

PDF version of the lesson notes.

## **A Note**

- I didn't get very far but the notes are already plenty long and contain more material than I can possibly cover.

## **I. He is Talkative**

- One striking part of this narrative is the verbose nature of Korihor in the first half of the narrative[1]. Mormon certainly gives him lot of air time. I mean he talks and he talks and he talks: for example, see vv 12–17 and 24–28. On the other hand his opponents say almost nothing in the first part of the narrative. The people of Ammon do not talk (presumably they did say something to Korihor but its not reported by Mormon.) In the land of Gideon, the high priest and chief judge ask him a few questions and then don't say anything. They don't respond at all to his teachings and arguments:

29 Now when the high priest and the chief judge saw the hardness of his heart, yea, when they saw that he would revile even against God, they would not make any reply to his words; but they caused that he should be bound; and they delivered him up into the hands of the officers, and sent him to the land of Zarahemla, that he might be brought before Alma, and the chief judge who was governor over all the land. -- Alma 30:29

However, when Korihor meets Alma everything changes. Alma dominates the conversation and Korihor say very little. Primarily, he briefly answers Alma's questions and asks for a sign.

- *What do you think of this structure? How does the change in dialogue dominance affect how we experience and understand the story? Let's suppose that the people of Ammon were quite verbose with Korihor. Why might Mormon leave that conversation out of the narrative?*
- *What does the early verbosity and then near silence of Korihor emphasize? About Korihor? About Alma?*

## **II. Korihor Appears**

- Read Alma 30:6

(6) But it came to pass in the latter end of the seventeenth year, there came a man into the land of Zarahemla, and he was Anti-Christ, for he began to

preach unto the people against the prophecies which had been spoken by the prophets, concerning the coming of Christ.

### A. *Anti-Christ*

- Mormon introduces Korihor to the narrative in verse 6 but only refers to him as an Anti-Christ. Mormon does not specifically name Korihor until verse 12. *Why not reveal his name immediately?*
- Maybe he forgot and it was pretty hard to insert words into the record. I actually don't think that is the case. I think the delay is purposeful. Mormon employs a similar identification delay in the story of Nehor. Mormon identifies Nehor as a large man and then describes his teachings (Alma 1:2-4). It's not until immediately prior to Nehor's execution that he is identified by name (verse 15).
- Given the identification delay in both accounts, let's assume it is a purposeful literary device used by Mormon. *How does this delay affect the narrative? Why not reveal his name and then let the reader find out that he is an Anti-Christ through his actions? How does revealing that Korihor is an Anti-Christ affect the narrative and you as a reader?*
- I believe this is the first time that the word, "Anti-Christ" is used in the Book of Mormon. For example, neither Sherem (Jacob 7) or Nehor are called Anti-Christ. Jacob describes Sherem as the following (Jacob 7:1-2):

(1) And now it came to pass after some years had passed away, there came a man among the people of Nephi, whose name was Sherem. (2) And it came to pass that he began to preach among the people, and to declare unto them that there should be no Christ. And he preached many things which were flattering unto the people; and this he did that he might overthrow the doctrine of Christ.

Nehor is described by Mormon in Alma 1:2-4:

(2) And it came to pass that in the first year of the reign of Alma in the judgment-seat, there was a man brought before him to be judged, a man who was large, and was noted for his much strength. (3) And he had gone about among the people, preaching to them that which he termed to be the word of God, bearing down against the church; declaring unto the people that every priest and teacher ought to become popular; and they ought not to labor with their hands, but that they ought to be supported by the people. (4) And he also testified unto the people that all mankind should be saved at the last day, and that they need not fear nor tremble, but that they might lift up their heads and rejoice; for the Lord had created all men, and had also redeemed all men; and, in the end, all men should have eternal life.

- Sherem's account is written by Jacob so maybe the absence of the word Anti-Christ is just due to stylistic difference between the authors. However, the accounts of Nehor and Korihor are both written or edited by Mormon. *Why does Mormon refer to Korihor as an Anti-Christ but not Nehor even though there is a clear overlap in their respective teachings?*
- I don't have a great answer to these last few questions but I do think there are some interesting differences between the Nehor and Korihor narratives. For example, the Korihor narrative is much more detailed and we get a much more expanded view of Korihor's teaching and rhetoric. Actually, Mormon gives very little detail about Nehor's teachings while Nehor is living. We get more discussion of Nehor's teachings post execution. *Possibly, Mormon is hesitant to apply the title broadly and only wants to use when he can provide context for exactly what he means by an Anti-Christ?*
- *Can you think of some reasons why Korihor particularly deserved the title? Can you think of any reasons why using the terms Anti-Christ enhances the narrative?*
- Second, Nehor is not tried or brought before the Chief Judge because he was an Anti-Christ. He is actually tried for the murder of Gideon. Korihor, in some sense is tried for being an Anti-Christ.
- *Can you think of any reasons why it might makes sense or be important to highlight the existence of an Anti-Christ at this point in the Book of Alma?*
- *Do Anti-Christ have a role throughout the book of Alma? Are their effects upon Nephite society a major theme of the book? In some sense does the book of Alma begin and end with Anti-Christ? If the effects of Anti-Christ are a major theme then does it make sense that the most detailed discussion of an Anti-Christ is right in the middle of the book?*

## ***B. Out of Nowhere***

- One commenter has noted the following about the appearance of Korihor[2]:

Korihor appears out of nowhere, as it were, in the Nephite record. His entire story is contained in Alma 30, where he suddenly appears in the land of Zarahemla, preaching "unto the people against the prophecies which had been spoken by the prophets, concerning the coming of Christ."

I can understand the sentiment and I certainly agree that its the first time Korihor appears. However, I don't entirely agree that he appears out of nowhere. Well, at least I don't think it is surprising to see a person like Korihor show up. I think the insertion of this story (remember Mormon could have left it it out) makes sense in terms of themes and structure of book of Alma.

- Why would Mormon choose to highlight this story? He could have left it out? Does the

story of Korihor continue or build on themes already observed in the Book of Alma?

- I do think the effect of Anti-Christ on Nephite society is a major theme and in that sense Korihor is the most detailed example of the acute problems the Nephites grappled with in terms of Anti-Christ. *Do Anti-Christ have a role throughout the book of Alma? Are their effects upon Nephite society a major theme of the book? In some sense does the book of Alma begin and end with Anti-Christ? If the effects of Anti-Christ are a major theme then does it make sense that the most detailed discussion of an Anti-Christ is right in the middle of the book?*
- Additionally, I also think the Korihor narrative is a great follow-up to Alma's meditation on missionary work in chapter 29[3]:

(1) O that I were an angel, and could have the wish of mine heart, that I might go forth and speak with the trump of God, with a voice to shake the earth, and cry repentance unto every people! (2) Yea, I would declare unto every soul, as with the voice of thunder, repentance and the plan of redemption, that they should repent and come unto our God, that there might not be more sorrow upon all the face of the earth. (3) But behold, I am a man, and do sin in my wish; for I ought to be content with the things which the Lord hath allotted unto me. -- Alma 29:1-3

- Do you see any links between Alma's meditation on missionary work and the Korihor narrative? Does their placement next to each other heighten or affect each in some way? Do they provide contrast with each other?
- *What about the other direction? Does the Korihor narrative parallel and contrast with Alma's mission to the Zoramites in the next chapter?*

### III. Unequal Ground

- Read Alma 30:7-11:

(7) Now there was no law against a man's belief; for it was strictly contrary to the commands of God that there should be a law which should bring men on to unequal grounds. (8) For thus saith the scripture: Choose ye this day, whom ye will serve. (9) Now if a man desired to serve God, it was his privilege; or rather, if he believed in God it was his privilege to serve him; but if he did not believe in him there was no law to punish him. (10) But if he murdered he was punished unto death; and if he robbed he was also punished; and if he stole he was also punished; and if he committed adultery he was also punished; yea, for all this wickedness they were punished. (11) For there was a law that men should be judged according to their crimes. Nevertheless, there was no law against a man's belief; therefore, a man was punished only for the crimes which he had done; therefore all men were on equal grounds.

- Mormon digresses into a discussion of Nephite laws. *Why is the digression important? How does it help us understand the Korihor story? Is it simply to explain why Korihor isn't arrested immediately?*
- I think it is interesting that inequality ("for it was strictly contrary to the commands of God that there should be a law which should bring men on to unequal grounds") is used as a rationale for the prohibition against laws that limit a man's belief. Its also clearly connected with Joshua 24:15. Specifically, not being able to choose to serve or not serve God would produce an equality.
  - ◆ *What is the link between inequality, the ability to choose to serve God or not and the Korihor situation?*
  - ◆ *Does this definition or aspect of equality have any bearing on the way we read the rest of the Korihor narrative?*
- I think there is some interesting editorial activity related to the issue whether Nephite law should be so liberal in the face of impiety[4]. Korihor's first brush with the law is with the people of Ammon:

19 Now this man went over to the land of Jershon also, to preach these things among the people of Ammon, who were once the people of the Lamanites. (20) But behold they were more wise than many of the Nephites; for they took him, and bound him, and carried him before Ammon, who was a high priest over that people. (21) And it came to pass that he caused that he should be carried out of the land. And he came over into the land of Gideon, and began to preach unto them also; and here he did not have much success, for he was taken and bound and carried before the high priest, and also the chief judge over the land.

- *Does this suggest that Mormon doesn't agree with the Nephite law on freedom of religion, equality, and the implications of Joshua 24:15?*
- *Does it suggest that the people of Ammon don't agree with the Nephites regarding freedom of religion, equality, and the implications of Joshua 24:15? Did the people of Ammon violate the law as describe in verse 7?*

#### **IV. A Frenzied Mind**

- Read Alma 30:12–16:

(12) And this Anti–Christ, whose name was Korihor, (and the law could have no hold upon him) began to preach unto the people that there should be no Christ. And after this manner did he preach, saying: (13) O ye that are bound down under a foolish and a vain hope, why do ye yoke yourselves with such foolish things? Why do ye look for a Christ? For no

man can know of anything which is to come. (14) Behold, these things which ye call prophecies, which ye say are handed down by holy prophets, behold, they are foolish traditions of your fathers. (15) How do ye know of their surety? Behold, ye cannot know of things which ye do not see; therefore ye cannot know that there shall be a Christ. (16) Ye look forward and say that ye see a remission of your sins. But behold, it is the effect of a frenzied mind; and this derangement of your minds comes because of the traditions of your fathers, which lead you away into a belief of things which are not so.

- Last week (see Alma 23:3) the importance of traditions on behavior was highlighted. The Lamanite king wished to convince his people of the wicked traditions of their fathers. Here we see Korihor emphasize the effect of traditions on Nephite behavior. *Is the importance of traditions a theme in the book of Alma? Does Korihor's attack on tradition make his teachings more seductive in some sense?*
- How would you describe Korihor's teachings in these verses? What is the core of his argument?
- Korihor does seem to emphasize the uncertainty of future events: "For no man can know of anything which is to come." My guess is that very few Mormons would agree with this part of Korihor's argument but let's suppose Korihor is right about the know-ability of the future. *Does the rest of his argument follow from that point? If "no man can know anything which is to come" then is appropriate conclusion that there is no Christ and that looking forward to a remission of sins is a product of a frenzied mind?*
- Gerald N. Lund in a 1992 Ensign article compared the teachings of Korihor with modern epistemological systems (for example, rationalism or empiricism).[5] For example, Lund points out overlap between the teachings in these verses and empiricism (OED: practice founded upon experiment and observation.) *Why might this be a useful and helpful exercise to us today as modern readers of the Book of Mormon? Are there potential pitfalls to this approach? Does it have a downside?*

## V. Triplet

- Read Alma 30:17–18:

(17) And many more such things did he say unto them, telling them that there could be no atonement made for the sins of men, but

every man fared in this life  
according to the management of the creature;

therefore every man prospered  
according to his genius,

and that every man conquered  
according to his strength;

and whatsoever a man did was no crime. (18) And thus he did preach unto them, leading away the hearts of many, causing them to lift up their heads in their wickedness, yea, leading away many women, and also men, to commit whoredoms—telling them that when a man was dead, that was the end thereof.

- Verse 17 contains a triplet of sayings which repeat "according" each time. How do the sayings build on each other? Is there sense in which these sayings seems seductive even though we can clearly see their flawed nature? Does there structure increase or add to their seductiveness?

### Endnotes

1. See Nate Oman's discussion for some nice thoughts about an implication I don't discuss here. The absolute silence of the judges. Only the priest talk to Korihor throughout the narrative. (Oman, Nate, 2008, *Korihor and the United States Reports*, Times and Seasons.)
2. Riddle, Chauncey C., 1977, "Korihor: The Arguments of Apostacy," *Ensign*, 18.
3. Hardy, Grant (Editor), 2003, *The Book of Mormon: A Reader's Edition*, University of Illinois Press, 318.
4. I think Nate Oman nicely frames some of the larger issues involves with law and belief in the Korihor narrative and points out the editorial activity. See, Oman, Nate, 2008, *Korihor and the United States Reports*, Times and Seasons.
5. Lund, Gerald N., 1992, "Countering Korihor's Philosophy," *Ensign*, 18.