

July 6-12, 2020

# Alma 30–31

“THE VIRTUE OF THE WORD OF GOD”

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**Summary:** *Korihor, the antichrist, ridicules Christ, the atonement, and the spirit of prophecy—He teaches that there is no God, no fall of man, no penalty for sin, and no Christ—Alma testifies that Christ shall come and that all things denote there is a God—Korihor demands a sign and is struck dumb—The devil had appeared to Korihor as an angel and taught him what to say—He is trodden down and dies. [About 74 B.C.]*

*Alma heads a mission to reclaim the apostate Zoramites—The Zoramites deny Christ, believe in a false concept of election, and worship with set prayers—The missionaries are filled with the Holy Spirit—Their afflictions are swallowed up in the joy of Christ. [About 74 B.C.]*

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## Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

### What are the Jewish burial practices?

The lesson material begins with a brief description of death,

mourning and burial. In Judaism, there has always been a great deal of procedure surrounding death. There is an immediate preparation of the body which includes washing, completely immersing and anointing of the dead. There are periods of mourning. The immediate mourning after death is called Shiva. It is derived from the word for seven and Shiva continues for seven days. Another period of mourning continues on for a month. There is also an annual remembrance of death called Yartzzeit.

### How is respect shown by Jews at a death?

“When a person dies, the body is covered with a sheet and a lighted candle placed at the head. There is an ancient custom to cover all the mirrors in the house and to pour out any water that was in containers or vessels at the time of death. This latter practice may be the result of superstitious beliefs but it has been suggested that it was a way to tell the neighbors that a death had occurred without having to say the actual words. In strictly Orthodox circles it is customary for men to stay with the body from the time of death until the

funeral and recite the Book of Psalms. This is a sign of respect to the deceased.”  
([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

### What symbolism is the white sheet?

There is a certain symbolism to covering the dead with a white sheet. The emblems of the sacrament are covered with a white sheet in remembrance of His death and resurrection. The pouring out of water can also be seen as symbolic of “living water” being removed. It should be noted that mourning is suspended on the Sabbath. To continue the symbolism, it seems that mourning is suspended on Sabbath because that is the Lord’s day.

### How long is the mourning period?

“Shivah . . . is the Hebrew for ‘seven’ and refers to the seven-day period of mourning which starts immediately after the funeral. All those required to mourn stay indoors (normally at the house of the deceased) for the week. They sit on low stools or on the floor and may not wear shoes made of leather. At the funeral, the relatives perform the rite of *keri’ah*, which is making a tear in the lapel of their outer garments. During the week of *shivah* they wear the torn clothes. A very ancient custom is for neighbors and friends to prepare the first meal for the mourners on their return from the funeral.” “The

mourning is suspended for the Sabbath and should a major festival occur during the week, it stops the *shivah* altogether.” “After the *shivah*, a modified period of mourning continues till the thirtieth (Hebrew: *sheloshim*) day after death. During this period the mourner should not attend places of entertainment or participate in social gatherings. A mourner may not marry during the *sheloshim*. When mourning for parents many of these laws apply for the whole year after death, and a son recites the *Kaddish* at the daily services for the whole year.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

### **What is done at the annual mourning date?**

“Yahrzeit . . . is a Yiddish word which comes from the German meaning ‘year-time’ or anniversary. Among Ashkenazi Jews it has come to refer exclusively to the anniversary of the death of a relative for whom one was required to mourn. The anniversary is according to the Hebrew date of death, and so in the secular calendar it will be on different dates each year. Very pious people observe a fast on the *yahrzeit* of parents and it is the general custom that a candle or light is kindled for the whole day, and that a mourner who is able to, leads the daily services on that day. Sons recite the *Kaddish* prayer on the *yahrzeit* of parents.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.) There are other occasions of mourning that include remembrance of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem as well as experiencing blasphemy. “Tish’ah be-av [is] (the ninth day of the Hebrew month of Av, usually falling within the first week of August) is the traditional day of mourning for the destruction of the Temples in Jerusalem. It is the culmination of the three weeks of mourning that start on the 17th of Tammuz. On Tish’ah be-Av in the year 586 B.C.E., the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar stormed the great

Temple built by Solomon, turned its marbled columns and gilded rooms into a useless pile of rubble and exiled Jerusalem's inhabitants.” “. . . the code of Jewish law, tells us that whoever hears blasphemy in any language from a Jew must tear his garment as if he were in mourning.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

### **How is proselytizing viewed by Jews?**

To many Jews, Christian missionary work among the Jews is considered blasphemy and even anti Semitic. The late Rabbi Goldstein in Jerusalem counteracted this activity by conducting seminars and lectures to refute missionaries and Christian polemics. “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.” “In the Greco-Roman era, pagan polytheism challenged Jewish monotheism. The Mishnah records that pagans asked the Jewish elders in Rome: if God does not desire idolatry, why does He not destroy it? The Jews answered: If men had worshiped objects unnecessary for the cosmos He would have destroyed those objects, but they worship the sun and moon and the stars and the planets. Should He destroy His world because of fools?” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

### **What religious rights are there in Israel?**

There are, however, religious rights in Israel. There are two legal systems, secular and religious so that religious people of some major religions in Israel can take disputes or legal processes to their own judges. The British set up this system before the State of Israel was formed. There are several different religious courts throughout Israel. They

include the Orthodox Jews, Moslems, Greek Orthodox, Armenians, Catholics, Syrian Orthodox and the Bahai's. The Bahai religious courts are the only ones established after the State of Israel was recognized.

### **What is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' position on proselytizing the Jews?**

It is also important to know that there is NO law in Israel prohibiting proselytizing. An anti missionary society has tried to pass such an anti proselytizing law in Israel but has failed every attempt. The closest thing they managed to bring through the Israeli Knesset is a law prohibiting bribing people to change their religion. (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints does not pay people to become members, it charges them!) On the other hand, although there are Christian missionaries in Israel, the Church does not engage in any proselytizing in Israel. It is their choice. The agreement signed by President Howard W. Hunter and added as an addendum to the lease of property where the BYU Jerusalem Center stands, clearly states that the Church will not engage in missionary activity if it is against the laws of Israel. The reason behind this position is doctrinal. The Lord instructed to, "Send forth the elders of my church unto the nations which are afar off; unto the islands of the sea; send forth unto foreign lands; call upon all nations, first upon the Gentiles, and then upon the Jews."

**(Doctrine and Covenants 133:8)** The first shall be last, and the last shall be first.  
**(1 Nephi 13:42)**

### **How is the difference between enthusiasm and excitement shown in the Book of Mormon?**

The Greek etymology of the word *enthusiasm* is "divine inspiration," it comes from God. The more recent (14<sup>th</sup> century) use of the word *excite* is "to move, stir up, instigate," it comes from within a person. The freedom of religion in the Book of Mormon account shows that Korihor became so wrapped up in his polemics that he believed the misinformation he was teaching. Much like the Pharisees in the days of Jesus, he wanted to be given a sign. "Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas . . ." **(Matthew 12:38-39)** The Zoramites were so wrapped up in their misinformation that they praised God that they were "better" than others. The Rameumtom they built means a high place. A high place in Hebrew can be called a ramah. Note the similarity of the word ramah and "rama-umptom." Alma and his companions praised God for the joy they experienced in a humble way. Their time of joy was filled with the spirit of the Holy Ghost.