

# Book of Mormon Study – Alma 23-29

Online zoom Sunday School, 5 Jul 2020

(<https://jayball.name/book-of-mormon-study-lessons>)

*Alma 23:7*

For they became a righteous people; they did lay down the weapons of their rebellion, that they did not fight against God any more, neither against any of their brethren.

They called them "weapons of rebellion". King Benjamin taught about rebellion:

*"And now, I say unto you, my brethren, that after ye have known and have been taught all these things, if ye should transgress and go contrary to that which has been spoken, that ye do withdraw yourselves from the Spirit of the Lord, that it may have no place in you to guide you in wisdom's paths that ye may be blessed, prospered, and preserved - I say unto you, that the man that doeth this, the same cometh out in open rebellion against God; therefore he listeth to obey the evil spirit, and becometh an enemy to all righteousness; (Mosiah 2:36-37)*

You see, rebellion is when you withdraw from the Spirit of the Lord and no longer trust that He will "guide you in wisdom's paths that ye may be blessed, prospered, and preserved". How much do we trust in our weapons to protect us against the chaos we see going on around us? Is it rebellion against God to trust in them? How strong was the faith of these people?

Hopi Origins

"The 'Old Hopi' will tell you that before the 'Great Star' appeared in the sky, their people were converted to the 'Great Spirit.' After they were converted, they took all their weapons of war that they had and buried them deep in the earth. They refused to take them up again lest they sin against the Great Spirit." (Zula Brinkerhoff, *God's Chosen People of America*, pg 250)

*Alma 24:7*

Look at this from the eyes of those who have not been converted. Their brother Lamanites no longer want to be called Lamanites. In fact, they are saying things like "God has in goodness sent these our brethren, the Nephites, unto us to preach unto us, and to convince us of the traditions of our wicked fathers." Not only that, they have opened a correspondence with the Nephites (Alma 23:18, see also next verse here). Even though the Anti-Nephi-Lehis are harmless, the Lamanites wouldn't see it that way. It would be natural for Lamanites to have some fear and trepidation over this.

In our current day we see a lot being said about white privilege. Because of conditions in the history of our wicked white race, it has resulted in a situation of what we now classify toward minorities as what is being called "systemic racism".

In this verse we see the Anti-Nephi-Lehis having been convinced of the traditions of their wicked fathers.

Is there merit or value in acknowledging the wickedness of our fathers? Part of the mission of the sons of Mosiah in the first place was to come into the land of the Nephites to convince them of these things (see Alma 17:9. See also Alma 9:16-17).

How can it help us to be convinced of traditions of our own wicked fathers?

In order to identify some possible false traditions that can be found in our own culture, I want to first take a look at the people of Qumran and what they said about wicked traditions of their fathers. The earliest we can estimate that the community of Qumran began is around 176 BCE. The community appears to have been destroyed by the Romans around 68 CE. This spans the timeframe between when the Old Testament record ends and after when our New Testament record ends. The wicked fathers for the people of Qumran would include the second temple period Deuteronomists who the Dead Sea Scrolls identifies as enemies. These would be those who were responsible for making changes to and corrupting God's covenant that was established during the first temple period and earlier. Here I want to remind you of Nephi's prophesy that covenants would be removed from the Bible (1 Ne 13:21-29).

The community of Qumran established their own covenant with God:

*And all those who enter in the Rule of the Community shall establish a covenant before God in order to carry out all that he commands and in order not to stray from following him for any fear, dread grief or agony (that might occur) during the dominion of Belial. (1QS 1:16-18, TDSST pg 3)*

Included in this covenant was a recognition and acknowledgement of the sins of their wicked fathers:

*And the levites shall recite the sins of the children of Israel, all their blameworthy transgressions and their sins during the dominion of Belial. [And all] those who enter the covenant shall confess after them and they shall say:  
<<We have acted sinfully,  
[we have transgressed,  
we have sinned, we have acted irreverently,  
we and our fathers before us,  
inasmuch as we walk  
[in the opposite direction to the precepts] of truth and justice  
[...] his judgment upon us and upon our fathers; (ibid. 22-26)*

Compare this to the typical Evangelical Christian prayer where we acknowledge our sinful nature to God before asking for forgiveness and asking Christ to save us. See Mosiah 4:2.

Daniel offered a prayer for a covenant of God with his people in his day. In it we see a plea and prayer exposing past sins of the people and petitioning forgiveness from the Lord. This pattern is consistent with what we see in other places in scripture.

*“And I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; we have sinned and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly and have rebelled, even by departing from your precepts and from your judgments. Neither have we listened unto your servants the prophets, who*

*spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.” (Daniel 9:4-6). See also Ezekiel 36:16-38. As also with Josiah (2 Chron 34:31-32), King Benjamin (Mosiah 1), and others.*

Note how in Daniel 9 he prays “we do not present our supplications before you for our righteousnesses” (Daniel 9:18). Moses put it even better, addressing the children of Israel:

*“Not for your righteousness or for the uprightness of your heart, do you go to possess their land, but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord your God does drive them out from before you; and that he may perform the word which the Lord swore unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Understand therefore, that the Lord your God gives you not this good land to possess it for your righteousness, for you are a stiffnecked people.” (Deut 9:5. See also Ezekiel 36:21-23)*

Lest we are tempted to become too proud of our own status as God's chosen people, we need to be reminded that the blessed state we find ourselves in is a result of promises made to righteous fathers that came before us, and that if we seek to obtain such blessings for ourselves we must make our own covenant with God. Do we need to remember how our own past wicked fathers failed and corrupted much of what we may wrongfully be accepting as correct traditions today? In our current day and circumstance, what things might we expect to include in such a prayer that follows a similar pattern as the examples given above? Could it begin something like this:

*"Heavenly Father, we ask you for your mercy and grace to be with those of us who seek to become your people. We hope to repent and return to your path, and no longer be condemned and rejected as a people because of those who went before. Take pity on us all and have mercy for us, as we acknowledge and accept the condemnation and rejection of the latter-day gentiles, and petition that we may overcome it. We are mindful that in 1832 the gentile saints were condemned for vanity and unbelief because they treated lightly the things they had received, and they were warned by you that they would remain under condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments, not only to say, but to do." (see D&C 84:53-47)*

These are things to think about. We should be mindful that we are no different in our day than were those who left a scriptural record for us as an example of what we must be to connect with God as they did.

### [Lamanite Converts vs Nephite Apostates](#)

Around 80 BC, 12 years after sons of Mosiah leave on their mission to the Lamanites, and about 3 months after Alma and Amulek escape out of prison, "in the eleventh year of reign of judges... on the fifth day of second month", the city of Ammonihah is destroyed by Lamanites. (Alma 16:1-2). These Lamanites were mostly Amlicites and Amulonites who were after the order of Nehor. The people of the city of Ammonihah were also after the order of Nehor (Alma 16:11).

Interesting to note that the native Lamanites who were killing the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi end up joining the people of God (Alma 24:25-26), but the Amlicites and Amulonites, who were native Nephites that had rejected Christ, end up destroying those of their own faith in Ammonihah.

*And thus we can plainly discern, that after a people have been once enlightened by the Spirit of God, and have had great knowledge of things pertaining to righteousness, and then have fallen away into sin and transgression, they become more hardened, and thus their state becomes worse than though they had never known these things. (Alma 24:30)*

### Wicked Destroy Wicked and Righteous

From notes sent to my Uncle Lauren around 22 May last year (in response to his request for me to review a book he had written):

The wicked can destroy the wicked. It is also fair game for the wicked to destroy the righteous. The wicked are allowed to destroy the righteous all the time in history. If you don't believe that then go ask Amulek, who suggested to Alma they stretch forth their hands and use the power of God to stop the killing of innocent believers. (Alma 14:10) Alma rejected the idea saying "the Lord receiveth them up unto himself, in glory; and he doth suffer that they may do this thing, or that the people may do this thing unto them, according to the hardness of their hearts, that the judgments which he shall exercise upon them in his wrath may be just." (Alma 14: 11) These people are received up into glory. These people who are righteous are slain this way because the wicked get to kill them. They get to kill them because God will judge the wicked by taking their lives. That is the system. God can slay the wicked, but God cannot slay the righteous. The wicked kill the righteous. The most righteous man who ever lived was allowed to be killed by the wicked. In fact, it was indispensable for the wicked to kill Him, because otherwise there could not have been an atonement made. Therefore, Christ was slain at the hands of wicked men.

However, "the time soon cometh that the fulness of the wrath of God shall be poured out upon all the children of men; for he will not suffer that the wicked shall destroy the righteous." (1 Ne. 22:16)

### Wicked Not Allowed to Destroy Righteous

We find several places in the scriptures where it says "the spirit shall not always strive with man." (Gen 6:3; 1 Ne. 7:14; Morm. 5:16 among others). What does it mean for the spirit to strive with us, and what does it mean when it says it will not always strive with us?

Let's look at some of these passages:

"the word of the Lord shall be fulfilled concerning the destruction of Jerusalem; for all things which the Lord hath spoken concerning the destruction of Jerusalem must be fulfilled. For behold, *the Spirit of the Lord ceaseth soon to strive with them*; for behold, they have rejected the prophets" (1 Ne 7:13-14)

"And when these things have passed away a speedy destruction cometh unto my people; for, notwithstanding the pains of my soul, I have seen it; wherefore, I know that it shall come to pass; and they sell themselves for naught; for, for the reward of their pride and their foolishness they shall reap destruction; for because they yield unto the devil and choose works of darkness rather than light, therefore they must go down to hell. *For the Spirit of the Lord will not always strive with man. And when the Spirit ceaseth to strive with man then cometh speedy destruction*, and this grieveth my soul." (2 Ne 26:10-11)

"And also that the seed of this people may more fully believe his gospel, which shall go forth unto them from the Gentiles; for this people shall be scattered, and shall become a dark, a filthy, and a loathsome

people, beyond the description of that which ever hath been amongst us, yea, even that which hath been among the Lamanites, and this because of their unbelief and idolatry. For behold, *the Spirit of the Lord hath already ceased to strive with their fathers*; and they are without Christ and God in the world; and they are driven about as chaff before the wind. They were once a delightsome people, and they had Christ for their shepherd; yea, they were led even by God the Father.” (Mormon 5:15-17)

One commentary on 1 Nephi chapter 14 gives the following insight:

*“God’s wrath is “poured out” and takes a specific form: “wars and rumors of wars among all the nations and kindreds.” People go to war. The “wicked kill the wicked.” (D&C 63: 33; Proverbs 11: 5; Mormon 4: 5.)*

*The wicked get to destroy one another, but they do not get to destroy the righteous. (1 Nephi 22: 16.)*

*The destruction of God’s judgment will be “among all the nations which belonged to the mother of abominations.” But that was all nations, was it not? Therefore, what nation will not be at war in this coming day?*

*The angel makes a point of stating what Nephi is beholding: “Behold, the wrath of God is upon the mother of harlots.” How is this God’s wrath? The answer is that when God is angry, He withdraws His spirit. (Helaman 6: 35; Helaman 13: 8.) And when He withdraws His spirit from one, He generally pours it out on another. (Helaman 6: 34-36.) When His spirit withdraws, men are left to their natural, carnal state, filled with envy, jealousy, covetousness, ambition and greed. When the heavens become silent, the judgments of God follow. (Revelation 8: 1; D&C 88: 95.)*

*This is the means by which the tares ripen in iniquity, and the wheat ripens in righteousness. However, to preserve the spirit among those to be saved in the last days, it will be necessary for the same priesthood, the same calling, to be in possession of those to be preserved. Otherwise they can’t ripen into wheat. (D&C 86: 1-11.) For the wheat are destined for Celestial Glory and eternal life. (D&C 101: 65.) This cannot be realized without a covenant (D&C 132: 20) and the testimony of Jesus to them. (D&C 76: 51-57.) ... If His spirit withdraws from the world, but remains with His Saints, what peril is there if the Saints don’t also withdraw from the world?” (Denver Snuffer Blog, 1 Nephi 14:15-16, Jul 12, 2010)*

#### [Alma 25:6-13](#)

*And it came to pass that when the Lamanites saw that they could not overpower the Nephites they returned again to their own land; and many of them came over to dwell in the land of Ishmael and the land of Nephi, and did join themselves to the people of God, who were the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi. (verse 13)*

Looking at the backstory (verses 6-12) we see how these Lamanites that ended up joining the people of God were able to come to their senses after having gotten caught up in the ridiculousness of the incense and outrage exhibited by the Amlicites and Amulonites in their anger and fury against the Nephites for what turned out to be no good cause. Liken that unto us in our own day. What do we see? Are people

becoming increasingly more angry without cause? Will we witness many conversions when those who start to see what's really going on come to their senses?

## Law of Moses

*Stick of Joseph* footnote Alma 25:15

124 ["for it was expedient that they should keep the Torah of Moshe as yet, for it was not all fulfilled."] The underlying Hebrew could likely also be rendered as "for it was expedient that they should keep the Torah of Moshe, for everything was not yet fulfilled." And not one yud or stroke shall pass from the Torah until everything is fulfilled (Matt. 5:18; Alma 16:34; 3 Nefi 1:6; 5:22). See also "What does it mean to fulfill the Torah?" in footnote to 2 Nefi 11:8 [2 Ne 25:23-27].

125 ["they must keep those outward performances until the time"] The underlying Hebrew was probably אד טו (Strong's 5704), meaning "as far (or long or much) as, whether in space (even unto) or time (during, while, until [the time]) or degree (equally with)." This word could, therefore, also be translated as "to the degree that" rather than "until the time."

*Alma 26:21*

...there is none that knoweth these things, save it be the penitent. (see Alma 27:18 below)

*Alma 26:22*

*Yea, he that repenteth and exerciseth faith, and bringeth forth good works, and prayeth continually without ceasing—unto such it is given to know the mysteries of God; yea, unto such it shall be given to reveal things which never have been revealed; yea, and it shall be given unto such to bring thousands of souls to repentance, even as it has been given unto us to bring these our brethren to repentance.*

This verse contains steps which, if taken, lead to promised results.

The steps are: 1) *repent*, 2) *exercise faith*, 3) *do good works*, and 4) *pray*. The promise which follows taking these steps is extraordinary. As with any formula in scripture, we can use the promise to determine if we have taken the required steps. If someone has repented, exercised faith, done good works and prayed, they will know they have done so successfully because they will then:

- *know the mysteries of God*
- *reveal things which never have been revealed*
- *bring thousands of souls to repentance*

## Repentance

Repentance means change. It begins by wanting to be more in harmony with God. It involves hungering and thirsting for something better. Done correctly, there is an eager willingness about repentance. Too often we associate it with guilt and being shamed into changing. The Gospel is more positive than that. It presumes the repentant soul is intrigued by what Christ offers. Those who most fit the model are they

who drop their nets, abandon their fishing ships, and follow Christ as He strolls along the shoreline asking for followers. (Matt 4:18-20)

We associate repentance almost exclusively with stopping something. "I need to repent" most often is an expression for "I need to stop doing that." In that sense repentance is exclusively "deduction" or "subtraction." In the real sense of the word, however, repentance is "additive" and "positive." It is the process of growing and receiving new information, new outlooks, and new positive behavior into your life.

### Faith

You should make it a practice to read Lectures on Faith every year. They are that good.

It is important to "exercise faith". By paring these words together, the implication is that it requires activity. There is action taking place. It is not something we "have" but something we "do." Faith should be engaged and actively used.

### Do Good Works

Good works are linked to helping others. Unless someone is benefitting from the work you do, there is not much good in it. See Matt 5:13-16. Significantly, we are warned against becoming a candle which calls attention to itself. Our "good works" should call attention to "your Father which is in heaven."

### Pray

You need to talk with Him. Unless you have a dialogue going with Him, He is not able to unfold the promises which follow. It is a conversation with heaven. To contrast this, look at the Pharisee in Luke 18:11. He "prayed thus with himself".

### Know the Mysteries of God

What more could be desired? It is a false, even damning suggestion that you should not seek to know mysteries from God. They must be learned. But they are not always permitted to be taught.

As has been discussed, doing charitable acts for others is necessarily tied to knowing mysteries. Some things are learned only by those who live them. Charity opens the doors to understanding things so subtle, so refined, it is not possible to comprehend them while living a coarse life. Charity to others softens the heart into increasing sensitivity. Those willing to walk in that path get to feel, and see, and ultimately comprehend things reserved only for them. It is a natural, even inevitable process. This verse sets it out as a formula. The formula works. The wisdom and experience necessary to have composed this verse was well beyond the capacity of the young Joseph Smith in 1829 when he translated the Book of Mormon. This is ancient wisdom, from a seasoned prophet of God. Joseph only translated wisdom which came from others.

### Reveal Things Which Never Have Been Revealed

Good example of this can be found in this verse given to Oliver Cowdrey:

*Behold, I say unto thee, Oliver, that it shall be given unto thee that **thou shalt be heard by the church** in all things **whatsoever thou shalt teach them by the Comforter**, concerning the revelations and commandments which I have given. But, behold, verily, verily, I say unto thee, no one shall be appointed to receive commandments and revelations in this church excepting my servant Joseph Smith,*

*Jun., for he receiveth them even as Moses. And thou shalt be obedient unto the things which I shall give unto him, even as Aaron, to declare faithfully the commandments and the revelations, with power and authority unto the church. **And if thou art led at any time by the Comforter to speak or teach, or at all times by the way of commandment unto the church, thou mayest do it. But thou shalt not write by way of commandment, but by wisdom;***

Oliver was not the Church President. Yet he was told to write words of wisdom and insight, through the Comforter or Holy Ghost. This did not upset the order of the Church, and is included within the revelation setting out that order. The order envisions there will be others who will provide inspired insight within the Church. Other, similar statements appear in D&C 88:77 ("And I give unto you a commandment that you shall teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom."); D&C 88:118 ("And as all have not faith, seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith."); and D&C 109:7.

There is no contradiction here in the promise of this verse and the order of the Church. The duty to teach one another is not limited to a single person or office, but spread broadly throughout the Church. Therefore the promise Ammon makes to anyone following the steps that they will be able to "reveal things which never have been revealed" does not contradict the established order within the Church. Rather, it supports it. Revealing things which have never been revealed is not limited to writing new commandments for the Church. Brother Hugh Nibley was a great restorer of ancient lost wisdom. He was a professor at BYU, and a Gospel Doctrine teacher in his ward. He never presided over either the Church at large, or any significant local portion of it. Yet his writings certainly revealed things which had not hitherto been revealed to the Saints.

### [Bringing Thousands of Souls to Repentance](#)

Never underestimate the influence of your inspired words.

We cannot rely upon or look to Church leaders, alone, to perform these promises. It is left to us to take up the task. The leaders have so little contact with the members at this point, they cannot possibly influence the conversion process, except indirectly. We are the ones who will be directly involved. Even so great an office as the Quorum of the Twelve only interfaces with the rank and file members for about twenty minutes on a screen every six months. They spend their time teaching and interfacing with other general Church officers and leaders. These other general leaders, taught by the Twelve, teach Stake leaders. The Stake leaders teach local leaders. And the local leaders teach you and me. Although, the Twelve may be venerated, respected and celebrated as great men, they are distant from the neighbor, coworker, relative and friends we should be speaking with about the Gospel. Ammon's promise was given to us.

### [Alma 26:35](#)

*Now have we not reason to rejoice? Yea, I say unto you, there never were men that had so great reason to rejoice as we, since the world began; yea, and my joy is carried away, even unto boasting in my God; for he has all power, all wisdom, and all*



*understanding; he comprehendeth all things, and he is a merciful Being, even unto salvation, to those who will repent and believe on his name.*

Since the world began? Nowhere in recorded history of the world do we see in the Old Testament, in the Upanishads, in the earliest records that have been uncovered (Gilgamesh etc.) do we hear of a people who have buried their weapons of war and willingly submitted to be killed before they would take up arms against their brothers? This is incredible indeed! How could Joseph Smith have been so bold as to make such a statement - since the world began?

*Alma 27:18*

*Now was not this exceeding joy? Behold, this is joy which none receiveth save it be the truly penitent and humble seeker of happiness.*

What does it mean to be penitent?

Penitence is another way to describe repentance or the process of change and growing beyond sins limiting your happiness. It comes as you allow Christ to "succor" you through the power of the Atonement. Through penitence, people do away with the darkness in their lives and add light instead.

*Stick of Joseph footnote Alma 27:22*

There is a wordplay here in the original Hebrew. "Yirshon" is from Hebrew ירשה (y'resha - Strong's 3424) meaning "possession, inheritance."

*Stick of Joseph footnote Alma 28:6-7*

Fasting and prayer at the turn of the year (see Alma 15:10) indicates it was Yom Kippur, just ten days after Rosh Hashanah. Verse 10 says, "... thus ended the fifteenth year" because it is summarizing and conflating Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. The entire month of Tishrei is called "the beginning of months" (Ex. 12:1 – 2), and Sukkot is said to be "at the year's end" (Ex. 34:22), though it begins fifteen days after Rosh Hashanah and five days after Yom Kippur. Years were also counted from Sukkot to Sukkot (Deut. 31:10 – 13).

*Alma 28:11-12*

*And the bodies of many thousands are laid low in the earth, while the bodies of many thousands are moldering in heaps upon the face of the earth; yea, and many thousands are mourning for the loss of their kindred, because they have reason to fear, according to the promises of the Lord, that they are consigned to a state of endless wo. While many thousands of others truly mourn for the loss of their kindred, yet **they rejoice and exult in the hope**, and even know, according to the promises of the Lord, that they are raised to dwell at the right hand of God, in a state of never-ending happiness.*

What does "hope" mean in this verse.

Read Jacob 4:6. Ether 12:32.

See also Alma 27:28-29 and compare with LoF 6:5.

*For a man to lay down his all, his character and reputation, his honor and applause, his good name among men, his houses, his lands, his brothers and sisters, his wife and children, and even his own life also, counting all things but filth and dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, requires more than mere belief, or supposition that he is doing the will of God, but actual knowledge, realizing that when these sufferings are ended he will enter into Eternal rest and be a partaker of the glory of God.*

*Stick of Joseph* footnote Alma 29:4

A similar teaching is found in the Talmud: “In the way in which a man wishes to walk he is guided” (b.Makot 10b); “If one goes to defile himself, openings are made for him; and if he goes to purify himself, help is afforded him” (b.Shabbat 104a); “If a man defiles himself a little, he becomes much defiled: [if he defile himself] below, he becomes defiled from above; if he defile himself in this world, he becomes defiled in the world to come. Our Rabbis taught: Sanctify yourselves, therefore, and be ye holy: If a man sanctify himself a little, he becomes much sanctified. [If he sanctify himself] below, he becomes sanctified from above; if he sanctify himself in this world, he becomes sanctified in the world to come” (b.Yoma 39a).