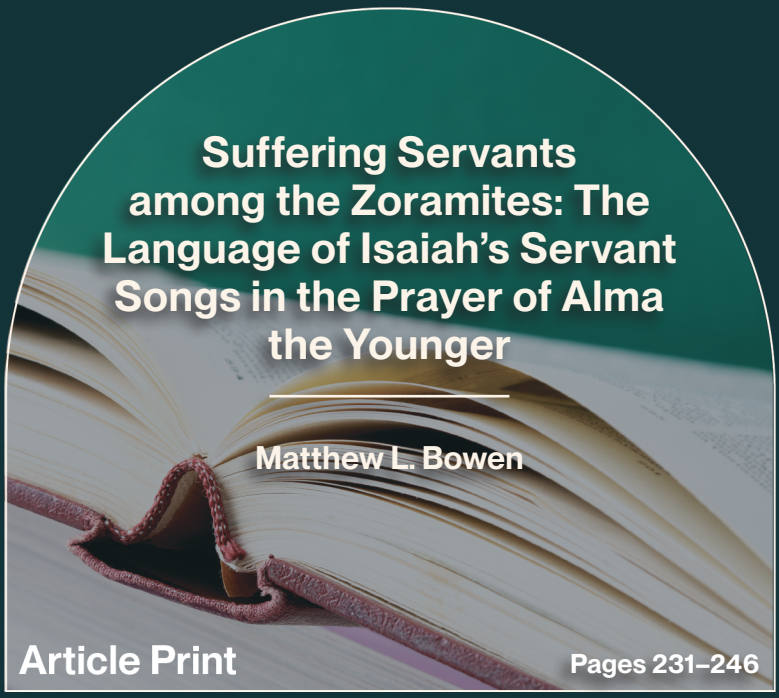
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Suffering Servants among the Zoramites: The Language of Isaiah's Servant Songs in the Prayer of Alma the Younger

Matthew L. Bowen

Abstract: *In pleading to the Lord for himself and his fellow missionary laborers as "servants," Alma$_2$ prays (in Alma 31:26–35) using the language of two of Isaiah's most prominent Servant Songs (Isaiah 49:1–9; 53:1–12). Alma$_2$'s use of the language of Isaiah 53 identifies him and his fellow-servants with Jesus, whose rejection and suffering as Messiah matches the rejection and suffering of the Servant in that text. Alma$_2$ anticipates that his and his fellow-servants' rejection and suffering will typify the suffering of Christ, whom the Zoramites have categorically rejected, and in whom Alma$_2$ and his companions must instill renewed faith. Alma$_2$ also resorted to the language of Isaiah 49, which describes God as the servant's (Israel's) "strength" and the servant (Israel's) commission to "bring Jacob again to him."*

The Christological importance of the Suffering Servant poem (Isaiah 53), as a prophecy of the Messiah's rejection and Atonement, for both ancient[1] and modern interpreters, can scarcely be overestimated. A recent study has noted the broader literary importance of Isaiah's Servant Songs, including Isaiah 53, for Mosiah 14–24 (beyond the quotation and interpretation of this text in Mosiah 14–16).[2] The

1. John Gee, "How Not to Read Isaiah," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 37 (2020): 29–41, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/how-not-to-read-isaiah. Gee demonstrates that ancient Jewish audiences understood Isaiah 53 as a prophecy of the Messiah.
2. See Matthew L. Bowen, "'The Travail of His Soul': The Narratological Use of Isaiah's Suffering Servant Typology in Mosiah 14–24," *Interpreter: A Journal*

same study found that Nephi uses a similarly expansive interpretation of elements of Isaiah 49 and 53 in 2 Nephi 29:4 ("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?").

In this new short study, I will show that another Book of Mormon passage, Alma 31:26–31, exhibits a keen awareness of and dependency on Isaiah 53. $Alma_2$'s prayer, recorded and preserved there as part of Mormon's abridged book of Alma, uses language from Isaiah 53 to depict himself and his fellow laborers as "servants" whose anticipated rejection and suffering among the apostate Zoramites would typify the rejection and suffering of the Messiah. $Alma_2$ offers this servant-prayer in response to the self-exalting rote prayer of the Zoramites:

> And he lifted up his voice to heaven, and cried, saying: O, how long, O Lord, wilt thou suffer that thy servants shall dwell here below in the flesh, to behold such gross wickedness among the children of men? . . . Behold, O my God, their costly apparel, and their ringlets, and their bracelets, and their ornaments of gold, and all their precious things which they are ornamented with; and behold, their hearts are set upon them, and yet they cry unto thee and say — We thank thee, O God, for we are a chosen people unto thee, while others shall perish. Yea, and they say that thou hast made it known unto them that there shall be no Christ.
>
> O Lord God, how long wilt thou suffer that such wickedness and infidelity shall be among this people? O Lord, wilt thou give me strength, that I may bear with mine infirmities. For I am infirm, and such wickedness among this people doth pain my soul. O Lord, my heart is exceedingly sorrowful; wilt thou comfort my soul in Christ. O Lord, wilt thou grant unto me that I may have strength, that I may suffer with patience these afflictions which shall come upon me, because of the iniquity of this people. O Lord, wilt thou comfort my soul, and give unto me success, and also my fellow laborers who are with me — yea, Ammon, and Aaron, and Omner, and also Amulek and Zeezrom, and also my two sons — yea, even all these wilt thou comfort, O Lord. Yea, wilt thou comfort

of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship 68 (2026): 289–310, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/the-travail-of-his-soul-the-narratological-use-of-isaiahs-suffering-servant-typology-in-mosiah-14-24.

> their souls in Christ. Wilt thou grant unto them that they may have strength, that they may bear their afflictions which shall come upon them because of the iniquities of this people.
>
> O Lord, wilt thou grant unto us that we may have success in bringing them again unto thee in Christ. Behold, O Lord, their souls are precious, and many of them are our brethren; therefore, give unto us, O Lord, power and wisdom that we may bring these, our brethren, again unto thee. (Alma 31:26–35)

$Alma_2$'s prayer in the language of this Servant Song was almost certainly motivated by the Zoramites' collective rejection of Christ and his Atonement. This added to $Alma_2$'s acute personal pain of the recent apostasy in Zarahemla caused by Korihor and the rejection of Christ among the broader Nephite population that Korihor inspired.[3]

$Alma_2$ and His Companions as Suffering Servants (Alma 31:26–29)

The setting of $Alma_2$'s prayer is described in Alma 31:1–25 with a description of the Zoramites' religious innovations. As demonstrated elsewhere, Mormon's portrait of the Zoramites revolves around a wordplay on the names *Zoram/Zoramites* and *Rameumptom* in terms of Hebrew *rām*, "high," "lifted up," "exalted."[4] For example, the Rameumptom is described as "a place for standing, which was *high* above the head" (Alma 31:13). This not only emphasizes the self-exalting nature of Zoramite worship, but furnishes the perfect emblem of Zoramite pride, "that their hearts were *lifted up* [compare Hebrew *rāmîm*] unto great boasting, in their pride" (Alma 31:25). As Brant Gardner puts it, "they participate in a ceremony designed to literally

3. On the possible relationship of Korihor and the Zoramites under whose feet Korihor met his demise, see Godfrey J. Ellis, "The Rise and Fall of Korihor, a Zoramite: A New Look at the Failed Mission of an Agent of Zoram," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 48 (2021): 49–94, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/the-rise-and-fall-of-korihor-a-zoramite-a-new-look-at-the-failed-mission-of-an-agent-of-zoram.

4. Matthew L. Bowen, "'See That Ye Are Not Lifted Up': The Name Zoram and Its Paronomastic Pejoration," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 19 (2016): 109–43, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/see-that-ye-are-not-lifted-up-the-name-zoram-and-its-paronomastic-pejoration.

place the wearer [i.e., the worshiper wearing costly apparel] above the crowd."[5]

Mormon makes a deliberate and ironic narrative juxtaposition to the "lifted up" hearts of the Zoramites when in the very next sentence he states that $Alma_2$ "lifted up his voice to heaven": "And he *lifted up* his voice to heaven, and cried, saying: O, how long, O Lord, *wilt thou suffer that thy servants shall dwell here below in the flesh*, to behold such gross wickedness among the children of men?" (Alma 31:26). $Alma_2$ "lifted up his voice to heaven" and his voice reached God, while the Zoramites "lifted up" their hearts in proud rote prayers, but that only put greater distance between themselves and the God they claimed to worship.

$Alma_2$'s description of himself and his fellow laborers as the Lord's "servants" becomes significant for what follows in his prayer, especially as he begins to incorporate the language of Isaiah 53. He draws the image of righteous servants who suffer on account of the wickedness of those they serve from Isaiah 53:11: "He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities." $Alma_2$ draws out the suffering aspect of the servant's role — especially bearing iniquity — later in his prayer.

While the Rameumptom that was "high" was one symbol of their pride, their prayers and clothing[6] also symbolized that arrogance:

> Behold, O God, they cry unto thee, and yet their hearts are swallowed up in their pride. Behold, O God, they cry unto thee with their mouths, while they are puffed up, even to greatness, with the vain things of the world. Behold, O my God, their costly apparel, and their ringlets, and their bracelets, and their ornaments of gold, and all their precious things which they are ornamented with; and behold, their hearts are set upon them, and yet they cry unto thee and say — We thank thee, O God, for we are a chosen people unto thee, while others shall perish. (Alma 31:27–28)

Nevertheless, the worst symptom of their spiritual sickness was

5. Brant A. Gardner, *Second Witness: Analytical and Textual Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Volume 4: Alma* (Salt Lake City, UT: Greg Kofford Books, 2007), 4:441.

6. See Parrish Brady and Shon Hopkin, "The Zoramites and Costly Apparel: Symbolism and Irony," *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 22, no. 1 (2013): 40–53, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol22/iss1/5.

not their pride; it was their rejection of the Messiah and even the need for a Savior: "Yea, and they say that thou hast made it known unto them that there shall be no Christ" (Alma 31:29). Brant Gardner notes that:

> While the Zoramites' pride disturbs Alma, their rejection of the Messiah, which he describes as "wickedness and infidelity," causes him such great suffering that he pleads with Yahweh for strength. Zoramite religion might pervert the true gospel, but their social stratification would not directly affect anyone outside of their own community. However, their rejection of the Atoning Messiah will bring eternal damnation on them.[7]

The Lord as the Servant's Strength (Alma 31:30a)

$Alma_2$ leans even further into the language of Isaiah 53:11 with its description of the servant's suffering on account of bearing iniquity in Alma 31:30:

> O Lord God, how long wilt thou suffer that such wickedness and infidelity shall be among this people? O Lord, *wilt thou give me strength, that I may bear with mine infirmities. For I am infirm, and such wickedness among this people doth pain my soul*.

$Alma_2$ immediately asks the Lord for strength, recognizing Jehovah as the divine source of the needed strength. His plea, "O Lord, wilt thou give me strength" is consonant with the Servant's declaration in Isaiah 49:5: "my God shall be my strength [*ʿuzzî*]" (KJV) or "my God has become my strength" (NRSVue). The Messiah whom the Zoramites have rejected (the Suffering Servant who will be rejected by his own in mortality) is the very one to whom $Alma_2$ appeals for strength.

In the outset of the Zoramite pericope, Mormon notes that $Alma_2$'s "heart again began to sicken because of the iniquity of the people" (Alma 31:1). To this, he adds, "For it was the cause of great sorrow to $Alma_2$ to know of iniquity among his people; therefore his heart was exceedingly sorrowful because of the separation of the Zoramites from the Nephites" (Alma 31:2). With these two statements, Mormon links $Alma_2$ to the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53, as he previously linked Abinadi, $Alma_1$, and $Alma_1$'s people to this figure. Isaiah 53:3 describes the Servant as a "man of sorrows" (literally, "a man of pains")

7. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 4:442.

and "acquainted with grief" (literally, "one given to know sickness" or "one given to know infirmity" by experience) who bore and carried pains and sickness. Isaiah 53:4 says of the servant, "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows" or "Surely he has borne our sicknesses [or infirmities] and carried our pains."

Indeed, in his prayer, $Alma_2$ describes himself as "bearing" (or "bearing with") his own "infirmities," weakness, or sickness. The necessity of $Alma_2$'s "bear[ing] with . . . infirmities" in order to help the Zoramites return to righteousness is closely analogous to the necessity of the Suffering Servant "bearing [the] iniquities" of the Lord's people in order for them to become righteous (Isaiah 53:11).

The Travail of $Alma_2$'s Soul as the Lord's Servant (Alma 31:30b)

The foregoing lexical connections between Alma 31:1–2 with $Alma_2$'s subsequent prayer and the Servant Song of Isaiah 53 are punctuated and reinforced by the end of Alma 31:30: "[A]nd such wickedness among this people doth pain my soul." The Servant, as "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" or "a man of pains and one given to know sickness," experienced "travail of . . . soul" because of the wickedness of his people (compare Mosiah 3:7). $Alma_2$, in a very limited way, personally experienced the wickedness of the Zoramites—wickedness that "pain[ed] his soul."

As the evidence of Alma 31:1–2 and Alma 31:30 thus far suggests, Mormon recognized the allusions and verbal links that $Alma_2$ made to the Servant Song of Isaiah 53—that $Alma_2$ was likening it to himself and to those with him. This prayer and its textual connections to Isaiah 53 served Mormon's narratological interests, enabling him to continue the theme of belief in the words of prophetic servants who suffered as types of the Suffering Servant.

$Alma_2$'s Partaking of the Messiah's Afflictions (Alma 31:31)

$Alma_2$'s prayer then becomes even more plaintive:

> *O Lord, my heart is exceedingly sorrowful*; wilt thou comfort my soul in Christ. O Lord, wilt thou grant unto me that I may have strength, *that I may suffer with patience these afflictions* which shall come upon me, because of the iniquity of this people. (Alma 31:31)

Notably, it was this specific language from $Alma_2$'s prayer that Mormon deployed at the beginning of the pericope to describe the spiritual and emotional suffering that the Zoramite apostasy caused him: "For it was the cause of great sorrow to Alma to know of iniquity among his people; therefore his heart was exceedingly sorrowful because of the separation of the Zoramites from the Nephites" (Alma 31:2). The language in both passages recalls the Isaianic description of the Suffering Servant as a "man of sorrows" or a "man of pains."

The Marcan passion narrative taps into the language of Isaiah 53 in a similar way. Mark records that prior to his suffering in Gethsemane on the eve of his crucifixion, Jesus said to Peter, James, and John: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death" (Mark 14:34). The "travail of the Messiah's soul" (Isaiah 53:11), at its greatest intensity, began in Gethsemane and did not conclude until after he "taste[d] death for everyone" (NRSV Hebrews 2:9) as he experienced divine abandonment for everyone.[8]

The Lord's administration of divine comfort to his people, who are his "servant . . . Israel" is a salient theme of Isaiah 49–52.[9] $Alma_2$'s plea for strength here, as previously, draws on the words of the servant in Isaiah 49:5, "[A]nd my God shall be [or, has become] my strength [*ʿuzzî*]" — divine strength that would be needed to endure the suffering.

Indeed, $Alma_2$'s prayer reflects his preoccupation with the "affliction[s]" (*ʿŏnî*) that would come upon himself ("these afflictions which shall come upon me," v. 31) and his fellow servants ("their afflictions which shall come upon them," v. 33), which is also a major emphasis of the Servant Song of Isaiah 53. Isaiah 53:4 and 53:7 emphasize that the Servant would be "afflicted": "we did esteem him . . . *afflicted* [*ûmĕʿunneh*]"; "He was oppressed, and he was *afflicted* [*naʿăneh*]." $Alma_2$ anticipated experiencing afflictions typological of those that would be experienced by the Messiah himself as the Suffering Servant. The inclusion of this "affliction" language heightens the significance of the affliction-humility-poverty language central to $Alma_2$'s sermon and Mormon's presentation of it, along with the hill Onidah as the site of that speech.

Additional language in Alma 31:31 points to Isaiah 53. The Servant

8. See Matthew L. Bowen, "Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise"(David O. McKay Lecture, Lāʻie, HI: Brigham Young University–Hawaiʻi, 10 March 2026), speeches.byuh.edu/david-o-mckay-lectures/let-zion-in-her-beauty-rise.
9. See Isaiah 49:13; 51:3 [2x], 12, 19.

Song also describes the Lord "lay[ing]" on the Servant the "iniquity" of everyone as a burden: "[T]he Lord hath laid [*hipgîaʿ*] on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). An examination of the operative Hebrew verb is helpful here. Hebrew *hipgîaʿ* is a causative (Hiphil) form of the verb *pāgaʿ*. This is a verb form that means to "meet, encounter, reach"[10] or to "meet someone, fall upon someone."[11] The causative form used in Isaiah 53:8 means "to cause to light upon"[12] or "to let something hurt someone."[13] $Alma_2$ recognizes that "afflictions" would "come upon," fall upon, or light upon himself and his fellow-servants (Alma 31:31, 33) just as they would come upon the Suffering Servant. The Lord would allow "afflictions . . . because of iniquity" to light upon him and allow them to hurt him, just as "iniquity" would light or come upon the Servant.

$Alma_2$'s Fellow-servants as Partakers of the Messiah's Sufferings (Alma 31:32)

The next part of $Alma_2$'s prayer follows in a manner similar to the previous one. $Alma_2$ beseeches the Lord to "comfort [his] soul" in Christ, but he expands his plea for comfort to include his fellow-servants and their souls:

> O Lord, wilt thou comfort my soul, and give unto me success, and also my fellow laborers who are with me — yea, Ammon, and Aaron, and Omner, and also Amulek and Zeezrom, and also my two sons — yea, even all these wilt thou comfort, O Lord. Yea, wilt thou comfort their souls in Christ. (Alma 31:32)

$Alma_2$'s plea to the Lord, "give unto me success," is essentially a plea for "the pleasure [*ḥēpeṣ*] of the Lord [to] prosper [*yiṣlāḥ*] in his [$Alma_2$'s] hand" (Isaiah 53:10) as it would in Christ's hand. The same divine "pleasure," purpose, or will that would bruise or crush the Servant (compare the verbal form *ḥāpēṣ* earlier in verse 10, "the Lord purposed to crush him") as he bore his people's iniquities, is the same divine purpose or will that would enable their success, whatever that might look like, just

10. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), 808 (hereafter referred to as *BDB*).
11. Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 910 (hereafter referred to as *HALOT*).
12. *BDB*, 808.
13. *HALOT*, 910.

as the Messiah's suffering has not ceased to bear fruit in the spiritual rebirth and salvation of those who come unto him.

$Alma_2$ then prays that the Lord, who is his own strength ("my God shall be my strength," Isaiah 49:5) as servant will be the strength of his fellow servants: "Wilt thou grant unto them that they may have strength, that they may bear their afflictions which shall come upon them because of the iniquities of this people" (Alma 31:33). The purpose clause, "that they may bear their afflictions that shall come upon them because of the iniquities of this people" is a circumlocution for the final clause of Isaiah 53:11 describing the Servant's "travail . . . of soul": "for he shall bear their iniquities." $Alma_2$ foresaw that his fellow-servants would become partakers of the Messiah's rejection and sufferings.

$Alma_2$ and his fellow servants cannot "bear [the] iniquities" of the Zoramites, or anyone else. That is the role of the Savior. However, through the Lord's strength they can "bear their [own] afflictions" that light upon them or come upon them "because of the iniquities of [the] people."

Bringing the Zoramites as Jacob-Israel Again to the Lord (Alma 31:34–35)

$Alma_2$ pled that the "pleasure of the Lord" would also "prosper in [his fellow-servants'] hand[s]": "O Lord, wilt thou grant unto us *that we may have success in bringing them again unto thee in Christ*" (Alma 31:34). He specifies what he expects that prosperity or success to look like — "bringing them again unto thee in Christ." That was a task made exponentially more difficult by the outright rejection of Christ by the Zoramites. $Alma_2$ repeats this request for emphasis: "Behold, O Lord, their souls are precious, and many of them are our brethren; therefore, give unto us, O Lord, power and wisdom that we may *bring these, our brethren, again unto thee*" (Alma 31:35).

$Alma_2$'s pleas on behalf of himself and his fellow-servants with purpose clauses, "that we may have success in bringing them again unto thee in Christ" and "that we may bring these, our brethren again unto thee," are expressly taken from one of the purpose clauses of Isaiah 49:5:

> And now, saith the Lord that formed me from the *womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him*, Though Israel be

> not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength.

$Alma_2$ recalled that many of the apostate Zoramites had recently been faithful Nephites ("many of them are our brethren")[14] and, as such, a part of Jacob-Israel. The servant's (Israel's collective) responsibility — the Messiah's and his fellow servants — is to "bring Jacob again to him" so that "Israel may be gathered to him." $Alma_2$'s use of the purpose clause "that we may bring these, our brethren, again unto thee," indicates that he understands the gathering of Israel as a covenant responsibility of Israel, the Lord's servant.

The Symbolism of $Alma_2$'s Clapping-On of Hands (Alma 31:36)

At this point, $Alma_2$'s prayer ends, but Mormon's text continues. He records that a ritual gesture immediately followed the prayer:

> Now it came to pass that when Alma had said these words, that he clapped his hands upon all them who were with him. And behold, as he clapped his hands upon them, they were filled with the Holy Spirit. (Alma 31:36)

The modern default interpretation of this gesture is that $Alma_2$ simply lays hands upon his fellow-servants to set them apart for their mission. Gardner suggests, however, that Mormon's use of a verb translated "clapped" in the near repetition "he clapped his hands upon all them" and "he clapped his hands upon them" is one that

> implies much more energy than "laying" hands. . . . I hypothesize that a clap is accompanied by a noise and a rush of air. A little-noted aspect of Mesoamerican people is their attention to sounds, which are frequently linked to deities.[15]

As it happens, Hebrew language strongly supports Gardner's hypothesis of a connection between "clap" and "a rush of air." The Hebrew verb *tāqaʿ* can mean to "strike" or "clap," as in the idiom *tāqaʿ kap,* "strike the hands together, clap,"[16] as well as "to blow," as in "to blow

14. On the Zoramite apostasy, see Sherrie Mills Johnson, "The Zoramite Separation: A Sociological Perspective" *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 14, no.1 (2005): 76, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol14/iss1/8.
15. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 4:443.
16. *HALOT*, 1785.

the trumpet" or "to blow the horn (or horns)."[17] The semantic bridge in these senses of *tāqaʿ* indeed appears to be a "clap . . . accompanied by a noise," and the sematic range of *tāqaʿ* certainly fits the language of the translation in this passage.

To illustrate the ritual dimensions of this word even further, *tāqaʿ*, as in "strike the hands together" or "fasten together,"[18] can also mean "to become a guarantor (by giving a handshake)," as in Job 17:3 ("Lay down now, put me in a surety with thee; who is he that will strike hands with me?")[19]—in other words, to "fasten hands together." This helps us to see the Christological symbolism of this verb in other scriptural passages as well. The verb *tāqaʿ* means to "drive in," as in to "drive in a peg [or nail] into a secure fixing."[20] This is the sense in which it is used in Isaiah 22:23: "And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house."[21] One can visualize the fastening of Eliakim as the Lord's priestly "servant" ("I will call my servant Eliakim ['May God cause to arise,' 'May God resurrect'] the son of Hilkiah," Isaiah 22) as "a nail in a sure place," such as a death by impaling (crucifixion, for example). However, one can also envision this "fastening" as the fastening of hands that makes one "a guarantor" or "surety" for someone else. Note how, in view of the foregoing, the men, women, and children at the temple in Bountiful became sure witnesses of the resurrected Messiah, the Suffering Servant who was scourged, crushed, and pierced. (Isaiah 53:5). As recorded by Mormon, Jesus invited a multitude of witnesses:

> Arise and come forth unto me, that ye may *thrust your hands into my side*, and also *that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands* and in my feet, that ye may know that I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world. And it came to pass that the multitude went forth, and *thrust their hands into his side, and did feel the prints of the nails in his hands* and in his feet; and this they did do, going forth one by one until they had all gone forth, and did see with their eyes and did feel with their hands, *and did know of a surety* and did bear record, that it

17. *HALOT*, 1785.
18. *HALOT*, 1785.
19. *HALOT*, 1786.
20. *HALOT*, 1785.
21. Compare also Isaiah 22:25.

> was he, of whom it was written by the prophets, that should come. (3 Nephi 11:14–15)

They did this by "thrusting" their hands into the Savior — notably, *tāqaʿ* also means to "thrust," as in "thrust in a weapon."[22] They fastened their hands together with his, as if "by giving a handshake."[23] The "laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost," of course, is itself a priestly Christ-type (compare, for example, Numbers 27:18–23 and Alma 13:2).[24] Though it does not appear that $Alma_2$'s gesture involved handclasps, the text's inclusion of a verb rendered *clap* in the "clap[ping] upon" of hands that enables the Lord's servants to be "filled with the Holy Spirit" has a wealth of additional Christological symbolism that helps us appreciate Jesus as the Atoning Servant, whose servants $Alma_2$ and his fellow laborers — and we — are.

Mormon's Narrative Transition to $Alma_2$'s Sermon on the Hill Onidah (Alma 31:37–38)

Curiously, Mormon transitions from $Alma_2$'s prayer to his speech on the hill Onidah with language derived from Jesus's "Sermon at the Temple" in Bountiful, the text of which is given in 3 Nephi 12–15. Following $Alma_2$'s prayer and blessing of his fellow servants, Mormon records:

> And after that they did separate themselves one from another, taking no thought for themselves what they should

22. *HALOT*, 1785.
23. *HALOT*, 1786.
24. Numbers 27:18–23:

> And the Lord said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him; and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight. And thou shalt put some of thine honour upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient. And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the Lord: at his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he, and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation. And Moses did as the Lord commanded him: and he took Joshua, and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation: and he laid his hands upon him, and gave him a charge, as the Lord commanded by the hand of Moses.

> In Alma 13:2, $Alma_2$ taught the apostate people of Ammonihah: "And those priests were ordained 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."

> eat, or what they should drink, or what they should put on. And the Lord provided for them that they should hunger not, neither should they thirst; yea, and he also gave them strength, that they should suffer no manner of afflictions, save it were swallowed up in the joy of Christ. Now this was according to the prayer of Alma; and this because he prayed in faith. (Alma 31:37–38)

Mormon here reflects back on that portion of the Sermon at the Temple that has been preserved in 3 Nephi 13:25–34. He uses the language of what are now verses 25 and 31:

> And now it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words he looked upon the twelve whom he had chosen, and said unto them: Remember the words which I have spoken. For behold, ye are they whom I have chosen to minister unto this people. Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? (3 Nephi 13:25).
>
> Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (3 Nephi 13:31)

The service of $Alma_2$ and his fellow-laborers occurred well over a century earlier than Jesus's own atoning service and his words in the Sermon on the Mount and its variant at the temple in Bountiful. Still, Mormon uses $Alma_2$'s prayer and the affirmative granting of its petitions as an illustration of the fulfillment of the promises of Christ to his disciples as servants. In this way, Mormon attaches the promises of Christ to the suffering of the Servant of Isaiah 53 and those who offer "sacrifice in the similitude of the great sacrifice of the Son of God, and . . . suffer tribulation in their Redeemer's name" (Doctrine and Covenants 138:13).

With the remark "he also gave them strength" (Alma 31:38), Mormon not only shows that $Alma_2$'s prayer was affirmatively answered, but also emphasizes once more that Jehovah — Jesus Christ — *was* the strength of his servants, as described in Isaiah 49:5. Divine strength is part of the divine provision that Christ promises to those who serve him and seek to establish his kingdom.

The blessing that $Alma_2$'s fellow-servants "should suffer no manner of *afflictions*, save it were swallowed up in the joy of Christ" (Alma 31:38)

is beautifully placed within Mormon's narrative. The next movement of that narrative is $Alma_2$ teaching the Zoramite poor, whose "afflictions" had "humbled" them. "Afflictions" is a key term in this narrative, revolving around Onidah, the name of the prominent hill from which $Alma_2$ delivered his speech.[25] The name Onidah evidently means "he knows my affliction," "he has acknowledged my humiliation," or something near that.[26]

Mormon's mention of the full granting of $Alma_2$'s prayer "because he prayed in faith" is also similarly strategic. The entirety of $Alma_2$'s subsequent sermon is calculated to help the poor Zoramites exercise faith in the Christ whom the elites among them have rejected.

Summary and Conclusions

$Alma_2$ prayed for those who accompanied him on his mission to reclaim the Christ-rejecting Zoramites in the language of two of Isaiah's most prominent Servant Songs (Isaiah 49:1–9 and Isaiah 53:1–12). The language of Isaiah 53, woven into $Alma_2$'s prayer, identifies $Alma_2$ and his fellow servants with Jesus, whose rejection and suffering as the Messiah fulfilled the rejection and suffering of the Servant in that prophetic poem.

$Alma_2$ understood that the rejection and suffering of him and his fellow-servants would typify the suffering of Christ, whom the Zoramites had formally and utterly excluded from their belief system (Alma 31:16). Those servants bore the formidable burden of instilling renewed faith in Jesus Christ among the Zoramites. $Alma_2$ also resorted to the language of Isaiah 49, which describes God as the servant's (Israel's) "strength" and Israel's commission as "servant" to "bring Jacob again to him" (Isaiah 49:3–5). $Alma_2$'s use of Isaiah 53 helps us see that all missionaries who share and accept the call to bring the glad tidings of salvation[27] through to the unbelieving also

25. Matthew L. Bowen, "He Knows My Affliction: The Hill Onidah as Narrative Counterpart to the Rameumptom," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-Day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 34 (2020): 195–220, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/he-knows-my-affliction-the-hill-onidah-as-narrative-counterpart-to-the-rameumptom.
26. Bowen, "He Knows My Affliction," 195–220.
27. Compare Abinadi's airtight use of Isaiah 53 to answer king Noah's priests' question about Isaiah 52:7–10 in Mosiah 12:20 to Mosiah 16:15. The messengers of salvation *are* the servants.

share the right to be called suffering servants, especially if rejection, suffering, and the message of salvation are part of the criteria.[28]

Alma$_2$'s use of the Servant Songs in Isaiah in his prayer offers yet more evidence of the crucial importance of those same texts to the faithful Lehites' understanding of Jesus Christ as Suffering Servant and their own covenant role as the Lord's "servant[s], to bring Jacob again to him." Mormon's recognition of the importance of these texts to his forebearers appears to have shaped his narratology and the editorial selection of materials for inclusion and emphasis in his abridged narrative.



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28. This is seemingly why Nephi saw "the travails, and the labors, and the pains of the Jews, and their diligence unto me, in bringing forth salvation unto the Gentiles" as collectively qualifying them to be considered the suffering servant in an extended sense.

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