

June 29-July 5, 2020

Alma 23–29

“THEY NEVER DID FALL AWAY”

Summary: *Religious freedom is proclaimed—The Lamanites in seven lands and cities are converted—They call themselves Anti-Nephi-Lehies and are freed from the curse—The Amalekites and the Amulonites reject the truth. [About 90–77 B.C.]*

The Lamanites come against the people of God—The Anti-Nephi-Lehies rejoice in Christ and are visited by angels—They choose to suffer death rather than to defend themselves—More Lamanites are converted. [About 90–77 B.C.]

Lamanite aggressions spread—The seed of the priests of Noah perish as Abinadi prophesied—Many Lamanites are converted and join the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi—They believe in Christ and keep the law of Moses. [About 90–77 B.C.]

Ammon glories in the Lord—The faithful are strengthened by the Lord and are given knowledge—By faith men may bring thousands of souls unto repentance—God has all power and comprehendeth all things. [About 90–77 B.C.]

The Lord commands Ammon to lead the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi to safety—Upon meeting Alma, Ammon’s joy exhausts his strength—The Nephites give them the land of Jershon—They are called the people of Ammon. [Between 90 and 77 B.C.]

The Lamanites are defeated in a tremendous battle—Tens of thousands are slain—The wicked are consigned to a state of endless woe; the righteous attain a never-ending happiness. [About 76 B.C.]

Alma desires to cry repentance with angelic zeal—The Lord grants teachers for all nations—Alma glories in the Lord’s work and in the success of Ammon and his brethren. [About 76 B.C.]

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

How common are proclamations?

The proclamation we read about in these chapters of

the Book of Mormon, reminds me of a few other outstanding proclamations (among many) that affect Israel as a people.

What was an Old Testament proclamation?

“Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem,

which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? The LORD his God be with him, and let him go up.”

(2 Chronicles 36:22-23)

What was the first proclamation of the restoration?

The Apostle, Orson Hyde, went to Europe with a proclamation for the Christians and the Jews to heed the restoration and recognize that the keys of the gathering of Israel had been restored to earth as they were given to the Prophet Joseph Smith. Orson Hyde's Credentials to Palestine included the following.

“To all people unto whom these presents shall come, Greeting - Be it known that we, the constituted authorities of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, assembled in Conference at Nauvoo, Hancock county, and

state of Illinois, on the sixth day of April, in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and forty, considering an important event at hand, an event involving the interest and fate of the Gentile nations throughout the world – from the signs of the times and from declarations contained in the oracles of God, we are forced to come to this conclusion. The Jewish nations have been scattered abroad among the Gentiles for a long period; and in our estimation, the time of the commencement of their return to the Holy Land has already arrived. As this scattered and persecuted people are set among the Gentiles as a sign unto them of the second coming of the Messiah, and also of the overthrow of the present kingdoms and governments of the earth, by the potency of His Almighty arm in scattering famine and pestilence like the frosts and snows of winter, and sending the sword with nation against nation to bathe it in each other's blood; it is highly important, in our opinion, that the present views and movements of the Jewish people be sought after and laid before the American people, for their consideration, their profit and their learning.”

“And feeling it to be our duty to employ the most efficient means in our power to save the children of men from ‘the abomination that maketh desolate,’ we have, by the counsel of the Holy Spirit, appointed Elder Orson Hyde, the bearer of these presents, a faithful and worthy minister of Jesus Christ, to be our Agent and Representative in foreign lands, to

visit the cities of London, Amsterdam, Constantinople, and Jerusalem; and also other places that he may deem expedient; and converse with the priests, rulers, and elders of the Jews, and obtain from them all the information possible, and communicate the same to some principal paper for publication, that it may have a general circulation throughout the United States.”

“Given under our hands at the time and place before mentioned.
JOSEPH SMITH, Jun., Chairman.
ROBERT B. THOMPSON, Clerk”
([History of the Church, Vol.4, Ch.6, p.112-113](#))

What governmental proclamation affected the gathering of the Jews?

Joseph Fielding Smith reminds us of a more recent proclamation, prompted by the spirit spreading after the keys of the gathering of Israel were restored. “The Balfour proclamation thus endorsed by the United States government brought great joy to thousands of downtrodden and persecuted Jews, and under the protection of Great Britain they commenced to gather in Palestine in great numbers, fulfilling partially the words of Isaiah.” ([Joseph Fielding Smith, The Restoration of All Things, p.151](#))

How did Apostle Orson Hydes’ proclamation affect the rest of the world?

The Apostle, Orson Hyde also pronounced blessings and “cursings” on those who would help the people of Israel or, on the other hand, who would not help them. “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, Ch.26, p.457)

How necessary are “blessings and cursings?”

Another blessing and curse were discovered in an archaeological excavation along the Dead Sea. Usually curses are not defined, but are mentioned often in Biblical and other Jewish writings. “Excavations in 1970 brought to light the remains of a Jewish community in the Byzantine period. Their synagogue had a beautiful mosaic floor depicting peacocks eating grapes, and the words ‘Peace on Israel,’ as well as a unique inscription consisting of 18 lines, part of which calls down a curse on ‘anyone causing a controversy between a man and his fellows or who slanders his friends before the gentiles or steals the property of his friends . . .’” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.) Some Israelis joke that Israel’s curse is its constant source of controversies, the “opposite point of view.” One growing controversy is about military involvement. As effective as Israel has been in the past in its military stewardship in maintaining its identity, there is a small but growing number of youth who object to serving in the military. Some of that may be laziness or inconvenience. However, there are some “conscientious objectors.” There may be a growing feeling to get to the turning of “swords to plowshares.” “And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD’S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye,

and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.” (Isaiah 2:2-4)

When did winning or losing make little difference?

Historically, in almost every part of the earth, for those who are angry and have a constant history of fighting, winning or losing made little difference. Once a battle or war would end, they would simply continue to fight someone else. They thrived on the “fighting” more than the “conquering” a particular enemy. Obviously, Alma saw the contrast between sorrow and peace. His wish that he could be an angel to bring more people to peace is poetic. Yet, in Jewish thought, man has more power than an angel! “. . . angels are assigned to countries, and thus there are angels who must not leave Erez Israel; angels walk upright and speak Hebrew; and they have no needs or free will. Man, because he does have free will and must conquer his evil inclination, is considered more important than the angels.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

How can a person harness the power of God?

Alma’s gratitude for the blessings of peace is almost like boasting; however, he acknowledges the power of God and not his own. He gives us a model to follow. “For although a man may have many revelations, and have power to do many mighty works, yet if he boasts in his own strength, and sets at naught the

counsels of God, and follows after the dictates of his own will and carnal desires, he must fall and incur the vengeance of a just God upon him.” (**Doctrine & Covenants 3:4**) The opposite is a humility that opens the soul to the mysteries of God. A synonym for “mysteries” is the “subtle understanding” of God’s word. This is available through the “Gift of the Holy Ghost.” “For he that diligently seeketh shall find; and the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto them, by the power of the Holy Ghost, as well in these times as in times of old, and as well in times of old as in times to come; wherefore, the course of the Lord is one eternal round.” (**1 Nephi 10:19**)

How can historical conflict change into brotherhood?

As the Book of Mormon experiences relate, people with a history of conflict can and did become brothers and sisters. Unfortunately, today Israel is thought of as a nation of conflicting people. Yet, living in Israel, I can say that most Jews and and using weapons to express their opinions.

Arabs get along with each other. There are Arabs and Jews that truly love each other. In Israel, my own home teaching companion was Mohammed AlShiabet from Bethlehem/BetSahour – an Arab and a Jew working for the Lord, in seeking the well being of his children! It is so similar to the Lamanite and Nephite account in the chapters we are studying.

How can and does history repeat itself?

There is an interesting model for today in that a portion of land was given by the Nephites to the “Anti-Nephi-Lehites,” former Lamanites. Protection was also provided for them. The difference in Israel right now is that the Arabs who call themselves Palestinians have not converted nor have they committed to bury their weapons. Many Arabs and Jews in Israel are anxiously awaiting “proclamations” of peace, substantive proclamations that include a departure from fighting