

Comments on Mosiah 18

1 AND now, it came to pass that Alma, who had fled from the servants of king Noah, repented of his sins and iniquities, and went about privately among the people, and began to teach the words of Abinadi-- 2 Yea, concerning that which was to come, and also concerning the resurrection of the dead, and the redemption of the people, which was to be brought to pass through the power, and sufferings, and death of Christ, and his resurrection and ascension into heaven. 3 And as many as would hear his word he did teach. And he taught them privately, that it might not come to the knowledge of the king. And many did believe his words. 4 And it came to pass that as many as did believe him did go forth to a place which was called Mormon, having received its name from the king, being in the borders of the land having been infested, by times or at seasons, by wild beasts. 5 Now, there was in Mormon a fountain of pure water, and Alma resorted thither, there being near the water a thicket of small trees, where he did hide himself in the daytime from the searches of the king. 6 And it came to pass that as many as believed him went thither to hear his words.

v1-6 Alma privately preaches to those who will listen.

v2 "the resurrection of the dead, and the redemption of the people", Mormon sets up a nice physical-spiritual parallelism with resurrection-redemption.

v3 Even though the society in general had grown decadent, there were still people among it who had not abandoned a religious viewpoint.

v4 "a place which was called Mormon", compare v. 30. This is the author's namesake, cp. 3 Ne. 5:12.

7 And it came to pass after many days there were a goodly number gathered together at the place of Mormon, to hear the words of Alma. Yea, all were gathered together that believed on his word, to hear him. And he did teach them, and did preach unto them repentance, and redemption, and faith on the Lord. 8 And it came to pass that he said unto them: Behold, here are the waters of Mormon (for thus were they called) and now, 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 I say unto you, 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? 11 And now when the people had heard these words, they clapped their hands for joy, and exclaimed: This is the desire of our hearts. 12 And now it came to pass that Alma took Helam, he being one of the first, and went and stood forth in the water, and cried, saying: O Lord, pour out thy Spirit upon thy servant, that he may do this work with holiness of heart. 13 And when he had said these words, the Spirit of the Lord was upon him, and he 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, whom he has prepared from the foundation of the world. 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. 15 And again, Alma took another, and went forth a second time into the water, and baptized him according to the first, only he did not bury himself again in the water. 16 And after this manner he did baptize every one that went forth to the place of Mormon; and they were in number about two hundred and four souls; yea, and they were baptized in the waters of Mormon, and were filled with the grace of God. 17 And they were called the church of God, or the church of Christ, from that time forward. And it came to pass that whosoever was baptized by the power and authority of God was added to his church.

v7-17 Alma organizes those who come to hear him preach into a "church" and people join by baptism.

v10 "a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant", the act of baptism is not the covenant in and of itself, it is a symbolic act representing the covenant. It represents and formalizes the covenant.

v11 "they clapped their hands for joy", the concept of clapping one's hands in contemporary Western Culture is different from that of ancient Semitic culture. A number of different Hebrew terms are translated variously, sometimes to "clap" in the KJV and their use varies from violence to rejoicing. The one most closely connected to rejoicing is macha ([Strongs H4222](#)) and is used in:

Ps. 98:8 Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together

Isa. 55:12 For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

Ezek. 25:6 For thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou hast clapped thine hands, and stamped with the feet, and rejoiced in heart with all thy despite against the land of Israel;

In these cases the clapping may be connected with singing, as music. Perhaps when these people clapped their hands and exclaimed, they began singing in unison.

On another BofM reference to clapping, see 31:36 where it says:

Now it came to pass that when Alma had said these words, that he clapped his hands upon all them who were with him. And behold, as he clapped his hands upon them, they were filled with the Holy Spirit.

The clapping here clearly has nothing to do with applause.

v13 "I baptize thee", the religious act of immersion which Christians refer to as baptism was not a NT novelty. We are informed in PofGP Moses 6:64 that Adam was immersed in the water, and the Jews have a similar practice called [tevilah](#) which is a ritual immersion. Tevilah is part of Yom Kippur, but is also consider a rite of conversion to Judaism, as well a common ritual purity rite. There is nothing in the context to suggest this specific event is tied to Yom Kippur. It seems more likely the group has reached critical mass to live independently of the city of Noah and wants to split off and form their own community based on common religious beliefs.

"having authority", in all likelihood Alma was ordained a priest during Zeniff's reign as king and then consecrated to Noah's inner circle of priests because he was self-promoting, cf. 11:5. While he would have been apostate with his involvement with Noah's priests, his ordination would have still be valid. And, given his repentance, he was once again worth to exercise his Priesthood. Compare v. 18 where it explicitly states Alma had authority to ordain other priests.

"as a testimony that ye have entered into a covenant to serve him until you are dead", in addition to being symbolic of shedding the carnal life in favor of a new spiritual one (cf. John 3:3-5) and of the resurrection (cd. Acts 1:22, 1 Pet. 3:21), baptism indicates the person being baptized will endure to the end, cf. 3 Ne. 15:9, Mormon 9:29.

"may the Spirit of the Lord be poured out upon you", note there is nothing in the text suggesting a confirmation or blessing of reception of the Holy Ghost as occurs in the present Church under the auspices of the Melchizedek Priesthood. This suggests the priesthood operative among them was of the Aaronic order, as was the case with Israel in general during this time. The authority to lay on hands for the reception of the Holy Spirit is not generally given to the Nephites until 3 Ne. 18:37.

v17 "they were called the church of God", the term "church" is one limited to the NT in the Bible. The English word "church"

is used to translate the Greek term "ekklesia" which literally translates to "the out-called", or those who have been called out, the chosen, the elect. In this case, Alma's group has been called out from Noah's decadent society. The idea of a chosen or elect people is one that is eminently OT (cf. Deut. 7:6, Ps. 33:12), it is just that the term "church" is not. For those who prefer a more OT flavor to the pre-advent portions of the BofM, the phrase would be "they were called the chosen of God, or those called of Messiah".

18 And it came to pass that Alma, having authority from God, ordained priests; even one priest to every fifty of their number did he ordain to preach unto them, and to teach them concerning the 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 he commanded them that they should preach nothing save it were repentance and faith on the Lord, who had redeemed his people. 21 And he commanded them that 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. 22 And thus he commanded them to preach. And thus they became the children of God. 23 And he commanded them that they should observe the sabbath day, and keep it holy, and also every day they should give thanks to the Lord their God. 24 And he also commanded them that the priests whom he had ordained should labor with their own hands for their support. 25 And there was one day in every week that was set apart that they should gather themselves together to teach the people, and to worship the Lord their God, and also, as often as it was in their power, to assemble themselves together. 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. 27 And again Alma commanded that the people of the church should impart of their substance, every one according to that which he had; if he have more abundantly he should impart more abundantly; and of him that had but little, but little should be required; and to him that had not should be given. 28 And thus they should impart of their substance 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 this he said unto them, having been commanded of God; and they did walk uprightly before God, imparting to one another both temporally and spiritually according to their needs and their wants.

v18-29 Alma establishes a small-scale Zion community, complete with the Law of Consecration.

v26-28 These verses could easily be read as reactionary to the practices of Noah and his priests.

30 And now it came to pass that all this was done in Mormon, yea, by the waters of Mormon, in the forest that was near the waters of Mormon; yea, the place of Mormon, the waters of Mormon, the forest of Mormon, how beautiful are they to the eyes of them who there came to the knowledge of their Redeemer; yea, and how blessed are they, for they shall sing to his praise forever.

v30 Mormon includes a parenthetical comment about how wonderful things were for that group. While he may just be waxing eloquent and verbose about his namesake, it is more likely Mormon's intention is to convey to the reader how well things really were going for them. The description given in v. 18-29 presents a Zion community. People living in a selfless and spiritual manner are bound to be happy and blessed.

31 And these things were done in the borders of the land, that they might not come to the knowledge of the king. 32 But behold, it came to pass that the king, having discovered a movement among the people, sent his servants to watch them. Therefore on the day that they were assembling themselves together to hear the word of the Lord they were discovered unto the king. 33 And now the king said that Alma was stirring up the people to rebellion against him; therefore he sent his army to destroy them. 34 And it came to pass that Alma and the people of the Lord were apprised of the coming of the king's army; therefore they took their tents and their families and departed into the wilderness. 35 And they were in number about four hundred and fifty souls.

v31-35 While Alma and his group are some distance off from the cities they left, Noah still ends up finding out about them. He sends his armies to kill them, but they are apprised of the army's coming and the flee to safety.

v34 "the people of the Lord were apprised", while there is nothing in the present text informing us if the appraisal was miraculous or not, in 23:1 it says "Alma...[was]...warned of the Lord" suggesting some kind of revelation.

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