

August 5-11, 2024

## Alma 39–42

“THE GREAT PLAN OF HAPPINESS”

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### Summary:

The commandments of Alma to his son Corianton.  
Comprising chapters 39 through 42.

*Alma 39. Sexual sin is an abomination—Corianton’s sins kept the Zoramites from receiving the word—Christ’s redemption is retroactive in saving the faithful who preceded it. [About 74B.C.]*

*Alma 40. Christ brings to pass the resurrection of all men—The righteous dead go to paradise and the wicked to outer darkness to await the day of their resurrection—All things will be restored to their proper and perfect frame in the Resurrection. [About 74B.C.]*

*Alma 41. In the Resurrection men come forth to a state of endless happiness or endless misery—Wickedness never was happiness—Carnal men are without God in the world—Every person receives again in the Restoration the characteristics and attributes acquired in mortality. [About 74B.C.]*

*Alma 42. Mortality is a probationary time to enable man to repent and serve God—The Fall brought temporal and spiritual death upon all mankind—Redemption comes through repentance—God Himself atones for the sins of the world—Mercy is for those who repent—All others are subject to God’s justice—Mercy comes because of the Atonement—Only the truly penitent are saved. [About 74 B.C.]*

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### Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

#### How can I better understand the sacredness of sexual behavior?

“Detailed legislation concerning sexual behavior can be found in the Bible as well as in the *Talmud* (written interpretations of Biblical law) and subsequent rabbinic literature. Celibacy (complete abstinence from all sexual activity) is discouraged as an unnatural state and detrimental to the human personality.” “The primary restriction of sexual activity in Jewish law is that it should take place within marriage, as an expression of love between husband and wife as well as out of a desire to fulfill God’s commandments. An element of holiness is added by the laws of *niddah* (separation during the period of menstruation, which ensure that the couple does not indulge in sex on impulse but rather directs the act to holiness).” “In general, moderation and

self-control in sexual activity are encouraged. Chastity, the goal to be aimed for, does not mean the avoidance of all sex but of illegal sex. This includes adultery, incest, sodomy, rape and seduction. Adultery is defined as sexual relations between a married woman and any man other than her husband.” “Judaism encourages modesty as one of the means to chastity. Thus, the Jewish woman is enjoined to dress and act modestly at all times. Furthermore, a man is forbidden to be alone with a woman with whom he is not permitted to have sexual relations from considerations of both chastity and modesty.” (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) The Book of Mormon teachings of Jacob reflect the repeated teachings to the Children of Israel which show concern for family identity and sacredness of marriage, marital companionship and the sanctity of children. “The mother . . . occupied a

place of honor next to her spouse. At his death, if no sons were of age, she could become the legal head of the household. Concern for her welfare as a widow was considered the duty of a good society.”

### **How important is a family and marriage relationship?**

“The successful marriage in the eyes of the prophets and the rabbis was the most perfect symbol of a meaningful and purposeful relationship and was taken by them as the closest approximation to the idealized relationship between God and Israel, and between Israel and the *Torah*.”

“‘Lo, children are a heritage of the Lord; the fruit of the womb is a reward’ (**Psalm 127:3**). In Jewish tradition, the central purpose of marriage is to have children. Children are considered a great blessing; they are the hope and the promise of continuing life. The joys of parenthood bring also many responsibilities and it is the parents' religious duty to fulfill them.”

“As the children grow, they must be educated and trained for their future roles in Jewish life. The father's duty is to provide for his children, to give them a proper education, to teach them a trade, and to prepare them for marriage.” “Great emphasis is placed on the importance of education and religious training, which should begin early in the home. The mother's role is vital since she is the one who creates the home atmosphere in which basic values are fostered and transmitted. She trains her sons and daughters in mitzvot and prepares them for formal education. The rabbis advised parents to be loving but firm in the upbringing of their children and warned against showing favoritism.” “In some communities it is customary for the father to bless his children on the Sabbath eve when he returns from the synagogue.”

“Children are obliged to treat their parents with honor and respect. Children must provide dependent parents with food, clothing and personal attention if it is

necessary. This obligation is removed from a daughter when she marries.”

“Children may not abuse their parents. According to the Bible, if a son is extremely rebellious and incorrigible and refuses to mend his ways (*ben sorer u-moreh*), his parents may agree to bring him to the town elders for judgment and punishment, which could be death by stoning. However, there is no record of such punishment ever having been carried out.” (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

### **How ageless is the principle of respect for wives and children?**

As Jacob rebuked the Nephite men for their mistreatment of their wives and children, so have other prophets given the same counsel. Jewish philosophy carries the same theme. “It is said that a man without a wife lives without joy, blessing and good, and that a man should love his wife as himself and respect her more than himself. Women have greater faith than men and greater powers of discernment. The Torah, the greatest joy of the rabbis, is frequently pictured as a woman and is represented as God's daughter and Israel's bride.” “In modern Israel, the Declaration of Independence ensures complete equality of political and social rights to all its inhabitants, regardless of religion, race, or sex, but the real Magna Carta of the Israeli woman was the Women's Equal Rights Law of 1951, giving women equal legal status with men. The only field of law in which there remains a degree of discrimination against women is that of personal status. Matters of marriage and divorce come within the exclusive jurisdiction of the religious courts and thus, for example, a divorce must be given by the husband to the wife. On the other hand, in accordance with the halakhah, children take the national identity of their mother and not that of their father.” (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

Mistreatment of anybody is simply ungodly. The Jews, as a people,

have experienced mistreatment. That probably makes them more concerned about being kind and removing racial prejudice.

### **When does resurrection begin?**

Alma teaches that there is no resurrection until after the coming of the Messiah. Judaic society, nowadays, has virtually no belief in resurrection or life as such after death. To the Jews, the Messiah has not come; consequently, it is understandable that they do not have an active belief in the resurrection. There are, however, benedictions and other statements with words that seem to connect to a former belief in Resurrection. “. . . *Barukh mehayyeh ha-metim* (‘Blessed be . . . He Who revives the dead’) is therefore also known as *Tehiyyat ha-Metim* (‘Resurrection of the Dead’) . . .” “. . . the righteous of all generations will be reunited at the time of the resurrection of the dead during the messianic period.” “. . . They (*Essenes*) believed in reward and punishment; in immortality of the soul; but not in physical resurrection.” “Some rabbis believed in resurrection. That is that at a certain point in time God will bring everybody back to life and then the world will be a perfect place and physical life will go on indefinitely. This doctrine poses some obvious difficulties: the body actually decomposes after burial so how can it be reconstituted; furthermore, what about overpopulation of the world? Those who believe in resurrection claim that anyway the whole process will be miraculous, and the miracle will solve all the problems. Other rabbis however denied physical resurrection entirely and understood the afterlife to be a completely spiritual experience.” ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

### **What happened to the belief in Resurrection?**

“The argument about resurrection lasted well into the Middle Ages and was one of

the reasons for the sharp attacks against *Maimonides* (1138-1204). Many believed that he denied the doctrine and his views started a controversy that lasted for hundreds of years. In modern times most Jewish theologians do not subscribe to the doctrine of physical resurrection and movements such as Reform Judaism do not consider it to be a necessary belief for the Jew.” “The whole subject of (an) afterlife is not explicitly stated in the Bible and many scholars are of the opinion that belief in (an) afterlife was adopted by Jews during the Babylonian exile after the destruction of the First Temple when they came into contact with eastern religions such as Zoroastrianism.” “The *Sadducees* also rejected the *Pharisaic* belief in the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body, claiming that there is no basis for these beliefs in the Torah.” ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#)) A simple and amusing way to remember a doctrinal difference between the two is that *Pharisees* believed in an expected resurrection, the *Sadducees* did not, (one could say, “that is why they were “sad, you see!”).

### **What are two attributes of God’s relationship with us?**

There are numerous incidents in the scriptures that relate to the concepts of justice and mercy. Jews and Latter-day Saints have similar thoughts on these. “The word *zedakah* literally means ‘righteousness’ or ‘justice’; by their very choice of word the rabbis reveal a great deal of their attitude to the subject, for they see charity not as a favor to the poor but something to which they have a right, and the donor, an obligation.” “The *Hebrew* word for justice is *Zedek*, and indicative of Judaism’s attitude is the fact that another form of the same root *Zedakah*, means ‘charity.’ For justice must be tempered with mercy and indeed the main attribute of God is His integration of justice and mercy. Yet another Hebrew

word derived from the same root is *Zaddik*, which means 'righteous.' The righteous man is one who is both just and merciful." ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

### **What are the two Cherubim on the ark of the covenant called?**

"A unique aspect of the Jewish faith is that although God rules the world with absolute justice, He is also merciful and forgives sins against Him. The doctrine of repentance is based on this belief." ". . . God, as depicted by the rabbis, embodies a combination of justice and mercy, of strict judgment and lenient compassion. This combination of justice and mercy in God --- *Elohim* and *YHWH*. The former stands for justice and the latter for mercy. Though they may seem contradictory, one actually complements the other and, when there is a conflict between the two, God

usually favors mercy." ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#)) Since there is mention of Cherubim in the chapters being studied, I want to suggest a possible physical parallel with justice and mercy. "The Ark of the Covenant stood inside the Holy of Holies and contained the tablets of the Ten Commandments which were given to Moses on Mount Sinai. Hovering over the Ark were two cherubim, each 16-foot high, made of olive wood. Archaeologists believe that each of the cherubim was formed with a lion-like body, a man-shaped head, and two wings. The cherubim were believed to be servants of God whose main task was to guard the Ark." ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#)) The possibility exists that the "law" was guarded by the two cherubim, one representing justice and the other mercy. In other words, to me the law has a relationship of justice and mercy.