

Shiblon

MY BOOK OF MORMON HERO



By Elder Michael T. Ringwood
Of the Seventy

He isn't one of the most prominent people in the record, but he is a great example.

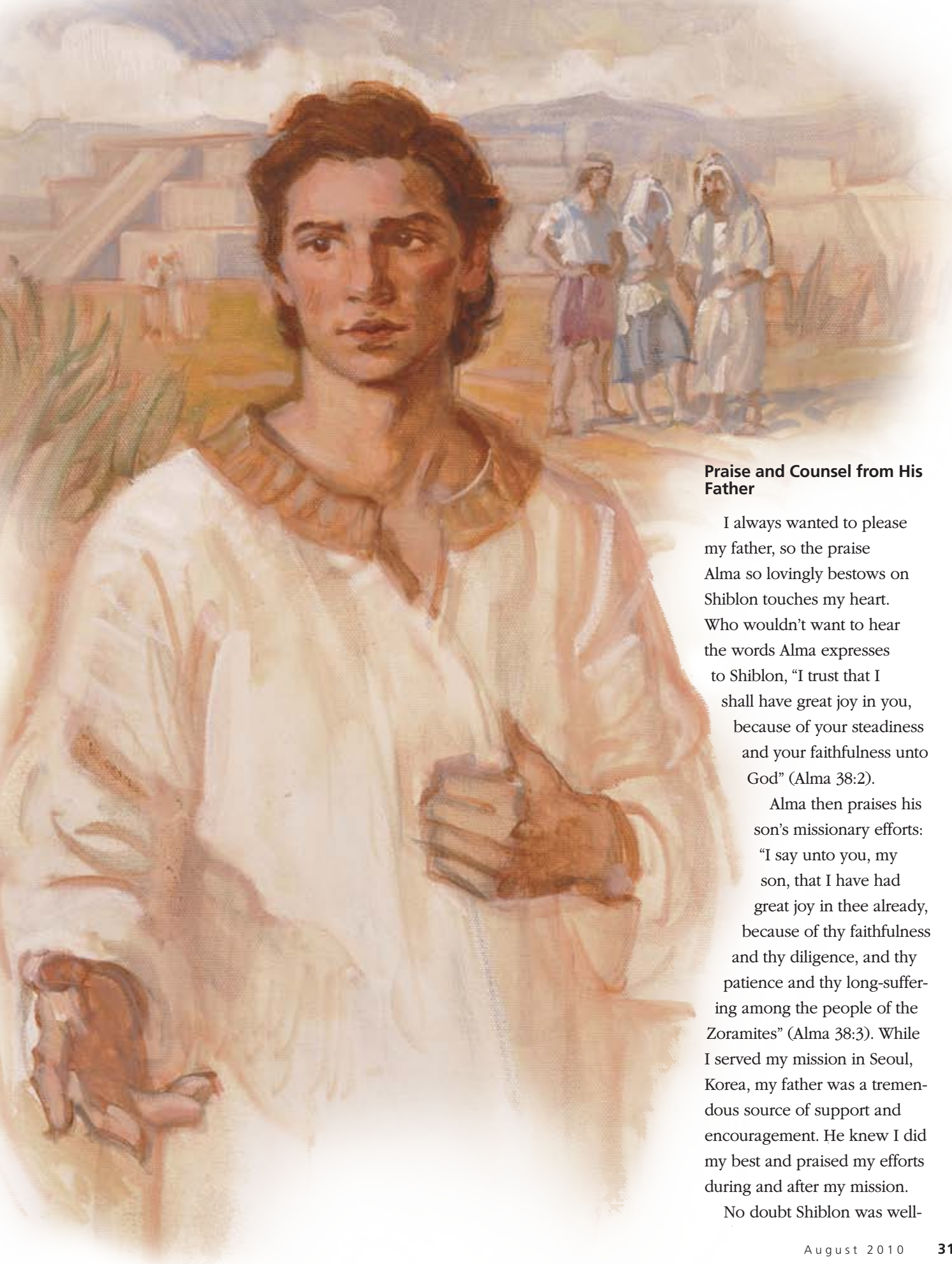
When people talk about their heroes in the Book of Mormon, most people think of charismatic leaders like Nephi, Captain Moroni, or King Benjamin. But I tend to think of an unsung hero, someone whose virtue is often overshadowed by his more illustrious brothers.

Let me introduce you to Shiblon, the second of Alma's three sons. As the middle son, he doesn't get much play in the Book of Mormon. He is first mentioned in Alma 31:7 as one of Alma's two sons who accompany their father on a mission to the Zoramites (the eldest son, Helaman, "he took not with him"). Later in the book of Alma, where Alma records his commandments to each of his sons, Helaman, the eldest son, receives 77 verses of counsel in two chapters, while Corianton, the youngest son, receives 91 verses of counsel in four chapters. Alma's words to his middle son, Shiblon, are brief—only 15 verses in a single chapter (see Alma 38). Yet that short chapter reveals some significant insights into Shiblon's character, as well as the relationship he had with his father.

A Just Man

I discovered the virtues of Shiblon many years ago, and ever since then, I've tried to live up to this tribute of him as recorded by Mormon in the book of Alma: "He was a just man, and he did walk uprightly before God; and he did observe to do good continually, to keep the commandments of the Lord his God" (Alma 63:2).

In many ways the relationship between Shiblon and his father, Alma, reminds me of the relationship I had with my own father during my youth. When I was a teenager, I really looked up to my father. Whenever I was faced with temptation to do something that was wrong, I was always stopped from doing it by the thought of how disappointed my father would be if he knew what I had done. I imagine Shiblon was like that, too. His father, Alma, was probably a hero to him, and he never wanted to disappoint him. Perhaps Shiblon had witnessed his younger brother's misdeeds (recall that Corianton had had some problems with morality when he was supposed to be preaching to the Zoramites) and was determined to never cause his father any sorrow. I was the same way with my own father. I never wanted to let him down.



Praise and Counsel from His Father

I always wanted to please my father, so the praise Alma so lovingly bestows on Shiblon touches my heart. Who wouldn't want to hear the words Alma expresses to Shiblon, "I trust that I shall have great joy in you, because of your steadiness and your faithfulness unto God" (Alma 38:2).

Alma then praises his son's missionary efforts: "I say unto you, my son, that I have had great joy in thee already, because of thy faithfulness and thy diligence, and thy patience and thy long-suffering among the people of the Zoramites" (Alma 38:3). While I served my mission in Seoul, Korea, my father was a tremendous source of support and encouragement. He knew I did my best and praised my efforts during and after my mission.

No doubt Shiblon was well-

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acquainted with his father's dramatic conversion experience, yet Alma records it for Shiblon's benefit, along with his testimony of the Savior: "There is no other way or means whereby man can be saved, only in and through Christ. Behold, he is the life and the light of the world. Behold, he is the word of truth and righteousness" (Alma 38:9). Like Shiblon, I have always been strengthened by my own father's testimony and never tire of hearing it.

Sometimes we fail to appreciate the counsel of our parents, but I'd like to think that Shiblon treasured the counsel of his father: "See that ye are not lifted up unto pride; yea,

see that ye do not boast in your own wisdom, nor of your much strength.

"Use boldness, but not overbearance; and also see that ye bridle all your passions, that ye may be filled with love; see that ye refrain from idleness" (Alma 38:11–12).

I believe this counsel is specifically tailored to Shiblon's needs. Clearly, Alma knew Shiblon's nature. Our own fathers know us sometimes better than we know ourselves and can offer counsel specific to our needs.

Stewardship over the Records

In yet another tribute to Shiblon's steadfastness, his older brother, Helaman, authorizes him to keep the records (see Alma 63:1). Helaman must have had great respect for his younger brother to confer such a responsibility and stewardship upon him rather than upon his own son, which is how records are typically passed down in the Nephite culture.

My respect for Shiblon continues to grow because I see people like him wherever I go on Church assignments. He is like the majority of people in the Church, who, without fanfare or notoriety, or regardless of their calling, go about doing good. Like Shiblon, we can walk uprightly and do good all the days of our lives and thereby earn the reward Alma promised: "May the Lord bless your soul, and receive you at the last day into his kingdom, to sit down in peace" (Alma 38:15). **NE**