

Mosiah 23 — Alma's People in Helam — The Refused Kingship, the Liberty Doctrine, the Land Beautiful, the Amulonites Discovered, and the Lord Chasteneth Those Whom He Loveth

Mosiah 23: Alma and his Church flee Noah's army eight days into the wilderness; they arrive in a beautiful land they call Helam; the people desire Alma as king but he refuses, articulating the BoM's foundational anti-kingship doctrine; Alma teaches and the people prosper; a Lamanite army discovers them — and the priests of Noah, now called the Amulonites, are with them; Amulon obtains favor with the Lamanite king; the doctrine 'the Lord chasteneth those whom he loveth' closes the chapter; c. 145–125 BC.

Mosiah 23 is the BoM's-master-chapter of-the-refused-kingship and-the-liberty-doctrine and-the-Lord-chasteneth-those-whom-he-loveth. The chapter back-fills the eight-day-flight of-Alma's-Church from-Mosiah-18:34 to-their-arrival-in-Helam; the chapter then has Alma refusing-the-people's-offered-kingship in the most-articulate anti-kingship-speech in-the-BoM-prior-to-Mosiah-29; the chapter has the people prospering in-the-land-they-call-Helam; the chapter ends with a Lamanite-army-stumbling-upon-them and-the-priests-of-Noah-revealed-to-be-with-them. The chapter is therefore the BoM's-prologue to-Mosiah-29's-anti-kingship treatise — it provides the narrative-rehearsal for-the-doctrine that-the-treatise-will-codify.

Load-Bearing Texts

1. v. 7. *but he said unto them: Behold, it is not expedient that we should have a king; for thus saith the Lord: Ye shall not esteem one flesh above another, or one man shall not think himself above another; therefore I say unto you it is not expedient that ye should have a king* — the chapter's-master no-flesh-above-another statement
2. v. 8. *nevertheless, if it were possible that ye could always have just men to be your kings it would be well for you to have a king* — the chapter's-master if-only-the-king-were-always-just qualification
3. v. 13. *and now as ye have been delivered by the power of God out of these bonds; yea, even out of the hands of king Noah and his people, and also from the bonds of iniquity, even so I desire that ye should stand fast in this liberty wherewith ye have been made free, and that ye trust no man to be a king over you* — the chapter's-master stand-fast-in-liberty statement
4. v. 14. *and also trust no one to be your teacher nor your minister, except he be a man of God, walking in his ways and keeping his commandments* — the chapter's-master trust-no-one-but-the-man-of-God statement
5. v. 21. *nevertheless the Lord seeth fit to chasten his people; yea, he trieth their patience and their faith* — the chapter's-master chastening-and-trial statement

Hebrew Word Studies

helam / chayil / nachalah (הֶלָם / חַיִּיל / נַחֲלָה) — **Helam (uncertain — perhaps 'their wealth/strength') / strength, virtue, force / inheritance, possession** v. 4. The chapter's land-naming triad. *Helam* is the only-named-place in this-flight-narrative; the etymology is debated but-the-most-credible-Semitic-root is *cheylam* (חַיִּיל, *their strength or their wealth*) — a defensible-derivation from-the-noun *chayil*. *Chayil* — strength, virtue, force — the same noun behind *eshet-chayil*, the virtuous woman of Prov. 31:10. *Nachalah* — inheritance, possession — the noun behind the Hebrew-Bible's-promised-land doctrine. The doctrine: the chapter has Alma's-people naming-the-land their-strength — the language of-divinely-given-strength inscribed-in-the-landscape; the chapter is the BoM's-clearest-text-on the name-the-land-by-the-grace-shown providence. Same name-the-land-by-the-grace grammar as Gen. 22:14 — Abraham called the name of that place *Jehovah-jireh*; Ex. 17:7 — he called the name of the place *Massah*, and *Meribah*; 1 Sam. 7:12 — Samuel... called the name of it *Eben-ezer*. The chapter is one of the BoM's clearest articulations of the name-the-place-by-the-grace providence.

From the Chapter's Architecture

The chapter is also the BoM's-clearest-text-on the prosperity-does-not-end-the-trial doctrine. The colony has-fled, has-built, has-prospered — and-now-is-discovered-and-encircled. The chapter is therefore one-of-the-BoM's-most-pastoral-texts for-the-experience-of-the-faithful-who-find that-righteousness-did-not-secure-them-against-affliction. The chapter is the BoM's-clearest-pre-Job articulation of-the-righteous-still-suffer doctrine.