
Alma 6 — Reordering the Church at Zarahemla — the Laying On of Hands, the Discipline of the Unrepentant, and the Journey to Gideon

Alma 6: still in the ninth year of the reign of the judges (c. 82 BC). Alma the Younger, having delivered the master sermon of chapter 5, now performs the priesthood work of reordering the Church at Zarahemla. He ordains priests and elders by the laying on of his hands. The unrepentant are rejected and their names blotted out from the Church roll. The Church is set in order. The faithful begin the discipline of fasting and praying often together for the welfare of the souls of those who do not yet know God. Alma departs Zarahemla, crosses the Sidon, and travels southward to the valley of Gideon.

Alma 6 is short, but it is the chapter that turns Alma 5's words into a working Church. After the master sermon at Zarahemla, Alma does the quieter and harder work of administration — ordaining priests and elders, disciplining the unrepentant, ordering the affairs of the Church, and then moving on to the next city. The chapter is the Book of Mormon's clearest glimpse of the Nephite priesthood at its administrative work, and it is the bridge that carries the missionary journey from Zarahemla to Gideon.

Hebrew Word Studies

***semikhah* / *kahal* / *tsom* (סמיכה / קהל / צום) — laying on of hands, ordination / assembly, congregation / fast vv. 1, 5, 6.**

The chapter's three Hebrew anchors of priestly discipline. *Semikhah* — *the laying on of hands* — is the noun behind every Hebrew Bible ordination text (Num. 27:18–23; Deut. 34:9), and it is still the rabbinic term for ordination in modern Jewish practice. Alma 6 is the Book of Mormon's clearest installment in the *semikhah* tradition. *Kahal* — *assembly, congregation* — is the noun behind every Hebrew Bible gathering of the covenant people (the *kahal-Yahweh*, congregation of the Lord, Deut. 23:1–3), and the Septuagint translates *kahal* as *ekklesia* — church. When Alma 6:3 speaks of names blotted out from the Church's roll, the underlying image is the *kahal* roll. *Tsom* — *the fast* — is the noun behind every Hebrew Bible communal fast (Joel 1:14; 2:15–16; Isa. 58). The chapter's intercessory fast — fasting and mighty prayer for the souls of those who do not yet know God — is the precise Isaiah 58 mode of fasting: not for the faster's own relief, but for another's deliverance.

From the Chapter's Architecture

Finally, the chapter is the bridge that carries the Alma narrative from Zarahemla to Gideon. The pattern — preach, implement, travel, preach again — is the rhythm of the rest of the Book of Alma's main arc. Alma 6 is the chapter that shows the rhythm doing its work for the first time.