

June 8-14, 2020

Alma 8–12

JESUS CHRIST WILL COME TO REDEEM HIS PEOPLE

Summary: *Alma preaches and baptizes in Melek—He is rejected in Ammonihah and leaves—An angel commands him to return and cry repentance unto the people—He is received by Amulek, and the two of them preach in Ammonihah. [About 82 B.C.]*

Alma commands the people of Ammonihah to repent—The Lord will be merciful to the Lamanites in the last days—If the Nephites forsake the light, they will be destroyed by the Lamanites—The Son of God will come soon—He will redeem those who repent, are baptized, and have faith in His name. [About 82 B.C.]

Lehi descended from Manasseh—Amulek recounts the angelic command that he care for Alma—The prayers of the righteous cause the people to be spared—Unrighteous lawyers and judges lay the foundation of the destruction of the people. [About 82 B.C.]

The Nephite monetary system is set forth—Amulek contends with Zeezrom—Christ will not save people in their sins—Only those who inherit the kingdom of heaven are saved—All men will rise in immortality—There is no death after the Resurrection. [About 82 B.C.]

Alma speaks to Zeezrom—The mysteries of God can be given only to the faithful—Men are judged by their thoughts, beliefs, words, and works—The wicked will suffer a spiritual death—This mortal life is a probationary state—The plan of redemption brings to pass the Resurrection and, through faith, a remission of sins—The repentant have a claim on mercy through the Only Begotten Son. About [82 B.C.]

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

What value is there in an “order” or “authority” of religious and

secular matters?

The opening statement of Alma, chapter eight, refers to the “order of the Church.” The Lord always had an order of governing the affairs of his dealings with his children. Modern Judaism struggles with a lack of religious order. There are many disputations among Jews themselves about the interpretations of Jewish law, yet the State of Israel provides a framework that is supposed to allow religious freedom. “Israel's Declaration of Independence guarantees religious freedom and the safeguarding of holy places for all peoples ‘without distinction of creed, race or sex.’ And, in fact, communities

from all the major religions of the world live side by side in Israel, attending their own centers of worship and maintaining their own traditions. The Ministry of Religious Affairs works closely with religious leaders of all denominations to ensure religious equality. Each religious community has its own courts with jurisdiction over personal matters, and their own community schools, should parents opt for a religious education.”
([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

What conflicts are there in secular vs religious law?

“Nevertheless, the problem of maintaining a balance between the religious and the secular has caused problems in Israel and has been the subject of many political disputes. For example, the Orthodox wing believes that all traffic and public works should

stop on the Sabbath. The non-religious, however, feel that this is tantamount to forcing religious observance on others. This results in a certain amount of inconsistency in national policy. In Jerusalem, no buses run on Sabbath while in Haifa there is public transport on that day. In the cities, some cafes and places of entertainment, such as movie houses, are open on the Sabbath. Yet, there are certain Orthodox neighborhoods completely blocked off to all vehicles, both public and private.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

How did the Israeli legal system evolve?

The State of Israel has established a legal system based on Biblical law yet it is greatly influenced by the British system of Law established during the Mandate period prior to Israel becoming a state. Some modern/biblical considerations of legal terms follow. The first includes information about witnesses. That is followed by some insight about lawyers and “pleaders.” “The laws involving witness are many. Not all people are qualified to testify before the court. Among those not admissible are slaves, minors (before bar mitzvah), lunatics, the deaf and dumb, the blind, criminals who have not repented their crime, relatives of any party involved in the case or the judges, one who stands to gain from his testimony, and, in certain cases, women.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

What are the responsibilities and requirements of witnesses?

“Any person who has seen the event but does not testify is liable to punishment which will be meted out to him by God. In criminal cases the witness is under obligation to testify of his own accord; in

civil cases the duty to testify arises only when the man is summoned to do so.” “The court warns the witnesses that bearing false witness is a serious crime and each witness is investigated and interrogated separately in order to make sure that he is not lying. If it is established that the witnesses have testified falsely, they are disqualified from ever bearing witness again and, under certain circumstances . . . the same punishment the accused would have received had he been convicted. If one witness should contradict another, or say something contradicted by fact --- the testimony is rejected. The Bible declares that in order to convict, the evidence must be given by at least two witnesses. However, in certain cases such as those requiring an oath, a single witness is valid. A testimony must be given by the witness himself and not by another who says that he heard such a testimony. Acceptable witnesses who sign a document render it valid.” “Halakhic requirements of the marriage ceremony include: the *huppah* (canopy); the giving of the ring by the groom to the bride in the presence of two valid witnesses;” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

What reasons would compel no “swearing-in” of a witness?

“Today in courts in most countries, it is common practice to ‘swear in’ all witnesses. Jewish law never adopted this custom, preferring to accept testimony without the administration of an oath, as long as there were at least two witnesses who corroborated each other’s testimony, as well as other supportive evidence. Testimony given under oath was, in fact, considered to be a particularly weak form of evidence, and it was only accepted when there was a complete lack of something

better. When the judicial oath was administered, it was only used in civil cases and then not to the witnesses but to the defendant, or less often, to the plaintiff. In capital cases, a judicial oath was never administered, since it was assumed that no one charged with a capital crime could be believed, even under oath." ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

How is perjury handled?

"In Jewish law, perjury can only be proven by the evidence of two other witnesses who both testify that the perjurer could not have been present at the time and place he claims. These second witnesses must give their evidence in the presence of the first witness. Only in this way can the charge of perjury be leveled: if the second witnesses simply disagree with the first but cannot break his alibi, or if the second witnesses do not offer their refutation in front of the first, this constitutes not perjury, but contradiction in which case all the evidence is disregarded." "The punishment for perjury is laid down in [Deuteronomy 19:19--21](#): 'You shall do to him as he schemed to do to his fellow (i.e., the accused).' There was considerable discussion on the death sentence for perjurers, complicated by a debate on whether a perjurer who had intended to kill by his false testimony, but had not in fact succeeded in doing so, was himself liable for execution. The law was interpreted to mean that a perjurer should suffer what he had schemed to do, not what had occurred, but in practice the death sentence was rarely carried out for any offense . . . perjurers were usually fined or flogged . . . never allowed to act as witnesses again . . . convictions for perjury were widely publicized."

([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

How is a Rabbi similar to a Lawyer?

The term "Rabbi" used to mean one trained in the law, or in other words, a lawyer. The higher degrees of Rabbi would have been the judges and court leaders. "During the 19th century, the functions of the rabbi began to change and many communities demanded that their leaders be versed not only in Talmud and Jewish law but also in secular studies. To meet these new conditions, rabbinical seminaries were organized, issuing a variety of 'rabbinical degrees.'" "The Hebrew word for court is *bet din* (plural: *battei din*), which literally means 'house of judgment'; in rabbinic literature it is the term for a Jewish court of law. We find *battei din* which handle the legal problems of the Israelites from the times of Moses. The rule of the law is an important principle of Judaism. The Torah stresses that justice must not be meted out by the parties themselves but must be administered by impartial judges." ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

What legal system is preferred, even in secular issues?

"The courts would deal with criminal law as well as all cases between two parties such as for damages and inheritance, decide on the status of individuals and objects as far as purity and *kashrut* were concerned, besides clarifying such laws as those regarding the Sabbath and festivals." "Rabbinic courts continued to be established even when the Jews went into exile. In those countries of exile where the Jews enjoyed judicial autonomy the rabbinical courts dealt with all matters and also imposed the special regulations made by the community. In some countries, cases involving both Christians and Jews

could be heard by the *bet din* as long as an equal number of Christian and Jewish witnesses, or an equal number of judges were involved. The *bet din* followed Jewish Law, except in such matters as taxes or pledges of loans, which were often disposed of according to the law of the land. In some countries the Jewish legal system was under the jurisdiction of an officially appointed chief rabbi. In the modern period when such autonomy has disappeared, the function of the *bet din* has been limited to purely religious matters.

Nevertheless, throughout the ages Jews have been encouraged to bring their disputes before a *bet din* rather than a secular court, and in the Middle Ages any Jew turning to a secular court to decide a dispute with another Jew was considered a traitor to the Jewish people.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

How does the Israeli Supreme Rabbinical Court function?

“In Israel today, where an elaborate network of *battei din* has been established under the Supreme Rabbinical Court of Israel, the term *bet din* has come to mean the rabbinic court which has, by act of the Knesset, jurisdiction in matters of personal status in addition to its normal religious function.” “In a *bet din* there were no lawyers either for the defense or the prosecution. The judges themselves questioned the witnesses and the parties involved and arrived at their own conclusions. In the State of Israel, however, there are men who are known as ‘pleaders’ who represent people appearing before the *bet din*.”

(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

How is the debate process viewed in modern times?

The history of disputations or polemics is common in Judaism, both biblically and in more recent times. The arguments, proving and disproving, appeared both positively and negatively, for and against, the Jews. It is human nature, yet more so, a characteristic of Jewish culture to have two-sided debates. “Throughout history Jews have often been called on to defend their faith against non-believers in public debates known as disputations or polemics.

Often these disputations were conducted in friendly atmospheres of mutual respect, but all too often these debates took on aspects of bitterness.” “The developing rift between Christianity and Judaism and the animosity after their final split in the second century C.E. produced many great disputations. A crucial one occurred about the time of the Bar Kokhba revolt (c. 135 C.E.) between the Christian Justin Martyr and the Jew Tryphon. While the two adversaries expressed friendship toward each other, the argument became bitter.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

How did disputations and arguments develop?

“Christian-Jewish disputation continued and Muslim-Jewish debates, which began in the 10th century, developed as well. Questions concerning the text of the Bible and Jewish way of life were discussed. The Jews questioned the Koran's value and attacked Muhammad in the process.” “Nahmanides defended Judaism at the famous Disputation of Barcelona in 1263. Fearlessly questioning the nature of Christian authority and teaching, Nahmanides asked why, if the Messiah had come, the world was still torn by war. He was declared the victor and given a monetary prize for his efforts.”

“Disputations still occurred in the 20th century. Franz Rosenzweig corresponded with the Christian philosopher Eugene Rosenstock Huessy, and Martin Buber was in disputation with Karl Ludwig Schmidt as the anti-Jewish laws were being implemented in Germany in 1933. In the face of Nazi Germany, Buber declared: ‘We also know, as we know that there exists air that we take into our lungs, that there exists the plane on which we move; nay, deeper, more truly we know that world history has not yet been probed to its roots, that the world is not yet redeemed.’ These disputations have traditionally seen some of history’s most elegant and powerful defenses of the Jewish faith.” “Within Judaism the polemics, or scholarly arguments, have been almost as bitter. From the Talmudic period when the Sadducees and Samaritans were in dispute with traditional Judaism, disputes have been frequent. Purely halakhic and rabbinic disputes were usually dealt within question-and-answer and other literary forms. However, battles over Kabbalah, ordination of rabbis and Maimonides’ *Guide of the Perplexed* were more substantial. The fiercest controversies in Jewish history were those arising over Shabbateanism.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.) Shabbetai Zvi, (1626-1676), was one who claimed to be the Messiah and eventually led a failing Aliyah (immigration) to the land of Israel. “Shabbateanism, the movement which arose around him, was one of the largest of the messianic movements. The extreme zeal of his supporters as well as his detractors nearly tore Judaism apart and the movement continued to be influential for over two centuries.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

How did disputation of “gathering,” or reestablishing Israel arise?

Another noteworthy disputation came from the “Satmar Rabbi.” He argued that the Aliyah to the Land of Israel was an evil trick and thus against God’s will. He felt that the establishment of Israel as a modern nation was wrong. “Satmar (is the) name of a small, contemporary Hasidic sect, distinguished by its fanatical opposition to Zionism and the State of Israel. It takes its name from the hometown of its leader, Joel Teitelbaum of Satmar (1888--1979), and most of its adherents reside in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, New York.” “Teitelbaum was an exceedingly sharp polemicist who combined extreme fanaticism with a forceful personality . . . he regarded the Holocaust of European Jews as a direct punishment for secular Zionism . . . Teitelbaum opposed the use of Hebrew as a spoken language, since he believed that it secularized and profaned the holy tongue. He forbade the Hasidim living in his community to cooperate with State institutions and he ordered those living in Israel not to take the oath of loyalty to the State, not to take part in elections, and not to make use of its law courts or legal system.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

What kind of agreements can come from disputations?

These kinds of disputations have drawn Jews away from dialogues with believers in Jesus, the Messiah. Disputations require some learning of the other’s point of view. Jews know very little about Jesus’ restoration of the original order that Father in Heaven gave Adam and his children. However, in the last days, more and more Jews are becoming aware that religious order

was restored from time to time throughout history and that there may need for a final restoration that has to happen in these latter-days. These restorations consistently review the “beginning to the end,” the plan of salvation, the true order of God.