

Alma 62 — Hardened or Softened — The End of the War and the Death of Teancum

Alma 62: Moroni receives Pahoran's reply and his heart 'did take courage.' Taking a small force and leaving Lehi and Teancum over the eastern army, he marches toward Gideon, raising the standard of liberty as he goes; thousands flock to it. Joined with Pahoran, they retake Zarahemla, slay Pachus the rebel king, and execute the captured king-men who would not take up arms for their country. Peace restored at the head, Moroni sends six thousand men and provisions each to Helaman and to Lehi and Teancum, then marches with Pahoran on the city of Nephihah, scaling its walls by night so that the Lamanites wake to find the Nephites inside — and Nephihah is retaken 'without the loss of one soul.' Lamanite prisoners are sent to dwell with the people of Ammon and become a free people. Driving the enemy from city to city to the land of Moroni by the seashore, the Nephites encircle them for a final battle. In the night Teancum, 'exceedingly angry' that Ammoron and Amalickiah had caused so much war and famine, slips into the Lamanite camp and casts a javelin that kills the king — but Ammoron wakes his servants before he dies, and they slay Teancum. Moroni and Lehi mourn him as a true friend to liberty. On the morrow the Lamanites are driven from the land, and the long war ends in the thirty-first year. Moroni fortifies the land, yields command to his son Moronihah, and retires; Pahoran returns to the judgment-seat; Helaman re-establishes the church. And Mormon pauses to weigh the war's harvest on the soul: 'many had become hardened... and many were softened because of their afflictions.'

The long war ends here, and Mormon ends it the way he has told the whole thing — not with a triumphant fanfare but with a careful, sober accounting of what it cost and what it did to people's souls. There is a great victory in this chapter; in fact there are several. Zarahemla is retaken, the king-men are put down, Nephihah is recovered without a single death, the Lamanites are finally driven from the land, and peace returns after years of blood. But Mormon will not let us close the book on a simple win. He keeps drawing our eyes to the human wreckage and the human harvest — to Teancum dead in a Lamanite camp, to the families returning home, and above all to the strange fact that the same affliction that hardened some people softened others. That last observation, tucked into verse 41, is the real ending of the war story, and it is one of the most important sentences in the Book of Mormon for anyone trying to make sense of their own hard years.

Hebrew Word Studies

qinah (קִינָה) — "zeal, jealousy, ardor" — from a root meaning to become intensely red or to burn; the deep, consuming heat of a passion that fixes wholly on its object. **Qinah is not the quick flash of temper (that is aph) but the sustained, burning zeal that can drive a person to great devotion or to ruin — the fire that will not let a wrong go v. 35 (Teancum... was exceedingly angry with Ammoron).** The anger that drives Teancum over the wall is not the hot flash of *aph*, the burning nose of a sudden temper. It is the deeper thing the Hebrew calls *qinah* — a consuming, sustained zeal that locks onto its object and burns. *Qinah* is the same root behind "jealousy," and the Bible uses it for the most intense passions it knows: God himself is *El qanna*, a *jealous God* (Ex. 20:5), whose *qinah* is the burning, all-in commitment of a love that will not share its beloved. It is *zeal* in the highest sense — *the zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this* (Isa. 9:7) — and it is the fire that consumes Phinehas when he acts against the sin in the camp, of whom God says *he was zealous (qinah) for my God* (Num. 25:13). And it is the dangerous fire too: *jealousy is the rage of a man* (Prov. 6:34); *wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy (qinah)?* (Prov. 27:4). *Qinah* is the strongest fire in the human heart, and like all strong fire it can warm or it can destroy. This is exactly Teancum. His *qinah* — his consuming zeal against the men who had drowned his nation in blood and famine — is the very thing that made him the war's boldest hero. It was *qinah* that sent him into Amalickiah's tent in Alma 51 and won the army a night's reprieve. It was *qinah* that made him *a true friend to liberty*, a man who could not coexist with a tyrant and would risk anything to end one. But *qinah* unbalanced, *qinah* without the cooler counsel of a Moroni beside it, drives a grieving man alone over a wall at night into a king's camp — and this time the fire that had won the war takes the man who carried it. The Psalmist knew zeal could consume its bearer: *the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up* (Ps. 69:9), a line the Gospel later sets on Christ himself (John 2:17). Teancum's zeal ate him up. And the lesson the chapter teaches by laying his body before us is not that zeal is bad — the book honors him without one word of rebuke — but that the strongest fire in a man needs the most governing, and that a great virtue, alone and ungoverned, becomes the instrument of its own undoing. Teancum's *qinah* was a gift to his people. It was also the death of him. Both are true, and Mormon makes us hold them together at the graveside.

qashah lev (קָשָׁה לֵב) — "to harden the heart" — *qashah*, to be hard, stiff, severe, difficult; *lev*, the heart, the inner person. To have a "hard heart" is to have an inner self gone stiff and unyielding, unable to be moved, taught, or softened — the opposite of the tender, teachable heart that bends toward God v. 41 (many had become hardened... and many were softened because of their afflictions). Mormon's great fork in verse 41 — *hardened* versus *softened* — runs on one of the oldest and most consequential images in scripture: the *hard heart*, *qashah lev*. The verb *qashah* means to be stiff, rigid, difficult to work — it is used of a hard yoke, a hard service, a stiff neck. A *hard heart* is an inner self that has set like cured clay: it can no longer be shaped, no longer be moved, no longer take an impression. The Exodus story is built on it — Pharaoh's heart *hardened* again and again until it could not soften even under the plagues that should have broken it. And the prophets diagnose it as Israel's deepest sickness: *they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law* (Zech. 7:12). Against it stands the great promise of a softened heart: *I will take the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh* (Ezek. 36:26) — God's work of replacing the hard heart with a tender, living one. Now here is the thing verse 41 sees so clearly, and it is the whole point. The *same affliction* fell on every heart in the nation — and some hardened, some softened. This is the exact pattern of Exodus, where the same sun *hardens* clay and *melts* wax; the heat is identical, the result depends entirely on the material. Affliction is like that. It does not make hearts hard or soft; it *reveals and intensifies* what the heart is already doing. The heart turning toward God under pressure grows *softer* — *an heart of flesh*, humbled in the *depth of humility*. The heart turning away under the same pressure grows *harder* — set, bitter, *qashah*, past feeling. So the long war was a furnace, and the furnace did not decide; the metal decided. This is why the scriptures plead, over and over, *harden not your heart* (Ps. 95:8; Heb. 3:8) — because the hardening is never the circumstance's doing; it is a *response*, and therefore a choice, and therefore something the plea can still reach. You cannot always choose the affliction. You can choose, under it, whether to let it drive you toward the God who can give you a heart of flesh, or away from him until your heart is stone. Mormon ends the entire war record on that choice, because it is the only part of the war that was ever truly in the people's hands — and it is the only part of yours that is in yours.

From the Chapter's Architecture

``cross-references Ezek. 36:26 (*I will take the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh — the softening of v. 41, the heart God remakes*); Ps. 95:8; Heb. 3:8 (*harden not your heart — the plea that the hardening of v. 41 is a response and therefore a choice*); Zech. 7:12 (*they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law — the hardened heart that affliction could not soften*); Ex. 20:5; Num. 25:11–13 (*the jealous God and Phinehas zealous for my God — the qinah, zeal, that drives Teancum, v. 35*); Prov. 27:4 (*who is able to stand before envy — qinah as the strongest and most dangerous fire of the heart*); Ps. 69:9; John 2:17 (*the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up — zeal that consumes its bearer, as Teancum's consumes him*); Josh. 23:14 (*I am going the way of all the earth — the ancient death-formula spoken over Teancum, v. 37*); Gen. 18:23–32 (*Abraham bargaining for Sodom — a faithful few sparing the many, for the righteous' sake... they were spared, v. 40*); Alma 60:23 (*the inward vessel shall be cleansed first — the principle this chapter enacts by cleansing Zarahemla before the war*); Alma 46:11–20 (*the title of liberty raised against the first king-men — raised again here, the standard of liberty, v. 4*); Alma 51:33–34 (*Teancum's earlier night-strike that killed Amalickiah — the act he repeats and dies in, v. 36*); Alma 48:11–17 (*Moroni who did not delight in bloodshed — proven finally by his retirement, that he might spend the remainder of his days in peace, v. 43*); Alma 58:40 (*the not one soul lost among the stripling warriors — echoed in Nephihah taken without the loss of one soul, v. 26*); Hel. 3:33–36 (*the pride that later undoes the prosperous — the danger this generation, softened by war, briefly escapes, v. 49*). ``