
Alma 35 — It Did Destroy Their Craft — The Fallout of the Word, the People of Ammon's Open Hand, and a Father Gathering His Sons

Alma 35: c. 74 BC, the close of the seventeenth and the commencement of the eighteenth year of the reign of the judges. The Zoramite mission is over, and this short chapter records its aftermath. The preaching has split Antionum: the converted poor are cast out, and the powerful Zoramites, enraged that the word destroyed their craft, expel everyone who favored it. The exiles flee to Jershon, where the people of Ammon — themselves once refugees — take them in, feed them, clothe them, and give them land. The furious Zoramites ally with the Lamanites and prepare for war; the people of Ammon yield up Jershon to the Nephite armies and withdraw to Melek, and a war begins. The chapter ends on a quiet, weighty note: Alma, grieved that the people are growing hard and offended at the strictness of the word, gathers his three sons to give each his own charge — opening the great farewell counsel of Alma 36–42.

Alma 35 is a short, transitional chapter, and it does three jobs in sixteen verses. It closes the Zoramite mission by showing what the preaching set in motion; it stages the rescue of the converts by the people of Ammon; and it turns the whole book toward the great farewell discourses by sitting Alma down to gather his sons. After the soaring sermons of chapters 32–34 — the seed of faith, the witnesses of the Son, the infinite atonement — this chapter is the hard landing back into the world of consequences. The word was preached; now we see what the word *did*. And what it did was divide. It converted the poor and enraged the powerful, because, as the chapter says with blunt economy, *it did destroy their craft* (v. 3). The chapter is a study in the social cost of truth: the gospel that planted a tree of everlasting life in humble hearts also pulled down the religious-economic system the proud had built, and the proud struck back the only way they knew how — by casting out everyone the word had touched.

Hebrew Word Studies

melakah / *nachalah* / *qashah* (מַלְאכָה / נַחֲלָה / קָשָׁה) — **craft, work, occupation, the labor by which one lives / inheritance, allotted possession, heritage / to be hard, to harden, to be severe vv. 3, 9, 15.** Three Hebrew ideas frame the chapter.

Behind *craft* in *it did destroy their craft* (v. 3) lies the sense of *melakah* — work, occupation, the trade by which one makes a living — though the Zoramite *craft* is closer to the Greek New Testament's *technē* in Acts 19:24–27, where the silversmiths of Ephesus riot against Paul because the gospel threatens *the craft by which we have our wealth*. The chapter exposes that the Rameumptom was a *melakah*, a livelihood; the rulers' fury is the fury of an interest, not an intellect, and the Hebrew and Greek both locate the resistance to truth in the threatened trade. *Nachalah* — inheritance — is the word behind *lands for their inheritance* (v. 9), the same root (*nachal*) that named Jershon itself in Alma 27 (a land given *for an inheritance*). It is covenant land-language: an inheritance is not bought but granted, a portion assigned by grace. The people of Ammon, who received Jershon as a *nachalah* when they had nothing, now extend a *nachalah* to the next dispossessed people — the inheritance freely given becoming an inheritance freely passed on. *Qashah* — to be hard — stands under *the hearts of the people began to wax hard* (v. 15), and it is the same root used of Pharaoh's hardened heart (Ex. 7:3) and of the *stiffnecked* (literally *hard-necked*) people Israel so often became. The chapter sets *qashah* against the soft, humbled, *anavah* hearts of the poor in Alma 32: the cast-out poor were made soft by affliction and received the word; the comfortable Nephites grow *qashah* and are offended by it. The same word that finds soil in a lowly heart finds only stone in a hard one — and the hardening of the many is exactly what drives Alma, grieving, to the still-soft hearts of his sons.

From the Chapter's Architecture

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