

July 27-August 2, 2020

Alma 39–42

“THE GREAT PLAN OF HAPPINESS”

Summary: *Sexual sin is an abomination—Corianton’s sins kept the Zoramites from receiving the word—Christ’s redemption is retroactive in saving the faithful who preceded it. [About 74 B.C.]*

Christ brings to pass the resurrection of all men—The righteous dead go to paradise and the wicked to outer darkness to await the day of their resurrection—All things will be restored to their proper and perfect frame in the Resurrection. [About 74 B.C.]

In the Resurrection men come forth to a state of endless happiness or endless misery—Wickedness never was happiness—Carnal men are without God in the world—Every person receives again in the Restoration the characteristics and attributes acquired in mortality. [About 74 B.C.]

Mortality is a probationary time to enable man to repent and serve God—The Fall brought temporal and spiritual death upon all mankind—Redemption comes through repentance—God Himself atones for the sins of the world—Mercy is for those who repent—All others are subject to God’s justice—Mercy comes because of the Atonement—Only the truly penitent are saved. [About 74 B.C.]

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

What is the Heavenly plan for sexuality?

“Like other basic human desires, sex

is regarded in a positive light in Jewish teaching, especially as it is the means of fulfilling the first biblical commandment: ‘Be fruitful and multiply.’ Judaism does not encourage the unbridled fulfillment of desire, however, but rather imposes restrictions which raise the act to the level of holiness.” “Detailed legislation concerning sexual behavior can be found in the Bible as well as in the Talmud and subsequent rabbinic literature. Celibacy (complete abstinence from all sexual activity) is discouraged as an unnatural state and detrimental to the human personality.” “The primary restriction of sexual activity in Jewish law is that it should take place within marriage, as an expression of love between husband and wife as well as out of a desire to fulfill God’s commandments. An element of holiness

is added by the laws of *niddah* (separation during the period of menstruation; which ensure that the couple does not indulge in sex on impulse but rather directs the act to holiness).”

What beneficial aspect is there to self-control?

“In general, moderation and self-control in sexual activity are encouraged. Chastity, the goal to be aimed for, does not mean the avoidance of all sex but of illegal sex. This includes adultery, incest, sodomy, rape and seduction. Adultery is defined as sexual relations between a married woman and any man other than her husband.” “Judaism encourages modesty as one of the means to chastity. Thus the Jewish woman is enjoined to dress and act modestly at all times. Furthermore, a man is forbidden to be alone with a woman with whom he is not permitted to have sexual relations from considerations of both chastity and

modesty.” ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#)) The Book of Mormon teachings of Alma reflect the repeated teachings to the Children of Israel which show concern for family identity and sacredness of marriage, marital companionship and the sanctity of children.

Will there be, and when is the resurrection?

Alma teaches that there is no resurrection until after the coming of the Messiah. Judaism, nowadays, has virtually no belief in resurrection or life as such after death. To the Jews, the Messiah has not come; consequently, it is understandable that they do not have an active belief in the resurrection. There are, however, benedictions and other statements with words that seem to connect to a former belief in Resurrection. “. . . *Barukh mehayyeh ha-metim* (‘Blessed be . . . He Who revives the dead’) is therefore also known as *Tehiyat ha-Metim* (‘Resurrection of the Dead’) . . .” “. . . the righteous of all generations will be reunited at the time of the resurrection of the dead during the messianic period.” “. . . They (Essenes) believed in reward and punishment; in immortality of the soul; but not in physical resurrection.” “Some rabbis believed in resurrection. That is that at a certain point in time God will bring everybody back to life and then the world will be a perfect place and physical life will go on indefinitely. This doctrine poses some obvious difficulties: the body actually decomposes after burial so how can it be reconstituted; furthermore what about over-population of the world? Those who believe in resurrection claim that anyway the whole process will be miraculous and the miracle will solve all the problems. Other rabbis however denied physical resurrection entirely and

understood the afterlife to be a completely spiritual experience.” “The argument about resurrection lasted well into the Middle Ages, and was one of the reasons for the sharp attacks against Maimonides. Many believed that he denied the doctrine and his views started a controversy that lasted for hundreds of years. In modern times most Jewish theologians do not subscribe to the doctrine of physical resurrection and movements such as Reform Judaism do not consider it to be a necessary belief for the Jew.” “The whole subject of (an) afterlife is not explicitly stated in the Bible and many scholars are of the opinion that belief in (an) afterlife was adopted by Jews during the Babylonian exile after the destruction of the First Temple when they came into contact with eastern religions such as Zoroastrianism.” “The Sadducees also rejected the Pharisaic belief in the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body, claiming that there is no basis for these beliefs in the Torah.” ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

What meanings are there for “Justice” and “Mercy?”

There are numerous incidents in the scriptures that relate to the concepts of justice and mercy. Jews and Latter-day Saints have similar thoughts on these. “The word *zedakah* literally means ‘righteousness’ or ‘justice’; by their very choice of word the rabbis reveal a great deal of their attitude to the subject, for they see charity not as a favor to the poor but something to which they have a right, and the donor, an obligation.” “The Hebrew word for justice is *zedek*, and indicative of Judaism’s attitude is the fact that another form of the same root *zedakah*, means ‘charity.’ For justice must be tempered with mercy and indeed the

main attribute of God is His integration of justice and mercy. Yet another Hebrew word derived from the same root is *zaddik*, which means 'righteous.' The righteous man is one who is both just and merciful." "A unique aspect of the Jewish faith is that although God rules the world with absolute justice, He is also merciful and forgives sins against Him. The doctrine of repentance is based on this belief." ". . . God, as depicted by the rabbis, embodies a combination of justice and mercy, of strict judgment and lenient compassion. This combination of justice and mercy in God is represented by the two names of God --- Elohim and YHWH. The former stands for justice and the latter for mercy. Though they may seem contradictory, one actually complements the other and, when there is a conflict between the two, God usually favors mercy." ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

What would be a possible meaning for two cherubim?

Since Alma mentions Cherubim in chapters 12 and 42, I suggest a possible physical parallel with justice and mercy. "The Ark of the Covenant stood inside the Holy of Holies and contained the tablets of the Ten Commandments which were given to Moses on Mount Sinai. Hovering over the Ark were two cherubim, each 16-foot high, made of olive wood. Archaeologists believe that each of the cherubim was formed with a lion-like body, a man-shaped head, and two wings. The cherubim were believed to be servants of God whose main task was to guard the Ark." ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#)) The possibility exists that the "law" was guarded by the two cherubim, one representing justice and the other mercy. In other words, to me the law has a balance of justice and mercy.