

Alma 8 — The Angel Returns — Alma Cast Out of Ammonihah and Sent Back with a Second Witness

Alma 8: the tenth year of the reign of the judges (c. 82 BC). Alma returns to Zarahemla from Gideon, rests briefly, then begins a missionary circuit westward — Melek, then Ammonihah. Ammonihah is a Nehor-order city, hardened, full of the lawyer class introduced in Alma 1. Alma is rejected, spit upon, and cast out. Wrestling in spirit on the road north toward Aaron, the same angel that appeared in Mosiah 27 — the angel who initiated his conversion — appears a second time and recommissions him. Alma returns by another way, is met at the gate by Amulek, lodges in Amulek's house, and the two go forth together with power and authority from God. The chapter is the Book of Mormon's master text on the angel-recommissioning pattern, the second-witness pattern, and the strangers-entertain-angels-unawares pattern.

Alma 8 is the Book of Mormon's master angel-recommissioning chapter and the foundational text of the second-witness doctrine that anchors the Latter-day Saint companionship discipline. It is the only chapter in the record where the same angel appears a second time to the same prophet. The angel who arrested Alma the Younger in Mosiah 27 returns in Alma 8:14–15 to the man whose conversion he occasioned. The chapter teaches a quietly tender doctrine: the angel of conversion is also the angel of recommissioning. The Lord does not call a servant once and forget him.

Hebrew Word Studies

melek (מֶלֶךְ) — **king, sovereign v. 3.** *Melek* is the standard Hebrew noun for *king*, occurring more than two thousand times in the Old Testament — Yahweh as king (Ps. 24:8), the Davidic king (1 Sam. 16:1), foreign kings (2 Kgs. 5:5). The Nephite toponym *Melek* is almost certainly a Lehi preservation of the Hebrew root. The same root underlies *Mulek* (little king, the Davidic remnant), *Melchizedek* (king of righteousness), and *Melech* the Asherite (1 Chron. 7:35). Alma 8 is one of the Book of Mormon's clearer hints that Nephite place-names preserve a continuous Hebrew vocabulary in the New World.

avaq / chazaq / paga (אָוַק / חָזַק / פָּגַע) — **to wrestle, struggle / to take fast hold, grip / to intercede, encounter, fall upon vv. 9–10.** The chapter's three Hebrew anchors of priestly struggle. *Avaq* — *to wrestle* — comes from *avak*, dust; the verb evokes the image of two wrestlers raising dust as they grapple. It is the verb of Jacob at Peniel and behind the Nephite vocabulary of *wrestling in mighty prayer*. *Chazaq* — *to take fast hold, grip* — is the verb of Satan's hold on Ammonihah and the same verb used of Pharaoh's hardened heart in the Exodus narrative. The chapter sets the two verbs against each other: Satan grips the city, Alma grips God. *Paga* — *to intercede, encounter, fall upon* — is the noun behind Isaiah's *he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors* (Isa. 53:12). Alma's wrestling has the flavor of *paga* — an intercession that encounters God on behalf of a people that will not listen to the prophet they have rejected.

From the Chapter's Architecture

Finally, Alma 8 is the textual anchor of the Latter-day Saint missionary discipline of companionship. Two witnesses. Many days of tarrying. The mission begun only when the two voices have become one. The pattern Christ canonized in Luke and the Restoration inherited in D&C 42 stands here, in its Nephite form, almost a century before the gospel was preached on the roads of Galilee.