

Mosiah 26

The Rising Generation, Alma's Intercession, and the Doctrine of "As Often As"

Where we are

About 120–100 BC. The children of those who covenanted at Benjamin's tower have grown up and inherited an institution they did not personally consent to. The first time the church faces: *what do you do when the children of believers stop believing?*

Covenant non-transferability

Mosiah 6:1–2 was explicit: little children were not numbered in Benjamin's covenant. The rising generation must make their own. The *shema* principle: testimony is never inherited. Each soul must *hear-and-do* for themselves.

The remnant inverted

In the reign of Mosiah they were not half so numerous as the people of God; but because of the dissensions among the brethren they became more numerous (v. 5). The wickedness is no longer outside Zion. It is *inside* it, among the children of the covenant.

Chalag — frictionless speech

These men sought to destroy the church, and they did spread through the church among all the brethren many flattering words.

— Mosiah 26:6

Chalag — smooth, slippery, frictionless. The signature of dangerous teaching. Apostasy is rarely a frontal attack — it is almost always a *smoothing*. The friction goes away, the cost disappears, and those who never paid the cost find it attractive.

Ecclesiastical / civil separation

Behold, I judge them not (v. 12). King Mosiah refuses to adjudicate a spiritual matter. He hands it back to Alma. The first formal Book of Mormon articulation of the separation of ecclesiastical and civil authority — the king's sword does not enforce the church's discipline.

Shaphakh — the altar-prayer

After he had poured out his whole soul to God (v. 14). *Shaphakh* — the verb of the blood poured at the altar (Leviticus 4), of Hannah's prayer (1 Samuel 1:15), of the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53:12). Alma is functioning as a high priest in the deepest substitutionary sense.

As often as (chiastic center)

As often as my people repent will I forgive them their trespasses against me.

— Mosiah 26:30

The phrase “as often as” is sacramental grammar. Compare 1 Corinthians 11:25–26, 3 Nephi 18:6, Moroni 6:6, D&C 27:2. The Lord binds Himself in the same grammar that governs the bread and the wine. *You do not graduate from the sacrament. You do not graduate from repentance.* Both are *as often as*.

Paqad and machah — Book of Life theology

Numbered among = *paqad* (mustered, counted, claimed). *Blotted out* = *machah* (Exodus 32:32, Psalm 69:28, Revelation 3:5). Alma is keeping the New World's chapter of the heavenly registry.

Hidden providence — a father being prepared

Alma the Younger was almost certainly among the unbelievers of vv. 1–6. He converts in the very next chapter. *The Lord is teaching Alma the Elder how to receive a repentant transgressor back — literally one chapter before his own son falls.* The Father preparing a father.

Architecture

- A The rising generation will not believe (vv. 1–6)
- B Procedural chain – teachers, priests, high priest, king (vv. 7–12)
- C Alma pours out his whole soul (vv. 13–14)
 - D Blessed art thou – divine naming (vv. 15–20)
 - E Church discipline procedure (vv. 21–28)
 - F AS OFTEN AS MY PEOPLE REPENT (v. 30)
 - E' Discipline procedure (vv. 31–32)
 - D' Blotted out (vv. 33–36)
- C' Church established more permanently (v. 37)
- B' Procedural enforcement going forward (v. 39)
- A' The church prospers (v. 38)

Where this lands

If you have grown children who have walked away from the covenant their grandparents made, you are inside this chapter. The covenant is not inherited. But the *as often as* doctrine is the deepest comfort in the Book of Mormon. The Lord forgives *as often as* you turn. The next time you partake of the sacrament, listen for the *always remember* — it is the *as often as* of Mosiah 26 in eucharistic form.