
Helaman 9 — Blood on the Skirts of His Cloak — The Seer and the Hidden Murder

Helaman 9: the test of the prophet. Five men run to the judgment-seat to verify Nephi's words and find the chief judge Seezoram fallen, dead in his blood, exactly as Nephi said; astonished, they fall to the earth. Meanwhile the people, finding these five, assume they are the murderers and cast them into prison. At the burial the judges learn the five were the runners, free them, and turn their suspicion on Nephi: surely he conspired with the killer to make himself seem a prophet. They seize and question Nephi, offering money and his life if he will confess the plot. Instead Nephi gives a second, more precise sign — a step-by-step detection of the real murderer. Go to the house of Seantum, brother of the dead judge, he says; question him, and he will deny it; examine him, and you will find blood on the skirts of his cloak; confront him, and he will tremble and turn pale and at last confess — and then you will know that I knew nothing of it save by the power of God. They go, and it unfolds word for word: Seantum denies, the blood is found, he pales, he confesses. Nephi and the five are freed. And the people are divided in their verdict — some say Nephi is a prophet, and others, astonished that he could know the thoughts of their hearts and the hidden murderer, say, 'he is a god.' The chapter is the vindication that proves the prophet, and the portrait of the seer who drags the secret works of darkness into the light.

This is the chapter where the bet pays off. In Helaman 8 Nephi staked his entire credibility on a fact no one knew — that the chief judge lay murdered at the judgment-seat — and invited the crowd to go and check. Helaman 9 is the checking, and then a second, even more astonishing demonstration: Nephi not only knows *that* the judge was murdered but, when accused of arranging it himself, names the real killer and predicts, in precise detail, exactly how the man will behave when confronted. The chapter is a vindication, but it's also something deeper — a portrait of what the Book of Mormon calls a *seer*, a prophet to whom God reveals the hidden things, and a sustained demonstration of one of Mormon's favorite themes: that the secret works of darkness, which the Gadianton band built its whole power on concealing, cannot stay hidden from God. The murderers swore oaths of secrecy. The seer drags the secret into the light anyway.

Hebrew Word Studies

galah (גָּלַהּ) — "to uncover, reveal, lay bare, disclose" — galah, to uncover (as one removes a covering), to reveal what was hidden, to disclose a secret; the root behind "revelation" and behind the megillah, the unrolled scroll. To reveal is to strip away the covering from what was concealed vv. 31–38 (ye shall find blood upon the skirts of his cloak... he did confess... save it were given unto me by the power of God). The whole drama of Helaman 9 is an act of *uncovering* — and the Hebrew word for it, *galah*, sits at the root of the deepest biblical ideas about revelation and about the exposure of hidden sin. *Galah* means literally to *uncover*, to remove a covering — to lay bare what was wrapped, hidden, or concealed. It is the word for stripping the veil off a secret. And scripture uses it in two directions that this chapter fuses into one. First, *galah* is the word for *divine revelation*: surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth (*galah*) his secret unto his servants the prophets (Amos 3:7) — God *uncovers* his hidden counsel to the prophet, strips the veil so the seer can see. The prophet is the one to whom God has *galah*-ed, uncovered, what is hidden from everyone else. Second, *galah* is the word for the *exposure of concealed sin*: the wicked hide their deeds, but that which is hidden shall be brought to light; a day comes when every covered thing is *uncovered*. The two meanings meet perfectly in Nephi. God *uncovers* to him (revelation) the *covered* crime of Seantum (exposure), and through the seer the hidden murder is *galah*-ed, laid bare before the whole city. The murderer had wrapped his crime in every covering available — the *garb of secrecy* (v. 6), the disguise, the secret oath of the Gadianton band, the assumption that a murder by night leaves no witness. He covered it. And God *uncovered* it, down to the blood he failed to wash from the skirts of his cloak — the one covering that betrayed him, the cloak meant to hide the deed carrying the very evidence of it. This is the chapter's deep answer to the entire Gadianton problem. The secret combination is a kingdom of *covering* — its whole power is in what it can keep hidden, the oaths sworn that *no man should know* (Hel. 1:11), the murders by *unknown hands* (Hel. 6:22). And God's answer to the kingdom of covering is the *seer*, the man of *galah*, to whom the coverings are nothing, who reads the hidden heart and the concealed crime as easily as an unrolled scroll. *There is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known* (Luke 12:2) — Jesus' words are the law of the universe that Helaman 9 dramatizes. The robbers built on the belief that some things can stay covered forever. The seer proves they cannot. Every hidden thing is, before God, already *galah*, already uncovered, already lying open like blood on a cloak in the daylight — and the only question is whether a man will uncover his own sin in repentance now, or have it uncovered for him at the last. *Be sure your sin will find you out* (Num. 32:23): the seer of Helaman 9 is the living proof of it.

From the Chapter's Architecture

``cross-references Amos 3:7 (the Lord God... revealeth — galah — his secret unto his servants the prophets — the divine uncovering that makes the seer, vv. 31–36); Luke 12:2–3 (there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known — the law of exposure Helaman 9 dramatizes); Num. 32:23 (be sure your sin will find you out — the hidden murder found out, the blood on the cloak, v. 31); Susanna 13:45–62 (Daniel given wisdom to expose the elders' hidden crime by separate questioning — the OT-apocryphal twin of Nephi detecting Seantum); Mosiah 8:13–17 (Ammon's definition of a seer — a seer can know of things which are past, and also of things which are to come... a gift which is greater can no man have — the office Nephi exercises here); Mosiah 28:11–16 (the seer-stones and the gift of translation — seership as God-given knowing of the hidden); Matt. 12:22–28 (the Pharisees accepting Christ's miracle but attributing it to Beelzebub — the conspiracy-theory move, accept the fact, poison the source, of vv. 16–20); John 11:47–48 (the rulers acknowledging Jesus' signs yet plotting against him to keep their place — undeniable evidence resisted by those determined not to believe); Hel. 8:27 (Nephi's first declaration of the murder — the prophecy this chapter verifies, vv. 3, 15); Hel. 6:22; 1:11 (the secret signs and oaths that no man should know — the kingdom of concealment the seer overthrows); Hel. 10:4–7 (the voice blessing Nephi's unwearyingness and granting the sealing power — the divine answer to those who called him a god, settling that he is a trusted man, not God); 2 Ne. 27:23 (the Lord a God of miracles... and I work... according to their faith — the power by which Nephi knows, not his own, v. 36). ``