

July 1-7, 2024

Alma 17–22

“I WILL MAKE AN INSTRUMENT OF THEE”

Summary:

An account of the sons of Mosiah, who rejected their rights to the kingdom for the word of God, and went up to the land of Nephi to preach to the Lamanites; their sufferings and deliverance—according to the record of Alma.

Comprising chapters 17 through 27.

Alma 17. The sons of Mosiah have the spirit of prophecy and of revelation—They go their several ways to declare the word to the Lamanites—Ammon goes to the land of Ishmael and becomes the servant of King Lamoni—Ammon saves the king’s flocks and slays his enemies at the water of Sebus. [Verses 1–3, about 77 B.C.; Verse 4, about 91– 77 B.C.; and Verses 5–39, about 91 B.C.]

Alma 18 King Lamoni supposes that Ammon is the Great Spirit—Ammon teaches the king about the Creation, God’s dealings with men, and the redemption that comes through Christ—Lamoni believes and falls to the earth as if dead. [About 90 B.C.]

Alma 19. Lamoni receives the light of everlasting life and sees the Redeemer—His household falls into a trance, and many see angels—Ammon is preserved miraculously—He baptizes many and establishes a church among them. [About 90 B.C.]

Alma 20. The Lord sends Ammon to Middoni to deliver his imprisoned brethren—Ammon and Lamoni meet Lamoni’s father, who is king over all the land—Ammon compels the old king to approve the release of his brethren. [About 90 B.C.]

An account of the preaching of Aaron, and Muloki, and their brethren, to the Lamanites.

Comprising chapters 21 through 25.

Alma 21. Aaron teaches the Amalekites about Christ and His Atonement—Aaron and his brethren are imprisoned in Middoni—After their deliverance, they teach in the synagogues and make many converts—Lamoni grants religious freedom to the people in the land of Ishmael. [About 90–77 B.C.]

Alma 22. Aaron teaches Lamoni’s father about the Creation, the Fall of Adam, and the plan of redemption through Christ—The king and all his household are converted—The division of the land between the Nephites and the Lamanites is explained. [About 90–77 B.C.]

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

What do mainstream Jews think of proselytizing?

The chapters being considered in this lesson deal with proselytizing in a very genuine way. Proselytizing is an anathema to Jews and that is the reason proselytizing to Jews is considered by them as part of “antisemitism.” Efforts to convert Jews to Christianity are sometimes regarded as antisemitic. (*European Jewish Press*. Published

September 5, 2008.) Many mainline Christian denominations have publicly declared that they no longer proselytize Jews. (**Ecumenical Considerations on Jewish-Christian Dialogue, World Council of Churches**). Most evangelical and conservative Christian churches have said they will continue their efforts to evangelize among Jews and claim that proselytism is not antisemitic (even if some Jews disagree). (**Why Evangelize the Jews? By Stan Guthrie. Christianity Today. Published March 25, 2008**) Yet, one of the *Hasidic* groups of the Jews, the *Habad*, makes

quite a “propaganda” effort to convert Jews (and others) to become more orthodox or convert to Judaism. “The uniqueness of *Habad* lies in the fact that it tries to reach other Jews and, if not to make ‘*Habadniks*’ out of them, at least to draw them a little closer to Orthodoxy. *Habad* representatives make regular visits to college campuses and military camps. They conduct a once-a-month kindergarten for a small number of Jewish children who live miles away from the nearest synagogue or Jewish school, and they will even send a *Mohel* to circumcise a child on a remote Caribbean Island.” “*Habad* has developed a widespread network of schools, and it was the first *Hasidic* group to open *yeshivot* (religious school) for the study of *Torah* and other religious subjects. They are also very active in attempting to help Russian Jews to emigrate to Israel. They run a strong ‘propaganda’ campaign and, in Jerusalem, the tourist visiting the Western Wall is likely to be approached by a *Habad Hasid* with a pair of *tefillin* (phylacteries) in his hand, suggesting that he put them on then and there.” ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

What is an alternative to evangelizing?

Outside the realm of proselytizing, Israel as a nation, seeks opportunities to be of service to surrounding nations. Recent earthquakes in nearby Turkey and fires in neighboring Cyprus brought scores of Israelis with equipment to their rescue operations. Recent history also includes accounts of Israelis protecting the late King Hussein in neighboring Jordan from assassination attempts. In the Book of Mormon’s accounts of rescues and unusual service, Ammon takes the opportunity afforded him because of his service to the king, to take the King back to the thing he believed (the great spirit) and then bring him forward to an understanding of who the “great spirit” was. We learn something of Ammon’s teaching skills, power and authority as he follows the spirit and takes the king back to creation then forward to prophecies already fulfilled and still anticipated. I would like to think that the Book of Mormon Ammon and Aaron experiences might be a parallel to what

may eventually happen to the Jews in Israel and throughout the world. I also see the foundation of the kind of faith described in Ammon’s and Aaron’s accounts in some of the people in Israel. I sense that, given a chance to stop and start again, many have the character to follow the Lord’s spirit and be part of miraculous experiences. Just look at what they’ve already done without the gifts of spirit and priesthood in building a nation and restoring the land. Modern religious Jews are still anticipating the return of prophets. “When a family performs the *mitzvah* of the *sukkah* (feast of tabernacles) joyfully, they are said to visited in the *sukkah* by seven ‘guests of the festival’ (the *ushpizin*) who are present in spirit. Each day it is customary to invite and welcome one of these seven guests --- Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron and David --- by an appropriate recitation.” ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#)) A religious Jew and those who know the Bible could consider that those messengers have – and will come with power and authority to restore the ancient, original, kingdom, temple, and covenants with God.

What responsibility do I have to overcome misunderstandings?

The challenge lies in the conflict of ideologies and ethnic misunderstandings of some that are widely echoed in media reports. The father of Lamoni was gripped with the rhetoric and even the “pack of lies” of his days. It created the animosity he felt. That kind of animosity exists in Israel, both with some Arabs and some Jews, fed by untruths that a few continue to propagate. In some instances, force needs to be used to stop the hatred that develops. At times, Ammon chose to show his beliefs through force, a force that had righteous intent. In each case, the force was necessary to protect property or to save someone. A look at modern Israel might be compared to these accounts. This could help in determining the length that Israel had to go to, or is going, or might yet have to go to in fulfilling its God- given destiny.

What modern day parallel can I see in Ammon’s and Orson Hyde’s missions?

Shortly after the First Vision in 1830, the Prophet Joseph Smith (1805-1844) who officially organized the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on 6 April 1830, (Passover week, that year), taught that members of the Church were descendants of the biblical Twelve Tribes of Israel – specifically the tribe of Ephraim, and as such shared “Israelite ancestry with the Jews.”ⁱ Smith said, “We [the house of Israel] are the favored people that God has made choice of to bring about the Latter-day glory; it is left for us to participate in and help to roll forward the Latter-day glory, “the dispensation of the fulness of times, when God will gather together all things that are in heaven, and all things that are upon the earth,” “even in one,” when the Saints of God will be gathered in one from every nation, and kindred, and people, and tongue, when the Jews will be gathered together into one.” **(Joseph Smith, Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith, Jr. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1938),p 231)** In 1831, one of the original members of the Quorum of the Twelve, of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Elder Orson Hyde (1805-1878) said, “Joseph Smith (1805-1844), a prophet and servant of the Most High God, did predict upon my head, that I should yet go to the city of Jerusalem, and be a watchman unto the house of Israel, and perform a work there which would greatly facilitate the gathering together of that people.” **(History of the Church 4:375) (Orson Hyde (1805-1878), “A voice from Jerusalem, or a sketch of the travels and ministry of Elder Orson Hyde, p 3)** Some of Hyde’s prophetic dedicatory prayer in Jerusalem included:

“Thou, O Lord, did once move the heart of Cyrus to show favor unto Jerusalem and her children. Do Thou now also be pleased to inspire the hearts of kings and the powers of the earth to look with a friendly eye towards this place, and with a desire to see Thy righteous purposes executed in relation thereto. Let them know that it is Thy good pleasure to restore the kingdom unto Israel raise up Jerusalem as its capital, and constitute her people a distinct nation and government, with David Thy servant, even a descendant from the loins of ancient David to be their king.” “Let that nation or that people who shall take an active part in behalf of Abraham's children, and in the raising up of Jerusalem, find favor in Thy sight. Let not their enemies prevail against them, neither let pestilence or famine overcome them, but let the glory of Israel overshadow them, and the power of the Highest protect them; while that nation or kingdom that will not serve Thee in this glorious work must perish, according to Thy word -- Yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted.” **(History of the Church, vol. 4, pp. 456-57.)**

What does a true proselytizer aspire to do?

The connection to the past and its recall can often take us beyond our present narrow focus and get beyond our present concerns. Even in their fallen state and distant from their forefather’s connection to their homeland, they called a new city, Jerusalem, City of Shalom, City of Peace. Every time peace prevailed, it was because of righteous “power and authority.” Those that have it . . . simply, want to share it!