
Alma 45 — Taken Up, Even as Moses — Alma's Last Prophecy and Helaman's Charge

Alma 45: c. 73 BC, the nineteenth year of the reign of the judges, in Zarahemla. The war with Zerahemnah is over and the people have humbled themselves; now Alma the Younger sets his house in order before he disappears from the record. He questions his son Helaman in a brief, searching catechism of belief, blesses him with the ancient covenant of prosperity, and then prophesies a thing so dark he commands it be kept secret: that in four hundred years, after seeing so much light, his people will dwindle in unbelief and be destroyed. Then Alma blesses the church, departs the land as if traveling to Melek, and is never seen again — and the record supposes, with reverent uncertainty, that the Lord took him unto Himself even as He took Moses. The chapter is the passing of the torch from the great convert-prophet to his son, and it closes with the first signs of the pride and dissension that the next chapters' crises will exploit. It is a chapter about succession, about the conditions of a nation's survival, and about the quiet, Moses-like departure of one of the Book of Mormon's central figures.

Alma 45 is a hinge chapter — the place where the Book of Mormon turns from the ministry of Alma the Younger to the ministry of his son Helaman, and from one generation of leadership to the next. The war is over; the people have *humbled themselves* and remembered the Lord (v. 1). Into this lull Alma steps to do the last things a departing prophet must do. He examines his successor; he pronounces the covenant blessing; he delivers a final, terrible prophecy about the distant future of his people; he blesses the church and the land; and then he simply leaves and is never found. Mormon, abridging, treats Alma's disappearance with unusual tenderness and admits the limits of his knowledge — *we know not* what became of him — before offering the reverent supposition that Alma, like Moses, was taken up by the Lord. The chapter is brief but weighty, because it carries the death (or translation) of one of the record's towering figures and sets in motion both the succession of Helaman and the internal decay that the war chapters to come will have to fight. It is the calm transition before a new storm — a storm that, this time, will rise from within.

Hebrew Word Studies

***laqach* / *tsalach* (לָקַח / צָלַח) — to take, to take away, to receive — the verb used when God "took" Enoch and Elijah / to prosper, to succeed, to advance, to be made to thrive vv. 18–19 / vv. 8, 10.** Two Hebrew words illuminate the chapter's two poles — the prophet's departure and the people's covenant. *Laqach*, "to take," is the verb behind the great translations of the Hebrew Bible. *Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took (laqach) him* (Gen. 5:24). Elijah is *taken (laqach)* from Elisha by a whirlwind (2 Kgs. 2:3, 9–10). And though the Hebrew of Deut. 34 says the Lord *buried* Moses in a valley with no man knowing his grave, the later tradition — which the Book of Mormon's *we suppose... even as Moses* (v. 19) reflects — held that the Lord *took* Moses to Himself (the Assumption of Moses preserves exactly this belief). When Mormon writes that Alma was *never heard of more* and supposes he was *taken up by the Spirit... even as Moses*, he is placing Alma in the *laqach* company — Enoch, Moses, Elijah — the prophets God removed from the world by His own hand rather than by ordinary death. The unmarked grave, the mysterious disappearance, the supposition of translation: these are the marks of *laqach*, God taking His servant unto Himself. The second word is *tsalach*, "to prosper" — the verb of the covenant blessing, *ye shall prosper (tsalach) in the land* (v. 8). *Tsalach* means to advance, to succeed, to be made to thrive — and crucially, in the Hebrew Bible it is something God *causes*; prosperity is not earned by cleverness but granted by the Lord to the obedient (Gen. 39:2–3, Joseph; Josh. 1:8; Ps. 1:3). This is why Alma binds *tsalach* so tightly to keeping the commandments: the prospering is God's gift to the covenant-keeper, withdrawn from the covenant-breaker. The chapter holds the two words in tension — the *laqach* taking-up of the faithful prophet at the end of a faithful life, and the *tsalach* prospering promised to a people who will, Alma knows, eventually forfeit it.

From the Chapter's Architecture

```cross-references Gen. 5:24 (Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took / laqach him — the translation behind v. 19); Gen. 39:2–3 (the Lord made Joseph to prosper / tsalach — the covenant blessing of v. 8); Num. 27:18–23 (Moses lays hands on Joshua his successor before departing — the succession of vv. 2–8); Deut. 31:14–29 (Moses' charge to Joshua and his prophecy that Israel will corrupt itself after his death — the pattern of vv. 8–14); Deut. 32:1–43 (the Song of Moses foretelling Israel's apostasy in prosperity — the model for Alma's sealed prophecy); Deut. 34:5–6 (the Lord buries Moses, no man knoweth of his sepulchre — v. 19); Josh. 1:7–8 (observe to do according to all the law... then thou shalt make thy way prosperous / tsalach — v. 8); 2 Kgs. 2:1–12 (Elijah taken up by a whirlwind, and Elisha saw it — the laqach translation, v. 19); Ps. 1:1–3 (the man who delights in the law: whatsoever he doeth shall prosper — v. 8); Isa. 8:16 (bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples — the sealed prophecy of v. 9); Dan. 12:4, 9 (shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end — vv. 9, 14); Heb. 11:5 (by faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death — v. 19); 1 Ne. 2:20; 4:14 (inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper in the land — the covenant Alma repeats at v. 8); 2 Ne. 1:20 (Lehi's identical covenant formula); Alma 37:1–12 (the charge of the records to Helaman that v. 2 presupposes); Alma 36–42 (the conversion and charges that complete Alma's ministry just before this departure); Alma 46:1–10 (Amalickiah exploits the pride and dissension that vv. 23–24 introduce); Hel. 13:5–11; 3 Ne. 9–10 (the eventual partial fulfillment of Alma's destruction prophecy at Christ's coming); Morm. 6:1–22; 8:1–7 (the final, total fulfillment of Alma's become extinct prophecy — the extinction Mormon and Moroni lived to record); 3 Ne. 28:1–9 (the doctrine of translation — being taken up and received... unto himself, v. 19); D&C 84:24–25 (Moses and the higher priesthood taken — the translation tradition); D&C 130:20–21 (the law on which prosper is predicated — every blessing tied to obedience, v. 8). ```