

# Book of Mormon Study – Alma 30-31

Online zoom Sunday School, 12 Jul 2020

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

Alma's Life at a Glance:

Year	Event	Age of Alma the Younger (estimated)
119 BC (Mon 27 Mar)	Alma to Zarahemla. (Mosiah 24:18-25)	15-25
Around 100 BC	Alma the younger sees angel and is converted. Alma the elder is 73. (Mosiah 27:11)	33-43
Around 91 BC	First year of reign of Judges. Alma Elder dies at 82, Mosiah dies at 63. (Mosiah 29:44-47)	42-52
Around 87 BC	Alma fights Amlici. (Alma 2:29-31)	46-56
Around 83 BC	Alma gives up judgement seat. (Alma 4:16-19)	50-60
Around 77 BC	Alma meets Ammon & sons of Mosiah returning home from their 14 year mission (Alma 27:16)	56-66
Around 76 BC	Tremendous battle between Lamanites and Nephites (Alma 28)	57-67
Around 74 BC	Alma's confrontation with Korihor (Alma 30). Mission to Zoramites (Alma 31). Alma's teachings to his sons (Alma 36-42). The Zoramite rebellion and Lamanite war with Nephites (Alma 43-44).	59-69
Around 73 BC	Alma taken up. (Alma 45:18)	60-70

[Alma 30:3](#)

*Stick of Joseph* footnote on Law of Moses again. We spoke of this last week.

[Korihor Anti-Christ](#)

[Alma 30:6](#)

In verses 15 and 26, Korihor teaches there is no way to know there will be a Christ who shall come. This is the common teaching of anti-Christ. Sherem taught the same thing to Jacob about 400 years earlier.

*“And ye have led away much of this people that they pervert the right way of God, and keep not the law of Moses which is the right way; and convert the law of Moses into the worship of a being which ye say shall come many hundred years hence. And now behold, I, Sherem, declare unto you that this is blasphemy; for no man knoweth of such things; for he cannot tell of things to come. And after this manner did Sherem contend against me.” (Jacob 7:7)*

**Side-note:** I found it curious that in this verse is a statement by Sherem, the first anti-Christ in the Book of Mormon, that is used by the church's Correlation Department. [See Gospel Doctrine Manual on The Doctrine and Covenants and Church History; lesson number 42, Continuing Revelation to Latter-day Prophets: <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/manual/doctrine-and-covenants-and-church-history-gospel-doctrine-teachers-manual/lesson-42-continuing-revelation-to-latter-day-prophets?lang=eng>]

*"Explain that the purpose of Church correlation is to preserve 'the right way of God' (Jacob 7: 7.)"*

In this quote Sherem is bringing an accusation against Jacob. Sherem, the anti-Christ, accuses Jacob of perverting the right way of God by teaching of Christ. It is this accusation which the Correlation Department has lifted and used as justification for Correlation. This seems a strange juxtaposition to me. (From Jay's email sent to Marcus Reed, 16 Jun 2019)

**Anti-Christ:** Those who invite people to follow them and deliberately seek devotees. Those who put themselves up for adoration and worship are mistaken, are practicing priestcraft, are anti-Christ, and are in the employ of the enemy to mankind's souls. Anti-Christ's are also all those who practice a religion that rejects Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Redeemer of mankind. Any teaching or person who draws us to them and does not point us to the Lord is unable to help us. If they try to supplant Christ as the object of admiration, then they are anti-Christ and a false prophet.

## Bound and Carried

*Alma 30:20*

I've tried to make sense of the justification for physically binding someone and removing them from your city or land. If the law protects a person in holding whatever religious belief they choose (or none at all) then how can an atheist be bound and taken before a chief judge for teaching his point of view? (Being held against one's will, 5th & 6th Amendments?)

A person could be punished for what he did wrong (v 9-11), but the law could have no hold on a person for his beliefs (v 7,11-12). Apparently, the law having no hold on a person for his beliefs does not include the right of a person not to be bound and taken before a judge or being cast out of a land (Alma 30:20,-21,29). The classification of "punishment" seems to exclude being bound and taken etc.

## Identifying with Korihor

*Alma 30:12-28*

Howard Zinn wrote:

*"Historically, the most terrible things - war, genocide, and slavery - have resulted not from disobedience, but from obedience." ("The Zinn Reader: Writings on Disobedience and Democracy", Howard Zinn, 1997-2009. Seven Stories Press, New York., 420)*

Consider the picture that comes into your mind when you think of the animated movie *The Breadwinner*. Haven't seen it? Here's the brief introduction of the plot:

*Parvana is an 11-year-old girl living in Kabul, Afghanistan, under the control of the Taliban. Her father Nurullah, who is a school teacher was left physically impaired during the Soviet–Afghan War; because of the war, he lost his left leg and became a hawker. A while later, during supper, he is unjustly arrested after a volatile young member of the Taliban, Idrees, thinks he insulted him earlier while the two were selling goods in the market in Kabul. Parvana's family is left without an adult male relative, as her elder brother Sulayman died years ago, leaving her, her mother Fattema, her elder sister Soraya and her youngest brother Zaki without means to support the family, as they are not allowed to go out without a male relative. Even though Parvana and her mother try to go to the prison, they are forced to go back when a member of the Taliban beats Fattema and threatens to arrest them if they are caught again. After Parvana unsuccessfully tries to buy food while going out as a girl, she decides to cut her hair and dress as a boy and pretend to be Nurullah's nephew, Aatish, in order to support the family.*

Or picture in your mind the images of Jihadists standing over their orange clad captors, knives in hand ready to behead them or torture them with some other cruel and unusual punishments for no other reason than because they are considered infidels. That is, because these infidels have a different belief than they do. Mind you, these are extremist views, but views we see being used as justification to commit atrocities. Don't misunderstand, I am not accusing or pointing a finger at Islam or Muslims. But these extremist examples give a perfect illustration of the point I'm trying to make.

Now look at the words of Korihor through the lens of someone who is disgusted with such atrocities. Can you see such abuses of these religions as *the effect of a frenzied mind; and this derangement of their minds comes because of the traditions of their fathers, which lead them away into a belief of things which are not so.*? (see v 16)

How applicable are these words from Korihor to the senseless religious craziness we see in our own day?

*I do not teach this people to bind themselves down under the foolish ordinances and performances which are laid down by ancient priests, to usurp power and authority over them, to keep them in ignorance, that they may not lift up their heads, but be brought down according to thy words. Ye say that this people is a free people. Behold, I say they are in bondage. Ye say that those ancient prophecies are true. Behold, I say that ye do not know that they are true. (23-24)*

*And thus ye lead away this people after the foolish traditions of your fathers, and according to your own desires; and ye keep them down, even as it were in bondage, that ye may glut yourselves with the labors of their hands, that they durst not look up with boldness, and that they durst not enjoy their rights and privileges. Yea, they durst not make use of that which is their own lest they should offend their priests, who do yoke them according to their desires, and have brought them to believe, by their traditions and their dreams and their whims and their visions and their pretended mysteries, that they should, if they did not do according to their words, offend some unknown being, who they say is God. (v 27-28)*

I look at Korihor's words and identify with him on these points because I see how it applies - if we're using the argument to agree against the ridiculousness we see on display with intolerant and violent religious movements. It's the same argument that Korihor could be making against the Zoramite religion. The ones who would actually eventually kill him. It's the same argument that Korihor could be making against the religion or order of Nehor. Nehor, the one that was intolerant of others to the point where he took the sword and killed Gideon. Forget Korihor for a moment, good grief, Alma could be the one making these same observations and be absolutely correct in his assessment. Didn't Alma and Amulek witness such intolerant senslessness first hand with the martyrdom of the believers by the apostate people of Ammonihah (who were of the order of Nehor).

Can you blame people for buying into Korihor's teaching? Can you begin to see its appeal?

Now, I want you to understand that I have taken Korihor's words out of context. Korihor is not making this argument against any of the incorrect traditions and teachings of Nehors or Zoramites. He taking some valid points, and then applying it to the true religion and believers in God. That's the difference. Korihor is denying Christ and attacking the truth, and he knows it.

The people of Ammon (and others in the assembly of God) possess a sense of the reality and self-evident truth in the incorrectness of what Korihor is teaching, even if they may not be able to articulate it.

Hugh Nibley describes those who bought into Korihor's teaching:

*They were now emancipated (verse 18), "leading away the hearts of many [because they liked it], causing them to lift up their heads in their wickedness, yea, leading away many women, and also men, to commit whoredoms - telling them that when a man was dead, that was the end thereof." So, as I said, nobody has to be paid off. On the basis of this materialistic thing you are not going anywhere. If you are going to have your fun you must have it here. So it led to immorality. That's part of the picture of this positivism. (Nibley, Teachings of The Book of Mormon Part 2, Lecture 54, pg 336)*

*<https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?filename=24&article=1071&context=mi&type=additional>*

Compare that to what we see today in the cult(s) of the social justice movement, how self-evident the garbage that gets put out there, and worse, bought into. I see these as just as real and dangerous a religious movement as one professing and using their belief in a god to control and manipulate others.

Take for example Korihor's statement, speaking about those under the abuse of religion, "...they durst not look up with boldness, and that they durst not enjoy their rights and privileges." (verse 27) Now look at something recently said by Congresswoman Ilhan Omar:

*"When we say housing is a human right, we need to guarantee homes for all." Later (3:22) she speaks of healthcare as a "human right". (2:20 min, Rep. Ilhan Omar Calls for Federal Action to Address Institutional Racism, <https://youtu.be/7u7yyHu6FZk>)*

This is either a clear misunderstanding or blatant misrepresentation of *basic human rights* (as understood by our country's founding fathers).

Omar's words appear to be the kind of stuff that is "*pleasing unto the carnal mind*" (v 53) and appeals to those who don't want to be accountable. What kind of damage does this rhetoric do? Should she be bound and removed from the land or hauled off to the high court to be questioned?

To put this in perspective, Korihor is teaching clearly incorrect, corrupt doctrine that has been taught to him from an angel of the devil himself.

"Allow the man his freedom", we hear people say. "We can't deny the man his freedom of speech".

But recognize that when he preaches such things (and people start buying it), it poses the same danger that we see preached to us by Omar or the cult(s) of the social justice movement. Clear, blatant, untruth that threatens the liberty and safety of our society. Liberty was just as fragile to them in Alma's day as it is to us in ours. If we don't stand up against it, confront it, or put a stop to it, what is bound to happen? Will we deserve what comes to us as a result?

*Alma 30:28*

I want to re-visit verse 28 for a moment.

*... if they did not do according to their words, offend some unknown being, who they say is God—a being who never has been seen or known, who never was nor ever will be.*

An atheist would argue that I don't need God to be moral. If we are using Sam Harris' definition of morality, I would agree. Common sense alone is enough to see the folly that adultery has on a committed marriage or the foolishness of murder, robbing, or stealing.

*Sam Harris' conception of scientific morality rests upon two factors: events in the world and states of the brain. He argues that there are right and wrong answers to questions of well-being, and he argues for a case of scientific morality in terms of well-being. There are peaks and valleys on the moral landscape, experiences whose subjective side can be objectively spoken of. The world of values is in effect a subset of the world of facts; the former one is only specific in that it is concerned with the well-being of conscious creatures. And I think that is what he might correlate with objective morality, although I haven't heard him using exactly this term. But nevertheless, in his book, he makes a case for a morality informed by science- he says that morality is an undeveloped branch of science. (Uday Saroj, Feb 21, 2017, Response to "What is Sam Harris' definition of 'objective morality'?" <https://www.quora.com/What-is-Sam-Harris-definition-of-objective-morality/answer/Uday-Saroj-1> See also Sam Harris' book, *The Moral Landscape*)*

Hugh Nibley taught:

*Korihor said, he said to me in the form of an angel "there is no God; yea, and he taught me that which I should say. And I have taught his words; and I taught them because they were pleasing unto the carnal mind." And it tells us here why they were pleasing to the carnal mind. The carnal mind is that which caused men and women to lift up their heads and to commit whoredoms, "telling them that when a man was*

*dead, that was the end thereof.” That’s what they wanted. They wanted a carte blanche for carnal behavior to do whatever they wanted. It appealed to the carnal mind. Carnal also means things of the world, as indicated in Alma 30:17, “but every man fared in this life according to the management of the creature [that’s carnal], . . . prospered according to his genius, . . . conquered according to his strength.” That’s on the carnal level of the warfare in which you deal with objects and people, having no spirit at all. So he had been fooled into that, and the people liked to hear it for that reason. (Nibley, Teachings of The Book of Mormon Part 2, Lecture 54, pg 338-339)*

In this whole encounter I admire Alma's boldness. The way he stands his ground. He is the first one to ask the question and put Korihor on the defensive. Alma leads and directs and takes control of the discussion. Alma knows things and is confident of what he knows. Contrast this with what we sometimes hold as the stereotypical good and gentle spirited "good guy" preacher "let's submit to authority and not disrupt the status quo" type. See also John the Baptist if you think the good guy is always a gentle soul.

#### *Alma 30:17*

I want to revisit verse 17

*And many more such things did he say unto them, telling them that there could be no atonement made for the sins of men, but every man fared in this life according to the management of the creature; therefore every man prospered according to his genius, and that every man conquered according to his strength; and whatsoever a man did was no crime.*

Compare with "And the Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there were no poor among them" (Moses 7:18). Of these, the words "*and the Lord dwelt among them*" are the most important. But He could not do so unless they were united. Becoming one and rising up to receive the proper order of things is but a prelude to the Lord's presence. For us this poses a socio-economic problem because we do not think it is even wise to attempt to have no poor among us. We think people prosper according to their genius and therefore, have earned all they have; or correspondingly, deserve all they lack. When you are a family, as the original Zion, those competitive ideas are not even entertained.

#### *Alma 30:53*

Lets turn to Moses' experience

*"And again Moses said...." (Moses 1:18)*

Here Moses is talking, because Satan has come during this interlude period as an angel of light, tempting him.

*"And again Moses said: I will not cease to call upon God, I have other things to inquire of him: for his glory has been upon me, wherefore I can judge between him and thee. Depart hence, Satan."*

The defect that Moses perceived in what Lucifer was saying, tempting him, did not consist merely in his presence. This is an angel. In D&C 76:28 we read a description. An angel, in a position of authority in the presence of God, was cast down. That being is not someone who, to look upon, would appear to you to be a vile creature. Instead he appears to be someone, who to look upon, is a being of light. A being of glory. He pretends to be an angel of light. The reason Moses could discern between them had nothing to do with the countenance of his appearance. It had to do with the content. It had to do with the Spirit. It had to do with what he radiated, and what Moses was able to discern was that this was not the source of something which he, Moses, chose to take in. As a consequence, he could judge between him and say, I dis-prefer you. Look at the Joseph Smith History relating to the thick darkness. The Orson Hyde account of Joseph Smith's first vision talks about a thick darkness that gathered around him. It consisted of the adversary benighting his mind with doubts and brought to his soul all sorts of improper pictures. The reason it is possible to do that, and more easily so with many of us, is because we have ingested all kinds of improper images, which then can be summoned back up. Look at 2 Nephi 9:9. This is one of the early sermons given by Jacob.

*“And our spirits must have become like unto him, and we become devils, angels to a devil, to be shut out from the presence of our God, and to remain with the father of lies, in misery, like unto himself; yea, to that being who beguiled our first parents, who transformeth himself nigh unto an angel of light, and stirreth up the children of men unto secret combinations of murder and all manner of secret works of darkness.”*

It is not the physical appearance, nor the transformation, that takes place. It is the content. This is why you need to know that the course that you are pursuing is in accordance with the will of God (see LoF 6). Because once you have made the required sacrifice, you acquire the required knowledge.

Now look again here in Alma. The judgments are upon Korihor. And he is writing his final confession.

*“But behold, the devil hath deceived me; for he appeared unto me in the form of an angel, and said unto me: Go and reclaim this people, for they have all gone astray after an unknown God. And he said unto me: There is no God; yea, and he taught me that which I should say. And I have taught his words; and I taught them because they were pleasing unto the carnal mind; and I taught them, even until I had much success, insomuch that I verily believed that they were true; and for this cause I withstood the truth, even until I have brought this great curse upon me.” (Alma 30:53)*

You see, he was convinced by the devil that appeared to him in a form of an angel. It's not always that the adversary comes to you with murderous intent. Sometimes he comes to appeal to your vanity, to your pride. And pride is such a sinkhole that he can get most people there. You could have acclaim, you could have wealth, the devil tells us. No, the truth is you acquire what you need to acquire as a consequence of sacrificing for God. And in that process, you will endure criticism, rejection, opposition, the world's hatred. You may even be cast out. But you obtain what you obtain from God, by sacrifice.

*Alma 30:60*

*"...and thus we see that the devil will not support his children at the last day, but doth speedily drag them down to hell."*

Remember that the Zoramites are also anti-Christ (Alma 31:16-17)

Also recall from last week's lesson how the wicked city of Ammonihah, who were of the order of Nehor, was destroyed by those who were stirred up to war by the Amlicites and Amulonites who were also of the order of Nehor.

*Alma 31:5*

*And now, as the preaching of the word had a great tendency to lead the people to do that which was just—yea, it had had more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword, or anything else, which had happened unto them—therefore Alma thought it was expedient that they should try the virtue of the word of God.*

This may have been more of an experiment back when Alma gave up the judgment seat (see Alma 4:16-19), but now at this time we can see it is a very valid way to effect change. This statement is backed up by evidence of what we see with Alma's experiences already and even more powerfully with Ammon and sons of Mosiah. This statement here in Alma is verifiably true.

*Stick of Joseph footnote Alma 31:16*

"...the Pharisees have delivered to the people a great many observances by succession from their fathers, which are not written in the law of Moses; for that reason it is that the Sadducees reject them, and say that we are to esteem those observances to be obligatory which are in the written word, but are not to observe what are delivered from the tradition of our forefathers..." (Josephus; Ant. 13:11:6). See also Ps. 78:1-4; Enosh 1:3 [Enos 1:14].

*Stick of Joseph footnote Alma 31:21*

From the Hebrew root rum רום and ram רם (Strong's 7311), "to be high."

*Alma 31:35*

*Behold, O Lord, their souls are precious, and many of them are our **near** (Original Manuscript) brethren; therefore, give unto us, O Lord, power and wisdom that we may bring these, our brethren, again unto thee.*

Who were Zoramites?

*Zoram was a servant of Laban. He was drafted by Lehi's family, by Nephi especially. Being a servant of Laban, the military governor of Jerusalem, he would not be an Israelite because you can't enslave or make a servant of an Israelite. The name Zoram is again one of those desert names. It's from the eastern half of Manasseh. It means a welcome, refreshing, powerful rain. A lot of this stuff has come out of Genesis 13-14, but the people of the Near East are noted for their genealogical awareness... So it*



*is very possible that these Zoramites would keep a sort of aloofness or distinction among themselves. They were proud of their blood, etc. It was not a hundred percent [Zoramite]. They had joined with Lehi's family and were good friends. The Zoramites were Nephites. They went along, but still they were aware of their ancestry, traditions, etc. (Hugh Nibley, Teachings of the Book of Mormon Part 2, Lecture 55, pg 349)*