

“My Soul is Pained No More”

Lesson
20
Summary

Mosiah 25–28; Alma 36

Scripture Summary:

The people (the Mulekites) of Zarahemla become Nephites—They learn of the people of Alma and of Zeniff—Alma baptizes Limbi and all his people—Mosiah authorizes Alma to organize the Church of God. [About 120 B.C.]

Many members of the Church are led into sin by unbelievers—Alma is promised eternal life—Those who repent and are baptized gain forgiveness—Church members in sin who repent and confess to Alma and to the Lord shall be forgiven; otherwise they shall be excommunicated. [Probably between 120 and 100 B.C.]

Mosiah forbids persecution and enjoins equality—Alma the younger and the four sons of Mosiah seek to destroy the Church—An angel appears and commands them to cease their evil course—Alma is struck dumb—All mankind must be born again to gain salvation—Alma and the sons of Mosiah declare glad tidings. [Probably between 100 and 92 B.C.]

The sons of Mosiah shall have eternal life—They go to preach to the Lamanites—Mosiah translates the Jaredite plates with the two seer stones. [About 92 B.C.]
Alma 36: Alma testifies to Helaman of his conversion by an angel—He suffered the pains of a damned soul; he called upon the name of Jesus, and was then born of God—Sweet joy filled his soul—He saw concourses of angels praising God—His converts have tasted and seen as he did. [About 73 B.C.]

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

Parallel of Gathering and Zionism: Alma preaching and gathering believing people to the Lord is a repeated theme throughout time. It is a characteristic of the House of Israel to be “gathered home.” The word “Zionism” is usually connected with the “gathering” of Jews. Some consider coming to Israel as a return to their ancient roots. Some feel it is a religious experience while others gather in a secular sense. Some of the Jews in the diaspora take years to make up their minds to “gather” while others make up their minds quickly. The State of Israel, although not “religious,” sends emissaries throughout the world to gather assist Jews who wish to reestablish themselves in their ancient homeland. These are called a “Shaliach” and they are somewhat similar to the “Mission Presidents” who administer the work of “emissaries” who bring the blood of Israel “home.”

Gathering is “Going Home”: “Ever since the destruction of the sovereign Jewish state by the Romans in 70 C.E., the Jewish people hoped and prayed for its restoration. From that time onward, the return to Zion became a central theme of Jewish prayer, and even today the Jew, no matter where he is, turns towards the Land of Israel whenever he prays.” “A very important aspect of Zionism was the education of Jews throughout the world towards immigration (*aliyah*) to Erez Israel. For this purpose every group in the Zionist Organization set up youth movements which were described as halutzic (from the word *halutz*, which means a pioneer). These groups also provided practical training for life in Erez Israel. Many even set up training farms to teach the members agriculture.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Conversion is Literal Adoption: Conversion to Judaism is also a literal adoption into the family of Israel. It involves a religious as well as a cultural change and subsequent involvement. “A convert to Judaism is considered a newborn child, and, from the halakhic point of view, he has no father or mother. Thus, if a whole family converts, the children and the parents start their lives as Jews with no legal relationship. Because of this state of affairs, converts are always named as though they were the sons of Abraham, the first Jew. A husband and wife who convert must also have another wedding ceremony in order to be married under Jewish law.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*) LDS converts also have another marriage (sealing) when they go to the Temple.

Protecting the Widow, the Convert by Instruction: “One of the most frequently mentioned *mitzvot* in the Torah is to protect the widow, the convert (the Hebrew word *ger* also means stranger) and the orphan who, like the converts, has no parents. This is because these people are alone in the world they are entering and need help in adjusting to new ways of acting and thinking. This *mitzvah* also helps to counterbalance any possible prejudice against those who are not Jews by birth.”

“A potential convert (or proselyte) is first questioned by a court (*bet din*) of three rabbis. They usually begin by trying to persuade him to give up the idea of joining a nation which has been, and today still is, severely persecuted. If the candidate still affirms sincerely that he is ready to ‘accept the yoke of the commandments,’ he or she must undergo a period of instruction in Judaism, in its laws and practices. After thorough study, when he understands the *mitzvot* and is ready to begin his life as a Jew, the candidate is ready for the rituals of conversion.”

(*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Rituals Repeated: “For both males and females the *bet din* oversees their immersion in a ritual bath (*mikveh*). Males must undergo circumcision. If the man has already been circumcised a symbolic drop of blood is drawn, and the proper blessing said. In Temple times a convert was also obligated to sacrifice a burnt offering of cattle or two young pigeons.”

Still a Question, “Who is a Jew?” “‘Who is a Jew’ is a very controversial political issue in Israel. The Law of Return was amended in 1970 to extend citizenship to the partners, children, and grandchildren of mixed marriages who were not Jews according to *halakhab*. This was done mainly to allow the immigration of thousands who were fleeing persecution in the Soviet Union. Although considered citizens by the civil authorities, they are not regarded as Jews by the Rabbinate and therefore they and their children cannot be married and divorced in Israel. To help these people, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, in 1971, established two schools on Orthodox kibbutzim where prospective converts can undergo intensive courses in Judaism. (A famous proselyte is): Ruth, the Moabite, the great-grandmother of King David, whose descendent is prophesied to be the Messiah of the House of David . . .” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Jewish Customs in Book of Mormon Recognizable: Throughout the Book of Mormon, various “Jewish” customs can be recognized such as the several gatherings or holy convocations in biblical precedents. From the Bible accounts, these include Passover in the spring, Sukkot in the fall, Shavuoth at the beginning of summer as well as Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. It is likely that the gatherings mentioned in the Book of Mormon may coincide with these holidays. The instruction given in those times are similar to those given in LDS conferences today. The history of forefathers is reviewed and lessons using contrasts are used for teaching effects. This is a typical Hebrew way of expression. As an example, Mosiah 24:8 speaks of joy and the next verse speaks of sorrow. Verse 10 speaks of giving thanks and the next one describes pain and anguish.

New Names: In verse 12 there is a parallel in taking on a new name and becoming “citizens.” Verse 15 shows similarity to the LDS area conferences in modern times. Verse 20 strikes a familiar chord to Moses dividing up responsibilities per Jethro’s counsel. Verse 23 tells us that the people took the name of the Lord upon them. As a related item to taking the name of the Lord upon us, let me tell of some small metal plates discovered in a stone box in Jerusalem dating to 600 B.C. that had scripture verses on them. They are displayed in the Israel Museum and contain the words of a priestly blessing.

“Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye will bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The LORDS bless thee, and keep thee: The LORDS make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The LORDS lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. And they will put my name upon the children of Israel. They will; and I will bless them.” (*Numbers 6:23-27*)

Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement: Preceded by ten days of repentance and seeking forgiveness, Yom Kippur is in anticipation of being able to receive the “priestly blessing” of taking the Lord’s name upon oneself and being in tune with the mind of the Lord. The scriptural reading at this holy time is the book of Jonah. He was tormented in the belly of a great fish for three days and three nights. In the Book of Mormon, Alma was tormented for three days and three nights until he recognized the atonement. He became tuned into the mind of the Lord and took the Lord’s name upon himself.

What Do the Urim and Thummim Look Like? The account of Mosiah 28:13 speaks of two rims of a bow with two stones, the Urim and Thummin, used to know the mind of the Lord. The Emeritus General Authority, Patriarch, Eldredge G. Smith once spoke of Joseph Smith describing the Urim and Thummin as two triangular stones connected by silver bows. Detractors of Joseph Smith spoke of them being “magic glasses.” The use of these special revelatory stones has been repeated throughout time. It is a characteristic of the House of Israel.

Daniel Rona, born in Israel and living in Jerusalem has authored Old & New Testament and Book of Mormon Supplement Study Materials to be used in conjunction with the weekly LDS Gospel Doctrine Lesson study. NOTE: Three versions of the supplemental study materials are available *FREE* at www.HolyLandsRevealed.com. (Just click “LDS SUPPLEMENTS”)

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