

Alma 36–39: Alma to his Sons

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Quotes

- Adam and Eve were disappointed to find out their insurance agent couldn't help them because they weren't covered.
- God invented time and space so everything cannot happen to you ... at the same time.
- A wife is a true friend to you when she thinks you're a good egg even though she knows you're slightly cracked.
- Insanity is hereditary. ... You get it from your kids.

1. "Lucky Guesses" in Alma

- The angel said, "If thou wilt of thyself be destroyed, seek no more to destroy the church of God." (36:9)
- "I have had great joy in thee ... because of thy faithfulness and thy diligence, and thy patience and thy long-suffering among the people of the Zoramites." (38:3)
- "Methought I saw, even as our father Lehi saw, God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels, in the attitude of singing and praising their God; yea, and my soul did long to be there." (36:22; 1 Ne 1:8)

The underlined part is an exact quote of 1 Nephi 1:8. Joseph dictated them weeks or months apart without referring to notes.

- I have somewhat to say concerning the thing which our fathers call a ball, or director—or ... Liahona, which is, being interpreted, a compass; and the Lord prepared it. (37:38)

לִיהוֹנָה = liahona

לִיהוֹנָה	יְהוָה	לֵךְ
ōna	iahō	1
"whither" or direction	Theomorphic indicator of YHWH	toe

Liahona means "the direction (director) of the Lord," or literally "to the YHWH is the wither." (JBMS 16:2, 2007)

- "Counsel ^{with} the Lord in all thy doings" (37:37)
 - Alma to Corianton: "counsel ^{with} your elder brothers in your undertakings ... and give heed to their counsel" (39:10)
- "With" was added in 1920 edition. To us, no one counsels the Lord. However, at least as late as 1547, one meaning of *counsel* was *consult* or *counsel with*. Translators do not use words with meanings they do not know. This example and others support witness reports that Joseph used the Urim and Thummim to see and read the translation (see lesson #1 notes at www.sviewp.com).

OED *counsel*: 4. To ask counsel of; to consult. *Obs.* (1547 last example) "Moses ... counseled the Lord and thereupon advised his subjects what was to be done"

- "There cannot any man work after the manner of so curious a workmanship." (37:39)

OED *curious*: 4. Ingenious, skilful, clever, expert. *Obs.*

This obsolete meaning of *curious* is in two phrases found in Exodus and Leviticus: "curious girdle" and "curious works."

2. Worship (31:1, 12; 32:3)

"The Zoramites ... [did] bow down to dumb idols. ... and did worship" by praying on a high place to God. They did not permit the poor "to enter into their synagogues to worship God."

A mission president in England told the missionaries to stop going to the lower class of people. One day as he read in Alma 32 about how the Zoramites rejected the poor, he felt strongly prompted to let the missionaries teach the poor again.

- What did Alma tell the poor about worshipping God?

¹⁰ Do ye suppose that ye cannot worship God save it be in your synagogues only? ¹¹ ... Do ye suppose that ye must not worship God only once in a week? ... ³ Do ye remember ... what Zenos ... has said concerning prayer or worship? ⁴ For he said: Thou art merciful, O God, for thou hast heard my prayer, even when I was in the wilderness ⁵ in my field ... ⁷ [in] my closet ... ¹⁰ [and] when I have been cast out and ... despised by mine enemies. (32:10–11; 33:3–10)

Worship = adore (Sp. adorar); prayer is a form of worship.

- ⁴⁰ Do not revile against those who do cast you out because of your exceeding poverty, lest ye become sinners like unto them" (34:40)

3. The word is like a seed (Alma 32, 33)

²⁷ Experiment upon my words. ... ²⁸ We will compare the word unto a seed. Now, if ... a seed may be planted in your heart, ...

This is one of the ways of knowing from my lesson 27 notes.

Lesson 28 discussed how they were to carry out this experiment and how they would know if the seed was good.

What seed did Alma want them to plant as an experiment?

¹⁹ [Christ] was spoken of by Moses; ... a type was raised up in the wilderness, that whosoever would look upon it might live. And many did look and live. ... ²⁰ But ... many ... would not look, therefore they perished. ... because they did not believe that it would heal them. ... ²² Cast about your eyes and begin to believe in the Son of God, that he will come to redeem his people, and that he shall suffer and die to atone for their sins; and ... rise again from the dead, which shall bring to pass the resurrection, that all men shall stand before him, to be judged at the last ... day, according to their works. ²³ ... **Plant this word in your hearts**, and as it beginneth to swell even so nourish it by your faith. And ... it will become a tree, springing up in you unto everlasting life. And then may God grant unto you that your burdens may be light, through the joy of his Son. (33:19–23)

4. Law of Moses points to Christ (Alma 34)

¹⁵ They did keep the law of Moses ... But ... they did look forward to the coming of Christ, considering that the law of Moses was a type of his coming. ... ¹⁶ Now they did not suppose that salvation came by the law of Moses; but the law of Moses did serve to strengthen their faith in Christ. (25:15–16; also 30:3)

¹³ It is expedient that there should be a great and last sacrifice, and ... then shall the law of Moses be fulfilled. ... ¹⁴ This is the whole meaning of the law, every whit pointing to that great and last sacrifice ... [which] will be the Son of God, yea, infinite and eternal." (34:13–14)

5. Scripture Puzzles

Puzzle strategy: (a) find and put together the side pieces, (b) put pieces with the similar colors in the area of the table, and (c) put the similar pieces together based on shape.

Scripture puzzle strategy: Find verses that use the same words or phrases together. For example, if you search for *destroy* and *craft* in the same verse, you will find the following two verses.

³ After the more popular part of the Zoramites had consulted together concerning the words which had been preached unto them, they were angry because of the word, for it did destroy their craft; therefore they would not hearken unto the words. (35:3)

²⁴ Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen ... ²⁵ said, Sirs, ye know

that by this craft we have our wealth. ... ²⁶ Paul hath persuaded ... people... that they be no gods, ... made with hands: ²⁷ So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.” (Acts 19:24–27)

Idolatry = idol (image, form, shape) + -latry (worship)

“They ... offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.” They made noise, sang, and danced. (Ex 32:6, 17–19)

Idol worship usually consisted of

Idols: golden calf (young bull)

Bow, pray, and burn incense to idol:

Music: sing to or before idols

Sacrifices and offerings of food (blood, wild carnivorous) and drink (“libation wine”)

Sex: Male and female prostitutes at pagan temples to idols

Eating, drinking, and being merry: This often included “loud laughter” and other activities common with drunks.

6. Believers cast out (Alma 35:1–14)

When the Zoramite leaders cast out the believers, they went to Jershon. The Zoramites joined with the Lamanites to fight against the people of Ammon. Alma and his sons returned to Zarahemla.

7. Alma’s messages to his sons

¹⁶ [Alma] caused that his sons should be gathered together, that he might give unto them every one his charge, separately, concerning the things pertaining unto righteousness. (35:16)

8. Passover was part of Law of Moses (Reexploring, 196–8)

What makes this night different than all other nights?

At the start of the Jewish Passover each year, this question is asked. After studying Alma 36–42, an LDS scholar excitedly called a rabbi friend at 2 AM. He told him to turn to Alma 36 and then asked him this question. As the rabbi began reading he exclaimed, “It is all here.” He had noticed that the types of sons and the types of Passover answers matched Jewish tradition.

“After gathering his family the father then instructed his sons and answered their questions. His words were not fixed but were ‘to fit the knowledge and understanding of the child’ and were supposed ‘to spell out the sequence of sin, suffering, repentance, and redemption.’ “

1. Wise son (Helaman): “What is the meaning of the testimonies, and the statutes ...?” (Deut 6:20)

Alma mentions wise/wisdom 9 times in Alma 37. Alma explains the meaning of the law (brass plates, ...)

2. Uninformed son (Shiblon): “What is this?” (Ex. 13:14). Son to be given preventative instruction

3. Wicked son (Corianton): “What mean ye by this service?” (Ex 12:26). In Jewish literature, the wicked son is guilty of social crimes, excluded self from community, he will be punished for own sins, and believed false doctrines. If he had been in Egypt, he would not have been redeemed.

Passover themes: crying out for deliverance from affliction and bondage, from the “night of darkness,” and from bitter suffering (bitter herbs). **Paschal lamb** → Christ. **Hardness of Pharaoh’s heart** → hard heart of people. **Alma’s deliverance after 3 days and nights of darkness** → first Passover (Ex. 10:22).

Remember: Moses said ... Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out ... of bondage ... by strength of hand the LORD ...: there shall no leavened bread be eaten. (Ex 13:3)

Remember (action word) used 12 times in these chapters.

9. Alma to Helaman in Alma 36 (JWW)

^A My son give ear to my words (1)

^B *Keep the commandments* and ye shall prosper in the land (1)

^C Do as I have done (2)

^D Remember the captivity of our fathers (2)

^E They were in *bondage* (2)

^F He surely did *deliver* them (2)

^G Trust in God (3)

^H Supported in *trials, troubles, and afflictions* (3)

^I Lifted up at the *last day* (3)

^J I know this not of myself but of *God* (4)

^K Born of *God* (5)

^L I sought to destroy the church (6–9)

^M My *limbs* were paralyzed (10)

^N Fear of being in the *presence of God* (14–15)

^O Pains of a damned soul (16)

^P Harrowed up by the *memory of sins* (17)

^Q I remembered *Jesus Christ, a son of God* (17)

^Q I cried, *Jesus, son of God* (18)

^P Harrowed up by *memory of sins* no more (19)

^O Joy as exceeding as was the *pain* (20)

^N Long to be in the *presence of God* (22)

^M My *limbs* received strength again (23)

^I I labored to bring souls to repentance (24)

^K Born of *God* (26)

^J Therefore *my knowledge* is of *God* (26)

^H Supported under *trials, troubles, and afflictions* (27)

^G Trust in him (27)

^F He will *deliver* me (27)

^I and *raise me up at the last day* (28)

^E God brought our fathers out of *bondage & captivity* (28–29)

^D Retain in *remembrance their captivity* (28–29)

^C Know as I do know (30)

^B *Keep the commandments* and ye shall prosper in the land (30)

^A This according to his *word* (30).

10. Small and Simple Means (Alma 37)

³ These plates of brass ... ⁴ should ... be kept and preserved by the hand of the Lord until they should go forth unto every nation ... that they shall know of the mysteries contained thereon. ...

David Whitmer: “We not only saw the plates of the Book of Mormon but also the brass plates, the plates of the Book of Ether, the plates containing the records of the wickedness and secret combinations of the people of the world down to the time of their being engraved, and many other plates. ... There appeared as it were, a table with many records or plates upon it, besides the plates of the Book of Mormon, also the Sword of Laban, the Directors, i.e., the ball which Lehi had [Liahona], and the Interpreters [Urim and Thummim]. I saw them just as plain as I see this bed (... beside him ...), and I heard the voice of the Lord, as distinctly as I ever heard anything in my life declaring that the records of the plates of the Book of Mormon were translated by the gift and power of God.” (1878 interview between Orson Pratt and David Whitmer, recorded in *BMRC*, 55–56)

⁶ By small and simple things are great things brought to pass; and small means in many instances doth confound the wise.

The brass plates and “all plates which do contain ... holy writ” have: (a) “enlarged the memory of this people,” (b) “convinced many of the error of their ways,” and (c) “brought them to the knowledge of their God unto the salvation of their souls.” (37:5, 8)

⁴⁰ [The Liahona] did point the way they should go ... Therefore they had this miracle, and also many other miracles wrought by the power of God, day by day.⁴¹ Nevertheless, because those miracles were worked by small means it did show unto them marvelous works. They were slothful, and forgot to exercise their faith and diligence and then those marvelous works ceased, and they did not progress in their journey. (37:40–41)

To what does Alma liken the Liahona? “The words of Christ” that we read, hear, feel (spiritual promptings).

11. Alma to Shiblon (Alma 38)

¹¹ See that ye are not lifted up unto pride; yea, see that ye do not boast in your own wisdom, nor of your much strength.¹² Use boldness, but not overbearance; and ... bridle all your passions, that ye may be filled with love; see that ye refrain from idleness.

OED *bridle*: 2. *fig. a.* To curb, check, restrain, hold in.

Boyd K. Packer: A bridle is used to guide, to direct. Our passion is to be controlled-but not controlled by extermination, as with a plague of insects; not controlled by eradication, as with a disease. It is to be controlled as electricity is controlled, to generate power and life. When lawfully used, the power of procreation will bless and it will sanctify (see Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 309). (*The Things of the Soul*, 109)

¹³ Do not pray as the Zoramites do, for ye have seen that they pray to be heard of men, and to be praised for their wisdom.¹⁴ Do not say: O God, I thank thee that we are better than our brethren; but rather say: O Lord, forgive my unworthiness, and remember my brethren in mercy—yea, acknowledge your unworthiness before God at all times.

We have the same temptations today as did the Zoramites.

12. Alma to Corianton (Alma 39)

³ Thou didst forsake the ministry, and did go over into the land of Siron among the borders of the Lamanites, after the harlot Isabel.

⁴ Yea, she did steal away the hearts of many; but this was no excuse for thee, my son. Thou shouldst have tended to the ministry wherewith thou wast entrusted.

The Zoramites lived near the land of the Lamanites. Going there would be like going from Utah to Nevada to gamble.

“When kings go forth to battle ... [king] David tarried still at Jerusalem” (2 Sam 11:1) where he saw Bathsheba bathing and committed adultery. If David and Corianton had been doing their duty, they would not have sinned.

⁵ Know ye not, my son, that these things are ... most abominable above all sins save it be the shedding of innocent blood or denying the Holy Ghost? ...¹¹ Suffer not the devil to lead away your heart again after those wicked harlots.

What are “these things”? “Harlot Isabel” ... “wicked harlots.”

Nibley: The Great Mother was dominant in ancient American religion. All non-Nephite cults practiced idolatry. Corianton had to go to another country (Siron) to practice idolatry with the harlots of Isabel. “Isabel was the name of the Patroness of Harlots in the religion of the Phoenicians.” (*Echoes*, 480)

Nibley: One of the aspects of ancient American religion that archaeology is bringing increasingly to the fore is the dominance of the familiar Great Mother [Goddess] in religion: Where is she in the Book of Mormon? The Book of Mormon brands all non-Nephite cults as idolatry and does not go on to describe them—Nephi says he does not want to run the risk of conveying the details of such enticing abominations to posterity. But there is one broad hint. When Alma’s youngest

son wanted to misbehave with the harlot Isabel, he had to go into another country to do it (Alma 39:3). Parenthetically, Isabel was the name of the Patroness of Harlots in the religion of the Phoenicians. (... Izebel is a goddess named “na” in a Phoenician inscription from Cyprus, world center of the love-cult, also in Palestine.) [If an Israelite wanted to indulge in unbridled license he would go over to the Phoenicians.] Remembering that this took place in a Mulekite setting, we have more than immoral behavior here—Corianton could have misbehaved anywhere. But we are also told that the lady Isabel had a large following. Others went over to join in the rites which Alma declared to be “most abominable above all sins” (Alma 39:5). In such a guarded manner Alma also refers to other hierodules [temple harlots] (Alma 30:18). (PBM)

SOED *hierodule*: male or female temple slave/prostitute

13. Crime and Punishment (Alma 39)

⁷ I would to God that ye had not been guilty of so great a crime.

Jewish Talmud: Idolatry is considered by the rabbis as one of the three cardinal sins, which one is enjoined to suffer martyrdom rather than transgress (the other two are incest and murder [“the shedding of blood”:Sanh. 74a]). (Encyclopaedia Judaica, s.v. *Idolatry*)

One who intends to worship idols may be killed (if there is an impossibility of preventing his crime otherwise). “In the city of Luda ... if one were compelled, under threat of being killed, to commit any one of all the crimes which are mentioned in the Torah, he might commit it and not be killed, except idolatry, adultery, and bloodshed. (Talmud, Sanhedrin)

²³ Life for life,²⁴ eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot. (Ex 21:23–24; Dt 19:21)

¹⁸ If the witness ... testified falsely against his brother;¹⁹ Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother. (Dt 19:18–19)

Like the Jews, the Nephites kept the Law of Moses. Under the Law of Moses, punishment must fit the crime. A thief must pay back double (or more if he sold the goods), instead of losing life or limb as in some cultures. One who injured another had to pay fair compensation or suffer a severe penalty (e.g., lose own eye or limb). “Eye for eye” helped determine fair compensation, and limited both punishment and vengeance to the equivalent, not two eyes or death for one eye. “If someone wounds his fellow, he becomes liable to compensate the injured party for five different aspects of the injury: damage, pain, healing, loss of time from work, and insult.” (Mishnah, Bava Kama 8:1)

¹⁰ He that committeth adultery with his neighbour’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death. (Lev 20)

²⁹ If ... the bull has had the habit of goring and the owner has been warned but has not kept it penned up and it kills a man or woman, the bull must be stoned and the owner also must be put to death.³⁰ However, if payment [HEB *kōpher*, KJV a sum of money] is demanded of him, he may redeem [KJV give for the ransom of] his life by paying whatever is demanded. (NIV Ex 21:29–30)

³¹ Ye shall take no satisfaction [HEB *kōpher*] for the life of a murderer, which *is* guilty of death: but he shall be surely put to death. (Num 35:31)

The Hebrew root (*kphr*) of *satisfaction* and *payment* is the same as the root of *atonement* and *mercy seat* (in the temple).

A man was to be “put to death” for such crimes as murder, not keeping a violent bull in a pen, kidnapping, adultery, false prophet, blaspheming the name of the Lord, sorcerer, smiting or cursing a parent, and defiling the Sabbath. However, there is little evidence of the death penalty being carried out for many of these crimes. The life of a murderer could not be redeemed or ransomed by making payment (satisfaction), but apparently the life of other criminals could be redeemed. A purpose of the “death penalty” may have been to teach that these crimes will result in spiritual death unless a redeemer atones for the crimes by paying the ransom price.

14. Repentance or “turning to the Lord”

¹¹ Suffer not the devil to lead away your heart again after those wicked harlots. Behold, O my son, how great iniquity ye brought upon the Zoramites; for when they saw your conduct they would not believe in my words. ... ¹³ Turn to the Lord with all your mind, might, and strength; that ye lead away the hearts of no more to do wickedly; but rather return unto them, and acknowledge your faults and that wrong which ye have done. (39:11, 13)

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.” Why, then, with all thy soul and with all thy might—is not one of them sufficient? Because people are of different natures. There are among them some who prize their body more than their money—for them it is written, “with all thy soul.” And there are some others who prize their money more than their body, and for them it is written, “with all thy might?” (Talmud, Sanhedrin, chapter 8; www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/Talmud/sanhedrin_toc.html).

15. Questions

- Could a 23 year old man have written the Book of Mormon?
- How do these things apply to me now in my circumstances?
- Are these things true? (read, remember, ponder, ask sincerely)

³ When ye shall read these things ... remember how merciful the Lord hath been ... and ponder it in your hearts. ⁴ And ... ask God ... in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent [to change], having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.” (Moro. 10:3–4)

- As I read these chapters, how do I feel?
- Do they invite and entice me to love God, believe in Christ, and do good?

Conclusion

Leave enough time for conclusion!

Every member is a missionary. If we leave our post like David and Corianton and set a bad example, others will see our “conduct ... [and] not believe.” If we do our duty and set a good example, our words are more believable.

Read Alma’s counsel to Corianton in quote section

Quotes

Alma to Corianton: ¹³ Turn to the Lord with all your mind, might, and strength; that ye lead away the hearts of no more to do wickedly. ... ¹⁴ Seek not after riches nor the vain things of this world; for ... you cannot carry them with you. ... 41 ³ It is requisite with the justice of God that men should be judged according to their works; and if their works ... and the desires of their hearts were good, that they should also, at the last day, be restored unto that which is good. ... ¹⁴ See that you are merciful ...; deal justly, judge righteously, and do good continually; and if ye do all these things then ... ye shall have good rewarded unto you again. ¹⁵ For that which ye do send out shall return unto you again, and be restored. (39:13, 14; 41:14–15)

- beardall2000.com/gospdoct.shtml;
- www.gospeldoctrine.com

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* = John W. Welch, ed., *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, <http://mi.byu.edu>
- JWW = John W. Welch, *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, 117
- PBM = Hugh Nibley, "Book of Mormon: Forty Years After," in *The Prophetic Book of Mormon*, <http://mi.byu.edu>; also TBM 2, lect 56

GENERAL

- BMRC = Dennis 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.achoiceland.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