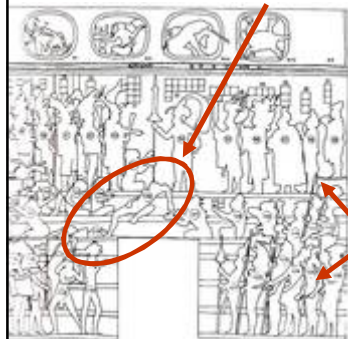
THE TURMOIL NOW SPILLS INTO ALL ASPECTS OF LAMANITE SOCIETY, AND NOW THE AMALEKITES BEGIN TO PLOT.

THE AMALEKITES GO TO THE OLDER BROTHER AND CONVINCHE HIM THROUGH THE MEANS OF SECRET COMBINATIONS.

ROOM 2

MEANWHILE, THE AMALEKITES CONFRONT THOSE CONVERTED BY AARON AND HIS BROTHERS.

THE FINAL SCENE IN ROOM #2 IS THE MOST DREADED. HERE KING ANTI-NEPHI-LEHI LIES BEHEADED ON THE TEMPLE STEPS.



THE VERY WORST HAS NOW OCCURRED. LAMANITES HAVE RECKLESSLY SLAUGHTERED THEIR OWN. A CONFERENCE OF THE CONVERTED IS HELD.

HERE IS A CLOSER VIEW OF THE SEVERED HEAD IN THE PREVIOUS ILLUSTRATION.



HERE IS THAT SAME SCENE AS IT APPEARS IN A PHOTO. IT IS NOT AS CLEAR AS THE LINE DRAWING. NEVER-THE-LESS, THE STORY OF THE DESPICABLE DEED IS SHOWN HERE.

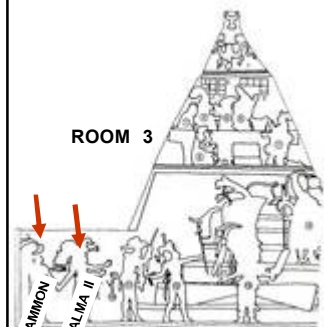
HERE IS THE ENDING TO THE AMMONITE STORY AS RELATED BY ROOM #3



ROOM #3



WE WILL BEGIN ON THE LEFT END WALL.



WE BELIEVE THAT THE FIRST TWO FIGURES REPRESENT AMMON AND ALMA AS THEY WORK TO MOVE THE LAMANITE REFUGEES TO JERSHON.

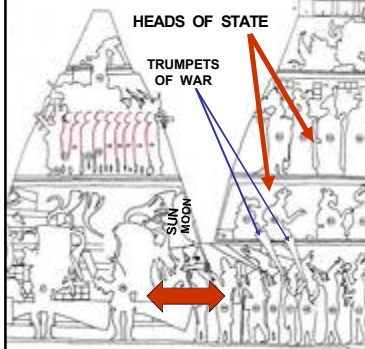
THE REFUGEES TRULY SHINE IN JERSHON! THEY HAVE FORSAKEN THEIR WEAPONS AND FOLLOW THE GOSPEL TO THE LETTER.



NOTICE THAT ALL HAVE QUETZALCOATL HEADDRESSES.

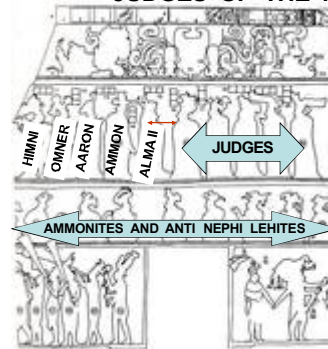
ALSO NOTE THE STRETCHED OUT CLOAKS THAT DEPICT "GREAT SPIRITUALITY"

THOUGH WAR HAS NOT BROKEN OUT BETWEEN THE TWO GROUPS, THE IMMINENT DANGER IS OBVIOUS TO ALL.



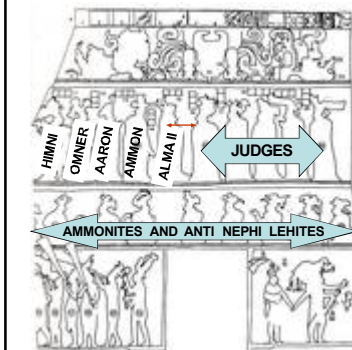
WE CAN SEE THAT THE TRUMPETS OF WAR ARE SOUNDING. THUS THE HEADS OF STATE DISCUSS WHAT SHOULD BE DONE.

CONCERNED ABOUT THIS SITUATION, THE MOSIAH BOYS AND ALMA APPROACH THE JUDGES OF THE NEPHITES.



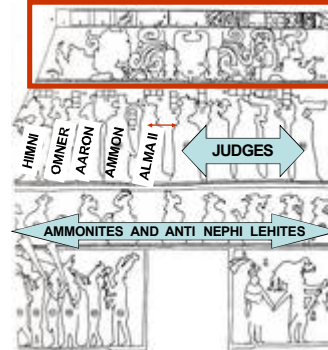
AN AGREEMENT IS REACHED SO THAT THE REFUGEES WHO HAD TAKEN AN OATH OF "NON-AGGRESSION" WILL MOVE TO THE CITY OF MELEK FOR THEIR OWN SAFETY.

THE MOSIAH BROTHERS, THE JUDGES, AND THE REFUGEE LEADERS DISCUSS OPTIONS.



THE RESULT IS THAT THE REFUGEES MUST ONCE AGAIN MOVE. THEY ARE ADMONISHED TO KEEP THEIR NON-AGGRESSION VOWS.

FOR REASONS UNKNOWN TO US, THE CITY OF MELEK IS CHOSEN.



THIS NEW LOCATION IS SEEN BY THE REFUGEES AS A WONDERFUL GIFT. THE REFUGEES VIEW IT AS MIRACULOUS !

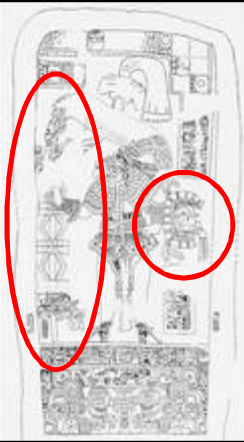
NOW WE HAVE TWO SIGNIFICANT MURALS DEPICTING STORIES REGARDING CONVERTED LAMANITES; ONE AT SAN BARTOLO THAT EXPRESSES THE GOSPEL MESSAGE AND THIS ONE AT BONAMPAK THAT ILLUSTRATES THE HISTORY OF THE AMMONITE STRUGGLE. THERE ARE OTHER STRUCTURES AND STELA AT BONAMPAK THAT FURTHER DEVELOP THE CONCEPT THAT THESE PEOPLE WERE CONVERTED LAMANITES.



THIS HUGE STELA FOUND IN THE CENTER OF THE GRAND PLAZA AT BONAMPAK ILLUSTRATES THE STORY OF WHY THE CONVERTED LAMANITES WERE BROUGHT TO BONAMPAK.

THIS LINE DRAWING OF THE STELA ALLOWS US TO UNDERSTAND THE MESSAGE.

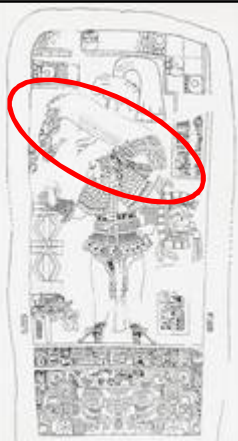
HERE WE SEE A WARRIOR HOLDING A SPEAR WITH HIS RIGHT HAND AND THERE IS A SEVERED HEAD TOUCHING HIS LEFT ELBOW.



WE BELIEVE THIS IS ILLUSTRATING THE NEPHITE NATION WHO IS ACTING AS THE WARRIOR TO PROTECT THE BOND THAT THE LAMANITES HAVE MADE TO NEVER AGAIN USE THEIR WEAPONS OF DEATH. THUS THE BINDINGS ON THE SPEAR ALLUDE TO THEIR BOND.



NOTICE HOW THE QUETZAL HEADDRESS OF THE WARRIOR IS WIPING THE BLOOD FROM THE END OF THE SPEAR. THIS IS ILLUSTRATING THE FORGIVENESS THAT THE LAMANITES HAD RECEIVED AND WHICH THE NEPHITES WERE COMMITTED TO HELP THEM KEEP.



ALSO, NOTE HOW THE EYE OF THE WARRIOR IS FIXED INTENTLY ON THE BINDINGS ON THE SHAFT OF THE SPEAR. AGAIN, THIS PLACES AN EXCLAMATION ON THE NEPHITE COMMITMENT TO SUPPORT THE LAMANITE BOND OF PEACE.



THE SEVERED HEAD ON THE LEFT ELBOW IS REPRESENTING THE EVENT THAT CAUSED THE MOVE TO THE CITY OF MELEK—IT IS THE BEHEADING OF KING ANTI-NEPHI-LEHI. THE NEPHITES WANT TO PROTECT THE CONVERTED LAMANITES FROM THIS FORM OF AGGRESSION.



THERE ARE ALSO OTHER CLUES IN THE TEXT AND IMAGES AT THE BASE OF THE STELA THAT JUXTAPOSE THE NUMBERS 3 AND 7. WE KNOW THAT THERE WERE SEVEN CITIES OF LAMANITES CONVERTED TO THE GOSPEL AND...



LATER THERE ARE THREE CITIES NAMED THAT WERE NOT PART OF THE CONVERSION. THE IMPLICATION IS THAT THE LAMANITE KINGDOM WAS COMPRISED OF TEN LAMANITE CITIES. IT IS ALLUDED TO IN THE MURALS AND ON THIS STELA AS WELL AS OTHERS FOUND AT TIKAL.



THE MURALS AND STELA AT SAN BARTOLO AND BONAMPAK ILLUSTRATE AND CONFIRM THE STORIES WE FIND IN THE BOOK OF MORMON CONCERNING THE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS OF A PEOPLE WHO WERE CONVERTED TO A GOSPEL OF PEACE.

THE NEPHITES WERE TASKED WITH USING THEIR ARMIES TO PROTECT THE THRONE OF DAVID AND TO PROTECT THOSE WHO BY THEIR VOWS COULD NOT PROTECT THEMSELVES.

THESE WERE A PEOPLE PREPARING FOR THE COMING OF THEIR MESSIAH. EACH SEGMENT OF THE GOSPEL SOCIETY WAS ATTEMPTING TO PREPARE THE PEOPLE FOR HIS APPEARANCE.

BUT, IN ADDITION TO THE BOOK OF MORMON STORIES, WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DISCOVER MANY THINGS CONCERNING THE PEOPLE OF ANTIONUM, THE AMMONITES AND THE LAND OF JERSHON.

OUR DISCOVERIES TRULY FLESH OUT THE MOTIVATIONS OF THESE CULTURAL FACTIONS AND GIVE A MORE COMPLETE UNDERSTANDING OF THE BOOK OF MORMON PEOPLE.

WE WILL BE COVERING THESE IN THE LAST SEGMENT OF OUR PRESENTATION ON THE AMMONITES.

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