

Mosiah 18–24: Alma, Baptism, Bondage

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1. FYI: “build buildings” (23:5) is a Hebraism.

2. Baptism (Mosiah 18)

Alma: ⁸“Here are the waters of Mormon … as ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light; ⁹ Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life—¹⁰ Now … if this be the desire of your hearts, what have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him, that ye will serve him and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you?

Marion G. Romney: I know of no better explanation of the baptismal covenant. (*Ensign*, Nov. 1975)

Ritually unclean Levites had to immerse themselves in “living water” (a *mikveh*) before offering sacrifice. Gentile converts to Judaism were circumcised, immersed in living water (baptized), and offered sacrifice. “A convert to Judaism is considered a new-born child.” (*EJ Jr.*; Rona #4; *Mortal Messiah* 1:397)

All those who humble themselves before God, and desire to be baptized, and come forth with broken hearts and contrite spirits, and witness before the church that they have truly repented of all their sins, and are willing to take upon them the name of Jesus Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end, and truly manifest by their works that they have received of the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of their sins, shall be received by baptism into his church. (D&C 20:37)

Alma ¹³ said: Helam, I baptize thee, having authority from the Almighty God, as a testimony that ye have entered into a covenant to serve him until you are dead as to the mortal body; and may the Spirit of the Lord be poured out upon you; and may he grant unto you eternal life, through the redemption of Christ …

¹⁴ And after Alma had said these words, both Alma and Helam were buried in the water; and they arose and came forth out of the water rejoicing, being filled with the Spirit.

3. Alma Organized the Church

Alma baptized 204 people. ¹⁷ And they were called the church of God, or … Christ … And … whosoever was baptized by the power and authority of God was added to his church.

I am called Mormon, being called after the land of Mormon, the land in which Alma did establish the church among the people (3 Ne 5:12)

The Greek Old Testament (Septuagint or LXX) used the word *ecclesia* (like the Spanish word *iglesia* for church) for the Hebrew word meaning *convocation, congregation, or assembly*

Priests: ¹⁸ Alma, having authority from God, ordained … one priest to every fifty … to preach … and to teach them … things pertaining to the kingdom of God. ¹⁹ And he commanded them that they should teach nothing save it were the things which he had taught, and which had been spoken by the mouth of the holy prophets. ²⁰ Yea, even … repentance and faith on the Lord, who had redeemed his people.

Let them journey from thence preaching the word by the way, saying none other things than that which the prophets and

apostles have written, and that which is taught them by the Comforter through the prayer of faith. (D&C 52:9)

²⁶ And the priests were not to depend upon the people for their support; but for their labor they were to receive the grace of God, that they might wax strong in the Spirit, having the knowledge of God, that they might teach with power and authority from God.

Duties: ²¹ There should be no contention one with another, but that they should look forward with one eye, having one faith and one baptism, having their hearts knit together in unity and in love one towards another. … ²³ And … they should observe the sabbath day, and keep it holy, and also every day they should give thanks to the Lord their God … ²⁵ And … one day in every week … they should gather themselves together to teach the people, and to worship the Lord their God … ²⁷ And … the people of the church should impart of their substance … ²⁸ of their own free will and good desires towards God, and to those priests that stood in need, yea, and to every needy, naked soul. ²⁹ And … they did walk uprightly before God, imparting to one another both temporally and spiritually according to their needs and their wants.

4. Alma and People Flee from Noah (Mosiah 23)

^{1–5} Lord warned Alma to flee from Noah and strengthened the 450 people who traveled 8 days to a beautiful land of pure water. ¹⁹ “They called the land Helam. ²⁰ And … they did multiply and prosper exceedingly … and they built … the city of Helam.”

Helam was the first to be baptized. (Mos 18:14)

The people wanted Alma to be their king, but Alma refused:

- “Ye shall not esteem one flesh above another, or one man shall not think himself above another;” (23:7)
- “If … ye could always have just men to be your kings it would be well … But remember the iniquity of king Noah and his priests” (23:9)

Therefore, “trust no man to be a king over you.” ¹⁴ And also trust no one to be your teacher nor your minister, except he be a man of God, walking in his ways and keeping his commandments. ¹⁵ And … every man should love his neighbor as himself, that there should be no contention among them. ¹⁶ Alma was their high priest, … the founder of their church.

5. Opposition in all things

SOED Opposition: 1. setting opposite or against … 4. placing one thing in contrast with another.

Oppositions or contrasts in Mosiah

- Laman vs. Nephi
- King Benjamin vs. King Noah
- Noah’s priests vs. Abinadi
- Limhi’s people vs. Alma’s people
- Amulon vs. Alma

6. Bondage to Lamanites

	Limhi	Alma
Lamanite Army	(19:6–14) Army attacked. Noah, priests, and some men run and leave families behind. Some repent or return after burning Noah. Daughters plead for those who remain	(23:25–29) Alma said fear not, but “remember the Lord … and he would deliver them. Therefore they <u>hushed their fears</u> , and began to <u>cry unto the Lord</u> that he would soften the hearts of the Lamanites”
Bondage	(19:10,15,26) bloodshed, 50% tribute, 2 years	(23:35–39) No bloodshed, guards
Problem	(21:1–5) heavy burdens, surrounded	(23:39; 24:9) King Amulon persecuted them. Tasks and great afflictions
Response	(21:6–14, 17) Murmur, war 3 times (trusted arm of flesh), humbled before God, cried to God for deliverance, helped needy	(24:10) trusted God; “ <u>they began to cry mightily to God.</u> ” When threatened with death for praying out loud, they prayed silently.
Answer to Prayers	(21:15–16) God was slow to answer. God softened hearts so Lamanites eased burdens. People prospered by degrees.	(24:13–15) God was quick to answer. “The Lord did strengthen them that they could bear up their burdens with ease.”
Plan	(22:1–8) Discussed options. Gideon said let’s get guards drunk, and flee at night with possessions and families.	(24:16–17) “So great was their faith and their patience that … the Lord … [said] Be of good comfort, for on the morrow <u>I will deliver you out of bondage.</u> ”
Escape	(22:9–13) Sent extra wine, departed by night, pursued for 2 days until Lamanites couldn’t follow tracks.	(24:18–25) “In the morning the Lord caused a deep sleep to come upon the Lamanites.” Thanked God, told to flee, “I will stop the Lamanites in this valley”
Travel to Zarahemla	(22:11, 14) Ammon led them to Zarahemla. “Mosiah received them with joy”	(22:25) God led them to Zarahemla; travelled 12 days, “Mosiah did also receive them with joy”

Coincidence is God’s way of remaining anonymous.

Did Limhi’s people recognize God’s hand?

The prompting Gideon received on how to escape.

Limhi’s people did right thing after exhausting all possible alternatives.

7. WHY do bad things happen to people?

His disciples asked [Jesus] … who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?³ Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. (Jn 9:1–3)

The disciples’ question (who did sin) assumed someone sinned because if you keep the commandments, you will prosper (good things will happen). If not, bad things will happen.

Easy to assume: “bad things should only happen to bad people.”

For some people, bad things make them lose faith in God.

“How could an all-loving, all powerful God allow evil?”

8. Why?

- a. Why were you late? BECAUSE (alarm clock, traffic, ...)
- b. Why did we come to earth? TO get a body, experience, ...

In English, a why question can be answered with BECAUSE (blame) or TO (purpose) answers.

9. Why were they in bondage?

- a. Limhi’s people: (7:25–28; 20:20–21)
Because: wicked, not repent, contentions, bloodshed, killed prophet, covenant curses as prophesied by Abinadi
- b. Alma’s people: (23:21)
“The Lord seeth fit to chasten his people; yea, he trieth their patience and their faith. Nevertheless—whosoever putteth his trust in him the same shall be lifted up at the last day.
For many people, *chasten* means only punishment. Notice meaning 2 below.
SOED *chasten*, 1. To correct or discipline by punishment. ...
2. To render pure in character or style; to refine

10. To stir them up to a remembrance

Lamanites “shall be a scourge unto [the Nephites], TO stir them up in remembrance of me; and inasmuch as they will not remember me, and hearken unto my words, they shall scourge them even unto destruction” (2 Ne 5:25)

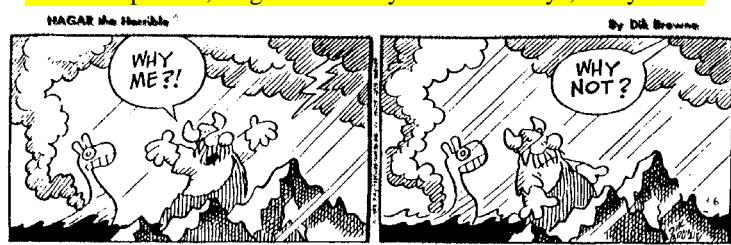
“There was … a law of performances and of ordinances … which they were to observe strictly from day to day, to keep them in remembrance of God and their duty towards him.” (13:30)

A “to” answer to “why do bad things happen” is “to stir us up to a remembrance of our duty to love God and neighbor.”

Lehi’s family was “smitten with famine and sore afflictions, TO stir them up in remembrance of their duty.” (Mos 1:17; Hel 11:4, 29)

Priests were appointed “TO stir them up in remembrance of the oath” (Mos 6:3) Alma did “preach the word of God unto them, TO stir them up in remembrance of their duty” (Al 4:19)

As his ship sinks, Hagar asks “why me?” God says, “why not?”



Neal A. Maxwell: “I know that he loveth his children; nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all things.” (1 Ne 11:17)

While Elder Maxwell was receiving chemotherapy for leukemia, my friend Randy met with him to get a blessing for his eyes. Randy asked how he made sense of his disease and the suffering of good people. He said “I know that [God] loveth his children; nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all things (1 Ne 11:17). … Our ‘why’ questions are so hard to answer. But … we can know … the Lord loves us and knows us personally. … I’ve learned that sometimes when the Lord is actually lifting us, we may feel He is letting us down.” In an earlier visit, Elder Maxwell referred to “three types of trials: those we die from, those we live with, and those we pass through.” (Randy Gibbs, *Spiritual Vision*, 1-3)

11. The Lord trieth their patience and their faith (23:21)

SOED **Try**: [OFr. sift, pick out] test, prove, experiment; refine, purify

SOED **Faith**: [L. *fidus* trustworthy, *fidere* trust. Used to translate Greek πίστις.] I. 1. confidence, reliance, trust ... II. 3. Assurance given, formal declaration, pledge, promise ... III. 1. The duty of fulfilling one's trust; fealty; the obligation of a promise [covenant]

BAUER πίστις (pístis): 1. That which causes trust and faith— a. *faithfulness, reliability*, b. *solemn promise, oath, truth*, c. *proof, pledge*. 2. *trust, confidence, faith* in God's commandments and promises.

SOED **Patient, patience**: [L. *pati* suffer] 1. Suffering or enduring (pain, trouble, or evil) with calmness and composure ... (b) Long suffering, forbearing under provocation of any kind; esp. bearing with others, their faults, limitations, ... (c) Quietly awaiting the course or issue of events, etc. (d) Persistent, constant, unwearied in the face of difficulties and hindrances.

Neal A. Maxwell: Faith ... includes faith in God's developmental purposes, for 'the Lord seeth fit to chasten his people; yea, he trieth their patience and their faith.' (Mos 23:21) Still, some of us have trouble when God's tutoring is applied to us! We plead for exemption more than we do for sanctification. (*Ensign*, May 1991, 90)

Patience is not indifference. Actually, it is caring very much, but being willing, nevertheless, to submit both to the Lord and to what the scriptures call the 'process of time.' Patience is tied very closely to faith in our Heavenly Father. Actually, when we are unduly impatient, we are suggesting that we know what is best— better than does God. Or, at least, we are asserting that our timetable is better than his. Either way we are questioning the reality of God's omniscience, as if, as some seem to believe, God were on some sort of postdoctoral fellowship. (*Ensign*, Oct 1980, 28)

Howard W. Hunter: Mormon surely knew that no pain we suffer, no trial that we experience is wasted. It ministers to our education, to the development of such qualities as patience, faith, fortitude and humility. All that we suffer and all that we endure, especially when we endure it patiently, builds up our characters, purifies our hearts, expands our souls, and makes us more tender and charitable, more worthy to be called the children of God. (*Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 60)

12. King Benjamin: Becoming as a Child

"The natural man is an enemy to God ... and will be ... unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit ... and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father." (3:19)

a. **Submissive**: yielding to power or authority (SOED)

"Yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit," keeps commandments of God, enters covenant with God

b. **Humble** [L. low, lowly ... f. *humus* ground] (SOED)

One who lowers himself before God (prayer, dependence), and esteems his neighbor as himself (down to earth) instead of being lifted up in pride above his neighbor.

"Humble yourselves before God" (4:10), kneel, bow, prostrate; recognize dependence on God for life, breath, food, clothes, riches, protection; unprofitable servant; Sabbath, give thanks to God everyday. Labor for self. Not above God or others. Does not despise (look down on) or persecute or pick on others.

c. **Meek** (GR gentle, considerate, forgiving, benevolent, kind)

BAUER ποαῖς: gentle, humble, considerate, meek (in the older favorable sense), unassuming,

TDNT 6:645 πρόως (adverb) a quiet and friendly composure which does not become embittered or angry at what is unpleasant in people or fate

SOED **meek**: 1a. [obs.] Gentle, courteous, kind; merciful, indulgent (overlook faults); 1b. humble, submissive, patient, unresentful

OED **meek**: 1. Gentle, courteous, kind. Of a social superior; merciful, compassionate, indulgent. *Obs.* [AD 1200–1610]

d. Full of Love for God and Neighbor

Limhi: Contention even to shedding blood.

Alma: Bear burdens, mourn, comfort; no contention; "hearts knit together in unity and in love one towards another"; impart of substance for needy.

e. "Willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him"

Two ways of Viewing: Some are compelled to be humble, while others humble themselves without compulsory means.

Limhi's people: murmured, fought 3 times, trusted in arm of flesh. Then, ^{21:13} "they did humble themselves even to the dust, subjecting themselves to the yoke of bondage, submitting themselves to be smitten, and to be driven to and fro, and burdened, according to the desires of their enemies.¹⁴ And they did humble themselves even in the depths of humility; and they did cry mightily to God ... that he would deliver them out of their afflictions. ... ¹⁷ King Limhi commanded that every man should impart to the support of the widows and their children."

Alma: Fear not, Trust in God. Accept what is but pray and work for deliverance. ^{24:15} "They did submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord."

13. Stand as Witnesses

^{18:9} "Ye are ... willing ... to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and ... places that ye may be in, even until death."

^{24:14} "I will also ease the burdens which are put upon your shoulders, that even you cannot feel them upon your backs, even while you are in bondage; and this will I do that ye may stand as witnesses for me hereafter, and that ye may know of a surety that I, the Lord God, do visit my people in their afflictions."

SOED Visit: 1. go to (a person) ... to comfort, benefit or assist

^{24:21} They poured out their thanks to God because he had been merciful unto them, and eased their burdens, and had delivered them out of bondage; ... and none could deliver them except it were the Lord their God. ²² And they gave thanks to God, [and] ... lifted their voices in the praises of their God.

"In nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things" (DC 59:21). **Brigham Young** said, "I do not know of any, excepting the unpardonable sin, that is greater than the sin of ingratitude." (*Pr/RS Manual*, 177) President **Monson** has said, "If ingratitude be numbered among the serious sins, then gratitude takes its place among the noblest of virtues." (*Church News*, Apr. 11, 1992)

14. What are other types of bondage?

Debt: “The borrower is servant to the lender” (Prov 22:7)
“Pay the debt thou hast contracted with the printer. Release thyself from bondage.” (D&C 19:35)

Sin: ^{23:12} “Bound with the bonds of iniquity” Deliverance

Habits/Addictions: Eating disorders, drugs (legal, prescription)
One woman addicted to alcohol was asked, “What would you do if you did not drink?” After three days of thinking, she said, “I do not know what I would do.”

Without a better alternative, one will continue habits.

Thoughts or Desires: A missionary asked Harold B. Lee what to do if he had bad thoughts. Elder Lee said, “You cannot keep a bird from flying over your head, but you can keep it from building a nest.”

Some people let bad thoughts build a nest by encouraging them with imagination and fantasizing; others, by condemning themselves and wondering why these thoughts. Both spend time thinking about the bad thoughts. Instead of trying to slay these thought dragons, others just walk away from them instead of letting them build a positive or negative nest.

Amulon and Priests	Limhites
Left wives and families. “Daughters of the Lamanites did gather … to sing, and to dance.” They took 24 into the wilderness to be their wives (20:1–5)	Limhi’s people stayed (19:12) or returned to be with their families.
Their Lamanite wives plead for their lives (23:33–34)	Daughters plead for their lives (19:13)

Amulon	Alma
Priest of king Noah; did not believe Abinadi or repent	Priest of king Noah; believed and repented
Led colony into wilderness when Noah commanded men to flee from Lamanites and to leave their families (19:11–23)	Led colony into wilderness with families when the Lord warned him to flee (18:32, 34; 23:1).
Gained favor of Lamanite king (24:1)	Gained favor with God
King over Alma’s people (23:39), exercised unrighteous dominion.	Refused to be king over his people (23:6–16). High priest, righteous dominion
Teacher of Lamanites who were friendly but knew not God (24:1, 5)	Teacher of church
Taught language of Nephites, keep records, write (24:4, 6), but did not teach about God or Law of Moses, or the words of Abinadi (24:5)	Taught words of Abinadi (18:1) and that God did and would deliver them (25:10,16)
Wicked and Prospered “The Lamanites began to increase in riches, and began to trade one with another and wax great, and began to be a cunning and a wise people, as to the wisdom of the world … delighting in … wickedness and plunder, except it were among their own.” (24:7)	Righteous and Prospered “They did multiply and prosper exceedingly in the land of Helam” (23:19)

Prosperity does not mean people are righteous

Poverty or bondage does not mean people are wicked

Conclusion

Leave enough time for conclusion!

The Book of Mormon uses contrast to help us see two ways of viewing and doing. We see people’s perceptions, choices, and the long and short term consequences. We see how a just and merciful God deals with his children. He is willing to bless, prosper, and preserve those who keep their covenant, or to let those who break their covenant see what happens when he does not bless, prosper, and preserve them. When they repent or return like the prodigal son, he embraces them and welcomes them back.

³ When ye shall read these things, … remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto [the people of Limhi and Alma] … ⁴ And … ask God … if these things are not true; and … he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. (Moro. 10:3–4)

The Book of Mormon is the most Christ-loving book I have read. It continually invites and entices us to do good. It stirs us up to a remembrance of our duty to love God and to love neighbor. It is true. May we read it daily and abide by its precepts that we may become more Christ-like.

Quotes

NOTE: The yellow shading shows what is NOT on the handout that I use in class. The handout makes it possible to share information while only briefly referring to it in class. The handout and any other supplements for the lesson are at www.sviewp.com.

Sources:

- *Reexploring* = *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, edited by John W. Welch; see <http://mi.byu.edu>; “Abinadi and Pentecost,” 135–138
- *Griggs* = C. Wilford Griggs, “Tree of life in Ancient Cultures,” in BMRC
- *Nibley* = Hugh Nibley, *Teachings of the Book of Mormon: Semester 1*, FARMS 1993, 249–257; Hugh Nibley, *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment*, Second Edition, Deseret Book, 2005, 427–439.

GENERAL

- BMRC = Dennis L. Largey, *Book of Mormon Reference Companion*.
- TBM = Hugh Nibley, *Teachings of the Book of Mormon*, 4 vols.
- OM = Original Manuscript
- PM = Printer’s Manuscript
- *LDS View* = This computer program with the scriptures in 11 languages was previously sold in the Church Distribution Center as *Scriptures on CDM*. It can now be downloaded with the scriptures in up to 30 languages (<http://ldsview.byu.edu>). At <http://WordCruncher.com>, you can download WordCruncher and Webster’s 1844 Dictionary (2nd Edition). If LDS View was downloaded first, WordCruncher will let you see the English scriptures and when you click on an English word, you can see Webster’s 1844 definition.
- Other Bible Translations are at <http://www.blueletterbible.org/>

BAJA model

- Baja = www.achoiceand.com

MESOAMERICAN model

- Sorenson = John L. Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*.
- *Reexploring* = John W. Welch, ed., *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, <http://mi.byu.edu>
- Poulsen = bomgeography.poulsenll.org/bomdirections.html

Hebraisms

- Par-Heb = Donald W. Parry, “Hebraisms and Other Ancient Peculiarities,” <http://mi.byu.edu>
- Tved-Heb = John Tvedtnes, “The Hebrew Background of the Book of Mormon,” chapter 8 in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*; <http://mi.byu.edu>

Other sources

- BD = *Bible Dictionary* (in English LDS Scriptures).
- GS = *Guide to the Scriptures* (in electronic LDS Scriptures)
- I-BofM = New Testament Institute manual, *The Life and Teachings of Jesus & his Apostles*, institute.lds.org
- KJV King James Version of the Bible.
- NIV = New International Version of the Bible
- TPJS = *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*
- SOED = Shorter Oxford English Dictionary
- OED = Oxford English Dictionary

• BDB = *Brown, Driver, Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*

• Bauer = Walter Bauer, *Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament*

• EJ = *Encyclopedia Judaica*

• Rona = Daniel Rona, www.israelrevealed.com/comp-sup-r.htm,

• MM = Meridian Magazine, *Gospel Doctrine*, www.ldsmag.com

• beardall2000.com/gospdoct.shtml;

• www.gospeldoctrine.com