

So Shall My Word Be

Reading Alma 32 through Isaiah 55

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THE TERM “INTERTEXTUALITY” was coined by philosopher and literary critic Julia Kristeva to describe the practice of reading one text through the lens of another. This paper will read Alma’s encounter with the Zoramite poor intertextually with Isaiah 55. While the focus will be on Alma 32, material from Alma 30–35 will be considered since that pericope reflects the original Book of Mormon chapter divisions. Additionally, Isaiah 54 and 56 contain many parallel passages that develop the themes of Isaiah 55, so those will be referenced as well.

With any intertextual reading, the question arises: What relationship do these texts have? In this case, we have four possibilities:

- (1) There is no historical or intentional relationship between the two texts.
- (2) The Book of Mormon writers and/or redactors deliberately crafted their account in a way that alludes to the Isaiah text.
- (3) Isaiah prophesied of the Book of Mormon events.
- (4) The writers and/or redactors of Alma and Isaiah drew on a common source.

The evidence that I will present suggests that (2) is most likely: Book of Mormon writers or editors intentionally alluded to Isaiah 55 in order to elucidate, undergird, and emphasize various key themes in

Alma 32.¹ However, I recognize that the intent of the ancient author(s) is not accessible to us and it may be the case that (1) is correct and that there is no inherent relationship between the two texts. Even in that case, we can still find much value in an intertextual reading and it would still be hermeneutically justifiable. While virtually every word of Isaiah 54–56 can be read with reference to the story told in Alma 30–35, space constraints will limit this paper only to those referents that shape our interpretation of the text in Alma.

We begin with the two direct citations of Isaiah 55 in the Book of Mormon. While neither of these is in Alma 32, both have strong thematic ties to that chapter and thus provide an important part of the backdrop and justification for this intertextual reading. Isaiah 55:1 reads:

Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

That verse is referenced in 2 Nephi 26:25–26 (I have italicized the material from Isaiah):

Behold, doth he cry unto any, saying: Depart from me? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; but he saith: *Come unto me all ye ends of the earth, buy milk and honey, without money and without price.* Behold, hath he commanded any that they should depart out of the synagogues, or out of the houses of worship? Behold, I say unto you, Nay.

Note that the Isaian material is surrounded by uses of the word “depart,” used in relation to the idea that no one is asked to depart from a place of worship. This suggests that the Book of Mormon tradition interpreted Isaiah 55:1 as an invitation to worship that

1. There are indications that Isaiah 55 is alluded to elsewhere in the Book of Alma; see, e.g., Alma 1:20 (where the “word of God” is imparted “without money and without price”) and Alma 5:34 (where the fruit of the tree of life is probably linked to Isaiah 55:1).

must be extended to all, which explains why Isaiah 55 might have been chosen to undergird Alma 32, where exclusion from worship is a key concern.

Isaiah 55:2 reads:

Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

This passage is quoted in 2 Nephi 9:51 (Here, I have italicized significant *deviations* from Isaiah's text):

Wherefore, do not spend money for that which is of no worth, nor your labor for that which cannot satisfy. Hearken diligently unto me, *and remember the words which I have spoken; and come unto the Holy One of Israel, and feast upon that which perisheth not, neither can be corrupted,* and let your soul delight in fatness.

Note that Isaiah's phrase "eat ye that which is good" is replaced with "and remember the words which I have spoken; and come unto the Holy One of Israel, and feast upon that which perisheth not, neither can be corrupted." While it is possible that the Nephites had an alternate recension of the Isaiah text,² it is more likely that the phrase was deliberately changed in order to suggest a relationship between "eating the good," remembering sacred words, and feasting upon them. If this is the case, then we have a possible thematic link to Alma 32, where a parable comparing the word to a seed ends with the promise of feasting (see Alma 32:42). So the attentive Book of Mormon reader is additionally prepared for the possibility of reading Alma 32 and Isaiah 55 intertextually by the careful quotation of Isaiah 55:2 in 2 Nephi 9 which aligned the idea of eating the good with remembering the words and feasting.

2. While certainty in this matter is not possible, the fact that Isaiah is poetry and the 2 Nephi version disrupts the poetic structure suggests that 2 Nephi doesn't reproduce the original text but rather alters it.

The balance of this paper will work sequentially through Isaiah 55 in order to see what light it might shed on Alma 32. We begin by noting that the poetic parallelism in the first two lines of Isaiah 55:1 (“Ho, *every one that thirsteth*, come ye to the waters, and *he that hath no money*; come ye, buy, and eat;”; italics added) equates those who thirst with those who have no money. In Alma 32, the Zoramite poor are, obviously, without money and are promised in verse 42 that when they feast upon the fruit, they shall not thirst (“ye shall feast upon this fruit even until ye are filled, that ye hunger not, neither shall ye thirst”). What Isaiah contributes to the discussion in Alma is an alignment of a monetary need with its spiritual solution: the answer to the Zoramites’ poverty isn’t more money or better clothing or access to the synagogue; it is the fruit of the tree of life. The verse in Isaiah also emphasizes that the Zoramites’ poverty need not keep them from the feast that Alma promises, since it specifically makes the invitation to worship to the poor. The concept of a spiritual response to a financial problem also explains Alma’s responses to the Zoramites’ questions: when the Zoramite poor ask him what to do about the fact that they are cast out of the synagogue (Alma 32:5: “Behold, what shall these my brethren do, ... for they have cast us out of our synagogues?”), Alma responds with a discourse on faith (Alma 32:8–43). But when they ask him about faith (Alma 33:1: “Now after Alma had spoken these words, they sent forth unto him desiring to know whether they should believe in one God ...”), he tells them what to do about having been barred from the synagogue (Alma 33:2–23).³ One result of these reversed questions and answers is to associate the idea of faith with the idea of place. The Zoramite poor are operating under the misunderstanding that they need access to a certain place to worship, but Alma teaches that the only “place” they need is the place that they give to the seed to grow.

3. I credit this observation to James Faulconer.

The theme of place is also elucidated in the chapters surrounding Isaiah 55. In Isaiah 54:11–13, we read of the Lord himself building a place for those who are in distress:

O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones. And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children.

And then, bookending that reference, we find the same sentiment in Isaiah 56:4–7:

For thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.

Note that the primary descriptor of the faithful in this passage is that they keep the Sabbath; this is particularly appropriate for our intertextual reading given that the Zoramites' apostasy is described in terms of improper Sabbath worship. These are multidimensional links to Alma 32's message of place, casting out, and worship. The irony is that being prevented from entering the holy place has put the Zoramite poor in a place—literally and figuratively—to hear the word. The audience is being called upon to examine their assumptions about the value of so-called holy places.

Also significant in Isaiah 55:1 is the idea that one can purchase food and drink without money (“come, buy wine and milk without money and without price”). What Alma describes as growing fruit that “ye shall feast upon ... even until ye are filled” (Alma 32:42), Isaiah calls buying without price. This is not to imply that the goods are free, but rather that the price has been paid by someone else; hence there is a subtle teaching here about the atonement. This message is amplified in Isaiah 55:10–11:

For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

In that passage, “bread for the eater” is tied to its source, the waters from heaven, and is paralleled to the Lord’s word. Similarly, the feasting done at the end of Alma’s parable is only possible because the price has been paid by Jesus Christ. In this case, Isaiah 55 serves as an important supplement to Alma’s parable, which otherwise could be (mis)construed as teaching that salvation can be achieved solely by planting and nourishing a seed and without the intervention of a Savior. By making clear that the fruit of the tree of life has been paid for by another—even if it is “grown” within the audience—Isaiah 55 enhances our reading of Alma’s parable. Isaiah 55:1 also contextualizes the story of Korihor, where his ignoble end involves begging for food (Alma 30:58); he, clearly, has not chosen a path that leads to being freely offered food without price. This is one of many ways in which Korihor’s experience serves as a foil to that of Alma and the Zoramite poor.

In Isaiah 55:2, we find two questions: “Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?” The Zoramites have adopted sartorial social markers, but Isaiah questions the practice of spending money on anything that

does not sustain life. That first phrase in 55:2 is paralleled to the idea of laboring for that which won't satisfy, using language reminiscent of that in Alma 32:5, where the complaint of the Zoramite poor is that they have been cast from a synagogue that they "have labored abundantly to build with [their] own hands." Perhaps because of this investment of labor, they prize the synagogue and desire to re-enter it. But the juxtaposition of the first two lines of Isaiah 55:2 implies that this labor will satisfy them no more than the fine Zoramite clothing will. Further, it suggests that the Zoramite poor may be just as culpable as the Zoramite rich; note that both Alma (Alma 32:13) and Amulek (Alma 34:17, 33) will preach of the Zoramites' need for repentance. The Alma text makes clear that they need to repent; the Isaiah text may give us a window into *why* they need to repent.

This theme of repentance may also explain the puzzling remark from the narrator that Alma "turned him about, his face immediately towards him" (Alma 32:6): it may have been included to echo Isaiah 54:8, which reads, "in a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee." The Lord's promise to turn his face back toward a penitent people is reflected in the narrator's phrase that Alma "turned him[self] about" and faced the Zoramites. A secondary purpose for that phrase may be to emphasize the closeness between Alma and the Lord: the Lord's favor is reflected in Alma's actions toward this penitent people.

Isaiah 55:2 ends with these words: "hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." This tricolon suggests the interrelatedness of hearkening, eating the good, and delighting in fatness; it is reminiscent of Alma's parable, particularly verse 28, where experimenting on the word leads to a fruit whose key characteristic is that it is good and whose swelling will enlarge the soul:

Now, we will compare the word unto a seed. Now, if ye give place, that a seed may be planted in your heart, behold, if it be a true seed, or a good seed, if ye do not cast it out by your unbelief, that ye will

resist the Spirit of the Lord, behold, it will begin to swell within your breasts; and when you feel these swelling motions, ye will begin to say within yourselves—It must needs be that this is a good seed, or that the word is good, for it beginneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding, yea, it beginneth to be delicious to me.

The final line in Isaiah 55:2, with its reference to delighting in fatness, serves as a counterpoint to the previous statement about laboring for that which will not satisfy. Thus, the intertextual reading serves to make explicit that the solution to the poor Zoramites' problem isn't re-admittance to the synagogue but rather trying the experiment upon the word and delighting in the growth of the seed; the Isaiah text once again makes clear that the financial and social problem has a spiritual solution.

The beginning of Isaiah 55:3 reads, "Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live." The repetition in these phrases serves to emphasize the importance of listening. Read intertextually, it calls attention to a curious feature of Alma 32: Alma's repeated use of the phrase "I say unto you" and its variants, which occur fourteen times in this chapter.⁴ This is a surprisingly high number for a phrase that might easily have been omitted, but a closer inspection of these phrases, along with phrases Alma uses to indicate what others say, reveals some interesting patterns. First, the sequence begins with "thy brother hath said" (Alma 32:9) and ends with "ye will say" (Alma 32:37), which suggests that one point of Alma's discourse is to help the audience transition from focusing on what others do to what they

4. Alma refers to himself speaking in Alma 32:10 ("I say unto you"), 32:11 ("I would ask"), 32:12 ("I say unto you"), 32:14 ("as I said unto you"), 32:18 ("now I ask"), 32:18 ("I say unto you"), 32:20 ("I say unto you"), 32:21 ("as I said"), 32:22 ("I say unto you"), 32:26 ("as I said"), 32:29 ("I say unto you"), 32:31 ("I say unto you"), 32:35 ("I say unto you"), and 32:36 ("I say unto you"). Alma refers to others speaking in 32:9 ("thy brother hath said"), 32:17 ("there are many who do say"), 32:28 ("ye will begin to say"), 32:30 ("ye will say"), and 32:37 ("ye will say").

themselves do. Note that the audience literally gets the last word in determining what will happen. Also note that the first time the audience says anything, it is “ye will begin to say” (Alma 32:28). That makes obvious sense, but it also points to the fact that at that moment, the audience has begun to interact with the word. When Alma indicates that the audience “will say: Let us nourish it with great care, that it may get root, that it may grow up, and bring forth fruit unto us” (Alma 32:37), the emphasis isn’t just on the nourishing process but also on the *saying* process. That is, the decision by the people to verbalize their plans is, at that moment, a significant constituent of their faith. This suggests that Korihor’s sign of muteness was partially symbolic: it made him literally unable to say that which he had chosen not to say. Additionally, this pattern highlights the fact that the construction of faith has a back-and-forth element between Alma and the people and is, truly, a dialogue. Further, the emphasis on “saying” also serves to humanize and dignify the Zoramite poor, who have apparently been treated as non-entities, unworthy of being conversation partners. To sum, the verse in Isaiah calls the reader’s attention to the fact that saying and speaking are used in the Alma text in a way that, while not strictly required to keep the story moving forward, functions to elucidate some its major themes.

Isaiah 55:9 reads, “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” We might read this as a rebuke not only to the worship on the “high” Rameumptom,⁵ but also as a rebuke to the Zoramite poor who desire to worship in the same way. Further, the Isaiah verse compares the difference between heaven and earth to the difference between the Lord’s thoughts and man’s thoughts; thus, it encourages us to see the physical attribute of height as imbued with symbolic meaning. This same connection is made when Alma sees that not

5. There are also interesting parallels to the story of the tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9).

only were the Zoramites' bodies lifted up but, in verse 25, that "their hearts were lifted up" as well. Zoramite worship uses physical space symbolically to accomplish several things. First, it suggests the superiority of one person above the others in contrast to Alma 30:7, where we learn that the motivating principle behind Nephite law was to be sure that people were *not* placed on "unequal grounds." Secondly, it denies the communal nature of worship by allowing only one person at a time to worship; contrast Alma's communality—e.g., "let us nourish it" in Alma 32:37. Next, it makes worship into an exterior, public act; contrast the interiority of the experiment upon the word in Alma's parable. Fourth, it presents worship as unchanging instead of growing, unlike the seed of Alma's parable. And, finally, it makes worship into a discrete event instead of a continual process, unlike Amulek's admonition in Alma 34:27 that they pray continually (see also Alma 33:4–7).

There is another significant contrast between the Rameumptom and Alma's preaching: while the Zoramite speaking occurs in "a place built up in the center of their synagogue, a place for standing" (Alma 31:13), Alma preaches from a hill (Alma 32:4). Both Alma's hill and the Rameumptom have the superficial similarity of being "high places" but Alma's is natural—by which I mean God-created—and out of doors while the Zoramites' is man-made and within a synagogue, which is also man-made. While Zoramite worship is surrounded by the man-made (synagogue, Rameumptom, fine clothing, and jewels), Alma preaches in nature with nothing artificial mentioned as he teaches a parable that is nature-focused. The implication is that the Zoramites are trying to achieve closeness to God on their own terms, through their own creations. Note that in Isaiah 54 and 56, even those things that we would normally consider human creations, such as buildings, are portrayed as God's creation (see, e.g., Isaiah 54:11–12). These references work together to establish the value of God's creations over human creation and imply the same hierarchy for God's thoughts and beliefs.

Isaiah 55:10 compares the word of the Lord to rain, which waters the earth, makes it bud, and, ultimately, “give[s] seed to the sower, and bread to the eater.” While the previous verse in Isaiah emphasized the distance between God and man, this one explains how that gap can be bridged. It is critical to note that this distance is not spanned by human creations such as the Rameumptom; rather, it is the word of the Lord that links heaven to earth. Verse 10 has an interesting constellation of similarities to and differences from Alma’s parable. Note that both compare natural plant growth to the word of the Lord, but in Alma, the word is a seed while in Isaiah, it is the rain. Water plays an important but understated role in Alma’s parable—since the plant will be scorched and die without nourishing—and the seed plays an important role in Isaiah’s metaphor—since the ultimate goal of the water coming down from heaven is to create the seed. When we read intertextually, we see that even the seed itself in Alma’s parable comes from God. This is a key point since both Korihor and the Zoramites are guilty of self-aggrandizement; what Isaiah adds to the story is that while true growth occurs from within the person, it ultimately comes from God.

The importance of water is further explored in the chapters surrounding Isaiah 55 through references to the dry and barren. Isaiah 54:1 reads:

Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord.

And Isaiah 56 begins with a description of a time when eunuchs (who, of course, are barren) will not be excluded from the temple. Appropriately enough for our comparison to Alma 32, it describes the eunuchs as blessed so that they won’t be a “dry tree.” We can use these Isaiah references to the improved state of the barren to better understand what Alma means when he tells the Zoramite poor that

if the seed doesn't get root, it is because their ground is barren (Alma 32:39). Unlike the parable of the soils in Mark 4, in Alma, barren ground is not a permanent condition but rather something under the control of the sower: the sower can choose to better nourish the ground so that growth will occur (see Alma 32:41). The image of the fruitful eunuch is a particularly compelling example of the Lord's ability to cause the barren to bear. When Isaiah prophesies that the barren will someday bring forth, it emphasizes Alma's message that growth is under the control of the sower and makes clear that the Zoramite poor are not limited in their spiritual growth because they have been cut off from the synagogue. Further, the references to eunuchs in Isaiah 56 emphasize that it is not the Lord's will that his followers be separated from the main body of worshippers. This is an important counterpoint to the Alma 32 story because it emphasizes the importance of community, an idea which might otherwise have been lost in Alma's teachings about the interiority of true worship.

Isaiah 55:11 ("So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.") sheds light on an irony in Alma 30–35: Alma decides to preach to the Zoramites specifically so that they won't enter into a league with the Lamanites and therefore threaten the peace of the Nephites (see Alma 31:3–5). This, however, is *exactly* what does occur as a *direct* result of his mission (see Alma 35:8–10). Isaiah's claim, then, that the Lord's word "shall not return unto [Him] void, but it shall accomplish that which [He] please[s]" (Isaiah 55:11) helps explain this irony. As Elder Neal A. Maxwell wrote, "we must not automatically regard irony as a sign of God's disinterest. It is more a reflection of His precision."⁶

6. See Neal A. Maxwell, *We Talk of Christ, We Rejoice in Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1984), 132. See also Neal A. Maxwell, "Irony: The Crust on the Bread of Adversity," *Ensign*, May 1989, 62f.

Reading intertextually suggests that even if Alma failed to achieve his own goal, his preaching still worked to fulfill God's purposes, which may have been even larger than Alma's.

Isaiah 55:12 reads, "For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." The parallelism between this verse and the two previous ones in Isaiah suggests that those who "go out," as Alma and his coworkers do, should model themselves on the rain that the Lord sends. This furthers the association between Alma and the Lord that was noted above. Isaiah 55:12 is also the most likely explanation for the extremely unusual phrasing in Alma 31:36, where it is twice noted that Alma clapped his hands upon his co-workers. While clapping one's hands and clapping one's hands *upon* a person are somewhat different, the verbal echo makes a connection between the two. Read intertextually, Alma is pictured as the tree, which is a most appropriate metaphor in light of his parable of the seed: the image of Alma himself as a tree implies that Alma has tried the experiment on the word and allowed the tree to grow up within him, the end result of which is his ability to convey the Holy Spirit to his co-workers.

Isaiah 55:12 mentions joy ("For ye shall go out with joy"), a concept also found in Alma 31:38 ("he also gave them strength, that they should suffer no manner of afflictions, save it were swallowed up in the joy of Christ"). Further, what Isaiah poetically describes as the hills "break[ing] forth before you into singing" (Isaiah 55:12), the writer of Alma more prosaically calls "teaching and speaking unto the people upon the hill" (Alma 32:4). When the Isaiah text links the singing hills to the clapping trees, it encourages the reader to associate Alma's preaching with the action by which he fills his companions with the Holy Spirit (Alma 31:36: "And behold, as he clapped his hands upon them, they were filled

with the Holy Spirit”). In other words, his preaching is not merely under his own authority but rather is accomplished by the same divine power by which he can confer an outpouring of the Spirit, an association which is strengthened by the note in verse 7 that “he stretched forth his hand,” a phrase which usually connotes the use of divine power (see, e.g., 1 Nephi 17:53, Mosiah 12:2, Alma 14:10, and Alma 19:12).

Perhaps the most interesting part of Isaiah 55 to read intertextually is verse 13:

Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

Note that thorns and briars are what grow where the land is neglected, while firs and myrtles are evidence of nourishment and cultivation. In terms of Alma’s parable, then, the promise is made that the nourished and nurtured trees will, in fact, grow up unto the Lord—that it is possible for the Zoramite poor *not* to end up with a bad seed or a scorched plant, despite what the wealthy Zoramites have led them to believe.

What Isaiah calls “an everlasting sign” is of key importance to the Alma text, where Korihor asks for a sign, where the Zoramites take their wealth to be a sign of God’s favor, and where Alma preaches against those who ask for signs. What the Isaiah text makes clear is that the only everlasting sign is the growth of the healthy tree, something we have seen in Alma where Korihor’s sign led only to his death. The issue of counterfeit signs might be especially important to Alma in this context, where Korihor’s experience with the devil’s angel (see Alma 30:53) is unfortunately similar to Alma’s conversion experience with an angel of God (see Alma 36:6). In the face of a spiritually immature audience, Alma needs to explain how and why he knows that his angel is true and Korihor’s is false and he does this by delineating what Isaiah calls “the everlasting sign.” Korihor

is portrayed as the brier and thorn—the false sign that is the result of no nourishing and care, a point which is emphasized by the summary statement to the Korihor story: “and thus we see that the devil will not support [=nourish] his children at the last day” (Alma 30:60). This is why Alma discourages sign seeking in Alma 32: no external sign is everlasting. Only the interior sign—the seed, becoming a tree, bearing the fruit of the tree of life—is the eternal sign. Any other sign sought or received is not an everlasting sign, because it will not lead to faith.

The Isaiah text mentions that this everlasting sign will not be “cut off.” The concept of being cut off (or cast out) is prominent in Alma, where Korihor is cast out, where the poor are cast out of the synagogue, and where Alma encourages them not to cast out a good seed. The Isaiah text reminds us that, although the Zoramites have been cast out of the synagogue, they can still choose to plant the seed which will create a sign that no one can cast out. They have assumed that worship is tied to a particular place; they are right, but that place isn’t the synagogue, it is the interior of the worshipper. As Amulek will say, the Lord “dwelleth not in unholy temples, but in the hearts of the righteous doth he dwell” (Alma 34:36). Note that the parallelism of that statement contrasts unholy temples with the heart of the righteous. This emphasizes the internality of true worship, for which the Rameumptom’s very public prayer is the foil. It also serves to emphasize the identification of the Zoramite poor with the seed: they were the (potentially) good seed which was cast out by the wealthy Zoramites. Alma relies on this Zoramite experience of being cast out as the basis for his parable. This Zoramites-as-seeds reading is strengthened by the fact that after they are cast out once again (this time from the land itself), the people in the land of Jershon “nourish[ed]” them (Alma 35:9), a phrase which echoes the language of the parable of the seed.

In this paper I have endeavored to show the ways in which Alma 32 relies on Isaiah 55 to develop key themes. Reading intertextually emphasizes certain facets of Alma 32 and helps to prevent some potential misunderstandings. Most importantly, it emphasizes the role of a Savior in the creation of faith and nourishing of the word.