
Alma 9 — Have Ye Forgotten the Tradition of Your Fathers — Alma's Covenant Memory Sermon and the Doctrine That It Shall Be More Tolerable for the Lamanites

Alma 9: continuing the tenth year of the reign of the judges (c. 82 BC). Alma is now back inside Ammonihah, lodged at Amulek's house, and emerges to preach. The first confrontation is with the people themselves — not yet the lawyers (that comes in Alma 10). The people deny Alma's authority because he is no longer chief judge, and Alma's response is a covenant-memory argument. He compels them to remember Lehi, the Brass Plates, the fathers' deliverance from Jerusalem. He then applies the comparative-judgment doctrine: the Lamanites, born into ignorance, are less accountable than Nephites who have inherited the truth and rejected it. The sermon closes with the prepare-the-way-of-the-Lord proclamation and the announcement that the Son of God shall come. The people seek to imprison him, but cannot lay hands on him until Amulek is brought forth as the second witness.

Alma 9 is the Book of Mormon's master covenant-memory chapter and the foundational text on the doctrine of comparative accountability. The first half of the chapter is a sustained interrogation under one question — *have ye forgotten?* — and the second half is the doctrine that follows from the answer: light received and rejected weighs heavier at the judgment than darkness not yet illuminated. Christ will canonize the same comparative-judgment principle a century later in the woe-unto-Chorazin saying (Mt. 11:21–24), but the chapter is its earliest scriptural articulation. Alma 9 is also the cleanest text in the Book of Mormon on the doctrine that apostasy is first amnesia and only second disobedience. A people that forgets the fathers' story will inevitably forsake the fathers' God.

Hebrew Word Studies

***zikkaron / shakach / nasi* (זִכָּרוֹן / שָׁכַח / נָשִׂיא) — memorial, remembrance / to forget / one lifted up, prince vv. 6–8.** The chapter's three Hebrew anchors of memory and authority. *Zikkaron* — *memorial, remembrance* — is the noun behind Exodus 12:14, the Passover as *chag zikkaron*, a feast of remembrance. The Hebrew Bible distinguishes between casual recollection and *zikkaron*, which is a deliberate cultic act. The chapter's *have ye forgotten the tradition of your fathers* is precisely the failure of *zikkaron* discipline. *Shakach* — *to forget* — is the verb of Deut. 6:12 (*beware lest thou forget the Lord, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt*) and of Psalm 137:5 (*if I forget thee, O Jerusalem*). It is the root sin in the Hebrew Bible, the failure that produces all other failures. Alma's *how have ye forgotten* is the Nephite cry of *shakach*. *Nasi* — *one lifted up, prince* — is the title of the tribal chief (Num. 1:16) and of the future Davidic prince in Ezekiel (Ezek. 34:24). The chapter shows Alma laying down the *nasi* role he held as chief judge and picking up the *kohen* role as priest. The Book of Mormon's quiet doctrine: priesthood is the true government of the covenant people.

From the Chapter's Architecture

Finally, the chapter is the hinge of the Ammonihah arc. Alma has preached alone in the first half; Amulek will preach in the second. The Lord protects Alma until the demand for two witnesses is registered, then lets the second witness stand, and from this point forward the mission to Ammonihah will be a paired ministry. The chapter is the moment the two voices begin to operate as one.