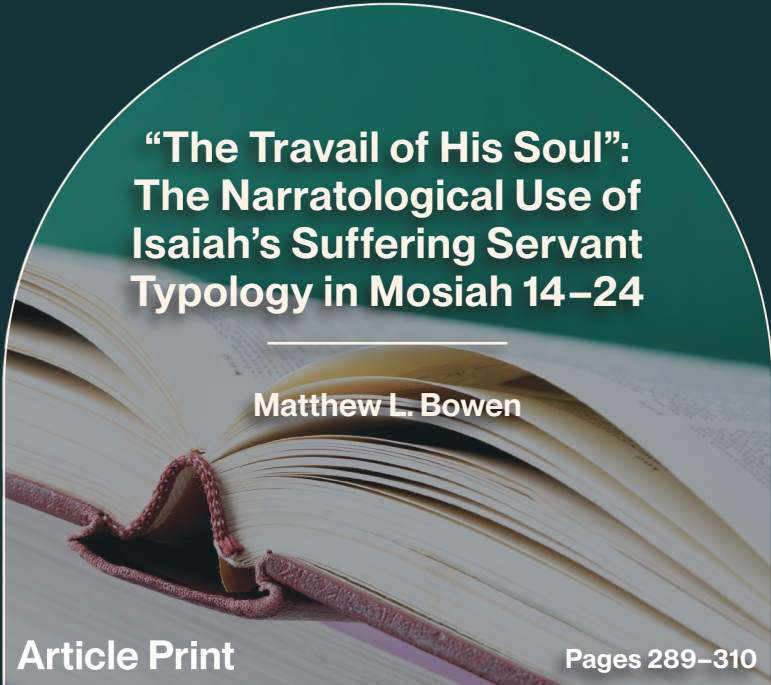


# Interpreter

**A Journal of Latter-day Saint  
Faith and Scholarship**



**“The Travail of His Soul”:  
The Narratological Use of  
Isaiah’s Suffering Servant  
Typology in Mosiah 14–24**

---

**Matthew L. Bowen**

**Article Print**

**Pages 289–310**

© 2026 The Interpreter Foundation. A 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution — NonCommercial — NoDerivatives 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>.

ISSN 2372-1227 (print)  
ISSN 2372-126X (online)

## Mission Statement

*Supporting The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints through scholarship.*

The Interpreter Foundation supports the Church in the following ways:

- **Promotion:** We provide tools to encourage and facilitate personal learning by study and faith, and disseminate accurate information to the public about the Church.
- **Explanation:** We make the results of relevant scholarship more accessible to non-specialists.
- **Defense:** We respond to misunderstandings and criticisms of Church beliefs, policies, and practices.
- **Faithfulness:** Our leadership, staff, and associates strive to follow Jesus Christ and be true to the teachings of His Church.
- **Scholarship:** Our leadership, staff, and associates incorporate standards of scholarship appropriate to their academic disciplines.

The Interpreter Foundation is an independent organization that supports but is not owned, controlled by, or affiliated with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The material published by the Interpreter Foundation is the sole responsibility of the respective authors and should not be interpreted as representing the views of The Interpreter Foundation or of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

This journal compiles weekly publications. Visit us online at [InterpreterFoundation.org](http://InterpreterFoundation.org)

# “The Travail of His Soul”: The Narratological Use of Isaiah’s Suffering Servant Typology in Mosiah 14–24

---

Matthew L. Bowen

**Abstract:** *The narrative account of Abinadi, king Noah and his priests, and Alma<sub>1</sub>—the lone believer in Abinadi’s words among Noah’s priests—ends with Alma<sub>1</sub>’s people being brought into bondage by the aptly-named Amulon (Hebrew, “man of travail,” “man of labor”) and his collaborators. Amulon, Alma<sub>1</sub>’s former priestly colleague, imposed Egypt-like bondage on Alma<sub>1</sub>’s people, with “tasks” overseen by “task-masters” (Mosiah 24:9). Abinadi had quoted Isaiah’s poem of the suffering servant (Isaiah 53) in Mosiah 14 to answer the question from one of Noah’s priests about the meaning of Isaiah 52:7–10. Isaiah 53:11 foretells that the suffering servant would experience “travail” (‘āmāl) that would give him experiential “knowledge” that would make many righteous. Alma<sub>1</sub> and his people’s fulfillment of the messianic suffering servant typology of Isaiah 53/Mosiah 14, which gave them experiential knowledge to “stand as witnesses,” helps us better appreciate how covenant Israel at other times fulfills this typology. A recognition of the validity of this approach can help Latter-day Saints extend more Christ-like empathy to ethnicities, faith groups, communities, and individuals who suffer persecution.*

**J**o Ann Hackett, a non-Latter-day Saint Hebraist and scholar of Northwest Semitic languages, was the first to propose that the Book of Mormon personal name Amulon, which later becomes a toponym (place name), could derive from ‘āmāl/‘āmēl, “toil,” “trouble,”

“labor,” or “travail.”<sup>1</sup> Of all the proposals for the origin and meaning of Amulon, Hackett’s proposal is far and away the most promising. It is the best candidate from an etymological standpoint and is an even better candidate when the ways in which the name Amulon occurs within the narrative of Mosiah 23–24 are considered.

The *-ôn* ending affixed to Hebrew names means “man/person of X” or “place of X.” In other words, the appellative *-ôn*, affixed to another Hebrew term “describ[es] some feature or aspect”<sup>2</sup> of the site or person. Thus, Amulon—derived from *’āmāl/’āmēl*, “toil” or “trouble”—would then mean “man of toil,” “man of labor,” “man of trouble,” or “man of travail.” It is probably a significant aspect of Mormon’s narratology, then, that in using the terms “tasks” and “taskmasters,” he (or his source) takes a keen interest in comparing Amulon to the Pharaoh of the exodus.<sup>3</sup> In so doing, he reinforces the meaning latent in the name Amulon in terms of Hebrew *’āmāl/’āmēl*, “toil,” “trouble,” “labor,” or “travail”—for example, “man of toil,” “man of trouble,” “man of labor,” or “man of travail” (see especially Mosiah 24:8–11).

A recent study has highlighted how Mormon uses the connection between Amulon (“man of labor,” “toil,” “travail,” etc.) and the pharaonic labor that Amulon imposed on Alma<sub>1</sub> and his people.<sup>4</sup> Mormon does this to draw a distinction between the type of priesthood represented by “the order of the Son of God” (Melchizedek priesthood) and the type of priesthood championed by Amulon and king Noah’s other priests and its successor order, the order of the Nehors. In speaking about Melchizedek to the people of Ammonihah—many of whom belonged to what Mormon described as “the order of the Nehors,” “order of Nehor,” or “profession of Nehor”<sup>5</sup>—Alma<sub>2</sub> taught that the priests after the order exemplified by Melchizedek “were ordained

---

1. See Paul Y. Hoskisson, ed., *Book of Mormon Onomasticon*, s.v. “Amulon,” [onoma.lib.byu.edu/index.php?title=AMULON](http://onoma.lib.byu.edu/index.php?title=AMULON).

2. Anson F. Rainey, “Toponymics of Erets-Israel,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 231 (1978): 4.

3. Alan Goff, “Historical Narrative, Literary Narrative—Expelling Poetics from the Republic of History,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 5, no. 1 (1996): 97–99.

4. Matthew L. Bowen, “Amulon’s Imposed Labor and Alma’s Exodus as a Story of Contrasting Priestly Legacies,” in *In the Eyes of the Ancients: Historical Perspectives on the Book of Mormon*, ed. Kerry Hull and Ryan Sharp (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2026), 215–38.

5. See especially Alma 21:4; 24:28, where “order of the Nehors is used twice”; Mormon uses the expression “order of Nehor” with Nehor in the singular in Alma 24:29. He uses “profession of Nehor” three times in 14:18; 15:15; and 16:11. He uses “order and faith of Nehor” once in Alma 14:16.

after the order of his Son, in a manner that thereby the people might know in what manner to look forward to his Son for redemption” (Alma 13:2). This statement suggests that priests after this order—like Alma<sub>2</sub>’s father—typified the Son of God, beginning with ordination, through lifelong suffering and affliction, sometimes even in death.

Alma<sub>2</sub> and Mormon both appear to have recognized Christological typology, not only in Abinadi’s suffering and martyrdom at the hands of king Noah and his priests, but also in Alma<sub>1</sub>’s suffering at the hands of Amulon and the other priests of king Noah and his gaining experiential knowledge (“*that ye may know of a surety that I, the Lord God, do visit my people in their afflictions,*” Mosiah 24:14). This experiential knowledge would enable him and his people to “stand as witnesses” of divine deliverance ever after (24:14), help others to receive the same divine deliverance, and to “comfort those who stand in need of comfort” in ways that king Noah, Amulon, and the other priests of king Noah never could.<sup>6</sup>

Abinadi’s quotation of the entirety of Isaiah 53 in response to a question from one of Noah’s priests—possibly Alma<sub>1</sub>,<sup>7</sup>—about the meaning of Isaiah 52:7–10 and its messenger (see Mosiah 12:20–24) certainly functions as a prophecy of Jesus Christ and his atoning suffering and death, as traditionally interpreted.<sup>8</sup> John W. Welch writes, “Abinadi’s rebuttal was an extensive and brilliant explanation of the true essence of redemption and how it brings good tidings to those who accept Christ (see Mosiah 12:29–37 and chs. 13–16).”<sup>9</sup>

In this article, I endeavor to sketch out an additional narratological function for the inclusion and arrangement of this poem in Mosiah 14–24: as a harbinger of Alma<sub>1</sub> and his people’s suffering travail at the hands of Amulon and their divine redemption. Just as Alma<sub>1</sub>, the “young man” (compare Hebrew *‘elem*) who believed Abinadi’s “report,”

---

6. Matthew L. Bowen, “‘This Son Shall Comfort Us’: An Onomastic Tale of Two Noahs,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 23 (2017):291–94, [interpreterfoundation.org/journal/this-son-shall-comfort-us-an-onomastic-tale-of-two-noahs](http://interpreterfoundation.org/journal/this-son-shall-comfort-us-an-onomastic-tale-of-two-noahs).

7. Aaron P. Schade and Matthew L. Bowen, “‘To Whom Is the Arm of the Lord Revealed?’ Part 1,” *Religious Educator* 16, no. 2 (2015): 90–111, [rsc.byu.edu/vol-16-no-2-2015/whom-arm-lord-revealed-part-1](http://rsc.byu.edu/vol-16-no-2-2015/whom-arm-lord-revealed-part-1).

8. See, for example, Matthew 8:17; Luke 22:37; Acts 8:32–35; 1 Peter 2:22–25.

9. John W. Welch, “Isaiah 53, Mosiah 14, and the Book of Mormon,” in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: Foundation for Apologetic Research and Mormon Studies [FARMS], 1998), 294, [scholarsarchive.byu.edu/mi/43/](http://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/mi/43/).

was the one “upon whom [*‘al-mī*] the arm of the Lord [was] revealed” (Mosiah 14:1), he and his people also suffer “travail” (*‘āmāl*) of soul at the hands of Amulon and his henchmen before the Lord redeems them out of bondage as he had done for Israel in the exodus. They became suffering servants in the mode of Isaiah 53, like the Messiah of a century and a half later. Alma<sub>1</sub>, as a suffering servant-priest, already typologically represented Christ to all his people who subsequently came to assume the role of suffering servants through their baptismal covenant (compare Mosiah 18:8–10 with Isaiah 61:1–2). In this way, Alma<sub>1</sub>’s covenant community became a miniaturized “kingdom of priests” (Exodus 19:6), doing the work of the Messiah their king. In universalizing the Christological typology from the priests to all people, as we see with Alma<sub>1</sub>’s people, we witness the continued fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant (“in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed,” Genesis 22:18) and the growth of the kingdom of God envisioned in Isaiah 52:7–10.<sup>10</sup> Priesthood and its ordinances not only portray and preenact divine redemption (and ultimately resurrection), but also bind covenant members of covenant communities closer to the Lord and to each other, because they require community members to rely on each other.<sup>11</sup>

Moreover, in fulfilling the Christological typology of the suffering servant, Alma<sub>1</sub> and his people help us better see how the Lord’s covenant people fit into the servant songs of Isaiah 49–53. We thus see why the Lord in a revelation to Nephi uses the language of Isaiah 49:3, 6 and 53:3–4 that casts the Jewish people collectively as suffering servant in the face of many centuries of antisemitism: “Do they [the Gentiles] remember the travails, and the labors, and the pains of the Jews, and their diligence unto me, in bringing forth salvation unto the

---

10. On Isaiah 52:7–10 and its use in the Book of Mormon, see Dana M. Pike, “How Beautiful upon the Mountains!: The Imagery of Isaiah 52:7–10 and Its Occurrences in the Book of Mormon,” in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, 249–91.

11. Samuel M. Brown, *First Principles and Ordinances: The Fourth Article of Faith in Light of the Temple* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute, 2014), 86, scholars archive.byu.edu/mi/36/. Brown writes, “Ordinances force us to rely on others. A priest blesses the sacrament for us each week so that we can renew our covenants. A patriarch relies on the promptings of the Spirit to pronounce a blessing that will help guide our lives. Male and female temple workers rise early and stay late to officiate in temple ordinances so that we can receive our own blessings and be bound to generations of our families. We are saviors on Mount Zion for one another. Ordinances are essential for our salvation not merely in and of themselves but as constant reminders that we cannot save ourselves. In this, ordinances always point to Christ.”

Gentiles?” (2 Nephi 29:4). A recognition and appreciation of this multivalent interpretive approach can lead Latter-day Saints to a greater appreciation for their own spiritual heritage, but also to greater empathy for the Jews as the Lord’s “ancient covenant people” (2 Nephi 29:5), who—like the Latter-day Saints themselves—are the Lord’s “servant[s].”

### **“He Shall See of the Travail of His Soul”: Amulon as the “Travail” (*āmāl*) of Alma<sub>1</sub>’s Soul**

In Mosiah 11:5–6, Mormon records that upon Noah’s succession of his father Zeniff, Noah purged his father’s priests and consecrated new priests: “For he put down all the priests that had been consecrated by his father, and consecrated new ones in their stead, such as were lifted up in the pride of their hearts” (Mosiah 11:5). The ethos of this new cadre of priests represented a vastly different one from their predecessor: “Yea, and thus they were supported in their *laziness*, and in their idolatry, and in their whoredoms, by the taxes which king Noah had put upon his people; *thus did the people labor exceedingly to support iniquity*” (Mosiah 11:6).

This characterization of Noah’s priests ironically reflects the Hebrew meaning of Noah’s name: “[divine] rest,” a meaning echoed throughout the biblical account of the patriarch Noah<sup>12</sup> and in the restoration account of Enoch’s vision of Noah and his posterity and the earth’s eventual “rest.”<sup>13</sup> A subsequent statement in the narrative affirms the intentionality of this play on meaning, with a more direct wordplay on “Noah” in terms of “rest”:

And the seats which were set apart for the high priests, which were above all the other seats, he did ornament with pure gold; and he caused a breastwork to be built before them, *that they might rest their bodies and their arms upon*

---

12. Isaac M. Kikawada, “Noah and the Ark,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freeman, et al. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1123–24. See also Moshe Garsiel, *Biblical Names: A Literary Study of Midrashic Derivations and Puns*, trans. Phyllis Hackett (Ramat Gan, IL: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1991), 203–4; Matthew L. Bowen, “‘And He Was a Young Man’: The Literary Preservation of Alma’s Autobiographical Wordplay,” *Insights* 30 (2010): 2–3, scholars archive.byu.edu/insights/vol30/iss4/3/.

13. Terrence L. Szink, “The Vision of Enoch: Structure of a Masterpiece,” *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Restoration Scripture* 17, nos. 1–2 (2008): 13–14, 18; Bowen, “This Son Shall Comfort Us,” 264–74.

while they should speak lying and vain words to his people.  
(Mosiah 11:11)

King “Rest” gave luxurious “rest” to himself and his priests, while he and his priests caused his people to “labor exceedingly to support iniquity.” The priests’ imposition of excessive “labor” on the people “to support iniquity” also hints at the name Amulon and Amulon’s imposition of labor (compare Hebrew *‘āmāl*, “labor,” “travail”) of Egyptian-style bondage and “taskmasters” as recounted in Mosiah 24:8–10 (compare Deuteronomy 26:7, “the Lord heard our voice, and looked on our affliction, *and our labour* [*‘āmālênû*] and our oppression”).

It is the nature of self-serving royal and priestly conduct to impose grievous burdens, toil, and travail on people whose burdens they should be making lighter (compare Matthew 23:4 with 1 Nephi 17:4 and Mosiah 2:14). The contrast could not be more clear, with respect to Jesus Christ and his Atonement, where the Lord “knows” and bears the burdens, toil, and travail of his people. The scriptures repeatedly testify of Lord’s intimate acquaintance with the sorrows of ancient Israel in Egypt (“I know their sorrows,” Exodus 3:7) as well as his understanding of the hearts of Alma, and his people (“he did know their hearts,” Mosiah 24:12), and Isaiah describes the experiential “knowledge” that emerged from the “travail,” “labor,” or “misery” of the suffering servant’s “soul.” Isaiah prophesies, “He shall see *of the travail* [*mē‘āmāl*, labor] of his soul, and shall be satisfied: *by his knowledge* shall my righteous servant justify many [or, make many righteous]; for *he shall bear* their iniquities” (Isaiah 53:11; Mosiah 14:11). Through the lens of Jesus Christ and his Atonement, we can also understand the Deuteronomistic narrator’s comment about the Lord being “grieved” over Israel being mired in a cycle of apostasy, bondage, and incomplete repentance: “And they put away the strange gods from among them, and served the Lord: and *his soul was grieved* [*wattiqsar*] *for the misery* [*ba‘āmāl*] of Israel” (Judges 10:16). The Lord is always grieved and pained for the misery of his people, even with his atoning suffering accomplished. Surrounded by the Lamanites and Nephites at the temple in Bountiful, the Resurrected Lord prayed: “And it came to pass that when they had knelt upon the ground, Jesus groaned within himself, and said: Father, I am troubled because of the wickedness of the people of the house of Israel” (3 Nephi 17:14).

In his quotation and interpretation of Isaiah 53 as preserved in Mosiah 14–16, Abinadi clearly and appropriately has Jesus Christ in mind as the fulfillment of that prophetic poem. Nevertheless, Abinadi’s

quotation of Isaiah 53 with its Messianic implications and his refusal to recant his testimony of Christ, resulted in his own martyrdom as a “suffering servant.”<sup>14</sup> Alma<sub>1</sub>, who alone “believes” the words of Abinadi, in his turn also becomes a “suffering servant.” A comparison of Mormon’s introductions of Alma<sub>1</sub> and Amulon into his narrative (table 1), with the respective plays on the meaning of their names, suggests that Mormon wished to highlight Amulon, along with his corrupt priestly cohort, as the authors and Alma<sub>1</sub> as the sufferer of the “toil” or “travail” (*āmal*) that bound Alma<sub>1</sub> and his people more closely with Christ:

**Table 1.** Introductions of Alma<sub>1</sub> and Amulon.

Mosiah 17:1–4	Mosiah 24:9–12
<p>And now it came to pass that when Abinadi had finished these sayings, that <i>the king commanded that the priests should take him and cause that he should be put to death.</i> But there was one among them whose name was <b>Alma</b>, he also being a descendant of Nephi. And he was a <b>young man</b> [cf. Hebrew <i>‘elem</i>] and <i>he believed the words which Abinadi had spoken, for he knew concerning the iniquity which Abinadi had testified against them; therefore he began to plead with the king that he would not be angry with Abinadi, but suffer that he might depart in peace. But the king was more wroth, and caused that Alma should be cast out from among them, and sent his servants after him that they might slay him.</i> But he fled from before them <b>and hid himself</b> [compare <i>‘Im</i> and its synonyms <i>str</i>, <i>hb’</i>, etc.] that they found him not. <b>And he being concealed</b> for many days did write all the words which Abinadi had spoken.</p>	<p>For <b>Amulon</b> <i>knew Alma</i>, that he had been one of the king’s priests, and that <i>it was he that believed the words of Abinadi and was driven out before the king</i>, and therefore he was wroth with him; for he was subject to king Laman, yet he exercised authority over them, and <b>put tasks upon them, and put task-masters over them.</b> And it came to pass that <i>so great were their afflictions that they began to cry mightily to God.</i> And <b>Amulon</b> commanded them that they should stop their cries; and he put guards over them to watch them, that <i>whosoever should be found calling upon God should be put to death.</i> And Alma and his people did not raise their voices to the Lord their God, but did pour out their hearts to him; and <i>he did know the thoughts of their hearts.</i></p>

Mormon’s text in Mosiah 17:2 plays on the meaning of the name of *Alma*,<sup>15</sup> a derivation from the Semitic/Hebrew word *‘elem*, “young man,” or “stripling,”<sup>16</sup> as a key part of his introduction of Alma<sub>1</sub> into the

14. Schade and Bowen, “To Whom Is the Arm of the Lord Revealed?,” 90–111.

15. Bowen, “And He Was a Young Man,” 2–4; Matthew L. Bowen, “Alma: Young Man, Hidden Prophet,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 19 (2016): 343–53, [interpreterfoundation.org/journal/alma-young-man-hidden-prophet](http://interpreterfoundation.org/journal/alma-young-man-hidden-prophet).

16. Hugh W. Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 3rd ed. (Provo, UT: FARMS; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 76, [scholarsarchive.byu](http://scholarsarchive.byu)

narrative: “[A]nd he was a young man and he believed the words of which Abinadi had spoken.” Mormon also places repeated emphasis on Alma<sub>1</sub>’s hiddenness, which could be a paronomasia on the name *Alma* in terms of the *‘lm* (“hide”) or one of its several Hebrew synonyms.<sup>17</sup> Alma<sub>1</sub> had to clandestinely form his community (see also Mosiah 18:1, 3, 5).

Later, Mormon recalls the exact narrative moment that Alma<sub>1</sub> “believed [the] report” or prophetic testimony of Abinadi: “Amulon knew Alma, that he had been one of the king’s priests, and that it was he that believed the words of Abinadi and was driven out before the king” (Mosiah 24:9). There, Mormon does something similar with the name *Amulon* in terms of its meaning, “man of toil” (compare Hebrew *‘āmāl*, “toil,” “labor,” “travail”): “[H]e exercised authority over them, and put tasks upon them, and put task-masters over them.” In so doing, Mormon connects both Alma<sub>1</sub> and Amulon to the testimony of Abinadi, which both men heard, but to which only one responded affirmatively.

The words of Isaiah that Alma<sub>1</sub> had heard Abinadi quote with reference to the suffering servant (Christ), would come to have greater meaning for Alma<sub>1</sub> in subsequent years, perhaps especially, “He [the Lord] shall see **of the travail** [*mē‘āmal*] of his soul, and shall be satisfied” (Mosiah 14:11). Alma<sub>1</sub>, for his own part, would taste such “travail,” “trouble,” “toil,” or “labor” as a suffering servant under the hands of Amulon, and his former priestly associates. That “travail” or “toil”—*‘āmal*—connected Alma<sub>1</sub> more closely to Jesus Christ.

The suffering servant would be “oppressed” or “tasked” (*niggaś*, Isaiah 53:7; Mosiah 14:7), just as ancient Israel had been “task[ed]” in Egypt (Exodus 3:7, 9; 5:13–14) and Alma<sub>1</sub> and his people had been “task[ed]” (Mosiah 24:9–11). For Mormon, the names *Noah* and *Amulon* apparently helped emphasize the deep parallels he saw between Israel’s “hard bondage,” “affliction, . . . labour [*‘āmālēnū*], . . . and . . . oppression” in Egypt (Deuteronomy 26:6–7). The same kinsman

---

.edu/mi/12/. Nibley wrote that *Alma* can mean “a young man, a coat of mail, a mountain, or a sign.” See also Paul Y. Hoskisson, “What’s in a Name? Alma as a Hebrew Name,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 7, no. 1 (1998): 72–73, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol7/iss1/10.

17. The extent to which Mormon appears to have done this in his narrative is remarkable. See Matthew L. Bowen, “‘He Did Go About Secretly’: Additional Thoughts on the Literary Use of Alma’s Name,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 27 (2017): 197–212, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/he-did-go-about-secretly-additional-thoughts-on-the-literary-use-of-almas-name.

Redeemer redeemed them all because he “knew” (Exodus 3:7; Isaiah 53:11/Mosiah 14:11; Mosiah 24:12; cf. especially Alma 7:11–13).

### “By His Knowledge”: Jesus and Alma<sub>1</sub> as Suffering Servants and “Travail” as the Source of Experiential Knowledge

The acquisition of experiential knowledge through suffering constitutes a vital element in the vicarious suffering of the servant foretold in the servant song of Isaiah 53 and fully realized in the atoning suffering of Jesus Christ; it is also reflected in the toil and travail of Alma<sub>1</sub>’s people in the land of Helam. Regarding the suffering servant, the prophet declares, “He shall see of **the travail** [*mē’āmal*] **of his soul, and shall be satisfied; by his knowledge** [*bēdā’tō*] shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities” (Isaiah 53:11; Mosiah 14:11). Abinadi interpreted the phrase “and shall be satisfied” as being fulfilled by Jehovah in atoning for humanity: “having broken the bands of death, taken upon himself their iniquity and their transgressions, having redeemed them, **and satisfied the demands of justice**” (Mosiah 15:9).

However, in using the phrase “by his knowledge” in Isaiah 53:11/Mosiah 14:11, Isaiah appears to reference his description of the suffering servant as “a man of sorrows **and acquainted with grief** [*wīdūa’ ḥōlī*; or, **and one given knowledge by sickness**]” (Isaiah 53:3). Biblical translations such as the KJV frequently obscure the lexical connection between the servant’s “knowledge” and his being “one given **knowledge by** sickness.” In both instances—first with a participial form of the verb *yāda’* “know” (*wīdūa’*, “and one known given knowledge by” or “informed by”) used adjectivally<sup>18</sup> and second with a prefixed and suffixed form of the noun *dā’at*, “knowledge”—Isaiah clearly describes knowledge that the servant gained through the experience of suffering.

In addressing the righteous church members in the city of Gideon, Alma<sub>2</sub> directly paraphrased Isaiah 53:3–5 when he foretold the atoning suffering of Jesus Christ: “And he shall go forth, suffering pains and

---

18. Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 619–20. They write, “By adjectival is meant the use of a participle in a clause where it could be replaced by an adjective, either attributive or predicate, rather than by some other part of speech” (619). As an example of the *qātul* form, they cite *wīdū’im* (“experienced, respected”—literally, “knowledgeable”) in Deuteronomy 1:13 and invite comparison to *wīdūa’* in Isaiah 53:3 (620n37).

afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith **he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people**” (Alma 7:11). The KJV rendition of Isaiah 53:3–4 reads,

He is despised and rejected of men; **a man of sorrows** [ʾiš mak'ōbōt], **and acquainted with grief** [wīdūa' ḥōlī]: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne **our griefs** [ḥōlāyēnū], and carried **our sorrows** [ūmak'ōbēnū]: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

As Thomas Wayment has previously pointed out, Alma<sub>2</sub>'s rendition of “the pains and the sicknesses” in Alma 7:11 more accurately reflects the meaning of “sorrows” and “grief”/“griefs” and “sorrows” in Isaiah 53:3–4 (cf. Mosiah 14:3–4).<sup>19</sup> Donald W. Parry rendered Isaiah 53:3–4 thus:

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and familiar with sickness; and like one from whom people hid their faces; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our sicknesses and carried our pains; but we considered him plagued, smitten by God, and afflicted.<sup>20</sup>

Parry's translation, though more personal (and, in my view, more felicitous) than the KJV, still slightly obscures the lexical connection between *wīdūa'* (“given knowledge [of]”) and *da'at* (“knowledge”) in Isaiah 53:11.

As Alma<sub>2</sub> more fully explicates Isaiah 53:3–5 and 53:11, he clearly and thoroughly emphasizes the experiential dimension of the knowledge gained by the Son of God through his atoning sacrifice:

And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and *he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities.*

19. Thomas Wayment, “The Hebrew Text of Alma 7:11,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 14, no. 1 (2005): 98–103, 130, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol14/iss1/10.

20. Donald W. Parry, *Harmonizing Isaiah: Combining Ancient Sources* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2001), 210–12, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/mi/40/.

Now the Spirit **knoweth** all things; nevertheless *the Son of God suffereth according to the flesh that he might take upon him the sins of his people*, that he might blot out their transgressions according to the power of his deliverance; and now behold, this is the testimony which is in me. (Alma 7:12–13)

Conceivably, the Spirit *could have* informed or acquainted the Messiah with all necessary *cognitive* knowledge *about* his people. Yet a “perfect atonement” (Doctrine and Covenants 76:69) required something more: the Messiah’s experiential knowledge.<sup>21</sup> Thus, he chose to know the pains, sicknesses, infirmities, and the consequences of his people — and all humankind — by suffering and experience.

The Lord said of his people Israel as they were oppressed by “taskmasters” in Egypt, “I know their sorrows [*mak’ōbâw*]”<sup>22</sup> or “I know their **pains**” (Exodus 3:7) — the same term is used in Isaiah 53:4–5 with respect to the servant’s vicarious suffering. In Mosiah 24, Mormon avers that the same Lord “knows the thoughts” of Alma, and his people’s “hearts,” as they have suffered as servants or slaves in “bondage” (*‘ābōdâ*; literally, service or servitude). He also *acknowledges* their baptismal covenant with him, a covenant with an ordinance that portrays divine deliverance through the waters of death and chaos, as in the Exodus. Isaiah describes this type of deliverance in Isaiah 51:9–11 (2 Nephi 8:9–11) with Jehovah acting as divine warrior in defeated Israel’s cosmic enemies at the time of the Exodus:

Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon? Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over? Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.

---

21. See, e.g., Neal A. Maxwell, “Willing to Submit,” *Ensign*, May 1985, 72–73, [churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1985/05/willing-to-submit](http://churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1985/05/willing-to-submit). See further Godfrey J. Ellis, “Experiential Knowledge and the Covenantal Relationship in Alma 7,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 51 (2022): 29–80, [interpreterfoundation.org/journal/experiential-knowledge-and-the-covenantal-relationship-in-alma-7](http://interpreterfoundation.org/journal/experiential-knowledge-and-the-covenantal-relationship-in-alma-7).

22. Or, *mak’ōbāyw*.

Paul described this event as Israel being “baptized . . . in the cloud and in the sea” (1 Corinthians 10:2).

Daniel Belnap helps us see how all of this fulfills the Abrahamic covenant: “This imagery [in Isaiah 51:9–11; 2 Nephi 8:9–11] is tied directly into the restoration of the promised land, for when the Divine Warrior comes, the covenant is fulfilled.”<sup>23</sup> Their baptisms in the waters of Mormon prefigured their deliverance from bondage in the land of Helam. Their restoration to the land of Zarahemla would enable them to stand as witnesses of God in fulfillment of their baptismal covenant, and the experience would give them experiential knowledge:

And Alma and his people did not raise their voices to the Lord their God, but did pour out their hearts to him; *and he did know the thoughts of their hearts*. And it came to pass that the voice of the Lord came to them in their afflictions, saying: Lift up your heads and be of good comfort, *for I know of the covenant* which ye have made unto me; and I will covenant with my people and deliver them out of bondage. And I will also ease the burdens which are put upon your shoulders, that even you cannot feel them upon your backs, even while you are in bondage; *and this will I do that ye may stand as witnesses for me hereafter, and that ye may know of a surety* that I, the Lord God, do visit my people in their afflictions. (Mosiah 24:12–14)

Just as the Son of God, in submission<sup>24</sup> to the will of God, chose to suffer and “know according to the flesh how to succor his people” (Alma 7:12), Alma<sub>1</sub>, in compliance with the will of God, suffered in consequence of earlier choices, and came to experientially “know of a surety” that God “visit[s] [his] people in their afflictions.” Just as Christ acquired the experiential knowledge that enables him to help his people, Alma<sub>1</sub> and his people — a people of the Lord — acquired the experiential knowledge that enabled them to help many other people.

In being experientially empowered to “stand as witnesses for [Christ] hereafter,” Alma<sub>1</sub> and his people could now fulfill the covenant obligation that they had willingly taken upon themselves at the waters

---

23. Daniel Belnap, “I Will Contend with Them That Contendeth with Thee: The Divine Warrior in Jacob’s Speech of 2 Nephi 6–10,” *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Restoration Scripture* 17, no. 1–2 (2008): 29, [scholarsarchive.byu.edu/facpub/4743/](http://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/facpub/4743/).

24. Compare Mosiah 3:19.

of Mormon, “to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life” (Mosiah 18:9). In “mourn[ing] with those that mourn” and “comfort[ing] those that stand in need of comfort,” Alma<sub>1</sub> and his people participated in the Messiah’s work “to comfort all that mourn” (Isaiah 61:2). What they suffered increased their capacity to administer comfort, and without it, they could not have “st[oo]d as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places . . . even until death” as a matter of experience. Alma<sub>1</sub>, as a priest, was authorized to administer the ordinances of baptism—the ordinance necessary for the creation of a unique covenant relationship that enables becoming one with the Lord: to take Christ upon oneself, bearing the name of Christ (“to be called his people,” “blessed is this people who are willing to bear my name,” Mosiah 18:8; 26:18), standing as witnesses of God (Mosiah 18:9; 24:14), serving as types of the suffering servant. In baptizing his people, Alma<sub>1</sub> also prefigured the Lord’s redemption of his own people from Amulon and the Lamanites under his leadership, and Christ’s ultimate redemption of all humankind in the resurrection.

The whole community, such as Alma<sub>1</sub>’s community, that participates in this covenant is blessed and redefined to share the same characteristics and bear the same burdens—that is, to “bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light” (Mosiah 18:8), just as Jesus Christ bore our burdens (see Isaiah 53:4, 6, 11; Mosiah 14:4, 6, 11). Regarding Alma<sub>1</sub>’s people, Mormon records,

And now it came to pass that the burdens which were laid upon Alma and his brethren were made light; yea, the Lord did strengthen them that they could bear up their burdens with ease, and they did submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord. (Mosiah 24:15)

It seems very likely that their “burdens were made light” as they fulfilled their baptismal covenant to “bear one another’s burdens, that they might be light.” Alma<sub>1</sub> and his people baptizing each other beautifully prefigured in ritual this sharing of burdens and suffering that preceded the Lord’s later deliverance of the whole community. Alma<sub>2</sub> seems to have had his father’s people and these events in mind when

he blessed the poor Zoramites: “[M]ay God grant unto you that your burdens may be light, through the joy of his Son” (Alma 33:23).

It is through “the order of his Son” (Melchizedek priesthood) and the Atonement of his Son that the administration of such blessings is made available to everyone, as all — male and female — share in the duties and blessings of priestly service, including priesthood ordinances, and come into unity with the Lord and each other (compare Mosiah 18:21).<sup>25</sup> As this happens more and more in communities and nations throughout the world, the Abrahamic covenant will come to fulfillment: “And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 22:18).

### **Covenant Israel as Suffering Servant and Messianic Type**

The examples of Abinadi, Alma<sub>1</sub>, and Alma<sub>1</sub>’s people help us see how prophets and the Lord’s covenant people, individually and collectively, can fulfill aspects of the Servant Song of Isaiah 53, and thus serve as types of the Messiah himself. Alma<sub>1</sub> “believed” Abinadi’s “report” (Isaiah 53:1; Mosiah 14:1; “But there was one among them whose name was Alma . . . And he was a young man, and he believed the words which Abinadi had spoken,” Mosiah 17:2). The Lord’s words again had reference to Isaiah’s question, “Who hath believed our report?” (Mosiah 14:1/Isaiah 53:1) when he commended Alma<sub>1</sub> for having faith in the words of Abinadi: “Thou art blessed because of thy exceeding faith in the words alone of my servant Abinadi” (Mosiah 26:15). The Lord further commended Alma<sub>1</sub>’s people as well for believing his report: “And blessed are they because of their exceeding faith in the words alone which thou hast spoken unto them” (Mosiah 26:16). Those who *believed* Alma<sub>1</sub>’s *report* gathered to the land and waters of Mormon:

And as many as would hear his word he [Alma<sub>1</sub>] did teach. And he taught them privately, that it might not come to the knowledge of the king. *And many did believe his words.* And it came to pass that *as many as did believe him did go forth to a place which was called Mormon*, having received its name from the king, being in the borders of the land having been infested, by times or at seasons, by wild beasts. Now,

---

25. Mosiah 18:21: “And he [Alma<sub>1</sub>] commanded them that there should be no contention one with another, but that they should look forward with one eye, having one faith and one baptism, having their hearts knit together in unity and in love one towards another.”

there was in Mormon a fountain of pure water, and Alma resorted thither, there being near the water a thicket of small trees, where he did hide himself in the daytime from the searches of the king. And it came to pass that *as many as believed him went thither to hear his words*. And it came to pass after many days there were a goodly number gathered together at the place of Mormon, to hear the words of Alma. *Yea, all were gathered together that believed on his word, to hear him*. And he did teach them, and did preach unto them repentance, and redemption, and faith on the Lord. (Mosiah 18:3–7)

As editor, Mormon—who previously included Abinadi’s use of Isaiah 53 and its introductory phrase “Who hath believed our report?” into his abridgment—emphasizes that the community that formed at the land and waters that were his namesake (3 Nephi 5:12) were those who “believed” in the prophetic word, just as Alma<sub>1</sub> had (Mosiah 17:2). There they formed themselves into a covenant community (Mosiah 18:8–35). Like Abinadi, Alma<sub>1</sub> and his people suffered “travail” (*‘āmāl*) of soul (Isaiah 53:11) at the hands of Amulon and his fellow priests in Mosiah 24:8–16, a foreshadowing or type of the Messiah’s suffering.

The Jews as the Messiah’s own people—described to Nephi as “mine ancient covenant people” as covenant Israel—also fit the typology of Isaiah’s suffering servant. A common modern Jewish reading of the Servant Song of Isaiah 53 is that the servant is the Jewish people.<sup>26</sup> Latter-day Saints should neither be averse to nor dismissive of this reading. In fact, Nephi himself records an oracle from the Lord using language that draws on the servant songs of Isaiah, including Isaiah 53, to condemn Gentile antisemitism and ingratitude for the Jewish production, transmission, and preservation of the biblical writings:

But thus saith the Lord God: O fools, they shall have a Bible; and it shall proceed forth from the Jews, mine ancient covenant people. And *what thank they the Jews for the Bible which they receive from them?* Yea, what do the Gentiles mean? Do they remember **the travails, and the labors, and the pains of the Jews, and their diligence unto me, in bringing forth salvation unto the Gentiles?** *O ye Gentiles, have ye remembered the Jews, mine ancient covenant*

---

26. David Noel Freedman, ed., *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. “Servant of the Lord” (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1189–90.

*people? Nay; but ye have cursed them, and have hated them, and have not sought to recover them. But behold, I will return all these things upon your own heads; for I the Lord have not forgotten my people. Thou fool, that shall say: A Bible, we have got a Bible, and we need no more Bible. Have ye obtained a Bible save it were by the Jews? (2 Nephi 29:4–6)*

When Nephi records the Lord’s scathing question, “what thank they [the Gentiles] the Jews for the Bible which they receive from them?,” the use of the verb “thank” — Hebrew *ydy* or *ydh* — cleverly plays on the names *Judah* (*yěhûdâ*, “praise, thanks”) and its tribal derivative, *Jews*<sup>27</sup> (*yěhûdîm*, those who are to be “thanked” or “praised out of a feeling of gratitude”),<sup>28</sup> similar to the etiological wordplay on Judah in the birth report in Genesis 29:35 (“And she [Leah] conceived again, and bare a son: and she said, Now will I praise the Lord [*’ôdeh ’et-yhwh*]: therefore she called his name Judah”) and Jacob’s blessing on Judah in Genesis 49:8: “Judah [*yěhûdâ*], thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise [*yôdûkâ*, literally, thy brethren shall thank thee]; thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father’s children shall bow down before thee.”

When the Lord asks another pointed question, “Do they [the Gentiles] remember the travails, and the labors, and the pains of the Jews, and their diligence unto me, in bringing forth salvation unto the Gentiles?” (2 Nephi 29:4), he has reference to several of the servant songs of Isaiah.

Firstly, “travails” in the triad “the travails, and the labors, and pains of the Jews” recalls the “travail” (*ămal*) of the servant’s “soul” in Isaiah 53:11; “labors” recalls the servant’s exclamation in Isaiah 49:4: “I have laboured [*yāga’tî*] in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work [*ûpě’ullātî*] with my God”; and “pains” recalls the “man of pains” and “the pains” borne in Isaiah 53:3–4.

Secondly, the phrase “diligence in bringing salvation unto the Gentiles” clearly and deliberately alludes to Isaiah 49:3, 6. In Isaiah 49:3, the Lord expressly designated the people of Israel as his

---

27. Matthew L. Bowen, “‘What Thank They the Jews’? (2 Nephi 29:4): A Note on the Name ‘Judah’ and Antisemitism,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 12 (2014): 111–25, [interpreterfoundation.org/journal/what-thank-they-the-jews-2-nephi-294-a-note-on-the-name-judah-and-antisemitism](http://interpreterfoundation.org/journal/what-thank-they-the-jews-2-nephi-294-a-note-on-the-name-judah-and-antisemitism).

28. Garsiel, *Biblical Names*, 171.

servant — “Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified” — and further foretold, “I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation [*yěšû‘atî*] unto the end of the earth” (Isaiah 49:6). Thus, in 2 Nephi 29:4, the Lord duly notes the “diligence” of the Jews, implicitly as “my servant, O Israel,” in “bringing salvation unto the Gentiles.”

It is true that Isaiah 49:6 in the narrowest sense describes the eternal “salvation” (*yěšû‘â*) “authored” (Hebrews 5:9; cf. Hebrews 12:12; Moroni 6:4) by Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah (“and thou shalt call his name Jesus [Greek *lēsou* < Hebrew/Aramaic *yěhōšû‘a* or *yěšû‘a*]: for he shall save [Greek *sōsei* < Hebrew *yōšî‘a*] his people from their sins,” Matthew 1:21). Simeon, when Jesus was brought to the temple as an infant, specifically applied the language of Isaiah 49:6 to Jesus:

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have *seen thy salvation* [Greek *sōtērion sou*], Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; *A light to lighten the Gentiles*, and the glory of thy people Israel. (Luke 2:29–32)

Nevertheless, Isaiah 49:6 has been applied to multiple individuals and communities throughout time. For example, Saul (Paul) and Barnabas, the great missionaries to the Gentiles, applied Isaiah 49:6 to themselves: “For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth” (Acts 13:46). In a 6 December 1832 revelation, the Lord directed the following to early members of the restored church of Christ: “Therefore, blessed are ye if ye continue in my goodness, *a light unto the Gentiles*, and through this priesthood, *a savior unto my people Israel*. The Lord hath said it. Amen” (Doctrine and Covenants 86:11). Here, the Lord uses the language of Isaiah 49:6 and Christological language (“a savior unto my people”) to designate the faithful early Saints as his servant. The Lord’s words to Nephi in 2 Nephi 29:4–6 collectively designate the Jews as his servant in the same way. His use of the language of Isaiah 53:3–4 (especially “travails” and “pains”) in Nephi’s oracle further characterizes the Jews collectively as a *suffering* servant.

Even a cursory review of antisemitism from antiquity to the present more than validates the application of “man of sorrows,” as in Isaiah 53:3, as a collective description of Jews as a people. The “pains” of persecution and abuse borne by Jews over long centuries is movingly

captured in Mark Markovich Warshawsky's *Oyfn Pripetshik*, a Yiddish song about teaching Jewish children the Hebrew aleph-beth (alphabet). This song became very popular among Eastern European Jews during the late part of the nineteenth century. The fourth verse particularly captures the Jewish experience with antisemitism and persecution (see table 2).

**Table 2.** *Oyfn Pripetshik* in Yiddish and English.

אויפן פריפעטשיק	<i>Oyfn Pripetshik</i> (4th Verse) <sup>29</sup>	At the Fireplace
אַז איר וועט, קינדער, עלטער ווערן וועט איר אַליין פֿאַרשטיין וועט איר די אותיות ליגן טרערן און ווי פיל געוויין	Az ir vet, kinder, elter vern, Vet ir aleyn farshteyn, Vifl in di oysyes lign trern, Un vi fil geveyn.	Children, when you will grow older you will understand how many tears are contained in these letters, and how much weeping.

The later collective experience of the *Shoah* (Holocaust) further imbued this song with inexpressible grief and poignancy.<sup>30</sup> It thus behooves everyone to “remember the travails, and the labors, and the pains of the Jews,” the Lord’s “ancient covenant people” from antiquity to the present (2 Nephi 29:4–5). According to Nephi, the world will be held accountable for the degree to which they have hearkened to and “respect[ed] the words of the Jews”—the scriptural records brought forth through their efforts to copy and preserve them (“Have ye obtained a Bible save it were by the Jews?”; 2 Nephi 29:6)—and the divine word in other scriptural witnesses.<sup>31</sup>

29. Mark Markovich Warshawsky, “*Oyfn Pripetshik* (At the Fireplace),” in *Mir Trogn A Gezang: Favorite Yiddish Songs*, by Eleanor Gordon Mlotek (New York: The Workman’s Circle, 2000), [yiddishsongs.org/oyfn-pripetshik/](http://yiddishsongs.org/oyfn-pripetshik/).

30. See, for example, Avrom Akselrod, “*Baym geto toyer!*” [“By the Ghetto Gate”], United States Holocaust Museum, [collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn671450](http://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn671450). This is a Holocaust-era song written to the tune of *Oyfn Pripetshik* that offers a snapshot of life during the Holocaust. A recorded audio version has been preserved. The song is described there as follows: “A topical song about food smuggling in the Kovno ghetto, *By the Ghetto Gate* draws on the melody of the much-loved ‘Yiddish alphabet song,’ *Oyfn pripetshik* [sic] (At the Hearth). Lyricist Avrom Akselrod, a refugee who had fled Poland at the start of World War II, wrote a number of parodic verses in the ghetto. He was killed in July 1944, when German militiamen set fire to his underground hiding place.”

31. See 2 Nephi 31:14. There Nephi cites three such scriptural witnesses: “And you that will not partake of the goodness of God, and respect the words of the Jews, and also my words, and the words which shall proceed forth out

In 3 Nephi 29:8, Mormon prophetically writes:

Yea, and ye need not any longer hiss, nor spurn, nor make game of the Jews, nor any of the remnant of the house of Israel; for behold, the Lord remembereth his covenant unto them, and he will do unto them according to that which he hath sworn.

The unjust and unjustifiable suffering of the Jewish people through antisemitism ("ye have cursed them, and hated them, and have not sought to recover them"; 2 Nephi 29:5) is mirrored in the unjust suffering of the Messiah himself, a Jew.

In view of all of the foregoing, we can better appreciate the prophetic assurance given to Joseph Smith in the "appendix" to the Book of Commandments: "And *they also of the tribe of Judah, after their pain*, shall be sanctified in holiness before the Lord, to dwell in his presence day and night, forever and ever" (Doctrine and Covenants 133:35). That great day is coming.

### Conclusion

Mormon's narrative links Alma<sub>1</sub> and Amulon through the story of Abinidi's testimony of the suffering servant and then, through extended wordplay on their names, he shows that Alma<sub>1</sub> and his people also become suffering servants at the hands of the taskmaster Amulon. The names of both Alma<sub>1</sub> ("and he was a young man [*elem*]," Mosiah 17:2, and "to [upon] whom [*al-mil*] is the arm of the Lord revealed," Isaiah 53:1/Mosiah 14:1) and Amulon ("yet he exercised authority over them, and put tasks upon them, and put task-masters over them," Mosiah 24:9; "he shall see of the travail [*mē'āmāl*] of his soul") are linked to the testimony of Abinadi when Mormon notes that Alma<sub>1</sub> "believed" that testimony or "report," Amulon and his cohorts did not. The Book of Mormon personal name *Amulon* likely derives from the Hebrew word *'āmāl* ("travail," "labor, toil"). Mormon and his source, almost certainly Alma<sub>1</sub>, recognized the lexical affinity between this term and the name

---

of the mouth of the Lamb of God, behold, I bid you an everlasting farewell, for these words shall condemn you at the last day." Nephi's invoking of these three scriptural witnesses is consistent with the Deuteronomic law of witnesses (Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15). On Nephi's idiosyncratic use of the law of witnesses, see Bruce A. Van Orden, "The Law of Witnesses in 2 Nephi," in *The Book of Mormon: Second Nephi, The Doctrinal Structure*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1989), 307–21.

*Amulon*. Further, they recognized the irony of Amulon (“man of travail,” “man of labor”) as the name of the leader of the priests of King Noah (“rest”), those who imposed Egypt-like bondage, taskmasters, and labor on Alma<sub>1</sub> and his people (see Mosiah 24:8–16), just as they had caused King Noah’s people to “labor exceedingly to support iniquity” (Mosiah 11:6).

The name *Amulon* itself functions as one of several significant terminological links to Isaiah 53 in Mosiah 14–24. The “travail” (*āmāl* [*mēāmal*]) of the servant’s “soul” described in Isaiah 53:11 that gave him experiential “knowledge” not only foretold the Messiah’s sufferings that gave him experiential knowledge (see Alma 7:11–13) but suggested a typology of experiential suffering in which Abinadi, Alma<sub>1</sub>, and Alma<sub>1</sub>’s people fit. While Abinadi “suffer[ed] the pains of death by fire” and “sealed the truth of his words by his death” as a martyr (Mosiah 17:15, 18, 20; cf. Isaiah 53:3–4), Alma<sub>1</sub> and his people subsequently suffered “afflictions” at the hands of Amulon (“man of travail,” “man of toil”) and his henchmen who imposed Egypt-like bondage on them, necessitating divine deliverance.

Recognizing the narratological use of the suffering servant typology and how the covenant people of the Lord fit within that typology helps us to reconcile the common Jewish reading of Isaiah 53 with the Messianic one embraced by Latter-day Saints and other Christians. Indeed, additional textual support for that reading exists within pages of Book of Mormon, in 2 Nephi 29:4–5 (“Do they remember the travails, and the labors, and the pains of the Jews, and their diligence unto me, in bringing forth salvation unto the Gentiles?”; cf. Isaiah 49:3, 6; 53:3–4). This should lead Latter-day Saints to greater empathy for the Jews as the Lord’s “ancient covenant people” and to a greater appreciation of their own spiritual heritage. The Jews, like the Latter-day Saints, are the Lord’s “servant.”

The priesthood and its ordinances make it possible for everyone to make covenants with the Lord. Nevertheless, to become *like the Lord* requires our following the way of the suffering servant. As we willingly “bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light,” we, like Jesus the Messiah, will learn through experience to “mourn with those that mourn; . . . and comfort those that stand in need of comfort” (compare again Mosiah 18:8–9 to Isaiah 61:1–2). If this was the Messiah’s path, how else could we learn to be like him?

As we do the Messiah’s work of atonement — “to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy

for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness,” those blessed by our efforts become “trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified” (Isaiah 61:3). The Abrahamic covenant is then fulfilled as covenant keepers “build the old wastes, . . . raise up the former desolations, and . . . repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations” (Isaiah 61:4; compare Isaiah 58:12).



[**Author’s note:** *I would like to thank Suzy Bowen, Rebecca Lambert, Allen Wyatt, and Alan Sikes.*]

**Matthew L. Bowen** was raised in Orem, Utah, and graduated from Brigham Young University. He holds a PhD in biblical studies from the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC, and is currently a professor and the Director of Religious Education at Brigham Young University–Hawaii. He is also the author of *Name as Key-Word: Collected Essays on Onomastic Wordplay and the Temple in Mormon Scripture* (Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2018) and *Ancient Names in the Book of Mormon: Toward a Deeper Understanding of a Witness of Christ* (Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2023). With Aaron P. Schade, he is the coauthor of *The Book of Moses: From the Ancient of Days to the Latter Days* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2021). He and his wife, Suzanne (formerly Blattberg), are the parents of three children: Zachariah, Nathan, and Adele.





*Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* is a peer-reviewed academic journal published by The Interpreter Foundation. Our mission is simple: Supporting The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints through scholarship.