

REIGN OF JUDGES  
TITLE OF LIBERTY

by

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FADE IN: Racing over ocean water.

SUPERIMPOSE: Before Columbus, before Erikson and Vespucci... there were others.

Two brothers from Joseph of Egypt's loins, fled their native land to escape the Babylonian raid of 586 BC. From Old World Jerusalem, over the waters they came, seeking a "land of promise." *The New World*.

Laman, being the eldest, received his father's birthright blessing. But he was a defiant son and so his birthright was made conditioned on following his younger brother, Nephi, who had proven himself more deferent.

Envy bred malice and, like Cain of old, Laman conspired to kill his brother. Thus, Nephi took their records, and those who would, fleeing northward in stealth.

Ergo the dawn of two nations. *Nephites* and *Lamanites*; Laman forfeiting his birthright to Nephi and forever branding him a robber and a thief. An age-old grudge lasting 1000 years.

In the meridian of the Nephite empire the age of kings ended. The monarchy surrendered, ushering in a new era of self-government. Alas, some of noble blood moved for the old ways.

Then came the mighty one, whose legacy of freedom would last over 500 years.

"Joseph is a fruitful branch... a fruitful branch near a well... whose branches climb over the wall..." *GENESIS 49:22*

RISE UPWARD over COASTLINE and over a WALL OF TREES.

#### **EXT. WILD COUNTRY - DAY**

SUPER: NEW WORLD... CIRCA 450 AD

A BREAK IN THE TREES-- a **CLOAKED MAN** (50's), running from six large INDIGENOUS WARRIORS; *LAMANITES*.

CLOAKED MAN sprints with remarkable speed; sinewy legs, moving in a blur. Over rocks, around trees, and through brush he maneuvers.

--WARRIORS gaining. LAMBSKIN girded about their loins. Piercings on face and body. WARRIOR ONE draws a SCIMITAR and closes in; *his prey in sights*.

CLOAKED MAN bursts into a small clearing, then suddenly, he halts; slowly drawing back his hood to face the enemy.

Intrepid, yet perfectly mild eyes framed in silver hair; his face tan and weathered, yet fairer-skinned than his hunters. Battle scars. *A lone survivor.*

He throws off his cloak and draws his SWORD. WARRIORS halt, pacing uneasily; like caged wolves waiting for their master's command. Intense silence lingers when-- A METHODICAL VOICE.

KING AARON (O.C.)  
("Scourge him")  
--Inàpinanà.

WARRIOR ONE anxiously steps forward and measures swords with MAN (Cloaked Man). A brief moment as they trade stares when--

SLASH. MAN diverts WARRIOR's sword, slitting his throat! WARRIOR TWO rushes with vengeance. Time slows as MAN parries. Calm precision. Wide eyes--

SLASH. WARRIOR TWO shrieks as he hits the ground, clinching a maimed leg. MAN settles in effortless posture- sword extended; knee down. A vindictive roar as--

WARRIOR THREE lunges toward MAN. Takedown. They grapple, trading high positions, when--

WARRIOR THREE plunges a KNIFE into MAN'S side and takes the upper ground. Arms lock; WARRIOR's knife inching down.

MAN closes his eyes as he struggles when-- WHUMF. A massive arch and MAN sends WARRIOR THREE airborne.

MAN recovers the KNIFE, somersaults forward, and sinks it into WARRIOR THREE'S chest.

A sadness in MAN's eyes as he shakes his head. Rising calmly; physical and emotional fatigue manifest when--

WARRIOR FOUR and FIVE suddenly converge.

Time slows as MAN's expression turns eerily peaceful; eyes close and head falls back. SWORD slips from his fingers-- falling slowly... *At last, he will join his Fathers.*

WARRIOR SCREAMS of aggression intensify when suddenly--

KING AARON (O.C.) (CONT'D)  
("STOP")  
NONGISHKA!

They stop- weapons inches from MAN'S neck. Eyes slowly open as WARRIORS look back to **KING AARON** (60s), who sounds a mouth-clicking gesture, and--

--WARRIORS step aside. KING AARON approaches methodically; senior in age to MAN- lean, strong, and calculated in manner. Skin like MAN's but with a MARK OF RED on his forehead.

KING AARON settles inches from MAN'S face-- **MORONI II.**

KING AARON (CONT'D)

(in English)

At last. The great Moroni. All these years we've hunted your arrogant kind, slaying you all one by one. But the last... always the most satisfying. Tell me *freemen*... Does the last Nephite blood still cry to a God who left you alone to die?

KING AARON runs his hand down the side of MORONI II's breastplate; pauses briefly over his wound, and--

THUD. Pounds into it. MORONI II slumps in pain.

KING AARON (CONT'D)

Deny Him. End this frivolous struggle.

MORONI II lifts his head slowly; eyes worn, but impassive.

KING AARON (CONT'D)

Stubborn. Just like your father. *He named you well, I'm afraid*. Pity the *Mighty Captain* shouldn't be here to witness the end of his legacy.

AARON vacantly returns MORONI II's SWORD and goes to walk away when-- *WHOOSH*. Whirls around in a surprising youth-like maneuver, slashing in ghoulish rage.

WHOOSH-A-CLANG. Barely deflected.

KING AARON (CONT'D)

Forced out of Jerusalem for your Fathers' abominations!

He bombards again; they lock swords.

KING AARON (CONT'D)

Usurped by your Fathers crossing the ocean!

He hurls MORONI II to the ground, stripping his sword.

KING AARON (CONT'D)

Robbed of our treasures!

AARON casts his own sword aside and shucks MORONI II's ARMOR.

KING AARON (CONT'D)  
Bereaved of our birthright.

He withdraws a pace. *Prideful swelling*. MORONI II- now half naked- crawls feebly on the ground; the last of KING AARON'S long-pursued enemies waning into his hands.

A *wild roar*. KING AARON lunges toward MORONI II; his feet crashing down when-- MORONI II rolls out of the way. Miss. Comes again--

THUD. A crushing kick to MORONI II's abdomen-- another to the face-- *POW. Head whips sideways; blood flying.*

Eyes widen as KING AARON'S foot grinds MORONI II'S head into the ground; lips powder with earth. KING AARON slowly kneels behind MORONI II, lifting his head by the hair--

*CHOKER HOLD*. Veins protrude as MORONI II struggles; eyes defiantly hopeful--

KING AARON (CONT'D)  
I will tear this earth apart until I  
find your secret record. I will ravage  
your temples and burn your cities.  
(beat)  
Your *great* captain and his noble  
namesake. Moroni's "cause of freedom"-  
his Title of Liberty... falls with you.

MORONI II sees WARRIOR FOUR recover his CLOAK; HIEROGLYPHIC CHARACTERS flash on its inside as he lifts it from the ground when-- *RIP*. WARRIOR FOUR tears it apart and casts it down as--

WARRIOR FIVE sets it ablaze. MORONI II looks on, eyes abiding; consciousness fading. From below, time slows as MORONI II falls; head thudding down. *Eyes open*. Lifeless.

CLOAK HIEROGLYPHICS consume in the flames as-- AN AGED VOICE.

KING MOSIAH (V.O.)  
*People of Nephi. I soon lie low in the  
dust.*

**EXT. LAND OF NEPHI - SUNRISE - VIGNETTE**

Shafts of SUNRISE flare through a huddle of brawny sons, praying as one; **AMMON** (20s), **AARON** (20s), and their **BROTHERS**.

KING MOSIAH (V.O.)  
*My sons, to whom the kingdom belongs,  
have declined succession, on their  
quest to reclaim our Lamanite brothers.*

The huddle breaks and they disperse separate ways. AMMON looks on, surveying his path, then exits.

**INT. KING MOSIAH'S RESIDENCE - ZARHEMLA - DAY**

An AGED HAND trembles ANCIENT HEBREW CHARACTERS onto papyrus.

SUPER: 500 YEARS EARLIER. 92 BC ZARHEMLA; CAPITAL CITY

KING MOSIAH (V.O.)

*Now, if another king were appointed in their stead, as is nature to seek power, I fear slavery would follow.*

The AGED HAND belongs to **KING MOSIAH** (60s), a beloved age-ailing king. TWO GUARDS sustain him as he continues writing.

KING MOSIAH (V.O.)

*You cannot dethrone a tyrannical king without much bloodshed. With sinister friends and guards about him, he burns the laws of his honorable predecessors.*

**EXT. ZARHEMLA HUMBLE COTTAGE - DAY**

Sweat drips as **ARCHEANTUS** (40s), a strong, noble father, and renown military captain, looks up from working his crops--

CAPITOL MESSENGER

(scroll brandishing)

Archeantus. Urgent decree from the King!

KING MOSIAH (V.O.)

*This... inequality should be no more. -- It is, thus, my last act as your king, to dissolve my crown and pronounce this land of Zarhemla...*

**INT. ZARHEMLA HUMBLE COTTAGE - DAY**

**BOY MORONI** (8), a sober lad, listens as his father reads--

ARCHEANTUS (O.C.)

*... a land of liberty, where every man with his posterity may enjoy their rights and privileges alike. A land... no more subject to kings.*

ARCHEANTUS regards his wife, ADIELA (40s), his DAUGHTER (6) and son, BOY MORONI; all riveted as ARCHEANTUS continues.

ARCHEANTUS (CONT'D)  
 Let us appoint judges, to judge  
 according to our law; and we will newly  
 arrange the affairs of this land. A  
free republic. *A Reign of Judges.*

ARCHEANTUS looks up, giving pause as he gathers his thoughts.

BOY MORONI  
 What does it mean father?

ARCHEANTUS  
 The beginning... of a new life.

Outside, the cottage overlooks a sweeping view of Zarahemla.

## REIGN OF JUDGES

# TITLE OF LIBERTY

### **EXT. CITY OF ZARAHEMLA - PUBLIC SQUARE - DAY**

THOUSANDS of onlookers chatter, waiting anxiously. BOY MORONI takes in the superior view atop ARCHEANTUS' shoulders; ADIELA at his side, DAUGHTER in arms.

All attention is on the DAIS, where TWELVE newly appointed JUDGES sit, including **NEPHIAH** (50s), a humble prefect, and **ALMA** (40s), a renown warrior prophet, as the king announces--

KING MOSIAH  
 On this momentous occasion, we gather  
 as one for a new birth of freedom. Your  
 ballots have been overwhelming. It is  
 my great honor to declare, our first  
 Chief Judge, chosen by your own  
 voices... Chief Judge Alma of  
 Zarahemla.

Approval erupts as ALMA rises. Looking over the CROWD, he spots BOY MORONI. Eyes meet. *A connection.* A mentor perhaps.

### **EXT. ZARAHEMLA HUMBLE COTTAGE - AFTERNOON**

ARCHEANTUS readies his horse as ADIELA adjusts his garment.

ADIELA  
 Let me help you. Archeantus the *Great.*

ARCHEANTUS smiles at the jest.

ADIELA (CONT'D)  
He is like you, you know. He will be great also.

ARCHEANTUS  
No. He will be greater... because he is more like his mother.

They kiss lovingly as ARCHEANTUS lifts her close, then mounts his steed, grinning--

ARCHEANTUS (CONT'D)  
Sure you can get on without me?

Eyes roll as ADIELA slaps his horse into a trot; ARCHEANTUS chuckling as he rides off.

**EXT. ZARHEMLA HUMBLE COTTAGE - FIELD - AFTERNOON**

ANTS scurry up their mound as BOY MORONI observes them intently. He drops a pinch of BREAD in their path and they gather around, struggling to hoist it when--

ARCHEANTUS  
(calling atop his steed)  
Moroni.  
(Moroni turns)  
Come with me son.

**EXT. LAND OF NEPHI BORDER & WILDERNESS - SUNSET**

Hair waves as ARCHEANTUS rides; MORONI sitting in front.

BOY MORONI  
Where are we going father?

ARCHEANTUS smiles, then produces an archaic MEDALLION.

ARCHEANTUS  
I have something for you.  
(puts it in Moroni's hand)  
It was given to me by my father.  
Egyptian gold; said to have come from Joseph himself.  
(re: medallion's insignia)  
This here is a nemes, worn by the Pharaohs. In the middle... the Feather of Maat; a symbol of truth, justice, and virtue-- the foundation of liberty.  
(MORE)

ARCHEANTUS (CONT'D)

At the bottom, the only surviving  
remnant of Joseph's coat.

Boyish eyes exude an unusually keen reverence as--

BOY MORONI

(re: medallion's insignia)

--What are these two branches?

ARCHEANTUS

(fingering along)

Palms. Seed of Nephi; seed of Laman.  
What do you notice at the top?

BOY MORONI sees the branches wrap around each other.

BOY MORONI

--They come together.

ARCHEANTUS

Yes. They come together.

BOY MORONI

But the Lamanites hate us.

ARCHEANTUS

Their hatred is tradition and no man is  
judged by the offense of his fathers.

BOY MORONI fingers along HIEROGLYPHICS on the MEDALLION.

BOY MORONI

"Mighty One."

ARCHEANTUS

There is a prophecy of one mighty and  
strong who will bring order to our  
people.

BOY MORONI

Who is it?

ARCHEANTUS

Can't be proven. --It's certainly not  
me! Who knows... could be you?

BOY MORONI takes in the thought. They share a moment.

BOY MORONI

Sing me our tribute father.

ARCHEANTUS smiles and begins the melody.

## ARCHEANTUS

We all brothers, we all soldiers.  
 Freed from bondage and slavery.  
 We all brothers, we all warriors.  
 Guard our families in bravery.

## ARCHEANTUS (CONT'D)

Allegiance now, allegiance  
 ever.  
 We are as one united.  
 Allegiance now, allegiance  
 ever.  
 Freedom ne'er be blighted.  
 Our freedom ne'er be  
 blighted.

## BOY MORONI

Allegiance now, allegiance  
 ever.  
 We are as one united.  
 Allegiance now, allegiance  
 ever.  
 Freedom ne'er be blighted.  
 Our freedom ne'er be  
 blighted.

## ARCHEANTUS (CONT'D)

(they arrive)  
 Ah, here we are.

BOY MORONI looks up to see-- the border; HIEROGLYPHIC MARKERS  
 crawl by as they ride along when-- a bandage-swathed LAMANITE  
 WOMAN slowly emerges from the trees, hobbling. A *leper*.

BOY MORONI clings to his father, startled. LAMANITE LEPER  
 (WOMAN) turns joyfully to a few others, bidding them come.  
 ARCHEANTUS halts close by; *scanning for danger--*

He extends a SACK with bread and corn; the woman receives it  
 thankfully. BOY MORONI watches her hobble back toward the  
 trees. She turns one last time, her gratitude abounding.

BOY MORONI regards his father; ambivalent. *She's a LAMANITE.*

## ARCHEANTUS (CONT'D)

--The branches... will come together.

They share a moment, then spur on homeward. BOY MORONI  
 glances back, the LEPERS fading from sight as he takes it in.

LAMANITE LEPER slowly sits. A moment of thankfulness before  
 she lifts the bread... about to take a bite when--

*SHH-THUD.* She slumps dead. Impaled by a massive DART with a  
 five-inch-wide, serrated tip. **COHOR** (20s), a craggy-faced,  
 heartless barbarian approaches, striding toward her.

Keeping distance, COHOR flips the bread away from the dead  
 LEPER with another long DART; *the bread of a NEPHITE.* He  
 glowers on the other recoiling LEPERS in retribution, then--

With contempt, he locks on ARCHEANTUS, now long out of range.

Unaware, BOY MORONI looks up at his father as they spur on; ARCHEANTUS smiles back warmly; BOY MORONI peers ahead and--

HE'S SLIGHTLY OLDER NOW.

Shaggy hair; spurring on his own horse, fingering his MEDALLION as it hangs from his neck.

He rides with **BOY LEHI** (10) and **BOY TEANCUM** (10), all led by **BOY AMALICKIAH** (11) and his brother, **BOY AMMORON** (9).

BOY MORONI tucks his MEDALLION into his tunic and peers up. *His expression slowly sinks* as he sees HIEROGLYPHIC MARKERS racing by-- the trees. A sight all too familiar. Oh no.

BOY AMALICKIAH

There it is lassies-- the border. Best hunting around.

BOY MORONI

Amalickiah-- I know a better place.

BOY AMALICKIAH

Nonsense! The best is here.

IN THE WILDERNESS, near the border, a SACK of food jostles on the back of a **CLOAKED GIRL** (9) traveling with **ABISH** (30s).

Riding THE BORDER, BOY AMALICKIAH spots deer. He nocks an ARROW tracking them as they bolt toward the trees when--

A HOBBLING FIGURE breaks his eyeline. BOY MORONI peers ahead as-- LAMANITE LEPERS scatter in fear. BOY AMALICKIAH sits up, disappointed, then spurs on impishly.

IN THE WILDERNESS, CLOAKED GIRL and ABISH approach unawares--

BOY AMALICKIAH (CONT'D)

(re: the lepers)

Ha! Outcasts of Laman. Even better!

BOY MORONI, LEHI, and TEANCUM trade uneasy looks as they follow AMALICKIAH across the border--

CLOAKED GIRL and ABISH spot the LEPERS scattering from--

NEPHITES! Food SACK drops as they duck behind trees.

BOY AMALICKIAH heads off the LEPERS as they throng together. BOY MORONI arrives with the others; the LEPERS aghast as-- BOY AMALICKIAH makes contorted faces. *Mocking.*

CLOAKED GIRL peers from behind the tree as--

BOY AMALICKIAH (CONT'D)  
Hungry?

He throws a half-chomped APPLE at the LEPERS.

BOY LEHI  
Hey! Why you waste'n that?

BOY MORONI mulls uncomfortably as AMALICKIAH aims in jest--

BOY MORONI  
Amalickiah. --Let's hunt.

BOY AMALICKIAH  
Come on. We are hunting!

BOY AMMORON snickers along.

BOY TEANCUM  
We shouldn't be here.

BOY MORONI  
We're trespassing-- in war time.

BOY AMALICKIAH  
I know. --That's why it's fun.

BOY MORONI cedes warily; LEHI and TEANCUM scan for danger.

SH-THUD. ARROW plants into the ground- inches from the LEPERS. THUD. Another teasing miss as CLOAKED GIRL peers on. BOY MORONI watches uneasily while AMALICKIAH nocks again.

Suddenly, BOY MORONI pulls into AMALICKIAH's sites. They stare evenly.

BOY AMALICKIAH (CONT'D)  
Move aside Moroni.  
(Moroni holds)  
They're cursed. We do them a kindness.

CLOAKED GIRL's eyes narrow as she spots BOY MORONI defending her kin when suddenly-- they lock eyes. She ducks behind the tree, breathing deeply.

BOY AMALICKIAH (CONT'D)  
--Very well. Let's hunt.

BOY MORONI hesitates a moment, then wheels about as--

BOY AMALICKIAH (CONT'D)  
(raising his bow again)  
One... last--

*SHHH*-THUD. *WHINNY*. An ARROW impales BOY AMALICKIAH's horse through the neck! *SH-SHOOM*. TWO more whistle passed as AMALICKIAH's thrown from his mount--

Eyes wide as MORONI turns in reaction when--

*WHACK*. Socked aside the head by an incoming stone. Grounded instantly. Time slows as blurry vision makes out COHOR and a DOZEN LAMANITE SPIES closing in; voices echo faintly--

BOY TEANCUM	BOY LEHI
Ride!	Get up Moroni!!

ARROWS RAIN hellfire as BOY MORONI barely remounts his horse. BOY AMALICKIAH scrambles to get up; ARROWS WHISTLING past when suddenly-- he also spots CLOAKED GIRL.

BOY AMMORON  
(panicking)  
Come on. Come on!

BOY AMALICKIAH turns to jump on with MORONI but--

*SH*-THUD. ARROW into BOY AMALICKIAH's calf-- THUD. Another one into his buttocks-- he's down!

BOY MORONI hesitates. Pressure mounting. ARROWS WHISTLING--

BOY LEHI	BOY TEANCUM
What are you waiting for?!	Come Moroni or we all perish together!

BOY MORONI and AMALICKIAH lock eyes. Adrenaline and terror clash. *They know they're in trouble*. --Eyes willing, but panicked, MORONI spurs about defiantly with LEHI and TEANCUM.

AMMORON lingers but AMALICKIAH shakes his head "No".

Against will, BOY AMMORON spurs off to catch up. MORONI's eyes are shaken; *filled with remorse* as he gallops away. He palms for his MEDALLION-- What? It's gone!

Back on BOY AMALICKIAH, reaching feebly as COHOR arrives, rips ARROWS from his flesh, whirls him about, and-- *BACKHAND*.

BLACKNESS

**EXT. LAMANITE VILLAGE - LATER**

FLIES buzzing. Upside-down images sway blearily back and forth. Blurriness slowly hones onto a SPIT POINT-- THUNK.

BOY AMALICKIAH

Ow!

It jabs suddenly, blood dribbling up BOY AMALICKIAH's cheek. A **CHILD LAMANITE** (6) holds the wooden SPIT; joined by a DOZEN LAMANITE CHILDREN filing in with SPITS of their own.

BOY AMALICKIAH's eyes widen as they banter native epithets when-- a sadistic jab game begins.

**EXT. LAMANITE VILLAGE - NIGHT**

FIRE crackles near BOY AMALICKIAH, still hanging upside down from a tree; face swollen. Barely alive. An observing LAMANITE GUARD nods off; bleary-eyed.

Suddenly, BOY MORONI, LEHI, TEANCUM, and AMMORON emerge from behind a log, camouflaged in mud. MORONI signals TEANCUM, who peers toward the GUARD while unwinding TWINE in his hand.

BOY TEANCUM moves furtively over the log, yanks the TWINE tight-- GUARD's ARM twitches; then falls limp as BOY MORONI and LEHI quickly move past.

BOY TEANCUM catches AMALICKIAH while MORONI cuts him lose; AMMORON readies the horses when--

BOY AMALICKIAH slowly comes to and lets out a MOAN--

BOY TEANCUM

Hush-- Sh. Sh--

A CHILD LAMANITE wakes suddenly, pointing in scorn--

LAMANITE CHILD

("Nephites")

Kimòdìwininì!

Tent doors fly open--

*SH-SH-THUNK.* A CELT plants into a tree, inches from BOY MORONI. ARROW grazes TEANCUM as he heaves AMALICKIAH over MORONI's horse. They mount, *spurring like bats out of hell!*

LAMANITES run for their horses-- *Oops.* Empty frayed halters instead. Outside camp, a DOZEN PAINTED HORSES graze calmly as BOY MORONI and company rip past wearing huge grins.

COHOR glowers into the distance, eyes burning.

BOY AMALICKIAH, slightly conscious now as he jostles on MORONI's horse. MORONI shoots him smile but he turns away. *Vacant expression.* BOY MORONI peers ahead, *eyes unsettled.*

All at once, BOY MORONI knows their relationship will never be the same. He cogitates deeply; GRASS TIPS racing by in the moonlight below--

**EXT. ZARHEMLA PROVINCE OPEN FIELD & HILL TOP - DAY**

GRASS TIPS race by below in an open field.

SUPER: TEN YEARS LATER

A MOMENT before-- **LEHI** (20s), strong and well-built, bursts in, dashing urgently through the field.

- ON A HILLTOP, ANTS scurry up their mound as a ruggedly handsome, **MORONI** (20s), observes them closely.

- SANDALS pound the ground as LEHI runs continuous.

- MORONI extends his arm and places a pinch of BREAD in the ANTS' path. It observes, dwarfed by the towering object--

A few failed attempts and the ANT finally succeeds in hoisting the BREAD, ascending the mound robustly. MORONI shakes his head, admiring its herculean strength when--

LEHI (O.C.)  
Moroni. --Moroni!

MORONI turns; rises to full stature. Simple garments steal no attention from his brawny muscle structure. A strapping young warrior marked with the gentleness of an imminent guardian.

*His presence commands allegiance-- summons loyalty.*

LEHI (CONT'D)  
(catching his breath)  
What is it with you and ants? --The city of Ammonihah is laid waste. They've taken hostages. War summons.

MORONI  
--Just as Alma foretold. And Teancum?

LEHI  
You think he'd be late for a fight?

**EXT. ZARHEMLA PROVINCE OPEN FIELD - DAY**

MORONI and LEHI run side by side.

MORONI  
How many?

LEHI

Oh the usual... more than us.

MORONI strides like a horse as the din of battle pre-laps--

**EXT. CITY OF AMMONIAH - OUTSKIRTS - SUNSET**

MORONI charges ahead in the front line. We pull out to see LEHI, **TEANCUM** (20s), over 6 feet with arms like tree trunks, and **AHA** (19), LEHI's brother, all charging together.

LEHI

I should've had a bigger breakfast.

MORONI

Small man. Big appetite.

LEHI

Hey! Who you callin small?

TEANCUM

You'll eat soon enough.

MORONI rallies as the LAMANITES approach combat range. Chief captain **ZORAM** (late 40's), a tired, yet noble Nephite leader, draws his sword atop his steed; army follows suit--

ZORAM

For the republic!

MORONI AND ARMY

Allegiance!

MORONI breaks the collision plane and plunges deep into LAMANITE forces; LEHI and TEANCUM not far behind.

With unparalleled agility, MORONI deflects a LAMANITE scimitar, ducks a javelin, hurdles a swinging club while twisting mid-air to avoid--

WHOOSH. Time slows as ARROW FEATHER grazes MORONI's CHEEK.

EIGHT LAMANITE WARRIORS converge. MORONI derails the first three; the second two lose their sword-bearing arms--

WHUD. A swift blow from MORONI'S elbow and number SIX goes down hard- unconscious.

The remaining TWO WARRIORS share hesitant looks, then charge. MORONI charges counter, grabbing a SECOND SWORD.

WARRIORS' swords converge at MORONI's neck- he limbos, sliding under their assault; SWORDS trim nose hairs as--

MORONI slits their ankles and slides to a stop; he turns to assure they're demobilized. MORONI finds LEHI on the battlefield felling several LAMANITE WARRIORS with precision.

LEHI grins, indicating as TEANCUM plows through a DOZEN LAMANITE WARRIORS and--

*WHUD.* A LAMANITE upends from TEANCUM'S ARM! *Clothesline.*

Looking bored, TEANCUM dispatches a LAMANITE about to club AHA unawares, when-- *FOOSH.* **AMALICKIAH** (20s) - large, strong, and lethal - bursts past him.

AMALICKIAH slits the throat of an approaching LAMANITE, sinks his SWORD HOOK into the leg of ANOTHER-- *SH-FLING.* LAMANITE hurls into the air like a rag doll.

Wasting no time, AMALICKIAH grabs a passing LAMANITE by the throat; leers mercilessly at the struggling enemy when--

*TH-CRUNCH.* LAMANITE meets ground- LAMANITE loses.

AMALICKIAH arrogantly observes his death count when--

*SHH-THUD.* ARROW plunges into his outer shoulder, knocking him back with an unexpected grunt.

He quickly resets, gauging about to identify his assailant. Eyes narrow as AMALICKIAH locks on--

LAMANITE ARCHER. *Paralyzed in trepidation.*

AMALICKIAH breaks off the arrow. *A vengeful smile* as he pursues, drunk with ire. LAMANITE ARCHER frantically nocks and fires again--

AMALICKIAH dodges without skipping a stride.

Another ARROW WHISTLES past-- *MISS.* LAMANITE ARCHER reaches back to a DEPLETED QUIVER-- Dire panic; he turns to flee.

MORONI watches as AMALICKIAH steps onto the back of a slain LAMANITE- atop a stone- launching himself toward the archer.

Time slows- CIRCLE AROUND as AMALICKIAH descends, SWORD reeled back-- *SH-THUD.* Lights out for LAMANITE ARCHER.

AMALICKIAH wipes blood from his face, wrath easing when--

BLARE. A BATTLE SHOFAR blows. All heads turn as-- ARCHEANTUS rides on the bluff atop his steed; **GID** (30s), his guard and MEN in tow, ready to thrash. *Their reputation precedes them.*

LAMANITE SOLDIER 1  
 ("Fearsome One")  
 Kotàganezi.

LAMANITE SOLDIER 2  
 ("It's Fearsome One.")  
 Nisidawinàge Kotàganezi!

LAMANITE SOLDIER 3  
 Kotàganezi!

All at once, *LAMANITES scatter in full retreat*. ARCHEANTUS shares a nod with ZORAM; MORONI, LEHI, and TEANCUM stand down as the enemy decamps--

MORONI looks on, admiring his father as LAMANITES retreat in a blur when suddenly-- MORONI's gaze shifts to AMALICKIAH and they lock eyes. A MOMENT as minds sync. A *memory*--

**EXT. LAND OF ZARHEMLA - BATTLE AFTERMATH - FLASHBACK**

BOY MORONI carries a bruised AMALICKIAH, riding with LEHI, TEANCUM, and AMMORON when-- they halt suddenly. AMALICKIAH lifts his gaze upon something dire. Their faces in shock as--

**EXT. CITY OF AMMONIAH - OUTSKIRTS - SUNSET (AS BEFORE)**

MORONI and AMALICKIAH stare evenly. Measuring one another.

AMALICKIAH's eyes slowly darken, when suddenly-- THUNK. He impales a FLEEING LAMANITE with his SWORD! SLASH. Another FLEEING LAMANITE goes down.

*MORONI's startled*. The battle's over. *It's a needless offensive*. He bolts toward AMALICKIAH, navigating the sea of WARRIORS with remarkable speed, closing in quickly--

MORONI  
 Amalickiah. No!

AMALICKIAH kills unabated when-- WHAM. MORONI bulls into him. Stunned momentarily, AMALICKIAH retrieves his sword, recovers and locks eyes with MORONI. AMALICKIAH rushes!

MORONI instinctively parries.

WHOOSH-A-CLANG. Another deflection!

MORONI (CONT'D)  
 What are you doing?

SH-CLANG. Monstrous blow deflected again!

MORONI (CONT'D)  
 Stand down!

They lock swords.

AMALICKIAH  
 You started this...  
 (re: Lamanites)  
 Why do you defend this scum?

MORONI shoves him into backpedal.

MORONI  
 They're still our brothers. If they  
 withdraw, they deserve their freedom!

SHANK. Disarmed and MORONI thrusts him down-- KER-THUD. Face  
 hits the ground. *Brain jarring* when--

A JAVELIN, lying at arms length.

AMALICKIAH  
 That's your tenet. Not mine.

He grabs the JAVELIN, turning to hurl when-- CRUNCH. JAVELIN  
 split in two. TEANCUM's sword to AMALICKIAH'S throat.

TEANCUM  
 If your life means anything to you--

LEHI and AHA rally behind MORONI; **AMMORON** (19) behind  
 AMALICKIAH when-- *HOOFS gallop in.*

ZORAM  
 What goes here?

TEANCUM stands down. LEHI brandishes a finger at AMALICKIAH.

ZORAM (CONT'D)  
 Tend to the wounded. --Moroni, report  
 to my quarters immediately.

**INT. CHIEF CAPTAIN'S TENT - LATER**

MORONI stands before the captain as he paces--

ZORAM  
 I've had my eye on you for some time  
 Moroni. Your stern actions with fellow  
 comrades; intolerance, rigidness, and  
 absolute obstinacy...

MORONI prepares for the worst--

ZORAM (CONT'D)

--These are exactly the kind of qualities I need in my captains.

MORONI is taken aback; tongue-tied.

MORONI

--Not sure I follow Captain.

ZORAM

I'm advancing you. You're ready... and willing I expect.

MORONI inclines his head; struggles to find words.

ZORAM (CONT'D)

I insist.

MORONI

--Captain please...

(Zoram double-takes)

Your offer lauds me-- My allegiance is willing but my heart... must decline.

ZORAM

--Never in my 15 years as Chief Captain has anyone declined advancement.

MORONI

It lends no pleasure Captain. I will serve my comrades best where I stand.

ZORAM

--You have your reasons.

(turns away smiling)

Moroni, you are a mystery. I love you like a son you know that?

MORONI

Yes. And my blood is yours.

ZORAM

--Keep your blood. Keep the republic.

ZORAM waves him away affectionately as MORONI salutes and exits; ZORAM left pondering the moment's impression.

**EXT. ZARHEMLA PROVINCE HILLTOP - DAY**

CIRCLE AROUND as MORONI, slightly older and larger with a light beard, stands on the hilltop of his youth. Eyes close as he cogitates, hair waving in the breeze when--