

July 20-26, 2020

Alma 36–38

“LOOK TO GOD AND LIVE”

Summary: *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 74 B.C.]*

The plates of brass and other scriptures are preserved to bring souls to salvation—The Jaredites were destroyed because of their wickedness—Their secret oaths and covenants must be kept from the people—Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings—As the Liabona guided the Nephites, so the word of Christ leads men to eternal life. [About 74 B.C.]

Shiblon was persecuted for righteousness' sake—Salvation is in Christ, who is the life and the light of the world—Bridle all your passions. [About 74 B.C.]

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

What meaning can I get from “deliverance?”

The greatest deliverance of the Children of Israel was

from Egypt. Yet, the great exodus was a learning experience. A complete generation had to die and only the next generation was willing to keep the commandments enough to be saved and able to enter the promised land to prosper there. Alma witnesses of a similar pattern through his languishing experience of three days and three nights as dead and then coming alive again being lifted-up and saved.

How does heaven and earth respond to being saved?

You will find that most of the scriptural references with a time factor of three days and three nights have something to do with being lifted-up and being saved. Often this is a “center” of a chiasmus, a focal point of redemption, a testimony of the Savior. Several times throughout scriptural history, people and the land they live in are lifted up and begin to prosper. In 1841, the Apostle Orson Hyde dedicated the Holy Land for another return of its heirs. Among many prophetic statements, some repeated from previous

prophets, he spoke about the land and the people. “Grant, therefore, O Lord, in the name of Thy well-beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to remove the barrenness and sterility of this land, and let springs of living water break forth to water its thirsty soil. Let the vine and olive produce in their strength and the fig-tree bloom and flourish. Let the land become abundantly fruitful when possessed by its rightful heirs; let it again flow with plenty to feed the returning prodigals who come home with a spirit of grace and supplication; upon it let the clouds distill virtue and richness, and let the fields smile with plenty. Let the flocks and the herds greatly increase and multiply upon the mountains and the hills . . .” (**History of the Church, Vol.4, Ch.26, p.457**) The return of Jews to their land is a righteous thing and those who oppose it are opposing the will of the Lord. Their future may hold an opposite of “prospering.” “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 important is teaching youth?

Alma’s advice to his son continues to echo the past as it becomes an advice to all sons and daughters in the present. It echoes a strong doctrinal point of teaching our youth. “O, remember, my son, and learn wisdom in thy youth; yea, learn in thy youth to keep the commandments of God.” (Alma 37:35) “As I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle;” (Job 29:4) “O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works.” (Psalms 71:17) “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” (1 Timothy 4:12)

How does the Lord prepare the prophet?

The advice Alma gives his son transcends parental responsibility. It is an instruction to the next prophet. At all times, there was a worthy prophet-in-waiting, much like the senior member of the Quorum of The Twelve. “Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good; yea, when thou liest down at night lie down unto the Lord, that he may watch over you in your sleep; and when thou risest in the morning let thy heart be full of thanks unto God; and if ye do these things, ye shall be lifted up at the last day.” (Alma 37:37) “Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.” (Amos 3:7) As Alma taught Helaman to counsel with the Lord in all his doings, so does God counsel with his prophets in all the doings that pertain to mankind.

What value can a physical object have for spirituality?

Throughout time there have been symbolic and functional artifacts that brought to our minds or reinforced God’s counsel to his children. To this day, Jews are counseled to place a “Mezuzah” on their door posts and on their gates so that in all their comings and goings and in all their “doings” they may remember the Lord. “Mezuzah is the name of the parchment scroll attached to the doorposts of a Jewish home. The word itself actually means ‘doorpost’ but has come to refer to the scroll. On it are written verses from Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:13-21 in square Assyrian letters, traditionally arranged in 22 lines. The Torah commands of these verses that ‘you shall write them on the doorposts (*mezuzot*) of your house and in your gates.’ The 12th century rabbinic authority, Maimonides, stresses that this commandment is to be observed purely from love of God, and that the *mezuzah* is not a good luck charm with power to ward off evil spirits. Many people, however, are accustomed to kiss the *mezuzah* or to touch it and then kiss the fingers when entering or leaving.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.) For many people, religious clothing and other artifacts can be reminders of spiritual commitments rather than objects of worship.

What type of tools did the Lord provide to lead his children?

In the Book of Mormon, the functional Liahona led the righteous descendants of Lehi. Its presence was a reminder that the Lord would lead his people. In the Bible, the cloud and pillar (as well as the raised serpent) was a reminder that God would lead Israel through the wilderness. “The Tabernacle stood in the center of the Israelite camp and a cloud rested over it.

When the cloud lifted, it was considered a divine signal to move the camp. A silver trumpet was sounded, the Levites dismantled the Tabernacle and transported it to its next resting place.” **(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)** “To typify Christ and point attention to the salvation which would come because he would be lifted up on the cross, Moses (as commanded by the Lord) made a brazen serpent and lifted it up on a pole. Then those of the children of Israel who were bitten by poisonous serpents were healed by looking upon the serpent, while those who refused to look died of the poisonous

bites. **(Num. 21:4-9.)** This performance was a ceremony in Israel which was intended to show the people that by looking to Christ they would be saved with eternal life, but by refusing to look to him they would die spiritually. **(John 3:14-15; Alma 33:1922; Hela. 8:14-15)** The brazen serpent was kept as a symbol in Israel until the time of Hezekiah, who broke it in pieces to keep apostate Israel of his day from burning incense to it. **(2 Kings 18:4.)** **(Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, p.104)** The pattern of directional tools is a metaphor to have us “look up” in order to be “lifted up.”