

May 4-10, 2020

Mosiah 11–17

“A LIGHT . . . THAT CAN NEVER BE DARKENED”

Summary: *King Noah rules in wickedness—He revels in riotous living with his wives and concubines—Abinadi prophesies that the people will be taken into bondage—His life is sought by King Noah. About 160–150 B.C.*

Abinadi is imprisoned for prophesying the destruction of the people and the death of King Noah—The false priests quote the scriptures and pretend to keep the law of Moses—Abinadi begins to teach them the Ten Commandments. [About 148 B.C.]

Abinadi is protected by divine power—He teaches the Ten Commandments—Salvation does not come by the law of Moses alone—God himself shall make an atonement and redeem his people. [About 148 B.C.]

Isaiah speaks Messianically—Messiah’s humiliation and sufferings are set forth—He makes his soul an offering for sin and makes intercession for transgressors—Compare Isaiah 53. [About 148 B.C.]

How Christ is both the Father and the Son—He shall make intercession and bear the transgressions of his people—They and all the holy prophets are his seed—He bringeth to pass the resurrection—Little children have eternal life. [About 148 B.C.]

God redeems men from their lost and fallen state—Those who are carnal remain as though there was no redemption—Christ brings to pass a resurrection to endless life or to endless damnation. [About 148 B.C.]

Alma believes and writes the words of Abinadi—Abinadi suffers death by fire—He prophesies disease and death by fire upon his murderers. [About 148 B.C.]

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

Who does the Prophet speak for?

One of the first things that came to mind in reading

about Abinadi is the parallel with other prophets. One in particular is Jonah. King Noah and his nobles did not repent when the prophet Abinadi spoke to them. However, in Jonah’s case, the king and his nobles heeded the words of God’s chosen prophet. Jonah tells his account in a way that humbly acknowledges that God himself is the Redeemer and that the prophet speaks for Him, not himself. “The phenomenon of prophecy is founded on the basic belief that God makes His Will known to chosen individuals in successive generations. A prophet is a charismatic individual endowed with the divine gift of

both receiving and imparting the message of revelation. A prophet does not choose his profession but is chosen, often against his own will, as in the case of Jonah, to convey the word of God to the people regardless of whether they wish to hear it. The prophet, although conscious of being overwhelmed by the divine word and of being involved in an encounter with God, is still capable of reacting and responding, and may even engage God in dialogue.” “The individuality of the prophet is never affected. No two prophets prophesied in the same style. God speaks to the prophet and the prophet in turn speaks out.” (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

How symbolic is mortal deliverance to an eternal one?

Jonah teaches the atonement through the experience God gives him of being in a great fish three days and three nights. The book of Jonah is read by religious Jews on Yom Kippur, The Day of Atonement. It is accompanied by a full day of fasting and prayer. The prayers given that day ask for forgiveness and for the Lord's spirit to be with them.

How did the Lord choose the timing to give the Lesser and Higher Laws?

Abinadi makes it clear that the Children of Israel preferred a "strict law" rather than following the spirit. The giving of the Law of Moses, as it became known, is celebrated fifty days after Passover, the festival of redemption from Egypt. In the Savior's time, the giving of the Higher Law, the gift of the Holy Ghost, was also fifty days after Passover. This is also called Pentecost, the time of the Hebrew holiday of Shavuot, the giving of the law. Coincidentally, most of us will be studying this lesson close to this year's Shavuot. The profound gift of the Holy Ghost was given so that a witness could be given of the completion of the Savior's atonement process. Being "set at liberty from our bruises" and happy to share our new-found freedom, we need the gifts of the Holy Ghost to be witnesses. Fifty days after the Passover when Jesus was crucified and resurrected there was a "Day of Pentecost." To this day it is a holy day for the Jews, called Shavuot. The most significant thing celebrated is the receiving of the Torah, the Law of Moses. "Shavuot (Hebrew for 'Weeks'), is the name of the festival which celebrates the end of the spring barley harvest and the beginning of the summer wheat and fruit harvests. According to rabbinic tradition, Shavuot is also the day on which the Torah was revealed to the Jewish people on Mount Sinai."

What does Pentecost mean?

"Shavuot is the only holiday for which the Torah does not give a specific date. The biblical text (**Leviticus 23:4**) states that Passover should be celebrated on the fifteenth of the first month (Nisan). It then says 'From the day after the Sabbath . . . you shall keep count [until] seven full weeks have elapsed . . . you shall count fifty days . . . then you shall bring an offering of new grain to the Lord.' What is the meaning of 'the day after the Sabbath?' Does the word 'Sabbath' mean 'Saturday' or does it mean 'the day of rest' which can also apply to the festival? The rabbis of the Talmud understood it in the latter sense and so Shavuot always falls 50 days after the second day of Passover. These 50 days represent the period of the counting of the *Omer*. In English, the festival is often known as Pentecost, from the Greek word which means 'the fiftieth day.'" "The Bible refers to Shavuot as *Hag Shavuot* ('The Festival of Weeks,' **Exodus 34:22; Deuteronomy 16:10**), and *Hag ha-Kazir* ('The Harvest Festival,' **Exodus 23:16**). Shavuot is also called *Yom ha-Bikkurim* ('The Day of the First Fruits,' **Numbers 28:26**) and is, therefore the festival which marks the beginning of the summer fruit harvest as well as the beginning of the wheat harvest. According to the Book of **Leviticus 23:17**, two loaves of bread, baked from the first wheat crop, were brought to the sanctuary as part of the festival offering. According to the Book of **Deuteronomy 16:9**, Shavuot is a holiday on which the entire community is to rejoice 'at the place where the Lord your God will choose to establish His name (Jerusalem).' The observance of Shavuot also included a 'freewill' offering in proportion to one's ability to contribute." "Seven weeks after the Exodus from Egypt a horde of slaves stood before Mount Sinai and freely accepted the spiritual and moral teachings which gave

meaning and depth to their newfound freedom.”

([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

What imagery does Pentecost bring to me?

The imagery of receiving the Torah from above on Shavuot (Jewish Pentecost), leads to understanding the “New Testament” day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost came down. The Holy Ghost came down so that the Savior could go up. Likewise, we must have the Holy Ghost come down on us so that we can go up to our Savior, who will bring us to his and our Father in Heaven. As Moses came down from Mount Sinai, he did shine. “And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him.” ([Exodus 34:30](#)) From his manner of preaching, one may get a glimpse of Abinadi’s countenance as he rebuked the wickedness of the people listening to him. The Children of Israel did not reject the Lord completely. They accepted a “lesser law,” one with strict rules and regulations rather than accept the spirit-guided “higher law.” The people of Nineveh repented. Yet, the people of King Noah rebelled even more, resulting in the martyrdom of the Prophet Abinadi.

What significance is true martyrdom?

Adding some Jewish thought on martyrdom, may have some significance. “Martyrdom is permitted only in the most exceptional circumstances; to lay down one’s life, even for the fulfillment of divine laws, when such sacrifice is not required by law, is regarded as a mortal offense.” “The willingness to sacrifice life rather than faith, is one of the most significant concepts of Judaism, and has paradoxically been a factor in Jewish survival, where other oppressed groups have assimilated and disappeared. The laws of martyrdom were first formulated at

the rabbinic council of Lydda in the second century C.E. when *kiddush ha-Shem* (‘Sanctification of the Name [of God]’) was declared obligatory with regard to three situations: idolatry, unchastity, and murder. Rather than worship idols, commit an unchaste act, or murder, the Jew is commanded to choose death. All other commandments may be violated rather than suffer death. But should a Jew be forced into breaking any commandment in the presence of ten Jews (or more) in order to demonstrate his apostasy (abandonment of faith) he is obliged to sanctify God’s name by choosing death. If ten Jews are not present, he should transgress rather than be killed. These rules were to apply in ‘normal’ times. In periods of persecution of the whole community, however, death was to be chosen even if no other Jews were present. The rabbis understood the first verse of the *Shema*, ‘And you shall love the Lord your God . . . with all your soul,’ as meaning even if He demands your soul from you, and, indeed, the proclamation of the *Shema*, ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One,’ was the phrase with which martyrs went to their death.” “Martyrdom when sacrifice was not obligatory became a matter of dispute. Maimonides held that one who chose death when the law decided for life was guilty of an offense. Others, like the tosafists and most medieval Jews of Germany, considered such voluntary death praiseworthy. The sages of the Talmud were divided as to whether gentiles are required to sanctify God’s name by martyrdom. Rava maintained that rather than break one of the Noachide laws, the gentile should choose death.” ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

Who were some righteous ones who gave their lives?

“Jewish history is replete with examples of those willing to die for their faith from Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who in the Book of Daniel refused to worship an idol and thus endangered their lives, up to the present generation of Soviet Jews who suffer indescribable hardships rather than give up their Jewishness.” “In modern times, the lessening of religious fanaticism, and growing secularization of Jewish life, accompanied by trends toward assimilation and emancipation, have led to the disintegration of Jewish values; as the necessity for self-sacrifice diminished, so the idea of *kiddush ha-Shem* appeared to lose its significance. However, renewed persecution under the Nazis revived the ancient tradition in the ghettos and concentration camps of Europe and very many cases of honorable death among the six million who perished must have gone unrecorded.” (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

What courage did it takes to speak out for truth?

Another example of the Lord’s prophet speaking out against the people - at the peril of his own life - was Jeremiah. He, like Abinadi, prophesied against the government and the people who followed their wickedness. “Therefore the princes said unto the king, We beseech thee, let this man be put to death: for thus he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them: for this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt. Then Zedekiah the king said, Behold, he is in your hand: for the king is not he that can do any thing against you. Then took they Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the son of Hammelech, that was in the court of the prison: and they let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the

dungeon there was no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sunk in the mire.”

(**Jeremiah 38:4-6**)

How did prophets become models of the Savior?

These prophets were models of their Master, the Savior, who would prophesy against the corrupt part of the Jewish government and the people who followed their wickedness. “And after all this, after working many mighty miracles among the children of men, he shall be led, yea, even as Isaiah said, as a sheep before the shearer is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. Yea, even so he shall be led, crucified, and slain, the flesh becoming subject even unto death, the will of the Son being swallowed up in the will of the Father.” (**Mosiah 15:6-7**) Abinadi knew that those who listen with their hearts and their spirits, would be redeemed and become his seed.

What is a false martyr?

In these modern times, evil pretenders “give their lives” to further their misguided cause. They pretend that they are using religion as a worthy reason for their and other’s deaths. These are false martyrs that tear down and destroy. True martyrs seal their testimonies of the Redeemer, the Savior, the Giver of Life with their lives. These are true prophets who leave a legacy of life. As tragic as their deaths may be for those so close to them, they build a future. They lead us to God.

Could I be that “one?”

“For these are they whose sins he has borne; these are they for whom he has died, to redeem them from their transgressions. And now, are they not his seed? Yea, and are not the prophets, every one that has opened his mouth to prophesy, that has not fallen into transgression, I mean all the holy

prophets ever since the world began? I say unto you that they are his seed. And these are they who have published peace, who have brought good tidings of good, who have published salvation; and said unto Zion: Thy God reigneth!" (**Mosiah 15:12-14**) As Abinadi gave his life, he succeeded in reaching through the crowd of wickedness to one soul. One Alma, listens to the voice of the prophet. More importantly, he felt the spirit of the Lord and he became a prophet to speak to the people for God.