

Alma 13 — After the Order of the Son of God — The High Priesthood, Foreordination, and Melchizedek the King of Salem

Alma 13: still the tenth year of the reign of the judges (c. 82 BC), still in the Ammonihah confrontation. Alma has finished the Fall-and-plan-of-redemption discourse of Alma 12 and now rises to the priesthood superstructure. This is the Book of Mormon's master priesthood chapter — the only sustained pre-Christian text on the High Priesthood after the order of the Son of God, on foreordination from before the foundation of the world, on Melchizedek king of Salem, and on entering into the rest of the Lord. The chapter closes with a pleading exhortation to humility and prayer, anticipating the further sermons of chapters 32–34 (the seed of faith and the great mediation) and the future Melchizedek correspondence of Hebrews 7.

Alma 13 is the Book of Mormon's master priesthood chapter and the foundational text of Latter-day Saint priesthood theology. It is the only sustained pre-Christian Nephite text on the High Priesthood after the order of the Son of God, the only sustained text on foreordination from before the foundation of the world, and the only Book of Mormon chapter that develops the doctrine of Melchizedek as the master Old Testament priestly type. By the time the chapter closes it has anticipated almost every major passage of Hebrews 7, named the Pauline triad of faith, hope, and charity, and rehearsed the discipline that Christ would later urge in Gethsemane: *watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.*

Hebrew Word Studies

kohen-gadol / yada-mi-rosh / shevua / minui (כֹּהֵן גָּדוֹל / יָדָא מִי רוֹשׁ / שְׁוּעָא / מִינוּי) — **high priest / known from the head, foreknown / sworn oath / appointment, ordination vv. 1–9.** The chapter's four Hebrew anchors of priesthood. *Kohen-gadol* — *high priest* — is the title of the Aaronic high priest (Lev. 21:10). Alma 13 applies it instead to the Order of the Son, which precedes Aaron. The chapter is one of the Book of Mormon's clearest articulations of the doctrine that the true *kohen-gadol* is not Aaronic but Melchizedekian — the very doctrine Hebrews 7:11 will press. *Yada-mi-rosh* — *known from the head* — is the Hebrew construction of foreknowledge in Isa. 41:26 and 46:10 (*declaring the end from the beginning*). Alma's *foreknowledge of God* is *yada-mi-rosh*: divine knowing that includes pre-mortal existence. *Shevua* — *sworn oath* — is the noun of Gen. 26:3 (*the oath which I swear unto Abraham thy father*) and of Heb. 6:13 (*he swore by himself*). The implicit *shevua* of the Father to the Son in the pre-mortal council becomes the textual basis for what D&C 84:39–40 will call the *oath and covenant of the priesthood*. *Minui* — *appointment, ordination* — is the noun behind formal public investiture (Esth. 9:31). Alma's *ordained* is *minui*: not a private call but a publicly binding investiture. The chapter teaches the priesthood not as private gift but as covenant office.

Malki-tzedek / Shalem / Shalom / Sar-Shalom (מַלְכִּי-צְדֵק / שָׁלֵם / שְׁלֹמֹה / שָׂר-שָׁלוֹם) — **my king is righteousness / Salem, peaceful place / peace, wholeness / Prince of Peace vv. 17–18.** The chapter's four Hebrew anchors of the Melchizedek doctrine. *Malki-tzedek* — *my king is righteousness* — combines *malki* (my king) and *tzedek* (righteousness). The name itself is a pre-Christian prophecy of the Christ figure. Hebrews 7:2 makes the etymology explicit: *first being by interpretation King of righteousness*. *Shalem* — *Salem* — is the place-name of Gen. 14:18 and Ps. 76:2 (*in Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Zion*). The Psalter identifies Salem with Zion-Jerusalem; Melchizedek was therefore the pre-Davidic priest-king of the same site that would later hold the Solomon temple and stand at the foot of the cross. *Shalom* — *peace, wholeness, completeness* — is the root of Salem. The chapter's identification of *King of Salem* with *Prince of Peace* rests on the Hebrew etymology, which Alma is using as Hebrews 7:2 will later. *Sar-Shalom* — *Prince of Peace* — is the Messianic title of Isa. 9:6 (*Pele-Yo'ets El-Gibbor Avi-Ad Sar-Shalom* — *Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace*). The chapter has Melchizedek bearing, pre-prophetically, one of the great titles of the Messiah. Christology and typology are bound together in the very name.

From the Chapter's Architecture

Finally, the chapter is the doctrinal foundation that makes Alma 14 narratively comprehensible. Alma 13 has taught that the priesthood holds power prepared from eternity to all eternity. Alma 14 will show the prison walls falling, the bound prophets walking out unharmed, the city of Ammonihah falling in a single day. The miracle that closes the next chapter is the visible fruit of the doctrine this chapter has just laid down.