

Alma 19 — The Light of the Everlasting Life Was Lit Up in His Soul — The Queen's Greater Faith, Abish the Long-Hidden Witness, and the Conversion of Lamoni's Household

Alma 19: the third day after Lamoni's collapse. The servants are preparing the sepulchre — Lamanite custom — when the queen, refusing to believe the king is dead, sends for Ammon. Ammon perceives by the Spirit and tells her: he is not dead, but he sleepeth in God, and on the morrow he shall rise again. Her faith astonishes him: there has not been such great faith among all the people of the Nephites. On the morrow the king rises, testifies that he has seen his Redeemer — and shall come forth, and be born of a woman, and he shall redeem all mankind — then sinks again, overcome with joy. The queen sinks beside him; Ammon prays in thanksgiving and is himself overcome; all the king's servants fall as well. One alone is left standing — Abish, a Lamanitish woman, converted to the Lord for many years on account of a remarkable vision of her father, who has hidden her conversion until this moment. She runs from house to house, gathering the people. Contention breaks out among them; the brother of one of Ammon's victims at Sebus raises a sword to kill Ammon, and falls dead. Abish, in tears, takes the queen's hand; the queen rises and takes Lamoni's hand; Lamoni rises and immediately preaches. The household is converted in a single morning.

Alma 19 is the third-day rising of the Lamoni narrative. The king who fell as if dead at the end of Alma 18 has been on a bed for two days and two nights. The queen will not let him be buried. The chapter is the resurrection scene that ends the long Sebus arc: the king rises, testifies of his Redeemer, and the entire household is converted within a single morning.

Hebrew Word Studies

or-olamim / panim / nichbash / kelim (אֵלֶּם / פָּנִים / נִחְבָּשׁ / כֵּלִים) — **light of the eternities, everlasting light / face, presence / to be overcome, subdued / vessels, instruments vv. 6, 11, 12, 16, 36.** Four Hebrew words underlie the chapter's vocabulary of light, presence, overcoming, and vessels. *Or-olamim* — light of the eternities, everlasting light — is the construct of *or* (light) and *olamim* (eternities, ages). It appears in Isaiah 60:19–20: *the sun shall be no more thy light by day... but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light.* The Hebrew is *or-olam*, and that *or-olam* is precisely what Alma 19:6 says is kindled in Lamoni's soul. The Isaian eschatological light of the New Jerusalem has been lit in a single Lamanite king. *Panim* — face, presence — is the noun in Exodus 33:14 (*my presence shall go with thee*), Numbers 6:25 (*the Lord make his face shine upon thee*, the priestly Aaronic blessing), and Psalm 27:8 (*thy face, Lord, will I seek*). When Alma 19:6 says *the marvelous light of his goodness*, the construction underneath is *or-ha-panim* — the light of the divine face. Lamoni receives, in his trance, the Aaronic blessing's content: the Lord made his face to shine upon him. *Nichbash* — to be overcome, subdued, brought low — is the verb in Micah 7:19 (*he will subdue our iniquities*). When the chapter says the light had *overcome his natural frame*, the underlying Hebrew is *nichbash* — the body subdued by the Spirit. *Kelim* — vessels, instruments — is the plural of *keli* (the Acts 9:15 chosen vessel). When Lamoni, the queen, the servants, and Ammon all fall together, the chapter is describing five *kelim* — five vessels — filled and overflowing at once. Paul will later say *we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us* (2 Cor. 4:7); the Lamoni court is the Book of Mormon's clearest pre-Pauline instance of the doctrine.

From the Chapter's Architecture

Finally, the chapter is the textual hinge between the Lamoni narrative and the Aaron narrative. Alma 20 will take Ammon and the now-converted Lamoni up to Middoni to rescue Aaron and his brethren from prison. The Lamanite king who lay as if dead two days ago will, in the next chapter, ride out to deliver the Nephite missionaries who have been suffering in chains. The arm that extended to him will, by him, be extended to them.