

# MOSIAH 25–28

John W. Welch Notes



## Overview

These four chapters set the stage for three very significant political and church organizational changes in the Nephite world, namely:

1. The development of independent churches within the land of Zarahemla
2. The abandonment of the kingship by Mosiah after thirty-three years on the throne
3. The political establishment of a new reign of judges under the leadership of a Chief Judge.

Before this time, life had been fairly simple in the land of Zarahemla. There were only Mulekites and Nephites in the land, and by agreement “all of the people of Zarahemla were numbered among the Nephites,” and only a descendant of Nephi could be king (25:13). They had been unified under King Benjamin (1:10).

Then occurred the return, baptism, and assimilation of the people of Zeniff under the leadership of his grandson King Limhi (Mosiah 22:13; 25:18). That was shortly followed by the arrival and independence of the covenant people of Alma, who had been treated badly by Amulon and the priests of Noah. Alma’s followers formed seven bodies and were called the church of God, the church of Christ, or the people of God (18:17; 25:23). Also in the mix were some of the children of the priests of Amulon who opted to become Nephites (25:12).

With these developments, things had gotten complicated, and the Benjamite generation of unity began to unravel. The younger generation, in particular, did not understand or

feel bound by the words and covenant of Benjamin (26:1). Dissensions and transgressions occurred within Alma's now urbanized church (26:5). Alma tried to get King Mosiah to judge cases involving crimes committed by members of his fledgling church (26:10), but Mosiah declined to take jurisdiction over any such cases (26:12).

This put Alma in a difficult position (26:13), which he took to the Lord and received prudent counsel (26:15–32). But still he had to blot out the names of some of his covenant people (26:36). This created pockets of dissidents who created disturbances and social tensions between the various religious groups.

Soon, persecutions began to arise (26:38; 27:1), and some priests and teachers began collecting payment for their services (27:5; Alma 1:3). Nehor, in particular, must have been attracting a following of believers (Alma 1:3, 7). The problems were severe enough that King Mosiah issued a proclamation with a "strict command" prohibiting persecutions and requiring "an equality among all men" (Mosiah 27:3).

Within a decade, as the people prospered, one of Alma's own sons would come to reject his father's church, its teachings and its baptismal ordinance from the Waters of Mormon (27:8). He and the four sons of King Mosiah began secretly working to destroy the church, contrary to the commandments of God and the order of King Mosiah (27:10).

But then, the sudden and unexpected intervention of the angel of the Lord changed this precarious course of personal destruction and national disintegration. That trajectory was halted as these five repented, were converted, and began serving as ambassadors of peace "throughout all the land of Zarahemla" (27:35), seeking to repair the damages they had caused and to bring many people "to the knowledge of their Redeemer" (27:35–37).

As a result, the four sons of Mosiah volunteered, and were given permission, to go south to the land of Nephi, where Zeniff, Noah, Limhi and Alma had been (28:8). They desired to help people on all sides to be "friendly to one another, and that there should be no more contentions in all the land" (28:2).

Mosiah himself then gathered together all the records and "all the things which he had kept" (28:20). Consolidating these records symbolized a virtual reunification of these groups. Each group of people was well-served. Using two stones that Coriantumr, the last of the Jaredites, or perhaps another Jaredite like Ether himself may have given to the Mulekites (Omni 1: 20–21), Mosiah translated the plates that had been found by the people of Limhi (28:11, 17). Mosiah also gathered "the plates of brass, and also the plates of Nephi, and all the things which he had kept and preserved" (28:11). He archived "the record of Zeniff" (headnote to Mosiah chapters 9–22), and he included the "account of Alma" (headnote to Mosiah chapters 23–24).

Mosiah then entrusted all these things to Alma the Younger and “commanded him that he should keep and preserve them, and also keep a record of the people” (28:20), and Alma was consecrated by his father to be the high priest (29:42). With the background of Mosiah 25–28 in mind, one can understand why various churches will continue to exist in the land of Zarahemla, the cities of Zarahemla, Gideon, Ammonihah, Jershon, and Antionum. For reasons that will be summarized by Mosiah in his abdication speech in Mosiah 29, the Nephites will relinquish their political right to kingship, and Alma will be appointed the first chief judge, having developed strong personal connections with insiders and outsiders, newcomers and old timers.

## Mosiah 25

### **Mosiah 25:12 — Family in the Book of Mormon: Fictive Kinship**

As a part of the process that is reported in this chapter of the assembling of the Nephites and the returning groups of Zeniff and Alma, these new arrivals could choose to be numbered among the Nephites. They were baptized and organized into units within the church of God. This step of joining, assembling, renaming, numbering, and belonging created for them, as it does in the Church today, a sense of extended family, of being brothers and sisters, of working together, caring for one another, all as a result of being adopted as sons and daughters of Christ.

Notice in verse 12 that even the children of Amulon and his brethren, the priests of Noah who had captured and married the daughters of the Lamanites, were displeased at the behavior of their fathers, and did not want to be identified any longer by the name of their fathers: “Therefore they took upon themselves the name of Nephi, that they might be called the children of Nephi and be numbered among those who were called Nephites.” This social and spiritual practice, in which people who were not closely related to each other claim to have a family connection, is known by anthropologists as “fictive kinship,” and it was common in the ancient world, especially in religious contexts.

There are several examples of it in the Old Testament. When the Israelites left Egypt, they were referred to as a “mixed multitude” (Exodus 12:38), suggesting that all emigrants were not of the tribes of Israel. These newcomers were adopted into one of the twelve tribes of Israel, even though they were not technically part of these extended family groups. Each of these tribes was named after one of the sons of Jacob or Joseph, the great patriarchs of the Old Testament, although later, Joseph’s two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, were given an inheritance with Jacob’s sons, as noted in Genesis 48:5.

This practice is evident throughout the Book of Mormon. Family was so important that those who belonged to a group that no longer had the same values, often identified themselves as Nephites. See, for example, Jacob 1:13–14, in which Jacob grouped the Nephites, Jacobites, Josephites, Zoramites, Lamanites, Lemuelites, and Ishmaelites into values-oriented tribes or fictive kinship groups: “Those who are friendly to Nephi, I shall call Nephites, or the people of Nephi.” Those who sought to destroy the people of Nephi, Jacob said, “I shall call them Lamanites.”

The importance of family relationships, whether by descendancy or adoption, is demonstrated throughout the Book of Mormon to be a primary human need fulfilled within the network of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and our always-loving Heavenly Father.

#### Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, “What Does the Book of Mormon Teach about Families? (Mosiah 25:12),” *KnoWhy* 382 (November 16, 2017). “For many people, family is the most important thing in life. The same can likely be said for the peoples of the Book of Mormon. Despite their sometimes-complex origins, they organized themselves into several core family relationships, just like many other societies in the ancient world.”

John L. Sorenson, “When Lehi’s Party Arrived in the Land, Did They Find Others There?” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 1, no. 1 (1992): 1–34.

## Mosiah 26

### Mosiah 26:12 — The Meaning of the Name *Mosiah*

Both of the kings who were named Mosiah in the Book of Mormon are depicted as exemplary leaders of extraordinary practical and spiritual ability. Both were champions of justice and mercy. Considering that these individuals were anointed as kings, it may at first glance be tempting to assume that their names derive from the Hebrew word for Messiah, meaning “anointed.” However, an even better possibility is that the name comes from the Hebrew word *môšia* ‘ (mo-SHE-ah), meaning a “deliverer” or “savior.”

#### Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, “How Was Mosiah a Type of Christ? (Mosiah 26:12),” *KnoWhy* 104 (May 20, 2016).

John W. Welch, “What Was a ‘Mosiah’?” in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon: A Decade of New Research*, ed. John W. Welch (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1992), 105–107.

### **Mosiah 26:15–32 — Church Governance and Administration**

As dissensions, crimes, and transgressions occurred within Alma's now expanded and urbanized church, Alma turned to King Mosiah (someone he scarcely knew) to judge cases involving crimes committed by members of his church (26:10). Perhaps wanting to not get in the middle of these problems about which he had little personal knowledge, Mosiah relinquished royal jurisdiction over any such cases, even though the results could possibly involve serious consequences for his subjects (26:12).

Given authority to determine who could remain a member of the church of God, Alma took the matter to the Lord and received instructions which amount to a handbook of membership and discipline within the church (26:15–32). The key elements are well worth noting and embracing: the Lord's repeated willingness to bless his people and their leaders (26:15–19), receiving and forgiving those who hear and know the name by which they are now and will be called at the last day (26:20–28). Alma was instructed to judge church members according to the sins they have committed, allowing them to confess, for as often as they repent the Lord will forgive their trespasses against Him (26:29). The members of the church ("ye") shall also forgive one another, but "whosoever will not repent of his sins the same shall not be numbered among my people" (26:32).

#### **Further Reading**

Book of Mormon Central, "[Was the Book of Mormon Used as the First Church Administrative Handbook?](#) (3 Nephi 27:21–22)," *KnowWhy* 72 (April 6, 2016).

## Mosiah 27

### **Mosiah 27:1–3 — Unbelievers Were Making Things Difficult**

The Nephite church, at this time, had a problem with the believers being persecuted by the unbelievers, to the extent that the members of the church took their concerns to Alma, who discussed the problem with the king. Mosiah consulted with his priests, and then issued a strict command throughout the churches that there should be no more persecution. That was a relief, but having the king issue a proclamation did not completely stop the problem, mainly because the persecutors went underground, operating "secretly," and thus witnesses could not be easily found to accuse and convict them (see Mosiah 27:10; compare the opposite situation in 26:9).

### **Mosiah 27:8 — Alma the Younger**

Alma the Younger would have learned some kind of a profession or craft fairly early in his life, as well as having been trained to write and to read. He probably had the privilege of being educated, and that raises the possibility that he was a younger child. Nephi had the privilege in Lehi's family of keeping the records, but he was not the eldest son. This was likely typical of ancient families. What do they need the older two or three children to be doing? Working. Taking care of the animals, tilling the fields, doing the hard, manual work. A younger son could be taught by the father who could to turn a lot of work over to others. Laman and Lemuel apparently resented that. Alma is a privileged young man, very privileged. He ends up being best friends with sons of the king.

#### **Further Reading**

Matthew L. Bowen, "Alma — Young Man, Hidden Prophet," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 19 (2016): 343–353.

Brant A. Gardner, "Nephi as Scribe," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 23, no. 1 (2011): 45–55.

### **Mosiah 27:8–10 — Alma the Younger and the Sons of Mosiah Seek to Destroy the Church**

We have no indication that Alma the Elder knew the extent of his son's participation in the persecution. If he knew that, it was not recorded. In fact, it says in Mosiah 27:10, "He [Alma the Younger] did go about *secretly* with the sons of Mosiah seeking to destroy the church." The main point is that the king and Alma the Elder were worried, and they were trying to do everything they possibly could to help the situation, but neither of them knew what their sons were up to. It was, therefore, up to the Lord to see that the situation was changed.

### **Mosiah 27:14 — The Lord Heard the Prayers of Alma the Elder and the People**

I like verse 14, when the angel said, "Behold, the Lord hath heard the prayers of his people." That tells us that the believers had been praying, especially in their distress. And the angel added "and also the prayers of his servant, Alma who is thy father, for he has prayed with much faith concerning thee, that you might be brought to a knowledge of the truth." Maybe, when Alma prayed, he said, as we sometimes we say, "Such and such is the result I want." But I doubt that he said, "I would like it to happen this way." However, he probably was thrilled when he could say, "My prayer is being answered." The angel's words indicate that the prayers of Alma the Elder were crucial to the unfolding of this event, even if he had no idea how that should happen or how it might turn out. He must have been as surprised and astonished as anyone else in this powerful blessing.

**Mosiah 27:16 — The Angel Told Alma to Remember the Captivity of His Father**

The angel who appeared to Alma never directly told him to repent. Why is that? Well, the message about repentance is actually there in the first half of this verse; it's just not explicitly spelled out. Alma was told to "remember the captivity" that is a consequence of disobedience. That phrase will lead us to repentance, and we can even see that same language used by Alma in several of his own sermons in the book of Alma.

The angel of the Lord said, "Alma, go thy way, and seek to destroy the church no more, that their prayers may be answered, and this even if thou wilt of thyself be cast off." It is not immediately clear what "cast off" meant. It may have meant that Alma would have been banished, excommunicated, or disciplined under the church rules established under Mosiah 26. Later, when recounting this experience, Alma warned his sons that if they didn't "keep the commandments of God ye shall be cut off from his presence" (Alma 36:30, 38:1). All of this indicates the ultimate spiritual significance of what the angel was telling Alma.

In Alma 36:9 he records the angel as having said, "If thou wilt of thyself be destroyed, seek no more to destroy the church of God." This language is even more powerful. It is possible that Alma was in some sort of physical danger, much like Sherem was in the days of Jacob. He was certainly in spiritual danger. When recounting the angel's warning later in his life, Alma immediately explained that he "was racked with eternal torment, for my soul was harrowed up to the greatest degree and racked with all my sins" (Alma 36:12) and was "tormented with the pains of hell" (36:13). Alma actually would have preferred to "become extinct both soul and body" rather than "stand in the presence of my God, to be judged of my deeds" (36:15). Again, this suggests that the more weighty destruction that Alma faced and feared was spiritual in nature.

**Mosiah 27:19–22 — Fasting and Praying as a Community**

We often have ward fasts and prayers to help people who are sick or have some unusual health problem. How many of you have had a ward prayer for a young man who has been losing his testimony? Have you ever heard of that happening? I was really quite struck by when it says, "And Alma caused that the priests should assemble themselves"—these were priesthood holders in the church. And Alma basically said, "We are going to have a fast." I do not think he said, "We are going to fast for two days and two nights." They did fast for two days and two nights, but that was because at the end of the second day, their prayers were answered. I wonder how long they would have continued that vigil of fasting and praying.

They prayed to the Lord their God that he would "open the mouth of Alma that he might speak, and also that his limbs might receive their strength, that the eyes of the

people might be opened to see and know of the goodness and glory of God” (Mosiah 27:22). Those words are very poignant. They tell us what they were asking for in their prayers. What if the bishop were to say, “Elders, I would like you to have a special fast. I would like you to pray to help a young man in our ward who really is in need of the influence of the Spirit of God”? Maybe a bishop could say, “There is a family that is struggling.” We need to unite our priesthood power and our ward faith and pray that the Lord will bless people with these exact objectives. I would like to see that kind of thing happen. There are such needs out there.

### Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, “[Why Does the Lord Require People to Live the Laws of Tithing and Fasting?](#) (3 Nephi 24:10),” *KnoWhy* 305 (April 6, 2017).

### Mosiah 27:28–31 — Alma’s Use of Language

A wonderful thing about Alma was that he had the language skills to articulate what he experienced. Many of us would not have been able to do that. In these verses, he had been out cold for three days. He woke up and was able to express these eloquent parallelisms with wonderfully accurate descriptive nouns, adjectives, and verbs. It is a masterful description of how a person feels after a profound conversion.

### Mosiah 27:29 — Snatched from the Dark Abyss

Alma referred to his being snatched from the darkest abyss. His beholding the “marvelous light of God” seemed to happen rapidly and very dramatically. That happens to us some of the time, but not always. In a talk titled “[The Spirit of Revelation](#),” Elder Bednar compared the receiving of spiritual light to two physical experiences with light:

The first experience occurred as we entered a dark room and turned on a light switch. Remember how in an instant a bright flood of illumination filled the room and caused the darkness to disappear.

This was comparable to Alma’s initial experience. In contrast, Elder Bednar’s second example entails a more gradual perception of light:

The second experience took place as we watched night turn into morning. Do you recall the slow and almost imperceptible increase in light on the horizon? In contrast to turning on a light in a dark room, the light from the rising sun did not immediately burst forth. Rather, gradually and steadily the intensity of the light increased, and the darkness of night was replaced by the radiance of morning. Eventually, the sun did dawn over the skyline. But the visual evidence of the sun’s impending arrival was apparent hours before the sun actually appeared



over the horizon. This experience was characterized by subtle and gradual discernment of light (Elder Bednar “The Spirit of Revelation”).

Most of us have the “sunrise” experience of conversion, which slowly brings us into the light. Note, though, that Alma, who had the instant light did not let his conversion stop at that first bright moment. He continued to seek the light.

### Further Reading

David A. Bednar, “[The Spirit of Revelation](#),” General Conference Address, April 2011, online at [churchofjesuschrist.org](http://churchofjesuschrist.org).

### Mosiah 27:24–31 — Shared Words in Alma’s Three Main Conversion Accounts

Alma told or referred to his experience of being born of God on several occasions (Figures 1, 2). The three main accounts of Alma’s conversion, found in Mosiah 27, Alma 36, and Alma 38, share several words or phrases, reminding us that Alma referred to this life-changing story often and in a distinctive manner. However, the varying contexts clearly influenced the rhetorical posture of each of these accounts.

Alma’s initial account of his conversion in Mosiah 27:7–37 is youthfully spontaneous and detailed. The event had just occurred and was still very vivid in his mind. On that occasion, he used direct, antithetical parallelism to emphasize that Christ’s Atonement had miraculously changed him from his former state into a contrastingly new person.

Alma’s account to his son Helaman in Alma 36 is told about twenty-five years later. It is the longest and most elaborate. Here Alma gives this reflective account in a blessing to his first son. Alma includes historical, theological, and institutional references that would be relevant to Helaman’s upcoming service as the high priest in Zarahemla. To emphasize the pivotal moment of his calling upon of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as his Savior, Alma expresses his testimony in the form of an extended chiasm, centered on that repentant turning point in his life.

Alma’s final account in Alma 38, given to his second son, Shiblon, is a shorter text. Given at the same time as Alma 36, it tracks the first half of the chiastic structure in Alma 36. Alma’s concluding words to Shiblon then comprise a more personally applicable set of exhortations focused on the mercy and truth of Christ, counseling Shiblon to learn wisdom, to be diligent and temperate, not to boast in his wisdom or strength, and to bridle his passions so that he may be filled with love.

## Three Accounts of Alma's Conversion

	<b>Mosiah 27:7–37</b>	<b>Alma 36:1–30</b>	<b>Alma 38:4–8</b>
<b>When</b>	about 100 B.C. immediately after conversion	about 73 B.C. 27 years after conversion	about 73 B.C. 27 years after conversion
<b>Told by</b>	Alma and Mosiah	Alma	Alma
<b>Audience</b>	multitude of people	Helaman	Shiblon
<b>Tone</b>	spontaneous	deliberate	brief
<b>Technique</b>	antithetical parallelism	chiasmus	narrative
<b>Feelings</b>	snatched, redeemed	relief, exquisite joy	peace to my soul
<b>Sphere</b>	public	personal, spiritual	personal, moral
<b>Length</b>	long	medium long	short
<b>Angel's Words</b>	long quote (vv. 13–16)	short quote (v. 9)	no quote
<b>Causal Forces</b>	prayers of God's people	Alma's cry for mercy	God's mercy
<b>Called on</b>	not mentioned	Jesus, thou Son of God	the Lord Jesus Christ
<b>Unique Parts</b>	Alma's evil deeds detailed (vv. 8–10, 30) affirmation of God's power (v. 18)  angel departed (v. 17)  Alma carried before a multitude (vv. 19, 21) God's declaration of judgment on all (vv. 25–27) the redeemed become God's sons and daughters (v. 25)  Alma persecuted as he preaches (v. 32)	Alma heard no more (v. 11); sons of Mosiah hear more	angel face to face (v. 7)  God sent angel in mercy (v. 7)

Figure 1 John W. Welch and Greg Welch, "Three Accounts of Alma's Conversion," in *Charting the Book of Mormon*, chart 106.

## Shared Words in the Three Accounts of Alma's Conversion

Mosiah 27:7–37	Alma 36:1–30	Alma 38:4–8
destroy the church	destroy the church	work of destruction
angel of the Lord	his holy angel	his angel
voice of thunder	voice of thunder	voice of thunder
fell to the earth	fell to the earth	
arise and stand	arose and stood	
remember captivity	remember captivity and bondage	thou wast in bonds
	Lord delivered them	Lord delivered thee
	trust in God	trust in God
	trials, troubles, afflictions	trials, troubles, afflictions
	lifted up at last day	lifted up at last day
	know not of myself	know not of myself
born of the Spirit, God	born of God	born of God
be cast off	be destroyed	
not open his mouth	not open my mouth	
not move hands	not move limbs	
fast two days, nights	out three days, nights	out three days, nights
the Lord in mercy	heart cried for mercy	
limbs received strength	limbs received strength	
everlasting burning	everlasting chains	
gall of bitterness	gall of bitterness	most bitter pain
marvelous light	marvelous light	
pained no more	pains no more	
many to the knowledge	many born of God	

Figure 2 John W. Welch and Greg Welch, "Shared Words in the Three Accounts of Alma's Conversion," in *Charting the Book of Mormon*, chart 107.

Though each of these accounts differs from the other two, all were appropriate for the contexts in which they were given. Moreover, the presence of shared words in his three main accounts is very interesting. Seven similar expressions or ideas are found in all three accounts. Eighteen are found in Mosiah 27 and Alma 36. Twelve overlap between Alma 36 and Alma 38. When compared in detail, this consistency offers circumstantial evidence of the authenticity of the Book of Mormon, since, in spite of the different settings of these accounts and the textual layers of compilation, abridgment, and translation, Alma's unique, underlying personal voice can still be heard, identified, and appreciated.

### Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, "Why Are there Multiple Accounts of Joseph Smith's and Alma's Visions? (Alma 36:6–7)," *KnoWhy* 264 (January 20, 2017).

John A. Tvedtnes, "The Voice of an Angel," in *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited: The Evidence for Ancient Origins*, ed. Noel B. Reynolds (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1997), 311–321.

S. Kent Brown, "Alma's Conversion: Reminiscences in His Sermons," in *The Book of Mormon: Alma, The Testimony of the Word*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1993), 141–156.

John W. Welch, "Three Accounts of Alma's Conversion," in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon: A Decade of New Research*, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City and Provo, UT: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992), 150–153.

### Mosiah 27:32 The Aftermath of Alma's Repentance

Alma experienced a powerful conversion, and he was changed; he basically did an about-face. How did that affect him personally? Is not one of the fruits of repentance the desire to want to share with other people what you have experienced? Have you had that feeling? In the vision of the tree of life, Lehi came to the tree, partook of that fruit, and then had an overwhelming desire to share it with his family.

If we retain a bright remembrance of our conversion, or conversions—we may have many in our lifetimes—we can also retain the desire to share the truths of the gospel. In these chapters there are many lessons that will help us as we move forward. Alma's case is a wonderful example of a lifetime of growth.

It is one thing to talk about the principle of repentance and the effects of the Atonement, but Alma experienced those on a very powerful level. He became an expert in those things, and was able to teach very effectively because it was personal and real, and he

knew how to communicate that. He, like Paul, had an unusual experience. Not everyone has that kind of a wake-up call. But because of it, Alma also could act as a much stronger teacher and an example of repentance and conversion, followed by enduring faithfulness.

We love, remember, and talk about the conversion of Alma the Younger, probably because it is so much of an archetype. It is an ideal representation of the full repentance process in its most powerful form. We all have parts of that going on in our own lives and in our own ongoing conversions. When Paul was teaching, he had the same kind of fire and could speak from the same type of first-hand experience. No matter how dramatic one's initial spiritual transformation is, conversion really is a lifetime process. It was that way for both Alma and Paul, and it is that way for us. We must all endure to the end.

### **Mosiah 27:32 — Comparing Alma's Experience with That of Paul**

Concerning the conversions of Paul and Alma, it may be instructive to compare the similarities and differences between these two magnificent missionaries. As for their backgrounds, both men were raised in a religious setting. Yet, unlike Alma, Paul wasn't opposed to his father's teachings. Paul was a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee, and seems to have been very much in agreement with his father who apparently had enough money to send Paul to Jerusalem (a long trip) to go away from home to study. Paul must have had family support to be able to do that. So, Paul didn't have the same type of family conflict.

Both were persecuting believers. Was there a difference, though, between the kinds of things that Paul was doing and the kind of things that Alma was doing? Paul was convinced in his heart that he was doing the right thing. He was totally committed to what he was doing, whereas Alma, having been taught by his father, probably knew on some level that he was going against the truth.

Jesus said to Paul, "Why persecutest thou me?" That may have been a shock to Paul because he thought he was doing absolutely the right thing. Yet, when the angel said to Alma, "Why are you doing this? Will you of yourself be destroyed?" it was because the destruction for Alma was far more serious than for Paul. Paul had done some serious things, but he was not quite sinning against the same degree of knowledge. So Alma's situation was a little different there as well.

Paul lost his vision, whereas Alma, who was going around *saying* all the wrong things, lost his speech as well as his ability to move. That is the kind of justice that we see so often in the ancient world. It is called *talionic* justice, where the "punishment fits the crime." Paul could still walk around although he could not see. His friends helped him. He had to be led, but he was never really unconscious. In contrast, how did Alma get

from where they were when this happened? His friends, the four sons of Mosiah, had to carry Alma to his father.

Alma the Elder heard about what had happened and he liked it. He rejoiced immediately. He said, “I know the Lord’s hand is in this,” but he did not know yet how it was going to turn out. He had faith that if the Lord was in charge, at least now his son would have a chance. However, Alma the Younger *could* have turned away from this, and could have died. Looking back upon his story, we know the outcome. But Alma the Elder and those with him had to exercise a great deal of faith.

Paul, on the other hand, simply said to the Lord, “What will you have me do?” There was not the same complexity. Paul asked, “Who are you Lord?” and received the reply, “I am Jesus Christ whom thou persecutest.” He asked next, “Well, what would you have me do?” He immediately becomes a willing servant.

The columns on the far right and left sides of Figure 3 show the verses of these six accounts—three from Paul and three from Alma—in which each element either appears or is absent. Down the very middle are found elements shared by both Paul and Alma, and off center are words or experiences unique to either Paul or Alma. In sum, the personalized differences significantly offset and highlight the individual experiences in the two conversions.

### Further Reading

Rex E. Lee, “Paul and Alma and Harold B. Lee: What Prophets and Common Sense Can Teach Us about Learning from Our Mistakes,” *Brigham Young University Devotional and Fireside Speeches*, (Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 1993/94), 13–17.

Book of Mormon Central, “Why Are there Multiple Accounts of Joseph Smith’s and Alma’s Visions? (Alma 36:6–7),” *KnoWhy* 264 (January 20, 2017).

Jasmin Gimenez, “How Paul’s conversion can strengthen your faith in Joseph Smith’s accounts of the First Vision,” Book of Mormon Central Blog, July 30, 2019, online at [bookofmormoncentral.org](http://bookofmormoncentral.org).

### Mosiah 27:32, 33, 35 — The Fruits of Repentance

What did King Benjamin say we have to do to retain a remission of our sins? We have to give to the poor (Mosiah 4:26), and Amulek taught that too. If we want an answer to our prayers, if you want God to give to us, we have to give to others. Did Alma and the sons of Mosiah do that? They did, in a remarkable fashion. They taught and they suffered persecution, no doubt in part to show the sincerity and completeness of their earlier wickedness and damage to the church.

# Comparing Conversions Paul and Alma

Conversion of Paul			Conversion of Alma		
Acts	Acts	Acts	Mos	Alma	Alma
9:1	22:1	26:1	27:1	36:1	38:1
1–2			8–11	6	
			8–10	14	
1–2	5	9–12	11–18	5–9	7
3–8	6–11	13–19			
3	6	13			
			11, 18	7	7
			11–18	7	7
4	7	14	12, 18		
4	7	14	13		
5	8	15			
6	10				
				9, 11	
6	10	16	13	8	
				16	
7				11	
			12, 18		
	9	13		11	
9	11		19		
			19	10	
9	11		23	10	8
			29	12–18	8
			21–23		
10–18	12–16		21		
18	16		24–30	18–19	6, 8
			20–22		
15–16	14–15	16–19			
13–26	18–21				
20–30			30–31	22–30	4–6
			32–37	24–26	
	20				
	31		32	27	

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Chart 15-17

Figure 3 John W. Welch and John F. Hall, "Comparing Conversions—Paul and Alma," in *Charting the New Testament*, chart 15-17.

In verse 33, Alma and the sons of Mosiah “impart much consolation to the church.” What were they doing? Restitution, reconciliation, and repentance. They were trying to console and reassure the believers. They were asking for forgiveness. It was the church that they had put in an awkward position. What did they do next to confirm their faith? Not only were they saying, “We were wrong,” but they were also saying “you were right.” They were “exhorting them with long-suffering and much travail.” They had been teaching, “Do not bother keeping the commandments.” Now they wanted the people to be sure to keep the commandments.

In verse 35, we see them zealously striving to repair the spiritual damage they had caused. They were also confessing. Is confession an important part of the repentance process? Absolutely. It does not say to whom they confessed their sins, but I imagine as part of consoling the church, they were confessing to the church.

With their conduct, they may also have been implicitly confessing to Alma the Elder, the head of the church, because, after all, a lot of the things they did had been in secret (see Mosiah 27:10). That may have been helpful information for Alma. It might have been pretty shocking. He must have known that things were bad with his son, but he may not have known how bad.

In verse 37, “they did publish peace; they did publish good tidings of good; and they did declare unto the people that the Lord reigneth.” Does that remind you of one of the questions that Abinadi answered (see Mosiah 15:13–18). Alma the Younger probably had learned these words from his father, who had been converted by the testimony of Abinadi. And who will be the ones to proclaim peace? Is it just the one messenger? Is it just the Messiah? Abinadi taught that it was all the holy prophets (15:13). So Abinadi had certainly laid the groundwork for these five friends to publish good tidings of good. This is part of the repentance process, to help other people by proclaiming to them the peace of the Living God.

### Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, “[Why Would Noah’s Priests Quiz Abinadi on Isaiah?](#) (Mosiah 12:20–21),” *KnoWhy* 89 (April 29, 2016).

### Mosiah 27:35 — Alma Increases His Scriptural Knowledge

Did Alma keep learning the rest of his life? We know that he started teaching right away, but did he keep learning? In verse 35, we learn that Alma and the sons of Mosiah went about “explaining the prophecies and the scriptures to all who desired to hear them.”

We have plenty of evidence that Alma knew the scriptures very well. John Hilton has done a lot of research recently on the topic of how Alma’s used Abinadi’s words. He



found that when Alma was talking to his son Corianton, he used more than 15 phrases from Abinadi's discourse.

Later, in Alma chapter 5, we can detect a lot of King Benjamin's words and phrases in Alma's great discourse in Zarahemla. What this tells us is that Alma had not only studied the scriptures, but he had internalized them to the extent that he could use their words and phrases and concepts seamlessly. He became deeply knowledgeable of the scriptures.

In addition, in Alma 40, we see that Alma knew about the different situations in the spirit realm, and the times of resurrection. In order to learn that, he had "inquired diligently of God that I might know—that is concerning the resurrection" (40:3). He did not consider that his conversion taught him all he needed to know. He kept seeking for further light and knowledge.

### Further Reading

John Hilton III, "Textual Similarities in the Words of Abinadi and Alma's Counsel to Corianton," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (2012): 39–60.

## Mosiah 28

### **Mosiah 28:1–4 — The Sons of Mosiah Desire to Preach to the Lamanites**

As a result of conversion, the four sons of Mosiah volunteered, and were given permission, to go south to the land of Nephi, where Zeniff, Noah, Limhi and Alma had been (28:8). They desired to help people on all sides to be "friendly to one another, and that there should be no more contentions in all the land" (28:2).

Why do you think the sons of Mosiah would have taken the love they had felt and said, "God, I love you so much, I will go to the Lamanites and teach them?" How would that be an expression of that love? For one thing, these Lamanite outsiders were, after all, still relatives—distant relatives, yet still part of the family of Lehi. There was a big concern about preaching to the Lamanites. No doubt they wanted to undo some of the hostility that existed between the Nephites and the Lamanites and to solve long-standing problems.

There was a bit of a political motive behind this too. The land that the Lamanites possessed was a special land to many people in Zarahemla because it was the land of the first of inheritance, part of the land of promise. Alma's father had grown up there, and of course that had been a very important part of what Zeniff, Noah, Limhi, and those people had thought they were doing. Alma had grown up as well with the people that had come from the land of Nephi with Limhi. He may have known them for as many as 20–25 years. There was a whole community of people who had come from there, so they

knew something of that land. That may have sparked some of their interest in wanting to go back and preach the gospel there.

One wonders why they did not come home after a few years, rather than staying there for 14 years. The religious motivations were the impetus that took them through this long, difficult mission. Apart from the success of the work, their absence from Zarahemla may have had something to do with the political environment back at home. All four of Mosiah's sons went. They didn't trade off, where some of them could have gone for a period of time while others stayed to take care of the kingdom. Instead, all four chose to go, partly because they knew that as the heirs-apparent there would be people in the city of Zarahemla that would want them to be king if they were around.

When Zeniff had gone back up to the lands of the Lamanites, he didn't go with a missionary attitude. Instead, he went with a colonization attitude, and there was hostility that only made things worse. Maybe the Nephites had learned a lesson from the experience of the people of Zeniff. The sons of Mosiah may have wanted to go back and try to do some international diplomacy the way the Lord would have liked it to be done. Of course, Ammon, the prince, the heir apparent, ended up being a slave. He was not going in order to conquer these people. The approach was completely different as a result of this conversion. This event was fundamentally paradigm-shifting for everything. They were now thinking in a completely different way.

In the fifth year of the reign of judges, in Alma chapters 2 and 3, in the new kingless system, there was a civil war in Zarahemla led by a man named Amlici. He wanted to be king. He wanted to reinstate the kings. There must have been a very substantial, political group in Zarahemla that liked the old system.

There were plenty of good, religious reasons for the sons of Mosiah to go, but there is also the issue that the Lord wisely kept them away from these difficulties. These four sons were smart enough to realize that if they stayed around, they were going to be in the crossfire. Transitions of political power were always a problem for the Nephites, as for most civilizations. On another occasion, when we get to the end of the book of Alma and the beginning of the book of Helaman, there were three brothers in Zarahemla. One was named Paanchi, another was Pahoran, and the third was Pacumeni. Within one year, all three of them were dead because there were factions with different political people supporting them. As the power shifted, they were caught in the middle of this and they did not survive. We see that these types of things really can and did happen. The situation that the sons of Mosiah were in could have gone very badly. But it worked out wonderfully in the end because they did the right things for the right reasons, and followed the inspiration of the Lord.

**Mosiah 28:20 — Alma Had All the Nephite Records and the Interpreters**

After King Mosiah had translated the plates of the Jaredites, and had read them to the people of Zarahemla, he “conferred them upon Alma, who was the son of Alma; yea, all the records, and also the interpreters ... and commanded him that he should keep and preserve them, and also keep a record of the people, handing them down from one generation to another, even as they had been handed down from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem.”

We know then that Alma had the interpreters, but we do not know whether or not he used them, or for what kind of enquiry he considered them to be an appropriate tool. Whether the words “inquired of the Lord” meant that Alma used the seer stones or not is open to debate. Cornelis Van Dam indicates that the phrase “inquired of the Lord” meant *used the Urim and Thummim* in the Old Testament (Van Dam, *The Urim and Thummim*, 3). In Alma 16:6, and 43:23–24, Alma was asked to “inquire of the Lord” for specific directions by military leaders, but how he sought the guidance and answers was not specified.

**Further Reading**

Jasmin Gimenez, “[4 Fascinating Insights about Seers, Seer Stones, and Interpreters](#),” Book of Mormon Central Blog, April 30, 2020, online at [bookofmormoncentral.org](http://bookofmormoncentral.org).

Book of Mormon Central, “[Were Joseph Smith’s Translation Instruments Like the Israelite Urim and Thummim?](#)” *KnoWhy* 417 (March 20, 2018).

Matthew Roper, “[Revelation and the Urim and Thummim](#),” in *Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon: The FARMS Updates of the 1990s*, ed. John W. Welch and Melvin J. Thorn (Provo, UT, FARMS, 1999), 280–282.

Cornelis Van Dam, *The Urim and Thummim: A Means of Revelation in Ancient Israel* (Winona Lake, IN, Eisenbrauns, 1997).

**Mosiah 28:11, 17, 20 — Mosiah Passes the Records to Alma the Younger**

Preparing to leave the kingship in the hands of others, Mosiah himself gathered together all the records and “all the things which he had kept” (28:20). Consolidating these records prepared the way for his successor (whoever that would turn out to be) to succeed. It also symbolized a virtual reunification of these groups, which would have helped to enhance solidarity within his ongoing kingdom. Each group of people was represented. Using the two stones that the Mulekites had obtained from the Jaredites (Omni 1: 20–21), Mosiah translated the plates that had been found by the people of Limhi (28:11, 17). Involving the Nephite heritage, Mosiah also gathered “the plates of brass, and also the plates of Nephi, and all the things which he had kept and preserved”

(28:11). Not excluding Limhi's and Alma's groups, he archived "the record of Zeniff" (headnote to Mosiah chapters 9–22), and he also included in the official compilation the "account of Alma" (headnote to Mosiah chapters 23–24).

Mosiah then entrusted all these things to Alma the Younger and "commanded him that he should keep and preserve them, and also keep a record of the people" (28:20), and soon Alma was consecrated by his father to be the high priest (29:42), but Alma the Younger was not yet the Chief Judge. For reasons that will be summarized by Mosiah in his abdication speech in Mosiah 29, which echoes many of Alma the Elder's concerns in refusing to become a king over his small group of people (Mosiah 23), King Mosiah will relinquish the Nephite political right to kingship, and judges will be elected. Alma will then be appointed the first Chief Judge (29:42), having developed strong personal connections with insiders and outsiders, with the newcomers and old timers.