
Alma 63 — The Record Handed On — Moroni Dies, Hagoth Sails, and the Book of Alma Closes

Alma 63: the quiet epilogue that closes the long book of Alma. In the thirty-sixth year Shiblon — Alma's faithful middle son — takes possession of the sacred records once delivered to Helaman by their father Alma, and walks uprightly before God, 'and also did his brother.' That same year Moroni dies. The years that follow are years of migration: large companies depart Zarahemla for the land northward, and Hagoth, 'an exceedingly curious man,' builds large ships on the borders of Bountiful by the narrow neck and launches them into the west sea, carrying Nephites — men, women, and children, with much provisions — northward. Some of his ships return and sail again; one company is never heard of more, and Mormon writes simply, 'we suppose that they were drowned in the depths of the sea,' while another ship's fate he leaves open: 'whither she did go we know not.' In the thirty-ninth year Shiblon dies, having first conferred the sacred things on Helaman, the son of Helaman, named after his father — the record passing to a third generation. The engravings meant for the people go forth among them; the parts Alma sealed up stay sacred and hidden. Some dissenters stir the Lamanites to war against Moronihah and are driven back. And with that, 'thus ended the account of Alma, and Helaman his son, and also Shiblon, who was his son' — the great book named for father and son laid down at last, the record handed on to the generation that will carry the Nephite story toward the coming of Christ.

The book of Alma ends not with a battle or a sermon but with a handing-over. After the longest, bloodiest stretch in the Book of Mormon — the war chapters, Amalickiah and Ammoron, the stripling warriors, Moroni and Pahoran — the whole vast narrative comes to rest in a quiet seventeen verses about an old record changing hands and some ships sailing north. It can feel like an anticlimax, a loose-ends chapter, a list of who died and who left. But read it as what it is — the *closing* of a book that has carried us through forty years of preaching and war — and it turns out to be doing something tender and important. It is showing us how a sacred trust survives the death of the great. Moroni dies in this chapter. Helaman died in the last one. Shiblon dies before it ends. The giants are going. And the question the chapter quietly answers is: when the giants are gone, what holds? And the answer is: *the record holds, because someone faithful keeps handing it on.*

Hebrew Word Studies

zikkaron (זִכָּרוֹן) — "memorial, remembrance, record" — from **zakar, to remember, call to mind, keep in memory**. A **zikkaron** is something that holds memory across time — a memorial stone, a written record, an appointed sign — so that what would otherwise be forgotten is carried into later generations and kept alive vv. 11–13 (those sacred things... to be kept sacred, and handed down from one generation to another). The whole quiet action of this chapter — the careful handing of the sacred records from Alma to Helaman to Shiblon to Helaman — runs on one of the deepest concerns of Hebrew scripture: the *zikkaron*, the keeping of memory across the generations. The root *zakar*, to remember, is one of the most repeated and most weighty verbs in the Hebrew Bible, because in scripture *to remember is to keep alive and to forget is to let die*. A *zikkaron* is anything that fights forgetting: the stones Joshua set up from the Jordan, *that this may be a sign among you... a memorial (zikkaron) unto the children of Israel for ever* (Josh. 4:6–7); the Passover, kept *for a memorial (zikkaron)...* *throughout your generations* (Ex. 12:14); the book Moses is told to write, *for a memorial (zikkaron) in a book* (Ex. 17:14). The entire covenant life of Israel is built on the command *thou shalt remember — and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children* (Deut. 6:7) — because a people that forgets its God is a people that has lost its God, and the only thing standing between memory and forgetting is the faithful *handing down*. This is exactly what the sacred things are in Alma 63: a *zikkaron*, a memory-keeping trust, that must be *handed down from one generation to another* (v. 13) or be lost. And notice how seriously the keepers take the *handing*. Each one transfers the record *before his death*, deliberately, into a faithful hand — because the chain of memory is only as strong as its least careful link, and one keeper who fails to pass it on in time breaks the whole inheritance. The Hebrew imagination knew the terror of that break: *there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done* (Judg. 2:10) — a single failed handing-on, and a whole generation lost the memory of God. Alma's sons will not let that happen. They make the *zikkaron* their sacred charge, passing it on, always in time, always to the just and the upright, so that the memory of God's dealings — the word, the covenant, the works he did for this people — survives every death and reaches the generation that will need it most. That is what a record is, in the end: a *zikkaron* against forgetting, kept by faithful hands so that the children's children will still remember. Mormon, handing his own record across the centuries to us, is the last keeper in that same chain — and we, reading, are the generation it finally reached.

From the Chapter's Architecture

``cross-references Deut. 6:6–7 (these words... shalt thou teach them diligently unto thy children — the handing-down of the sacred trust from one generation to another, v. 13); Josh. 4:6–7 (the memorial stones, a memorial — *zikkaron* — unto the children of Israel for ever — the record as a memory kept against forgetting); Ex. 12:14; 17:14 (the Passover and the book kept for a memorial — *zikkaron* — the sacred record's purpose, vv. 12–13); Judg. 2:10 (another generation... which knew not the Lord — the broken chain of memory the keepers of Alma 63 refuse to let happen); Josh. 23:14 (I am going the way of all the earth — the death of Moroni and the keepers, v. 3); Mal. 3:16 (a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord — the record kept for the faithful, vv. 12–13); Alma 37:1–5 (Alma's charge to keep the sacred records, that they may go forth unto every nation — the records now passing to Shiblon, v. 1); Alma 38:1–15 (Alma's counsel to Shiblon — learn wisdom in thy youth... be diligent — the steadiness that earns him the record here, v. 2); Alma 39:1–14 (Alma's counsel to Corianton — the wayward son whose later faithfulness is sealed in and also did his brother, v. 2); Alma 48:11–17 (if all men had been... like unto Moroni — the hero whose vast praise ends in the three words Moroni died also, v. 3); Hel. 1:1–13 (the political fracture that the dissenters of vv. 14–15 foreshadow — the recurring internal danger); Hel. 3:3–16 (the great later migrations to the land northward — the movement Hagoth's ships begin, vv. 4–9); 3 Ne. 11 (the coming of the Lord to this people — the day toward which the handed-on record is carried). ``