



THE ANNOTATED

Book of Mormon

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BOOK OF MORMON

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Edited, Introduced, and Annotated by
GRANT HARDY

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

The Book of Mormon, first published in 1830, is one of the rare recent additions to the library of world scripture—a category that can be defined as texts that are considered sacred by millions of people over several generations, including many outside its country of origin who have read it only in translation. Thanks to the energetic proselytizing of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (whose nickname, the Mormons, is derived from their signature scripture), nearly two hundred million copies of the book have been printed over the last two centuries, in more than one hundred languages, making the Book of Mormon one of the most widely distributed books ever produced by an American. Latter-day Saints constitute by far the largest denomination of the several Restorationist churches that include the Book of Mormon in their canon. Because it is central to their faith tradition, church members read it regularly, often daily, as a source of guidance and spiritual insight. For outsiders, the book may be of interest in terms of American history, religion, literature, and popular culture, or the broader fields of religious studies, biblical reception, and world scripture. Yet even if the Book of Mormon is often opened for a variety of purposes, it is not always read carefully.

Part of the problem is that it is a lengthy work, which makes it difficult to hold in mind the interconnections and repetitions that can signal the development of ideas and characters, internal tensions, gaps, coherences, or literary richness. Another obstacle is that LDS official editions since 1920 have replicated the basic formatting of the King James Bible, with double columns of text and separated verses that tend to impede the natural flow of thought and obscure the book's rather complicated narrative structure. The Book of Mormon is much easier to read when it is organized into paragraphs and cohesive passages (pericopes) with quotation marks, poetic formatting where appropriate, indentation of embedded documents, and some indication in the headings of topics, speakers, and significant narrative units, as in this edition. The odd, archaicizing language presents yet another challenge. The idiom is much like that of the King James Bible, with *thee* and *thou* and verbs ending in *-eth* (though the seventeenth-century biblical diction is not employed consistently). It also incorporates hundreds of phrases, and sometimes even entire chapters, borrowed from that early modern translation. These grammatical and verbal connections make the Book of Mormon a companion to the traditional English Bible, but it speaks in a dialect that is no longer as familiar as it once was, and biblical echoes and allusions are often lost on modern readers.

A final impediment to careful reading is the book's implausible origin story. Joseph Smith claimed that he was led by an angel to a set of gold plates buried near his home in upstate New York. When he translated the plates through miraculous seer stones—dictating the entire text once through, over the course of three months in the spring of 1829—he learned that they contained writings from ancient American prophets who were descended from a family that in the sixth century BCE had fled Jerusalem and sailed to the New World, where they had established a now-lost Christian civilization. For many people, it seems unlikely that such a book would reward sustained attention. And the fact that its message is overwhelmingly religious is hardly a selling point in an increasingly secular, post-theological age. Religious readers, both advocates and critics, have long mined the book for evidence about Smith's prophetic claims—what he could or could not have known about the ancient Near East or pre-Columbian America, and whether parallels to nineteenth-century American culture constitute proof of forgery. Such arguments often take readers far afield from what the text itself says.

In this volume, I have tried to help readers navigate some of these challenges by reformatting the scriptural text in a manner similar to my 2018 *Maxwell Institute Study Edition* and providing the

sort of commentary found in the *New Oxford Annotated Bible*. The headings, introductions, and annotations identify themes and major ideas, highlight narrative structures and literary patterns, delineate arguments, draw attention to internal parallels and allusions, and trace intertextuality with the Bible. The Book of Mormon has often been defined more by its colorful backstory than its actual contents; this annotated edition offers an alternative approach that is consistently focused on the plain meaning of the text. What ideas are conveyed by specific phrases? How are they connected to the surrounding material? Have we seen them before? In what context? Are there patterns in their usages? As in the LDS Church's 2013 edition, the canonical words are printed in roman type, with non-canonical headings in italics. Bolding may indicate either key words that are repeated from earlier passages or differences between Book of Mormon biblical quotations and the King James Version (the relevant section headings will distinguish between the two usages). To clarify the meaning of outdated vocabulary, Webster's 1828 *American Dictionary of the English Language* is regularly cited, and occasionally the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Where it was necessary to distinguish between two Book of Mormon figures who share the same name, subscripts have been added to names in the headings and annotations, with a complete index of names at the end.

While the annotations generally attend to matters within the framework of the narrative, there are a few brief references to the ancient Near East (as seen through the Bible) and nineteenth-century America, both of which are important contexts for the scripture. However, readers will find little in this volume about the ancient Americas, since without a clear geographical setting or identifiable Nephite artifacts it is difficult to know which New World cultures might offer relevant comparisons. Similarly, this annotated edition, unlike most previous commentaries, is not especially interested in correlating the religious ideas of the Book of Mormon with current teachings of the LDS Church. There is a great deal of continuity, to be sure, but Latter-day Saint doctrine—guided by modern prophets and continuing revelation—has developed considerably since 1830. Here the teachings of the Book of Mormon are considered on their own terms.

The most obvious exceptions to the generally inward focus of the annotations are the abundant references to the Bible. Through its themes, phrasing, quotations, and allusions, the Book of Mormon is in nearly constant dialogue with the King James Bible. It is difficult for contemporary readers, without the aid of computer-aided searches, to get a sense of where biblical language is borrowed or adapted or blended, or where the Book of Mormon modifies or adds details to biblical stories and concepts. The Mormon scripture was intended to be read alongside the Bible, and the annotations in this volume will help clarify the close relationship between the two books. In addition, there is a list at the end of biblical quotations and allusions that is the most comprehensive, carefully scrutinized tabulation published to date. Other outward-looking exceptions occur in the concluding essays, which introduce readers to conversations about the text, as opposed to explicating the meaning of the text itself.

All commentaries have biases of some kind or another. This work is an experiment in reading the Book of Mormon as scripture, a genre that is somewhat distinct from both history and fiction. On the one hand, I take its ostensible historical context seriously, trying to imagine how it might be read as an example of exilic literature informed by Hebrew culture and augmented by new revelations received by Lehi and his descendants. At the same time, I accept the generally agreed upon findings of modern biblical scholars and historians, so along with ancient echoes and literary devices I also note incongruities in the narrative, including anachronisms and nineteenth-century parallels. These are all part of what makes the Book of Mormon what it is. As scripture, the primary value of the text is theological rather than historical, even for believers who assume it is based on an authentic ancient record. Faith can often accommodate some degree of historical inaccuracy or even implausibility in a sacred text.

On the other hand, even though the majority of annotations focus on literary matters, I am not reading the Book of Mormon simply as a story without regard to its truth value. In trying to make sense of its characters, I approach them as I would figures in a historical narrative such as Caesar's *Gallic War* or in a work of literature like Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: as actual people with distinct minds on display in their words and deeds, in their writing and editing, with lives outside what is explicitly stated in the narrative. This is not free association, since I endeavor to stay close to hints and details in the text itself, yet it does involve some creative interpretation, perhaps along the lines of Jewish midrash. For outsiders who, quite reasonably, view Nephites and Lamanites as fictional constructs, this may appear a bit strange, yet the genre of scripture—in which every word or phrase may hold existentially significant meaning—seems to invite engagement with its protagonists as if they were fully imagined, extraordinarily rich figures. I am constantly asking, “Do these characters work? Are they intellectually and emotionally coherent? Is there adequate motivation for their actions, including their literary endeavors? How would they have understood their own era? And how would they have perceived their predecessors?” In reading the Book of Mormon as scripture, I approach the text with respect and generosity, and my initial assumption is that any given passage is intelligible from the perspective of the narrators, even if some verses may later turn out to be inconsistent or obscure. So the annotations in this volume reflect an approach that is a little less than history, and a little more than fiction.

To take just one example, out of several hundred similar cases, there is an annotation at Alma 6.8 that says, “The narrator’s summary of Alma’s preaching closely follows Alma’s own description at 5.47–49.” What is indisputable is that the two passages share similar language, as can be seen in the bolded words below:

Alma 5.47–49

⁴⁷ “And moreover, I say unto you that it has thus been **revealed** unto me, **that the words which have been spoken by our fathers are true**, even so **according to the spirit of prophecy which is in me**, which is also by the manifestation of the Spirit of God. ⁴⁸ I say unto you, that I know of myself that whatsoever I shall say unto you, concerning that which is to come, is true; and I say unto you, that I know that **Jesus Christ** shall come, yea, **the Son**, the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace, and mercy, and truth. And behold, it is he that **cometh to take away the sins** of the world, yea, the sins of every man who steadfastly believeth on his name.

⁴⁹ “And now I say unto you that this is **the order after which I am called**, yea, to preach unto my beloved brethren, yea, and every one that dwelleth in the land...

Alma 6.8

⁸ And Alma went and began to declare the word of God unto the church which was established in the valley of Gideon, according to **the revelation of the truth of the word which had been spoken by his fathers, and according to the spirit of prophecy which was in him**, according to the testimony of **Jesus Christ, the Son of God**, who should **come to redeem his people from their sins, and the holy order by which he was called**. And thus it is written. Amen.

It may well be that Joseph Smith had in his mind a storehouse of stock phrases that he drew upon as he dictated the text (regardless of whether he was working from revelation or imagination) and consequently, repetitions appear somewhat haphazardly. Here, however, there are enough repeated elements, in the same order, that I suspect the pattern is deliberate, particularly in light of the narrative functions of the two passages. Alma 5 is a transcript of a sermon that Alma delivered at the city of Zarahemla, which the narrator has chosen to insert into his account nearly verbatim. When the narrator (either Alma or Mormon) resumes his third-person reporting in Alma 6, he borrows phrases from the sermon he has just quoted, to suggest that Alma's proselytizing efforts closely matched his publicly articulated, first hand explanation of his motivations. In other words, the repetitions are the result of the narrator intentionally merging primary and secondary sources in order to make his account more cohesive and aesthetically pleasing. In this case, the verbal parallels happen in quick succession, but elsewhere similar phrasings, in resonant contexts, recur after many pages, or even dozens of chapters. As a general rule, I see repetition, juxtaposition, parallels, slight variations, and narrative gaps as the result of intentionality rather than randomness. Is this overreading? Perhaps for history or fiction, but much less so for scripture.

Reading scripture entails a measure of reverence and humility, yet this does not mean believers must read uncritically, with an eye single to hagiography or didacticism. There is room for conversation with the text, potentially an inexhaustible dialogue, in which adherents make new observations, ask novel questions, and offer fresh interpretations—all bounded by textual and historical evidence, guided by a community of faith, and inspired by endless curiosity and genuine devotion. "What else could this mean?" is always an appropriate question. The type of scripture reading that I endeavor to model in this volume, which aspirationally follows Jewish precedents, stands in contrast to approaches that attempt to reduce scripture to a set of principles, or to discover the one true meaning that coheres with everything else in sacred writ. There are puzzling episodes in the narrative, and sometimes Nephite prophets say or do things that modern readers may find uncomfortable. Accepting the Book of Mormon as the word of God, however, does not mean that it is his last word on any particular subject. Throughout this edition, I have tried to deal with the text fairly and honestly, acknowledging weaknesses and problems where they arise, but I have not adopted a disinterested, neutral stance. As a believer myself, I have emphasized the book's strengths, conscious of my role as a host (I hope a gracious one) in inviting outsiders to see how the narrative operates, how it makes its points, and to gain some sense of the book's message and why believers have found it so compelling.

My intention in this annotated edition is not to persuade readers of the book's historicity or supernatural origins. Rather, my primary argument is that the Book of Mormon is not nonsense; that it is still worth reading attentively nearly two hundred years after its initial publication, whether one approaches it as an intriguing cultural artifact, an unusual literary work, or a new scripture. Indeed, I believe there is good evidence for it being a thoughtfully crafted, rich, evocative text, fully deserving of its place in the library of world scripture. It is like those classics of literature or music that become more impressive the more intently one studies them. Throughout this volume, in chapter after chapter, I highlight the book's constituent parts and how they fit together, along with its rhetorical devices, allusions both internal and biblical, clever turns of phrase, subtle plot implications, theological innovations, and characterizations that are communicated not just through speech and action but also in the writings and editorial decisions attributed to Nephite figures. The Book of Mormon, despite its often-inelegant language and style, nevertheless exhibits a sophisticated type of storytelling, even if it requires some effort to discern its aesthetic value. Indeed, taken as a whole, it strikes me as a carefully composed literary work

rather than the product of an extemporized oral performance based on general ideas and rough outlines. And in contrast to several other LDS scholars, I do not see the Book of Mormon as being of a piece with Joseph Smith's other scriptural productions. The Book of Mormon seems quite different in both its form and content.

As the Jewish journalist George Robinson has written with regard to his own scripture study, "One of the most satisfying aspects of reading the Torah in its entirety is the gradual recognition one gains of the intricate literary structures at work in the text, a labyrinth of symmetries, echoes, and allusions that adds immeasurably to the book's resonance and emotional impact, as well as amplifying its power as a sacred text" (*Essential Torah*, p. 531). The same might be said of the Book of Mormon, despite its decidedly different mode of production. The type of close, careful, systematic reading found in this edition can be useful for Latter-day Saints and outsiders alike, that is, for anyone who wishes to understand this curious book more fully, for whatever reason, much as one might read annotated versions of the Qur'an or the Bhagavad Gita. Most of the observations in the annotations are my own, though I have regularly drawn on the work of earlier scholars, many of whom are cited in the Further Reading list that follows the General Essays in this volume.

For anyone interested in my own religious background, I am an active member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I believe that God has spoken to people throughout history in different ways and different faith traditions, but the Book of Mormon is special. Over the course of my lifetime, this scripture has shaped my identity, engaged me intellectually and spiritually, sustained my faith, inspired me to be a better person, and, I hope, brought me closer to Christ. I believe the Book of Mormon is gift from God, a revealed translation of a record written by ancient American prophets. Perhaps more to the point, I regard the Book of Mormon as both sacred and authoritative, so much so that all my editor's royalties from this volume will be donated to the Humanitarian Aid Fund of the LDS Church, in accordance with Moroni's injunction to give priority to "the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted" (Morm 8:37). I expect someday to stand in the presence of God, along with Nephi and Moroni (2 Ne 33:11; Moro 10:27, 34), where I will be judged, at least in part, by how I have treated this text. Whether the Book of Mormon had its origin in revelation, inspiration, or creative genius, it became a world scripture because it spoke to the religious desires and concerns of many of its first readers, that is, biblically literate English-speaking Christians in the early nineteenth century. It still speaks to millions of people, across the globe, today.

A NOTE ON THE TEXT

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints prefers that its current 2013 scriptural text (a slight adjustment of the 1981 edition) be published with the Church's own formatting, so this annotated edition uses the 1920 text, in the public domain, with some updated spelling and revised punctuation, particularly with regard to quotation marks and poetry. The 1920 and 2013 texts are very similar, differing in less than 200 words out of nearly 270,000 (aside from 136 instances of *exceeding* being changed to *exceedingly*), with almost half of the modified words being restorations of accidentally deleted phrases in just seven verses (Mos 17.15; 29.15; Alma 29.4; 32.30; 3 Ne 3.23; 16.10; Morm 9.34). The textual notes in this volume indicate the most significant errors that were corrected in the 1981/2013 edition, as documented in Robert F. Smith, ed., *Book of Mormon Critical Text: A Tool for Scholarly Reference*, 3 vols., 2nd ed. (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1987). In addition, there are references to about fifty meaningful errors that were not corrected in 2013, based on the FARMS volumes and the transcriptions of the Original and Printer's Manuscripts in the Joseph Smith Papers. Full discussions of all variant readings can be found in Royal Skousen, ed., *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon*, 6 vols., 2nd ed. (Provo, UT: FARMS and BYU Studies, 2017). The textual notes also include references to specific years, sources of direct quotations, alternative punctuation, some instances of dense intertextuality, and a few linguistic explanations.

ABBREVIATIONS

Old Testament

Gen	Genesis	2 Chr	2 Chronicles	Dan	Daniel
Ex	Exodus	Ezra	Ezra	Hos	Hosea
Lev	Leviticus	Neh	Nehemiah	Joel	Joel
Num	Numbers	Esth	Esther	Am	Amos
Deut	Deuteronomy	Job	Job	Ob	Obadiah
Josh	Joshua	Ps	Psalms	Jon	Jonah
Judg	Judges	Prov	Proverbs	Mic	Micah
Ruth	Ruth	Eccl	Ecclesiastes	Nah	Nahum
1 Sam	1 Samuel	Song	Song of Solomon	Hab	Habakkuk
2 Sam	2 Samuel	Isa	Isaiah	Zeph	Zephaniah
1 Kings	1 Kings	Jer	Jeremiah	Hag	Haggai
2 Kings	2 Kings	Lam	Lamentations	Zech	Zechariah
1 Chr	1 Chronicles	Ezek	Ezekiel	Mal	Malachi

New Testament

Mt	Matthew	Eph	Ephesians	Heb	Hebrews
Mk	Mark	Phil	Philippians	Jas	James
Lk	Luke	Col	Colossians	1 Pet	1 Peter
Jn	John	1 Thess	1 Thessalonians	2 Pet	2 Peter
Acts	Acts	2 Thess	2 Thessalonians	1 Jn	1 John
Rom	Romans	1 Tim	1 Timothy	2 Jn	2 John
1 Cor	1 Corinthians	2 Tim	2 Timothy	3 Jn	3 John
2 Cor	2 Corinthians	Tit	Titus	Jude	Jude
Gal	Galatians	Philem	Philemon	Rev	Revelation

Book of Mormon

1 Ne	1 Nephi	Omni	Omni	3 Ne	3 Nephi
2 Ne	2 Nephi	WoM	Words of Mormon	4 Ne	4 Nephi
Jacob	Jacob	Mos	Mosiah	Morm	Mormon
Enos	Enos	Alma	Alma	Ether	Ether
Jarom	Jarom	Hel	Helaman	Moro	Moroni

Other Abbreviations

1830	1830 edition	1981	1981 edition
1837	1837 edition	ATV	Royal Skousen, <i>Analysis of Textual Variants</i> , 6 vols. (2017)
1840	1840 edition	BoM	Book of Mormon
1920	1920 edition		

ABBREVIATIONS

DC	Doctrine and Covenants	O	original manuscript
JS	Joseph Smith	OC	Oliver Cowdery
KJV	King James Version	OED	Oxford English Dictionary
LXX	Septuagint	OT	Old Testament
MT	Masoretic Text	P	printer's manuscript
NAB	New American Bible	v.	verse
NJPS	New Jewish Publication Society translation	vv.	verses
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version	WB	Noah Webster's 1828 American Dictionary
NT	New Testament		

THE BOOK OF MORMON

An account written by the hand of Mormon upon plates, taken from the plates of Nephi—

Wherefore, it is an abridgment of the record of the people of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites

Written to the Lamanites, who are a remnant of the house of Israel, and also to Jew and Gentile

Written by way of commandment, and also by the spirit of prophecy and of revelation

Written and sealed up, and hid up unto the Lord, that they might not be destroyed, to come forth by the gift and power of God unto the interpretation thereof

Sealed by the hand of Moroni, and hid up unto the Lord, to come forth in due time by way of the Gentile, the interpretation thereof by the gift of God

An abridgment taken from the book of Ether also, which is a record of the people of Jared, who were scattered at the time the Lord confounded the language of the people, when they were building a tower to get to heaven.

Which is to show—

Unto the remnant of the house of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers, and that they may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off forever

And also to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that JESUS is the CHRIST, the ETERNAL GOD, manifesting himself unto all nations.

And now, if there are faults they are the mistakes of men—

Wherefore, condemn not the things of God, that ye may be found spotless at the judgment-seat of Christ.

TRANSLATED BY JOSEPH SMITH, *Jun.*

This title page from JS's original dictation has been reformatted into three sections, each of which has a distinct function: a description of the record, the purposes of the record, and a warning against condemning the record. In 1838, JS said that the title page of the BoM is "not by any means a modern composition, either of mine, or of any other man who has lived or does live in this generation." For the 1840 edition, he added the name "Moroni" below the last line of the text as an indication of the original author; the name was deleted in 1879. *An abridgment . . . from the book of Ether*, although the title page here refers to Moroni's additions to Mormon's record, it is striking that it does not mention the Small Plates at all. *Translated by Joseph Smith, Jun.*, JS was identified as the "author and proprietor" on the 1830 title page in order to comply with copyright regulations. The preface to that same edition included Smith's assertion that he had translated the book "by the gift and power of God" and that "the plates of which hath been spoken, were found in the township of Manchester, Ontario county, New York." The current identification of Smith as the translator has been on the title page of every edition since 1837.

THE SMALL PLATES OF NEPHI

(1 Nephi—Omni)

The six books that make up the Small Plates (along with a brief afterword from Mormon) cover the first four and a half centuries of Nephite history, from about 600 to 130 BCE. They narrate the exodus of Lehi's family from Jerusalem to a new promised land, presumably somewhere in the Americas (1 Ne 1–18); the family's division into the two hostile lineages of Nephites and Lamanites (2 Ne 5); the establishment of a Nephite monarchy and priesthood (2 Ne 5; Jacob 1); the flight of King Mosiah, and his people to the land of Zarahemla, where they discover and merge with the Mulekites, who were descendants of yet another Judahite group that left Jerusalem at the time of the Babylonian conquest and were led by God to the New World (Omni 1); and brief summaries of the reigns of kings Mosiah, and Benjamin (Omni 1). Along the way there are generic references to economic development and warfare, as well as confrontations with skeptics or dissidents such as Laman and Lemuel (throughout 1 Ne), and Sherem (Jacob 7). The somewhat cursory accounts of secular history are overshadowed by reports of revelations (1 Ne 1; 8; 11–14; 2 Ne 10; 29; Enos 1); scripture quotations and interpretations, mostly from Isaiah (1 Ne 20–22; 2 Ne 6–8; 12–30) but also from Joseph and Zenos (1 Ne 19; 2 Ne 3; Jacob 5–6), each of whose writings were said to be preserved on the Brass Plates—a unique, early collection of Hebrew sacred writings carried by Lehi's family on their journeys; and episodes of preaching: Lehi to his children (1 Ne 8; 10; 2 Ne 1–4); Nephi to his brothers (1 Ne 15; 17; 20–22); Jacob to the people of Nephi (2 Ne 6–10; Jacob 2–3); and Nephi and Jacob to their future readers (1 Ne 25–33; Jacob 4–6). Indeed, the basic theology of the Book of Mormon—combining ancient prophecies with new revelations, and integrating salvation history for nations with Christian redemption for individuals—is set forth in the Small Plates.

The narration is always in the first-person voice, with writers from subsequent generations providing updates to the original accounts of Nephi and Jacob. These later authors contribute less and less to the Small Plates, comically so in the case of the four record keepers who can muster only a paragraph each (all in Omni 1). Finally, this section of the Book of Mormon concludes with a short afterword added by Mormon some five hundred years after the final entry on the Small Plates. Mormon, one of the last of the Nephite leaders, was writing a history of the entire thousand-year span of his civilization based on a large corpus of official records known as the Large Plates of Nephi. In the Words of Mormon, he informs readers that after he had compiled a summarized version of the Large Plates from the time of Nephi to King Benjamin, he discovered the Small Plates of Nephi, which covered the same period from a more spiritual perspective. He was particularly

impressed with their prophecies, many of which had been fulfilled in later centuries, and therefore decided to append them to his abridgment as a supplemental, unedited primary source. Mormon's final conception of his book, which he inscribed onto gold plates, would thus have included two complementary accounts of the origins of the Nephites, one at the beginning and the other at the end of his history. He says that he felt inspired to do this for some "wise purpose" known only to God (WoM 1.7).

This, at least, is the Book of Mormon's own explanation for the major disjuncture that occurs about a quarter of the way through the narrative, which is not always evident to first-time readers. As the book of Mosiah begins, there is a shift from authors writing about contemporary matters to Mormon narrating a national history from a vantage point many centuries after the events he recounts. While there are hints in the Small Plates about multiple sets of records, each disclosure comes as a surprise. Thus, 1 Nephi begins with several quickly narrated, dramatic episodes, but in chapter 6 Nephi reveals that there are other records that contain fuller accounts, while "these plates" are reserved for the "things of God" (1 Ne 6.3). In chapter 9, he is more explicit about the existence of two sets of plates, both of which bear his name, and that what readers are currently perusing is the later, shorter, more spiritual version of his life, written by divine commandment "for a wise purpose . . . which purpose I know not" (v. 5). It is only at 2 Nephi 5 that readers hear the backstory of how God commanded Nephi to create a second set of plates, thirty to forty years after his family's flight from Jerusalem (vv. 29–34). The later plates are consistently referred to as being "small," but the designations "Small Plates of Nephi" and "Large Plates of Nephi" do not occur in the text itself; they are terms used by LDS commentators. Shortly before his death, Nephi passed the Small Plates on to his younger brother Jacob, requesting that he and his descendants in the Nephite priestly line continue to update them with contemporary examples of preaching, revelation, and prophecy (Jacob 1.1–4). This happened through six generations, until the last keeper of the Small Plates, having no children himself, handed the entire collection over to King Benjamin (Omni 1.25).

At this point the chronology jumps from 130 BCE to about 385 CE with the Words of Mormon, when readers are informed of another backstory, not of decades but of centuries, with an explanation of how the books they have just completed, 1 Nephi–Omni, became attached to Mormon's history. This is apparently not the first time the Small Plates had been forgotten and then rediscovered, perhaps because they were "written for the intent of the benefit of our brethren the Lamanites" (Jarom 1.2). Nephite leaders after King Benjamin were unaware of Lehi and Nephi's prophetic timeline for the coming of Christ in six hundred years and their foretelling of his post-resurrection visit to the Americas (e.g., Alma 7.7–8; 13.25). The Small Plates may have lain neglected in the royal archives, or the sons of Mosiah may have taken them on their fourteen-year proselytizing journey to the Lamanites, when they preached from "all the records and scriptures from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem down to the present time" (this is the first mention of uniquely Nephite scriptures that are distinguishable from the Brass Plates), which included "all the journeyings of their fathers in the wilderness," "the rebellions of Laman and Lemuel," "the plan of redemption," and "the coming of Christ" (Alma 18.37–39). This sounds like the Small Plates. After the sons of Mosiah are reunited with Alma, the latter seems to have learned about Nephi's prophecies of Jesus's future appearance in the New World (Alma 16.20), and he quotes directly from the Small Plates at Alma 36.22 (cf. 1 Ne 1.8). In any event, these plates were never in wide circulation, since the Nephites are not portrayed as waiting in anticipation for signs of Christ's coming at the six hundredth anniversary of Lehi's departure from Jerusalem (see 3 Ne 11.6–8).

Three and a half centuries after Jesus's visit, Mormon was unaware of the existence of the Small Plates before he found them among the records that he had inherited. Nephi's narrative voice is quite different from Mormon's. The earlier prophet spoke extensively of his own life, the house of Israel, and the last days. He included numerous sermons with little context, along with lengthy scriptural quotations and commentary. None of these are found in Mormon's writings. There are, however, regular connections in themes and language between Nephi's words and those of Mormon's son Moroni, which conclude the Book of Mormon.

From the perspective of the narrative, this might be explained by the fact that Mormon had discovered the Small Plates shortly before he handed his records over to Moroni (WoM 1.1), and his son could have eagerly read these recovered writings, the earliest scriptures of his culture.

All of this, however, may leave readers wondering what happened to Mormon's own account of the first five centuries of Nephite history. That question leads to yet a third backstory, this one involving Joseph Smith, who began translating the Gold Plates in the spring of 1828, at Harmony, Pennsylvania. His first scribes were his wife, Emma, her brother Reuben, and Martin Harris, an old friend and supporter from Palmyra, New York. Smith dictated the "book of Lehi," which was Mormon's recounting of the first generations of the Nephites, summarized from the Large Plates. Then in June, when the translation had proceeded through about 116 pages (the number comes from the corresponding pages in the printer's manuscript), Harris asked if he could take the manuscript home to Palmyra to show his incredulous wife. During that visit, the pages were stolen and never recovered. The angel took back the Gold Plates from Smith and he lost his ability to translate for a time. When he was given permission to resume the work, almost a year later, he was commanded not to retranslate the lost material. Instead, he was to substitute a translation of the Small Plates (DC 10). In this way, the redundancy of Mormon's ancient book provided modern readers with a complete history of the Nephites, from Lehi and Nephi in Jerusalem to Mormon and Moroni at the cataclysmic conclusion a millennium later. This appears to have been the "wise purpose" for the creation of the Small Plates that God had in mind all along.

The only indication in the Book of Mormon itself of these traumatic modern events was the preface to the first edition, which somewhat cryptically referred to the theft of 116 pages, and reported that God had forbidden a retranslation because the thieves had altered the manuscript and would attempt to discredit Smith by pointing out discrepancies if he were to translate the book of Lehi again—an explanation that presumes a new translation would use exactly the same words, and that modifications to the pages would be undetectable. (The same rationale was given in DC 10.) For those who view Smith's dictation of the Book of Mormon as an extemporaneous oral performance (whether inspired or not), which would have been impossible to recreate precisely, the Small Plates offered a solution to the dilemma of the lost manuscript. Because 1 Nephi–Omni covered the same time period as the stolen pages, but from a less political, more spiritual point of view, they could fill in for the missing history without the need to reconstruct complicated plotlines, genealogies (1 Ne 6.1), or king lists (Jacob 1.9–12; Omni 1.18).

It is also notable that when Smith resumed translating in April 1829, with Oliver Cowdery as his principal scribe, he continued from where he had left off, in the book of Mosiah, that is, with Mormon's abridgment of the Large Plates, and then he completed the narrative through the book of Moroni. Only then did he turn to 1 Nephi and the rest of the Small Plates, with their account of the first centuries of Nephite history. This means that the narrative of the Book of Mormon was dictated out of chronological order, and the succession of internal books in every printed edition does not match the sequence in which Smith and Cowdery first produced the words. So there are two ways to track the development of storylines, theology, and phrasing through the Book of Mormon. This first is by chronological order, from 1 Nephi to Moroni, and the second is by dictation order, which starts in Mosiah, continues to the end of the book, returns to 1 Nephi, and then concludes with the Words of Mormon.

From a secular point of view, the sequence of dictation provides an explanation for why Nephi seems to have a clearer understanding of the future course of Nephite history than later prophets, namely, that Smith had not yet worked out the details of his narrative when he dictated the books of Mosiah and Alma. The overlapping concerns with the house of Israel and the latter days found in both Moroni and 1–2 Nephi can similarly be ascribed to the fact that those books were dictated in quick succession. On the other hand, the dictation order also means that when Mormon and Moroni are quoting or alluding to verses from the Small Plates, they are referring to passages that Smith had not yet dictated. In addition to similarities,

THE SMALL PLATES OF NEPHI

there are also important differences between the first and last sections of the Book of Mormon, in that the Small Plates are much more attuned to the historical context of the impending Babylonian conquest, and particularly the question of whether the flight of Lehi's family from Jerusalem had been an exodus or an exile; or in Jacob's words, whether the Nephites had been "led away" or "cast off" (2 Ne 10.20–22).

The creation of the Small Plates—due to either God's foreknowledge or Smith's desperation—gives a literary coherence to the book as a whole by balancing Mormon's sorrow at the final destruction of the Nephites (Morm 6.16–22) and Moroni's direct appeal to future readers (Morm 8–9; Moro 10), both of which occur at the end of the volume, with Nephi's grief over the annihilation of his descendants, which he saw in a vision (1 Ne 15.4–5), and his prophetic warnings for the last days (2 Ne 28–30), which readers encounter toward the beginning of the story of the Nephites. Even more significantly, the Small Plates provide space in the narrative to hear Nephi's remarkable voice, and to a lesser extent Jacob's, as they wrestle with loss, fear, disappointment, social disruption, family disintegration, and questions of faith. They seek additional revelation and pore over the scriptures in an effort to understand what is happening to their world, and in the end find solace and redemption.

INTRODUCTION TO 1 NEPHI

The Book of Mormon begins with two visionary experiences of Lehi, a wealthy resident of Jerusalem, foretelling the impending Babylonian conquest in 586 BCE—a political and spiritual catastrophe that would be one of the most pivotal moments in Jewish history. When Lehi’s preaching provoked opposition, he was warned by the Lord of a plot against his life and told to flee with his family. About half the chapters in 1 Nephi recount their travels in the wilderness, building a ship, and sailing across the ocean. The other chapters consist of revelations, prophecies, biblical quotations, and scriptural exegesis, most of which are conveyed through conversations between family members and Lehi or his son Nephi, who is both a major character and also the author of the narrative. The story is set in the historical context of the Exile. Much like the Jews who were taken to Babylon, the Lehites also found themselves cut off from the primary manifestations of God’s covenantal favor: the Levitical priesthood (Lehi was from the tribe of Joseph/Manasseh), the Davidic monarchy, the temple, the holy city, and the promised land itself. Jewish exiles in Babylon were able to maintain their traditions for some fifty years until Cyrus, their new Persian overlord, allowed some of them to return to their native land. By contrast, Lehi and his descendants would never see Jerusalem again. Instead, God reenacted the miracle of the Exodus and led them to a new promised land, somewhere in the Western Hemisphere.

Lehi and Nephi, perhaps as compensation for the losses mentioned above, were granted extraordinary revelations that conveyed a new, fuller understanding of God, the nature of salvation, the future of the house of Israel, and the role their posterity would play in the unfolding of God’s promises to Israel and to the entire world. The Lord and his angels spoke to Lehi and Nephi in startlingly anachronistic terms, with references to a divine messiah, the Son of God, the Holy Ghost, the devil, hell, the kingdom of God, and a clear conception of an afterlife. In short, it was a very Christianized version of the religion of the Hebrew Bible. It also seemed quite novel to Nephi’s older brothers, who were confused and doubtful about what they had heard, since the new revelations could qualify as apostasy from a strictly Deuteronomistic point of view (see Deut 13.1–9). One consequence is that Nephi speaks about “faith” in New Testament terms, as assent to a series of doctrinal assertions. (The word “faith” occurs 245 times in the New Testament, but only twice in the Old, where the concepts of trust in God and faithfulness to the covenant are much more significant than mere belief.) Another consequence is that he and his father search the writings of Moses and the prophets, inscribed on a set of brass plates in their possession, for evidence that these teachings were not entirely unknown among earlier generations, or as Nephi tells his brothers, so that “ye need not suppose that I and my father are the only ones that have testified, and also taught them” (22.31). At the same time, the basic Deuteronomistic orientation of their religion is preserved when God covenants with Lehi’s lineage that “inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments ye shall prosper in the land; but inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye shall be cut off from my presence” (2 Ne 1.20; cf. Deut 28–30), a promise that is reiterated twenty times in the Book of Mormon.

INTRODUCTION TO 1 NEPHI

In addition to rather detailed prophecies of the coming of Christ, Lehi and Nephi present two modes of salvation, each of which is given an allegorical, arboreal representation. The first mode can be designated “salvation history,” referring to God’s saving acts performed on behalf of Israel and the nations as collective entities. The shared rewards and punishments are meted out in this life and encompass the fates of nations and ethnic groups in terms of land, prosperity, and posterity. This type of salvation is embodied in Lehi’s allegory of the olive tree, whose branches represent various peoples in history (10.11–15; a fuller version of the allegory is found at Jacob 5). The second mode of salvation, which can be called the “plan of salvation,” offers justice and mercy to individuals in the eternities, through the atoning intervention of a coming Redeemer. This was a crucial theological development for the Lehites, given their separation from the temple and the holy land. Their new understanding was that God’s greatest blessings are available to everyone, regardless of lineage or social circumstances, on conditions of faith and repentance. Those who experience undeserved suffering in this life will be compensated after death on the basis of their personal desires and decisions. The allegory of the tree of life, seen in Lehi’s dream and Nephi’s vision (chs. 8 and 11), highlights individual choice and accountability. Salvation history, based on covenants made to the fathers, is characteristic of the Old Testament. The plan of salvation, made possible by Christ’s atonement and resurrection, is the message of the New Testament. The Book of Mormon thoroughly integrates the two, and this integration may well be what Lehi and Nephi meant by the phrase “the fulness of the gospel” (10.14; 13.24; 15.13).

CONTENTS

Chapters 1–7: A series of revelations launch Lehi’s family into the wilderness. His sons make two return trips to Jerusalem for the Brass Plates and then for Ishmael’s family, which included daughters that the young men would eventually marry. In chapter 6, Nephi explains his purposes for writing and editing.

Chapters 8–10: Lehi tells his sons about his dream of a tree, a river, a handrail-like iron rod, and a large building, and then he prophesies of Christ and compares the relationship of Israel and the Gentiles to an olive tree. In chapter 9, Nephi provides more details about his writing and editing.

Chapters 11–14: An angel shows Nephi a vision that covers much of the same ground as Lehi’s dream, but in more world-historical terms. He sees Jesus’s life, his post-resurrection appearance to Lehi’s descendants in the Americas, and the eventual destruction of Nephi’s own lineage, the Nephites. Chapters 11–12 offer an outline for the entire narrative of the Book of Mormon, and then Nephi’s vision reveals events of the more distant future leading to the recovery of the Nephite record in the latter days, the gathering of scattered Israel, and the end of the world.

Chapter 15: Nephi explains his father’s innovative teachings to his brothers, in an attempt to allay their initial uncertainty and skepticism.

Chapters 16–18: The account of the journey resumes with marriages, the discovery of the compass-like Liahona, and sufferings in the wilderness. After eight years they reach a coastal campsite they call Bountiful, where they build a ship and sail to their designated promised land in the New World. Chapter 17 includes a speech of Nephi to his brothers recounting the Exodus and conquest of Canaan.

Chapter 19: Nephi again comments on his writing and editing, then cites several prophecies from the Brass Plates that he believes validate his and his father’s revelations, particularly concerning a coming messiah and the eventual restoration of God’s covenants with Israel, including “broken off” remnants such as the Lehites.

Chapters 20–21: Nephi reads Isaiah 48–49 to his brothers, inviting them to compare their family’s situation to the words of the prophet. The Book of Mormon version of these chapters is taken from the King James Bible, but with a few changes that may represent Nephi’s adaptations of the text.

Chapter 22: Nephi then provides an interpretation in which he merges the just-cited words of Isaiah and Zenos (one of the Brass Plates prophets) with his own revelations. The book of 1 Nephi ends abruptly,

apparently in the middle of a family discussion. Second Nephi will pick up the story with Lehi speaking just a few moments afterward.

The books of 1–2 Nephi cover events from ca. 600–545 BCE.

INTERPRETATION

Several themes recur regularly in 1 Nephi, including prophecy, revelation, covenants, miraculous signs, obedience to commandments, and deliverance from danger. At a time of political and spiritual turmoil, when the status of God’s covenant with Israel was in question, Nephi sought greater understanding concerning the Lord’s faithfulness in keeping his promises, particularly with regard to the scattered remnants of his chosen people. When Nephi’s family fled from Jerusalem, they left behind nearly everything that defined their faith tradition, yet they were assured by revelation that God was with them. These divine communications revised and expanded upon what family members had previously believed, yet the revelations also included troubling elements. Lehi dreamed that his older sons Laman and Lemuel would reject his words; Nephi saw in vision that his brothers’ descendants would someday eradicate his own posterity. Even in the midst of what should have been a hope-filled journey to a new promised land, Nephi was keenly aware that he had lost both his past, in terms of a direct connection to Israelite culture, and also his future, at least with regard to the survival of his direct descendants.

The family had also, however, brought from Jerusalem a collection of historical and prophetic writings inscribed on brass plates, to which Nephi turned for consolation, insight, and corroborating witnesses for his revelations. In his reliance on what was functionally a scriptural canon, he discovered deeper meaning in the experiences of their small party of religious refugees. What began as a family drama would expand into a story with repercussions for the future history of the entire world, a development that would follow a path outlined by earlier prophets. The Brass Plates offered the Lehites a portable form of their religion, in a manner that paralleled what Ezra would do with the Torah 150 years later (Neh 8.1–12), or from another perspective, what Protestants had in the Bible when they migrated to America (as foreseen by Nephi at 13.20–23). Nephi not only searched and interpreted the scriptural records in his possession, he also created new scripture, by commandment, which could bind together generations past and future. At the same time that 1 Nephi affirms the indispensability of God’s word in written form—a theme thrown into sharp relief by the killing of Laban in chapter 4—it also suggests the possibility, or even the necessity, of continuing revelation.

The journey of the Lehites to a new promised land obviously brings to mind the Exodus, and Nephi’s account is written in such a way as to highlight similarities—from spectacular revelations (sometimes on mountains), years of wandering in the wilderness, and the murmuring of various family members, to a miraculous water crossing and alternating episodes of rebellion and repentance. In addition, there are family dynamics that are reminiscent of the Joseph story from Genesis. Lehi and his children are reading the traditions of Israel, but just as importantly, they are re-enacting those sacred stories. And it is not just the Torah they are looking to, but also Isaiah, the other prophets, and the Psalms. Through their reading, writing, and lived experience, the Lehites consolidate the major portions of the Hebrew Bible into a unified, coherent whole. It is worth noting as well that when symbolism is employed, it is most often interpreted within the text itself, either by an angel (chs. 11–14) or by Nephi (chs. 15; 22).

Of course, the greatest disjunction in the Christian Bible is the divide between the Old and New Testaments, a difficulty that has challenged preachers and theologians for two millennia. In the Book of Mormon, however, beginning with 1 Nephi, the themes and concerns of the Hebrew Bible are thoroughly infused with Christian perspectives, through prophecy and revelation many centuries before the birth of Christ and the composition of the Christian canon. In particular, Nephi attempts to demonstrate that the God of Old Testament salvation history is the same God who offers the plan of salvation that would one day characterize

the New Testament (e.g., 19.8–10). He further explains his prescient fusion of Judaism and Christianity as a restoration of “plain and precious parts of the gospel” that would be lost in the early Christian era (13.30–41).

GUIDE TO READING

First Nephi can be read as a didactic adventure story, with God rescuing Lehi and his family from foreign conquest, murder plots, starvation in the desert, and shipwreck on the high seas, all in accordance with the attention and obedience they give his commandments. Yet it is important to recognize that the Book of Mormon is a profoundly religious work that interprets the world through a biblical lens. It responds to the Bible by clarifying ambiguities, filling gaps, and exploring implications. First Nephi cares deeply about the identity of God, the role of Israel in human history, the nature of salvation, the meaning of Hebrew scripture, and the viability of Old Testament covenants. Not all readers will share its enthusiasm for these rather specific theological concerns, yet the book also addresses broader, perhaps more universal issues. What does it mean to be a refugee? To be physically but also spiritually vulnerable? To be caught in toxic family relationships? To lose the foundation of one’s identity and have to fashion another in very different circumstances, with whatever resources may be at hand? Note that God’s interventions do not solve all their problems. They escape Jerusalem, but they take with them their doubts, rivalries, disappointments, and stubbornness. There is also an undercurrent of violence that runs through the story, from the threatenings of the people of Jerusalem, to beatings and even attempted murder of Nephi by Laman and Lemuel, to Nephi’s own killing of Laban.

Nephi, like some readers of the Book of Mormon, is a seeker. He describes himself as someone with “great desires to know of the mysteries of God,” but who was only able to believe after the Lord had softened his heart (2.16). When he heard his father’s dream and prophecies, he wanted to “see, and hear, and know of these things” himself, “by the power of the Holy Ghost” (10.17). He furthermore assured his questioning brothers, and by implication his readers, that they too could ask God directly, who would make such things manifest to them (15.6–11). This is how the Book of Mormon itself wants to be read, by those who are open to asking God for spiritual confirmation (see Moro 10.4–5). It is not a generic wisdom text; rather it invites a specific response to the very particular claims it makes for itself, taken in the most literal terms. But for readers interested in more universal forms of spirituality, chapter 8 is a good place to begin. Lehi’s dream of a tree offers an allegory for how some people are able to find and treasure truths, while others lose interest after a while, or fail to respond in the first place. It is noteworthy that when Lehi tastes the fruit that he describes as “most sweet” and “desirable to make one happy” (8.10–11), his first response is to want to share it with others, starting with his family.

The elements of Lehi’s dream have few precedents in the Bible. The dream presents an original configuration of symbols—a fruit-laden tree, a path, an iron rod, a river, and a spacious building—which is somewhat unusual for the Book of Mormon. Elsewhere the stories, phrases, concepts, and metaphors tend to have more obvious connections to the Old and New Testaments. In reading 1 Nephi, it is useful to keep an eye open for how the narrator borrows, adapts, or reinterprets the biblical record. Indeed, this is one of the constant concerns of the annotations in this volume. There are important ways in which the Book of Mormon is both like and unlike the Bible, and a careful comparison of the two books may offer clues as to why responses to Joseph Smith’s new scripture were so polarizing in the nineteenth century among Bible-reading Americans. On a related note, 1 Nephi can be seen as a sustained meditation on the nature of faith. How should people respond to claims of new revelation? What criteria of judgment might be employed? What are the roles of miracles and prior scripture in fostering belief? And what are the possible negative effects of revealed knowledge?

In addition to simply following the events and ideas described in 1 Nephi, it is also possible to treat the text as a work of literature, analyzing how the story is structured and how it makes its points. Whether

considered as a historical figure or a literary creation, Nephi, the narrator, is portrayed as shaping earlier records and his own experiences for particular purposes—purposes he articulates explicitly in chapters 6, 9, and 19. How effective is the text in fulfilling those purposes, and how might Nephi’s motivations for writing compare to Joseph Smith’s? The narrative scheme invites readers to work through a series of literary puzzles. Nephi hints that he has drastically simplified his record; for instance, he tells only a few stories from the eight years that his family wandered in the wilderness (17.4). What makes those stories so significant? His brothers Laman and Lemuel can seem like flat characters, whose main functions are to complain and resist revelation, yet it is Nephi’s narration that has made them flat, and at least they have names—unlike Ishmael’s sons and daughters (including Nephi’s own wife). Are there ways in which Nephi has made his brothers seem less sympathetic? Or places where specific details appear at odds with Nephi’s characterizations? For instance, Laman and Lemuel seem more attuned to the concerns of the women in the family than is Nephi (see 16.33–17.2; 17.19–21). Since Nephi is writing about events of his teenage years from a vantage point three or four decades later, as readers learn in 2 Ne 5, how does his knowledge of all that happened in those intervening years, including the disintegration of his family into warring factions, color his narration? Does he ever import fuller understandings of outcomes and theology back into his accounts of earlier conversations? And who does Nephi think he is writing for? When he addresses his readers directly, starting at 1.20 (“Behold, I, Nephi, will show unto *you* . . .”), what audience does he have in mind? When does he first realize that the memoir he is writing in his middle age is actually one of the books he saw in vision as a young man (13.39–41)?

And finally, the Book of Mormon, starting with 1 Nephi, can be read as an origin story for the American Indians. In fact, this was most often the way it was read in the nineteenth century, and it bears comparison to other theories that were circulating at the time. (Today, rather than viewing the Lamanites as the principal ancestors of North American tribes, Latter-day Saints tend to see them as a much smaller component in the heritage of indigenous peoples from throughout the Americas.) The book also functions as the origin story, or the founding document, of a new religion. Although Smith could hardly have known it at the time the book was first published, within three decades Latter-day Saints themselves, like Lehi and Nephi, would be persecuted for innovative teachings about God and the nature of salvation that seemed heretical to more traditional believers. And they would take their scriptures, both old and new, into the wilderness of the American West, looking for refuge in a new promised land they believed God had given them. The Book of Mormon affirms typically Protestant notions of individual redemption through the grace of Christ, but it also created a people, a religious community who saw their collective faith and covenant-keeping as a new chapter in God’s salvation history.

THE FIRST BOOK OF NEPHI

His Reign and Ministry

An account of Lehi and his wife Sariah, and his four sons, being called, (beginning at the eldest) Laman, Lemuel, Sam, and Nephi. The Lord warns Lehi to depart out of the land of Jerusalem, because he prophesieth unto the people concerning their iniquity and they seek to destroy his life. He taketh three days' journey into the wilderness with his family. Nephi taketh his brethren and returneth to the land of Jerusalem after the record of the Jews. The account of their sufferings. They take the daughters of Ishmael to wife. They take their families and depart into the wilderness. Their sufferings and afflictions in the wilderness. The course of their travels. They come to the large waters. Nephi's brethren rebel against him. He confoundeth them, and buildeth a ship. They call the place Bountiful. They cross the large waters into the promised land, and so forth. This is according to the account of Nephi; or in other words, I, Nephi, wrote this record.

Nephi's Introduction

[1] **1** I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father; and having seen many afflictions in the course of my days, nevertheless, having been highly favored of the Lord in all my days; yea, having had a great knowledge of the goodness and the

mysteries of God, therefore I make a record of my proceedings in my days. ² Yea, I make a record in the language of my father, which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians. ³ And I know that the record which I make is true; and I make it with mine own hand; and I make it according to my knowledge.

Preface. This synopsis of 1 Nephi is in the original manuscript and was dictated by JS before he continued with ch. 1. Most of the books in the BoM begin with similar synopses, not always this detailed. *The promised land*, this is, of course, a new promised land in the Americas, distinct from ancient Israel and Judah. Because the passage is in the present tense, the frequency of *-eth* verb endings is unusual, even for the BoM.

CHAPTER 1

Roman numerals in brackets indicate the original chapter breaks, which were part of JS's dictation; the current chapter numbers, introduced in 1879, are in Arabic numerals. **1–2:** Nephi introduces himself, his record, and his qualifications for writing. *I, Nephi*, in the ancient world, first-person narration was rare, with the exception of Egyptian literature. It mainly appears in the OT at Ezra 7–9; Neh 1–7; 12–13. *Goodly*, WB: “beautiful” or “agreeable,” rather than simply “good.” An alternative reading, “godly parents,” has precedents in the 17th–19th c., including examples of being “born of godly parents.” *Course of my days... all my days... proceedings of my days*, Nephi is writing as a middle-aged man, some thirty years after his family arrived in the New World. What we are reading was not his first attempt at a personal history, although the existence of an earlier account is not revealed until 9.1–5, and the approximate date of this later version is only given at 2 Ne 5.28–33. Lehi's mastery of the *language of the Egyptians*, along with his wealth and skill at desert travel, could imply that he was a merchant. According to Morm 9.32–34, the BoM was originally written in “reformed Egyptian”—a combination of the *learning of the Jews* and the *language of the Egyptians* that was idiosyncratic to Lehi's descendants. **3:** Anticipating his readers' skepticism, Nephi regularly asserts that his *record* is *true* (14.30; 2 Ne 11.3; this same concern is characteristic of John; see Jn 8.13–14; 19.35). *Make it with mine own hand*, inscribe it on hand-made metal plates, see 19.1.

Lehi's Commission

⁴ For it came to pass in the commencement of the first year of the reign of Zedekiah,⁴ king of Judah, (my father, Lehi, having dwelt at Jerusalem in all his days); and in that same year there came many prophets, prophesying unto the people that they must repent, or the great city Jerusalem must be destroyed. ⁵ Wherefore it came to pass that my father, Lehi, as he went forth prayed unto the Lord, yea, even with all his heart, in behalf of his people. ⁶ And it came to pass as he prayed unto the Lord, there came a pillar of fire and dwelt upon a rock before him; and he saw and heard much; and because of the things which he saw and heard he did quake and tremble exceedingly.

⁷ And it came to pass that he returned to his own house at Jerusalem; and he cast himself upon his bed, being overcome with the Spirit and the things which he had seen. ⁸ And being thus overcome with the Spirit, he was

carried away in a vision, even that he saw the heavens open, and he thought he saw God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels in the attitude of singing and praising their God.

⁹ And it came to pass that he saw one descending out of the midst of heaven, and he beheld that his luster was above that of the sun at noon-day. ¹⁰ And he also saw twelve others following him, and their brightness did exceed that of the stars in the firmament. ¹¹ And they came down and went forth upon the face of the earth; and the first came and stood before my father, and gave unto him a book, and bade him that he should read. ¹² And it came to pass that as he read, he was filled with the Spirit of the Lord. ¹³ And he read, saying, "Wo, wo, unto Jerusalem, for I have seen thine abominations!" Yea, and many things did my father read concerning Jerusalem: that

⁴ 4 597 BCE

4: *It came to pass*, this characteristic phrase occurs 1,447 times in the current BoM, as compared to 535 times in the KJV OT, where it corresponds to the Hebrew word *waybi* (which occurs some 1,200 times in the Hebrew Bible) and, as a Hebraism, occurs more than 60 times in the KJV NT (represented by the Greek *kai egeneto*); many modern Bible translations omit the phrase. As with most Hebraisms in the BoM, this may be taken either as evidence of the Hebraic roots of the text or as an indication of JS's reliance on KJV idioms. *Zedekiah* (r. 597–586 BCE), the last king of Judah, was put on the throne at age 21 by Nebuchadnezzar II, the king of Babylon (2 Kings 24.10–20). The warnings of *many prophets* during Zedekiah's eleven-year reign are described in 2 Chr 36.11–16. **6:** God responds to Lehi's prayer with a *pillar of fire*, like the one that accompanied the Exodus from Egypt (see Ex 13.21), perhaps an intimation that Lehi would soon be called to make a new Exodus. Indeed, Exodus motifs recur throughout Nephi's narrative. **8:** In ancient Israel, a prophet's observation of the divine council, with *God sitting upon his throne, surrounded by angels*, was a key element of his call narrative (1 Kings 22.19; Isa 6.1–3; Jer 23.16–18; cf. Dan 7.9–10; Rev 4.1–11). The twenty-one words *saw God...praising their God* are quoted exactly at Alma 36.22. **9:** In the 1981 edition, *one* was capitalized as "One" to signal to readers the identity of this figure as Jesus Christ, although at this point in the story Lehi would not have known or understood this; cf. 3 Ne 11.8. **11:** The BoM from the beginning is fascinated by written records; rather than simply telling Lehi things, the messenger offers him a *book* and commands him to *read*. Ezekiel reads a divine book at Ezek 2.9–10, and a book is part of John's vision at Rev 10.8–10, though in both cases the prophets are then commanded to eat the books. Since there were not modern-style books, or codices, in biblical times, these documents would be better described as "scrolls." **12:** *The Spirit of the Lord*, an ambiguous term that occurs 40 times in the BoM. The phrase appears 26 times in the OT, of course without the later Christian conception of being a member of the Trinity, and five times in the NT. (Because LDS reject the Trinitarian theology of postbiblical councils, when they refer to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit they prefer the term "Godhead," which will be used hereafter.) **13:** A prophecy that Jerusalem *should be destroyed* and its *inhabitants* either killed or *carried away captive* would not have been surprising in 597 BCE; some 10,000 people (including the prophet Ezekiel) had already been taken to Babylon when Nebuchadnezzar's forces had captured Jerusalem, deposed the ruler, raided the Temple, and installed Zedekiah as a puppet king (2 Kings 24.10–20), but see 2.13n.

it should be destroyed; and the inhabitants thereof—many should perish by the sword, and many should be carried away captive into Babylon.

¹⁴ And it came to pass that when my father had read and seen many great and marvelous things, he did exclaim many things unto the Lord, such as:

“Great and marvelous are thy works,
 O Lord God Almighty!
 Thy throne is high in the heavens,
 and thy power, and goodness, and
 mercy
 are over all the inhabitants of the
 earth.
 And because thou art merciful,
 thou wilt not suffer those who
 come unto thee
 that they shall perish!”

¹⁵ And after this manner was the language of my father in the praising of his God; for his soul did rejoice, and his whole heart was filled, because of the things which he had seen, yea, which the Lord had shown unto him.

¹⁶ And now I, Nephi, do not make a full account of the things which my father hath written, for he hath written many things which he saw in visions and in dreams; and he also hath written many things which he prophesied and spake unto his children, of which I shall not make a full account. ¹⁷ But I shall make an account of my proceedings in my days. Behold, I make an abridgment of the record of my father, upon plates which I have made with mine own hands; wherefore, after I have abridged the record of my father then will I make an account of mine own life.

Lehi, Prophecies to the Jews

¹⁸ Therefore, I would that ye should know, that after the Lord had shown so many marvelous things unto my father, Lehi, yea, concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, behold he went forth among the people, and began to prophesy and to declare unto them concerning the things which he had both seen and heard. ¹⁹ And it came to pass that the Jews did mock him because of the things which he testified of them; for he truly testified of their wickedness and their abominations; and he testified that the things which he saw and

14–15: Despite the destructions that Lehi has read in the book and seen in vision, he joins the angels of v. 8 in praising God. The many *great and marvelous things* that led him to rejoice included a promise of deliverance for *those who come unto thee*, and perhaps also a new understanding of a future, redeeming Messiah (v. 19). *Great and marvelous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty*, Rev 15.3 (where it is ascribed to the “song of Moses”). **16–17:** Nephi has based this part of his account on a record written by Lehi. The plates *made with mine own hands* were the Large Plates of Nephi (see 19.1–2). Several years later, he was commanded to make a second, smaller set of plates with *an account of mine own life*, which is what we are currently reading (2 Ne 5.29–33); see 6.1n. **18:** *I would that ye should know*, for the first time Nephi addresses his readers directly. **19:** Referring to the people of Jerusalem as *the Jews* may be an indication of how alienated Nephi feels from his fellow Judeans; see 2 Ne 25.1–6; 33.8. Lehi himself was from the tribe of Manasseh (Alma 10.3); presumably his ancestors had migrated from the north to Jerusalem at the time of the Assyrian invasion a century earlier. *A Messiah*, in the OT this title generally refers to human priests or kings (e.g., 1 Sam 24.6; Isa 45.1), though the idea of a future Davidic monarch who would bring peace and justice can be seen in the books of Isa, Jer, and other prophets. The word *messiah* appears a few times in Jewish writings from 200 BCE to 100 CE to describe a coming savior/redeemer of Judah, and then the idea is picked up strongly in the NT. Lehi’s use of “Messiah” is something of an anachronism (especially since he views him as a redeemer of the whole world, not just of Judah; cf. 1 Ne 10.4–5), but the entire Christology of the BoM is anachronistic in the same way. One of the primary themes in the BoM—and one of the ways in which it augments the Bible—is its insistence that some prophets had a clear knowledge of Christ before his birth.

heard, and also the things which he read in the book, manifested plainly of the coming of a Messiah,⁴ and also the redemption of the world.²⁰ And when the Jews heard these things they were angry with him; yea, even as with the prophets of old, whom they had cast out, and stoned, and slain; and they also sought his life, that they might take it away.

But behold, I, Nephi, will show unto you that the tender mercies of the Lord are over all those whom he hath chosen, because of their faith, to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance.

Into the Wilderness

2¹ For behold, it came to pass that the Lord spake unto my father, yea, even in a dream, and said unto him, “Blessed art thou Lehi, because of the things which thou hast done; and because thou hast been faithful and declared unto this people the things which I commanded thee, behold, they seek to take away thy life.”² And it came to pass that the Lord commanded my father, even in a dream, that he should take his family and depart into

the wilderness.³ And it came to pass that he was obedient unto the word of the Lord, wherefore he did as the Lord commanded him.

⁴ And it came to pass that he departed into the wilderness. And he left his house, and the land of his inheritance, and his gold, and his silver, and his precious things, and took nothing with him, save it were his family, and provisions, and tents, and departed into the wilderness.⁵ And he came down by the borders near the shore of the Red Sea; and he traveled in the wilderness in the borders which are nearer the Red Sea; and he did travel in the wilderness with his family, which consisted of my mother, Sariah, and my elder brothers, who were Laman, Lemuel, and Sam.

⁶ And it came to pass that when he had traveled three days in the wilderness, he pitched his tent in a valley by the side of a river of water.⁷ And it came to pass that he built an altar of stones, and made an offering unto the Lord, and gave thanks unto the Lord our God.

⁴ 19 Hebrew “anointed one”; *Christ* is the Greek translation of *Messiah*.

20: Despite the persecution reported at Jer 11.18–19 and 26.7–9 (and the NT recollections of Mt 23.37 and Heb 11.36–37), accounts of *prophets* who were *slain* are rare in the OT; see 1 Kings 18.4; 2 Chr 24.20–22; Jer 26.20–24. The BoM names two additional non-biblical prophets who were killed, Zenos (Hel 8.19) and Zenock (Alma 33.17). *Tender mercies of the Lord are over all those whom he hath chosen*, cf. Ps 145.9. The BoM as a whole is framed by an inclusio referencing God’s mercies, seen here and at Moro 10.3. *Deliverance*, both physical and spiritual, is a key theme in Nephi’s writings and throughout the BoM.

CHAPTER 2

2: That God spoke to Lehi *in a dream* may have something to do with Laman and Lemuel’s resistance to their father’s message (v. 11). Although dreams could be a legitimate means of divine communication (Gen 40–41; Dan 2; Joel 2.28), they were also subject to considerable skepticism (Deut 13.1–5; Ps 73.20) and in Lehi’s time they were regarded as the least reliable form of prophecy (Jer 23.25–32). 4: It is hard to imagine why Lehi would not have taken his gold and silver, which could have been used to buy supplies or protection, unless 3.16 implies that he was commanded to leave such things behind. The fact that the family had tents on hand may be evidence that Lehi was someone who traveled regularly; see 1.1–2n. 5–7: It was nearly 250 miles (400 km) from Jerusalem to the northeast tip of the *Red Sea*, or Gulf of Aqaba, probably a two-week journey. From that point they traveled another *three days in the wilderness* before establishing a base camp where Lehi *made an offering of thanks* (a sacrificial peace offering, or well-being offering, as described in Lev 3). The idea that Lehi, a non-Levite (1 Ne 5.14; Alma 10.3), was offering sacrifices outside of Jerusalem requires some theological justification, particularly since the prohibition in Deut 12 against such offerings had been a major focus of the religious reformation of King Josiah in 622 BCE. The three days of travel in the wilderness, followed by sacrifice, may deliberately echo the flight of the Israelites from Egypt; see Ex 3.18; 8.27; 15.22.

Laman, and Lemuel's Murmuring

⁸ And it came to pass that he called the name of the river Laman, and it emptied into the Red Sea; and the valley was in the borders near the mouth thereof. ⁹ And when my father saw that the waters of the river emptied into the fountain of the Red Sea, he spake unto Laman, saying,

“O that thou mightest be like unto this river,
continually running into the
fountain of all righteousness!”

¹⁰ And he also spake unto Lemuel,

“O that thou mightest be like unto this valley,
firm and steadfast and immovable
in keeping the commandments of
the Lord!”

¹¹ Now this he spake because of the stiff-neckedness of Laman and Lemuel; for behold

they did murmur in many things against their father, because he was a visionary man, and had led them out of the land of Jerusalem, to leave the land of their inheritance, and their gold, and their silver, and their precious things, to perish in the wilderness. And this they said he had done because of the foolish imaginations of his heart. ¹² And thus Laman and Lemuel, being the eldest, did murmur against their father. And they did murmur because they knew not the dealings of that God who had created them. ¹³ Neither did they believe that Jerusalem, that great city, could be destroyed according to the words of the prophets. And they were like unto the Jews who were at Jerusalem, who sought to take away the life of my father.

¹⁴ And it came to pass that my father did speak unto them in the valley of Lemuel, with power, being filled with the Spirit, until their frames did shake before him. And he did confound them, that they durst not utter against him; wherefore, they did as he commanded them. ¹⁵ And my father dwelt in a tent.

8–10: Lehi tries to gain the support of his two older sons by attaching their names to local landmarks. A similar comparison of virtue and water, as in Laman's blessing, appears at Isa 48.18—a passage quoted by Nephi at 20.18, perhaps as a subtle, but barbed criticism of his oldest brother. **9:** *Fountain of all righteousness*, a phrase that will be used to describe Christ at Ether 8.26 and 12.28, which apparently originated with John Calvin. **10:** *Steadfast and immovable*, cf. 1 Cor 15.58. **11:** *Stiffneckedness*, the adjective “stiffnecked” in the OT was primarily associated with the incident of the golden calf (the metaphor refers to a draft animal unwilling to be directed by its master). Lehi is afraid that Laman and Lemuel—who are witnesses to extraordinary revelation, as were the Israelites at the foot of Mount Sinai—will similarly turn back to their old ways (see Ex 32). *Murmur*, complain. Most of the instances of “murmuring” in the Bible are in Exodus and Numbers, describing the children of Israel's response to wandering in the desert. In vv. 11–13 three causes of murmuring are identified: (1) material loss, (2) ignorance of divine activity, and (3) unbelief. *Visionary*, WB: “affected by phantoms,” and as a noun it denoted “one whose imagination is disturbed” or “one who forms impracticable schemes.” *Their gold, and their silver, and their precious things*, note the shift in possessive pronouns from v. 4. **13:** In their disbelief that *Jerusalem could be destroyed*, Laman and Lemuel echo an orthodox interpretation of the time. Despite recent political turmoil, many people, including prophets and priests, interpreted promises made to David (2 Sam 7; Ps 46; 132.11–18) and prophecies of Isaiah (Isa 31.4–5; 37.33–35) to mean that God would never allow Jerusalem to be destroyed. Jeremiah nearly lost his life when he preached against this assumption, referred to by scholars as “Zion Theology,” in his Temple Sermon of 609 BCE (Jer 7.1–15; 26.1–24). It is perhaps significant that Nephi never mentions David aside from his quotations of Isaiah, and even his brother Jacob mentions David only negatively (Jacob 1.15; 2.23–24). Lehi and his posterity are not invested in Davidic kingship, which will later cause problems with the Mulekites, who claimed descent from that royal line (Omni 1.14–19; Hel 6.10; 8.21). **14:** *Confound*, WB: “make ashamed,” “stupefy with amazement.” *Durst*, dared. **15:** *My father dwelt in a tent*, a narrative detail that appears three more times in 1 Ne (9.1; 10.16; 16.6), always in the context of providing additional instruction regarding newly received revelation. It may be an allusion to the “tent of meeting” (KJV: “tent of the congregation”) mentioned 34 times in Ex. This name for the Tabernacle emphasizes its role as a place of revelation, where the Israelites or their representatives met God.

Nephi's Faithfulness and Blessing

¹⁶ And it came to pass that I, Nephi, being exceeding young, nevertheless being large in stature, and also having great desires to know of the mysteries of God, wherefore, I did cry unto the Lord; and behold he did visit me, and did soften my heart that I did believe all the words which had been spoken by my father; wherefore, I did not rebel against him like unto my brothers.

¹⁷ And I spake unto Sam, making known unto him the things which the Lord had manifested unto me by his Holy Spirit. And it came to pass that he believed in my words. ¹⁸ But, behold, Laman and Lemuel would not hearken unto my words; and being grieved because of the hardness of their hearts I cried unto the Lord for them.

¹⁹ And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto me, saying:

“Blessed art thou, Nephi, because of thy faith,
for thou hast sought me diligently,
with lowliness of heart.
²⁰ And inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments,

ye shall prosper, and shall be led to a land of promise;
yea, even a land which I have prepared for you;
yea, a land which is choice above all other lands.

²¹ And inasmuch as thy brethren shall rebel against thee,
they shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord.

²² And inasmuch as thou shalt keep my commandments,
thou shalt be made a ruler and a teacher over thy brethren.

²³ For behold, in that day that they shall rebel against me,
I will curse them even with a sore curse,
and they shall have no power over thy seed
except they shall rebel against me also.

²⁴ And if it so be that they rebel against me,
they shall be a scourge unto thy seed,
to stir them up in the ways of remembrance.”

16: Nephi at this time was probably in his mid-to-late teens. The verb *visit* (Hebrew *paqad*) in the OT does not generally mean to “pay a personal call,” but rather to being singled out, for either caring attention or for punishment. When Nephi prays for greater knowledge, God does not grant him an independent witness but rather *softens his heart* so that he can believe his father’s words. Although to “harden [one’s] heart” is a common biblical expression, beginning with the Exodus story, the opposite function of “softening hearts” does not appear in either the OT or NT, although Ezek 36:26 says God will substitute a “heart of flesh” for a “heart of stone” (NRSV). **18:** Nephi’s first revelation, giving him precedence over his brothers, comes while he is praying *for them*, similar to Lehi at 1.5–6. **19:** *Blessed art thou, Nephi*, echoing God’s words to Lehi in v. 1 above. The emphasis on Christian-style *faith*, or the acceptance of a set of doctrinal beliefs, is unexpected in the context of ancient Israel, which was much more concerned with faithfulness to covenants or commandments, but Lehi has already introduced the concept of a universal messiah, or redeemer of the world (1.19; cf. 10.5), and much of the religious tension in the BoM is between those who accept or reject this new teaching. **20–21:** Variations of this promise, which is also reported by Lehi at 2 Ne 1.20, appear some twenty times in the BoM. The juxtaposition of blessings and curses is reminiscent of Deut 28–30, though here the former apply to Nephi while the latter are reserved for his brothers. This is the first mention of a *land of promise*, aside from the 1 Ne preface, though 5.5 indicates that the Lord had also told Lehi of their ultimate destination; cf. 13.30. **20:** *A land which is choice above all other lands*, this expression, referring to the Americas, is used nine times in the BoM; cf. Jacob 5.43. **21:** *Cut off from the presence of the Lord* is a phrase that occurs twenty times in the BoM (with variants), but only once in the Bible, at Lev 22.3, where it is a specialized term referring to priests losing their sacerdotal privileges. **22:** *Ruler and a teacher over thy brethren*, God here connects Nephi with Joseph of Egypt, who gained authority over his older brothers (Gen 37.5–8); at 2 Ne 5.19 Nephi will declare the promise fulfilled. His brothers, like Joseph’s, will contest that role at 16.37; 18.10; 2 Ne 5.3. **23–24:** The first *they shall rebel against me . . . cursed* refers to Nephi’s brothers; the second *they shall rebel against me also . . . scourge* refers to dissenters among Nephi’s posterity, who will become a continual problem in Nephite history.

The Brothers Return for the Brass Plates

3¹ And it came to pass that I, Nephi, returned from speaking with the Lord, to the tent of my father.² And it came to pass that he spake unto me, saying, “Behold I have dreamed a dream, in the which the Lord hath commanded me that thou and thy brethren shall return to Jerusalem.³ For behold, Laban hath the record of the Jews and also a genealogy of thy forefathers, and they are engraven upon plates of brass.⁴ Wherefore, the Lord hath commanded me that thou and thy brothers should go unto the house of Laban, and seek the records, and bring them down hither into the wilderness.⁵ And now, behold thy brothers murmur, saying it is a hard thing which I have required of them; but behold I have not required it of them, but it is a commandment of the Lord.⁶ Therefore go, my son, and thou shalt be favored of the Lord, because thou hast not murmured.”

⁷ And it came to pass that I, Nephi, said unto my father, “I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may

accomplish the thing which he commandeth them.”⁸ And it came to pass that when my father had heard these words he was exceedingly glad, for he knew that I had been blessed of the Lord.

⁹ And I, Nephi, and my brethren took our journey in the wilderness, with our tents, to go up to the land of Jerusalem.¹⁰ And it came to pass that when we had come up to the land of Jerusalem, I and my brethren did consult one with another.¹¹ And we cast lots—who of us should go in unto the house of Laban. And it came to pass that the lot fell upon Laman; and Laman went in unto the house of Laban, and he talked with him as he sat in his house.¹² And he desired of Laban the records which were engraven upon the plates of brass, which contained the genealogy of my father.¹³ And behold, it came to pass that Laban was angry, and thrust him out from his presence; and he would not that he should have the records. Wherefore, he said unto him, “Behold thou art a robber, and I will slay thee.”¹⁴ But Laman fled out of his presence, and told the things which Laban had done, unto us. And we began to be exceeding sorrowful, and my brethren were about to return unto my father in the wilderness.

CHAPTER 3

1: The episode of obtaining the Brass Plates is framed by the inclusio of returning to Lehi’s tent at 3.1 and 4.38.

2: *A dream*, see 2.2n. *To return to Jerusalem* from Lehi’s base camp in the Valley of Lemuel would have been a lengthy journey, see 2.5–7n. *Dreamed a dream* and *plates of brass* (v. 3) are often cited as characteristic examples of Hebrew-like grammar in the BoM, corresponding to the cognate accusative and the construct state, but see 1.4n.

3: *Laban* was a distant relative (5.16) who possessed a family record of genealogy (v. 12 below) and early versions of texts that would eventually become part of the OT. For the record’s contents, see 5.10–16. *Plates of brass*, that is, of bronze, an ancient alloy of copper and tin. Brass, an alloy of copper and zinc, was only developed in Roman times. The BoM follows the KJV in using the term “brass” to refer to bronze. Note that the *record(s) . . . are engraven upon plates of brass*. It is standard in the BoM for “records” to be thought of as conceptual entities separate from the materials upon which they are written; cf. Morm 8.14. The Apocrypha mentions inscriptions on “tables [tablets] of brass” at 1 Maccabees 8.22; 14.18, 27, 48. **4:** *Bring them down*, Jerusalem is situated on a plateau nearly 2,500 feet high (760 m); in 1 Ne people always travel up to Jerusalem and down into the wilderness (e.g., 3.9, 15; 4.1; 5.1; 7.2, 4). **7:** This famous expression of faith is the first time that Nephi, as narrator, directly quotes his younger self. Contrast this verse with his first direct quotation of Laman and Lemuel at 3.31; see Alma 44.1–7n. **11:** *Cast lots*, a divinatory practice regularly used in the OT to determine the will of the Lord. This is its only occurrence in the BoM.

A Second Attempt to Obtain the Brass Plates

¹⁵ But behold I said unto them that “As the Lord liveth, and as we live, we will not go down unto our father in the wilderness until we have accomplished the thing which the Lord hath commanded us. ¹⁶ Wherefore, let us be faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord; therefore let us go down to the land of our father’s inheritance, for behold he left gold and silver, and all manner of riches. And all this he hath done because of the commandments of the Lord.” ¹⁷ For he knew that Jerusalem must be destroyed, because of the wickedness of the people. ¹⁸ For behold, they have rejected the words of the prophets. Wherefore, if my father should dwell in the land after he hath been commanded to flee out of the land, behold, he would also perish. Wherefore, it must needs be that he flee out of the land. ¹⁹ And behold, it is wisdom in God that we should obtain these records, that we may preserve unto our children the language of our fathers; ²⁰ and also that we may preserve unto them the words which have been spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets, which have been delivered unto them by the Spirit and power of God, since the world began, even down unto this present time.” ²¹ And it came to pass that after this manner of language did I persuade my brethren, that they might be faithful in keeping the commandments of God.

²² And it came to pass that we went down to the land of our inheritance, and we did gather together our gold, and our silver, and our precious things. ²³ And after we had gathered these things together, we went up again unto the house of Laban. ²⁴ And it came to pass that we went in unto Laban, and desired him that he would give unto us the records which were engraven upon the plates of brass, for which we would give unto him our gold, and our silver, and all our precious things. ²⁵ And it came to pass that when Laban saw our property, and that it was exceeding great, he did lust after it, insomuch that he thrust us out, and sent his servants to slay us, that he might obtain our property. ²⁶ And it came to pass that we did flee before the servants of Laban, and we were obliged to leave behind our property, and it fell into the hands of Laban. ²⁷ And it came to pass that we fled into the wilderness, and the servants of Laban did not overtake us, and we hid ourselves in the cavity of a rock.

²⁸ And it came to pass that Laman was angry with me, and also with my father; and also was Lemuel, for he hearkened unto the words of Laman. Wherefore Laman and Lemuel did speak many hard words unto us, their younger brothers, and they did smite us even with a rod.

^a ¹⁶ O *commandment*; P commandments of the Lord

15: *As the Lord liveth*, an oath that appears regularly in the OT and the BoM, but never in the NT. The addition of *and as we/I live*, occurs only here and at 4.32, though the Deuteronomistic History (Josh–2 Kings) includes six instances of “as the Lord liveth and as thy soul liveth.” **16:** The brothers now attempt to purchase the Brass Plates. The reading in O suggests that Lehi was commanded to leave his wealth behind when he took his family into the wilderness, perhaps for this purpose; see 2.4n. **19–20:** Possession of the Brass Plates will help the Nephites avoid the fate of the Mulekites; see Omni 1.17–18. *The language of our fathers*, apparently not simply Hebrew; see 1.1–2n. The Brass Plates were said to have been written in some form of Egyptian or Egyptian script (Mos 1.3–4). Accordingly, the Nephites would have had access to the Hebrew scriptures only in a foreign language and in a very early version. From a believer’s point of view, the close correspondence of quoted chapters to the KJV must be a function of the English translation. **25–26:** When facing all four brothers, Laban enlists his servants to help *thrust out* and *slay* them, though he did this singlehandedly with Laman in vv. 13–14. By taking their property, Laban becomes the sort of robber that he had accused Laman of being in v. 13, and thus by his own verdict is worthy of death. **28–29:** *Younger brothers*, Nephi and Sam. Curiously, although two brothers are beaten, the angel only takes note of Nephi.

²⁹ And it came to pass as they smote us with a rod, behold, an angel of the Lord came and stood before them, and he spake unto them, saying, “Why do ye smite your younger brother with a rod? Know ye not that the Lord hath chosen him to be a ruler over you, and this because of your iniquities? Behold ye shall go up to Jerusalem again, and the Lord will deliver Laban into your hands.”³⁰ And after the angel had spoken unto us, he departed.

³¹ And after the angel had departed, Laman and Lemuel again began to murmur, saying, “How is it possible that the Lord will deliver Laban into our hands? Behold, he is a mighty man, and he can command fifty, yea, even he can slay fifty; then why not us?”

Nephi, Gains Possession of the Brass Plates

4¹ And it came to pass that I spake unto my brethren, saying, “Let us go up again unto Jerusalem, and let us be faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord; for behold he is mightier than all the earth, then

why not mightier than Laban and his fifty, yea, or even than his tens of thousands?”² Therefore let us go up; let us be strong like unto Moses; for he truly spake unto the waters of the Red Sea and they divided hither and thither, and our fathers came through, out of captivity, on dry ground, and the armies of Pharaoh did follow and were drowned in the waters of the Red Sea.³ Now behold ye know that this is true; and ye also know that an angel hath spoken unto you; wherefore can ye doubt? Let us go up; the Lord is able to deliver us, even as our fathers, and to destroy Laban, even as the Egyptians.”

⁴ Now when I had spoken these words, they were yet wroth, and did still continue to murmur; nevertheless they did follow me up until we came without the walls of Jerusalem.⁵ And it was by night; and I caused that they should hide themselves without the walls. And after they had hid themselves, I, Nephi, crept into the city and went forth towards the house of Laban.⁶ And I was led by the Spirit, not knowing beforehand the things which I should do.

⁷ Nevertheless I went forth, and as I came near unto the house of Laban I beheld a man,

29: *A ruler over you*, the angel here reveals the contents of Nephi’s blessing at 2.22 to his brothers, who will recall these words with resentment at 16.37; 18.10; 2 Ne 5.3. It seems that Nephi, knowing well the story of Joseph, had kept this to himself. *Deliver Laban into your hands*, OT precedents for this expression foreshadow a fatal outcome for Laban. **31:** In the narrator’s first direct quotation of Laman and Lemuel (see 3.7n), they resume their murmuring immediately after the angel leaves, even contradicting his exact words. *Command fifty*, Laban apparently had a large household, or perhaps a military command.

CHAPTER 4

1–3: Nephi urges *let us go up* three times in three verses. In contrast to his brothers, he affirms the angel’s command (*go up again to Jerusalem*), reiterates his initial statement of faith from 3.16 (*let us be faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord*), and cites scriptural parallels. He also shifts the angel’s ominous “deliver Laban into your hands” to the more positive *deliver us*, while still acknowledging that the Lord may bring Laban to an unpleasant end, *even as the Egyptians*. **2:** *Like unto Moses*, references to Moses highlight the exodus to a new promised land that awaits Lehi’s family, who are currently camped by the Red Sea. *He truly spake unto the waters of the Red Sea*, at Ex 14.21–29 Moses divided the waters by stretching out his hand, not by speaking; the same reinterpretation appears at 17.26. **3:** Nephi appeals to both personal religious experience and historical precedent. **4–5:** *Without, outside. Walls of Jerusalem*, Emma Smith reported that her husband, Joseph, was so ignorant of biblical history that he was surprised, while translating, to learn that Jerusalem had walls. **7–19:** Nephi’s killing of Laban is a troubling episode. Various legal and moral justifications have been put forward, including some by Nephi himself, but Nephi’s extended narration suggests that he was still uncomfortable with his actions when he wrote this account many years later. The fact that the Brass Plates were obtained through faith, sacrifice, and violence is a constant reminder to the family of their value.

and he had fallen to the earth before me, for he was drunken with wine.⁸ And when I came to him I found that it was Laban.⁹ And I beheld his sword, and I drew it forth from the sheath thereof; and the hilt thereof was of pure gold, and the workmanship thereof was exceeding fine, and I saw that the blade thereof was of the most precious steel.

¹⁰ And it came to pass that I was constrained by the Spirit that I should kill Laban; but I said in my heart, “Never at any time have I shed the blood of man.” And I shrunk and would that I might not slay him.¹¹ And the Spirit said unto me again, “Behold the Lord hath delivered him into thy hands.” Yea, and I also knew that he had sought to take away mine own life; yea, and he would not hearken unto the commandments of the Lord; and he also had taken away our property.¹² And it came to pass that the Spirit said unto me again, “Slay him, for the Lord hath delivered him into thy hands; ¹³ behold the Lord slayeth the wicked to bring forth his righteous purposes. It is better that one man should perish than that a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief.”

¹⁴ And now, when I, Nephi, had heard these words, I remembered the words of the Lord which he spake unto me in the wilderness, saying that “Inasmuch as thy seed shall keep my commandments, they shall prosper in the land of promise.”^a ¹⁵ Yea, and I also thought that they could not keep the commandments of the Lord according to the law of Moses, save they should have the law.¹⁶ And I also knew that the law was engraven upon the plates of brass.¹⁷ And again, I knew that the Lord had delivered Laban into my hands for this cause—that I might obtain the records according to his commandments.¹⁸ Therefore I did obey the voice of the Spirit, and took Laban by the hair of the head, and I smote off his head with his own sword.¹⁹ And after I had smitten off his head with his own sword, I took the garments of Laban and put them upon mine own body; yea, even every whit; and I did gird on his armor about my loins.

²⁰ And after I had done this, I went forth unto the treasury of Laban. And as I went

^a 14 Compare 1 Ne 2.20.

9: It is perhaps ominous that Nephi’s attention is first drawn to the sword. *Steel*, bronze; the BoM follows the anachronistic usage of the KJV in referring to bronze as “steel” or “brass” (2 Sam 22.35; Job 20.24; Ps 18.34; Jer 15.12; see 2 Ne 3.2n). 10–13: Compare this incident with Acts 10.9–18, which also has a voice from heaven giving instruction that (a) is repeated three times, (b) is difficult for the hearer to accept, (c) is at first refused with the phrase “I have never . . .,” and (d) includes a command to “kill.” 10: *Constrained*, WB: “urged irresistibly or powerfully; compelled.” *Shrunk*, WB: “to decline action from fear; to recoil.” 11: *Delivered him into thy hands*, see 3.29n. *Sought to take away mine own life and our property*, 3.25–26. Nephi’s observation that *Laban would not hearken unto the commandments of the Lord* suggests that Laman’s initial proposal to him (3.11–12) may have been put forward as a divine command. 13: It may be true that *the Lord slayeth the wicked*, as in the story of Nabal at 1 Sam 25.36–39, but in this case Nephi is being asked to kill on God’s behalf, which is a more problematic situation (though the book of Deuteronomy, which had been rediscovered within Lehi’s lifetime, introduces the idea of *herem*, or divinely mandated destruction). The Spirit counters Nephi’s hesitation with an argument reminiscent of that given by Caiaphas, the high priest who argued for Jesus’s execution, at Jn 11.50. *Dwindle*, WB: “to degenerate” or “to fall away.” This non-biblical verb appears 25 times in the BoM, almost always in the expression “dwindle(d) in unbelief.” 14–17: Nephi extrapolates from what the Spirit said in order to provide a fuller justification for what he is about to do. 14: Not an exact quotation of 2.20; a promise that was originally addressed to Nephi has now been extended to his *seed*, or descendants. 17: *According to his commandment(s)*, 3.4–5. 18: Nephi decapitates Laban *with his own sword*, much like David and Goliath (1 Sam 17.51). One must assume that he removed some of Laban’s clothing and armor before what would have been a rather bloody procedure, since he puts on those garments in the next verse. 19: *Every whit*, entirely, without exception; the idea seems to be that Nephi completely conceals his identity with Laban’s clothing. *Loins*, waist. 20–29: Nephi impersonates Laban to obtain the Brass Plates. 20: *Servant*, probably “slave,” in accordance with KJV usage; in v. 33, Nephi offers the man his freedom. His name, Zoram, is not revealed until v. 35.

forth towards the treasury of Laban, behold, I saw the servant of Laban who had the keys of the treasury. And I commanded him in the voice of Laban, that he should go with me into the treasury.²¹ And he supposed me to be his master, Laban, for he beheld the garments and also the sword girded about my loins.²² And he spake unto me concerning the elders of the Jews, he knowing that his master, Laban, had been out by night among them.²³ And I spake unto him as if it had been Laban.²⁴ And I also spake unto him that I should carry the engravings, which were upon the plates of brass, to my elder brethren, who were without the walls.²⁵ And I also bade him that he should follow me.²⁶ And he, supposing that I spake of the brethren of the church, and that I was truly that Laban whom I had slain, wherefore he did follow me.²⁷ And he spake unto me many times concerning the elders of the Jews, as I went forth unto my brethren, who were without the walls.

²⁸ And it came to pass that when Laman saw me he was exceedingly frightened, and also Lemuel and Sam. And they fled from before my presence; for they supposed it was Laban, and that he had slain me and had sought to take away their lives also.²⁹ And it came to pass that I called after them, and they did hear me; wherefore they did cease to flee from my presence.

Zoram, Joins Nephi, and His Brothers

³⁰ And it came to pass that when the servant of Laban beheld my brethren he began to tremble, and was about to flee from before me and return to the city of Jerusalem.³¹ And now I, Nephi, being a man large in stature, and also having received much strength of the Lord, therefore I did seize upon the servant of Laban, and held him, that he should not flee.³² And it came to pass that I spake with him, that if he would hearken unto my words, as the Lord liveth, and as I live, even so that if he would hearken unto our words, we would spare his life.³³ And I spake unto him, even with an oath, that he need not fear; that he should be a free man like unto us if he would go down in the wilderness with us.³⁴ And I also spake unto him, saying, "Surely the Lord hath commanded us to do this thing; and shall we not be diligent in keeping the commandments of the Lord? Therefore, if thou wilt go down into the wilderness to my father thou shalt have place with us."

³⁵ And it came to pass that Zoram did take courage at the words which I spake. Now Zoram was the name of the servant; and he promised that he would go down into the wilderness unto my father. And he also made an oath unto us that he would tarry with us from that time forth.³⁶ Now we were desirous that he should tarry with us for this cause, that the

22: *Elders of the Jews*, an anachronistic phrase that occurs three times in Ezra and twice in Luke/Acts; here it probably indicates unordained community leaders. **24–26:** *To my elder brethren*, Nephi may have made a mistake here in mentioning his brothers; fortunately, Laban's servant misunderstands. His use of the word *church*, however, is entirely anachronistic since this is a NT designation; perhaps Nephi is referring to some sort of Jewish council or assembly. **31:** *A man large in stature*, Nephi, who had described himself as "exceedingly young" at 2.16, now sees himself as an adult. **33:** An oath carries great weight in the BoM (e.g., Mos 20.23–26; Alma 44.8–20; 49.17; 53.13–15). **34:** Diligence in keeping God's commandments is a theme of the BoM and also of Deut; e.g., Deut 6.17; 11.22; Enos 1.10; Mos 4.6; Alma 7.23; 37.20. *Thou shalt have place with us*, it goes unmentioned whether Zoram leaves behind a family, but he eventually marries one of Ishmael's daughters and thus becomes a brother-in-law to Nephi and his brothers (16.7). His descendants compose one of the major lineages among the BoM peoples (Jacob 1.13), and there are two later figures who will bear his name (Alma 16.5; 30.59). Many centuries later, Ammoron, a descendant of Zoram who becomes king of the Lamanites, claims that his ancestor did not join Nephi's party voluntarily; see Alma 54.23. **36:** Because members of Laban's household would have been aware of the brothers' interest in the plates, when they go missing and Laban's body is found the sons of Lehi will become fugitives. They cover their tracks by taking Zoram with them.

Jews might not know concerning our flight into the wilderness, lest they should pursue us and destroy us.³⁷ And it came to pass that when Zoram had made an oath unto us, our fears did cease concerning him.³⁸ And it came to pass that we took the plates of brass and the servant of Laban, and departed into the wilderness, and journeyed unto the tent of our father.

Lehi's Family Reunited

5¹ And it came to pass that after we had come down into the wilderness unto our father, behold, he was filled with joy, and also my mother, Sariah, was exceeding glad, for she truly had mourned because of us.² For she had supposed that we had perished in the wilderness; and she also had complained against my father, telling him that he was a visionary man, saying, "Behold thou hast led us forth from the land of our inheritance, and my sons are no more, and we perish in the wilderness."³ And after this manner of language had my mother complained against my father.

⁴ And it had come to pass that my father spake unto her, saying, "I know that I am a visionary man; for if I had not seen the things of God in a vision I should not have known the goodness of God, but had tarried at Jerusalem, and had perished with my brethren."⁵ But behold, I have obtained a land of promise, in the which things I do rejoice; yea, and I know that the Lord will deliver my sons out of the hands of Laban, and bring them down again unto us in the wilderness."⁶ And after this manner of language did my father, Lehi, comfort my mother, Sariah, concerning us, while we journeyed in the wilderness up to the land of Jerusalem, to obtain the record of the Jews.

⁷ And when we had returned to the tent of my father, behold their joy was full, and my mother was comforted.⁸ And she spake, saying, "Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath commanded my husband to flee into the wilderness; yea, and I also know of a surety that the Lord hath protected my sons, and delivered them out of the hands of Laban, and given them power whereby they could accomplish the thing which the Lord hath commanded them." And after this manner of

38: Although Nephi does not mention it here, he also keeps Laban's sword, which appears later in the narrative (2 Ne 5.14; Jacob 1.10; WoM 1.13; Mos 1.16), and even in the stone box with the gold plates found by JS (according to DC 17.1, it was seen by the Three Witnesses).

CHAPTER 5

1: *She truly had mourned because of us*, since the journey to Jerusalem was nearly 250 miles (400 km) each way, the brothers would likely have been gone for several weeks; v. 6 ("up to the land of Jerusalem") suggests that her concerns began soon after her sons left, on the initial phase of their journey. The absence of four adult sons would have made the wilderness much more dangerous for her and her husband. **2–8:** Sariah's complaint in this verse and her faithful affirmation at v. 8 make this one of only four passages in the entire BoM that feature direct quotations spoken by women (see 16.35; Alma 19.2–10; Ether 8.9–10). She begins by echoing Laman and Lemuel's murmuring at 2.11; by v. 8 she will sound more like Nephi. **4:** Lehi attempts to turn a negative adjective, *visionary*, into something positive; see 2.11n. The idea that the family would have perished if they had remained in Jerusalem recurs at 7.15; 19.20; 2 Ne 1.4. **5:** This is the first mention by Lehi of a *land of promise* (but note the Lord's words to Nephi at 2.20; 4.14). Also interesting is the past participle *obtained*, referring to an event still in the future. Perhaps Lehi regarded God's promises as certain, or this may be an example of the prophetic perfect tense. *Out of the hands of Laban*, in v. 2 Sariah was concerned about the safety of her sons in the wilderness; Lehi considered Laban a greater threat. **6:** *While we journeyed in the wilderness*, Nephi, as the narrator, is reporting a conversation that took place while he and his brothers were away. **8** *Accomplish the thing which the Lord hath commanded them*, repeating her son Nephi's words from 3.7, 15.

language did she speak.⁹ And it came to pass that they did rejoice exceedingly, and did offer sacrifice and burnt offerings unto the Lord; and they gave thanks unto the God of Israel.

The Contents of the Brass Plates

¹⁰ And after they had given thanks unto the God of Israel, my father, Lehi, took the records which were engraven upon the plates of brass, and he did search them from the beginning.¹¹ And he beheld that they did contain the five books of Moses, which gave an account of the creation of the world, and also of Adam and Eve, who were our first parents;¹² and also a record of the Jews from the beginning, even down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah;¹³ and also the prophecies of the holy prophets, from the beginning, even down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah; and also many prophecies which have been spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah.

¹⁴ And it came to pass that my father, Lehi, also found upon the plates of brass a genealogy of his fathers; wherefore he knew that he was a descendant of Joseph; yea, even that Joseph who was the son of Jacob, who was sold into Egypt, and who was preserved by the hand of the Lord, that he might preserve his father, Jacob, and all his household from perishing with famine.¹⁵ And they were also led out of captivity and out of the land of Egypt, by that same God who had preserved them.¹⁶ And thus my father, Lehi, did discover the genealogy of his fathers. And Laban also was a descendant of Joseph, wherefore he and his fathers had kept the records.

¹⁷ And now when my father saw all these things, he was filled with the Spirit, and began to prophesy concerning his seed—¹⁸ that these plates of brass should go forth unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people who were of his seed.¹⁹ Wherefore, he said that these plates of

9: Nephi never reports his father's reaction to the slaying of Laban and the arrival of the recently emancipated Zoram, but this verse hints at trouble. The addition of burnt offerings (see Lev 1) to the sacrifice of well-being (see 2.5–7n) indicates that Lehi believed there was sin to be atoned for, whether that might be Laman and Lemuel's mistreatment of Nephi and Sam, or Sariah's complaining, or the way in which Nephi had accomplished his task. Getting the plates turned out to be more complicated than Lehi had anticipated in v. 5. **10–13:** The Torah, or *five books of Moses*, did not take its final form until about the time of Ezra in the mid-5th c. BCE, so the Brass Plates would have contained an early version that did not necessarily correspond to what is in the OT today. The plates were also said to have included an early version of the Deuteronomistic History (Josh–2 Kings), as well as writings of the *prophets*. Isaiah features prominently in the BoM (though the presence of Second Isaiah, or Deutero-Isaiah [chs. 40–55], generally understood to have been written during the Exile, is problematic); *Jeremiah* is alluded to only occasionally. **11:** After Gen 5, Adam and his transgression are mentioned only once in the OT (Job 31.33), but the events in the garden of Eden become important in the NT because of the connection between the fall of Adam and the atonement of Christ; see Rom 5.12–21; 1 Cor 15.21–23, 45–49. There are additional discussions of this topic in the BoM at 2 Ne 2.14–27; Mos 3.11–19, 26; Alma 12.22–32; 22.12–14; 42.1–16; Hel 14.14–19; Morm 9.12–14. **12:** *Commencement of the reign of Zedekiah*, 597 BCE, see 1.4. **14–16:** It is strange that Lehi only now seems to discover that Joseph was his ancestor (according to Alma 10.3, he was from the tribe of Manasseh, Joseph's son), but perhaps Nephi, as the narrator, highlights the Joseph connection because of its typological significance for his own history. Nephi has already been *preserved by the hand of the Lord*, he will soon *preserve his father . . . and all his household from perishing with famine* (16.17–32), and he will eventually, like Joseph, rule over his older brothers (see 2.22n; 16.37; 2 Ne 5.19), despite their attempts to kill him (7.16; 16.37; 17.48; 2 Ne 5.2); see 2 Ne 5.11n. For the Joseph story, see Gen 37–50. **16:** The Brass Plates seem to have been a family record or a lineage artifact. Such a collection of early Hebrew writings (in Egyptian!) would have been rare and valuable indeed since there is little extant evidence for book-length documents inscribed on metal plates in the 6th c. BCE. **18–19:** At Alma 37.3–5, Alma refers to this prophecy that the Brass Plates will *go forth to all nations*, that they will *never perish* and never be *dimmed* (lose their brightness). Lehi, at least initially, sees the Brass Plates as something that will connect his ancestors (vv. 14, 16: “genealogy of his fathers”) with his descendants (vv. 17, 18, 19: “his seed”); Nephi, by contrast, values them primarily because they contain the law of Moses, which would enable his posterity to keep God's commandments (4.14–16; v. 21 below).

brass should never perish; neither should they be dimmed any more by time. And he prophesied many things concerning his seed.

²⁰ And it came to pass that thus far I and my father had kept the commandments where-with the Lord had commanded us. ²¹ And we had obtained the records which the Lord had commanded us, and searched them and found that they were desirable; yea, even of great worth unto us, insomuch that we could preserve the commandments of the Lord unto our children. ²² Wherefore, it was wisdom in the Lord that we should carry them with us, as we journeyed in the wilderness towards the land of promise.

Nephi, Writes of the Things of God

[III] **6** ¹ And now I, Nephi, do not give the genealogy of my fathers in this part of my record; neither at any time shall I give it after upon these plates which I am writing; for it is given in the record which has been kept by my father; wherefore, I do

not write it in this work. ² For it sufficeth me to say that we are a descendant of Joseph. ³ And it mattereth not to me that I am particular to give a full account of all the things of my father, for they cannot be written upon these plates, for I desire the room that I may write of the things of God. ⁴ For the fulness of mine intent is that I may persuade men to come unto the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, and be saved. ⁵ Wherefore, the things which are pleasing unto the world I do not write, but the things which are pleasing unto God and unto those who are not of the world. ⁶ Wherefore, I shall give commandment unto my seed, that they shall not occupy these plates with things which are not of worth unto the children of men.

The Brothers Return for Ishmael's Family

7 ¹ And now I would that ye might know, that after my father, Lehi, had made an end of prophesying concerning his seed, it came to pass that the Lord spake unto him again,

20: Nephi's summary that *thus far I and my father had kept the commandments* pointedly leaves out his brothers, though in fairness, only he and Lehi have received commandments directly from the Lord. **21:** *Of great worth*, a non-biblical phrase that appears ten times in the BoM, almost always with regard to *records* or scripture; the prophecy of Joseph that was included on the Brass Plates (2 Ne 3.7) may have been the source of many of these references.

CHAPTER 6

Nephi begins what was originally his second chapter with a restatement of his goals and editorial priorities; he will reiterate his intentions at 9.1–6. These two editorial comments provide a frame, or *inclusio*, for the original ch. II. **1:** *These plates*, commonly referred to as the Small Plates of Nephi, constitute a second, more spiritual account of his history, written at God's command (9.1–6; 19.1–7; 2 Ne 5.29–33); see the introduction to the Small Plates. **2:** Again, an emphasis on Nephi's connection to *Joseph* of Egypt; see 5.14–16n. *Sufficeth me*, that is, "it is sufficient for me to say." **4:** A key verse regarding Nephi's writerly ambitions. The phrase *come unto [God] . . . be saved* does not occur in the Bible, but takes on significant theological meaning in the BoM, where it appears eight times, including variants. **5:** *Those who are not of the world*, cf. Jn 15.19; 17.14, 16; referring to secular or ungodly concerns and pursuits as "the world" is foreign to the OT. **6:** *Occupy*, fill.

CHAPTER 7

After Lehi prophesies concerning his descendants (5.17–19), it occurs to him, or to God, that unless his sons have wives, there will not be any descendants. **1:** *I would that ye might know*, again Nephi addresses his readers directly, but at this point it is not clear to whom he thinks he is writing; cf. 1.18, 20; 19.18–19n. *Meet*, WB: "fit; suitable; proper." *Daughters*, someone else's daughters, implying that marriages were arranged by fathers.

saying that it was not meet for him, Lehi, that he should take his family into the wilderness alone; but that his sons should take daughters to wife, that they might raise up seed unto the Lord in the land of promise.² And it came to pass that the Lord commanded him that I, Nephi, and my brethren, should again return unto the land of Jerusalem, and bring down Ishmael and his family into the wilderness.

³ And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did again, with my brethren, go forth into the wilderness to go up to Jerusalem.⁴ And it came to pass that we went up unto the house of Ishmael, and we did gain favor in the sight of Ishmael, insomuch that we did speak unto him the words of the Lord.⁵ And it came to pass that the Lord did soften the heart of Ishmael, and also his household, insomuch that they took their journey with us down into the wilderness to the tent of our father.

Rebellion in the Wilderness

⁶ And it came to pass that as we journeyed in the wilderness, behold Laman and Lemuel, and two of the daughters of Ishmael, and the two sons of Ishmael and their families, did rebel against us; yea, against me, Nephi, and Sam,

and their father, Ishmael, and his wife, and his three other daughters.⁷ And it came to pass in the which rebellion, they were desirous to return unto the land of Jerusalem.

⁸ And now I, Nephi, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, therefore I spake unto them, saying, yea, even unto Laman and unto Lemuel, “Behold ye are mine elder brethren, and how is it that ye are so hard in your hearts, and so blind in your minds, that ye have need that I, your younger brother, should speak unto you, yea, and set an example for you?⁹ How is it that ye have not hearkened unto the word of the Lord?¹⁰ How is it that ye have forgotten that ye have seen an angel of the Lord?¹¹ Yea, and how is it that ye have forgotten what great things the Lord hath done for us, in delivering us out of the hands of Laban, and also that we should obtain the record?¹² Yea, and how is it that ye have forgotten that the Lord is able to do all things according to his will, for the children of men, if it so be that they exercise faith in him? Wherefore, let us be faithful to him.¹³ And if it so be that we are faithful to him, we shall obtain the land of promise.

“And ye shall know at some future period that the word of the Lord shall be fulfilled

2: Zoram presumably remains behind with Lehi and Sariah. **3–5:** The trip to Jerusalem to get Ishmael’s family goes much more smoothly than the journey to get the Brass Plates. The older brothers do not complain (one assumes they were interested in marrying), and Ishmael and his household are persuaded by the *words of the Lord*, as delivered by Lehi’s sons. Conveniently, Ishmael has five unmarried daughters (v. 6), one for each of the four brothers and another for Zoram. Nephi had sisters as well, though they are only mentioned once in the BoM (2 Ne 5.6). Early Mormon leader Erastus Snow said the lost 116 pages indicated that the sisters were married to Ishmael’s sons (see v. 6) and thus were part of Ishmael’s extended household at the time Lehi left Jerusalem, so the two families already had marital connections. Snow also reported that Ishmael was of the tribe of Ephraim. **8–9:** *Blind in your minds* (rather than in one’s eyes) is an unexpected metaphor, though it occurs in the NT at 2 Cor 3.14; 4.4; and ten more times in the BoM, almost always in combination with hard hearts. **10–12:** Remembering is a major theme in the BoM; see 17.45n. Here Nephi makes rebellion a function not of disbelief, but of *forgetting*, that is, a denial of what one already knows; cf. Deut 4.9; Alma 9.8–10; 30.52. He alludes to several details from their previous trip to Jerusalem and concludes with *let us be faithful*, echoing 3.16; 4.1. **10–11:** *Ye have seen an angel*, see 3.29–30. *Delivering us out of the hands of Laban*, Nephi quotes Lehi and Sariah (5.5, 8) rather than the angel, who promised that the Lord would deliver Laban into their hands. **13:** *And if it so be that we are faithful*, here obtaining the land of promise is a conditional prophecy, as opposed to 5.5, because the brothers want to return to Jerusalem; the implications of that choice are made clear in v. 15. The future knowledge of *the destruction of Jerusalem* will come through revelation at 2 Ne 1.4; 6.8.

concerning the destruction of Jerusalem; for all things which the Lord hath spoken concerning the destruction of Jerusalem must be fulfilled.¹⁴ For behold, the Spirit of the Lord ceaseth soon to strive with them; for behold, they have rejected the prophets, and Jeremiah have they cast into prison. And they have sought to take away the life of my father, inso-much that they have driven him out of the land.¹⁵ Now behold, I say unto you that if ye will return unto Jerusalem ye shall also perish with them. And now, if ye have choice, go up to the land, and remember the words which I speak unto you, that if ye go ye will also perish; for thus the Spirit of the Lord constraineth me that I should speak.”

¹⁶ And it came to pass that when I, Nephi, had spoken these words unto my brethren, they were angry with me. And it came to pass that they did lay their hands upon me, for behold, they were exceeding wroth, and they did bind me with cords, for they sought to take away my life, that they might leave me in the wilderness to be devoured by wild beasts.¹⁷ But it came to pass that I prayed unto the Lord, saying, “O Lord, according to my faith which is in thee, wilt thou deliver me from the hands of my brethren? Yea, even give me strength that I may burst these bands with which I am bound.”

¹⁸ And it came to pass that when I had said these words, behold, the bands were loosed from off my hands and feet, and I stood before my brethren, and I spake unto them again.

¹⁹ And it came to pass that they were angry with me again, and sought to lay hands upon me; but behold, one of the daughters of Ishmael, yea, and also her mother, and one of the sons of Ishmael, did plead with my brethren, inso-much that they did soften their hearts; and they did cease striving to take away my life.²⁰ And it came to pass that they were sorrowful, because of their wickedness, inso-much that they did bow down before me, and did plead with me that I would forgive them of the thing that they had done against me.²¹ And it came to pass that I did frankly forgive them all that they had done, and I did exhort them that they would pray unto the Lord their God for forgiveness. And it came to pass that they did so.

And after they had done praying unto the Lord we did again travel on our journey towards the tent of our father.²² And it came to pass that we did come down unto the tent of our father. And after I and my brethren and all the house of Ishmael had come down unto the tent of my father, they did give thanks unto the Lord their God; and they did offer sacrifice and burnt offerings unto him.

14: *Spirit of the Lord ceaseth soon to strive with them*, in Gen 6.3 this cryptic phrase seems to refer to a limit set on human lifespans; in the BoM it indicates the point at which God turns away from his rebellious children. It is the final precursor of the destruction of Jerusalem, of the Nephites and Lamanites, and of the Jaredites (see 2 Ne 26.11; Morm 5.16; Ether 2.15; Moro 8.28). *Jeremiah have they cast into prison*, see Jer 32.1–2; 38.1–13, though this imprisonment postdated the departure of Lehi’s family. *Driven him out of the land* is a more forceful description than the incipient plot said to have been revealed to Lehi at 2.1–2. **15:** *If ye have choice*, if you so choose. **16–18:** Laman and Lemuel do not kill Nephi directly; rather they tie him up and leave him behind to be *devoured by wild beasts*, again echoing the story of Joseph (Gen 37.20, 33). Nephi prays for *strength to burst these bands*, but instead they are passively *loosed* and seem to slip off (cf. Samson at Judg 15.14). **16:** Laman and Lemuel may have justified the slaying of a religiously unorthodox brother (cf. 16.37–38; 2 Ne 5.2) by appealing to Deut 13.1–9; see 2.19n; 22.30–31n. **17:** *Deliver me from the hands of my brethren*, Nephi’s older brothers have now become as much of a danger as Laban once was; see v. 11. **19:** It is tempting to imagine that the *daughter of Ishmael* who pleaded for Nephi’s life is the one whom he eventually marries (16.7); his wife pleads for him at 18.19. **20:** *Bow down before me*, like Joseph of Egypt (Gen 42.6; 43.26; 44.14; 50.18). **21–22:** In the end, everyone prays: Nephi for strength, the brothers for forgiveness, and the whole company in thanks for a safe journey. *Burnt offerings*, an indication that there had again been transgressions along the way, see 5.9n. **21:** *Frankly*, WB: “freely; readily”; cf. Lk 7.42.

Lehi's Dream (an allegory):

1 Nephi 8

The Tree and Its Fruit

8¹ And it came to pass that we had gathered together all manner of seeds of every kind, both of grain of every kind, and also of the seeds of fruit of every kind.

² And it came to pass that while my father tarried in the wilderness he spake unto us, saying, "Behold, I have dreamed a dream; or, in other words, I have seen a vision."³ And behold, because of the thing which I have seen, I have reason to rejoice in the Lord because of Nephi and also of Sam; for I have reason to suppose that they, and also many of their seed, will be saved.⁴ But behold, Laman and Lemuel, I fear exceedingly because of you.

"For behold, methought I saw in my dream, a dark and dreary wilderness."⁵ And it came to pass that I saw a man, and he was dressed in a white robe; and he came and stood before me.⁶ And it came to pass that he spake unto me, and bade me follow him.⁷ And it came to pass that as I followed him I beheld myself that I was in a dark and dreary waste.⁸ And after I had traveled for the space of many hours in darkness, I began to pray unto the Lord that

he would have mercy on me, according to the multitude of his tender mercies.

⁹ "And it came to pass after I had prayed unto the Lord I beheld a large and spacious field.¹⁰ And it came to pass that I beheld a tree, whose fruit was desirable to make one happy.¹¹ And it came to pass that I did go forth and partake of the fruit thereof; and I beheld that it was most sweet, above all that I ever before tasted. Yea, and I beheld that the fruit thereof was white, to exceed all the whiteness that I had ever seen.¹² And as I partook of the fruit thereof it filled my soul with exceeding great joy; wherefore, I began to be desirous that my family should partake of it also; for I knew that it was desirable above all other fruit."

The River, the Iron Rod, and the Spacious Building

¹³ "And as I cast my eyes round about, that perhaps I might discover my family also, I beheld a river of water; and it ran along, and it was near the tree of which I was partaking the fruit.¹⁴ And I looked to behold from whence it came; and I saw the head thereof a little way off; and at the head thereof I beheld your mother Sariah, and Sam, and Nephi; and they

CHAPTER 8

This allegory is one of the most well-known and beloved passages in the BoM, and has been illustrated in a variety of media and styles. It has few precedents in the Bible or in traditional Christianity, though it shares several features with an 1811 dream of Joseph Smith's father, as reported by Lucy Mack Smith (Joseph's mother) in 1844. Note that Lehi never speaks of the tree as the "tree of life." That identification is only made by Nephi at 11.25 and 15.22. For Nephi's explanation of specific elements in the dream—the tree, the rod, the river, the building—see 11.13–36; 12.16–18; 15.21–36. However, three key features—a man saying "follow me," "the straight and narrow path," and "pressing forward"—will not be explained until much later, at 2 Ne 31.10, 12, 17–21. **1:** This is the last historical detail before a lengthy, eight-chapter digression recounting dreams, prophecies, visions, and their interpretations. The story of the family's journeying through the wilderness will resume at 16.7. **2–4:** Lehi's immediate reference to *a vision* emphasizes that this was no ordinary dream; cf. 2.2n. The allegory can be read as having universal meaning, portraying the plight of all humankind, yet Lehi's first response focuses on his own family. *Methought*, WB: "it seemed to me; I thought." **6:** *Bade... follow*, only here and 4.25, suggesting that Lehi is now in the position of Zoram; having enough trust to follow someone into the wilderness can result in deliverance and happiness. **7:** *Waste*, an uninhabited region or desolate area. **9–12:** The fruit is not only *most sweet*, it also has the psychotropic quality of making one *happy* and full of *joy*. **10:** A tree with fruit *desirable to make one happy*, later identified as the tree of life (11.25), contrasts with the arboreal referent of Gen 3.6: "a tree to be desired to make one wise"; see 11.11n. **14:** *Head*, headwaters, source.

stood as if they knew not whither they should go.¹⁵ And it came to pass that I beckoned unto them; and I also did say unto them with a loud voice that they should come unto me, and partake of the fruit, which was desirable above all other fruit.¹⁶ And it came to pass that they did come unto me and partake of the fruit also.

¹⁷ “And it came to pass that I was desirous that Laman and Lemuel should come and partake of the fruit also; wherefore, I cast mine eyes towards the head of the river, that perhaps I might see them.¹⁸ And it came to pass that I saw them, but they would not come unto me and partake of the fruit.

¹⁹ “And I beheld a rod of iron, and it extended along the bank of the river, and led to the tree by which I stood.²⁰ And I also beheld a straight and narrow path, which came along by the rod of iron, even to the tree by which I stood; and it also led by the head of the fountain, unto a large and spacious field, as if it had been a world.²¹ And I saw numberless concourses of people, many of whom were pressing forward, that they might obtain the path which led unto the tree by which I stood.²² And it came to pass that they did come forth, and commence in the path which led to the tree.

²³ “And it came to pass that there arose a mist of darkness; yea, even an exceeding great mist of darkness, insomuch that they who had commenced in the path did lose their way, that they wandered off and were lost.²⁴ And it came to pass that I beheld others pressing forward, and

they came forth and caught hold of the end of the rod of iron; and they did press forward through the mist of darkness, clinging to the rod of iron, even until they did come forth and partake of the fruit of the tree.²⁵ And after they had partaken of the fruit of the tree they did cast their eyes about as if they were ashamed.

²⁶ “And I also cast my eyes round about, and beheld, on the other side of the river of water, a great and spacious building; and it stood as it were in the air, high above the earth.²⁷ And it was filled with people, both old and young, both male and female; and their manner of dress was exceeding fine; and they were in the attitude of mocking and pointing their fingers towards those who had come at and were partaking of the fruit.²⁸ And after they had tasted of the fruit they were ashamed, because of those that were scoffing at them; and they fell away into forbidden paths and were lost.”

²⁹ And now I, Nephi, do not speak all the words of my father.³⁰ But, to be short in writing, behold, he saw other multitudes pressing forward; and they came and caught hold of the end of the rod of iron; and they did press their way forward, continually holding fast to the rod of iron, until they came forth and fell down and partook of the fruit of the tree.

³¹ And he also saw other multitudes feeling their way^a towards that great and spacious building.³² And it came to pass that many

^a 31 O *pressing their way*

15–18: *Come unto me and partake of the fruit* (repeated three times), this is the first occurrence of *come unto me* in the BoM, a phrase that will be spoken by God nearly thirty times in the rest of the book, greatly exceeding such usage in the Bible. The invitation to come to Christ is a major theme of the BoM. **16:** The three family members apparently find their way to Lehi and the tree without utilizing the “rod of iron” first described in v. 19. **18:** Presumably, Lehi waved and shouted to Laman and Lemuel as well, to no avail. **19–20:** *Rod of iron*, something like a handrail. **21–22:** *Concourses*, WB: “a collection formed by a voluntary or spontaneous moving and meeting in one place.” **26:** *As it were in the air*, the meaning could either be that the top of the building was very high, or that the building itself floated above the earth, without a foundation. **27:** *Attitude*, WB: “posture or action.” **28:** Because some of those who *tasted of the fruit* later *fell away*, Nephi’s identification of the tree as the “tree of life” is imprecise, or represents a reinterpretation (compare Gen 3.22, where those who eat “live for ever”). **30:** *Fast*, firmly. It is not obvious why they *fell down*; reverence, exhaustion, joy, and being overcome by the Spirit are all possibilities. **32–33:** *Strange*, foreign or forbidden. The word generally has negative connotations in the OT, as in “strange gods” or “strange fire.” *Point the finger of scorn at me*, if v. 33b is a continuation of Nephi’s paraphrase rather than a shift back to quoting Lehi directly (see v. 35 textual note), then Nephi is imagining himself within his father’s dream.

were drowned in the depths of the fountain; and many were lost from his view, wandering in strange roads.³³ And great was the multitude that did enter into that strange building.

“And after they did enter into that building they did point the finger of scorn at me and those that were partaking of the fruit also; but we heeded them not.”³⁴ (These are the words of my father.) For as many as heeded them, had fallen away.³⁵ “And Laman and Lemuel partook not of the fruit,” said my father.^a

³⁶ And it came to pass after my father had spoken all the words of his dream or vision, which were many, he said unto us, because of these things which he saw in a vision, he exceedingly feared for Laman and Lemuel; yea, he feared lest they should be cast off from the presence of the Lord.³⁷ And he did exhort them then with all the feeling of a tender parent, that they would hearken to his words, that perhaps the Lord would be merciful to them, and not cast them off; yea, my father did preach unto them.³⁸ And after he had preached unto them, and also prophesied unto them of many things, he bade them to keep the commandments of the Lord; and he did cease speaking unto them.

Nephi’s Two Sets of Plates

9¹ And all these things did my father see, and hear, and speak, as he dwelt in a tent, in the valley of Lemuel, and also a great

many more things, which cannot be written upon these plates.² And now, as I have spoken concerning these plates, behold they are not the plates upon which I make a full account of the history of my people; for the plates upon which I make a full account of my people I have given the name of Nephi; wherefore, they are called the plates of Nephi, after mine own name; and these plates also are called the plates of Nephi.^b³ Nevertheless, I have received a commandment of the Lord that I should make these plates, for the special purpose that there should be an account engraven of the ministry of my people.⁴ Upon the other plates should be engraven an account of the reign of the kings, and the wars and contentions of my people; wherefore these plates are for the more part of the ministry; and the other plates are for the more part of the reign of kings and the wars and contentions of my people.

⁵ Wherefore, the Lord hath commanded me to make these plates for a wise purpose in

^a ³⁵ Or [with no quotation marks in v. 33] *we heeded them not.* [³⁴] *These are the words of my father: “For as many as heeded them, had fallen away.”* [³⁵] *“And Laman and Lemuel partook not of the fruit,” said my father.*

^b ² That is, *they are called the [large] plates of Nephi, after mine own name; and these [small] plates also are called the plates of Nephi* [with the bracketed words added for clarification]

36: This chapter is framed by an inclusio, since it closes as it began—with references to a *dream or vision*, and Lehi fearing exceedingly for Laman and Lemuel; see vv. 2–4.

CHAPTER 9

Nephi had begun to paraphrase his father’s words at 8.29 in an attempt to keep things brief (cf. 1.16–17). Here he interrupts his narrative to explain once again that what we are reading is a shorter, secondary account of his people’s history; see the notes in ch. 6. The next chapter continues to paraphrase the same discourse of Lehi, after what was apparently a brief pause. **1:** *Dwelt in a tent*, see 2.15n. *Valley of Lemuel*, 2.10, 14. *These plates*, the Small Plates of Nephi. **2:** The *plates* with the *full account* are the Large Plates of Nephi. The fact that Nephi himself refers to both sets by the same name, *the plates of Nephi*, is not particularly helpful. **3–4:** The *commandment* to produce the second set of plates does not come until much later, after the family has been in the promised land for many years; see 2 Ne 5.29–34. The Small Plates were supposed to have a more spiritual focus, in contrast to the fuller political details recorded in the Large Plates. **5:** *For a wise purpose*, eventually the Small Plates of Nephi (1 Nephi–Omni) were used as a replacement for the 116 pages lost by Martin Harris in 1828; see the introduction to the Small Plates. This is one purpose that was unknown to Nephi; there may be others. For instance, Jarom 1.2 describes the Small Plates as being written for “the benefit of our brethren the Lamanites”; cf. Alma 37.18–19.

him, which purpose I know not.⁶ But the Lord knoweth all things from the beginning; wherefore, he prepareth a way to accomplish all his works among the children of men; for behold, he hath all power unto the fulfilling of all his words. And thus it is. Amen.

Lehi, Prophecies of the Messiah

[III] **10**¹ And now I, Nephi, proceed to give an account upon these plates of my proceedings, and my reign and ministry; wherefore, to proceed with mine account, I must speak somewhat of the things of my father, and also of my brethren.² For behold, it came to pass after my father had made an end of speaking the words of his dream, and also of exhorting them to all diligence, he spake unto them concerning the Jews—³ that after they should be destroyed, even that great city Jerusalem, and many be

carried away captive into Babylon, according to the own due time of the Lord they should return again, yea, even be brought back out of captivity; and after they should be brought back out of captivity they should possess again the land of their inheritance.

⁴ Yea, even six hundred years from the time that my father left Jerusalem, a prophet would the Lord God raise up among the Jews—even a Messiah, or, in other words, a Savior of the world.

⁵ And he also spake concerning the prophets, how great a number had testified of these things, concerning this Messiah, of whom he had spoken, or this Redeemer of the world.

⁶ Wherefore, all mankind were in a lost and in a fallen state, and ever would be save they should rely on this Redeemer.

⁷ And he spake also concerning a prophet who should come before the Messiah, to prepare the way of the Lord—⁸ yea, even he should go forth and cry in the wilderness, “Prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight;

6: *He prepareth a way to accomplish*, see 3.7; 5.8. *And thus it is. Amen*, a narrative marker that also appears at 14.30; 22.31; Alma 13.9; Hel 12.26; cf. Alma 6.8.

CHAPTER 10

In the second half of the discourse that began in ch. 8, Lehi’s attention turns from the salvation of individuals to the collective salvation of nations and peoples, which is more typical of the OT. It is not clear why Nephi places the accounts of the two trees into two different chapters, when Lehi apparently spoke about them on the same day. Perhaps the bifurcation reflects two distinct sources for the word of God: new revelation in ch. 8, and inherited scripture in ch. 10 (particularly the Brass Plates that Lehi had likely been studying while his sons journeyed the second time to Jerusalem; cf. 5.21). **1:** *Reign* implies Nephi’s kingship—something he only hints at in 2 Ne 5.18 (cf. Jacob 1.9); the Small Plates include very little about his monarchy, in accordance with 9.4. **3:** Lehi continues his prophecies from what he read in the heavenly book at 1.13. At this point, the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE was still a few years in the future. Here he prophesies of the physical return of the Jews from exile (which began in 538 BCE as recorded in Ezra-Nehemiah), but only in passing; his primary interests are elsewhere, particularly in the coming of Christ and the latter-day integration of temporal and spiritual deliverance described in v. 14. **4:** *Six hundred years*, also at 19.8; 2 Ne 25.19; an approximation of the time from 597 BCE to 6–4 BCE (the years when most scholars believe Jesus was born). *A prophet would the Lord God raise up among the Jews*, Deut 18.15. Lehi, like Peter at Acts 3.19–23, identifies this prophet as the *Messiah*; Nephi will later add “the Holy One of Israel” (22.20–21; cf. 3 Ne 30.23). *Savior of the world*, a Johannine expression found elsewhere only at Jn 4.42; 1 Jn 4.14; 1 Ne 13.40. **5:** *How great a number had testified*, in addition to Moses’s prophecy at Deut 18.15, 18–19, just alluded to, Lehi may also be referring to Brass Plates prophecies of Zenock, Neum, and Zenos, as recorded at 19.8–21; cf. Alma 33.12–22. *Of whom he had spoken*, the connection between a Messiah and world redemption was the subject of Lehi’s preaching in Jerusalem (see 1.19n); Lehi will offer a fuller explanation at 2 Ne 2.17–27, esp. v. 26. *Redeemer of the world*, not just of Israel. **6:** *Lost and fallen state*, later clarifications of this BoM term can be found at 2 Ne 2.17–27; 25.17; Mos 16.4. **7:** *A prophet*, John the Baptist. The description of John’s ministry that follows is an amalgam from the four NT Gospels. **8:** *Cry in the wilderness*, “*Prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight*” is taken from the citations of Isa 40.3 at Mt 3.3; Mk 1.2–3; and Lk 3.4. But note that in the

for there standeth one among you whom ye know not; and he is mightier than I, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose." And much spake my father concerning this thing.⁹ And my father said he should baptize in Bethabara, beyond Jordan; and he also said he should baptize with water; even that he should baptize the Messiah with water.¹⁰ And after he had baptized the Messiah with water, he should behold and bear record that he had baptized the Lamb of God, who should take away the sins of the world.

Lehi, Compares the House of Israel to an Olive Tree (a second allegory)

¹¹ And it came to pass after my father had spoken these words he spake unto my brethren concerning the gospel which should be

preached among the Jews, and also concerning the dwindling of the Jews in unbelief. And after they had slain the Messiah, who should come, and after he had been slain he should rise from the dead, and should make himself manifest, by the Holy Ghost, unto the Gentiles.¹² Yea, even my father spake much concerning the Gentiles, and also concerning the house of Israel, that they should be compared like unto an olive tree, whose branches should be broken off and should be scattered upon all the face of the earth.¹³ Wherefore, he said it must needs be that we should be led with one accord into the land of promise, unto the fulfilling of the word of the Lord, that we should be scattered upon all the face of the earth.¹⁴ And after the house of Israel should be scattered they should be gathered together again; or, in fine,

Synoptic Gospels the quotation is provided by the narrators, while at Jn 1.23 Isaiah's prophecy (with different wording) is cited by John himself, as here. *There standeth one among you whom ye know not*, Jn 1.26. *He is mightier than I, whose shoe's latchet [strap] I am not worthy to unloose*, although John the Baptist expresses similar sentiments in all four Gospels (see Mt 3.11; Mk 1.7; Jn 1.27), the language here is closest to Luke 3.16. It is not obvious why Lehi *spake much concerning* John. Perhaps the concept of Christian-style baptism was new to him. Although Jacob and Nephi both mention baptism (2 Ne 9.23–24; 31.4–18), there is no record of any Nephites actually being baptized until Mos 18, when Alma introduces what seems to be a novel practice. **9:** *Bethabara, beyond Jordan*, Jn 1.28; there are Greek textual problems, however, and the place name should probably be "Bethany." Each of the four Gospels speaks of John *baptizing with water* and then adds a reference to Jesus baptizing with the Holy Ghost and/or with fire—a contrast that the BoM will pick up in 2 Ne 31.13–14; 3 Ne 9.20; 12.1–2; 19.13; Morm 7.10; and Ether 12.14. **10:** *Lamb of God, who should take away the sins of the world*, Jn 1.29. *Lamb of God*, Jn 1.29, 36, with 35 occurrences in the BoM, only three of which postdate Nephi (27 occur in 1 Ne 11–14). The term refers to the lamb sacrificed at Passover. **11:** The term "gospel" is first used here in the BoM, with no explanation or definition (compare 3 Ne 27.13–22). This verse is also the first occurrence of *Holy Ghost*, another NT concept familiar to Nephi. That Jesus will *make himself manifest by the Holy Ghost* is a BoM rather than a biblical expression, suggesting that Christ will reveal himself directly only to the house of Israel (cf. 3 Ne 15.23; Mt 15.24). The salvation of the *Gentiles* is not a concern in the OT before Second Isaiah. **12–14:** The *house of Israel* is also *compared to an olive tree* at Jacob 5.1–77 (which is attributed to the non-biblical prophet Zenos, whose writings were on the Brass Plates); cf. Rom 11.17–24. Lehi's tree of precious fruit, which he learned about through revelation, is complemented by a tree from scripture. For Nephi's explanation of the olive tree imagery, see 15.12–20. The Lehites see themselves as a part of this global historical process, especially since *all the face of the earth* would include their land of promise in the New World. **13:** *With one accord*, with one mind or purpose; together. **14:** *In fine*, WB: "in the end; to conclude; to sum up all." *Fulness of the/my gospel*, a non-biblical phrase that occurs nine times in the BoM. The mention of "fulness of the gospel" here, in the context of Lehi's discussion of the two allegorical trees, suggests a merging of the NT plan of salvation for individuals with OT salvation history by which God redeems nations and peoples. The implication is that while the NT contains "the gospel," only the BoM offers a complete version, which will bring far-flung, lost remnants of Israel, like the descendants of the Lamanites, back to *the knowledge of the true Messiah* (BoM title page; 2 Ne 30.1–7; 3 Ne 21.1–10; Morm 7.1–2, 5); see 13.24n and Nephi's further explanation at 15.13. The phrase *true Messiah* (also at 2 Ne 1.10; 25.18) assumes the existence of "false Christ" (Mt 24.24; Mk 13.22; WoM 1.15).

after the Gentiles had received the fulness of the Gospel, the natural branches of the olive tree, or the remnants of the house of Israel, should be grafted in, or come to the knowledge of the true Messiah, their Lord and their Redeemer.

¹⁵ And after this manner of language did my father prophesy and speak unto my brethren, and also many more things which I do not write in this book; for I have written as many of them as were expedient for me in mine other book. ¹⁶ And all these things, of which I have spoken, were done as my father dwelt in a tent, in the valley of Lemuel.

Nephi, Desires to Know for Himself

¹⁷ And it came to pass after I, Nephi, having heard all the words of my father, concerning the things which he saw in a vision, and also the things which he spake by the power of the Holy Ghost, which power he received by faith on the Son of God—and the Son of God was the Messiah who should come—I, Nephi, was desirous also that I might see, and hear, and know of these things, by the power of the Holy Ghost, which is the gift of God unto all

those who diligently seek him, as well in times of old as in the time that he should manifest himself unto the children of men.

¹⁸ For he is the same yesterday, today, and forever; and the way is prepared for all men from the foundation of the world, if it so be that they repent and come unto him. ¹⁹ For he that diligently seeketh shall find; and the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto them, by the power of the Holy Ghost, as well in these times^a as in times of old, and as well in times of old as in times to come; wherefore, the course of the Lord is one eternal round.

²⁰ Therefore remember, O man, for all thy doings thou shalt be brought into judgment. ²¹ Wherefore, if ye have sought to do wickedly in the days of your probation, then ye are found unclean before the judgment-seat of God; and no unclean thing can dwell with God; wherefore, ye must be cast off forever. ²² And the Holy Ghost giveth authority that I should speak these things, and deny them not.

^a ¹⁹ O, P *in this time*

15: *Mine other book*, the Large Plates; see 9.2. **16:** *Dwelt in a tent*, see 2.15n. **17:** Israelite kings were sometimes referred to as adopted sons of God (e.g., 2 Sam 7.14; Ps 2.7), but this verse is the first indication in the BoM that God has a non-metaphorical son, which would have been somewhat shocking in the context of early 6th c. Hebrew religion. The reference to the Holy Ghost in the preceding phrase completes the Godhead. Lehi never identified *the Messiah who should come* as the *Son of God*. Perhaps this is Nephi's addition, based on the angel's words at 11.18–21, though 11.5–6 may hint at Lehi's unrecorded teachings. Nephi's desire to *see and hear and know* his father's vision is fulfilled at 11.3, 6, 11; see also 14.29. There is a universalizing aspect to God's plan if the gift of the Holy Ghost was available to faithful seekers even before *the time that he should manifest himself unto the children of men*, that is, before Jesus's birth (contrast Jn 7.39; 16.7). *Those who diligently seek him*, Nephi's earlier experience at 2.16–24 seems to have given him confidence to continue asking God questions; cf. Deut 4.29. **19:** *One eternal round* also occurs at Alma 7.20 and 37.12; it always describes *the course of the Lord*. The phrase is non-biblical but does appear in 18th c. English poetry (most famously in a hymn by Isaac Watts, where it refers to a perpetual musical canon). The meaning here seems to point toward the continuity of God's ways, with an implication of cyclical recurrence. **20–22:** These verses intrude awkwardly into the narrative, as Nephi admonishes his readers in terms quite similar to those he will use with his brothers at 15.32–34 in explaining Lehi's dream (and which may be derived from Lehi's omitted words; see v. 15). The later passage includes the phrases "judged of their works," "their days of probation," "they must be cast off," and "there cannot any unclean thing enter into the kingdom of God." **21:** *Probation* (nine times in the BoM), along with "probationary" (four times), is a non-biblical term that exemplifies one of the 19th c. usages from WB: "the state of man in the present life, in which he has the opportunity of proving his character and being qualified for a happier state."

1 NEPHI 11–14: OUTLINE

Nephi merges the plan of salvation elements of chapter 8 with the salvation history of chapter 10. Thus each of the major features of Lehi’s dream is given a generalized or allegorical interpretation by the angel, and then a historical counterpart in the apocalyptic survey of future events that follows:

Symbol	Plan of Salvation	Salvation History
Tree (8.10)	Love of God (11.21–22)	Ministry of Jesus (chs. 11–12)
Rod of iron (8.19)	Word of God (11.25)	Bible and Book of Mormon (ch. 13)
Mists of darkness (8.23)	Temptations (12.17)	Missing scripture (13.23–29)
Spacious building (8.26)	Pride (11.35–36; 12.18)	Great and abominable church (13.5–9)
River (8.26)	Depths of hell (12.16)	Wars and wickedness (chs. 12–14)

Nephi’s Vision (an apocalypse): 1 Nephi 11–14

Nephi, Converses with the Spirit of the Lord

11¹ For it came to pass after I had desired to know the things that my father had seen, and believing that the Lord was able to make them known unto me, as I sat pondering in mine heart I was caught away in the Spirit of the Lord, yea, into an exceeding high

mountain, which I never had before seen, and upon which I never had before set my foot.

² And the Spirit said unto me, “Behold, what desirest thou?”

³ And I said, “I desire to behold the things which my father saw.”

⁴ And the Spirit said unto me, “Believest thou that thy father saw the tree of which he hath spoken?”

⁵ And I said, “Yea, thou knowest that I believe all the words of my father.”

CHAPTERS 11–14

In these four chapters, Nephi recounts a vision that interprets, integrates, and expands elements from Lehi’s vision in ch. 1, his dream in ch. 8, and his prophecies in ch. 10. Nephi’s spiritual experience is presented in the form of an apocalypse, for which John J. Collins has provided an oft-cited definition: “‘Apocalypse’ is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.” Isaiah 24–27 is sometimes considered an early “proto-apocalypse,” but Nephi’s vision seems closer to Jewish and Christian examples that date from the 2nd c. BCE to the 2nd c. CE, many of which took Dan 7–12 as a model. It also has affinities with the NT book of Revelation; see 1 Ne 14.18–30. The report of this visionary experience is framed by an inclusio at 11.1 and 14.29–30, both of which refer to “the things that my father had seen,” that were “made... known unto me” by either “the Lord” or “the angel of the Lord,” while “I was caught away in the Spirit.”

CHAPTER 11

1: Biblical references to prophets being *caught away in the Spirit* occur at Ezek 37.1; Acts 8.39; Rev 17.3; 21.10. Nephi does not explicitly identify the *Spirit of the Lord* with the Holy Ghost mentioned five times in the previous chapter. Some LDS have interpreted this figure as the preexistent Christ of Ether 3.6–16 (note “form of a man” at v. 11; the only other occurrence is at Mos 13.34, where it definitely refers to Christ). Mountains were often sites of revelation in the Bible. **5:** *Believe all the words of my father*, see 2.16.

⁶ And when I had spoken these words, the Spirit cried with a loud voice, saying, “Hosanna^a to the Lord, the most high God; for he is God over all the earth, yea, even above all. And blessed art thou, Nephi, because thou believest in the Son of the most high God; wherefore, thou shalt behold the things which thou hast desired.” ⁷ And behold this thing shall be given unto thee for a sign, that after thou hast beheld the tree which bore the fruit which thy father tasted, thou shalt also behold a man descending out of heaven, and him shall ye witness; and after ye have witnessed him ye shall bear record that it is the Son of God.”

⁸ And it came to pass that the Spirit said unto me, “Look!” And I looked and beheld a tree; and it was like unto the tree which my father had seen; and the beauty thereof was far beyond, yea, exceeding of all beauty; and the whiteness thereof did exceed the whiteness of the driven snow.

⁹ And it came to pass after I had seen the tree, I said unto the Spirit, “I beheld thou hast shown unto me the tree which is precious above all.”

¹⁰ And he said unto me, “What desirest thou?”

¹¹ And I said unto him, “To know the interpretation thereof”—for I spake unto him as a man speaketh; for I beheld that he was in

the form of a man; yet nevertheless, I knew that it was the Spirit of the Lord; and he spake unto me as a man speaketh with another.

¹² And it came to pass that he said unto me, “Look!” And I looked as if to look upon him, and I saw him not; for he had gone from before my presence.

An Angel Explains the Meaning of the Tree and the Iron Rod

¹³ And it came to pass that I looked and beheld the great city of Jerusalem, and also other cities. And I beheld the city of Nazareth; and in the city of Nazareth I beheld a virgin, and she was exceedingly fair and white.

¹⁴ And it came to pass that I saw the heavens open; and an angel came down and stood before me; and he said unto me, “Nephi, what beholdest thou?”

¹⁵ And I said unto him, “A virgin, most beautiful and fair above all other virgins.”

¹⁶ And he said unto me, “Knowest thou the condescension of God?”

¹⁷ And I said unto him, “I know that he loveth his children; nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all things.”

^a 6 Hebrew “Help!” or “Save us!”; this eventually became an expression of praise.

6: *Blessed art thou*, this is the second time Nephi has heard these words, see 2.19. **7:** *Behold a man descending out of heaven*, this happens at 12.6; cf. 1.9; 3 Ne 11.8. The Spirit’s command that Nephi look for an entity *descending* and then *bear record* of the *Son of God* is reminiscent of Jn 1.33–34. **8:** *Look!* a command that will be repeated twelve more times in chs. 11–14. *Tree which my father had seen*, 8.10–12. At 8.11, it was the fruit that was described as extraordinarily white rather than the entire *tree*, as here. This verse also features the only mention of *snow* in the BoM, which some have taken as evidence for a historical setting in the tropics. **11:** It seems like the expected response to *what desirest thou* would be “to partake of the fruit that my father tasted” (see v. 7) in order to fulfill Lehi’s parental wish and gain the happiness of which he spoke (8.12). Nephi instead asks for knowledge, which in the end will cause him considerable grief (15.5; cf. 2 Ne 26.7). As with the tree of knowledge of good and evil in Gen, knowledge can be exceedingly valuable, but it comes at a price. *As a man speaketh with another*, like Moses at Ex 33.11. **12:** It is not obvious why the Spirit departs at this point; the remainder of Nephi’s vision will be mediated by an angel. **13–23:** The meaning of the tree is revealed to be the love of God, as manifest in the incarnation of Jesus. **13:** The *virgin* Mary, from the Galilean village of *Nazareth*, is described as *exceedingly white*, like the tree (v. 8). **14:** The question-and-answer format continues, with an angel now as the interlocutor. Hebrew prophets were regularly shown visions and then asked “What seest thou?” as at Jer 1.11, 13; 24.3; Am 7.8; 8.2; Zech 4.2; 5.2; cf. 1 Ne 13.2. *I saw the heavens open*, as Lehi did at 1.8. **16:** *Condescension*, WB: “voluntary descent from rank, dignity or just claims.” *Condescension of God* was used regularly in the early 19th c.

¹⁸ And he said unto me, “Behold, the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of the Son of God, after the manner of the flesh.”

¹⁹ And it came to pass that I beheld that she was carried away in the Spirit; and after she had been carried away in the Spirit for the space of a time the angel spake unto me, saying, “Look!” ²⁰ And I looked and beheld the virgin again, bearing a child in her arms.

²¹ And the angel said unto me, “Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father! Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw?”

²² And I answered him, saying, “Yea, it is the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore, it is the most desirable above all things.”

²³ And he spake unto me, saying, “Yea, and the most joyous to the soul.”

²⁴ And after he had said these words, he said unto me, “Look!” And I looked, and I beheld the Son of God going forth among the children of men; and I saw many fall down at his feet and worship him. ²⁵ And it came to pass that I beheld that the rod of iron, which my father had seen, was the word of God,

which led to the fountain of living waters, or to the tree of life; which waters are a representation of the love of God; and I also beheld that the tree of life was a representation of the love of God.

Nephi, Sees the Ministry of Jesus in the Old World

²⁶ And the angel said unto me again, “Look and behold the condescension of God!”

²⁷ And I looked and beheld the Redeemer of the world, of whom my father had spoken; and I also beheld the prophet who should prepare the way before him. And the Lamb of God went forth and was baptized of him; and after he was baptized, I beheld the heavens open, and the Holy Ghost come down out of heaven and abide upon him in the form of a dove.

²⁸ And I beheld that he went forth ministering unto the people, in power and great glory; and the multitudes were gathered together to hear him; and I beheld that they cast him out from among them. ²⁹ And I also beheld twelve others following him. And it came to pass that they were carried away in the Spirit from before my face, and I saw them not.

18: *Mother of the son of God.* The early manuscripts and 1830 edition had “mother of God.” For the 1837 edition, JS added the qualifier “the son of” to this and three other passages to more clearly distinguish the Father and the Son (11.21, 32; 13.40). It is possible that the phrase “mother of God” may have sounded too Catholic for JS’s taste. **21:** *Lamb or Lamb of God* is the preferred designation for Jesus in Nephi’s vision, where it occurs some 55 times; elsewhere in the BoM the title appears only 14 times; see 10.10n. In the NT, “lamb” mostly occurs in Rev—a text closely connected to Nephi’s vision, according to 14.24–27. **22:** *Love of God*, in the BoM this expression always refers to God’s love, rather than a love for God, with the exception of 2 Ne 31.20. **25:** *Rod of iron*, 8.19–20, 24. The *word of God* can refer to both written scripture and also new revelation to prophets or individuals. When imagery from Lehi’s dream returns again at the end of 2 Ne (see 31.20n), those who are on the straight path are led by the “words of Christ,” conveyed through the Holy Ghost (2 Ne 31.19–21; 32.1–3); this seems to be a counterpart to the iron rod in the dream. *Fountain of living waters*, Jer 2.13; 17.13; cf. Jn 4.10–11. Apparently, there were two fountains: one of living, that is, flowing, water (8.20), and the other of filthy water (8.32; 12.16). *Tree of life* appears seven times in the OT, esp. Gen 2–3; three times in the NT (all in Rev); and sixteen times in the BoM; see the introductory note to ch. 8. **26–27:** *The condescension of God*, here applied specifically to Jesus’s baptism, whereas in v. 16 it seemed to refer to his birth; cf. 2 Ne 31.6–7. **27:** *Redeemer... of whom my father had spoken*, 10.5. *The prophet* (John the Baptist), 10.4–10. The descent of the Holy Ghost like a dove was not in Nephi’s earlier report of his father’s sermon. The Synoptic Gospels all recount that after Jesus’s baptism *the heavens opened*, but the second part of the description is most like Jn 1.32; cf. 2 Ne 31.8. **28:** The phrase *power and great glory* is used in the Gospels to describe Christ’s *parousia*, or second coming (Mt 24.30; Mk 13.26; Lk 21.27); here it is applied to his mortal ministry. *Cast out*, the NT never explicitly mentions Jesus being cast out, but Lk 4.29 is a possibility. **29:** *Twelve others following him*, cf. 1.10. Nephi’s vision included elements from Lehi’s inaugural revelation; see v. 7; 12.6.

³⁰ And it came to pass that the angel spake unto me again, saying, “Look!” And I looked, and I beheld the heavens open again, and I saw angels descending upon the children of men; and they did minister unto them.

³¹ And he spake unto me again, saying, “Look!” And I looked, and I beheld the Lamb of God going forth among the children of men. And I beheld multitudes of people who were sick, and who were afflicted with all manner of diseases, and with devils and unclean spirits; and the angel spake and showed all these things unto me. And they were healed by the power of the Lamb of God; and the devils and the unclean spirits were cast out.

³² And it came to pass that the angel spake unto me again, saying, “Look!” And I looked and beheld the Lamb of God, that he was taken by the people; yea, the Son of the everlasting God was judged of the world; and I saw and bear record. ³³ And I, Nephi, saw that he was lifted up upon the cross and slain for the sins of the world.

³⁴ And after he was slain I saw the multitudes of the earth, that they were gathered together to fight against the apostles of the Lamb; for thus were the twelve called by the angel of the Lord. ³⁵ And the multitude of the earth was gathered together; and I beheld

that they were in a large and spacious building, like unto the building which my father saw. And the angel of the Lord spake unto me again, saying, “Behold the world and the wisdom thereof; yea, behold the house of Israel hath gathered together to fight against the twelve apostles of the Lamb.”

³⁶ And it came to pass that I saw and bear record, that the great and spacious building was the pride of the world; and it fell, and the fall thereof was exceeding great. And the angel of the Lord spake unto me again, saying, “Thus shall be the destruction of all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, that shall fight against the twelve apostles of the Lamb.”

Nephi, Sees the Coming of Jesus to the New World

12 ¹ And it came to pass that the angel said unto me, “Look, and behold thy seed, and also the seed of thy brethren.” And I looked and beheld the land of promise; and I beheld multitudes of people, yea, even as it were in number as many as the sand of the sea.

² And it came to pass that I beheld multitudes gathered together to battle, one against the other; and I beheld wars, and rumors of wars,

30–31: The *angels descending* and *ministering* seems more connected to 3 Ne (3 Ne 17.24) than to the NT, though the Gospels do contain numerous accounts of *healings* and *casting out unclean spirits*. **32:** Ironically, the judge of the world will himself be judged by the world. **33:** *Lifted up upon the cross*, the phrase “lifted up” is Johannine (Jn 3.14; 8.28; 12.32, 34; see 3 Ne 27.14–15n); however, at 19.10 it is attributed to Zenock, a non-biblical prophet whose writings were included on the Brass Plates. The Roman practice of crucifixion would have been unfamiliar to Nephi, though again 19.10 has the non-biblical prophet Neum using the term. **34:** Oddly, this account of Christ’s life concludes with no mention of the Resurrection (even though Lehi spoke of that event at 10.11); the vision of Christ’s coming to the Nephites in the next chapter (12.6) completes what is missing here. **35:** *The building which my father saw*, 8.26, 31. This verse seems to refer to the persecution of the early church by the Jews, or *the house of Israel*, rather than by Romans or other Gentiles. A more universal persecution is assumed in the next verse.

CHAPTER 12

1–12: These prophecies are fulfilled at 3 Ne 8–4 Ne 1. **1:** *Thy seed, and also the seed of thy brethren*, Nephi’s vision says nothing about the Mulekites. Having *seed*, or descendants, as *numerous as the sand of the sea* was an important part of the Abrahamic covenant (Gen 22.17), as well as Isaiah’s prophecy of a surviving remnant of Israel (Isa 10.22, quoted at 2 Ne 20.22; Rom 9.27). **2:** This chapter begins and ends with *multitudes gathered* in *wars and rumors of wars*; see v. 21. The phrase *wars . . . rumors of wars* has eschatological connotations, but the seven occurrences in the BoM do not refer to the conflicts foretold at Mt 24.6 and Mk 13.7.

and great slaughters with the sword among my people.³ And it came to pass that I beheld many generations pass away, after the manner of wars and contentions in the land; and I beheld many cities, yea, even that I did not number them.

⁴ And it came to pass that I saw a mist of darkness on the face of the land of promise; and I saw lightnings, and I heard thunderings, and earthquakes, and all manner of tumultuous noises; and I saw the earth and the rocks, that they rent; and I saw mountains tumbling into pieces; and I saw the plains of the earth, that they were broken up; and I saw many cities that they were sunk; and I saw many that they were burned with fire; and I saw many that did tumble to the earth, because of the quaking thereof.⁵ And it came to pass after I saw these things, I saw the vapor of darkness, that it passed from off the face of the earth; and behold, I saw multitudes who had fallen^a because of the great and terrible judgments of the Lord.

⁶ And I saw the heavens open, and the Lamb of God descending out of heaven; and he came down and showed himself unto them.
⁷ And I also saw and bear record that the Holy Ghost fell upon twelve others; and they were ordained of God, and chosen.⁸ And the angel spake unto me, saying, “Behold the twelve

disciples of the Lamb, who are chosen to minister unto thy seed.”⁹ And he said unto me, “Thou rememberest the twelve apostles of the Lamb? Behold they are they who shall judge the twelve tribes of Israel; wherefore, the twelve ministers of thy seed shall be judged of them; for ye are of the house of Israel.”¹⁰ And these twelve ministers whom thou beholdest shall judge thy seed. And, behold, they are righteous forever; for because of their faith in the Lamb of God their garments are made white in his blood.”

¹¹ And the angel said unto me, “Look!” And I looked, and beheld three generations pass away in righteousness; and their garments were white even like unto the Lamb of God. And the angel said unto me, “These are made white in the blood of the Lamb, because of their faith in him.”¹² And I, Nephi, also saw many of the fourth generation who passed away in righteousness.

Nephi, Sees Unbelief and War among Lehi's Descendants

¹³ And it came to pass that I saw the multitudes of the earth gathered together.¹⁴ And the angel said unto me, “Behold thy seed, and also the seed of thy brethren.”¹⁵ And it came

^a 5 O, 1981 *had not fallen*

4–5: Nephi’s description of a *mist of darkness* literalizes an allegorical element of Lehi’s dream (8.23–24); the accompanying *lightnings*, *thunderings*, and *earthquakes* all happened at the time when Jesus appeared to the Nephites (3 Ne 8.5–19). *Cities that . . . were sunk* and a *vapor of darkness* are additional prophecies of the destruction at Jesus’s coming (3 Ne 8.14, 20). 4: The eight repetitions of “I saw” in this verse emphasize the visual mode of this revelation; cf. the five repetitions in 14.28–30. 6: *Descending out of heaven*, this sight was promised by the Spirit at 11.7; the vision of Christ’s coming among the Nephites (later fulfilled at 3 Ne 11.8–12) is the resurrection event that was missing at 11.34. 7: *Twelve others*, the Nephite Twelve who are called at 3 Ne 11.18–22; cf. 3 Ne 12.1. Their names are given at 3 Ne 19.4, and the Holy Ghost falls upon them at 19.13. 9: *Thou rememberest the twelve apostles*, 11.29, 34–36; the BoM is always careful to distinguish the original apostles in Judea from the Nephite Twelve, who are never referred to as “apostles.” *Apostles . . . shall judge the twelve tribes*, Mt 19.28; Lk 22.30. 10: *Garments made white in his blood*, this counterintuitive image, related to Rev 7.14, appears six times in the BoM. *Shall judge thy seed*, the task of judging the Nephites will be delegated to the Nephite Twelve, see 3 Ne 27.27. 13–23: These prophecies are fulfilled at Morm 6, when the Lamanites gather together for a final battle against the Nephites. The BoM narrative is characterized by prophetic foreknowledge rather than driven by suspense; outcomes may be tragic, but there are few surprises for readers. 14–15: *Thy seed and the seed of thy brethren . . . gathered together to battle*, the same forces are arrayed in v. 19; in the intervening verses, the angel connects the coming Nephite military catastrophe with Lehi’s dream by equating the river with the masses of warriors, brought on by a combination of mists/temptations and the spacious building/pride.

to pass that I looked and beheld the people of my seed gathered together in multitudes against the seed of my brethren; and they were gathered together to battle.

¹⁶ And the angel spake unto me, saying, “Behold the fountain of filthy water which thy father saw; yea, even the river of which he spake; and the depths thereof are the depths of hell. ¹⁷ And the mists of darkness are the temptations of the devil, which blindeth the eyes, and hardeneth the hearts of the children of men, and leadeth them away into broad roads, that they perish and are lost. ¹⁸ And the large and spacious building, which thy father saw, is vain imaginations and the pride of the children of men. And a great and a terrible gulf divideth them; yea, even the word of the justice^a of the Eternal God, and the Messiah^b who is the Lamb of God, of whom the Holy Ghost beareth record, from the beginning of the world until this time, and from this time henceforth and forever.”

¹⁹ And while the angel spake these words, I beheld and saw that the seed of my brethren did contend against my seed, according to the word of the angel; and because of the pride of my seed, and the temptations of the devil, I beheld that the seed of my brethren did overpower the people of my seed. ²⁰ And it came to pass that I beheld, and saw the people of the

seed of my brethren that they had overcome my seed; and they went forth in multitudes upon the face of the land. ²¹ And I saw them gathered together in multitudes; and I saw wars and rumors of wars among them; and in wars and rumors of wars I saw many generations pass away.

²² And the angel said unto me, “Behold these shall dwindle in unbelief.” ²³ And it came to pass that I beheld, after they had dwindled in unbelief they became a dark, and loathsome, and a filthy people, full of idleness and all manner of abominations.

Nephi, Sees a Great and Abominable Church

13 ¹ And it came to pass that the angel spake unto me, saying, “Look!” And I looked and beheld many nations and kingdoms.

² And the angel said unto me, “What beholdest thou?”

And I said, “I behold many nations and kingdoms.”

^a 18 O sword of the justice

^b 18 O, P Jesus Christ; 1837 the Messiah

16: *Fountain of filthy water*, 8.32; distinct from the “fountain of living waters” at 11.25 (8.20), cf. 15.27. *River*, 8.13. **17:** *Mists of darkness*, 8.23. *Devil*, a Second Temple and NT term that is absent from the OT but occurs 59 times in the NT and 99 times in the BoM. *Blindeth the eyes and hardeneth the hearts*, Jn 12.40 (alluding to Isa 6.10), also at 1 Ne 13.27; Mos 11.29. **18:** *Large and spacious building*, 8.26. *Vain imaginations*, futile thinking; cf. Rom 1.21. *Sword* [the reading of O] *of the justice of the Eternal God*, this non-biblical image appears nine times in the BoM, and is almost always described as “hanging over” or about to “fall” on wrongdoers; the usage is reminiscent of the famous Sword of Damocles. *Messiah*, it is not clear why JS changed the original reading “Jesus Christ” to “Messiah” in 1837; perhaps he felt that “Messiah” better fit the passage as a whole. In any case, this is the first use of the name Jesus Christ in the BoM, and Nephi’s later remark that “according to . . . the word of the angel of God, his [the Messiah’s] name shall be Jesus Christ” (2 Ne 25.19) is a direct reference to this verse; see the discussion in ATV. (At 2 Ne 10.3, Jacob notes that he learned from an angel, not from his brother Nephi, that the Redeemer would be named “Christ.”) The BoM generally treats “Jesus Christ” as a personal name rather than a name and a title. **20:** *Seed of my brethren . . . overcome my seed*, some remnant of the Nephites will eventually be absorbed into the Lamanite lineage; see 13.30. **23:** *Dark*, see 2 Ne 5.21n.

CHAPTER 13

Nephi’s vision of the future now moves past the time period of the BoM. **2:** *What beholdest thou*, see 11.14n.

³ And he said unto me, “These are the nations and kingdoms of the Gentiles.”

⁴ And it came to pass that I saw among the nations of the Gentiles the foundation^a of a great church. ⁵ And the angel said unto me, “Behold the foundation^b of a church which is most abominable above all other churches, which slayeth the saints of God, yea, and tortureth them and bindeth them down, and yoketh them with a yoke of iron, and bringeth them down into captivity.” ⁶ And it came to pass that I beheld this great and abominable church; and I saw the devil that he was the foundation^c of it.

⁷ And I also saw gold, and silver, and silks, and scarlets, and fine-twined linen, and all manner of precious clothing; and I saw many harlots. ⁸ And the angel spake unto me, saying, “Behold the gold, and the silver, and the silks, and the scarlets, and the fine-twined linen, and the precious clothing, and the harlots, are the desires of this great and abominable church. ⁹ And also for the praise of the world do they destroy the saints of God, and bring them down into captivity.”

Nephi, Sees the Arrival of Gentiles in the Americas

¹⁰ And it came to pass that I looked and beheld many waters; and they divided the

Gentiles from the seed of my brethren. ¹¹ And it came to pass that the angel said unto me, “Behold the wrath of God is upon the seed of thy brethren.” ¹² And I looked and beheld a man among the Gentiles, who was separated^d from the seed of my brethren by the many waters; and I beheld the Spirit of God, that it came down and wrought upon the man; and he went forth upon the many waters, even unto the seed of my brethren, who were in the promised land. ¹³ And it came to pass that I beheld the Spirit of God, that it wrought upon other Gentiles; and they went forth out of captivity, upon the many waters.

¹⁴ And it came to pass that I beheld many multitudes of the Gentiles upon the land of promise; and I beheld the wrath of God, that it was upon the seed of my brethren; and they were scattered before the Gentiles and were smitten. ¹⁵ And I beheld the Spirit of the Lord, that it was upon the Gentiles, and they did prosper and obtain the land for their

^a 4 O, 1981 *formation*

^b 5 O, 1981 *formation*

^c 6 O, P, 1981 *founder*

^d 12 O *the Gentiles which were separated* [That is, the Gentiles, not the man, would be separated from the Lamanites.]

3: *Gentiles* were mentioned previously by Lehi at 10.11–14. **4:** *Formation of a church*, early Latter-day Saints, in an anti-Catholic era, would have seen this as the medieval Catholic Church, which persecuted and killed *saints* whom they considered heretics. Later in Nephi’s vision, the “abominable church” encompasses all who “fight against the Lamb,” regardless of denomination or religion; see 14.13. **5:** *Above all other churches*, apparently a reference to multiple, post-Reformation Christian denominations. In 1–2 Nephi, the term “churches” is always used this way (and also in the prophecies of Morm 8.28–37); elsewhere in the BoM “churches” refer to local congregations of God’s church, as at Mos 25.22 (with the exception of 4 Ne 1, which describes the origins of rival, competing Nephite churches). *Saints of God*, non-biblical, but seven times in the BoM (all in 1 Ne 13–15). In the BoM, the term “saints” generally refers to people of special spiritual status, and especially Christian martyrs, as opposed to ordinary church members, but see 14.12; Mos 3.19. **7:** The *precious clothing* connects the abominable church with the well-dressed occupants of the spacious building in Lehi’s dream, see 8.27. **10:** *Many waters*, the Atlantic Ocean. *Gentiles*, here referring primarily to Europeans. **12:** *A man*, perhaps Christopher Columbus. *Wrought upon*, WB: “influenced; prevailed on.” **13:** The immigration of the Pilgrims and Puritans to America is regarded as their coming *forth out of captivity* from the abominable church (v. 8), which in this case would refer to the Catholic-influenced Church of England. The emancipation of European immigrants from spiritual captivity will be noted several more times in this chapter and the next, with no recognition of their own literal enslavement of Native Americans and Africans in the New World. **15:** *White... like unto my people*, see 2 Ne 5.21n.

inheritance; and I beheld that they were white, and exceeding fair and beautiful, like unto my people before they were slain.¹⁶ And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld that the Gentiles who had gone forth out of captivity did humble themselves before the Lord; and the power of the Lord was with them.

¹⁷ And I beheld that their mother Gentiles were gathered together upon the waters, and upon the land also, to battle against them.

¹⁸ And I beheld that the power of God was with them, and also that the wrath of God was upon all those that were gathered together against them to battle.¹⁹ And I, Nephi, beheld that the Gentiles that had gone out of captivity were delivered by the power of God out of the hands of all other nations.²⁰ And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld that they did prosper in the land; and I beheld a book, and it was carried forth among them.

Nephi, Sees the Record of the Jews in the Hands of the Gentiles

²¹ And the angel said unto me, “Knowest thou the meaning of the book?”

²² And I said unto him, “I know not.”

²³ And he said, “Behold it proceedeth out of the mouth of a Jew.” And I, Nephi, beheld it; and he said unto me, “The book that thou beholdest is a record of the Jews, which contains the covenants of the Lord, which he hath made unto the house of Israel; and it also containeth many of the prophecies of the holy prophets; and it is a record like unto the engravings which are upon the plates of brass, save there are not so many; nevertheless, they contain the covenants of the Lord, which he hath made unto the house of Israel; wherefore, they are of great worth unto the Gentiles.”

²⁴ And the angel of the Lord said unto me, “Thou hast beheld that the book proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew; and when it proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew it contained the plainness^a of the gospel of the Lord, of whom the twelve apostles bear record; and they bear record according to the truth which is in the Lamb of God.

^a 24 O, 1981 *fulness*

17: *Their mother Gentiles*, England, gathering forces to put down the American Revolution. **20:** *They did prosper in the land* echoes God's covenant with Lehi; see 2 Ne 1.20. *A book*, the English Bible. **21–29:** The angel characterizes the Bible as containing covenants and prophecies, both of which are major concerns of the BoM. Other biblical genres, such as legal codes, wisdom literature, and psalms are ignored. **23:** *Save there are not so many*, the implication is that the Brass Plates contained additional writings that were lost before the biblical canon was firmly established. The BoM restores some of these, including prophecies of Neum, Zenock, and Zenos (1 Ne 19.8–21; Jacob 5; Alma 33.3–17), as well as a lost prophecy of Joseph of Egypt (2 Ne 3). *Covenants... unto the house of Israel*, apparently more than just the Mosaic Covenant. The Abrahamic covenant is explicitly noted at 15.18; 17.40; and 22.9, while the Davidic Covenant receives scant attention in the BoM. Covenants were of particular interest to Nephi, struggling to understand how his own people, far from Jerusalem, might fit into the promises made to Israel, but he is told that the ancient covenants will also have significance for the Gentiles. Rather than supersessionism, the BoM holds that God's covenants with Israel will never be abrogated, and that righteous Gentiles will ultimately be “numbered among the house of Israel” (1 Ne 14.2; 15.16; 2 Ne 10.18; 3 Ne 16.13; 21.6, 22; 30.2), and thus will receive salvation under terms given by God to the Jews, but see also 2 Ne 30.2. **24–26:** *From the mouth of a Jew*, the singular here is puzzling (see v. 38n), but the angel is clearly referring to both the Old and New Testaments, and he regards the original twelve apostles as Jews. The BoM asserts that later Gentiles, associated with the abominable church, when creating the Bible intentionally omitted or deleted writings that included *many plain and precious parts of the gospel*, as well as *many covenants*. This would explain the confused state of Christianity at the time of European immigration to the Americas. For many Protestants of the time, however, a more obvious problem was the inclusion of uninspired writings in Catholic Bibles, that is, the Apocrypha. **24:** *Fulness of the Gospel*, which the BoM would restore; see 10.14n. The Bible is repeatedly described as proceeding forth from the mouths of Jews (v. 38; 14.23; cf. 2 Ne 29.4), while the BoM, in contrast, has come directly from the mouth of the Lord (2 Ne 3.21; 29.2; 33.14; Moro 10.28).

²⁵ Wherefore, these things go forth from the Jews in purity unto the Gentiles, according to the truth which is in God.

²⁶ “And after they go forth by the hand of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, from the Jews unto the Gentiles, thou seest the foundation of a^a great and abominable church, which is most abominable above all other churches; for behold, they have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away.²⁷ And all this have they done that they might pervert the right ways of the Lord, that they might blind the eyes and harden the hearts of the children of men.²⁸ Wherefore, thou seest that after the book hath gone forth through the hands of the great and abominable church, that there are many plain and precious things taken away from the book, which is the book of the Lamb of God.

²⁹ “And after these plain and precious things were taken away it goeth forth unto all the nations of the Gentiles; and after it goeth forth unto all the nations of the Gentiles, yea, even across the many waters which thou hast seen with the Gentiles which have gone forth out of captivity, thou seest—because of the many plain and precious things which have been taken out of the book, which were plain unto the understanding of the children of men, according to the plainness which is in the Lamb of God—because of these things

which are taken away out of the gospel of the Lamb, an exceeding great many do stumble, yea, inasmuch that Satan hath great power over them.”

The Angel Tells Nephi, about the Restoration of the Gospel

³⁰ “Nevertheless, thou beholdest that the Gentiles who have gone forth out of captivity, and have been lifted up by the power of God above all other nations, upon the face of the land which is choice above all other lands, which is the land that the Lord God hath covenanted with thy father that his seed should have for the land of their inheritance; wherefore, thou seest that the Lord God will not suffer that the Gentiles will utterly destroy the mixture of thy seed, which are among thy brethren.³¹ Neither will he suffer that the Gentiles shall destroy the seed of thy brethren.³² Neither will the Lord God suffer that the Gentiles shall forever remain in that awful state of blindness,^b which thou beholdest they are in, because of the plain and most precious parts of the gospel of the Lamb which have been kept back by that abominable church, whose formation thou hast seen.³³ ‘Wherefore,’ saith the Lamb of God, ‘I will be merciful unto the Gentiles, unto the visiting of the remnant of the house of Israel in great judgment.’”

^a 26 O, 1981 *formation of that*

^b 32 O, P *state of awful woundedness*

29: *Plainness* is of particular importance to Nephi, much more so than for any other BoM writer; see 2 Ne 25.4, 7, 20, 28; 31.2–3; 32.7; 33.5–6. *Stumble*, WB: “to trip in walking; to slide into a crime or an error.” *Satan* (“the adversary” or “the accuser”) is generally a title rather than a proper name in the Hebrew Bible, as in Job 1–2 and Zech 3.1–2, where it refers to a being who functioned in the divine council as something like a prosecuting attorney. The identification of Satan with the devil came about in the Second Temple and Christian eras; this is the way the term is used in the BoM. **30:** The Nephite promised land is regularly described as being *choice above all other lands* (2.20; 2 Ne 1.5; 10.19; Ether 2.7, 10, 15; 9.20; cf. Jacob 5.43). *Covenanted with thy father*, there has been no account so far of a covenant with Lehi; the first mention comes later, at 2 Ne 1.5. **32:** The reading “woundedness” from O and P may be an attractive concept, but it is most likely a transcription error; ATV posits “state of awful wickedness” (cf. Ether 4.15). **33–37:** The angel is here quoting the Lamb of God. This is the first time in the BoM we hear words that are explicitly attributed to Jesus. **33:** *The remnant of the house of Israel*, although the BoM is primarily Deuteronomistic in its perspective, it also draws upon the remnant theology of Mic, Isa, Zeph, and Jer.

³⁴ And it came to pass that the angel of the Lord spake unto me, saying, “Behold,’ saith the Lamb of God, ‘after I have visited the remnant of the house of Israel (and this remnant of whom I speak is the seed of thy father), wherefore, after I have visited them in judgment, and smitten them by the hand of the Gentiles, and after the Gentiles do stumble exceedingly, because of the most plain and precious parts of the gospel of the Lamb which have been kept back by that abominable church, which is the mother of harlots,’ saith the Lamb, ‘I will be merciful unto the Gentiles in that day, insomuch that I will bring forth unto them, in mine own power, much of my gospel, which shall be plain and precious,’ saith the Lamb.

³⁵ “For, behold,’ saith the Lamb, ‘I will manifest myself unto thy seed, that they shall write many things which I shall minister unto them, which shall be plain and precious; and after thy seed shall be destroyed, and dwindle in unbelief, and also the seed of thy brethren, behold, these things shall be hid up, to come forth unto the Gentiles, by the gift and power of the Lamb.’ ³⁶ ‘And in them shall be written my gospel,’ saith the Lamb, ‘and my rock and

my salvation.’ ³⁷ And blessed are they who shall seek to bring forth my Zion at that day, for they shall have the gift and the power of the Holy Ghost; and if they endure unto the end they shall be lifted up at the last day, and shall be saved in the everlasting kingdom of the Lamb; and whoso shall publish peace, yea, tidings of great joy, how beautiful upon the mountains shall they be.”

Nephi, Sees Additional Records to Come Forth

³⁸ And it came to pass that I beheld the remnant of the seed of my brethren, and also the book of the Lamb of God, which had proceeded forth from the mouth of the Jew, that it came forth from the Gentiles unto the remnant of the seed of my brethren. ³⁹ And after it had come forth unto them I beheld other books, which came forth by the power of the Lamb, from the Gentiles unto them, unto the convincing of the Gentiles and the remnant of the seed of my brethren, and also the Jews who were scattered upon all the face of the earth, that the records of the prophets and of the twelve apostles of the Lamb are true.

34: *Smitten them by the hand of the Gentiles*, the BoM regards the conquest of Native Americans by European settlers as a manifestation of divine judgment, but it also later speaks forcefully of the need for those settlers to assist indigenous peoples in restoring them to their former dignity and prosperity, threatening dire consequences if the Gentiles fail in that obligation; see 3 Ne 20.14–29. *Mother of harlots*, Rev 17.5; the phrase is used again at 1 Ne 14.16–17. **35:** This is the first time that Nephi has heard that his own descendants will *dwindle in unbelief*. He had killed Laban and taken the Brass Plates to prevent this very outcome; see 4.12–19; 12.18–22 (referring to his brothers’ descendants). *These things shall be hid up*, that is, the BoM. **36:** *My rock and my salvation*, a recurrent epithet for God in Ps, is used in the BoM only by Nephi and Jacob. **37:** *Zion*, the first mention in the BoM; here it does not refer to Jerusalem and its environs, as in the OT, but rather to God’s future kingdom on earth. As a consequence of Jesus being “lifted up” in agony on the cross, believers will ultimately be “lifted up” to salvation; cf. 11.33. *Lifted up at the last day*, nine times in the BoM; the phrase may be original to the BoM. *Whoso shall publish peace, yea, tidings of great joy, how beautiful upon the mountains shall they be*, a conflation of Isa 52.7 and Lk 2.10. As it often does, the BoM Christianizes an OT prophecy. The interpretation of Isa 52.7–10 will figure prominently in the trial of Abinadi at Mos 12–15, as well as at 3 Ne 20. **38:** *Book of the Lamb of God*, the Bible. *From the mouth of the Jew* (also at 14.23), not a particular Jew, but rather Jewish people in general. The book of Romans uses “the Jew” and “the Gentile” to refer to categories of people; the BoM occasionally does the same (see 2 Ne 33.8). **39:** *Other books*, the BoM and additional scriptures. By 2 Ne 25.8, Nephi has realized that the record he is writing will become one of the books he saw in this vision many years earlier. *Records of the prophets*, the OT. *Records . . . of the twelve apostles*, one of only three direct references to the NT in the BoM; see 14.25–27 (regarding the book of Revelation) and Ether 12.41.

⁴⁰ And the angel spake unto me, saying, “These last records, which thou hast seen among the Gentiles, shall establish the truth of the first, which are of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, and shall make known the plain and precious things which have been taken away from them; and shall make known to all kindreds, tongues, and people, that the Lamb of God is the Son of the Eternal Father, and the Savior of the world; and that all men must come unto him, or they cannot be saved.⁴¹ And they must come according to the words which shall be established by the mouth of the Lamb; and the words of the Lamb shall be made known in the records of thy seed, as well as in the records of the twelve apostles of the Lamb; wherefore they both shall be established in one; for there is one God and one Shepherd over all the earth.”

The Angel Assures Nephi, That the Gentiles Can Repent

⁴² “And the time cometh that he shall manifest himself unto all nations, both unto the Jews

and also unto the Gentiles; and after he has manifested himself unto the Jews and also unto the Gentiles, then he shall manifest himself unto the Gentiles and also unto the Jews, and the last shall be first, and the first shall be last.

14 ¹ “And it shall come to pass, that if the Gentiles shall hearken unto the Lamb of God in that day that he shall manifest himself unto them in word, and also in power, in very deed, unto the taking away of their stumbling blocks—² and harden not their hearts against the Lamb of God, they shall be numbered among the seed of thy father; yea, they shall be numbered among the house of Israel; and they shall be a blessed people upon the promised land forever; they shall be no more brought down into captivity; and the house of Israel shall no more be confounded.³ And that great pit, which hath been digged for them by that great and abominable church, which was founded by the devil and his children, that he might lead away the souls of men down to hell—yea, that great pit which

⁴⁰: *Last records... shall establish the truth of the first*, the BoM will convince many of the veracity of the Bible, in part by restoring lost teachings; cf. 2 Ne 3.12; Morm 7.8–9. The BoM envisions the miraculous recovery of multiple bibles from throughout the world, and sees the gathering together of the records of God’s dealings with various peoples as a precursor to the uniting of actual peoples; see 2 Ne 29.6–14. **41**: *One Shepherd*, Ezek 34.23; 37.24 (both referring to a future Davidic ruler over Israel, in contrast to *over all the earth* here); Jn 10.16 (referring to Jesus). It is perhaps unexpected that Christ is regarded as both the *Lamb* and the *Shepherd* within a single verse. **42**: In the last days, salvation will go first to the Gentiles and then to the Jews, reversing the situation at the time of Jesus, and fulfilling his prophecy that *the last shall be first, and the first shall be last* (Mt 19.30; 20.16; Mk 10.31; Lk 13.30; cf. Jacob 5.63).

CHAPTER 14

1–7: This passage presents an “if/if not” argument: vv. 1–2 describe the state of the latter-day Gentiles if they repent, vv. 5b–6 indicate the consequences if they do not repent, and v. 7 emphasizes the momentous nature of their decision. A similar argument, on the same theme, can be seen at 3 Ne 16.13–15. **1**: *Manifest himself unto them in word and also in power*, through the BoM (following from 13.38–41). *Unto the taking away of their stumbling blocks*, Isa 57.14. *Stumbling blocks*, that is, the loss of plain and precious truths, see 13.29, 34; Jacob 4.14–15. **2**: *Numbered among the seed of thy father*, the new promised land has been given to the Lehitites as an inheritance, but Gentile believers, through adoption, can eventually share in that blessing as they join with the Lamanites, or Native Americans; cf. 2 Ne 10.19. *Numbered among the house of Israel*, see 13.23n. *Captivity*, here referring to political oppression, though v. 4 will shift the focus to the spiritual “captivity of the devil,” and v. 7 will combine the two types of subjugation. *Confound*, WB: “to throw into disorder,” “to destroy.” **3**: It is not obvious where the quotation of the Lamb ends, but v. 7 (“the captivity of the devil, of which I have spoken”) makes it clear that it extends into v. 4. *That great pit*, this is the first that we have heard of a pit, but for similar imagery see Ps 7.15; Prov 28.10. *The Devil and his children*, cf. 1 Jn 3.10; Alma 5.25; 30.60. *Hell*, usually in the BoM this refers to the Christian notion of a place of suffering for the spirits of the wicked, overseen by the devil, rather than the Hebrew concept of Sheol, the underworld in general. *Not the destruction of the soul*, the BoM is quick to disavow annihilationism.

hath been digged for the destruction of men shall be filled by those who digged it, 'unto their utter destruction,' saith the Lamb of God, 'not the destruction of the soul, save it be the casting of it into that hell which hath no end. ⁴ For behold, this is according to the captivity of the devil, and also according to the justice of God, upon all those who will work wickedness and abomination before him.'"

⁵ And it came to pass that the angel spake unto me, Nephi, saying, "Thou hast beheld that if the Gentiles repent it shall be well with them; and thou also knowest concerning the covenants of the Lord unto the house of Israel; and thou also hast heard that whoso repenteth not must perish. ⁶ Therefore, wo be unto the Gentiles if it so be that they harden their hearts against the Lamb of God. ⁷ 'For the time cometh,' saith the Lamb of God, 'that I will work a great and a marvelous work among the children of men; a work which shall be everlasting, either on the one hand or on the other—either to the convincing of them unto peace and life eternal, or unto the deliverance of them to the hardness of their hearts and the blindness of their minds unto their being brought down into captivity, and also into destruction, both temporally and spiritually, according to the captivity of the devil, of which I have spoken.'"

Nephi, Sees Two Churches at the Time the Father Will Fulfill His Covenants

⁸ And it came to pass that when the angel had spoken these words, he said unto me, "Rememberest thou the covenants of the Father unto the house of Israel?"

I said unto him, "Yea."

⁹ And it came to pass that he said unto me, "Look, and behold that great and abominable church, which is the mother of abominations, whose foundation^a is the devil." ¹⁰ And he said unto me, "Behold there are save two churches only; the one is the church of the Lamb of God, and the other is the church of the devil; wherefore, whoso belongeth not to the church of the Lamb of God belongeth to that great church, which is the mother of abominations; and she is the whore of all the earth."

¹¹ And it came to pass that I looked and beheld the whore of all the earth, and she sat upon many waters; and she had dominion over all the earth, among all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people. ¹² And it came to pass that I beheld the church of the Lamb of God, and its numbers were few, because of the wickedness and abominations of the whore who sat upon many waters; nevertheless, I beheld that the church of the Lamb, who were

^a 9 P, 1981 *founder*

7: *Marvelous work*, Isa 29.14, and nine times in the BoM, usually with reference to God's miraculous interventions in the latter days, particularly in the coming forth of the BoM. *Temporally*, WB: "pertaining to this life or this world or the body only; secular. In this sense, it is opposed to spiritual." This is how the word is used in the BoM; in its only occurrence in the Bible (2 Cor 4.18), it means "temporary." 8–9: *Covenants of the Father unto the house of Israel*, this is the first mention in the BoM of actions taken by God the Father, distinct from those of the Son. Nephi does not seem perplexed by Trinitarian language; he has already learned that God has a son at 10.17; cf. 11.24. The BoM regularly describes multiple covenants with Abraham and the house of Israel as having been made by the Father. *Mother of... abominations*, Rev 17.5 and four times in the BoM (all in this chapter). 10: At this point the identification of the abominable church transcends any particular denomination or institution; see 13.4n. *Church of the Lamb*, non-biblical, but five times in the BoM, all within 14.10–14. The type of dualistic categorization seen here is characteristic of apocalyptic literature. 11: *Whore... sat upon many waters*, cf. Rev 17.1, 15. 12: *Numbers were few*, a prophecy that although *saints of God* might be found in many nations, they would never become powerful or numerically significant. The phrase "few in number" is associated with exile at Deut 4.27.

the saints of God, were also upon all the face of the earth; and their dominions upon the face of the earth were small, because of the wickedness of the great whore whom I saw.

¹³ And it came to pass that I beheld that the great mother of abominations did gather together multitudes upon the face of all the earth, among all the nations of the Gentiles, to fight against the Lamb of God. ¹⁴ And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld the power of the Lamb of God, that it descended upon the saints of the church of the Lamb, and upon the covenant people of the Lord, who were scattered upon all the face of the earth; and they were armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory.

¹⁵ And it came to pass that I beheld that the wrath of God was poured out upon the great and abominable church, insomuch that there were wars and rumors of wars among all the nations and kindreds of the earth. ¹⁶ And as there began to be wars and rumors of wars among all the nations which belonged to the mother of abominations, the angel spake unto me, saying, “Behold, the wrath of God is upon the mother of harlots; and behold, thou seest all these things—” ¹⁷ And when the day cometh that the wrath of God is poured out upon the mother of harlots, which is the great and abominable church of all the earth, whose foundation^a is the devil, then, at that day, the work of the Father shall commence, in preparing

the way for the fulfilling of his covenants, which he hath made to his people who are of the house of Israel.”

Nephi, Sees the Apostle John

¹⁸ And it came to pass that the angel spake unto me, saying, “Look!” ¹⁹ And I looked and beheld a man, and he was dressed in a white robe. ²⁰ And the angel said unto me, “Behold one of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. ²¹ Behold, he shall see and write the remainder of these things; yea, and also many things which have been. ²² And he shall also write concerning the end of the world. ²³ Wherefore, the things which he shall write are just and true; and behold they are written in the book which thou beheld proceeding out of the mouth of the Jew; and at the time they proceeded out of the mouth of the Jew, or, at the time the book proceeded out of the mouth of the Jew, the things which were written were plain and pure, and most precious and easy to the understanding of all men.

²⁴ “And behold, the things which this apostle of the Lamb shall write are many things which thou hast seen; and behold, the remainder shalt thou see. ²⁵ But the things which thou shalt see hereafter thou shalt not write; for the Lord God hath ordained the apostle of the Lamb of God that he should write them.

^a 17 P, 1981 *founder*

13: Earlier in 11.34–36 the “multitudes of the earth,” symbolized by the spacious building, gathered together to fight against the apostles of the Lamb; now they are fighting against the Lamb himself; cf. Rev 17.14. **14:** *Covenant people of the Lord*, non-biblical, but seven times in the BoM; the term refers to the descendants of Lehi (15.14), Jews (2 Ne 6.13; Morm 3.21), and repentant Gentiles (2 Ne 30.2). The *saints of the church* are not strictly synonymous with the *covenant people*, which is a much larger group. **17:** *The work of the Father shall commence*, the BoM sees itself as a harbinger of the beginning of the end times; see 2 Ne 3.13; 30.8; 3 Ne 21.26–28; Morm 3.17. **19:** *Dressed in a white robe*, appropriately, John the Revelator’s attire corresponds to a familiar image from his book; see Rev 6.11; 7.9; 13–14. **22:** *He shall also write concerning the end of the world*, an apparent reference to Rev, which shares a great deal of phrasing with Nephi’s vision, including “twelve apostles of the Lamb,” “the Lamb,” “mother of harlots,” “souls of men,” “great whore,” “many waters,” and “wrath poured out.” **23:** *Book . . . proceeding out of the mouth of the Jew*, the Bible; cf. 13.23, 38. **25:** *Thou shalt not write*, all three major BoM narrators repeatedly receive divine instruction concerning what they should include or omit from their record; see v. 28; 9.3; 2 Ne 4.25; 5.29–30; 3 Ne 26.11–12; 27.23–24; 28.25; 30.1–2; Ether 4.5; 8.26; 13.13; cf. Rev 10.4; 21.5.

²⁶ And also others who have been, to them hath he shown all things, and they have written them; and they are sealed up to come forth in their purity, according to the truth which is in the Lamb, in the own due time of the Lord, unto the house of Israel.” ²⁷ And I, Nephi, heard and bear record, that the name of the apostle of the Lamb was John, according to the word of the angel.

²⁸ And behold, I, Nephi, am forbidden that I should write the remainder of the things which I saw and heard; wherefore the things which I have written sufficeth me; and I have written but a small part of the things which I saw. ²⁹ And I bear record that I saw the things which my father saw, and the angel of the Lord did make them known unto me. ³⁰ And now I make an end of speaking concerning the things which I saw while I was carried away in the Spirit; and if all the things which I saw are not written, the things which I have written are true. And thus it is. Amen.

Inquiring of the Lord

[IV] **15** ¹ And it came to pass that after I, Nephi, had been carried away in the Spirit, and seen all these things,

I returned to the tent of my father. ² And it came to pass that I beheld my brethren, and they were disputing one with another concerning the things which my father had spoken unto them. ³ For he truly spake many great things unto them, which were hard to be understood, save a man should inquire of the Lord; and they being hard in their hearts, therefore they did not look unto the Lord as they ought.

⁴ And now I, Nephi, was grieved because of the hardness of their hearts, and also, because of the things which I had seen, and knew they must unavoidably come to pass because of the great wickedness of the children of men. ⁵ And it came to pass that I was overcome because of my afflictions, for I considered that mine afflictions were great above all, because of the destructions^a of my people, for I had beheld their fall.

⁶ And it came to pass that after I had received strength I spake unto my brethren, desiring to know of them the cause of their disputations. ⁷ And they said, “Behold, we cannot understand the words which our

^a 5 O, 1981 destruction

26: *Others* to whom *he hath shown all things*, this select group includes the brother of Jared; see Ether 3.25–28. *Written . . . sealed up*, see Ether 4.4–7. **27:** *John*, that is, John the Revelator or John of Patmos, the author of the Gospel that now bears his name, but modern scholarship suggests that these were probably different people. **28–30:** *I saw*, see 12.4n. **29–30:** The combination of *the things which my father saw* and *carried away in the Spirit* closes off the inclusio that began at 11.1 (see chs. 11–14n). **30:** Nephi here conflates speaking and writing; his readers are the only audience for the words of chs. 11–14; see Omni 1.30n. *And thus it is. Amen*, see 9.6n.

CHAPTER 15

1: *Returned to the tent of my father*, presumably to talk about the things they had both seen (14.29). That discussion, whenever it may have happened, is not part of the BoM; we only read of Nephi’s conversation with his brothers. **3:** *Inquire of the Lord*, usually in the OT one inquires of the Lord through a prophet, not directly as here. **4:** *Grieved because of the hardness of their hearts*, a recurring theme in the relationship of Nephi and his brothers; see 2.18; 7.8. **5:** Nephi—who at this point is unmarried, has no children, and is far from the new promised land—despairs because his descendants will eventually be destroyed (12.19–20) and because the mission of the Lehtes as a remnant of Israel in the New World will end in failure (12.22–23). His being *overcome* in this verse complements the fate of his posterity at 12.20. **7:** *Words which our father hath spoken . . . Gentiles*, 10.12–14. The brothers’ first question concerns Lehi’s teachings about the *olive tree* and the *Gentiles* from ch. 10 rather than his dream in ch. 8, even though that earlier revelation had shown them outside the family circle, cut off from the tree and its fruit.

father hath spoken concerning the natural branches of the olive tree, and also concerning the Gentiles.”

⁸ And I said unto them, “Have ye inquired of the Lord?”

⁹ And they said unto me, “We have not; for the Lord maketh no such thing known unto us.”

¹⁰ Behold, I said unto them, “How is it that ye do not keep the commandments of the Lord? How is it that ye will perish, because of the hardness of your hearts? ¹¹ Do ye not remember the things which the Lord hath said?—‘If ye will not harden your hearts, and ask me in faith, believing that ye shall receive, with diligence in keeping my commandments, surely these things shall be made known unto you.’”^a

Nephi, Explains the Olive Tree

¹² “Behold, I say unto you, that the house of Israel was compared unto an olive tree, by the Spirit of the Lord which was in our fathers;^b and behold are we not broken off from the house of Israel, and are we not a branch of the house of Israel? ¹³ And now, the thing which our father meaneth concerning the grafting in of the natural branches through the fulness of

the Gentiles, is, that in the latter days, when our seed shall have dwindled in unbelief, yea, for the space of many years, and many generations after the Messiah shall be manifested in body unto the children of men, then shall the fulness of the gospel of the Messiah come unto the Gentiles, and from the Gentiles unto the remnant of our seed—¹⁴ And at that day shall the remnant of our seed know that they are of the house of Israel, and that they are the covenant people of the Lord; and then shall they know and come to the knowledge of their forefathers, and also to the knowledge of the gospel of their Redeemer, which was ministered unto their fathers by him; wherefore, they shall come to the knowledge of their Redeemer and the very points of his doctrine, that they may know how to come unto him and be saved.

¹⁵ “And then at that day will they not rejoice and give praise unto their everlasting God, their rock and their salvation? Yea, at that day, will they not receive the strength and nourishment from the true vine? Yea, will they not come unto the true fold of God?”

^a ¹¹ Reference uncertain, but see Mt 21.21–22.

^b ¹² O, 1981 *father*

8: Nephi assumes that revelation is accessible to all, perhaps not surprisingly given his own experience; see 2.16–19; 10.17–19. **11:** Comparable promises can be seen at Enos 1.15; Mos 4.21; Alma 22.16; 3 Ne 18.20; Morm 9.25; cf. Mk 11.24. In this case, what is offered is knowledge and understanding, through direct revelation. A similar invitation is extended to all readers of the BoM at Moro 10.4–5. *Ask me in faith, believing that ye shall receive*, a conflation of Jas 1.6 and Mt 21.22. **12:** *Compared to an olive tree*, Lehi used this image at 10.12–14; Zeno’s version (included in the Brass Plates) is found at Jacob 5; Paul’s version is at Rom 11.16–24. This allegory concerns the collective salvation of peoples in history; when Nephi explains Lehi’s dream allegory of the tree of life in vv. 21–36 below, the focus shifts to the salvation of individuals, particularly in the afterlife. **13:** *When our seed shall have dwindled in unbelief*, see 12.20n. Note the pronoun “our”: Nephi never shares with his brothers the fact that their descendants would one day destroy his own posterity (cf. 22.7–8). **14:** A succinct version of a primary theme in the BoM—that someday the descendants of Lehi (thought to be Native Americans) through the ministrations of the Gentiles will come to recognize their identity as Israelites in a covenant relationship with God. The key to their restoration is a knowledge of their *forefathers*, the *gospel*, and their *Redeemer*, all of which are explained in the BoM. *Very points of his doctrine*, unique to this verse, but perhaps a variant of “true points of his doctrine” (Hel 11.23; 3 Ne 21.6); cf. “the doctrine of Christ,” which is defined at 2 Ne 31.2–21 and 3 Ne 11.31–41. *Come unto him and be saved*; compare Nephi’s stated intention at 6.4. Here the emphasis is on *knowing how* to do so. **15–16:** Nephi employs a series of quickly shifting metaphors. **15:** *Will they not rejoice and give praise unto . . . their rock and their salvation*, as Nephi does in his Psalm at 2 Ne 4.30. *True vine*, Jn 15.1; the phrase also occurs at Alma 16.17 (which mentions grafted branches, as does v. 16 below). *True fold* and *true olive tree* both occur only here (but see 2 Ne 9.2).

¹⁶ Behold, I say unto you, Yea; they shall be remembered^a again among the house of Israel; they shall be grafted in, being a natural branch of the olive tree, into the true olive tree.

¹⁷ “And this is what our father meaneth; and he meaneth that it will not come to pass until after they are scattered by the Gentiles; and he meaneth that it shall come by way of the Gentiles, that the Lord may show his power unto the Gentiles, for the very cause that he shall be rejected of the Jews, or of the house of Israel. ¹⁸ Wherefore, our father hath not spoken of our seed alone, but also of all the house of Israel, pointing to the covenant which should be fulfilled in the latter days; which covenant the Lord made to our father Abraham, saying, ‘In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.’”^b

¹⁹ And it came to pass that I, Nephi, spake much unto them concerning these things; yea, I spake unto them concerning the restoration of the Jews in the latter days. ²⁰ And I did rehearse unto them the words of Isaiah, who spake concerning the restoration of the Jews, or of the house of Israel; and after they were restored they should no more be confounded, neither should they be scattered again. And it came to pass that I did speak many words unto

my brethren, that they were pacified and did humble themselves before the Lord.

Nephi, Explains the Tree, the Iron Rod, and the River

²¹ And it came to pass that they did speak unto me again, saying, “What meaneth this thing which our father saw in a dream? What meaneth the tree which he saw?”

²² And I said unto them, “It was a representation of the tree of life.”

²³ And they said unto me, “What meaneth the rod of iron which our father saw, that led to the tree?”

²⁴ And I said unto them that it was the word of God; and whoso would hearken unto the word of God, and would hold fast unto it, they would never perish; neither could the temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary overpower them unto blindness, to lead them away to destruction. ²⁵ Wherefore, I, Nephi, did exhort them to give heed unto the word of the Lord; yea, I did exhort them with all the energies of my soul, and with all the faculty which I possessed, that they would give heed to the word of God and remember

^a 16 O numbered

^b 18 Gen 22.18; Acts 3.25

17: The ingathering of Israel in the last days will be accomplished with the assistance of the Gentiles, and will, at the same time, demonstrate God’s power to the Gentiles. *For the very cause*, because. **18:** God’s promise is that the world will be blessed through the house of Israel. According to 22.8–9, this blessing will be made known through the BoM; at 3 Ne 20.27, it is associated with the Holy Ghost being poured out upon the Gentiles. **19–20:** *Restoration of the Jews*, this prophecy was not fulfilled when the Jews returned from Babylon, but instead refers to a much later event that would end their tribulations and scattering. **20:** *Rehearse*, WB: “to recite; to repeat the words of a passage or composition.” *The words of Isaiah*, perhaps Isa 45.17; 49.6, 22–23. **21:** The brothers now turn their attention to the allegory centering on the other tree (in reverse order from Lehi’s discussion of the two trees in chs. 8 and 10). It is striking that Nephi never conveys his understanding, confirmed by the angel, that the tree in Lehi’s dream represented “the love of God” (11.22, 25). This may say something about his relationship with his brothers. *The tree which he saw*, 8.10–12. **22:** *Tree of life*, 11.25; see the introductory note to ch. 8. **23:** *The rod of iron*, 8.19–20, 24. **24:** *It was the word of God*, as explained by the angel at 11:25. There are some mixed metaphors here. While it is easy to imagine how temptations might lead to metaphorical blindness, it is less clear how that blindness might be related to flaming arrows (*fiery darts*). *Fiery darts of the adversary*, non-biblical but regularly used in 18th–19th c. and apparently derived from Eph 6.16 (“fiery darts of the wicked”). *Adversary*, referring to the devil, occurs elsewhere only at 1 Pet 5.8 and Alma 12.5–6. **25:** *Faculty* denotes “ability, skill.”

to keep his commandments always in all things.

²⁶ And they said unto me, “What meaneth the river of water which our father saw?” ²⁷ And I said unto them that the water which my father saw was filthiness; and so much was his mind swallowed up in other things that he beheld not the filthiness of the water. ²⁸ And I said unto them that it was an awful gulf, which separated the wicked from the tree of life, and also from the saints of God. ²⁹ And I said unto them that it was a representation of that awful hell, which the angel said unto me was prepared for the wicked. ³⁰ And I said unto them that our father also saw that the justice of God did also divide the wicked from the righteous; and the brightness thereof was like unto the brightness of a flaming fire, which ascendeth up unto God forever and ever, and hath no end.

³¹ And they said unto me, “Doth this thing mean the torment of the body in the days of probation, or doth it mean the final state of the soul after the death of the temporal body, or doth it speak of the things which are temporal?”

³² And it came to pass that I said unto them that it was a representation of things both temporal and spiritual: “For the day should come that they must be judged of their

works, yea, even the works which were done by the temporal body in their days of probation. ³³ Wherefore, if they should die in their wickedness they must be cast off also, as to the things which are spiritual, which are pertaining to righteousness; wherefore, they must be brought to stand before God, to be judged of their works; and if their works have been filthiness they must needs be filthy; and if they be filthy it must needs be that they cannot dwell in the kingdom of God; if so, the kingdom of God must be filthy also.

³⁴ “But behold, I say unto you, the kingdom of God is not filthy, and there cannot any unclean thing enter into the kingdom of God; wherefore there must needs be a place of filthiness prepared for that which is filthy. ³⁵ And there is a place prepared, yea, even that awful hell of which I have spoken, and the devil is the foundation^a of it; wherefore the final state of the souls of men is to dwell in the kingdom of God, or to be cast out because of that justice of which I have spoken. ³⁶ Wherefore, the wicked are rejected^b from the righteous, and also from that tree of life, whose fruit is most precious and most desirable above all other fruits;

^a ³⁵ O proprietor; 1837 foundation; P, 1981 preparator

^b ³⁶ O separated

26: *River of water*, 8.13. **27:** *Filthiness*, see 12.16. One implication of this verse is that the experience of revelation can overwhelm the perception of the recipient; there may be more to a divine manifestation than an individual can process at the time, or even later articulate. **28–30:** Where Lehi had emphasized the invitation for all to come and partake of the fruit, Nephi here highlights the judgment of God in keeping the wicked away from the tree of life. *Awful gulf*, 12.18. *Hell* was mentioned by the angel at 12.16. **30:** *Justice of God divides the wicked from the righteous*, not included in the original account of Lehi’s dream, though it was part of Nephi’s parallel vision at 12.18. **31:** It is not clear whether the brothers are proposing three alternatives, or just two with the first repeated. Regardless, they seem familiar with the idea of an afterlife, unlike most Jews of the 6th c. BCE. **33–34:** Nephi employs a *reductio ad absurdum* argument, consisting of a chain of reasoning (sorites) based on counterfactual statements. Other examples of sorites or *ad absurdum* arguments can be found at 2 Ne 2.13; 9.25; 11.7; Alma 42.11–26; Morm 9.15–20. **33:** The phrases *kingdom of God* and “kingdom of heaven” never occur in the OT, though they are common in the NT, where they appear about twice as often as in the BoM. **35:** *Proprietor*, non-biblical. The idea that the devil is the proprietor, or owner, of hell seems original to the BoM. **36:** *Desirable above all other fruits*, 8.12, 15. *The greatest of all the gifts of God*, apparently referring to dwelling in God’s kingdom (v. 35), or more generally to salvation or eternal life (as at DC 6.13; 14.7).

yea, and it is the greatest of all the gifts of God.” And thus I spake unto my brethren. Amen.

Truth Is Hard for the Wicked

[V]16 ¹ And now it came to pass that after I, Nephi, had made an end of speaking to my brethren, behold they said unto me, “Thou hast declared unto us hard things, more than we are able to bear.”

² And it came to pass that I said unto them that I knew that I had spoken hard things against the wicked, according to the truth: “And the righteous have I justified, and testified that they should be lifted up at the last day; wherefore, the guilty taketh the truth to be hard, for it cutteth them to the very center.

³ And now my brethren, if ye were righteous and were willing to hearken to the truth, and give heed unto it, that ye might walk uprightly before God, then ye would not murmur because of the truth, and say, “Thou speakest hard things against us.”

⁴ And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did exhort my brethren, with all diligence, to keep the commandments of the Lord. ⁵ And it came to pass that they did humble themselves before

the Lord; insomuch that I had joy and great hopes of them, that they would walk in the paths of righteousness. ⁶ Now, all these things were said and done as my father dwelt in a tent in the valley which he called Lemuel.

The Daughters of Ishmael, Marry

⁷ And it came to pass that I, Nephi, took one of the daughters of Ishmael to wife; and also, my brethren took of the daughters of Ishmael to wife; and also Zoram took the eldest daughter of Ishmael to wife. ⁸ And thus my father had fulfilled all the commandments of the Lord which had been given unto him. And also, I, Nephi, had been blessed of the Lord exceedingly.

Traveling in the Wilderness with the Liahona

⁹ And it came to pass that the voice of the Lord spake unto my father by night, and commanded him that on the morrow he should take his journey into the wilderness. ¹⁰ And it came to pass that as my father arose in the morning, and went forth to the tent door, to his great astonishment he beheld upon the ground a round ball of curious workmanship; and it was of fine brass. And within the ball

CHAPTER 16

1–2: In light of Nephi’s explanations, his brothers feel that Lehi’s teachings that were “hard to be understood” (15.3) have been transformed into *hard things*, that is, painful truths. Nephi responds that the truth is only painful for the guilty. **1:** *And now it came to pass*, a non-biblical construction that occurs over 100 times in the BoM. **3:** *Walk . . . before God* is a characteristic phrase from the Deuteronomistic History that appears more than a dozen times in the BoM, usually with an adverb such as “uprightly” or “circumspectly.” **4:** *With all diligence* may modify either “keep the commandments” (see 4.34n) or “exhort” (as at 2 Ne 6.3). **5:** Nephi’s joy and hope for his brothers will only last until v. 20. **6:** *Dwelt in a tent*, see 2.15n. **7:** After eight chapters of dreams, prophecies, visions, and their interpretations (1 Ne 8–15), Nephi, as narrator, returns to his account of his family’s journey. Presumably, the five marriages would have taken place shortly after the events of 7.1–5. **8:** *My father had fulfilled all the commandments*, updating a similar declaration at 5.20. *I, Nephi, had been blessed of the Lord exceedingly*, this may be a summary statement referring to everything that had happened thus far, but readers might hope that it has particular application to his recent wedding (see 7.19n). Nephi, however, never sees fit to include his wife’s name in his record. **10:** The name for the revelatory device introduced in this verse, the “Liahona,” is given in Alma 37.38. *Curious*, WB: “wrought with care and art; elegant.” *Two spindles*, the function of the second spindle is never specified, though some have speculated that the two spindles being in alignment may have indicated that the device was functioning properly. Lehi’s family soon discovers that this compass-like instrument only works if they exercise faith and follow its directions; see v. 28; 18.12, 21. Centuries later, Alma will use the Liahona as a metaphor for how the words of Christ can lead all people to “a far better land of promise,” see Alma 37.38–47.

were two spindles; and the one pointed the way whither we should go into the wilderness.

¹¹ And it came to pass that we did gather together whatsoever things we should carry into the wilderness, and all the remainder of our provisions which the Lord had given unto us; and we did take seed of every kind that we might carry into the wilderness. ¹² And it came to pass that we did take our tents and depart into the wilderness, across the river Laman. ¹³ And it came to pass that we traveled for the space of four days, nearly a south-southeast direction, and we did pitch our tents again; and we did call the name of the place Shazer. ¹⁴ And it came to pass that we did take our bows and our arrows, and go forth into the wilderness to slay food for our families; and after we had slain food for our families we did return again to our families in the wilderness, to the place of Shazer.

And we did go forth again in the wilderness, following the same direction, keeping in the most fertile parts of the wilderness, which were in the borders near the Red Sea. ¹⁵ And it came to pass that we did travel for the space of many days, slaying food by the way, with our bows and our arrows and our stones and our slings. ¹⁶ And we did follow the directions of the ball, which led us in the more fertile parts of the wilderness.

Nephi's Broken Bow

¹⁷ And after we had traveled for the space of many days, we did pitch our tents for the space

of a time, that we might again rest ourselves and obtain food for our families. ¹⁸ And it came to pass that as I, Nephi, went forth to slay food, behold, I did break my bow, which was made of fine steel; and after I did break my bow, behold, my brethren were angry with me because of the loss of my bow, for we did obtain no food. ¹⁹ And it came to pass that we did return without food to our families, and being much fatigued, because of their journeying, they did suffer much for the want of food.

²⁰ And it came to pass that Laman and Lemuel and the sons of Ishmael did begin to murmur exceeding, because of their sufferings and afflictions in the wilderness; and also my father began to murmur against the Lord his God; yea, and they were all exceeding sorrowful, even that they did murmur against the Lord. ²¹ Now it came to pass that I, Nephi, having been afflicted with my brethren because of the loss of my bow, and their bows having lost their springs, it began to be exceedingly difficult, yea, insomuch that we could obtain no food. ²² And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did speak much unto my brethren, because they had hardened their hearts again, even unto complaining against the Lord their God.

²³ And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did make out of wood a bow, and out of a straight stick, an arrow; wherefore, I did arm myself with a bow and an arrow, with a sling and with stones. And I said unto my father, "Whither shall I go to obtain food?" ²⁴ And it came to pass that he did inquire of the Lord, for they

14: *Most fertile parts of the wilderness*, perhaps near the Incense Trail, an ancient trade route that ran along the west side of the Arabian Peninsula. **17–32:** Lehi's family spent eight years in the wilderness of Arabia (17.4), yet this brief incident is one of the only stories that Nephi recounts from that lengthy time period, perhaps because it highlights parallels between himself and Joseph of Egypt. Both men were favored by the Lord and their fathers, experienced conflict with older brothers, and in the end saved their families from starvation; cf. 2 Ne 1.24. **18:** *Steel*, bronze (see 4.9n); the expression "bow of steel" appears three times in the KJV (2 Sam 22.35; Job 20.24; Ps 18.34), where its meaning has puzzled scholars. **20:** The fact that Lehi also joins in the murmuring is worrisome; it is striking that Nephi, as the narrator, chose not to omit this detail. The years in the desert were apparently traumatic; even after the family has arrived in the promised land, Lehi mentions their "afflictions" in the "wilderness" four times in 2 Ne 2–3, as does Nephi at 4.20 (cf. Mos 1.16–17; Alma 37.42). **23–24:** Bow hunting with a single arrow is a remarkable expression of optimism. Even though Nephi has received many revelations himself, he defers to his father's prophetic status by asking him to *inquire of the Lord* on his behalf; see 15.3n.

had humbled themselves because of my word; for I did say many things unto them in the energy of my soul.²⁵ And it came to pass that the voice of the Lord came unto my father; and he was truly chastened because of his murmuring against the Lord, insomuch that he was brought down into the depths of sorrow.

²⁶ And it came to pass that the voice of the Lord said unto him, “Look upon the ball, and behold the things which are written.”²⁷ And it came to pass that when my father beheld the things which were written upon the ball, he did fear and tremble exceedingly, and also my brethren and the sons of Ishmael and our wives.²⁸ And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld the pointers which were in the ball, that they did work according to the faith and diligence and heed which we did give unto them.²⁹ And there was also written upon them a new writing, which was plain to be read, which did give us understanding concerning the ways of the Lord; and it was written and changed from time to time, according to the faith and diligence which we gave unto it. And thus we see that by small means the Lord can bring about great things.

³⁰ And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did go forth up into the top of the mountain, according to the directions which were given upon the ball.³¹ And it came to pass that I did slay wild

beasts, insomuch that I did obtain food for our families.³² And it came to pass that I did return to our tents, bearing the beasts which I had slain; and now when they beheld that I had obtained food, how great was their joy! And it came to pass that they did humble themselves before the Lord, and did give thanks unto him.

The Death of Ishmael,

³³ And it came to pass that we did again take our journey, traveling nearly the same course as in the beginning; and after we had traveled for the space of many days we did pitch our tents again, that we might tarry for the space of a time.³⁴ And it came to pass that Ishmael died, and was buried in the place which was called Nahom.³⁵ And it came to pass that the daughters of Ishmael did mourn exceedingly, because of the loss of their father, and because of their afflictions in the wilderness; and they did murmur against my father, because he had brought them out of the land of Jerusalem, saying, “Our father is dead; yea, and we have wandered much in the wilderness, and we have suffered much affliction, hunger, thirst, and fatigue; and after all these sufferings we must perish in the wilderness with hunger.”³⁶ And thus they did murmur against my father, and also against me; and they were desirous to return again to Jerusalem.

26–29: Beside indicating directions, the Liahona was also a means to convey written communications from God, which were updated as circumstances changed. Such messages were apparently more exact and accessible than the “voice of the Lord,” but in the BoM reading and revelation often go together; see 1.11n. 27: *And our wives*, perhaps an indication that the women in the family were literate. 29: Unfortunately, Nephi never informs his readers what the *new writing* actually said. *Thus we see*, this narrator-comment marker, used by Nephi only here and at 17.3, will appear more than twenty times in the books of Alma and Mosiah, where it serves to draw readers into agreement with the narrator. *Small means*, it would seem that a portable divine communication device would be a rather dramatic manifestation of God’s favor, but perhaps Nephi has in mind the inconsistent working of the spindles. In any case, Alma uses the examples of the Brass Plates and the Liahona in Alma 37 to make the same point in greater detail, namely, that “by small and simple things are great things brought to pass” (Alma 37.6). 32: *Humble themselves before the Lord*, the third instance of a recurring pattern in Nephi’s relationship with his brothers (15.20; 16.5). It will happen yet again at 18.4. 34: *Nahom*, three altar inscriptions from the 7th–6th c. BCE indicate that NHM (now transliterated as Nihm) was a tribal name in southwestern Arabia in the area where the Incense Trail turned eastward (see 17.1). Many Latter-day Saints have viewed this as an independent confirmation of a historical detail from the BoM. 35–36: The voices of women are rare and welcome in the BoM, though here the daughters of Ishmael are not portrayed in a positive light, even if their concerns are reasonable. Their complaints about wandering in the wilderness and fears of starvation recall the Exodus story (esp. Ex 16.2–3); their desire to return to their old home echoes Num 14.1–4.

Rebellion and Repentance

³⁷ And Laman said unto Lemuel and also unto the sons of Ishmael, “Behold, let us slay our father, and also our brother Nephi, who has taken it upon him to be our ruler and our teacher, who are his elder brethren.”³⁸ Now, he says that the Lord has talked with him, and also that angels have ministered unto him. But behold, we know that he lies unto us; and he tells us these things, and he worketh many things by his cunning arts, that he may deceive our eyes, thinking, perhaps, that he may lead us away into some strange wilderness; and after he has led us away, he has thought to make himself a king and a ruler over us, that he may do with us according to his will and pleasure.” And after this manner did my brother Laman stir up their hearts to anger.

³⁹ And it came to pass that the Lord was with us, yea, even the voice of the Lord came and did speak many words unto them, and did chasten them exceedingly; and after they were chastened by the voice of the Lord they did turn away their anger, and did repent of their sins, insomuch that the Lord did bless us again with food, that we did not perish.

To Bountiful,

17 ¹ And it came to pass that we did again take our journey in the wilderness; and we did travel nearly eastward from that time forth. And we did travel and wade

through much affliction in the wilderness; and our women did bear children in the wilderness.² And so great were the blessings of the Lord upon us, that while we did live upon raw meat in the wilderness, our women did give plenty of suck for their children, and were strong, yea, even like unto the men; and they began to bear their journeyings without murmurings.

³ And thus we see that the commandments of God must be fulfilled. And if it so be that the children of men keep the commandments of God he doth nourish them, and strengthen them, and provide means whereby they can accomplish the thing which he has commanded them; wherefore, he did provide means for us while we did sojourn in the wilderness.⁴ And we did sojourn for the space of many years, yea, even eight years in the wilderness.⁴

⁵ And we did come to the land which we called Bountiful, because of its much fruit and also wild honey; and all these things were prepared of the Lord that we might not perish. And we beheld the sea, which we called Irreantum, which, being interpreted, is “many waters.”⁶ And it came to pass that we did pitch our tents by the seashore; and notwithstanding we had suffered many afflictions and much difficulty, yea, even so much that we cannot write them all, we were exceedingly rejoiced when we came to the seashore; and we called the place Bountiful, because of its much fruit.

^a 4 589 BCE

37–39: That Laman takes the opinions of women seriously is admirable, though in this case it seems more of an excuse for his own murderous impulses. **37:** *Our ruler and our teacher*, see 2.22; 3.29. **38:** *Cunning*, deceitful. *Deceive our eyes*, Laman now doubts his experience with the angel at 3.29–30. *Strange*, foreign or remote. **39:** *The Lord was with us*, as he was with Isaac, Jacob, Moses, the Israelites, and Joshua in their travels (Gen 26.3; 31.3; Ex 3.12; Num 14.9; Deut 31.8); cf. 2 Ne 5.11. *Chastened by the voice of the Lord*, as was Lehi in v. 25 above. Apparently, the problem with *food* was not entirely resolved at v. 32; rather, it seems to have been a constant worry.

CHAPTER 17

1: *Wade through... affliction* is a poignant metaphor that never occurs in the Bible but appears four times in the BoM. **2:** *Raw meat*, because God had restricted their use of fire (v. 12), perhaps so they did not attract attention. **3:** *Provide means whereby they can accomplish the thing which he has commanded them*, this observation both looks back to Nephi’s affirmation at 3.7, and also forward to the type of faith necessary to counter the skepticism expressed in v. 19 below. **5:** *Bountiful*, Latter-day Saints have identified two or three sites on the Dhofar coast of Oman that may meet the criteria for this place as described in the BoM.

Nephi, Is Commanded to Build a Ship

⁷ And it came to pass that after I, Nephi, had been in the land of Bountiful for the space of many days, the voice of the Lord came unto me, saying, “Arise, and get thee into the mountain.” And it came to pass that I arose and went up into the mountain, and cried unto the Lord.

⁸ And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto me, saying, “Thou shalt construct a ship, after the manner which I shall show thee, that I may carry thy people across these waters.”

⁹ And I said, “Lord, whither shall I go that I may find ore to molten, that I may make tools to construct the ship after the manner which thou hast shown unto me?” ¹⁰ And it came to pass that the Lord told me whither I should go to find ore, that I might make tools.

¹¹ And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did make a bellows wherewith to blow the fire, of the skins of beasts; and after I had made a bellows, that I might have wherewith to blow the fire, I did smite two stones together that I might make fire. ¹² For the Lord had not hitherto suffered that we should make much fire, as we journeyed in the wilderness; for he said, “I will make thy food become sweet, that ye cook it not; ¹³ and I will also be your light in the wilderness; and I will prepare the way before you, if it so be that ye shall keep my commandments; wherefore, inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments ye shall be led

towards the promised land; and ye shall know that it is by me that ye are led.” ¹⁴ Yea, and the Lord said also that “after ye have arrived in the promised land, ye shall know that I, the Lord, am God; and that I, the Lord, did deliver you from destruction; yea, that I did bring you out of the land of Jerusalem.”

¹⁵ Wherefore, I, Nephi, did strive to keep the commandments of the Lord, and I did exhort my brethren to faithfulness and diligence. ¹⁶ And it came to pass that I did make tools of the ore which I did molten out of the rock.

Nephi’s Brothers Murmur

¹⁷ And when my brethren saw that I was about to build a ship, they began to murmur against me, saying, “Our brother is a fool, for he thinketh that he can build a ship; yea, and he also thinketh that he can cross these great waters.”

¹⁸ And thus my brethren did complain against me, and were desirous that they might not labor, for they did not believe that I could build a ship; neither would they believe that I was instructed of the Lord.

¹⁹ And now it came to pass that I, Nephi, was exceeding sorrowful because of the hardness of their hearts; and now when they saw that I began to be sorrowful they were glad in their hearts, insomuch that they did rejoice over me, saying, “We knew that ye could not construct a ship, for we knew that ye were lacking in judgment; wherefore, thou canst

8: God directs Nephi in shipbuilding, much as he did Noah (Gen 6.14–16), by means of a pattern shown in a mountain vision, as with Moses and the Tabernacle (Ex 25.40). **9:** *Molten*, here, to melt or refine. The use of *molten* (an adjective or past participle of *melt*) as an independent verb is virtually unknown outside of the BoM.

11: Bellows are necessary to achieve temperatures high enough to smelt metal. **13:** *Light in the wilderness*, another motif from the Exodus; see Ex 13.20–21; 40.38; Ps 78.14; 105.39; cf. v. 30 below. **14:** *Ye shall know that I, the Lord, am God*, Ex 6.7 (after bringing the Israelites out of Egypt). News of the destruction of Jerusalem comes via revelation at 2 Ne 1.4 and 6.8, after their arrival in the New World; it is independently confirmed by the discovery of the Mulekites much later, as reported at Hel 8.21. **17–22:** This section is framed by a particular type of inclusio: in v. 17, the brothers *murmur*; in v. 18, they *complain*. The passage concludes by reiterating both: *after this manner did my brethren murmur and complain* (v. 22); see 14.2n for similar rhetoric. **17–18:** Nephi’s brothers question his ability to build an ocean-going vessel with no prior experience. In most cases, such skepticism would be justified, particularly from those who might be asked to sail on such a ship.

not accomplish so great a work.²⁰ And thou art like unto our father, led away by the foolish imaginations of his heart; yea, he hath led us out of the land of Jerusalem, and we have wandered in the wilderness for these many years; and our women have toiled, being big with child; and they have borne children in the wilderness and suffered all things, save it were death; and it would have been better that they had died before they came out of Jerusalem than to have suffered these afflictions.²¹ Behold, these many years we have suffered in the wilderness, which time we might have enjoyed our possessions and the land of our inheritance; yea, and we might have been happy.

²² “And we know that the people who were in the land of Jerusalem were a righteous people; for they kept the statutes and judgments of the Lord, and all his commandments, according to the law of Moses; wherefore, we know that they are a righteous people; and our father hath judged them, and hath led us away because we would hearken unto his words; yea, and our brother is like unto him.” And after this manner of language did my brethren murmur and complain against us.

Nephi, Recounts the History of Israel

²³ And it came to pass that I, Nephi, spake unto them, saying, “Do ye believe that our fathers, who were the children of Israel, would have been led away out of the hands of the Egyptians if they had not hearkened unto the words of the Lord?²⁴ Yea, do ye suppose that they would have been led out of bondage, if the Lord had not commanded Moses that he should lead them out of bondage?²⁵ Now ye know that the children of Israel were in bondage; and ye know that they were laden with tasks, which were grievous to be borne; wherefore, ye know that it must needs be a good thing for them, that they should be brought out of bondage.

²⁶ “Now ye know that Moses was commanded of the Lord to do that great work; and ye know that by his word the waters of the Red Sea were divided hither and thither, and they passed through on dry ground.²⁷ But ye know that the Egyptians were drowned in the Red Sea, who were the armies of Pharaoh.²⁸ And ye also know that they were fed with manna in the wilderness.²⁹ Yea, and ye also know that Moses, by his word according to

20–21: The brothers argue, contrary to Nephi’s revelation at v. 13, that it is Lehi rather than the Lord who has led the family out of Jerusalem; Nephi will respond with a lengthy analogy (vv. 23–42) of how God led the Israelites out of Egypt to the promised land. *It would have been better that they had died*, another echo of the Exodus; cf. Ex 14.12. Again, Nephi’s brothers seem more attuned to the hardships of the women in the family (see 16.37–39n), though they also regret their own loss of *possessions* and *land*. *Like unto our father... foolish imaginations of his heart*, the attitudes expressed at 2.11 have resurfaced. 22: In defending the righteousness of the people at Jerusalem, Laman and Lemuel reject both their father’s revelations and the perspective of the Deuteronomistic historians (see 2 Kings 23–24). *Statutes and judgments*, a characteristic phrase from Deuteronomy. In the speech that follows, Nephi responds to his brothers’ complaints by reversing their assertions, and then repeating and recontextualizing several key words from this verse, including what they *know* (12x), who is *righteous* (5x), who has been *led* where (9x), and the power of God’s *word* (10x). 23–47: This speech of Nephi to his brothers recalls several lengthy addresses in the Deuteronomistic History (Joshua–2 Kings) that reviewed Israel’s history (e.g., Josh 24; 1 Sam 12; 1 Kings 8), which in turn reflect Moses’s three speeches in Deuteronomy (chs. 1–4; 5–28; 29–30), particularly the first. Compare Stephen’s speech at Acts 7, which similarly retells Israel’s history and ends with a condemnation of his hearers. 25: *Grievous to be borne*, or hard to bear, is a biblical expression used five times in the BoM. 26–27: *That great work*, simultaneously an echo of the brothers’ jeering at v. 19 and also an allusion to Ex 14.31 (its only occurrence in the Bible), where it refers to the drowning of the Egyptian army. As at 4.2, Moses parts the sea *by his word* rather than by stretching forth his hand; cf. Ex 14.21–29. 28: Ex 16.4–35. 29: Ex 17.1–7; Num 20.2–13; though as in v. 26 Moses works a miracle *by his word* rather than by stretching forth his hand or by striking with his staff. In both cases, the biblical account is modified in order to highlight a consistent theme of the potency of divinely authorized spoken words.

the power of God which was in him, smote the rock, and there came forth water, that the children of Israel might quench their thirst.

³⁰ “And notwithstanding they being led, the Lord their God, their Redeemer, going before them, leading them by day and giving light unto them by night, and doing all things for them which were expedient for man to receive, they hardened their hearts and blinded their minds, and reviled against Moses and against the true and living God.³¹ And it came to pass that according to his word he did destroy them; and according to his word he did lead them; and according to his word he did do all things for them; and there was not any thing done save it were by his word.

³² “And after they had crossed the river Jordan he did make them mighty unto the driving out of the children of the land, yea, unto the scattering them to destruction.

³³ And now, do ye suppose that the children of this land, who were in the land of promise, who were driven out by our fathers, do ye suppose that they were righteous? Behold, I say unto you, Nay.³⁴ Do ye suppose that our fathers would have been more choice than

they if they had been righteous? I say unto you, Nay.

³⁵ Behold, the Lord esteemeth all flesh in one;
 he that is righteous is favored of God.
 But behold, this people had rejected every word of God,
 and they were ripe in iniquity;
 and the fulness of the wrath of God was upon them.
 And the Lord did curse the land against them,
 and bless it unto our fathers;
 yea, he did curse it against them unto their destruction,
 and he did bless it unto our fathers unto their obtaining power over it.

³⁶ Behold, the Lord hath created the earth that it should be inhabited,
 and he hath created his children that they should possess it.

³⁷ And he raiseth up a righteous nation, and destroyeth the nations of the wicked.

30: *Giving light unto them by night*, Ex 13.21–22; see v. 13n. Reviling against both Moses and God was a serious transgression that initiated the bronze serpent story (Num 21.4–9); the two incidents are referred to again at vv. 41–42 below. The only Nephite who goes so far as to “revile even against God” is the arch-heretic Korihor (Alma 30.29). *The true and living God* is a distinctive BoM phrase that occurs eight times; the closest biblical parallel is Jer 10.10, but see 1 Thess 1.9. **31:** *He did destroy them*, that is, the Egyptians (see v. 27). *He did lead them*, the Israelites. **32:** *Crossed the river Jordan*, Josh 3. **33–35:** Nephi interprets the conquest of the Canaanites, described in the book of Joshua, as God’s judgment upon their wickedness (cf. Lev 18.24–30; Deut 18.9–12), but in so doing suggests that the chosenness of the Israelites was due to their righteousness, and thus could have been bestowed on other peoples who had kept the commandments of the Lord (in contrast with Deut 9.4–6, which specifically rejects this idea). **34:** Both instances of *they* in this verse refer to the Canaanites. **35:** *Esteemeth all flesh in one* seems to mean “values or treats everyone equally”; cf. Mos 23.7. *This people*, the Canaanites at the time of Israel’s conquest; it is not clear when they had rejected God’s word. *Ripe in iniquity*, an agricultural metaphor not found in the Bible, but four times in the BoM; cf. Gen 15.16 where God postpones giving the promised land to Abraham because “the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full” (unbeknownst to Nephi, this also applies to the promised land his own family will inherit; see Ether 2.9; 9.20). Divine wrath reaching its *fulness* is not biblical, but occurs ten times in the BoM. In contrast to the OT, the cursing and blessing is directed toward *the land*; cf. Alma 37.28, 31; 45.15–16; Ether 2.9–12; 9.20. **36–40:** Nephi is preoccupied with the destiny of Israel and its covenants with God, yet there are also passages, as here, where he asserts that the blessings of the covenant are available to any righteous nation. From a BoM perspective, the displacement of the Canaanites by the Israelites will be echoed by the destruction of the Jaredites to make room for the Lehites, and the destruction of the Nephites and Lamanites to make way for the Gentiles, though in a departure from precedent the descendants of Lehi will still retain their right to the land as an inheritance.

- ³⁸ And he leadeth away the righteous
into precious lands,
and the wicked he destroyeth,
and curseth the land unto them for
their sakes.
- ³⁹ He ruleth high in the heavens, for it
is his throne,
and this earth is his footstool.
- ⁴⁰ And he loveth those who will have
him to be their God.

“Behold, he loved our fathers, and he covenanted with them, yea, even Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and he remembered the covenants which he had made; wherefore, he did bring them out of the land of Egypt. ⁴¹ And he did straiten them in the wilderness with his rod; for they hardened their hearts, even as ye have; and the Lord straitened them because of their iniquity. He sent fiery flying serpents among them; and after they were bitten he prepared a way that they might be healed; and the labor which they had to perform was to look; and because of the simpleness of the way, or the easiness of it, there were many who perished. ⁴² And they did harden their hearts from time to time, and they did revile against Moses, and also against God; nevertheless, ye know that

they were led forth by his matchless power into the land of promise.

⁴³ “And now, after all these things, the time has come that they have become wicked, yea, nearly unto ripeness; and I know not but they are at this day about to be destroyed; for I know that the day must surely come that they must be destroyed, save a few only, who shall be led away into captivity. ⁴⁴ Wherefore, the Lord commanded my father that he should depart into the wilderness; and the Jews also sought to take away his life; yea, and ye also have sought to take away his life; wherefore, ye are murderers in your hearts and ye are like unto them.

⁴⁵ “Ye are swift to do iniquity but slow to remember the Lord your God. Ye have seen an angel, and he spake unto you; yea, ye have heard his voice from time to time; and he hath spoken unto you in a still small voice, but ye were past feeling, that ye could not feel his words; wherefore, he has spoken unto you like unto the voice of thunder, which did cause the earth to shake as if it were to divide asunder. ⁴⁶ And ye also know that by the power of his almighty word he can cause the earth that it shall pass away; yea, and ye know that by his word he can cause the rough places to be made

38: *Curseth the land...for their sakes*, a unique BoM construction that also occurs at 2 Ne 1.7; Jacob 2.29; 3.3; Morm 1.17. It is probably related to Gen 3.17 (though it supersedes Gen 8.21). *For their sakes* seems to mean “because of their iniquities” rather than “for their benefit”; see Hel 13.17. **40:** *He loved our fathers*, Deut 4.37. The idea that the Exodus was a result of God remembering covenants made to the patriarchs also occurs at Ex 2.23–24; 6.2–5. **41:** *Straiten*, WB: “to distress; to perplex; to press with poverty or other necessity.” *Even as ye have*, Nephi begins to draw uncomfortable parallels that will culminate in v. 44. *Fiery flying serpents*, this description appears at Isa 14.29 and 30.6, probably referring to quick, darting, poisonous snakes (though a mythological interpretation is also possible). The incident in the wilderness is at Num 21.4–9; the BoM, however, adds the detail that many stubbornly refused to look at the bronze serpent and consequently died. This detail is explained more fully at Alma 33.19–22 and is alluded to again at Alma 37.46. **44:** The Jews tried to kill Lehi at 1.20–2.2; the brothers threatened his murder at 16.37. In vv. 20 and 22, Laman and Lemuel criticized Nephi as being “like unto our father”; Nephi’s retort here is to condemn them as “like unto” their wicked peers in Jerusalem. **45:** *Swift to do iniquity but slow to remember*, a striking instance of antithesis that seems to be original to the BoM; cf. Mos 13.29 and Hel 12.4–5, where Mormon uses similar language in his pessimistic assessment of humanity. *Seen an angel*, see 3.29–30. *Heard his voice*, see 16.39. *Still small voice*, 1 Kings 19.12. *Past feeling*, Eph 4.19; Moro 9.20. *Feel his words*, a curious expression meaning “able to perceive or be affected by his words.” It is not clear when God spoke to the brothers through thunder and earthquake, but compare Mos 27.11; Alma 36.6–7. *Asunder*, into parts. **46:** *Rough places to be made smooth* seems to conflate Isa 40.4 with its quotation at Lk 3.5.

smooth, and smooth places shall be broken up. O, then, why is it, that ye can be so hard in your hearts? ⁴⁷ Behold, my soul is rent with anguish because of you, and my heart is pained; I fear lest ye shall be cast off forever. Behold, I am full of the Spirit of God, inso-much that my frame has no strength.”

Nephi, Rebukes His Brothers

⁴⁸ And now it came to pass that when I had spoken these words they were angry with me, and were desirous to throw me into the depths of the sea. And as they came forth to lay their hands upon me I spake unto them, saying, “In the name of the Almighty God, I command you that ye touch me not, for I am filled with the power of God, even unto the consuming of my flesh; and whoso shall lay his hands upon me shall wither even as a dried reed; and he shall be as naught before the power of God, for God shall smite him.” ⁴⁹ And it came to pass that I, Nephi, said unto them that they should murmur no more against their father; neither should they withhold their labor from me, for God had commanded me that I should build a ship.

⁵⁰ And I said unto them, “If God had commanded me to do all things I could do them. If he should command me that I should say unto this water, ‘Be thou earth,’ it should be earth; and if I should say it, it would be done.” ⁵¹ And now, if the Lord has such great power, and has wrought so many miracles among the children of men, how is it that he cannot instruct me,

that I should build a ship?” ⁵² And it came to pass that I, Nephi, said many things unto my brethren, insomuch that they were confounded and could not contend against me; neither durst they lay their hands upon me nor touch me with their fingers, even for the space of many days. Now they durst not do this lest they should wither before me, so powerful was the Spirit of God; and thus it had wrought upon them.

⁵³ And it came to pass that the Lord said unto me, “Stretch forth thine hand again unto thy brethren, and they shall not wither before thee, but I will shock them,” saith the Lord, “and this will I do, that they may know that I am the Lord their God.” ⁵⁴ And it came to pass that I stretched forth my hand unto my brethren, and they did not wither before me; but the Lord did shake them, even according to the word which he had spoken. ⁵⁵ “And now,” they said, “we know of a surety that the Lord is with thee, for we know that it is the power of the Lord that has shaken us.” And they fell down before me, and were about to worship me, but I would not suffer them, saying, “I am thy brother, yea, even thy younger brother; wherefore, ‘worship the Lord thy God,’^a and ‘honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God shall give thee.’”^b

^a 55 Deut 6.13; Mt 4.10; Lk 4.8

^b 55 Ex 20.12

⁴⁷: *I fear lest ye shall be cast off*, the phrasing of Nephi’s concern demonstrates that he is indeed like his father; see 8.36. ⁴⁸: Once again, the brothers try to kill Nephi; see v. 44n. *Touch me not*, the phrase is spoken by the resurrected Jesus at Jn 20.17, but the closest parallel to this verse occurs in the story of Abinadi at Mos 13.3. ⁵⁰: *Water* turning to *earth* calls to mind Moses’s parting of the Red Sea, see v. 26. ⁵²: *Neither durst they lay their hands upon me*, similar fears recur at Mos 13.5; Alma 19.24; 22.20; Hel 5.23–25; 8.4. ⁵³: *Stretch forth thine hand*, like Moses and Aaron in Pharaoh’s court (e.g., Ex 8.5; 9.22; 10.22) and at the Red Sea (14.27), for a similar purpose: “that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord” (Ex 14.4, 18); see v. 14 above. *Shock* probably “shake.” ⁵⁵: Nephi attempts to restore order by redirecting his brothers’ inappropriate awe into reverence for God and respect for their parents; cf. Acts 10.25–26; Rev 22.8–9. *Honor thy father and thy mother . . . shall give thee*, a direct quotation of Ex 20.12, with the crucial shift from the land that the Lord “giveth thee” to one that he *shall give thee*. Nephi has modified the verse so that it refers to the new promised land that is still in the future for Lehi’s family. When Abinadi quotes the same verse several hundred years later, the tense of “give” has reverted to the present (Mos 13.20).

Preparing the Ship

18¹ And it came to pass that they did worship the Lord, and did go forth with me; and we did work timbers of curious workmanship. And the Lord did show me from time to time after what manner I should work the timbers of the ship.² Now I, Nephi, did not work the timbers after the manner which was learned by men, neither did I build the ship after the manner of men; but I did build it after the manner which the Lord had shown unto me; wherefore, it was not after the manner of men.³ And I, Nephi, did go into the mount oft, and I did pray oft unto the Lord; wherefore the Lord showed unto me great things.⁴ And it came to pass that after I had finished the ship, according to the word of the Lord, my brethren beheld that it was good, and that the workmanship thereof was exceeding fine; wherefore, they did humble themselves again before the Lord.

⁵ And it came to pass that the voice of the Lord came unto my father, that we should arise and go down into the ship.⁶ And it came to pass that on the morrow, after we had prepared all things, much fruits and meat from the wilderness, and honey in abundance, and provisions according to that which the Lord had commanded us, we did go down into the ship, with all our loading and our seeds, and whatsoever thing we had brought with us,

every one according to his age; wherefore, we did all go down into the ship, with our wives and our children.⁷ And now, my father had begat two sons in the wilderness; the elder was called Jacob and the younger Joseph.⁸ And it came to pass after we had all gone down into the ship, and had taken with us our provisions and things which had been commanded us, we did put forth into the sea and were driven forth before the wind towards the promised land.

Sailing to the Promised Land

⁹ And after we had been driven forth before the wind for the space of many days, behold, my brethren and the sons of Ishmael and also their wives began to make themselves merry, inasmuch that they began to dance, and to sing, and to speak with much rudeness, yea, even that they did forget by what power they had been brought thither; yea, they were lifted up unto exceeding rudeness.¹⁰ And I, Nephi, began to fear exceedingly lest the Lord should be angry with us, and smite us because of our iniquity, that we should be swallowed up in the depths of the sea; wherefore, I, Nephi, began to speak to them with much soberness; but behold they were angry with me, saying, “We will not that our younger brother shall be a ruler over us.”

¹¹ And it came to pass that Laman and Lemuel did take me and bind me with cords,

CHAPTER 18

1: *Curious workmanship*, the same description was used earlier of the Liahona (16.10); the implication is that the ship they are building similarly utilizes a divinely ordained design. **4:** *Beheld that it was good*, like God at the end of each day of creation (Gen 1). *Humbled themselves again before the Lord*, previous instances were at 15.20; 16.5, 32. **5:** Even though Nephi and his brothers had built the ship, the divine command to set sail comes to his father. **6:** *Loading*, WB: “a cargo.” *Everyone according to his age*, deference to older siblings was also part of the order that Nephi attempted to restore at 17.55. **7:** Jacob and Joseph will be consecrated as priests and teachers at 2 Ne 5.26, after which Jacob becomes a major figure in the BoM, with a book of his own, while Joseph virtually disappears. **9:** *Rudeness*, WB: “coarseness,” “vulgarity,” and “violence.” **10:** Nephi’s fear of drowning, based on spiritual discernment, will be shared by his more temporally minded brothers three days later (v. 13), but it will take them an additional four days to come around to his religious interpretation of their situation (v. 20). *Younger brother shall be a ruler over us*, remembering the words of the angel at 3.29; cf. 2.22; 16.37–38. **11:** *Bind me with cords*, a repetition of what happened at 7.16. Nephi provides a reason why God might allow bad things to happen to the innocent: *that he might show forth his power*. A similar explanation of theodicy occurs at Mos 23.21–24. *His word . . . concerning the wicked*, reference uncertain.

and they did treat me with much harshness; nevertheless, the Lord did suffer it that he might show forth his power, unto the fulfilling of his word which he had spoken concerning the wicked.¹² And it came to pass that after they had bound me insomuch that I could not move, the compass, which had been prepared of the Lord, did cease to work.¹³ Wherefore, they knew not whither they should steer the ship, insomuch that there arose a great storm, yea, a great and terrible tempest, and we were driven back upon the waters for the space of three days; and they began to be frightened exceedingly lest they should be drowned in the sea; nevertheless they did not loose me.¹⁴ And on the fourth day, which we had been driven back, the tempest began to be exceeding sore.¹⁵ And it came to pass that we were about to be swallowed up in the depths of the sea.

And after we had been driven back upon the waters for the space of four days, my brethren began to see that the judgments of God were upon them, and that they must perish save that they should repent of their iniquities; wherefore, they came unto me, and loosed the bands which were upon my wrists, and behold they had swollen exceedingly; and also mine ankles were much swollen, and great was the soreness thereof.¹⁶ Nevertheless, I did look

unto my God, and I did praise him all the day long; and I did not murmur against the Lord because of mine afflictions.

¹⁷ Now my father, Lehi, had said many things unto them, and also unto the sons of Ishmael; but, behold, they did breathe out much threatenings against anyone that should speak for me; and my parents being stricken in years, and having suffered much grief because of their children, they were brought down, yea, even upon their sick-beds.¹⁸ Because of their grief and much sorrow, and the iniquity of my brethren, they were brought near even to be carried out of this time to meet their God; yea, their grey hairs were about to be brought down to lie low in the dust; yea, even they were near to be cast with sorrow into a watery grave.

¹⁹ And Jacob and Joseph also, being young, having need of much nourishment, were grieved because of the afflictions of their mother; and also my wife with her tears and prayers, and also my children, did not soften the hearts of my brethren that they would loose me.²⁰ And there was nothing save it were the power of God, which threatened them with destruction, could soften their hearts; wherefore, when they saw that they were about to be swallowed up in the depths of the sea they repented of the thing which they had done, insomuch that they loosed me.

12: *Compass*, the Liahona, see Alma 37.38. The term is something of a misnomer since the device indicated the direction the Lord wanted his people to travel rather than magnetic north. **13–21:** This story of near shipwreck begins and ends with key phrases from Mk 4.37–39: *there arose a great storm and the wind did cease... and there was a great calm*. Such parallels may simply reflect language borrowed from the KJV, or they may convey theological meaning about the identity of Nephi's God and his continuing power and care; cf. Ps 107.23–29. **14:** *Sore*, severe, violent. **15:** *Loosed the bands*, also at v. 20; the brothers did not untie Nephi twice, rather vv. 17–20 are a brief flashback narrating the events of the previous few days and highlighting the brothers' disregard for their family's concerns. **16:** Nephi, unlike his brothers, the women in the family, and even Lehi, never murmurs. *I did praise him all the day long*, Nephi may have had in mind Ps 35.19–28, which pleads for deliverance from enemies and culminates in this phase (with a reference to "swallowed up" in v. 25); cf. Ether 6.9. **18:** *Carried out of this time*, perhaps "carried out of this time-bound sphere of existence." *To meet their God*, although death as an occasion to meet God is not explicit in the Bible, it became common in later Christianity (but see Amos 4.12). *Their grey hairs... brought down... with sorrow*, similar to Jacob's lament at Gen 42.38, though here Nephi corrects himself with the next phrase—his parents will not be buried *in the dust*, but in the sea. *Watery grave*, non-biblical but common in the early 19th c. **19:** *And also my wife*, this may be the second time this woman has pleaded for Nephi's life (see 7.19n).

²¹ And it came to pass after they had loosed me, behold, I took the compass, and it did work whither I desired it. And it came to pass that I prayed unto the Lord; and after I had prayed the winds did cease, and the storm did cease, and there was a great calm.

²² And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did guide the ship, that we sailed again towards the promised land. ²³ And it came to pass that after we had sailed for the space of many days we did arrive at the promised land; and we went forth upon the land, and did pitch our tents; and we did call it the promised land.

²⁴ And it came to pass that we did begin to till the earth, and we began to plant seeds; yea, we did put all our seeds into the earth, which we had brought from the land of Jerusalem. And it came to pass that they did grow exceedingly; wherefore, we were blessed in abundance. ²⁵ And it came to pass that we did find upon the land of promise, as we journeyed in the wilderness, that there were beasts in the forests of every kind, both the cow and the ox, and the ass and the horse, and the goat and the wild goat, and all manner of wild animals, which were for the use of men. And we did find all manner of ore, both of gold, and of silver, and of copper.

Two Sets of Plates

19 ¹ And it came to pass that the Lord commanded me, wherefore I did make plates of ore that I might engraven upon them the record of my people. And upon the plates which I made I did engraven the record of my father, and also our journeyings in the wilderness, and the prophecies of my father; and also many of mine own prophecies have I engraven upon them. ² And I knew not at the time when I made them that I should be commanded of the Lord to make these plates; wherefore, the record of my father, and the genealogy of his fathers, and the more part of all our proceedings in the wilderness are engraven upon those plates^a of which I have spoken; wherefore, the things which transpired before I made these plates are, of a truth, more particularly made mention upon the first plates.

³ And after I had made these plates by way of commandment, I, Nephi, received a commandment that the ministry and the prophecies, the more plain and precious parts of them, should be written upon these plates; and that the things which were written should be kept for the instruction of my people, who should possess

^a 2 O, 1981 *those first plates*

21: *The compass... did work*, see 16.10n. **25:** It is surprising that Nephi does not report encounters with other humans. Any large area of the world with rich vegetation and animal life would have already been populated, yet in Nephi's telling, the story of the Lehites in the New World is a family drama, and after the Nephites encounter the Mulekites in the book of Omni, the BoM becomes a tale of rival Israelite lineages. Other native peoples may be assumed to be in the background, but they are never mentioned explicitly. *Beasts in the forests of every kind*, none of the animals in the list that follows were native to the Americas in the pre-Columbian era, which may indicate that Nephi is applying familiar names to newly encountered fauna, or it may be a translation issue, or simply an inaccuracy.

CHAPTER 19

1–2: An account of the creation of the Large Plates of Nephi (*the first plates*). In addition to his talents as a writer, desert traveler, hunter, shipbuilder, and farmer, Nephi is also a metalsmith. *Commanded of the Lord to make these plates*, that is, the Small Plates of Nephi, from which we are reading. According to 1 Ne 6 and 9, Lehi had previously created a record that was a source for Nephi's first account on the Large Plates (cf. 1.17). Nephi notes here that although the Small Plates give particular attention to spiritual matters, the Large Plates also included prophecies by Lehi and Nephi. **3:** *These plates*, the Small Plates. *For other wise purposes*, see 9.5n.

the land, and also for other wise purposes, which purposes are known unto the Lord.⁴ Wherefore, I, Nephi, did make a record upon the other plates, which gives an account, or which gives a greater account of the wars and contentions and destructions of my people. And this have I done, and commanded my people what they should do after I was gone; and that these plates should be handed down from one generation to another, or from one prophet to another, until further commandments of the Lord.

⁵ And an account of my making these plates shall be given hereafter; and then, behold, I proceed according to that which I have spoken; and this I do that the more sacred things may be kept for the knowledge of my people. ⁶ Nevertheless, I do not write anything upon plates save it be that I think it be sacred. And now, if I do err, even did they err of old; not that I would excuse myself because of other men, but because of the weakness which is in

me, according to the flesh, I would excuse myself. ⁷ For the things which some men esteem to be of great worth, both to the body and soul, others set at naught and trample under their feet. Yea, even the very God of Israel do men trample under their feet; I say, trample under their feet but I would speak in other words—they set him at naught, and hearken not to the voice of his counsels.

Prophecies of Christ from Zenock, Neum, and Zenos

⁸ And behold he cometh, according to the words of the angel, in six hundred years from the time my father left Jerusalem. ⁹ And the world, because of their iniquity, shall judge him to be a thing of naught; wherefore they scourge him, and he suffereth it; and they smite him, and he suffereth it. Yea, they spit upon him, and he suffereth it, because of his loving kindness and his long-suffering towards the children of men. ¹⁰ And

⁴: *Or from one prophet to another*, the clarification is necessary because the Small Plates will next go to Nephi's brother Jacob, who is of the same generation. Unlike the Large Plates, which were in the care of kings (Omni 1.11; WoM 1.10–11), the Small Plates will remain in Jacob's priestly lineage until Amaleki, having no children, gives them to King Benjamin (Omni 1.25), some 400 years after Nephi. ⁵: *An account... given hereafter*, 2 Ne 5.29–33. ⁶: Nephi admits the possibility of human error in his record, as does Moroni (Morm 8.12, 17; BoM title page). *Weakness which is in me*; cf. 2 Ne 3.21; 33.4, 11; Moroni also worries about his weakness in writing, see Ether 12.22–41. The association of weakness with “the flesh” can also be found at Mt 26.41; Mk 14.38; Rom 8.3, 7: *Of great worth*, see 5.21n. *Set at naught*, a biblical phrase meaning “to treat as worthless.” *Very*, WB: “true; real.” *Trample under their feet*, the same image of walking on God appears at Heb 10.29; Alma 5.53; Hel 12.2; 3 Ne 28.35; cf. Mt 7.6. *But I would speak in other words*, an explanation of what it might mean to metaphorically trample God under foot. ^{8–17}: According to the BoM, the writings of the prophets Zenock, Neum, and Zenos were on the Brass Plates but were not included in the Hebrew Bible; that is, they are examples of the sorts of “plain and precious things” that were lost from the scriptures, according to 13.26–34, which the BoM would restore (13.40). Note that at 3 Ne 10.16, Zenos and Zenock are said to be among the ancestors of the Nephites. This may be an explanation for why their writings were on the Brass Plates, which was a lineage history; see 3.3; 5.14–16. Nephi's summary of Jesus's interactions with the world begins with his patient, passive acceptance of mistreatment (vv. 9–10), followed by his divine retribution and judgments (vv. 11–14), and concludes with his remembering covenants and gathering Israel again, for the benefit of the entire world (vv. 15–17). ^{8–10}: In this prophecy of the life of Jesus, Nephi combines phrases from both angelic revelation and from scriptural texts, in keeping with evidentiary practices throughout his writings; see ch. 10n; 22.30–31n; 2 Ne 4.16n; 2 Ne 25–30n. ⁸: *According to the words of the angel*, see 10.4, but the words there are Lehi's rather than an angel's; cf. 2 Ne 25.19. ^{9–10}: Three instances of *he suffereth it* in v. 9 are matched by three instances of [*yieldeth himself*] *to be* in v. 10, each ascribed to a different prophet. ⁹: *The world... shall judge him*, see 11.32n. *Scourge... smite... spit upon*, cf. Mt. 27.26, 30; Mk 10.34. *Long-suffering*, slow to anger. ¹⁰: In this verse, the BoM definitively identifies the God of the patriarchs as Jesus; by contrast, Acts 3.13 refers to Jesus as the son of “the God of our fathers,” specifying Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. *Three days of darkness... a sign*, fulfilled at 3 Ne 8.19–23; cf. Hel 14.20. *Isles of the sea*, cf. Isa 11.11; 24.15. Nephi finds the phrase on the Brass Plates (vv. 12, 16; 21.8) and recognizes its applicability to his own people—a branch of Israel living on an “isle of the sea” (cf. 2 Ne 10.20). He and his brother Jacob assume that other remnants of Israel have been led to other islands as well (22.4; 2 Ne 10.8, 21–22; 29.7, 11).

the God of our fathers, who were led out of Egypt, out of bondage, and also were preserved in the wilderness by him, yea, the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, yieldeth himself, according to the words of the angel, “as a man, into the hands of wicked men,” to be “lifted up,” according to the words of Zenock, and to be “crucified,” according to the words of Neum, and to be “buried in a sepulchre,” according to the words of Zenos, which he spake concerning the three days of darkness, which should be a sign given of his death unto those who should inhabit the isles of the sea, more especially given unto those who are of the house of Israel.

¹¹ For thus spake the prophet, “The Lord God surely shall visit all the house of Israel at that day, some with his voice, because of their righteousness, unto their great joy and salvation, and others with the thunderings and the lightnings of his power, by tempest, by fire, and by smoke, and vapor of darkness, and by the opening of the earth, and by mountains which shall be carried up.” ¹² “And all these things must surely come,” saith the prophet Zenos, “and the rocks of the earth must rend; and because of the groanings of the earth, many of the kings of the isles of the sea shall be

wrought upon by the Spirit of God, to exclaim, “The God of nature suffers.”

¹³ “And as for those who are at Jerusalem,” saith the prophet, “they shall be scourged by all people, because they crucify the God of Israel, and turn their hearts aside, rejecting signs and wonders, and the power and glory of the God of Israel.” ¹⁴ “And because they turn their hearts aside,” saith the prophet, “and have despised the Holy One of Israel, they shall wander in the flesh, and perish, and become a hiss and a byword, and be hated among all nations.”

¹⁵ “Nevertheless, when that day cometh,” saith the prophet, “that they no more turn aside their hearts against the Holy One of Israel, then will he remember the covenants which he made to their fathers; ¹⁶ yea, then will he remember the isles of the sea.” “Yea, and all the people who are of the house of Israel, will I gather in,” saith the Lord, according to the words of the prophet Zenos, “from the four quarters of the earth.” ¹⁷ “Yea, and all the earth shall see the salvation of the Lord,” saith the prophet, “every nation, kindred, tongue and people shall be blessed.”

¹⁸ And I, Nephi, have written these things unto my people, that perhaps I might persuade them that they would remember the Lord their Redeemer. ¹⁹ Wherefore, I speak

11–17: *The prophet* quoted seven times in these verses is probably Zenos, who is mentioned explicitly in vv. 10, 12, 16. Nephi appears to be excerpting this material from a passage in the Brass Plates. **11:** At 3 Ne 8.5–20, the wicked are destroyed by the natural phenomena listed here, while the more righteous survivors hear God’s voice at 3 Ne 9–10. Indeed, this prophecy may be the reason the Nephite survivors are surprised when the resurrected Christ appears bodily to them (3 Ne 11.8); they had only been expecting to hear his voice (as did the Israelites at Sinai, according to Deut 4.12; 5.22). Mormon’s editorial summary at 3 Ne 10.11–17 is directly connected to this passage, esp. 10.14. **12:** *Rocks...rend...groanings*, 3 Ne 10.9. *The God of nature suffers*, this seems to refer to an early Christian tradition, known in the 19th c., that the pagan philosopher Dionysus the Areopagite was in Egypt at the time of Jesus’s crucifixion and upon seeing an untimely eclipse exclaimed, “Either the God of nature suffers, or the frame of the world is dissolved.” He was later converted to Christianity by Paul; see Acts 17.34. **13:** *They shall be scourged*, the metaphorical whipping described here reciprocates the literal whipping administered to Jesus in v. 9, perhaps following the model of talionic justice (“eye for an eye”) found in Ex 21.22–25; Lev 24.19–21; Deut 19.16–21. **14:** *Holy One of Israel*, 31 times in the OT (mostly in Isaiah), never in the NT, and 40 times in the BoM (almost all in 1–2 Nephi). *Hiss* is never used in the Bible as a noun; WB: “an expression of contempt or disapprobation.” *Byword*, not in WB; OED: “a person or thing who becomes proverbial; an object of scorn or contempt”; cf. 1 Kings 9.7–8. **17:** *All the earth shall see the salvation of the Lord*, cf. Isa 52.10 (quoted at Lk 3.6 and five times in the BoM). **18–19:** *Written these things unto my people*, at this point Nephi assumes that he is writing his record for his descendants (vv. 3, 5), and perhaps for a wider audience of *all the house of Israel*.

unto all the house of Israel, if it so be that they should obtain these things.²⁰ For behold, I have workings in the spirit, which doth weary me even that all my joints are weak, for those who are at Jerusalem; for had not the Lord been merciful, to show unto me concerning them, even as he had prophets of old, I should have perished also.²¹ And he surely did show unto the prophets of old all things concerning them (and also he did show unto many concerning us), wherefore, it must needs be that we know concerning them for they are written upon the plates of brass.

Nephi, Reads and Interprets Isaiah: 1 Nephi 19.22–22.31

Introduction to Isaiah,

[VI]²² Now it came to pass that I, Nephi, did teach my brethren these things; and it came to pass that I did read many things to them, which were engraven upon the plates

of brass, that they might know concerning the doings of the Lord in other lands, among people of old.²³ And I did read many things unto them which were written in the book^a of Moses; but that I might more fully persuade them to believe in the Lord their Redeemer I did read unto them that which was written by the prophet Isaiah; for I did liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning.²⁴ Wherefore I spake unto them, saying, “Hear ye the words of the prophet, ye who are a remnant of the house of Israel, a branch who have been broken off; hear ye the words of the prophet, which were written unto all the house of Israel, and liken them unto yourselves, that ye may have hope as well as your brethren from whom ye have been broken off; for after this manner has the prophet written.”

^a 23 O, 1981 *books*

21: Nephi believes that the prophets had specifically seen himself and his people, and had prophesied about them (cf. 2 Ne 3.5; 10.20–22). **22–24:** Nephi portrays himself as reading aloud portions of the Brass Plates to his siblings, which gives him an opportunity to copy two chapters from Isaiah into his record nearly verbatim. He identifies five reasons his brothers need to hear these chapters: (1) so they would know of God’s dealings with peoples in other times and places, (2) so they might be persuaded to believe in the Lord, (3) so they might recognize predictions about themselves in earlier prophecies, (4) so they would remember their identity as Israelites despite their removal from the holy land, and (5) so they might have hope. **23:** *Books of Moses*, see 5.10–13n. Reviewing the Torah (esp. Deut) would have been appropriate for an episode of covenant renewal soon after the family’s arrival in a new promised land—a topic taken up by Lehi at 2 Ne 1, later the same day (compare Moses’s discourse on the plains of Moab at Deut 29–30). *The Lord their Redeemer*, God’s redemptive acts are mentioned in 20.17, 20, and then described in detail at 21.22–26. *Liken all scriptures unto us*, an encouragement to find one’s place in the scriptural story of salvation history rather than applying scriptural precedents to one’s own life (cf. 2 Ne 6.5; 11.2, 8). *Scripture(s)*, the first use of the word in the BoM. The term appears in the OT only at Dan 10.21, but 52 times in the NT and 45 times in the BoM. Even though the canonical boundaries of the Hebrew Bible would not be firmly established in Judea until the 1st or 2nd c. CE, the Brass Plates served as a de facto canon for the Nephites. **24:** *A branch who have been broken off*; the image comes from the allegory of the olive tree at 10.12–14; 15.12–20; cf. Jacob 5.14. In searching Isaiah for information about the redeeming Lord and the gathering of Israel, Nephi hopes to demonstrate that the revelations he and his father received about a divine Messiah and salvation that will be extended to the Gentiles are in continuity with the words of earlier prophets, as can be seen at 22.30–31.

Nephi's Quotation of Isaiah

48–49: 1 Nephi 20–21

(with significant changes and additions to the King James Bible in bold)

Prophecy Will Overcome Stubbornness (Isaiah 48.1–11)

20 ¹ **Hearken** and hear this, O house of Jacob, who are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, **or out of the waters of baptism**, who^a swear by the name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Israel, **yet they swear** not in truth nor in righteousness.
² **Nevertheless**, they call themselves of the holy city,

but they do not stay themselves upon the God of Israel, **who is the Lord of Hosts; yea**, the Lord of Hosts is his name.

³ **Behold**, I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of my mouth, and I showed them. I did **show** them suddenly.^b

⁴ **And I did it** because I knew that thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass.

⁵ **And I** have even from the beginning declared to thee;

^a 1 O, P *Judah, which*; 1840 Judah, (or out of the waters of baptism,) who [The parentheses were deleted in 1920.]

^b 3 Nephi, here omits “and they came to pass” from Isa 48.3.

CHAPTERS 20–21

Nephi copies these chapters from the Brass Plates, though most scholars believe that Isaiah 40–55 (Second Isaiah) was written in the mid-6th c. BCE, a generation after Lehi's family had left Jerusalem. Believers might respond to this discrepancy by positing a divinely sanctioned updating of Nephi's writings, or a very free translation. In any event, there are similar problems for all the extended quotations from the Hebrew Bible, including the chapters from First Isaiah reproduced in 2 Ne 12–24. The BoM follows the King James Bible quite closely, even though the underlying Hebrew text of that 1611 translation—the Masoretic Text (MT)—was the end result of a process of writing, editing, revising, augmenting, and merging sources that continued for many centuries after 600 BCE. In this edition, many of the BoM modifications to lengthy quotations from the KJV are bolded, to show places where the BoM might function as biblical commentary of sorts. As with other such quotations, many of the changes in chs. 20–21 are to words that were italicized in the KJV (indicating that they were added by the translators when the Hebrew original yielded incomplete sentences in English). Additions of conjunctions, interjections, and minor clarifications are also common, as are transposed words. From the perspective of the narrative, it is unclear whether these changes to the KJV are supposed to be restored original readings, or Nephi's own glosses on Isaiah intended to “liken” scripture to his family's current situation. In any case, the deletions, additions, and substitutions of a few words here and there are reminiscent of how 1 Chr 16.8–36 adapts Pss 105, 96, and 106 to fit a particular historical context.

CHAPTER 20

1: *Hearken*, WB: “to listen,” “to attend to what is uttered, with eagerness or curiosity,” “to observe or obey.” *Waters*, perhaps “loins.” *Or out of the waters of baptism*, an explanatory gloss, in parentheses, that was added by JS in 1840. This appears to be the type of theological reinterpretation that characterized his revision of the Bible in 1830–33 (often referred to as the Joseph Smith Translation or JST). **2:** *The holy city*, Jerusalem. *Stay themselves*, rely upon. The BoM adds a negative (*do not stay themselves*); in the original, hypocritical Israelites look to the Lord for help even though they speak of him falsely. The change may reflect Nephi's criticisms of Laman and Lemuel, who mention the Lord in defending the people of Jerusalem at 17.22, but who repeatedly challenge the words of the *God of Israel* given through Lehi. *Hosts*, armies. **3:** The deleted phrase may suggest that Nephi has in mind predicted events that are still in the future. **4–5:** Prophecies spoken beforehand and then later fulfilled will prove to the stubborn that it is the God of Israel who has been in control from the beginning; history unfolds according to his plans and designs.

before it came to pass I showed
them thee;
and I showed them for fear lest thou
 shouldst say:
 “Mine idol hath done them,
 and my graven image and my
 molten image
 hath commanded them.”

⁶ Thou hast **seen and heard** all this,
 and will **ye not declare them?**
And that I have showed thee new
 things from this time,
 even hidden things, and thou didst
 not know them.

⁷ They are created now, and not from
 the beginning;
 even before the day when thou
 heardest them not,
they were declared unto thee,
 lest thou shouldst say, “Behold I
 knew them.”

⁸ Yea, **and** thou heardest not;
 yea, thou knewest not;
 yea, from that time thine ear was
 not opened.

For I knew that thou wouldst deal very
 treacherously,
 and wast called a transgressor from
 the womb.

⁹ **Nevertheless,** for my name’s sake will
 I defer mine anger,

and for my praise will I refrain
from thee,
 that I cut thee not off.

¹⁰ **For,** behold, I have refined thee,^a
 I have chosen thee in the furnace of
 affliction.

¹¹ For mine own sake, **yea,** for mine
 own sake will I do **this;**
 for **I will not suffer** my name **to be**
 polluted,
 and I will not give my glory unto
 another.

God Proclaims the Redemption of Israel (Isaiah 48.12–22)

¹² Harken unto me, O Jacob, and
 Israel my called,
for I am he; I am the first, **and I am**
also the last.

¹³ Mine hand **hath also** laid the
 foundation of the earth,
 and my right hand hath spanned
 the heavens.

I call unto them **and** they stand up
 together.

¹⁴ All ye, assemble yourselves, and hear;
 who among them hath declared
 these things **unto them?**
 The Lord hath loved him;

^a ¹⁰ Nephi, here omits “but not with silver”
 from Isa 48.10.

6: *New things*, originally Judah’s deliverance from Babylon and return to Jerusalem. Here perhaps a new promised land for the Lehites, or the new revelations about the plan of salvation and salvation history from Lehi’s dream and Nephi’s vision. **7:** *They were declared unto thee*, an addition that highlights the role of prophets. The word *declare* appears nine times in this chapter, four of which are BoM additions to the KJV. **8:** *Wouldst deal very treacherously*, a phrase that recalls the times when Nephi’s brothers tried to kill him; see 7.16–21; 17.48–49. **9:** As with the children of Israel, God has not cut off Lehi’s family, despite their rebellions, murmuring, rudeness, and violence—though Lehi will shortly afterward note that God may still do so in the future; see 2 Ne 1.20. **10:** *Furnace of affliction*, usually taken as a reference to the Babylonian exile, but here reminiscent of Lehi’s family’s afflictions during their travels (16.20, 35; 17.1, 6, 20; 18.19), or perhaps Nephi’s personal afflictions (1.1; 15.5; 18.16). The reference to refining suggests that such afflictions could in some ways be beneficial—a point made by Lehi to his son Jacob at 2 Ne 2.2. **14:** The one whom the Lord *loved* is often interpreted to mean Cyrus (Isa 44.28; 45.1), the Persian king who allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem after their captivity in Babylon. Here, however, the added phrases make this unnamed conqueror into a prophet, perhaps referring to Lehi or Nephi. *Yea, and he will fulfil... declared by them*, again an emphasis on prophetic words, which fits well with the narrative of 1 Ne. *Chaldeans*, the Babylonians.

yea, and he will fulfil his word
which he hath declared by
them.

And he will do his pleasure on
Babylon,
and his arm shall **come upon** the
Chaldeans.

¹⁵ **Also, saith the Lord:**

“**I the Lord, yea**, I have spoken;
yea, I have called him **to declare**,
I have brought him, and he shall
make his way prosperous.

¹⁶ Come ye near unto me;^a
I have not spoken in secret from the
beginning,
from the time that it was **declared**
have I spoken.”

And the Lord God, and his Spirit, hath
sent me.

¹⁷ **And** thus saith the Lord, thy
Redeemer, the Holy One of
Israel:

“**I have sent him.**”

The Lord thy God who teacheth thee
to profit,
who leadeth thee by the way thou
shouldst go,
hath done it.

¹⁸ O that thou hadst hearkened to my
commandment!

Then had thy peace been as a river,
and thy righteousness as the waves
of the sea.

¹⁹ Thy seed also had been as the sand,
the offspring of thy bowels like the
gravel thereof.

His name should not have been cut off,
nor destroyed from before me.

²⁰ Go ye forth of Babylon,
flee ye from the Chaldeans,
with a voice of singing declare ye, tell
this,

utter to the end of the earth; say ye:
“The Lord hath redeemed his
servant Jacob.”

²¹ And they thirsted not;
he led them through the deserts.

He caused the waters to flow out of the
rock for them;
he clave the rock also and the waters
gushed out.

²² **And notwithstanding he hath
done all this, and greater also,**
“There is no peace,” saith the Lord,
“unto the wicked.”

^a 16 Nephi₁ here omits “hear ye this” from Isa 48.16.

15: *Called him to declare* is more specific than the original “called him.” **17:** *I have sent him*, an addition that echoes the last line of v. 16 and appears to refer to a prophet whose legitimacy has been doubted, as was both Lehi’s and Nephi’s. *Leadeth thee by the way thou shouldst go*, the words “leadeth” and “led” (v. 20) recall the thirteen instances of the verb *lead* in ch. 17. **18:** The combination of keeping *commandments*, a *river*, and *righteousness* may remind readers of Lehi’s disappointed hopes for Laman and Lemuel; see 2.8–10n. **19:** An allusion to God’s covenant with Abraham, which he renewed with Jacob; see Gen 13.16; 22.17. It would have been troubling for Nephi to realize that his own posterity would someday be cut off, while his brothers’ descendants would persist and multiply. *The gravel thereof*, the grains of sand. **20–22:** Israelites who are captive in Babylon are commanded to return home, with a promise that the miracles of the Exodus will be repeated on their behalf, though the wicked can expect continuing strife and tribulation. These verses take on additional meaning in the context of 1 Ne, where Lehi and his family have obeyed a divine command to flee from the Babylonians, proclaiming their redemption as an Israelite branch preserved by God and led to a new promised land. **20:** At last, the substance of the message declared long beforehand is revealed: *the Lord hath redeemed his servant Jacob*. **21:** *Clave the rock . . . waters gushed out*, Ex 17.1–7; Num 20.2–13.

The Servant of the Lord (Isaiah 49.1–7)

21 ¹ And again:
Hearken, O ye house of Israel,
all ye that are broken off and are
driven out
because of the wickedness of the
pastors of my people;
yea, all ye that are broken off, that
are scattered abroad,
who are of my people, O house of
Israel.

Listen, O isles, unto me,
and hearken ye people from far.

The Lord hath called me from the
womb;
from the bowels of my mother hath
he made mention of my name.

² And he hath made my mouth like a
sharp sword,

in the shadow of his hand hath he
hid me;
and made me a polished shaft,
in his quiver hath he hid me;
³ and said unto me, “Thou art my
servant, O Israel,
in whom I will be glorified.”
⁴ Then I said, “I have labored in vain;
I have spent my strength for naught
and in vain.
Surely my judgment is with
the Lord,
and my work with my God.”

⁵ And now, saith the Lord that formed
me from the womb—
that I should 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.

CHAPTER 21

1–6: This is the second of four “servant songs” that appear in the book of Isaiah (the others are at Isa 42.1–4; 50.4–11 [quoted at 2 Ne 7.4–11]; and 52.13–53.12 [quoted at Mos 13.1–12; 3 Ne 20.43–45]). There has been much debate about the identity of the servant or servants, with interpretations ranging from Israel or a faithful remnant of Israel, to a prophet or a future Davidic king, to Cyrus, to Christ. The additions made to this chapter in the BoM open possibilities that Nephi may have seen the servant as his descendants in the New World, or even as himself (with multiple fulfillments of prophecy being an interpretive option; see 2 Ne 6.4n). In any case, in the BoM version of Isa 49, God calls a servant with a special relationship to the isles of the sea, who is himself Israel and yet will also gather Israel, and who will eventually rise above initial humiliations to become a blessing to the entire world. **1:** This added introduction (which takes a chiasitic form) places Isa 49 in the context of Lehi’s allegory of the olive tree, where branches of Israel are *broken off* and *scattered* throughout the world; cf. 10.12–14; 19.24; Jacob 5; Rom 11.16–24. The term “pastors” (i.e., shepherds) occurs eight times in the OT, all in Jer and usually in metaphors of unfaithful shepherds scattering the people of Israel like sheep (e.g., Jer 10.21; 23.1–2); see 22.21–28n. Nephi is mixing metaphors from agriculture and animal husbandry here, though it is noteworthy that he is blaming the Exile on Judah’s corrupt leaders. *Isles*, the Hebrew can mean “coastlands” as well as “islands.” With the new introduction, Nephi is reinterpreting *isles*, which would have originally been seen as a reference to Gentile nations (parallel with “people from far”), as a reference to scattered Israel. **2:** Lehi will mention the “sharpness” of Nephi’s words at 2 Ne 1.26. **4:** *I have labored in vain*, this may well have been Nephi’s assessment of his own life, writing these words as a disappointed middle-aged prophet who had seen rejection and deadly warfare among his irreparably divided family (2 Ne 5). **5:** The Lord promises his dejected servant eventual success.

⁶ And he said:
 “It is a light thing that thou shouldst
 be my servant,
 to raise up the tribes of Jacob,
 and to restore the preserved of
 Israel.
 I will also give thee for a light to the
 Gentiles,
 that thou mayest be my salvation
 unto the **ends** of the earth.”
⁷ Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of
 Israel, his Holy One,
 to him whom man despiseth,
 to him whom the **nations** abhorreth,
 to servant of rulers:
 “Kings shall see and arise,
 princes also shall worship,
 because of the Lord that is
 faithful.”^a

**A Mission for the Isles of the Sea
 (Isaiah 49.8–13)**

⁸ Thus saith the Lord:
 “In an acceptable time have I heard
 thee, **O isles of the sea**,
 and in a day of salvation have I
 helped thee;
 and I will preserve thee, and give thee
 my servant
 for a covenant^b of the people,

to establish the earth,
 to cause to inherit the desolate
 heritages;
⁹ that thou mayest say to the prisoners,
 ‘Go forth,’
 to them that **sit** in darkness, ‘Show
 yourselves.’
 They shall feed in the ways,
 and their pastures shall be in all
 high places.
¹⁰ They shall not hunger nor thirst,
 neither shall the heat nor **the** sun
 smite them;
 for he that hath mercy on them shall
 lead them,
 even by the springs of water shall he
 guide them.
¹¹ And I will make all my mountains a
 way,
 and my highways shall be exalted.”
¹² **And then, O house of Israel**,
 behold, these shall come from
 far;
 and lo, these from the north and
 from the west,
 and these from the land of Sinim.

^a ⁷ Nephi, here omits “and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee” from Isa 49.7.

^b ⁸ Or *give thee, my servant, for a covenant*

6–7: *Preserved*, survivors. Nephite writings in the BoM would *restore the preserved of Israel* (particularly the latter-day descendants of the Lamanites) and eventually convert the Gentiles; see 13.35–41. Nephi may have seen in Isa 49 an assurance from God that his influence would extend beyond his immediate family, and even beyond the house of Israel—that he, through his writings, would become a *light to the Gentiles* in proclaiming *salvation to the ends of the earth*. **8:** There is a question about how to punctuate the sentence. Commas around *my servant* make the phrase a vocative, matching *O isles of the sea* above. The meaning in this rendering is that God is collectively addressing those who live on the isles of the sea (in this context, the Lehtes), and he is commissioning them by covenant to liberate and gather Israel. Without commas, the servant is the direct object of “give,” and refers to a servant of the Lord, likely Christ, who will be bestowed upon the islands. *In an acceptable time*, “in a time of favor” (NRSV). **9–12:** Originally these verses prophesied of a Jewish return from the Babylonian exile, with God providing food, shelter, and a smooth road for the travelers. In the context of the BoM, however, it seems to refer to a much later gathering of Israel from among all nations. **9:** *The prisoners*, Jews in exile. *To them that sit in darkness*, the KJV reads “are in darkness,” though “sit in darkness” occurs at Ps 107.10; Isa 42.7; Mic 7.8; Lk 1.79. **12:** *Sinim*, probably Syene (Aswan), in southern Egypt.

¹³ Sing, O heavens, and be joyful,
 O earth;
**for the feet of those who are in the
 east shall be established.**
 And break forth into singing,
 O mountains;
for they shall be smitten no more;
 for the Lord hath comforted his
 people,
 and will have mercy upon his
 afflicted.

Israel to Be Restored (Isaiah 49.14–26)

¹⁴ But, **behold**, Zion **hath** said:
 “The Lord hath forsaken me,
 and my Lord hath forgotten me.”
But he will show that he hath not.

¹⁵ **For** can a woman forget her sucking
 child,
 that she should not have compas-
 sion on the son of her womb?
 “Yea, they may forget,
 yet will I not forget thee, **O house
 of Israel.**

¹⁶ Behold, I have graven thee upon the
 palms of my hands;
 thy walls are continually before me.

¹⁷ Thy children shall make haste
against thy destroyers;

and they that made thee waste shall
 go forth of thee.

¹⁸ Lift up thine eyes round about and
 behold;
 all these gather themselves together,
 and **they shall** come to thee.”
 “**And** as I live,” saith the Lord,
 “thou shalt surely clothe thee with
 them all, as with an ornament,
 and bind them on **even** as a bride.

¹⁹ For thy waste and thy desolate
 places,
 and the land of thy destruction,
 shall even now be too narrow by reason
 of the inhabitants;
 and they that swallowed thee up
 shall be far away.

²⁰ The children whom thou shalt have,
 after thou hast lost the
first,^a
 shall again in thine ears say:
 “The place is too strait for me;
 give place to me that I may dwell.”

²¹ Then shalt thou say in thine heart:
 ‘Who hath begotten me these,

^a 20 O, P *other* (= Isa 49.20); 1837 first

13: The identity of *those who are in the east* is mysterious, though they are apparently another branch of Israel. After references to the north, west, and south (Egypt) in v. 12, the addition to v. 13 of people in the east brings the chapter in line with Zenos’s prophecy that God will gather his people “from the four quarters of the earth”—a prophecy that frames the two quoted Isaiah chapters (19.16; 22.25); cf. Ps 107.3; 3 Ne 20.13. *They shall be smitten no more*, a significant addition indicating a time frame in the latter days; see 15.19–20n. **14–26:** *Zion*, that is, Jerusalem, is personified as a grieving mother in conversation with God, who assures her that he has not forgotten his people Israel, and that at some future time he will rescue them from their oppressors and gather them back together again. **16:** *Graven*, inscribed, or perhaps tattooed. **18:** Zion’s children are described metaphorically as her jewels, or *ornaments*. **19–21:** Although Jerusalem lost many of her children to death and exile, she will eventually have many more, so many that her population will expand beyond her borders. Nephi has similarly grieved for the (future) destruction of his natural posterity (12.19; 15.5; 2 Ne 26.7); he could have read into these verses a promise of a later, spiritual progeny made up of those who would someday hear his voice through the BoM; cf. 2 Ne 10.18–19. **20:** JS’s 1837 change of “other” to *first* clarifies the chronology. *Strait*, narrow. **21:** In paraphrase, “Where did all these children come from? Did someone give birth to them and raise them on my behalf?”; cf. Isa 54.1–3 (quoted at 3 Ne 22.1–3).

seeing I have lost my children,
and am desolate, a captive,
and removing to and fro?
And who hath brought up these?
Behold, I was left alone;
these, where **have** they been?”

²² Thus saith the Lord God:
“Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the
Gentiles,
and set up my standard to the people;
and they shall bring thy sons in their
arms,
and thy daughters shall be carried
upon their shoulders.

²³ And kings shall be thy nursing fathers,
and their queens thy nursing
mothers;
they shall bow down to thee with their
face towards the earth,
and lick up the dust of thy feet.
And thou shalt know that I am the
Lord;
for they shall not be ashamed that
wait for me.”

²⁴ **For** shall the prey be taken from the
mighty,
or the lawful **captives** delivered?

²⁵ But thus saith the Lord:
“Even the captives of the mighty shall
be taken away,
and the prey of the terrible shall be
delivered;
for I will contend with him that
contendeth with thee,
and I will save thy children.
²⁶ And I will feed them that oppress
thee with their own flesh;
they shall be drunken with their
own blood as with sweet wine;
and all flesh shall know that I, the
Lord, am thy Savior and thy
Redeemer,
the Mighty One of Jacob.”

Nephi, Interprets Isaiah and Zenos: 1 Nephi 22

*(with quotations from passages cited in 1 Nephi
19–21 in bold)*

The Scattering and Gathering of Israel, Aided by the Gentiles

[VII] 22 ¹ And now it came to pass
that after I, Nephi, had read
these things which were engraven upon the

22–26: These verses from Isa will be quoted again by Jacob at 2 Ne 6.6–7, 16–18. **22–23:** The gathering of Israel will happen with the assistance of Gentile nations who will nurture and reverence God’s people. Nephi will offer an interpretation of these verses at 22.6–8; his brother Jacob will follow with another explanation at 2 Ne 6.6–15, and then record the Lord’s clarification at 2 Ne 10.7–9. *Set up my standard*, raise my signal flag. At 2 Ne 29.2, this standard is identified as the BoM. **23:** *Nursing fathers*, foster fathers. *Lick up the dust of thy feet*, a gesture of servitude and humility. **24–26:** God answers his own rhetorical question: Israel will indeed be delivered from her captors as the Lord fights on behalf of his people, with the result that all nations will know that he is the Redeemer of Israel (cf. v. 23, where Israel herself would first recognize this fact).

CHAPTER 22

This chapter offers an impressive prophetic performance as Nephi integrates his own revelations with the scriptural heritage of Israel found on the Brass Plates. First Ne 22, as well as 2 Ne 6–10, outlines a scenario of national restoration that shares language with Deut 30.1–10; but whereas the biblical passage envisions an ingathering from the Babylonian exile (most scholars regard these verses as an exilic addition to Deut), the BoM chapters prophesy of much later events, long after the Jews have been scattered by the Romans and subsequent kingdoms. **1:** *Read these things*, aloud to his brothers; see 19.22–23. Their question seems to be whether the liberation and restoration spoken of by Isaiah will occur within the hearts of individuals, or whether the prophet was describing future historical events among nations and peoples. *According to the flesh* suggests the latter interpretation, though Nephi acknowledges a spiritual meaning as well.

plates of brass, my brethren came unto me and said unto me, “What meaneth these things which ye have read? Behold, are they to be understood according to things which are spiritual, which shall come to pass according to the spirit and not the flesh?”

² And I, Nephi, said unto them, “Behold they were manifest unto the prophet by the voice of the Spirit; for by the Spirit are all things made known unto the prophets, which shall come upon the children of men according to the flesh. ³ Wherefore, the things of which I have read are things pertaining to things both temporal and spiritual.

“For it appears that the house of Israel, sooner or later, will be scattered upon all the face of the earth, and also among all nations. ⁴ And behold, there are many who are already lost from the knowledge of those who are at Jerusalem. Yea, the more part of all the tribes have been led away; and they are scattered **to and fro^a upon the isles of the sea;**^b and whither they are none of us knoweth, save that we know that they have been led away. ⁵ And since they have been led away, these things have been prophesied concerning them, and also concerning all those who shall hereafter be scattered and be confounded, because of **the Holy One of Israel;**^c for against him will they harden their hearts; wherefore, they shall be scattered among all nations and **shall be hated of all^d men.**

⁶ “Nevertheless, after they shall be **nursed^e** by the Gentiles, and the Lord has **lifted up his hand upon the Gentiles and set them up for**

a standard, and their children have been carried in their arms, and their daughters have been carried upon their shoulders;^f behold these things of which are spoken are temporal; for thus are the covenants of the Lord with our fathers; and it meaneth us in the days to come, and also all our brethren who are of the house of Israel. ⁷ And it meaneth that the time cometh that after all the house of Israel have been scattered and confounded, that the Lord God will raise up a **mighty^g** nation among the Gentiles, yea, even upon the face of this land; and by them shall our seed be scattered. ⁸ And after our seed is scattered the Lord God will ‘proceed to do a marvelous work’^b among the Gentiles, which shall be of great worth unto our seed; wherefore, it is likened unto their being **nourishedⁱ by the Gentiles and being carried in their arms and upon their shoulders.**^j

⁹ “And it shall also be of worth unto the Gentiles; and not only unto the Gentiles but unto all the house of Israel, unto the making known of the covenants of the Father of

^a 4 1 Ne 21.21 (Isaiah)

^b 4 1 Ne 19.10, 12, 16 (Zenos); 21.1, 8 (Isaiah)

^c 5 1 Ne 19.14–15 (Zenos)

^d 5 1 Ne 19.14 (Zenos)

^e 6 1 Ne 21.23 (Isaiah)

^f 6 1 Ne 21.22 (Isaiah)

^g 7 1 Ne 21.24–25 (Isaiah)

^b 8 Isa 29.14

ⁱ 8 O *nursed* [The original reading makes this an allusion to 1 Ne 21.23 (Isaiah).]

^j 8 1 Ne 21.22 (Isaiah)

³: *Things both temporal and spiritual*, see 14.7n; 15.31–32. ⁴: *The more part of all the tribes*, the ten tribes that were conquered and deported by the Assyrians in 722 BCE (2 Kings 17). *Whither*, here meaning “where,” rather than the standard adverbial “to what place.” ⁵: The Lehites are just one of a number of Israelite groups that have been led out of Israel in the past, and that will be led away in the future as well. The BoM views the destiny of lineage Israel—the chosen people of God’s covenants—as central to world history. ⁶: Nephi adapts Isa 49.22: where the original stated that God would “set up my standard to the people,” Nephi here makes the Gentiles the *standard* (a flag or conspicuous object raised to indicate a rallying point). At 2 Ne 29.2, the BoM itself is seen as the “standard” spoken of by Isaiah. *Their children . . . their daughters*, curiously, Nephi changes Isaiah’s first pronoun from “sons” to “children.” ⁷: The *mighty nation* that scatters the descendants of Lehi in the New World might refer to Spain, England, or the United States; cf. 13.14. ^{8–9}: *Proceed to do a marvelous work*, Isa 29.14; the “marvelous work” seems to refer to the publication of the BoM, as at 2 Ne 25.17–18; 29.1–2; 3 Ne 21.1–9; cf. 1 Ne 14.7n. *Of great worth*, at 2 Ne 3.7; 28.2; and 33.3 the phrase is specifically applied to the BoM.

heaven unto Abraham, saying, ‘In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.’^a
¹⁰ And I would, my brethren, that ye should know that all the kindreds of the earth cannot be blessed unless he shall ‘make bare his arm in the eyes of the nations.’^b ¹¹ Wherefore, the Lord God will proceed to make bare his arm in the eyes of all the nations, in bringing about his covenants and his gospel unto those who are of the house of Israel. ¹² Wherefore, he will bring them again out of captivity, and they shall be gathered together to the lands of their inheritance;^c and they shall be brought ‘out of obscurity and out of darkness’;^d and they shall **know that the Lord is their Savior and their Redeemer, the Mighty One of Israel.**”^e

War Amongst the Nations The Righteous Will Be Preserved

¹³ “And the blood of that great and abominable church, which is the whore of all the earth, shall turn upon their own heads; for they shall war among themselves, and the sword of their own hands shall fall upon their own heads, and they shall be **drunken with their own blood.**”^f ¹⁴ And every nation which shall war against thee, O house of Israel, shall be turned

one against another, and they shall fall into the pit which they digged to ensnare the people of the Lord. And ‘all that fight against Zion’^g shall be destroyed, and that great whore, who hath perverted the right ways of the Lord, yea, that great and abominable church, shall tumble to the dust and great shall be the fall of it.

¹⁵ “‘For behold,’ saith the prophet, ‘the time cometh speedily that Satan shall have no more power over the hearts of the children of men; for the day soon cometh that all the proud and they who do wickedly shall be as stubble; and the day cometh that they must be burned.’”^h
¹⁶ For the time soon cometh that the fulness of the wrath of God shall be poured out upon all the children of men; for he will not suffer that the wicked shall destroy the righteous.

^a 9 Gen 22.18; Acts 3.25; cf. 1 Ne 15.18

^b₁₀ Isa 52.10

^c 12 O *their first inheritance*

^d 12 Isa 29.18

^e 12 1 Ne 21.26 (Isaiah)

^f 13 1 Ne 21.26 (Isaiah)

^g 14 Isa 29.8

^h 15 Mal 4.1

11: *Make bare his arm*, display his power. **12:** *Again out of captivity*, the “again” presupposes an earlier liberation from bondage, probably the return from the Babylonian exile predicted by Lehi at 10.3 and fulfilled at the time of Cyrus. The phrase *out of captivity* also reflects 21.24–25 (Isa 49.24–25). Whereas in 21.26 (Isa 49.26) knowledge that *the Lord is their Savior* would come from witnessing the destruction of enemies, here Nephi makes it the result of seeing God’s mercy in gathering Israel. *Lands of their inheritance*, the plural is significant given BoM teachings about multiple promised lands. **13–14:** Imagery from Nephi’s vision reappears: *great and abominable church* (13.6), *whore of all the earth* (14.10), and a *pit* filled by those who dug it (14.3). Nephi interprets Isaiah’s disturbing allusion to self-cannibalism as a metaphor for internecine warfare and self-destruction. **14:** *Zion*, see 13.37n. *Perverted the right ways of the Lord*, more phrasing from Nephi’s vision (13.27; cf. Acts 13.10); in addition, *great shall be the fall of it* echoes 11.36. **15:** *The prophet*, not Isaiah; the quotation closely follows Mal 4.1, but this is problematic since Malachi lived long after Lehi’s flight from Jerusalem, and since 3 Ne 26.1–2 specifically states that the Nephites did not have access to Mal 3–4 before Christ’s coming. A possible solution for Latter-day Saints is that Malachi drew upon language derived from a Brass Plates prophet, such as Zenos. In the context of this chapter, the citation of Mal 4.1 has reference to eschatological events at the end of the world, but the verse is also cited at 2 Ne 26.1–9 in conjunction with prophecies concerning the coming of Christ to the Nephites (see 2 Ne 6.4n). *Satan shall have no more power over the hearts of the children of men*, a recurring idea in the BoM; see v. 26 (possibly an inclusio); 2 Ne 30.18; Ether 8.26; cf. Alma 10.25; 48.17; 3 Ne 2.2; 28.39; 4 Ne 1.28; Ether 15.19. The establishment of God’s kingdom on earth and the temporary powerlessness of Satan at vv. 24–26 could also have partial fulfillment in 3–4 Nephi. **16:** *Wrath of God shall be poured out*, also from Nephi’s vision; see 14.15, 17.

¹⁷ Wherefore, he will **preserve**^a the righteous by his power, even if it so be that the fulness of his wrath must come, and the righteous be preserved, even unto the destruction of their enemies by fire. Wherefore, the righteous need not fear; for thus saith the prophet, “They shall be saved, even if it so be as by fire.”^b

¹⁸ “Behold, my brethren, I say unto you, that these things must shortly come; yea, even blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke must come; and it must needs be upon the face of this earth; and it cometh unto men according to the flesh if it so be that they will harden their hearts against the Holy One of Israel.

¹⁹ For behold, the righteous shall not perish; for the time surely must come that ‘all they who fight against Zion’^c shall be cut off.

²⁰ “And the Lord will surely prepare a way for his people, unto the fulfilling of the words of Moses, which he spake, saying, ‘A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass that all those who will not hear that prophet shall be cut off from among the people.’^d ²¹ And now I, Nephi, declare unto

you, that this prophet of whom Moses spake was the Holy One of Israel; wherefore, he shall execute judgment in righteousness.

²² “And the righteous need not fear, for they are those who shall not be confounded. But it is the kingdom of the devil, which shall be built up among the children of men, which kingdom is established among them which are in the flesh—²³ for the time speedily shall come that all churches which are built up to get gain, and all those who are built up to get power over the flesh, and those who are built up to become popular in the eyes of the world, and those who seek the lusts of the flesh and the things of the world, and to do all manner of iniquity—yea, in fine, all those who belong to the kingdom of the devil are they who need fear, and tremble, and quake; they are those who must be ‘brought low in the dust’;^e they are those who must be consumed ‘as

^a 17 1 Ne 21.8 (Isaiah)

^b 17 Reference uncertain, but see 1 Cor 3.15.

^c 19 Isa 29.8

^d 20 Deut 18.15, 18–19; Acts 3.22–23

^e 23 Isa 29.4

17: These are comforting words for the righteous who see a world that will soon be engulfed in destruction. *His wrath... destruction... by fire*, in Hebrew, as in English, the concepts of anger and heat are closely associated; cf. 2 Ne 26.6. *They shall be saved, even if it so be as by fire*, words again ascribed to an unnamed prophet, but compare 1 Cor 3.15: “but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire”; the Greek term implies a narrow escape from danger; cf. 2 Ne 30.10. 18: *According to the flesh*, Nephi is emphasizing the temporal aspects of these prophecies, in answer to his brothers’ question in v. 1; cf. vv. 22, 27. 20–21: *A prophet... among the people*, Deut 18.15, 18–19. This is the second time this prophecy has been cited (10.4), and here the affinities with the version at Acts 3.22–23 are even more pronounced. Nephi identifies the coming prophet as the *Holy One of Israel*, whom Lehi will describe as “the true Messiah, their Redeemer and their God” (2 Ne 1.10); Nephi himself will later definitively state that “Christ is the Holy One of Israel” (2 Ne 25.29); and at 3 Ne 20.23 the resurrected Jesus will proclaim himself the prophet foretold by Moses; cf. 1 Ne 19.10, 14–15. 21–28: These verses share several concepts and phrases with Jer 23.3–6, which speaks of a future king who “shall execute judgment and justice [righteousness],” and whose people “shall fear no more nor be dismayed”; in addition, the Lord will “gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries... to their fold(s),” with none “lacking” [missing; uncounted], where they shall be fed and “shall dwell safely.” The fact that Nephi’s inserted introduction to Isa 49 (1 Ne 21.1) also shares language with Jer 23.1–2 (wicked “pastors” have “driven away” and “scattered” God’s people) makes the connection even stronger. 22: *The righteous need not fear*, repeated from v. 17. *Kingdom of the devil*, non-biblical, but six times in the BoM; it is clearly the opposite of the kingdom of God or of Heaven, as at Alma 5.25; 41.4. The implied conclusion—that it is the devil’s kingdom that should fear—is made explicit in the next verse. 23: Corrupt churches in the last days are singled out for particular opprobrium; cf. 2 Ne 26.20–21. *Get gain*, make money. *Brought low in the dust*, this is the fifth phrase in ch. 22 borrowed from Isa 29, a chapter that will be explicated by Nephi at length at 2 Ne 27.

stubble’;^a and this is according to the words of the prophet.

²⁴ “And the time cometh speedily that the righteous must be ‘led up as calves of the stall;’^b and the Holy One of Israel must reign in dominion, and might, and power, and great glory. ²⁵ And he **gathereth** his children **from the four quarters of the earth;**^c and he numbereth his sheep, and they know him; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd; and he shall feed his sheep, and in him they shall find **pasture.**^d ²⁶ And because of the righteousness of his people, Satan has no power; wherefore, he cannot be loosed for the space of many years; for he hath no power over the hearts of the people, for they dwell in righteousness, and the Holy One of Israel reigneth.

²⁷ “And now behold, I, Nephi, say unto you that all these things must come according to the flesh. ²⁸ But, behold, all nations, kindreds,

tongues, and people shall dwell safely in the Holy One of Israel if it so be that they will repent.

²⁹ “And now I, Nephi, make an end; for I durst not speak further as yet concerning these things. ³⁰ Wherefore, my brethren, I would that ye should consider that the things which have been written upon the plates of brass are true; and they testify that a man must be obedient to the commandments of God. ³¹ Wherefore, ye need not suppose that I and my father are the only ones that have testified, and also taught them. Wherefore, if ye shall be obedient to the commandments, and endure to the end, ye shall be saved at the last day. And thus it is. Amen.”

^a 23 Mal 4.1

^b 24 Mal 4.2

^c 25 1 Ne 19.16 (Zenos)

^d 25 1 Ne 21.9 (Isaiah)

25: The image of a divine shepherd who gathers his people contrasts with the wicked, scattering shepherds (“pastors”) of 21.1. *Numbereth his sheep*, a striking, non-biblical image of God identifying his people one by one; it may be related to the parable of the lost sheep at Lk 15.3–7. *There shall be one fold and one shepherd*, Jn 10.16; 3 Ne 15.17, 21; 16.3; cf. the “one shepherd” in Ezek 34.23 and 37.24, referring to a future Davidic king, as well as 1 Ne 13.41. **26:** *Satan . . . cannot be loosed for the space of many years*; cf. Rev 20.7. The BoM rarely speaks of the Millennium, and in this somewhat oblique reference Satan is bound not by being imprisoned (Rev 20.1–3), but by the general righteousness of the world. **27:** At the beginning of the chapter, Nephi’s brothers asked how Isaiah’s prophecies should be interpreted, and he responded that while they would be fulfilled “according to the flesh” (i.e., in history), they were “both temporal and spiritual.” Here Nephi concludes by emphasizing once again that the prophecies refer to world historical events. **29:** It is not clear why Nephi does not dare to give further details about these future events; perhaps he is encroaching on aspects of his vision that God told him not to reveal (14.24–30). **30–31:** The brothers have reacted to the revelations of Lehi and Nephi as if they were dangerously innovative or even apostate. It is important to Nephi to demonstrate that his prophecies are in harmony with the teachings of Moses, Isaiah, and Zenos. *Last day*, the Judgment Day; as a specific occasion, the term is absent from the OT but appears six times in the NT (all in John) and fifty times in the BoM. Nephi ends on a note of hope, as promised at 19.24. *And thus it is. Amen*, see 9.6n.

INTRODUCTION TO 2 NEPHI

This book completes Nephi's contributions to the Small Plates. The break between 1 and 2 Nephi seems somewhat arbitrary, coming in the middle of a family gathering, yet the beginning scene is momentous. Chapters 1–4 are presented as Lehi's last words before his death, reminiscent of Moses's final admonitions to Israel at the end of Deuteronomy as they prepared to enter the promised land. Whereas 1 Nephi brought the Lehites to their own promised land, 2 Nephi sets the conditions for their continued existence there. One of the most puzzling features of Nephi's second book is its shift away from faith-affirming stories toward non-narrative modes of religious devotion, including sermons, scripture, and prophecy. While 1 Nephi focused primarily on physical deliverance—particularly for Lehi's family fleeing Jerusalem, and then in the wilderness and on the seas—2 Nephi turns its attention to spiritual deliverance. In fact, only a single chapter, 2 Nephi 5, recounts narratives from the history of the Lehites in the New World over the course of the roughly forty-five years covered by the book. Nephi refers readers to his earlier Large Plates (abridged in the lost 116 pages) for more details about his reign, along with the “wars and contentions of my people” (1 Ne 9.4; 2 Ne 5.33), but what he offers in 2 Nephi is a series of speeches, lengthy quotations from Isaiah, and passages of scriptural exegesis, largely without narrative context. It is also significant that this book recounts the origin of the division between Nephites and Lamanites, the two related groups whose mutual antagonism drives most of the history related in the Book of Mormon.

In chapter 5, shortly after Lehi's death, Nephi is warned by God to take his relatives who support him and flee into the wilderness to escape the murderous anger of his brothers, thus recapitulating Lehi's flight from Jerusalem. Those who follow Nephi and establish a new settlement are called “Nephites,” while all those left behind become “Lamanites.” As decades pass, divisions harden and Nephi describes the Lamanites as “idle” and “full of mischief”; indeed, they are cursed for their rejection of the Lord by being “cut off from his presence” (5.20–24; cf. 1.17–18). They are also marked with a dark skin, something that many contemporary readers have found distressing, and rightfully so, even if skin color does not prevent Lamanites from repentance and full acceptance by God, at times becoming more righteous than the Nephites, as in the book of Helaman. What is less often recognized, however, is that the curse is paired with a blessing: the Lamanites will persist and eventually be restored to their former knowledge and privileges (see 4.5–7; Hel 15). The Nephites, while blessed with multiple revelations and an understanding of the truth, are themselves cursed with the threat of complete annihilation if they turn away from God (see Alma 9.13–24), which is precisely what happens at the end of the Book of Mormon. After their demise, their records—the Book of Mormon itself—will be instrumental in the salvation of the latter-day Lamanites, generally identified as the indigenous peoples of the Americas (or some subset thereof).

In contrast to 1 Nephi, which was filled with adolescent sibling rivalry, youthful confidence, miraculous rescues, and dramatic visions and revelations, 2 Nephi portrays a somewhat subdued, even despondent prophet, whose ambitions for a new life in the promised land—as a faithful, covenant-keeping remnant of

Israel—were dashed by the break-up of his family. Second Nephi is remarkable for what it does not say: over the course of some thirty years, Nephi reports no new revelations, aside from the warning to flee; he tells no stories from his decades as king (a position about which he was apparently ambivalent; see 5.18); he records no miracles; and he says nothing about his wife or children. In his old age, he passes the Small Plates to his brother Jacob rather than to a son, and it is not obvious that he has a son to succeed him as king (Jacob 1.9–12)—an absence that would have been devastating in a patrilineal, patriarchal culture. He talks himself out of sorrow and anger in a psalm at 4.13–35, and pleads, “O Lord, wilt thou redeem my soul?” (4.31). Although he reports that his people prospered and lived “after the manner of happiness” (5.11, 27), God seems farther away than he did in 1 Nephi. Nephi himself appears as someone who is struggling to make sense of a life that did not turn out as he had expected, and as he searches the scriptures for consolation and understanding, he seems more attuned to the distant future than to the immediate present. The book as a whole is framed by Lehi’s declaration at 1.15 that “the Lord has redeemed my soul from hell” (with a similar assurance extended to Nephi’s younger brother Jacob at 2.3), and the moment many years later, after once again hearing the Lord’s revelatory voice (28.30–29.14; 31.12–15), when Nephi is finally able to claim that blessing for himself at 33.6: “I glory in my Jesus, for he hath redeemed my soul from hell.”

CONTENTS

Chapters 1–4: Lehi, at the end of his life, blesses and counsels his posterity. His instructions include a theological summary in chapter 2 and quotations from an otherwise unknown prophecy of the biblical Joseph in chapter 3. Nephi concludes the section with a newly composed psalm, apparently intended to take the place of his own conspicuously missing blessing from Lehi.

Chapter 5: The Nephites separate from the Lamanites. The former prosper under Nephi’s rule while the latter are cursed. Nephi ordains his younger brothers Jacob and Joseph as priests and teachers.

Chapters 6–10: The narrative shifts abruptly to a five-chapter, two-day sermon given by Jacob, with no indication of when it was originally delivered, which includes nearly verbatim quotations of Isaiah 49.22–52.2. In chapter 9 Jacob explains the resurrection and judgment, two key components of the plan of salvation for individuals, while chapter 10 turns to the salvation history of Lehwites, Jews, and Gentiles in the last days, particularly those living in the Americas. The placement of this sermon suggests that its doctrines define the primary theological differences between Nephites and Lamanites.

Chapters 11–24: After a brief introduction, Nephi reproduces Isaiah 2–14 in full. He explicitly states that he himself, his brother Jacob, and Isaiah constitute the three witnesses necessary to establish truth, as stipulated in Deuteronomy 19.15 (see 2 Ne 11.2–3). Read in the context of 1–2 Nephi, the prophecies of God’s judgments against Assyria, Israel, Judah, and Babylon pronounced by Isaiah appear to prefigure the destructions that await the Nephites at 3 Nephi 8 and Mormon 6 (seen in vision by Nephi at 1 Ne 12), while Isaiah’s occasional prophecies of redemption and restoration hint at a more promising future.

Chapters 25–30: Nephi provides an interpretation of Isaiah 2–14 by integrating some of its phrases within his own prophecies of Christ and salvation history, foretelling the destructions that would precede Jesus’s visitation to the Nephites, and explaining how God will either redeem or render judgment upon various nations, ethnicities, and institutions at the time the Book of Mormon will come forth. The latter-day Gentiles, like the Assyrians and Babylonians, will be instruments of God’s wrath, but they may avoid the fate of those two ancient empires if they repent. Nephi works in phrases from his vision in 1 Nephi 11–14 as well as from Jacob’s sermon in 2 Nephi 6–10. Isaiah 29 is given particular attention in chapters 26–27. Finally, at 28.30, God again speaks directly to Nephi, for the first time since 5.25.

Chapters 31–33: A concluding appendix returns to the plan of salvation, affirming the need for individuals to follow Christ, repent, be baptized, receive the Holy Ghost, and endure to the end (with interpretive allusions in ch. 31 to Lehi’s dream at 1 Ne 8). Nephi bids his readers farewell until the Judgment Day. The books of 1–2 Nephi cover events from ca. 600–545 BCE.

INTERPRETATION

In addition to explaining the division between 1 and 2 Nephi—whether that might be attributed to a change in themes or approach, or to some structural design such as parallelism or chiasmus or the *inclusio* noted above—interpretations of 2 Nephi must also account for the lengthy quotations from Isaiah. To skip over those chapters is to miss the point of whatever Nephi was trying to communicate. For secular readers, the Isaiah passages, taken nearly verbatim from the King James Bible, may seem like filler intended to add bulk to Joseph Smith’s replacement for the lost manuscript, yet Nephi interacts with the message of his prophetic predecessor in sustained, creative ways. He explains that he is copying Isaiah’s words into his record as a third witness of Christ, after himself and his brother Jacob—with no mention, oddly, of Lehi (11.2–3). In his subsequent comments, however, Nephi ignores the standard Christian prooftexts in the chapters he has just quoted, such as Isaiah 7.14 (“a virgin shall conceive”) or Isaiah 9.6 (“for unto us a child is born”), and instead highlights Isaiah’s explication of God’s covenants with Israel, and in particular how they might be applied to remnants of the Lehites in the last days. In other words, Nephi uses Isaiah 2–14 to focus on Christ’s role as Redeemer of Israel rather than as the personal savior of individuals. It appears that Nephi is moved by how Isaiah’s prophecies and warnings, set in the politics of the eighth century BCE, offer a pattern of alternating judgment and hope, and how the fulfillment of many of his predictions suggests that the rest will eventually come to fruition as well.

Nephi claims a comprehensive understanding of Isaiah’s prophecies in their original context, but he prefers to treat them typologically for the sake of his descendants who know little of Jerusalem and its environs (25.1–6). He preaches a doctrine of recurrence—that just as Israel and Judah were overthrown by the Assyrians and Babylonians, so also the Nephites (a remnant of Israel) would be vanquished by the Lamanites, who would themselves be conquered by the Gentiles, in repeated episodes of judgment and scattering, but with a promise of eventual gathering and salvation. He acknowledges the possibility of multiple fulfillments as he “likens” Isaiah’s words to his own people, and to “all men” (11.2, 8; cf. 1 Ne 19.23–24 and Jacob’s words at 6.4–5), foreshadowing Jesus’s observation at 3 Nephi 23.3 that Isaiah spoke many things that both “have been and shall be.” Both Nephi and Jacob take a long-term perspective, in which the fates of lineages and ethnic groups are tracked over millennia, and the vicissitudes of individuals are required in the eternities. In both cases salvation entails spiritual deliverance, as God sends his word to multiple nations, allowing them to believe and repent collectively, while individual human beings are posthumously rescued from death and hell. To this end, the story of the fall of Adam, the mediation of Christ, and the redemption of individual believers (detailed in ch. 2) are superimposed upon the future history of Israel, with the verb *restore* being used in Jacob’s sermon in chapters 6–10 to describe both the reuniting of spirit and body in the resurrection, as well as the final gathering of Israel to their lands of inheritance. (Interestingly, the return of the Jews from Babylon merits only two passing references, at 6.9 and 25.11, perhaps because the Lehites have no share in that marvelous occurrence.)

Jacob’s preaching may also play a crucial role in Nephi’s maturation as a prophet. The latter’s prophecies in chapters 25–30 come after a long hiatus. One can read 2 Nephi as the record of a difficult spiritual journey in which Nephi experiences not a crisis of faith—he always believes in God and his revelations—so much as a crisis of expectations. As a young man, Nephi was extraordinarily favored by both God and his parents. He was obedient and faithful, and according to the dictates of salvation history he should have been rewarded

INTRODUCTION TO 2 NEPHI

with land, prosperity, peace, and posterity. Instead, he discovered that his direct lineage would be exterminated by the descendants of his rebellious brothers, whose animosity had driven him out and resulted in open warfare. Discouragement, or even resentment, was natural, especially if he himself had no surviving sons. Where was God's promised justice?

And so, after the death of Lehi, Nephi writes very little, noting that thirty years had gone by since the family had left Jerusalem (5.28), and then just six verses later, forty years (5.34). He seems to have reached a spiritual impasse during which, so far as we know, God was no longer speaking to him. Nevertheless, after some indeterminate amount of time, his younger brother Jacob, born in the wilderness and now an adult, shows him the way forward. Jacob, who himself had seen visions and angels (6.8–9; 10.3), preaches a sermon explaining how individuals can find peace even in times of distress, and he urges his listeners to “cheer up your hearts” and “reconcile yourselves to the will of God” (10.23–24). Significantly, he sees beyond current conflicts and refers to descendants of his older, estranged brothers as “our children” (10.2; cf. vv. 18–19).

Unlike Laman and Lemuel, who were incapable of heeding a younger brother, Nephi listens to Jacob and follows his lead, even adopting his characteristic reference to “my beloved brethren” (used thirteen times by Jacob in chs. 6–10, and then sixteen more times by Nephi, but only starting at 26.1). As Nephi elaborates on Isaiah's words, he comes to understand that instead of his descendants blessing the world directly, their influence would come through their records, which would include his own writings: “For this cause hath the Lord God promised unto me that these things which I write shall be kept and preserved, and handed down unto my seed from generation to generation” (25.21). He laments the destructions that await his people, both at the time of Christ's coming, and then at their bitter end four hundred years later: “O the pain, and the anguish of my soul for the loss of the slain of my people! For I, Nephi, have seen it, and it well nigh consumeth me before the presence of the Lord” (26.7; cf. 1 Ne 12.19; 15.5). Yet heeding Jacob's admonition to be reconciled to the divine will, he continues, “But I must cry unto my God, ‘Thy ways are just’” (26.7). A few chapters later, God resumes speaking to him, with details about the Book of Mormon in the latter days (ch. 29), and Nephi adds his own prophecy about how the book will eventually come to “the remnant of our seed” (30.3–4), speaking of the descendants of his brothers long after his own line has come to an end.

Nephi realizes that his efforts have not been in vain (cf. 1 Ne 21.4), and that God's promises are sure, even if they may be fulfilled in unexpected ways. According to salvation history, lineage and ethnicity will continue to matter in future ages, at least to some degree, yet from another perspective communal identities become less relevant, for God “inviteth all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female. . . all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile” (26.33). Nephi accepts the justice of divine judgment, including the fall of Jerusalem and the future destruction of his own people, but in the end he is able to overcome personal traumas and prejudices to arrive at an expansive, inclusive vision of God's love. This realization seems to be what allows him to finally affirm that he has himself been redeemed (33.6).

GUIDE TO READING

Because 2 Nephi lacks a strong narrative structure, it is possible to get a sense of its major themes and concerns by reading a few disparate chapters. An overview of its theology can be found in chapters 9–10, where Jacob explains the plan of salvation in one chapter and salvation history in the next. Chapter 2 provides more details about the intersection of human agency and Christian redemption, and chapter 25 offers a clear exposition of Book of Mormon eschatology. The literary qualities of 2 Nephi can be seen at 4.13–35, when Nephi puts his fears, frustrations, and faith into a psalm of lament, or again at Jacob's speech in chapter 9, which takes the form of a highly organized example of oral rhetoric. Readers interested in social commentary

can compare Nephi's prophecies of self-serving religious institutions in chapter 28 with the denominational conflicts of Joseph Smith's time, or even today.

It may be instructive to observe Nephi as a reader of scripture—perhaps in the Deuteronomistic mode of a pious king (Deut 17:18–20)—delighting in God's word and seeking to apply it to his own circumstances, much like believers throughout history. However, two elements in 2 Nephi are rare in the Christian reception of scripture, at least since the final establishment of the canon in the fourth century CE. The first is the inclusion of extra-biblical scripture: chapter 3 quotes extensively from a prophecy made by Joseph of Egypt. Whether one views this as a creation of Joseph Smith, or as a genuine document preserved on the Brass Plates, it is telling that Nephite writers treat it as scripture, alluding to it even in passages that were dictated before 2 Nephi. For example, Moroni's description of the Nephite record at Mormon 8.14 as being of "great worth" is connected to 2 Nephi 3.7, and his discussion about weakness in writing at Ether 12.23–28 appears to draw upon 2 Nephi 3.13, 21.

The second unusual move is that even as the Book of Mormon affirms the biblical witness, it also challenges its uniqueness, presenting itself as evidence that God spoke to prophets outside the Holy Land, and imagining the response of Christians who would reject any additions to the Bible (29.1–8). Furthermore, it predicts that additional bibles will be forthcoming from other branches of scattered Israel, demonstrating God's love for his children in many lands and many ages (29.9–14). Second Nephi arguably features the most intensive engagement with the Bible of any book in the Book of Mormon, and it is worth noting how biblical verses are modified, and which ones are cited multiple times, such as Isaiah 11.11; 29.13–15; and 49.22–23. Also, Jacob's expanded version of Isaiah 55.1–2 at 2 Nephi 9.50–51 is striking, as is Nephi's revision and recontextualization of Isaiah 29 in 2 Nephi 26–27. (The formatting and annotations in this volume can assist in tracking the biblicisms in 2 Nephi.)

Second Nephi is often regarded by Latter-day Saints as something of a challenge to read, especially in light of the Isaiah chapters from the King James Bible, which they generally encounter without poetic formatting. Indeed, many church members prefer the youthful exploits of Nephi in his first book, which have captured the imagination of LDS artists and writers. Yet 2 Nephi tells a story that is well suited to the difficulties of middle age, to those who struggle with life's disappointments when previous assumptions about God and religion appear to have been discredited. It offers a model for responding to adult discontent and frustrations, especially when faith seems difficult, and it illustrates a type of intricate, detailed engagement with scripture that is rare in the Latter-day Saint tradition. If 1 Nephi appeals to adolescent sensibilities, 2 Nephi is, to paraphrase Virginia Woolf's assessment of *Middlemarch*, scripture written for grown-ups.

THE SECOND BOOK OF NEPHI

An account of the death of Lehi. Nephi's brethren rebel against him. The Lord warns Nephi to depart into the wilderness. His journeyings in the wilderness, and so forth.

Lehi's Last Words: 2 Nephi 1.1–4.12

Lehi, Prophecies about the Inhabitants of the Americas

[1]¹ And now it came to pass that after I, Nephi, had made an end of teaching my brethren, our father, Lehi, also spake many things unto them—how great^a things the Lord had done for them in bringing them out of the land of Jerusalem.² And he spake unto them concerning their rebellions upon the waters, and the mercies of God in sparing their lives, that they were not swallowed up in the sea.³ And he also spake unto them concerning the land of promise, which they had obtained—how merciful the Lord had been in warning us that we should flee out of the land of Jerusalem.

⁴ “For behold,” said he, “I have seen a vision, in which I know that Jerusalem is destroyed;

and had we remained in Jerusalem we should also have perished.”⁵ “But,” said he, “notwithstanding our afflictions, we have obtained a land of promise, a land which is choice above all other lands; a land which the Lord God hath covenanted with me should be a land for the inheritance of my seed. Yea, the Lord hath covenanted^b this land unto me, and to my children forever, and also all those who should be led out of other countries by the hand of the Lord.

⁶ “Wherefore, I, Lehi, prophesy according to the workings of the Spirit which is in me, that there shall none come into this land save they shall be brought by the hand of the Lord.

⁷ Wherefore, this land is consecrated unto

^a 1 O, 1981 unto them, and rehearsed unto them, how great

^b 5 O consecrated

Preface. As with 1 Ne, this description of contents covers only the narrative portions of the book, found in chs. 1–5.

CHAPTERS 1–4:

The division between 1 and 2 Ne is somewhat puzzling since 2 Ne begins in the midst of the same family gathering that was ongoing at the end of 1 Ne; however, the shift to Lehi's words allows Nephi, the editor, to do several things simultaneously. After quickly recapitulating the main events of 1 Ne (1.1–5), Lehi turns his attention to the promised land (1.6–12), and so introduces the major themes of 2 Ne, which will be evident in the lengthy quotations from Isaiah (chs. 12–24) as well as Jacob's speech (chs. 6–10) and Nephi's subsequent commentary (chs. 25–30): God's plans for humanity in patterns of alternating scattering and gathering, destruction and prosperity, and judgment and restoration—with a focus on commandments, covenants, scripture, and lands of inheritance. He also sets up an inclusio at 1.15 that will be answered at 33.6. In ch. 2, Lehi highlights the concept of free will and the Deuteronomistic doctrine of punishments and rewards (as would be appropriate for covenant renewal upon arriving in a promised land), counterbalances the fall of Adam with the future coming of the Messiah, and suggests that individual death and resurrection can be seen as yet another instance of scattering and gathering (of the body). In ch. 3, he integrates his own prophecies with scripture (from the Brass Plates). All of this is accomplished through the familiar genre of patriarchs giving final blessings to their children, as Isaac and Jacob did at Gen 27 and 48–49, or as Moses blessed the tribes of Israel at Deut 33.

CHAPTER 1

2–3: Nephi's second book, like his first, begins with references to Lehi's prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem, coupled with an acknowledgment of God's mercies (1 Ne 1.14, 20). *Rebellions upon the waters*, see 1 Ne 18.9–22. *Land... which they had obtained*, see 1 Ne 18.23–25. *Warning us*, see 1 Ne 2.2. **4:** *Jerusalem is destroyed*, in 586 BCE. **5:** *Consecrated* [the reading of O], made holy, or set apart for sacred purposes; cf. vv. 7, 32; 10.19. **6:** The idea that everyone who came to the Americas was brought by God is difficult to reconcile with the transatlantic slave trade. **7:** *Cursed shall be the land*, see 1 Ne 17.35n, 38n.

him whom he shall bring. And if it so be that they shall serve him according to the commandments which he hath given, it shall be a land of liberty unto them; wherefore, they shall never be brought down into captivity; if so, it shall be because of iniquity; for if iniquity shall abound cursed shall be the land for their sakes, but unto the righteous it shall be blessed forever.

⁸ “And behold, it is wisdom that this land should be kept as yet from the knowledge of other nations; for behold, many nations would overrun the land, that there would be no place for an inheritance. ⁹ Wherefore, I, Lehi, have obtained a promise, that inasmuch as those whom the Lord God shall bring out of the land of Jerusalem shall keep his commandments, they shall prosper upon the face of this land; and they shall be kept from all other nations, that they may possess this land unto themselves. And if it so be that they shall keep his commandments they shall be blessed upon the face of this land, and there shall be none to molest them, nor to take away the land of their inheritance; and they shall dwell safely forever.

¹⁰ “But behold, when the time cometh that they shall dwindle in unbelief, after they have received so great blessings from the hand of the Lord—having a knowledge of the creation of the earth, and all men, knowing the great and marvelous works of the Lord from the creation of the world; having power given them to do all things by faith; having all the commandments from the beginning, and having been brought by his infinite goodness into this precious land of promise—behold, I say, if the day shall come that they will reject the Holy One of Israel, the true Messiah, their Redeemer and their God, behold, the judgments of him that is just shall rest upon them.

¹¹ Yea, he will bring other nations unto them, and he will give unto them power, and he will take away from them the lands of their possessions, and he will cause them to be scattered and smitten. ¹² Yea, as one generation passeth to another there shall be bloodsheds, and great visitations among them; wherefore, my sons, I would that ye would remember; yea, I would that ye would hearken unto my words.”

2 NEPHI 1.13–23: ROUGHLY CHIASTIC REPETITION

- a) **awake . . . shake off the awful chains by which ye are bound** (v. 13)
- b) **arise from the dust** (14)
 - c) cut off and **destroyed forever** (17)
 - d) a **cursing** should come upon you (18)
 - e) according to the will and **captivity** of the devil (18)
 - f) Lehi’s covenant: **Inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments . . .** (20)
 - e’) come down into **captivity** (21)
 - d’) **cursed** with a sore cursing (22)
 - c’) **eternal destruction** (22)
- a’) **awake . . . shake off the chains with which ye are bound** (23)
- b’) **arise from the dust** (23)

8–9: Lehi speaks as if there were no indigenous people already in the land. **9:** The demonstrative *those* leaves room for the Mulekites, who were also brought by God out of Jerusalem and whom the Nephites will later encounter; see Omni 1.12–19. *Molest*, WB: “to trouble; to disturb.” *Dwell safely*, here and at 2.3, picks up Nephi’s words at 22.28; these are the only instances in the BoM (though the phrase appears a dozen times in the OT). **10:** A similar shift from *when the time cometh* to *if the day shall come*, in a comparable context, can be seen at Deut 30.1, 4. **11–12:** These verses can be read as a justification for the subjugation of Native Americans,

Lehi, Exhorts His Sons

¹³ “O that ye would awake; awake from
a deep sleep,
yea, even from the sleep of hell,
and shake off the awful chains by
which ye are bound,
which are the chains which bind
the children of men,
that they are carried away captive
down to the eternal gulf of misery
and woe.

¹⁴ Awake! and arise from the dust,
and hear the words of a trembling parent,
whose limbs ye must soon lay down in
the cold and silent grave,
from whence no traveler can return;
a few more days and I go the way of
all the earth.

¹⁵ But behold, the Lord hath redeemed
my soul from hell;
I have beheld his glory,

and I am encircled about eternally
in the arms of his love.

¹⁶ “And I desire that ye should remember
to observe the statutes and the judgments of
the Lord; behold, this hath been the anxiety
of my soul from the beginning. ¹⁷ My heart
hath been weighed down with sorrow from
time to time, for I have feared, lest for the
hardness of your hearts the Lord your God
should come out in the fulness of his wrath
upon you, that ye be cut off and destroyed for-
ever; ¹⁸ or, that a cursing should come upon
you for the space of many generations; and ye
are visited by sword, and by famine, and are
hated, and are led according to the will and
captivity of the devil.

¹⁹ “O my sons, that these things might not
come upon you, but that ye might be a choice
and a favored people of the Lord. But behold,
his will be done; for his ways are righteousness
forever. ²⁰ And he hath said that:

though the BoM promises eventual redemption and even ascendancy for them, as a remnant of God's chosen people. *Other nations*, European conquerors and settlers. *Visitations*, WB: “In Scripture, and in a religious sense, the sending of afflictions and distresses on men to punish them for their sins”; cf. v. 18 below. **13–21**: This speech is reminiscent of David's last words to his son Solomon at 1 Kings 2.1–4. Common elements include *go the way of all earth*; keep the Lord's *statutes* and *judgments*, that you may *prosper*; inheriting and continuing a covenant made with their fathers; and *be men* (vs. “show thyself a man”). **13–14**: There are several parallels between these verses and Isa 52.1–2. The images of awaking, chains, and dust in vv. 13–14 are echoed again in vv. 21–23; in between is the classic statement of God's covenant with Lehi (v. 20). The imagery of waking from a deep sleep, compared to binding chains, recurs at Alma 5.7. *Sleep of hell*, apparently original to the BoM. **14**: *Grave, from whence no traveler can return*, the phrasing has reminded many readers of *Hamlet* 3.1.80–82: “death, the undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveler returns,” though the sentiment itself is widespread and ancient (e.g., Job 10.21). **15**: *The Lord hath redeemed my soul from hell*, Lehi's affirmation of personal redemption is extended to his son Jacob at 2.3, but at 4.31 Nephi is still looking for such an assurance, which in his case comes only at 33.6. Thus the book of 2 Nephi is framed by Lehi's and Nephi's matching assertions of personal redemption. *Encircled about eternally in the arms of his love*, a phrase with precedents in the 18th c. Here, the arms of God's love are a striking contrast to the chains of the devil at v. 13. **16**: Lehi has been worried about at least two of his sons since 1 Ne. 2.8–11. *Statutes* and *judgments* are paired terms characteristic of Lev and Deut. **17–19**: These verses suggest that Lehi, like Nephi, had seen the tragic future of his posterity in vision (the Nephites in v. 17 and the Lamanites in v. 18), though he still speaks about it in conditional terms. **20**: This is the standard articulation of God's covenant with Lehi, which is repeated nineteen times elsewhere in the BoM, and which exemplifies a decidedly Deuteronomistic perspective (e.g., Deut 8.1, 19–20; 28.1–2, 15). *Hath said* indicates that Lehi had received this promise at some earlier time, possibly even before Nephi's revelation at 1 Ne 1.20. Alma 50.20 may offer a longer, original version of the promise (perhaps from the Large Plates of Nephi).

‘Inasmuch as ye shall keep my
commandments
ye shall prosper in the land;
but inasmuch as ye will not keep my
commandments
ye shall be cut off from my
presence.’

- ²¹ And now that my soul might have
joy in you,
and that my heart might leave this
world with gladness because
of you,
that I might not be brought down
with grief and sorrow to the
grave:
Arise from the dust, my sons, and be
men,
and be determined in one mind and
in one heart,
united in all things,
that ye may not come down into
captivity,
²² that ye may not be cursed with a sore
cursing,
and also, that ye may not incur the
displeasure of a just God upon
you,
unto the destruction,
yea, the eternal destruction of both
soul and body.
²³ Awake, my sons; put on the armor of
righteousness;
shake off the chains with which
ye are bound,

and come forth out of obscurity,
and arise from the dust.

²⁴ “Rebel no more against your brother, whose views have been glorious, and who hath kept the commandments from the time that we left Jerusalem; and who hath been an instrument in the hands of God, in bringing us forth into the land of promise; for were it not for him, we must have perished with hunger in the wilderness; nevertheless, ye sought to take away his life; yea, and he hath suffered much sorrow because of you.” ²⁵ And I exceedingly fear and tremble because of you, lest he shall suffer again; for behold, ye have accused him that he sought power and authority over you; but I know that he hath not sought for power nor authority over you, but he hath sought the glory of God, and your own eternal welfare. ²⁶ And ye have murmured because he hath been plain unto you. Ye say that he hath used sharpness; ye say that he hath been angry with you; but behold, his sharpness was the sharpness of the power of the word of God, which was in him; and that which ye call anger was the truth, according to that which is in God, which he could not restrain, manifesting boldly concerning your iniquities. ²⁷ And it must needs be that the power of God must be with him, even unto his commanding you that ye must obey. But behold, it was not he, but it was the Spirit of the Lord which was in him, which opened his mouth to utterance that he could not shut it.”

²¹: *Brought down with . . . sorrow to the grave*, an allusion to the patriarch Jacob in the story of Joseph (Gen 42.38; 44.29, 31); cf. 1 Ne 18.18. In Nephi’s telling, Laman and Lemuel are always of *one mind* and *united*, it is their relationship with Nephi that is strained. ²³: *Armor of righteousness*, 2 Cor 6.7 (cf. Isa 59.17; Eph 6.11–17). ²⁴: *Views*, visions. *Instrument in the hands of God* (with variants), non-biblical, but twelve times in the BoM and common in the early 19th c. *Perished with hunger in the wilderness*, see 1 Ne 16.17–32. *Sought to take away his life*, see 1 Ne 7.16–19; 16.37–39; 17.48. ²⁵: *Ye have accused him*, see 1 Ne 16.37–38; 18.10. ²⁶: *Murmured because he hath been plain unto you*, see 1 Ne 16.1–4. *He hath used sharpness*, see 1 Ne 21.2. ²⁷: *Not he, but . . . the Spirit*, Lehi expressed a similar idea at 1 Ne. 3.5.

Lehi's Charge to His Older Sons and to Zoram,

²⁸ “And now my son, Laman, and also Lemuel and Sam, and also my sons who are the sons of Ishmael, behold, if ye will hearken unto the voice of Nephi ye shall not perish. And if ye will hearken unto him I leave unto you a blessing, yea, even my first blessing.²⁹ But if ye will not hearken unto him I take away my first blessing, yea, even my blessing, and it shall rest upon him.

³⁰ “And now, Zoram, I speak unto you: Behold, thou art the servant of Laban; nevertheless, thou hast been brought out of the land of Jerusalem, and I know that thou art a true friend unto my son, Nephi, forever.

³¹ Wherefore, because thou hast been faithful thy seed shall be blessed with his seed, that they dwell in prosperity long upon the face of this land; and nothing, save it shall be iniquity among them, shall harm or disturb their prosperity upon the face of this land forever.

³² Wherefore, if ye shall keep the commandments of the Lord, the Lord hath consecrated this land for the security of thy seed with the seed of my son.”

Lehi, Speaks to His Son Jacob²

2 ¹ “And now, Jacob, I speak unto you: Thou art my firstborn in the days of my tribulation in the wilderness. And behold, in thy childhood thou hast suffered afflictions and much sorrow, because of the rudeness of thy brethren.² Nevertheless, Jacob, my firstborn in the wilderness, thou knowest the greatness of God; and he shall consecrate thine afflictions for thy gain.³ Wherefore, thy soul shall be blessed, and thou shalt dwell safely with thy brother, Nephi; and thy days shall be spent in the service of thy God. Wherefore, I know that thou art redeemed, because of the righteousness of thy Redeemer; for thou hast beheld that in the fulness of time he cometh to bring salvation unto men.⁴ And thou hast beheld in thy youth his glory; wherefore, thou art blessed even as they unto whom he shall minister in the flesh.

“For the Spirit is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. And the way is prepared from the fall of man, and salvation is free.⁵ And men are instructed sufficiently that they know good from evil. And the law is given unto men. And by the law no flesh is justified; or, by the law

28: *First blessing*, perhaps a blessing of leadership, or the first half of God's covenant with Lehi (v. 20), or the double portion of a firstborn son (Deut 21.17), here offered to Laman if he follows Nephi's counsel. Sam will receive an additional blessing at 4.11. **31:** The Zoramites seem to have generally been allied with the Nephites (5.6; Jacob 1.13; 4 Ne 1.36–37; Morm 1.8).

CHAPTER 2

Chapters 1 and 2, which were originally a single chapter, share several themes: captivity, both physical and spiritual (1.7, 23; 2.27, 29); creation (1.10; 2.14); being cut off for disobedience (1.17, 20; 2.5); and blessings and curses in the land (1.7, 18, 31; 2.3) reminiscent of Deut 28–30, which culminate in a reworking at 2.27–29 of Moses's famous plea from Deut 30.19. **1:** *Firstborn . . . in the wilderness*, see 1 Ne 18.7; both Jacob and Joseph, whose blessing appears in the next chapter, are quite a bit younger than Nephi. *Because of the rudeness of thy brethren*, see 1 Ne 18.9, 19. **3:** *In the service of thy God*, Jacob will eventually become a priest, in conjunction with Nephi's kingship; 5.26; Jacob 1.18. *Thou art redeemed*, see 1.15n; Jacob's spiritual status contrasts with Nephi's at 4.31. *Thou hast beheld*, thus far, Nephi has not written about Jacob's revelations. **4:** One of the major themes of the BoM is that through prophecy and revelation, people living centuries before the Common Era could nevertheless know and be blessed by Christ. *The same yesterday, today, and forever* is here applied to the Spirit rather than to God, as at 1 Ne 10.18; cf. Heb. 13.8. *The fall*, referring to the transgression of Adam and Eve, is a non-biblical term that occurs fifteen times in the BoM. **5:** *Know good from evil* is the characteristic BoM rendition of Gen 3.5, 22, which reads “knowing good and evil.” *By the law no flesh is justified*; cf. Rom 3.20; Gal 2.16. Because Lehi asserts the universality of God's judgment, *the law* here probably refers to the law of conscience rather than the law of Moses, and the point he is making is similar to that of Paul at Rom 2–3.

men are cut off. Yea, by the temporal law they were cut off; and also, by the spiritual law they perish from that which is good, and become miserable forever. ⁶ Wherefore, redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah; for he is full of grace and truth. ⁷ Behold, he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered.

⁸ “Wherefore, how great the importance to make these things known unto the inhabitants of the earth, that they may know that there is no flesh that can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah, who layeth down his life according to the flesh, and taketh it again by the power of the Spirit, that he may bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, being the first that should rise. ⁹ Wherefore, he is the firstfruits unto God, inasmuch as he shall make intercession for all the children of men; and they that believe in him shall be saved. ¹⁰ And because of the

intercession for all, all men come unto God; wherefore, they stand in the presence of him, to be judged of him according to the truth and holiness which is in him. Wherefore, the ends of the law which the Holy One hath given, unto the inflicting of the punishment which is affixed, which punishment that is affixed is in opposition to that of the happiness which is affixed, to answer the ends of the atonement—

¹¹ “For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. If not so, my firstborn in the wilderness, righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad. Wherefore, all things must needs be a compound in one; wherefore, if it should be one body it must needs remain as dead, having no life neither death, nor corruption nor incorruption, happiness nor misery, neither sense nor insensibility. ¹² Wherefore, it must needs have been created for a thing of naught; wherefore there would have been no purpose in the end of its creation. Wherefore, this thing must needs destroy the wisdom of God and his eternal purposes,

6: *Full of grace and truth*, Jn 1.14. **7:** *Offereth himself a sacrifice for sin*, this image, taken from ancient temple worship, also appears at Heb 7.27 and 9.12–28 (the latter passage explains how Christ is “the mediator of the new covenant”; cf. vv. 27–28 below, where Jesus is described as “the great Mediator”). *Answer*, OED: “to pay the penalty or suffer the consequences.” *Ends of the law* is defined in v. 10 as something like “consequences of sin.” *A broken heart and a contrite spirit*, Ps 34.18 and 51.17 (with the latter referring to sacrifice); the expression recurs seven times in the BoM, which is rather unusual for an OT phrase that is not found in the NT. In Hebrew, *contrite* carries the connotation of “crushed” rather than “remorseful” or “penitent.” **8–10:** Lehi presents a fairly standard synopsis of the Christian faith—that through Christ’s sacrifice and power over death, all people will be resurrected and brought back into the presence of God, where they will be judged. **8:** *Layeth down his life... taketh it again*, cf. Jn 10.17–18; this BoM verse identifies the “power” mentioned at Jn 10.18, by which this is said to happen. This is the first reference in the BoM to a general resurrection, a concept that is virtually unheard of in the OT. **9:** Offerings of the *firstfruits*, or the first agricultural produce of the season, were important in the Mosaic law (Ex 23.16; Lev 2.14–16; 23.9–14). Christ is referred to as the “firstfruits” at 1 Cor 15.20–23, with regard to his resurrection; Rev 14.4 has the phrase *firstfruits unto God*, but there it refers to the 144,000 disciples rather than to Christ; cf. Jacob 4.11. **10:** The clearest biblical precedent of standing before God to be judged is Rev 20.12. In the NT, the idea of Christ dying for humanity’s sins is referred to by the word *atonement* just once (Rom 5.11); the term appears 28 times in the BoM. **11–12:** Lehi’s observation is that if the cosmos did not contain opposites, there would be no basis for judgment, no rewards, no life, no change, and no perception, which would render existence meaningless. He assumes that all of God’s creations must have a purpose; otherwise, divine wisdom would be called into question. **12:** *Thing of naught*, something inconsequential or worthless. These same four divine attributes—wisdom, power, mercy, and justice—are repeated at Mos 5.15; cf. 2 Ne 11.5.

and also the power, and the mercy, and the justice of God.

¹³ “And if ye shall say there is no law, ye shall also say there is no sin. If ye shall say there is no sin, ye shall also say there is no righteousness. And if there be no righteousness there be no happiness. And if there be no righteousness nor happiness there be no punishment nor misery. And if these things are not there is no God. And if there is no God we are not, neither the earth; for there could have been no creation of things, neither to act nor to be acted upon; wherefore, all things must have vanished away.”

Lehi, Teaches All His Sons about the Fall and Human Agency

¹⁴ “And now, my sons, I speak unto you these things for your profit and learning; for there is a God, and he hath created all things, both the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are, both things to act and things to be acted upon. ¹⁵ And to bring about his eternal purposes in the end of man, after he had created our first parents, and the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and in

fine, all things which are created, it must needs be that there was an opposition; even the forbidden fruit in opposition to the tree of life; the one being sweet and the other bitter. ¹⁶ Wherefore, the Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself. Wherefore, man could not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed by the one or the other.

¹⁷ “And I, Lehi, according to the things which I have read, must needs suppose that an angel of God, according to that which is written, had ‘fallen from heaven’;^a wherefore, he became a devil, having sought that which was evil before God. ¹⁸ And because he had fallen from heaven, and had become miserable forever, he sought also the misery of all mankind. Wherefore, he said unto Eve, yea, even that old serpent, who is the devil, who is the father of all lies, wherefore he said, ‘Partake of the forbidden fruit, and ye shall not die, but ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil.’^b

^a ¹⁷ Isa 14.12

^b ¹⁸ Gen 3.4–5

13: On the type of argumentation that begins *if ye say there is no law*, see 1 Ne 15.33–34n. In this case, the argument follows the pattern of a sorites, in which the conclusion of each proposition becomes the premise of the next (cf. 9.25; 11.7). The final conclusion is that since we are here, on the earth, making choices, some God-given law must be in effect; Jacob and Nephi will respond to this argument at 9.25–26 and 11.6–7. The distinction between things that *act* and are *acted upon* (cf. vv. 14, 26) can be found in religious debates of the 18th–19th c. *No law... no sin*, cf. 9.25; Rom 4.15; 5.13. **14:** The shift in audience here functions as a chiasmic pivot, as Lehi now describes the coming Messiah and conditions of humanity’s fallen state to all his sons, with ideas and phrases he earlier used with Jacob but in reverse order. The chiasmic elements are a Redeemer who will come “in the fulness of time” (vv. 3, 26); the fall of man (vv. 4, 19); “know good from evil” (vv. 5a, 18b); “become miserable forever” (vv. 5b, 18a); “it must need be that there is an opposition” (vv. 11, 15b); God’s eternal purposes (vv. 12, 15a); and the existence of a God who created things “to act... to be acted upon” (vv. 13, 14). (Several of these points reappear in the summary at vv. 26–27.) **15:** *Forbidden fruit... tree of life*, see Gen 2.9, 16–17; 3.22–24. *Forbidden fruit*, non-biblical, but six times in the BoM. This is the only place in scripture where the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil is described as *bitter*, which must be referring to its consequences, since Eve “saw that the tree was good for food” (Gen 3.6). **16:** Human agency requires multiple alternatives to deliberate upon. **17:** Lehi seems to have in mind Isa 14.12, which was originally an allusion to Canaanite mythology, but here is interpreted in Christian fashion as a reference to the devil. **18:** The devil, being jealous of the happiness of humans, wanted them to share in his own misery; see v. 27. *That old serpent, who is the devil*, Rev 12.9; 20.2. *Father of (all) lies*, 9.9; Ether 8.25; cf. Jn 8.44. The serpent’s words are paraphrased from Gen 3.4–5, with the monotheistic replacement of *as God* for “as gods.” The identification of the Eden serpent with the devil is not in Gen.

¹⁹ And after Adam and Eve had partaken of the forbidden fruit they were driven out of the garden of Eden, to till the earth. ²⁰ And they have brought forth children; yea, even the family of all the earth.

²¹ “And the days of the children of men were prolonged, according to the will of God, that they might repent while in the flesh; wherefore, their state became a state of probation, and their time was lengthened, according to the commandments which the Lord God gave unto the children of men. For he gave commandment that all men must repent; for he showed unto all men that they were lost, because of the transgression of their parents. ²² And now, behold, if Adam had not transgressed he would not have fallen, but he would have remained in the garden of Eden. And all things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created; and they must have remained forever, and had no end. ²³ And they would have had no children; wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin.

²⁴ “But behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things.

²⁵ Adam fell that men might be;
and men are, that they might have joy.

²⁶ And the Messiah cometh in the fulness of time, that he may redeem the children of men from the fall. And because that they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon, save it be by the punishment of the law at the great and last day, according to the commandments which God hath given. ²⁷ Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great mediation^a of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself.

^a ²⁷ O, 1981 *Mediator*

19: See Gen 3.23–24. **21–27:** Lehi begins with an Augustinian/Calvinist type of assertion—*all men . . . were lost, because of the transgression of their parents*—and then explains that the Fall was actually necessary for human happiness (variations of the idea of *felix culpa*, or “fortunate fall,” were also advocated by Ambrose, Wycliffe, and Milton). And because Christ has redeemed humankind from the Fall, individuals are free to choose life or death for themselves. At Alma 30.25 the anti-Christ Korihor disputes the same Calvinist sentiment that Lehi articulates in these verses. **21:** Alma’s words to his son Corianton at Alma 42.1–28 cover many of the same points that Lehi makes here in 2 Ne 2. **22:** The Fall set in motion the sort of opposition that makes mortal life—characterized by change, choice, and accountability—possible. **23:** *And they would have had no children* suggests that human sexuality and reproduction came as a result of the Fall. Lehi notes, realistically, that children can be a source of both joy and misery. **25:** A memorable aphorism and a nice example of anadiplosis, where the beginning of a line repeats the last phrase of the previous line. **26:** *In the fulness of time*, when the prophesied time is fulfilled (see v. 3). Although Christ redeems people from sinful inclinations or depravity due to Adam’s transgression, so that they can choose freely, or *act for themselves*, at some point they will be compelled to accept the consequences of their choices, or be *acted upon* by the *punishment of the law*. In Methodism, the gift of being able to choose goodness is referred to as “prevenient grace” or “enabling grace.” **27:** *According to the flesh*, in mortality. **27–29:** An expansion of, or response to, Deut 30.19, with its injunction to “choose life.” Here Moses’s directive to choose life in the covenant in the promised land (also applicable to Lehi’s family) is transformed into a choice with implications for the eternities. This is yet another example of the merging of OT salvation history with a NT plan of salvation perspective.

²⁸ “And now, my sons, I would that ye should look to the great Mediator, and hearken unto his great commandments; and be faithful unto his words, and choose eternal life, according to the will of his Holy Spirit; ²⁹ and not choose eternal death, according to the will of the flesh and the evil which is therein, which giveth the spirit of the devil power to captivate, to bring you down to hell, that he may reign over you in his own kingdom. ³⁰ I have spoken these few words unto you all, my sons, in the last days of my probation; and I have ‘chosen the good part,’ according to the words of the prophet.^a And I have none other object save it be the everlasting welfare of your souls. Amen.”

Lehi, Speaks to His Son Joseph₂, Quoting Joseph₁, of Egypt

[III] **3** ¹ “And now I speak unto you, Joseph, my last-born. Thou wast born in the wilderness of mine afflictions; yea, in the days of my greatest sorrow did thy mother bear thee. ² And may the Lord consecrate also unto thee this land, which is a most precious land, for thine inheritance and the inheritance of thy seed with thy brethren, for

thy security forever, if it so be that ye shall keep the commandments of the Holy One of Israel.

³ “And now, Joseph, my last-born, whom I have brought out of the wilderness of mine afflictions, may the Lord bless thee forever, for thy seed shall not utterly be destroyed. ⁴ For behold, thou art the fruit of my loins; and I am a descendant of Joseph who was carried captive into Egypt. And great were the covenants of the Lord which he made unto Joseph. ⁵ Wherefore, Joseph truly saw our day. And he obtained a promise of the Lord, that out of the fruit of his loins the Lord God would raise up a righteous branch unto the house of Israel; not the Messiah, but a branch which was to be broken off, nevertheless, to be remembered in the covenants of the Lord that the Messiah should be made manifest unto them in the latter days, in the spirit of power, unto the bringing of them out of darkness unto light—yea, out of hidden darkness and out of captivity unto freedom.

⁶ “For Joseph truly testified, saying, ‘A seer shall the Lord my God raise up, who shall be a

^a ³⁰ Reference uncertain, but see Lk 10.42.

29: *Eternal life*, never in the OT, but 26 times in the NT and 25 times in the BoM. *Eternal death* is an obvious antonym, which appears just this once in scripture. This verse suggests that the primary causes of sin are mortal desires and weaknesses—*the will of the flesh and the evil... therein*—which the devil then takes advantage of. *Reign over you*, the devil’s jealousy of human happiness is conjoined with a desire to subjugate.

CHAPTER 3

Within the narrative context, the prophecies in this chapter were included in the Brass Plates, though they are not part of the OT; see 4.1–2. **1:** *Last-born*, see 1 Ne 18.7. **2:** The idea of consecrating land, or making it holy, for a particular lineage also appears at 1.5, 7, 32; 10.19. **4:** *Joseph who was carried captive into Egypt*, see Gen 37; 39. **5:** *Truly saw our day*, here and elsewhere, Lehi’s family regards themselves as fulfilling prophecy. *Righteous branch*, a term used at Jer 23.5 (see 1 Ne 22.21–28n) to describe a future Davidic king; here, however, it refers to a group of people descended from Joseph, rather than a king from the tribe of Judah. **6–15:** The term “seer” is explained at 1 Sam 9.9 as an earlier, obsolete term for “prophet”; cf. Mos 8.13–17. In the context of the 19th c., it carried connotations of visions and seer stones. In this passage, the seer is JS, whose translation of the BoM will bring the descendants of Joseph through Lehi, or Native Americans, to a *knowledge of the covenants which [God] made with [their] fathers*. The clearest indication of the identity of the seer comes in v. 15, where his name is revealed to be Joseph, the son of Joseph (i.e., Joseph Smith Jr.), making this one of only five passages in the BoM that refer to Smith even obliquely; cf. 27.9–23; 3 Ne 21.9–10; Morm 8.13–16, 25; Ether 5.

choice seer unto the fruit of my loins.’⁷ Yea, Joseph truly said:

Thus saith the Lord unto me: A choice seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins; and he shall be esteemed highly among the fruit of thy loins. And unto him will I give commandment that he shall do a work for the fruit of thy loins, his brethren, which shall be of great worth unto them, even to the bringing of them to the knowledge of the covenants which I have made with thy fathers.

⁸ And I will give unto him a commandment that he shall do none other work, save the work which I shall command him. And I will make him great in mine eyes; for he shall do my work.⁹ And he shall be great like unto Moses, whom I have said I would raise up unto you, to deliver my people, O house of Israel.¹⁰ And Moses will I raise up, to deliver thy people out of the land of Egypt.

¹¹ But a seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins; and unto him will I give power to bring forth my word unto the seed of thy loins—and not to the bringing forth my

word only, saith the Lord, but to the convincing them of my word, which shall have already gone forth among them.¹² Wherefore, the fruit of thy loins shall write; and the fruit of the loins of Judah shall write; and that which shall be written by the fruit of thy loins, and also that which shall be written by the fruit of the loins of Judah, shall grow together, unto the confounding of false doctrines and laying down of contentions, and establishing peace among the fruit of thy loins, and bringing them to the knowledge of their fathers in the latter days, and also to the knowledge of my covenants, saith the Lord.¹³ And out of weakness he shall be made strong, in that day when my work shall commence among all my people, unto the restoring thee, O house of Israel, saith the Lord.

¹⁴ “And thus prophesied Joseph, saying:

Behold, that seer will the Lord bless; and they that seek to destroy him shall be confounded; for this promise, which I have obtained of the Lord, of the fruit of my loins,

9–10: Because God is here addressing Joseph of Egypt, who lived long before the birth of Moses, prophetic foreknowledge is required to make sense of the analogy. **11–12:** One of the purposes of the BoM, *which shall be written by the fruit of thy loins* (i.e., the Nephites who are descendants of Joseph) is to convince people of the truth of the Bible, *which shall be written by the fruit of the loins of Judah*. The Bible and the BoM, working together, will bring Christians into a harmonious unity of true doctrine. **13:** *Out of weakness he shall be made strong*, cf. Heb 11.34; similar language appears at v. 21; 33.4; Ether 12.27, 37. God’s work, which will commence in the latter days with the publication of the BoM, is to *restore the house of Israel* to their former lands, prestige, and relationship with the Lord. In other words, there will be a reversal of the Exile. This is one of the two ways that the BoM defines “restoration”; the other is a confluence of ideas that includes the reunification of the body and soul in the Resurrection, followed by a return to the presence of God for judgment, and a matching of earthly deeds and eternal rewards (see Alma 40–42). Jacob will interweave both definitions in ch. 9.

shall be fulfilled. Behold, I am sure of the fulfilling of this promise; ¹⁵ and his name shall be called after me; and it shall be after the name of his father. And he shall be like unto me; for the thing, which the Lord shall bring forth by his hand, by the power of the Lord shall bring my people unto salvation.

¹⁶ “Yea, thus prophesied Joseph:

I am sure of this thing, even as I am sure of the promise of Moses; for the Lord hath said unto me, ‘I will preserve thy seed forever.’

¹⁷ And the Lord hath said: I will raise up a Moses; and I will give power unto him in a rod; and I will give judgment unto him in writing. Yet I will not loose his tongue, that he shall speak much, for I will not make him mighty in speaking. But I will write unto him my law, by the finger of mine own hand; and I will make a spokesman for him.

¹⁸ And the Lord said unto me also: I will raise up unto the fruit of thy loins; and I will make for

him a spokesman. And I, behold, I will give unto him that he shall write the writing of the fruit of thy loins, unto the fruit of thy loins; and the spokesman of thy loins shall declare it. ¹⁹ And the words which he shall write shall be the words which are expedient in my wisdom should go forth unto the fruit of thy loins. And it shall be as if the fruit of thy loins had cried unto them from the dust; for I know their faith. ²⁰ And they shall cry from the dust; yea, even repentance unto their brethren, even after many generations have gone by them. And it shall come to pass that their cry shall go, even according to the simpleness of their words. ²¹ Because of their faith their words shall proceed forth out of my mouth unto their brethren who are the fruit of thy loins; and the weakness of their words will I make strong in their faith, unto the remembering of my covenant which I made unto thy fathers.

²² “And now, behold, my son Joseph, after this manner did my father of old prophesy.

15: *The thing, which the Lord shall bring forth by his hand*, the BoM. **17:** When Moses was called by God, he was afraid that his words would not be believed and he protested that he was “slow of speech.” God responded by granting Moses power to perform miracles though a *rod* and by appointing Aaron as his *spokesman* (Ex 4.1–17). The BoM adds to the biblical account the observation that, despite his weakness in speech, Moses would nevertheless be a judicious writer, drawing on the tradition that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch. *Give judgment unto him in writing*, either “make him a discerning author” or “allow him to judge people through his writings.” Nephi views his own abilities as opposite those of Moses; he sees himself as mighty in speaking but weak in writing (33.1); cf. Ether 12.23–25. *Write... my law, by [my] finger*, Ex 31.18; Deut 9.10. **18:** The spokesman of the one who would write the record of Joseph’s Lehiite descendants (i.e., Joseph Smith) may have been Oliver Cowdery. Alternatively, the verse may refer to Mormon as the writer and Moroni as his spokesman. **19–20:** *Cried unto them from the dust* appears regularly in the BoM; see 33.13; Morm 8.23; Moro 10.27; cf. Isa 29.4. **21:** Several Nephite writers have *faith* that *their words* will eventually go to *their brethren*, the descendants of Lehi in the latter days, and God responds to that faith by promising that it will happen; see 29.1–2; Enos 1.11–18; 3 Ne 5.14–15; Ether 12.22. *My covenant which I made unto thy fathers*, God’s covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

²³ Wherefore, because of this covenant thou art blessed; for thy seed shall not be destroyed, for they shall hearken unto the words of the book. ²⁴ And there shall rise up one mighty among them, who shall do much good, both in word and in deed, being an instrument in the hands of God, with exceeding faith, to work mighty wonders, and do that thing which is great in the sight of God, unto the bringing to pass much restoration unto the house of Israel, and unto the seed of thy brethren. ²⁵ And now, blessed art thou, Joseph. Behold, thou art little; wherefore hearken unto the words of thy brother, Nephi, and it shall be done unto thee even according to the words which I have spoken. Remember the words of thy dying father. Amen.”

Nephi’s Assessment of Joseph’s Prophecies

[III] 4 ¹ And now, I, Nephi, speak concerning the prophecies of which my father hath spoken, concerning Joseph, who was carried into Egypt. ² For behold, he truly prophesied concerning all his seed. And the prophecies which he wrote, there are not many greater. And he prophesied concerning us, and our future generations; and they are written upon the plates of brass.

Lehi’s Blessing on the Children of Laman, and Lemuel

³ Wherefore, after my father had made an end of speaking concerning the prophecies of Joseph, he called the children of Laman, his sons, and his daughters, and said unto them, “Behold, my sons, and my daughters, who are the sons and the daughters of my firstborn, I would that ye should give ear unto my words.

⁴ For the Lord God hath said that:

‘Inasmuch as ye shall keep my
commandments
ye shall prosper in the land;
and inasmuch as ye will not keep my
commandments
ye shall be cut off from my presence.’⁴

⁵ But behold, my sons and my daughters, I cannot go down to my grave save I should leave a blessing upon you; for behold, I know that if ye are brought up in the way ye should go ye will not depart from it. ⁶ Wherefore, if ye are cursed, behold, I leave my blessing upon you, that the cursing may be taken from you and be answered upon the heads of your parents. ⁷ Wherefore, because of my blessing the Lord God will not suffer that ye shall perish; wherefore, he will be merciful unto you and unto your seed forever.”

⁴ 4 2 Ne 1.20; cf. 1 Ne 2.20–21.

23–24: The descendants of Lehi’s son Joseph will apparently be mixed with the posterity of Laman and Lemuel (the latter-day Lamanites), but will eventually *hearken unto the words of the book*, that is, the BoM, and hence will avoid destruction (see v. 3). *One mighty among them* seems to refer to a future spiritual leader from among the latter-day Native Americans, but see Hel 10.5n.

CHAPTER 4

2: *He truly prophesied*, referring to Joseph rather than Lehi, since his prophecies were written on the Brass Plates. **3:** *His sons and his daughters*, this is the first indication that daughters were among the recipients in this series of patriarchal deathbed blessings. Heightened roles for women are typically associated with the Lamanites; see Jacob 3.7n. **5–9:** Both Nephites and Lamanites receive cursings and blessings in the BoM. Here the descendants of Laman and Lemuel are promised that despite the curses that will come upon them (in the next chapter as it turns out), their lineage will survive and eventually be restored; cf. Alma 9.16; Hel 7.23–24; 15.12, 16. The Nephites, by contrast, will be blessed spiritually and temporally for a time but then utterly destroyed—though their records will be preserved. It is left up to readers to decide which fate is worse.

⁸ And it came to pass that after my father had made an end of speaking to the sons and daughters of Laman, he caused the sons and daughters of Lemuel to be brought before him. ⁹ And he spake unto them, saying, “Behold, my sons and my daughters, who are the sons and the daughters of my second son; behold I leave unto you the same blessing which I left unto the sons and daughters of Laman; wherefore, thou shalt not utterly be destroyed; but in the end thy seed shall be blessed.”

Lehi’s Final Blessings and Death

¹⁰ And it came to pass that when my father had made an end of speaking unto them, behold, he spake unto the sons of Ishmael, yea, and even all his household. ¹¹ And after he had made an end of speaking unto them, he spake unto Sam, saying, “Blessed art thou, and thy seed; for thou shalt inherit the land like unto thy brother Nephi. And thy seed shall be numbered with his seed; and thou shalt be even like unto thy brother, and thy seed like unto his seed; and thou shalt be blessed in all thy days.” ¹² And it came to pass after my father, Lehi, had spoken unto all his household, according to the feelings of his heart and the

Spirit of the Lord which was in him, he waxed old. And it came to pass that he died, and was buried.

The Psalm of Nephi,

¹³ And it came to pass that not many days after his death, Laman and Lemuel and the sons of Ishmael were angry with me because of the admonitions of the Lord. ¹⁴ For I, Nephi, was constrained to speak unto them, according to his word; for I had spoken many things unto them, and also my father, before his death; many of which sayings are written upon mine other plates; for a more history part are written upon mine other plates. ¹⁵ And upon these I write the things of my soul, and many of the scriptures which are engraven upon the plates of brass. For my soul delighteth in the scriptures, and my heart pondereth them, and writeth them for the learning and the profit of my children.

¹⁶ Behold, my soul delighteth in the things of the Lord; and my heart pondereth continually upon the things which I have seen and heard.

11: *Sam* was an early believer in Nephi’s revelations (1 Ne 2.17) and a close ally (1 Ne 7.6; 8.3, 14), yet apart from a single verse in the next chapter (2 Ne 5.6), there are no further reports of anything else he did. And in contrast to references to the posterity of his younger brothers as “Jacobites” and “Josephites” (Jacob 1.13; 4 Ne 1.36–37; Morm 1.8), there are never any “Samites.” His descendants seem to have completely merged with the Nephites (as might have happened if he had only had daughters). **12:** *Spoken unto all his household*, even though any blessing given to Nephi is conspicuously absent. Perhaps the psalm that follows was meant to substitute for fatherly words that Nephi did not wish to share with his readers. *Waxed, grew*. **14:** *Mine other plates*, the Large Plates of Nephi. **15:** With poetic license, Nephi asserts that his heart writes scriptures (elsewhere in the psalm that follows, his heart exclaims, sorrows, groans, weeps, and rejoices). *My soul delighteth*, Nephi is the only person in the BoM to use this phrase, which he does eleven times (including six times in 2 Ne 11). *Scriptures*, see 1 Ne 19.23n. **16–35:** Nephi’s poem follows the classic form of a psalm of individual lament: invocation (v. 16), complaint (vv. 17–19), confession of trust (vv. 20–30), petition (vv. 31–33), and vow of praise (vv. 34–35). The poem alludes to episodes from previous chapters at vv. 20, 22, 24, 25. In the beginning, God is spoken of in the third person, which is unusual for a psalm that includes a petition; there is a dramatic shift at v. 30 when Nephi turns to address God directly, in the second person. For biblical examples of psalms of lament, see Pss 13, 54, 71, 140. There are also seven passages in Jer 11–20, commonly referred to as his “confessions,” that generally follow this form. **16:** Nephi expands the object of his heart’s delight and soul’s pondering from the scriptures to his own revelations.

17 Nevertheless, notwithstanding the
great goodness of the Lord,
in showing me his great and
marvelous works,
my heart exclaimeth:

“O wretched man that I am!”

Yea, my heart sorroweth because of my
flesh;
my soul grieveth because of mine
iniquities.

18 I am encompassed about,
because of the temptations
and the sins which do so easily
beset me.

19 And when I desire to rejoice,
my heart groaneth because of my
sins;
nevertheless, I know in whom
I have trusted.

20 My God hath been my support;
he hath led me through mine
afflictions in the wilderness;
and he hath preserved me upon the
waters of the great deep.

21 He hath filled me with his love,
even unto the consuming of my flesh.

22 He hath confounded mine enemies,
unto the causing of them to quake
before me.

23 Behold, he hath heard my cry by day,
and he hath given me knowledge by
visions in the night-time.

24 And by day have I waxed bold in
mighty prayer before him;
yea, my voice have I sent up on high;
and angels came down and
ministered unto me.

25 And upon the wings of his Spirit
hath my body been carried away
upon exceeding high mountains.
And mine eyes have beheld great things,
yea, even too great for man;
therefore I was bidden that I should
not write them.

26 O then, if I have seen so great things,
if the Lord in his condescension
unto the children of men
hath visited men^a in so much mercy,
why should my heart weep
and my soul linger in the valley of
sorrow,

and my flesh waste away,
and my strength slacken,
because of mine afflictions?

27 And why should I yield to sin,
because of my flesh?

Yea, why should I give way to
temptations,

that the evil one have place in my heart
to destroy my peace and afflict my
soul?

Why am I angry because of mine enemy?

^a 26 P me

17: *O wretched man that I am!* Rom 7.24; like Paul, Nephi laments the weaknesses of the *flesh*, or mortality. Such weaknesses and *iniquities* include moral as well as bodily shortcomings; see 2.29n. 18: *The sins which do so easily beset me*, Heb 12.1. *Beset*, WB: “to press on all sides; to entangle; to waylay.” 20: See 1 Ne 16.19–21; 17.1, 6; 18.9–20. 21: *Filled me with his love*, compare 1 Ne 17.48, where Nephi is filled with the power of God “unto the consuming of my flesh.” Nephi’s meaning here, however, may be that God’s love has purified his fallen nature. 22: See 1 Ne 17.52–55. 24: An *angel* rescued Nephi at 1 Ne 3.29–30 and instructed him in chs. 11–14. 25: In this verse, Nephi refers to the entirety of his vision at 1 Ne 11–14 by mentioning the *exceeding high mountain* at the beginning (1 Ne 11.1) and the command to *not write* at its conclusion (1 Ne 14.28); for similar rhetorical patterns, see Alma 31.37–38; 33.23n; 3 Ne 18.32n. 26–27: A series of “why” questions that will be answered by praise for God is reminiscent of Ps 42.5. Note that the psalmist is speaking directly to his own soul, as Nephi will in v. 28. *The evil one*, non-biblical, but seven times in the BoM.

28 Awake, my soul!
 No longer droop in sin.
 Rejoice, O my heart,
 and give place no more for the
 enemy of my soul.

29 Do not anger again because of mine
 enemies.
 Do not slacken my strength
 because of mine afflictions.

30 Rejoice, O my heart,
 and cry unto the Lord, and say:
 “O Lord, I will praise thee forever.”
 Yea, my soul will rejoice in thee,
 my God, and the rock of my salvation.

31 O Lord, wilt thou redeem my soul?
 Wilt thou deliver me out of the
 hands of mine enemies?
 Wilt thou make me that I may
 shake at the appearance of sin?

32 May the gates of hell be shut
 continually before me,
 because that my heart is broken and
 my spirit is contrite!

O Lord, wilt thou not shut the gates of
 thy righteousness before me,
 that I may walk in the path of the
 low valley,
 that I may be strict in the plain road!

33 O Lord, wilt thou encircle me around
 in the robe of thy righteousness!
 O Lord, wilt thou make a way for
 mine escape before mine enemies!
 Wilt thou make my path straight
 before me!
 Wilt thou not place a stumbling
 block in my way—
 but that thou wouldst clear my way
 before me,
 and hedge not up my way, but the
 ways of mine enemy.

34 O Lord, I have trusted in thee,
 and I will trust in thee forever.
 I will not put my trust in the arm of flesh;
 for I know that cursed is he that
 putteth his trust in the arm of flesh.
 Yea, ‘cursed is he that putteth his
 trust in man or maketh flesh his
 arm.’^a

35 Yea, I know that God will give
 liberally to him that asketh.
 Yea, my God will give me, if I ask
 not amiss;
 therefore I will lift up my voice unto thee;
 yea, I will cry unto thee,

^a 34 Jer 17.5

30: Nephi’s response is similar to what he foresaw for his descendants in the latter days, when they receive a knowledge of their Redeemer; see 1 Ne 15.15. *Rock of... salvation*, the image was used at Deut 32.15 and 2 Sam 22.47 in the final words of Moses and David; also at Ps 18.2; 89.26; 95.1; 2 Ne 9.45; Jacob 7.25. In an exilic context, when Nephi and his family have left behind the traditional Israelite institutions of salvation (Levitical priesthood, temple, Jerusalem, holy land, and Davidic monarchy), Nephi proclaims that God himself is his salvific foundation. **31–33:** These verses offer a striking example of anaphora, where eight lines begin with *wilt thou* (sometimes following “O Lord”). **31:** *O Lord, wilt thou redeem my soul*, see 1.15n; 2.3n. **32:** *Gates of hell*, Mt 16.18 and four times in the BoM. City gates were shut at night to protect those inside; here the gates are *shut continually* to keep someone who is outside from entering. *My heart is broken and my spirit is contrite*, a phrase associated with David, is indicative of Nephi’s desire for God to draw near (Ps 34.17–18; cf. Ps 51.17; 2 Ne 2.7n). *Not shut the gates of thy righteousness*, cf. Ps. 118.19. *Be strict*, stay close, or not deviate. *Plain road*, a smooth or level way. **33:** *Encircle me about in the robe of thy righteousness*, cf. Isa 61.10; 2 Ne 9.14. The image of being surrounded by temptation and sin in v. 18 has been transformed into being wrapped about by God’s righteousness. Nephi’s need to *escape his enemies* foreshadows the events of the next chapter. *Make a [straight] way for mine escape before mine enemies* may echo Ps 5.8. *Stumbling block in my way* and *hedge not up my way*, perhaps allusions to the otherwise unknown scripture quoted at Mos 7.29; cf. Lev 19.14; Isa 57.14. **34:** For a further interpretation of Jer 17.5, see 28.31. **35:** *Give liberally to him that asketh* and *ask not amiss*, cf. Jas 1.5; 4.3.

my God, the rock of my righteousness.
Behold, my voice shall forever ascend
up unto thee,
my rock and mine everlasting God.
Amen.

Nephi, and His Followers Flee

[IV] 5 ¹ Behold, it came to pass that I, Nephi, did cry much unto the Lord my God, because of the anger of my brethren. ² But behold, their anger did increase against me, insomuch that they did seek to take away my life. ³ Yea, they did murmur against me, saying, “Our younger brother thinks to rule over us; and we have had much trial because of him; wherefore, now let us slay him, that we may not be afflicted more because of his words. For behold, we will not have him to be our ruler; for it belongs unto us, who are the elder brethren, to rule over this people.” ⁴ Now I do not write upon these plates all the words which they murmured against me. But it sufficeth me to say, that they did seek to take away my life.

⁵ And it came to pass that the Lord did warn me, that I, Nephi, should depart from them and flee into the wilderness, and all those who would go with me. ⁶ Wherefore, it came to pass that I, Nephi, did take my family, and also Zoram and his family, and Sam, mine elder brother and his family, and Jacob and

Joseph, my younger brethren, and also my sisters, and all those who would go with me. And all those who would go with me were those who believed in the warnings and the revelations of God; wherefore, they did hearken unto my words.

⁷ And we did take our tents and whatsoever things were possible for us, and did journey in the wilderness for the space of many days. And after we had journeyed for the space of many days we did pitch our tents. ⁸ And my people would that we should call the name of the place Nephi; wherefore, we did call it Nephi. ⁹ And all those who were with me did take upon them to call themselves the people of Nephi. ¹⁰ And we did observe to keep the judgments, and the statutes, and the commandments of the Lord in all things, according to the law of Moses.

The Nephites Prosper

¹¹ And the Lord was with us; and we did prosper exceedingly; for we did sow seed, and we did reap again in abundance. And we began to raise flocks, and herds, and animals of every kind. ¹² And I, Nephi, had also brought the records which were engraven upon the plates of brass; and also the ball, or compass, which was prepared for my father by the hand of the Lord, according to that which is written. ¹³ And it came to pass that we began to prosper exceedingly, and to multiply in the land.

CHAPTER 5

1–4: Nephi’s quotation of his brothers’ complaints is framed by a chiasmic inclusio: *seek to take away my life* followed by *murmur against me* in vv. 2–3 are repeated in reverse order in v. 4. **1–2:** When Nephi, worried about his brothers’ anger (cf. 4.13–14), asks God for help, the problem gets worse. **3:** This verse features several echoes from the Joseph story at Gen 37. **5–7:** Nephi’s life is recapitulating his father’s history at 1 Ne 2.1–5. If Nephi’s sisters (mentioned only here) were married to the sons of Ishmael, they may have left their husbands to follow their brother; see 1 Ne 7.3–5n. **6:** The primary division is between *those who believed in the . . . revelations of God* given to Lehi and Nephi, and those who did not. **8:** About four centuries later, some of the Nephites will flee again, this time to the land of Zarahemla, after which the land of Nephi will become Lamanite territory; see Omni 1.12–13. **10:** The combination of *judgments, statutes, and commandments*, characteristic of Deut, appears seven times in the BoM. **11:** *The Lord was with us and we did prosper*, another echo of the Joseph story at Gen 39.2, 3, 21, 23; see 1 Ne 5.14–16n; 16.39. **12:** *Prepared . . . by the hand of the Lord*, only here and Mos 1.16, which also refers to the Liahona. *According to that which is written*, see 1 Ne 16.10, 26–29; 18.12. The Nephites keep possession of the Liahona, even though they never again consult it for directions. It seems to have already fulfilled its purpose, perhaps like the seer stone of JS, which he discontinued using not long after the publication of the BoM.

¹⁴ And I, Nephi, did take the sword of Laban, and after the manner of it did make many swords, lest by any means the people who were now called Lamanites should come upon us and destroy us; for I knew their hatred towards me and my children and those who were called my people. ¹⁵ And I did teach my people to build buildings, and to work in all manner of wood, and of iron, and of copper, and of brass, and of steel, and of gold, and of silver, and of precious ores, which were in great abundance. ¹⁶ And I, Nephi, did build a temple; and I did construct it after the manner of the temple of Solomon save it were not built of so many precious things; for they were not to be found upon the land, wherefore, it could not be built like unto Solomon's temple. But the manner of the construction was like unto the temple of Solomon; and the workmanship thereof was exceeding fine. ¹⁷ And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did cause my people to be industrious, and to labor with their hands. ¹⁸ And it came to pass that they

would that I should be their king. But I, Nephi, was desirous that they should have no king; nevertheless, I did for them according to that which was in my power.

The Lamanites Are Cursed

¹⁹ And behold, the words of the Lord had been fulfilled unto my brethren, which he spake concerning them, that I should be their ruler and their teacher. Wherefore, I had been their ruler and their teacher, according to the commandments of the Lord, until the time they sought to take away my life. ²⁰ Wherefore, the word of the Lord was fulfilled which he spake unto me, saying that "Inasmuch as they will not hearken unto thy words they shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord."^a And behold, they were cut off from his presence.

²¹ And he had caused the cursing to come upon them, yea, even a sore cursing, because of their iniquity. For behold, they had hardened

^a 20 1 Ne 2.21

14: *Sword of Laban*, see 1 Ne 4.9, 38n. **15:** Nephi's knowledge of metallurgy would have been unusual. *Brass* and *steel* are anachronistic for the early 6th c. BCE; the use of the two metals, along with *iron*, is unattested in the New World before Columbus. **16:** Nephi never reports a commandment from God to build a temple. *After the manner of the temple of Solomon*, see 1 Kings 6. Temples and shrines outside of Jerusalem were forbidden in Deut 12, though some Jews in the 5th c. BCE built a small temple at Elephantine in upper Egypt. **18:** Ambivalence toward kingship is characteristic of the Deuteronomistic History, in which the narrative gives prominence to the house of David but also includes the warnings of Samuel at 1 Sam 8; cf. Deut 17.14–20. Despite the obscurity of this verse, Nephi clearly became a monarch, as can be seen in the subtitle of 1 Ne; 2 Ne 6.2; Jacob 1.11. Nevertheless, aside from his consecration of Jacob and Joseph in v. 26 below, he does not include in the Small Plates a single incident from his reign of approximately forty years (see 1 Ne 9.3–4). In addition, Nephi records the Lord's anti-monarchic admonitions at 10.10–14; cf. Mos 23.6–13; 29.1–11. **19:** *Words of the Lord had been fulfilled*, see 1 Ne 2.22; 3.29 (cf. 1 Ne 16.37). Because Nephi was made a king only after he had fled from his brothers, he specifies that he had been functioning informally as their ruler even before the family divided, so that the prophecy might be fulfilled. **20:** *Inasmuch as they will not hearken . . . cut off from his presence*, 1 Ne 2.21, though Nephi has here modified the language so that it refers not to general rebellion ("rebel against thee"), but specifically to not hearkening to his "words," thus making a connection with v. 3. **21:** *Cursing . . . sore cursing*, 1 Ne 2.23; 2 Ne 1.22; Jacob 3.3 (which all refer to this moment). *Flint*, a hard, often grayish rock. *A skin of blackness*, a notoriously difficult passage, not only because the equating of skin color with righteousness runs counter to modern ethical standards but because it is contradicted within the BoM itself: 26.33 declares that "black and white . . . all are alike unto God," and the dark-skinned Anti-Nephi-Lehies and Lamanites are sometimes morally superior to the Nephites (see Jacob 3; Hel 6; 13–15). Some LDS readers have interpreted descriptions of the Lamanites being "dark" as cultural or symbolic rather than biological, but this appears to contradict the plain meaning of the text, and the most plausible naturalistic explanation is that they intermarried with indigenous inhabitants of the Americas who had migrated from Asia thousands of years earlier (see v. 23, and 3 Ne 2.14–16, where the curse was taken from Lamanites who united with the Nephites, but only over the course of several generations). It may also be significant that the curse of being separated from God's presence is distinct

their hearts against him, that they had become like unto a flint; wherefore, as they were white, and exceeding fair and delightsome, that they might not be enticing unto my people the Lord God did cause a skin of blackness to come upon them.²² And thus saith the Lord God, “I will cause that they shall be loathsome unto thy people, save they shall repent of their iniquities.²³ And cursed shall be the seed of him that mixeth with their seed; for they shall be cursed even with the same cursing.” And the Lord spake it, and it was done.

²⁴ And because of their cursing which was upon them they did become an idle people, full of mischief and subtlety, and did seek in the wilderness for beasts of prey.²⁵ And the Lord God said unto me, “They shall be a scourge unto thy seed, to stir them up in remembrance of me;^a and inasmuch as they will not remember me, and hearken unto my words, they shall scourge them even unto destruction.”

²⁶ And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did consecrate Jacob and Joseph, that they should be priests and teachers over the land of my people.²⁷ And it came to pass that we lived after the manner of happiness.²⁸ And thirty years had passed away from the time we left Jerusalem.^b

The Small Plates of Nephi,

²⁹ And I, Nephi, had kept the records upon my plates, which I had made, of my people thus far.³⁰ And it came to pass that the Lord God said unto me, “Make other plates; and thou shalt engraven many things upon them which are good in my sight, for the profit of thy people.”³¹ Wherefore, I, Nephi, to be obedient to the commandments of the Lord, went and made these plates upon which I

^a 25 1 Ne 2.24

^b 28 567 BCE

from having a dark complexion, which functions as a “mark” of the curse; the two do not always go together, as can be seen at Alma 3.4–19. It is worth noting that the term “black” is applied to skin color in only two verses (here and 26.33); racial issues in the BoM are not connected to the peoples of sub-Saharan Africa. Nevertheless, there is a persistent tendency in the BoM to associate “white” or “fair” with goodness and desirability. The Nephites, including their prophets, often exhibit racial assumptions that are unacceptable in the 21st century. The current LDS Church disavows any connection between dark skin and curses. **22:** *Thus saith the Lord*, a paradigmatic prophetic phrase that occurs 416 times in the OT, never in the NT, and 39 times in the BoM. This is the first instance of its use by a Nephite prophet. **24:** Nephi contrasts the hunter-gatherer lifestyle of the Lamanites with the permanent settlements and agriculture of his own people. **25:** *They shall be a scourge . . .*, 1 Ne 2.24, though the second half of the warning (*and inasmuch as they will not remember me . . .*) is new. *Scourge them even unto destruction*, a reminder of the curse that hangs over the Nephites; see 4.5–9n. **26:** Kings and priests generally worked together in ancient times; here Nephi consecrates his younger brothers as a new priestly line (not descended from Aaron or Levi) with authority throughout the land. (The precedent of King Jeroboam appointing non-Levitical priests at 1 Kings 12.31 is not a happy one.) We never hear of Joseph again except at Jacob 1.18, though Jacob’s descendants will continue to fulfill priestly functions for many generations; they will also become the keepers of the Small Plates. *Priests and teachers* should not be confused with the modern LDS priesthood offices. If the Nephites kept the law of Moses (v. 10), their priests would have been responsible for sacrificial offerings in the temple. Government-appointed teachers would have been a Nephite innovation since there is no such office in the OT; teachers in early Christian churches are mentioned at 1 Cor 12.28–29 and Eph 4.11. **27:** *We lived after the manner of happiness*, perhaps simply a KJV-like locution, or it may be that living “after the manner of happiness” was not quite the same as actually being happy. **28–34:** Ten years are covered in just six verses. This basically marks the end of Nephi’s narrative as his people settle into the labors and worries of mundane life, as opposed to the sacred time of their exodus. **29:** The Large Plates. **31:** This is the moment when Nephi creates the Small Plates, that is, the record we have been reading since 1 Ne 1.

have engraven these things.³² And I engraved that which is pleasing unto God. And if my people are pleased with the things of God they will be pleased with mine engravings which are upon these plates.³³ And if my people desire to know the more particular part of the history of my people they must search mine other plates.³⁴ And it sufficeth me to say that forty years had passed away,^a and we had already had wars and contentions with our brethren.

Jacob₂'s Discourse: 2 Nephi 6–10

[V] **6**¹[*Nephi's heading*] The words of Jacob, the brother of Nephi, which he spake unto the people of Nephi.

32: Nephi repeats his earlier declaration that he will write on the Small Plates the things that are *pleasing unto God*; see 1 Ne 6.5. **34:** *Forty years have passed away*, for whatever reason, it seems that the three decades since the death of Lehi have not provided Nephi with any experiences that would fit the requirement that the Small Plates be filled with accounts of his “ministry” and “prophecies” (1 Ne 9.3–4; 19.3).

CHAPTERS 6–10

Rather abruptly, Nephi inserts into his record a two-day sermon delivered by his younger brother Jacob, with no indication of the date or circumstances. From the discourse itself, it appears the people were concerned about the future, their children, and their place within God's covenants (9.1–4, 53; 10.2), particularly whether they had been “cast off” by the Lord or “led away to a better land” (10.20–22). The sermon was given at Nephi's behest (6.4), and continues Nephi's quotation of Isa 48–49 (1 Ne 20–21) into Isa 50–51. On the first day (chs. 6–9), Jacob quotes Isaiah's prophecies about the restoration of Israel, and then deftly transitions from salvation history to the plan of salvation—including death and hell, resurrection and redemption, and physical and spiritual death—by recontextualizing the meaning of “restoration”; see 3.13n. On the second day (ch. 10), Jacob shifts back to salvation history, with prophecies about the destiny of Israelites and Gentiles in the latter days, particularly in the New World. The two modes of salvation both hinge upon Christ (9.5; 10.3–6) and the idea of restoration (9.2, 12–13, 26; 10.2, 7), and Jacob combines the perspectives of salvation history and the plan of salvation when he concludes his sermon at 10.20–25.

CHAPTER 6

1: For consistency, in this edition v. 1 has been made into a heading, just as John Gilbert, the 1830 typesetter, did with the introductory descriptions at Mos 9; 23; Alma 5; 7; 9; 17; 21; 36; 38; 39; 45; Hel 7; 13; 3 Ne 11; Moro 9; cf. Jacob 2.1. The words for all these headings were in P. **2:** This is the first occurrence of *my beloved brethren* in the BoM, where it appears 60 times (compared to four times in the NT and never in the OT). Jacob employs the phrase 13 times in chs. 6–10; Nephi will pick it up himself at 26.1 and use it 14 times in chs. 30–33. Jacob is speaking in his official capacity as an *ordained, consecrated* priest and teacher. *Holy order*, non-biblical, but 16 times in the BoM (14 times in Alma). The phrasing here is reminiscent of Heb 5.10, which describes Christ as “called of God, an high priest after the order of Melchisedec,” which in turn draws upon the Davidic promise of Ps 110.4. The point of both passages is to legitimate a non-Levitical, non-Aaronic category of priesthood. The non-Israelite Melchizedek is said to have been a “priest of the most high God” at Gen 14.18, and figures prominently in a discussion of priesthood at Alma 13. **3:** *Desirous for the welfare of your souls* and *anxiety*, Jacob will introduce his sermon at Jacob 2.3 in the same way. *The words of my father* and *all things which are written*, representing the totality of God's word to the Lehites, as seen in both recent revelations and in the Brass Plates (which may have been the only book that Jacob, who was born in the wilderness, had ever read).

Day One: Jacob₂ Interprets Isaiah: 2 Nephi 6–9

Promises to the Gentiles and to God's Covenant People: An Explanation of Isaiah 49.22–26

² “Behold, my beloved brethren, I, Jacob, having been called of God, and ordained after the manner of his holy order, and having been consecrated by my brother Nephi, unto whom ye look as a king or a protector, and on whom ye depend for safety, behold ye know that I have spoken unto you exceeding many things.³ Nevertheless, I speak unto you again; for I am desirous for the welfare of your souls.

^a 34 557 BCE

Yea, mine anxiety is great for you; and ye yourselves know that it ever has been. For I have exhorted you with all diligence; and I have taught you the words of my father; and I have spoken unto you concerning all things which are written, from the creation of the world.

⁴ “And now, behold, I would speak unto you concerning things which are, and which are to come; wherefore, I will read you the words of Isaiah. And they are the words which my brother has desired that I should speak unto you. And I speak unto you for your sakes, that ye may learn and glorify the name of your God. ⁵ And now, the words which I shall read are they which Isaiah spake concerning all the house of Israel; wherefore, they may be likened unto you, for ye are of the house of Israel. And there are many things which have been spoken by Isaiah which may be likened unto you, because ye are of the house of Israel.

⁶ “And now, these are the words:

Thus saith the Lord God:

‘Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles,
and set up my standard to the people;
and they shall bring thy sons in their arms,
and thy daughters shall be carried
upon their shoulders.

⁷ And kings shall be thy nursing fathers,
and their queens thy nursing mothers;

they shall bow down to thee with their faces towards the earth,
and lick up the dust of thy feet.
And thou shalt know that I am the Lord;
for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.’^a

⁸ “And now I, Jacob, would speak somewhat concerning these words. For behold, the Lord has shown me that those who were at Jerusalem, from whence we came, have been slain and carried away captive. ⁹ Nevertheless, the Lord has shown unto me that they should return again. And he also has shown unto me that the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, should manifest himself unto them in the flesh; and after he should manifest himself they should scourge him and crucify him, according to the words of the angel who spake it unto me.

¹⁰ “And after they have hardened their hearts and stiffened their necks against the Holy One of Israel, behold, the judgments of the Holy One of Israel shall come upon them. And the day cometh that they shall be smitten and afflicted. ¹¹ Wherefore, after they are driven to and fro (for thus saith the angel, ‘Many shall be afflicted in the flesh, and shall

^a ⁷ Isa 49.22–23; cited by Nephi, at 1 Ne 21.22–23. Quotations from these verses are in bold below (vv. 12–13, 15).

⁴: The fact that Jacob reads Isaiah to understand both *things which are and which are to come* suggests that the Nephites understood that prophet’s words to have multiple fulfillments; cf. 3 Ne 23.1–3. *Learn... the name of your God*, this happens at 10.3. ⁵: *They may be likened unto you*, see 1 Ne 19.23–24; 2 Ne 11.2, 8 (all referring to the words of Isaiah). ^{6–7}: Isa 49.22–23 was quoted about thirty years earlier by Nephi (1 Ne 21.22–23) and will be referenced again by the Lord at 10.8–9. ⁸: This happened in 586 BCE. Jacob’s visionary confirmation of his father’s prophecies (1 Ne 1.13, 18) offers additional corroboration of Lehi’s words at 2 Ne 1.4. ⁹: Jacob reiterates Lehi’s prophecies of a return from exile and the birth of Christ (1 Ne 10.2–6), as well as Nephi’s predictions, based on the Brass Plates, that Jesus would be scourged and crucified (1 Ne 19.9–10, 13), but Jacob claims that his knowledge has come from visions and an angel, independent of scripture or older members of his family; cf. 2.3–4. ¹¹: *Prayers of the faithful*, this may refer to the prayers of those who are afflicted, or to the prayers of their ancestors whose righteousness and petitions moved God to act on behalf of their descendants, as at Deut 7.7–8 or 2 Ne 3.5. The same scenario—that Israel would be *scattered and hated*, and then *gathered to the lands of their inheritance* as they come to a *knowledge of their Redeemer*—was outlined by Nephi at 1 Ne 22.2–12, also with reference to Isa 49.22–26. In the BoM, the conversion of the Jews is usually depicted as a precursor to their gathering; see 10.7n.

not be suffered to perish, because of the prayers of the faithful'), they shall be scattered, and smitten, and hated; nevertheless, the Lord will be merciful unto them, that when they shall come to the knowledge of their Redeemer, they shall be gathered together again to the lands of their inheritance.

¹² "And blessed are the **Gentiles**, they of whom the prophet has written; for behold, if it so be that they shall repent and fight not against Zion, and do not unite themselves to that great and abominable church, they shall be saved; for the Lord God will fulfil his covenants which he has made unto his children; and for this cause the prophet has written these things. ¹³ Wherefore, they that fight against Zion and the covenant people of the Lord shall **lick up the dust of their feet**; and the people of the Lord shall **not be ashamed**. For the people of the Lord are they **who wait for him**; for they still wait for the coming of the Messiah.

¹⁴ "And behold, according to the words of the prophet, the Messiah will 'set himself again the second time to recover them';^a wherefore, he will manifest himself unto them in power and great glory, unto the destruction of their enemies, when that day cometh when they shall believe in him; and none will he destroy that believe in him. ¹⁵ And they that

believe not in him shall be destroyed, both by fire, and by tempest, and by earthquakes, and by bloodsheds, and by pestilence, and by famine. And they **shall know that the Lord is God**, the Holy One of Israel.

¹⁶ **For** shall the prey be taken from the mighty,
or the lawful captive delivered?

¹⁷ But thus saith the Lord:
'Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away,
and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered;

for the Mighty God shall deliver his covenant people.

For thus saith the Lord:

I will contend with **them** that contendeth with thee^b—

¹⁸ And I will feed them that oppress thee, with their own flesh;
and they shall be drunken with their own blood as with sweet wine;

^a 14 Isa 11.11

^b 17 Jacob2 here omits "and I will save thy children" from Isa 49.25 and 1 Ne 21.25.

12–13: These verses offer several innovative interpretations of Isa 49.22–23 (vv. 6–7 above). There are now two distinct groups of Gentiles: one that assists the Israelites, and another that fights against Zion (alluding to Isa 29.8; the omission of "mount" suggests that *Zion* is here God's future kingdom on earth rather than Jerusalem, similar to 1 Ne 13.37). Isaiah imagines that the helpful Gentiles are those who will "lick up the dust of their feet" as a sign of submission; Jacob assigns this action to the hostile Gentiles. In addition, Jacob redefines "the people of the Lord" in non-ethnic, non-lineage terms, as all those who are waiting for the Messiah. **12:** *Fight not against Zion*, cf. Isa 29.8; 1 Ne 22.14, 19. *Great and abominable church*, also mentioned at 1 Ne 22.14, as well as numerous times in 1 Ne 13–14. **13:** *The people of the Lord are they who wait for him*, a message both to the Nephites before the birth of Jesus, and also to the readers of the BoM in the latter days. (The book of 3 Nephi is framed by an inclusio on this theme; see 3 Ne 1.5–6 and 29.1–3.) **14–15:** The emphasis here on the efficacy of belief accords with NT usages. In consequence of the destructions that will come upon unbelievers, faith will turn into knowledge. **14:** *Set himself again the second time to recover them*, the phrase is derived from Isa 11.11, where it refers to the return of the Jews from the Babylonian exile (with the first deliverance being the Exodus); for Jacob and Nephi, however, the second recovery is the gathering of Israel in the latter days, and the first was the return from Babylon, as in v. 9 above; cf. 25.14–17; 29.1–2; Jacob 6.2. *When they shall believe in him*, Jacob envisions the conversion of Jews to Christianity, though God himself will bring this about. **15:** This description of calamities in the last days also fits the divine judgments that will precede Christ's visit to the Nephites, not coincidentally. **17:** The significant addition to Isa 49.25 emphasizes God's faithfulness to the covenant. On the possible significance of the deleted phrase, see 1.17–19n.

and all flesh shall know that I, the
Lord, am thy Savior and thy
Redeemer,
the Mighty One of Jacob.”^a

Jacob²'s Quotation of Isaiah 50.1–52.2: 2 Nephi 7–8

(with significant changes and additions to
the King James Bible in bold)

Israel's Iniquities and God's Power (Isaiah 50.1–3)

7 ¹ Yea, for thus saith the Lord:
“Have I put thee away,
or have I cast thee off forever?”

For thus saith the Lord:

“Where is the bill of your mother's
divorcement?

To whom **have I** put **thee** away?

Or to which of my creditors **have I**
sold you?

Yea, to whom **have I** sold you?

Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold
yourselves,

and for your transgressions is your
mother put away.

² Wherefore, when I came, **there was**
no man;

when I called, **yea, there was** none
to answer.

O house of Israel, is my hand
shortened at all that it cannot
redeem,
or have I no power to deliver?
Behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea,
I make **their** rivers a wilderness
and their fish **to stink** because **the**
waters are dried up,
and **they die because of thirst**.

³ I clothe the heavens with blackness,
and I make sackcloth their
covering.”

God's Servant Tells of His Humiliation and Vindication (Isaiah 50.4–11)

⁴ The Lord God hath given me the
tongue of the learned,
that I should know how to speak a
word in season
unto thee, O house of Israel when
ye are weary.

He waketh morning by morning;
he waketh mine ear to hear as the
learned.

^a 18 Verses 16–18 quote Isa 49.24–26, with a few variations from 1 Ne 21.24–26. Differences from the King James Bible are in bold.

CHAPTER 7

1–3: Israel has been taken away (into exile), through their own fault, but the God who has power over the seas and the heavens can rectify things. In poetic metaphor, the Lord's relationship with Israel is envisioned as a marriage in which an unfaithful wife has been divorced and sold into slavery, though the prophet assures his listeners that this is not really the case. 1: Jacob concluded ch. 6 by quoting through the end of Isa 49; here he continues into Isa 50 (with no original chapter break), though the first sentence is an addition to the Isaiah text. *Where is the bill*, without a formal divorce, God's bond to his people is still intact. *To which of my creditors*, the image comes from debt slavery. God himself could have no creditors, though his people have sold themselves to pay for their sins. 2: The Lord has returned to Jerusalem, only to find that no one is there. *O house of Israel*, an addition that clarifies to whom the prophecy is directed; also inserted at v. 4. *Dry up the sea*, as when God parted the waters of the Red Sea in the Exodus. 4–9: This is the third of four servant songs that appear in the book of Isaiah; see 1 Ne 21.1–6n. Despite being treated poorly, God's servant will outlast his oppressors. 4: *The tongue of the learned*, “a well-trained tongue” (NAB); this servant is a disciple, having learned from earlier prophets. Perhaps as Jacob is quoting, he has his own relationship with Nephi in mind. *In season*, at the right time. *When ye are weary*, in the BoM narrative context, applying Isaiah's words to their own situation, this may allude to either the hardships of pioneering new settlements, or to concerns about the long-term prospects of their descendants, given the prophecies of Lehi and Nephi.

- ⁵ The Lord God hath opened mine ear,
and I was not rebellious,
neither turned away back.
- ⁶ I gave my back to the **smiter**,
and my cheeks to them that
plucked off the hair.
I hid not my face from shame and
spitting.
- ⁷ For the Lord God will help me,
therefore shall I not be confounded.
Therefore have I set my face like a flint,
and I know that I shall not be
ashamed.
- ⁸ **And the Lord** is near, **and he**
justifieth me.
Who will contend with me? Let us
stand together.
Who is mine adversary? Let him
come near me,
and I will smite him with the
strength of my mouth.
- ⁹ **For** the Lord God will help me.
And all they who shall condemn me,
behold, all they shall wax old as a
garment,
and the moth shall eat them up.
- ¹⁰ Who is among you that feareth the
Lord,
that obeyeth the voice of his
servant,

- that walketh in darkness and hath
no light?^a
- ¹¹ Behold all ye that kindle fire,
that compass yourselves about with
sparks,
walk in the light of your fire
and in the sparks **which** ye have
kindled.
This shall ye have of mine hand:
ye shall lie down in sorrow.

Comfort for Zion (Isaiah 51.1–16)

- 8** ¹ Hearken unto me, ye that follow after
righteousness.^b
Look unto the rock **from** whence ye
are hewn,
and to the hole of the pit **from**
whence ye are digged.
- ² Look unto Abraham, your father,
and unto Sarah, **she** that bare you;
for I called him alone, and blessed him.^c
- ³ For the Lord shall comfort Zion,

^a 10 Jacob₂ here omits “let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God” from Isa 50.10.

^b 1 Jacob₂ here omits “ye that seek the Lord” from Isa 51.1.

^c 2 Jacob₂ here omits “and increased him” from Isa 51.2.

6: Tearing out someone’s beard was a painful insult. **7:** *Like a flint*, here indicating righteous resolve rather than a hardened heart, as at 5.21. **8:** *Justifieth*, that is, vindicates. The inserted phrases identify the Lord as the justifier (substituting for the KJV “He is near”) and heighten the confrontation, which in the original is given a courtroom setting. *I will smite him*, the insertion echoes the “smiter” of v. 6, but one who returns verbal condemnation for physical violence. *With the strength of my mouth*, again, the power of the word is a prominent theme in the BoM (see 1 Ne 17.29n); the phrase is non-biblical. **10:** There is a shift in speakers as a new voice talks about the servant in the third person. *Feareth the Lord*, a common OT expression that often means “to revere” or “stand in awe” of God. **11:** *Walketh in darkness*, not spiritual blindness, but rather bewilderment or uncertainty. Those who rely on their own light rather than trusting in the Lord and his servant will *lie down in sorrow*.

CHAPTER 8

1–3: A prophecy that Jerusalem will once again enjoy fruitfulness, like Eden, after a time of barrenness, like Sarah and Abraham. **1:** *Pit from whence ye are digged*, a quarry. **2:** *I called him alone*, when he was a single individual, by himself. **3:** *Waste places*, ruins. *Joy and gladness*, as opposed to the terror and sorrow that characterized the Babylonian conquest and the Exile.

he will comfort all her waste places;
and he will make her wilderness like
Eden,
and her desert like the garden of the
Lord.
Joy and gladness shall be found therein,
thanksgiving and the voice of
melody.

⁴ Harken unto me, my people;
and give ear unto me, O my nation;
for a law shall proceed from me,
and I will make my judgment to rest
for a light **for** the people.

⁵ My righteousness is near;
my salvation is gone forth,
and mine **arm** shall judge the
people.

The isles shall wait upon me,
and on mine arm shall they trust.

⁶ Lift up your eyes to the heavens,
and look upon the earth beneath;
for the heavens shall vanish away like
smoke,
and the earth shall wax old like a
garment;
and they that dwell therein shall die
in like manner.

But my salvation shall be forever,
and my righteousness shall not be
abolished.

⁷ Harken unto me, ye that know
righteousness,

the people in whose heart **I have**
written my law,
fear ye not the reproach of men,
neither be ye afraid of their
revilings.

⁸ For the moth shall eat them up like a
garment,
and the worm shall eat them like
wool.

But my righteousness shall be forever,
and my salvation from generation
to generation.

⁹ Awake, awake! Put on strength,
O arm of the Lord;
awake as in the ancient days.^a
Art thou not **he** that hath cut Rahab,
and wounded the dragon?

¹⁰ Art thou not **he** who 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?

¹¹ Therefore, the redeemed of the Lord
shall return,
and come with singing unto Zion;
and everlasting joy **and holiness** shall
be upon their **heads**;
and they shall obtain gladness
and joy;
sorrow and mourning shall flee away.

^a ⁹ Jacob₂ here omits “in the generations of old”
from Isa 51.9.

⁴: *A law*, “teaching” or “instruction” rather than simply the law of Moses. ⁵: *My righteousness*, that is, my justice or deliverance. *The isles*, the Nephites tended to read themselves into these references to islands, as at 10.20–22. ⁶: God’s salvation is eternal, lasting longer than the heavens or the earth and its inhabitants. ⁷: The addition here draws on the new covenant of Jer 31.33: “I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.” ^{9–11}: The people plead to the Lord for deliverance. ⁹: The call to *awake* is reminiscent of Lehi’s words at 1.13, 23, but here the speaker’s plea is addressed to God’s strong arm. *Rahab* and *the dragon* were primordial sea monsters in ancient Near Eastern mythology. ¹⁰: An allusion to the crossing of the Red Sea (Ex 14.21–22) would have reminded the Nephites of their own crossing of the sea as they traveled to a new promised land; cf. 2 Ne 10.20. ¹¹: Just as the Israelites once escaped bondage in Egypt with the Lord’s help, so also the Lord will bring the exiles back to Jerusalem, with *gladness and joy*, as in v. 3 (by contrast, the Nephites do not expect to return to Judea; the New World is their permanent land of inheritance). The BoM adds *holiness* here, indicating that their spiritual status has changed, along with their location.

¹² **I am he;** yea, I am he that
comforteth you.
Behold, who art thou,
that thou shouldst be afraid of man,
who shall die,
and of the son of man, who shall be
made **like unto** grass?
¹³ And forgettest the Lord thy maker—
that hath stretched forth the
heavens,
and laid the foundations of the earth—
and hast feared continually every day,
because of the fury of the oppressor,
as if he were ready to destroy?
And where is the fury of the oppressor?

¹⁴ The captive exile hasteneth,
that he may be loosed,
and that he should not die in the pit,
nor that his bread should fail.
¹⁵ But I am the Lord thy God, whose
waves roared;^a
the Lord of Hosts is **my** name.
¹⁶ And I have put my words in thy
mouth,
and have covered thee in the
shadow of mine hand,
that I may plant the heavens
and lay the foundations of the
earth,
and say unto Zion, “**Behold,** thou
art my people.”

Awake, Jerusalem (Isaiah 51.17–52.2)

¹⁷ Awake, awake, stand up,
O Jerusalem,
which hast drunk at the hand of the
Lord the cup of his fury—
thou hast drunken the dregs of the
cup of trembling wrung out—
¹⁸ **and** none to guide her
among all the sons she hath brought
forth;
neither that taketh her by the hand,
of all the sons she hath brought
up.
¹⁹ These two **sons** are come unto thee,
who shall be sorry for thee—
thy desolation and destruction,
and the famine and the sword—
and by whom shall I comfort thee?
²⁰ Thy sons have fainted, **save these**
two;
they lie at the head of all the streets,
as a wild bull in a net;
they are full of the fury of the Lord,
the rebuke of thy God.
²¹ Therefore hear now this, thou
afflicted,
and drunken, **and** not with wine.

^a ¹⁵ Jacob₂ here omits “that divided the sea”
from Isa 51.15.

12–16: God’s positive response. **12–13:** The creator is superior to all his creations, including the human opponents who are currently oppressing his people. **12:** *Son of man*, here a generic term for “human”; the BoM never uses the term in reference to a future Messianic figure, as at Dan 7.13–14 and very commonly in the Gospels. In fact, this is its only occurrence in the BoM. **16:** *Covered thee in the shadow of mine hand*, sheltered you. **17–25:** Jerusalem, imagined as a woman who has suffered in captivity, is encouraged to wake up and stand, even though she currently has no children to guide her or help her up. **19:** In the original, “these two things” referred to *desolation/destruction* and *famine/sword*; the BoM instead has *these two sons*, with another reference to the pair added at v. 20. Jacob apparently has two specific individuals in mind, but the chronological setting is unclear. Perhaps he is alluding to Lehi and Jeremiah, or the two prophets described in Rev 11.3–13. **20:** *At the head of all the streets*, at the corner of every street. **21:** *Drunken, and not with wine*, staggering from the effects of God’s anger.

²² Thus saith thy Lord,
 the Lord and thy God pleadeth the
 cause of his people:
 Behold, I have taken out of thine hand
 the cup of trembling,
 the dregs of the cup of my fury;
 thou shalt no more drink it again.
²³ But I will put it into the hand of
 them that afflict thee;
 who have said to thy soul, “Bow
 down, that we may go over.”
 And thou hast laid thy body as the
 ground
 and as the street to them that went
 over.

²⁴ Awake, awake, put on thy strength,
 O Zion;
 put on thy beautiful garments, O
 Jerusalem, the holy city.
 For henceforth there shall no more
 come into thee
 the uncircumcised and the unclean.

²⁵ Shake thyself from the dust; arise.
 Sit down, O Jerusalem;
 loose thyself from the bands of thy neck,
 O captive daughter of Zion.

Jacob₂ Explains the Resurrection and the Judgment

[VI] **9** ¹ “And now, my beloved
 brethren, I have read these
 things that ye might know concerning the
 covenants of the Lord that he has cov-
 enanted with all the house of Israel— ² that
 he has spoken unto the Jews, by the mouth
 of his holy prophets, even from the begin-
 ning down, from generation to generation,
 until the time comes that they shall be
 restored to the true church and fold of God;
 when they shall be gathered home to the
 lands of their inheritance, and shall be estab-
 lished in all their lands of promise. ³ Behold,
 my beloved brethren, I speak unto you these
 things that ye may rejoice, and lift up your

22–23: Transferring the cup of the Lord’s wrath transforms the oppressors, who had previously walked on Israel like the ground, into the oppressed. **24–25:** These two verses, Isa 52.1–2, will be quoted again by Jesus at 3 Ne 20.36–37; cf. Moro 10.31. *Awake and shake thyself from the dust and loose thyself from the bands [chains] of thy neck* again recall Lehi’s words at 1.13–14, 23, although there the problem was spiritual bondage rather than temporal domination by foreign nations. *The uncircumcised, foreigners; the unclean, Jews* who do not keep the rules of ritual purity. *From the dust*, she is covered in dust after having sat on the ground in humiliation, or having been walked on like a street. *Arise, sit down*, that is, sit down on a throne.

CHAPTER 9

This theologically rich chapter exhibits a tightly organized structure: six expressions of praise for God beginning with *O* (vv. 8–24) are followed by ten woes (vv. 27–38), and then by six exhortations to remember that start with *O my beloved brethren* (vv. 39–52; though the last exhortation omits the *O*). **1:** *That ye might know concerning the covenants*, the only specific mention of a “covenant” in the Isaiah quotations was the addition at 6.17. Nevertheless, the Isaiah chapters affirm that God will be faithful to his covenant relationship with Israel by rescuing his people from exile and restoring them to Jerusalem. **2:** Jacob expands on Isaiah’s witness in three ways: (1) he looks past the return of Jews to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah in the 6th–5th c. BCE to a much later period when they will be *restored to the true church and fold of God*; (2) he notes that Israel will be gathered back to multiple *lands of their inheritance*, so the Jews will return to Jerusalem, but the descendants of Lehi will also receive their promised land in the Americas, and other unspecified branches of Israel will claim their regional inheritances as well; and (3) he regards Isaiah’s prophecies of deliverance as having application not only to the political fates of nations but also in the eternal salvation of individuals—which is the main subject of this chapter. *True church*, only here and 4 Ne 1.26, 29. This is the only verse in the BoM suggesting that converted Jews will become members of a specific church; elsewhere, church affiliation is not a major element in prophecies about the redemption of the Jewish people. *True...fold of God*, 1 Ne 15.15; the metaphor assumes the image of God as a shepherd.

heads forever, because of the blessings which the Lord God shall bestow upon your children.

⁴ “For I know that ye have searched much, many of you, to know of things to come; wherefore I know that ye know that our flesh must waste away and die; nevertheless, in our bodies we shall see God. ⁵ Yea, I know that ye know that in the body he shall show himself unto those at Jerusalem, from whence we came; for it is expedient that it should be among them; for it behooveth the great Creator that he suffereth himself to become subject unto man in the flesh, and die for all men, that all men might become subject unto him.

⁶ “For as death hath passed upon all men, to fulfil the merciful plan of the great Creator, there must needs be a power of resurrection, and the resurrection must needs come unto man by reason of the fall; and the fall came by reason of transgression; and because man became fallen they were cut off from the presence of the Lord. ⁷ Wherefore, it must needs be an infinite atonement—save it should be an infinite atonement this corruption could not put on incorruption. Wherefore, the first judgment which came

upon man must needs have remained to an endless duration. And if so, this flesh must have laid down to rot and to crumble to its mother earth, to rise no more.

⁸ “O the wisdom of God, his mercy and grace! For behold, if the flesh should rise no more our spirits must become subject to that angel who fell from before the presence of the Eternal God, and became the devil, to rise no more. ⁹ And our spirits must have become like unto him, and we become devils, angels to a devil—to be shut out from the presence of our God, and to remain with the father of lies, in misery, like unto himself—yea, to that being who beguiled our first parents, who transformeth himself nigh unto an angel of light, and stirreth up the children of men unto secret combinations of murder and all manner of secret works of darkness.

¹⁰ “O how great the goodness of our God, who prepareth a way for our escape from the grasp of this awful monster; yea, that monster, death and hell, which I call the death of the body, and also the death of the spirit. ¹¹ And because of the way of deliverance of our God, the Holy One of Israel, this death, of which I have spoken, which is the temporal, shall

⁴: *In our bodies we shall see God*, cf. Job 19.26. ⁵: *In the body he shall show himself*, Jacob learned directly from the Lord, or perhaps an angel, that God would come into the world in bodily form (6.9), though Lehi and Nephi had taught similar things (1 Ne 11.16–21; 15.13; 2 Ne 2.3–4). Jacob never finishes his explanation of why God had to be born among *those at Jerusalem*, but see 10.3–4 for an angelic clarification. The verse ends with a chiasmic formula, that the Creator became subject to men, so that through his death they might become subject to him. *Behoove*, WB: “to be necessary for; to be fit for.” ^{6–12}: Verses 6–7 are about bodily death; vv. 8–9 describe spiritual death; and vv. 10–12 discuss both under the terms “death” and “hell.” ⁷: Without Christ’s atonement, those who are deceased would remain dead forever, as a consequence of Adam’s fall. *Infinite atonement*, non-biblical, but the concept is associated with Anselm of Canterbury (late 11th c.) and was common in Christian writings thereafter. *Corruption*, perishable body. *Corruption could not put on incorruption*, cf. 1 Cor 15.53. *Mother earth*, non-biblical, but three times in the BoM and common in the 18th–19th c. ^{8–9}: For his description of the devil, Jacob is drawing on Lehi’s words at 2.17–18. ⁹: *Angels to a devil*, the idea that the devil has angels, or servants, appears at Mt 25.41; Rev 12.9; 2 Ne 9.16; Jacob 3.11; Mos 26.27; 3 Ne 9.2; Moro 7.17. *Beguiled our first parents*, see Gen 3.13; 2 Cor 11.3; Mos 16.3; Ether 8.25. The BoM always has Satan beguiling both Adam and Eve, rather than just Eve, as in the Bible. *Transformeth himself nigh unto an angel of light*, cf. 2 Cor 11.14; Alma 30.53. *Secret combination(s)*, non-biblical, but 18 times in the BoM and common in the early 19th c., when it was often, but not exclusively, used as a criticism of Masonry. These organizations will later become a significant part of the BoM narrative. *Combination*, WB: “association of two or more persons or things, by set purpose or agreement, for effecting some object, by joint operation... in an ill sense, when it is illegal or iniquitous.” ¹⁰: There is a single monster, which personifies two types of involuntary separation: *death and hell*.

deliver up its dead; which death is the grave.¹² And this death of which I have spoken, which is the spiritual death, shall deliver up its dead; which spiritual death is hell; wherefore, death and hell must deliver up their dead, and hell must deliver up its captive spirits, and the grave must deliver up its captive bodies, and the bodies and the spirits of men will be restored one to the other; and it is by the power of the resurrection of the Holy One of Israel.

¹³ “O how great the plan of our God! For on the other hand, the paradise of God must deliver up the spirits of the righteous, and the grave deliver up the body of the righteous; and the spirit and the body is restored to itself again, and all men become incorruptible, and immortal, and they are living souls—having a perfect knowledge—like unto us in the flesh, save it be that our knowledge shall be perfect.¹⁴ Wherefore, we shall have a perfect knowledge of all our guilt, and our uncleanness, and our nakedness; and the righteous shall have a perfect knowledge of their enjoyment, and their righteousness, being clothed with purity, yea, even with the robe of righteousness.

¹⁵ “And it shall come to pass that when all men shall have passed from this first death unto life, insomuch as they have become immortal,

they must appear before the judgment-seat of the Holy One of Israel; and then cometh the judgment, and then must they be judged according to the holy judgment of God.¹⁶ And assuredly, as the Lord liveth (for the Lord God hath spoken it, and it is his eternal word, which cannot pass away), that they who are righteous shall be righteous still, and they who are filthy shall be filthy still; wherefore, they who are filthy are the devil and his angels; and they shall go away into everlasting fire, prepared for them; and their torment is as a lake^a of fire and brimstone, whose flame ascendeth up forever and ever and has no end.”

Justice, Mercy, and the Law

¹⁷ “O the greatness and the justice of our God! For he executeth all his words, and they have gone forth out of his mouth, and his law must be fulfilled.¹⁸ But, behold, the righteous, the saints of the Holy One of Israel, they who have believed in the Holy One of Israel, they who have endured the crosses of the world, and despised the shame of it, they shall inherit the kingdom of God, which was prepared for

^a 16 P is a lake; 1837 is as a lake

12: *Death and hell must deliver up their dead*, the parallel language at Rev 20.13 is puzzling, because death and hell (Hebrew: *sheol*; Greek: *hades*; the abode of the dead) are often synonymous in the Bible, but are there treated as separate entities for unclear reasons. Jacob here provides a definitive distinction between the two. *Spiritual death*, non-biblical, but eight times in the BoM; defined at Alma 42.9 and Hel 14.16 as being “cut off from the presence of the Lord.” **14:** Jacob places himself among the guilty with first-person plural, while describing *the righteous* in the third person. The righteous being *clothed with purity* contrasts with the guilty who are keenly aware of their nakedness; cf. Gen 3.7, 10, 21. *Robe of righteousness*, Isa 61.10; 2 Ne 4.33. **15–16:** After the Judgment, the righteous will remain in God’s presence while the wicked will be sent away *into everlasting fire*. *First death* is strictly a BoM phrase (Alma 11.45; Hel 14.16), though it presupposes a “second death,” a term that appears four times in Rev and six times in the BoM. *Righteous still... filthy still*, cf. Rev 22.11. *The devil and his angels; and they shall go away into everlasting fire, prepared for them*, cf. Mt 25.41. *Their torment is as a lake of fire and brimstone, whose flame ascendeth up forever and ever*, cf. Rev 20.10; 14.10–11. JS’s 1837 addition of “as” makes the lake of burning sulfur a simile rather than something literal, which aligns this verse with usage elsewhere in the BoM such as Mos 3.27; Alma 12.17; and esp. Mos 2.38 and Morm 9.1–5, where the “flame of unquenchable fire” after the Final Judgment is explained as “a lively sense of his own guilt” or “a consciousness of guilt.” The BoM thus redefines everlasting hell as a psychological state. **17:** *Words... gone forth out of his mouth... must be fulfilled*, see Isa 55.11. **18:** *Endured the crosses... despised the shame*, cf. Heb 12.2. *Cross(es)*, WB includes “hindrance, opposition,” though both Jacob and Nephi knew of Jesus’s future crucifixion; see 6.9; 1 Ne 11.33; 19.10. *Inherit the kingdom of God... from the foundation of the world*, cf. Mt 25.34 (note that Mt 25.41 was alluded to in v. 16).

them from the foundation of the world, and their joy shall be full forever.

¹⁹ “O the greatness of the mercy of our God, the Holy One of Israel! For he delivereth his saints from that awful monster the devil, and death and hell, and that lake of fire and brimstone, which is endless torment.

²⁰ “O how great the holiness of our God! For he knoweth all things, and there is not anything save he knows it. ²¹ And he cometh into the world that he may save all men if they will hearken unto his voice; for behold, he suffereth the pains of all men, yea, the pains of every living creature, both men, women, and children, who belong to the family of Adam. ²² And he suffereth this that the resurrection might pass upon all men, that all might stand before him at the great and judgment day. ²³ And he commandeth all men that they must repent, and be baptized in his name, having perfect faith in the Holy One of Israel, or they cannot be saved in the kingdom of God. ²⁴ And if they will not repent and believe in his name, and be baptized in his name, and endure to the end, they must be damned; for the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, has spoken it.

²⁵ “Wherefore, he has given a law; and where there is no law given there is no punishment;

and where there is no punishment there is no condemnation; and where there is no condemnation the mercies of the Holy One of Israel have claim upon them, because of the atonement; for they are delivered by the power of him. ²⁶ For the atonement satisfieth the demands of his justice upon all those who have not the law given to them, that they are delivered from that awful monster, death and hell, and the devil, and the lake of fire and brimstone, which is endless torment; and they are restored to that God who gave them breath, which is the Holy One of Israel.”

Ten Woes

²⁷ “But wo unto him that has the law given, yea, that has all the commandments of God, like unto us, and that transgresseth them, and that wasteth the days of his probation, for awful is his state! ²⁸ O that cunning plan of the evil one! O the vainness, and the frailties, and the foolishness of men! When they are learned they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves, wherefore, their wisdom is foolishness and it profiteth them not. And they shall perish. ²⁹ (But to be learned is good if they hearken unto the counsels of God.)

21: *Save all men*, the same phrase is used by an opponent of Nephite missionaries at Alma 21.6, expressing a type of Universalism (but cf. Hel 12.25). In terms of Protestant theology, this verse teaches unlimited atonement (*suffereth the pains of . . . every living creature*) and resistible grace (*if they will hearken unto his voice*), doctrines associated with Arminianism and Methodism as opposed to Calvinism. **23–24:** The combination of repentance, baptism, faith, and enduring to the end (along with the Holy Ghost) is identified as the doctrine of Christ at 31.2–21, and the essence of the gospel at 3 Ne 27.13–22. Although Jacob in these two verses, and later Nephi (in ch. 31), speaks in general, abstract terms about baptism, there are no recorded baptisms in the BoM until Alma baptizes at Mos 18, nearly four hundred years later, where the practice appears to be something new. *Perfect faith*, only here in scripture. **25–26:** Jacob offers a revised version of Lehi’s argument at 2.13. If *law* here refers to the law of Moses, the implication is that non-Jews—the vast majority of the world’s population—are automatically saved. However, Jacob seems to be speaking of more general requirements; see 2.5n. The infractions listed in vv. 30–38 represent fairly universal ethical standards (aside from the prohibition of idolatry), and one possibility, according to the BoM, is that God has given laws forbidding such actions through multiple religious traditions and moral teachers; see Alma 29.8. See also Gen 9.1–17; the covenant with Noah after the Flood is regarded in rabbinic tradition as required of all human beings. **26:** Verses 19 and 26 have twenty-one words in common, and between them, they account for the similar fates of both God’s saints and those outside of the law. *Demands of . . . justice*, non-biblical, but six times in the BoM. **27–38:** The genre of a list of woes has precedents in the Bible at Isa 5.8–23; Hab 2.6–20; Mt 23.13–36; Lk 11.42–52; another instance in the BoM occurs at 2 Ne 28.24–29.

30 But wo unto the rich,
 who are rich as to the things of the
 world.
 For because they are rich they despise
 the poor,
 and they persecute the meek,
 and their hearts are upon their
 treasures.
 Wherefore, their treasure is their god;
 and behold, their treasure shall
 perish with them also.
 31 And wo unto the deaf that will not
 hear,
 for they shall perish.
 32 Wo unto the blind that will not see,
 for they shall perish also.
 33 Wo unto the uncircumcised of heart,
 for a knowledge of their iniquities
 shall smite them at the last day.
 34 Wo unto the liar,
 for he shall be thrust down to hell.
 35 Wo unto the murderer who
 deliberately killeth,
 for he shall die.
 36 Wo unto them who commit
 whoredoms,
 for they shall be thrust down to hell.
 37 Yea, wo unto those that worship
 idols,
 for the devil of all devils delighteth
 in them.

38 And, in fine, wo unto all those who
 die in their sins;
 for they shall return to God and
 behold his face,
 and remain in their sins.”

Jacob₂ Exhorts His People to Remember

39 “O, my beloved brethren, remember the awfulness in transgressing against that Holy God, and also the awfulness of yielding to the enticing of that cunning one. Remember, to be carnally-minded is death, and to be spiritually-minded is life eternal.

40 “O, my beloved brethren, give ear to my words. Remember the greatness of the Holy One of Israel. Do not say that I have spoken hard things against you; for if ye do, ye will revile against the truth; for I have spoken the words of your Maker. I know that the words of truth are hard against all uncleanness; but the righteous fear them not, for they love the truth and are not shaken.

41 “O then, my beloved brethren, come unto the Lord, the Holy One. Remember that his paths are righteous. Behold, the way for man is narrow, but it lieth in a straight course before him, and the keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel; and he employeth no servant there; and there is none other way save it be by the gate; for he cannot be deceived, for the Lord God is his name.”⁴² And whoso

30: *Their treasure is their god*, a form of idolatry more universal than polytheism. 31–32: *Will not hear*, rather than “cannot hear,” and *will not see*, rather than “cannot see”; the problem is attitudinal rather than physical. 31: The series of *wo unto* statements that begin with this verse is another example of anaphora; see 4.31–33n. 33: *Uncircumcised of heart*, the concept, obviously metaphorical, appears at Lev 26.41; Jer 9.26; Ezek 44.7, 9; Acts 7.51; Hel 9.21; it indicates a heart that is resistant or blocked to God’s commands. 35: *Murderer who deliberately killeth*, distinguishing murder from manslaughter. 37: *Devil of all devils*, only here in scripture. 39–46: The repeated injunctions to “remember” contrast with the forgetting of 8.13. 39: *Carnally-minded... spiritually-minded*, cf. Rom 8.6. 40: *Spoken hard things*, Ps 94.4; 1 Ne 16.1–3 (where Nephi similarly equates “hard things” with “the truth”); cf. 2 Ne 1.26. 41: A striking image emphasizing the strictness of the requirements to enter into God’s eternal home and the personal nature of his welcome therein. In this passage, Jacob seems to think of the gate as being at the end of the path, as in Hel 3.28–29; elsewhere, it is at the beginning (2 Ne 31.17–18; 33.9; Jacob 6.11). 42: *Whoso knocketh, to him will be open*, cf. Mt 7.8; Lk 11.10. Since the Lord opens to everyone who knocks, yet *he will not open* to the learned, the wise, and the rich, it must be because they are too proud to knock. Within the narrative context, it is hard to imagine great disparities of wealth or education among the small family gathering of first- or second-generation settlers that Jacob was addressing.

knocketh, to him will he open; and the wise, and the learned, and they that are rich, who are puffed up because of their learning, and their wisdom, and their riches—yea, they are they whom he despiseth; and save they shall cast these things away, and consider themselves fools before God, and come down in the depths of humility, he will not open unto them.⁴³ But the things of the wise and the prudent shall be hid from them forever—yea, that happiness which is prepared for the saints.

⁴⁴ “O, my beloved brethren, remember my words. Behold, I take off my garments, and I shake them before you; I pray the God of my salvation that he view me with his all-searching eye; wherefore, ye shall know at the last day, when all men shall be judged of their works, that the God of Israel did witness that I shook your iniquities from my soul, and that I stand with brightness before him, and am rid of your blood.

⁴⁵ “O, my beloved brethren, turn away from your sins; shake off the chains of him that would bind you fast; come unto that God who is the rock of your salvation.⁴⁶ Prepare your souls for that glorious day when justice shall be administered unto the righteous, even the day of judgment, that ye may not shrink with awful fear; that ye may not remember your awful guilt in perfectness, and be constrained

to exclaim: ‘Holy, holy are thy judgments, O Lord God Almighty—but I know my guilt; I transgressed thy law, and my transgressions are mine; and the devil hath obtained me, that I am a prey to his awful misery.’”

Jacob₂ Quotes and Interprets Isaiah 55.1–2

(with significant changes and additions to the King James Bible in bold)

⁴⁷ “But behold, my brethren, is it expedient that I should awake you to an awful reality of these things? Would I harrow up your souls if your minds were pure? Would I be plain unto you according to the plainness of the truth if ye were freed from sin?⁴⁸ Behold, if ye were holy I would speak unto you of holiness; but as ye are not holy, and ye look upon me as a teacher, it must needs be expedient that I teach you the consequences of sin.⁴⁹ Behold, my soul abhorreth sin, and my heart delighteth in righteousness; and I will praise the holy name of my God.

⁵⁰ **Come, my brethren**, every one that thirsteth,
 come ye to the waters;
 and he that hath no money,
 come buy and eat.
 Yea, come buy wine and milk
 without money and without price.

⁴³: *Things of the wise and the prudent shall be hid*, cf. Isa 29.14 (alluded to at Mt 11.25; Lk 10.21). ⁴⁴: *I take off my garments and I shake them*, symbolic actions were part of the Hebrew prophetic idiom, see Jer 27–28; 51.63–64. The image of the sins of the people clinging like blood to the garments of their leaders recurs at Jacob 1.19; 2.2; Mos 2.28; Morm 9.35; Ether 12.38, and may be related to Acts 18.6. The conjunction of blood and clothing is indicative of Jacob’s priestly status (5.26; Jacob 1.18), see Ex 29.21; Lev 8.30. *All-searching eye*, non-biblical, but here and Mos 27.31, and common in the 18th–19th c. *Rid of your blood*, Paul declares that his preaching has a similar effect at Acts 20.26–27. ⁴⁵: *Shake off the chains*, echoing Lehi’s words at 1.13, 23. ⁴⁶: *Shrink*, non-biblical, but seven times in the BoM; WB: “To recoil, as in fear, horror or distress.” *Remember your awful guilt in perfectness*, see v. 14. *Prey* has connotations of being trapped or hunted, though Jacob makes it clear that we have been complicit in our own spiritual captivity. ⁴⁷: *Harrow*, WB: “To break or tear with a harrow [an agricultural instrument with iron teeth that is drawn over plowed land to level it and break clods]; to torment.” The verb is used once in the Bible (Job 39.10), and ten times in the BoM. ⁴⁸: *Ye look upon me as a teacher*, see 5.26. ⁴⁹: Praising the name of God is a common refrain in the Psalms; in the BoM it occurs only here and Alma 26.12. ^{50–51}: Five repetitions of *come* culminate in an inserted invitation to *come unto the Holy One of Israel*.

⁵¹ Wherefore, do **not** spend money for
that which is **of no worth**,^a
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,^b
neither can be corrupted,
and let your soul delight in fatness.

⁵² “Behold, my beloved brethren, remember the words of your God; pray unto him continually by day, and give thanks unto his holy name by night. Let your hearts rejoice. ⁵³ And behold how great the covenants of the Lord, and how great his condescensions unto the children of men; and because of his greatness, and his grace and mercy, he has promised unto us that our seed shall not utterly be destroyed, according to the flesh, but that he would preserve them; and in future generations they shall become a righteous branch unto the house of Israel.

⁵⁴ “And now, my brethren, I would speak unto you more; but on the morrow I will declare unto you the remainder of my words. Amen.”

Day Two: Jacob₂ Concludes His Discourse: 2 Nephi 10

Jacob₂ Prophecies of Christ and the Restoration of Israel

[VII] **10** ¹ “And now I, Jacob, speak unto you again, my beloved brethren, concerning this righteous branch of which I have spoken. ² For behold, the promises which we have obtained are promises unto us according to the flesh; wherefore, as it has been shown unto me that many of our children shall perish in the flesh because of unbelief, nevertheless, God will be merciful unto many; and our children shall be restored, that they may come to that which will give them the true knowledge of their Redeemer.

^a ⁵¹ Isa 55.2 reads “for that which is not bread”

^b ⁵¹ Isa 55.2 reads “and eat ye that which is good”

51: Two rhetorical questions in Isaiah’s original version have been transformed into imperatives (i.e., the meaning of *wherefore* has been changed from “why” to “therefore”). *Of no worth* is a substitution for “not bread”; *cannot satisfy* is a substitution for “satisfieth not.” In both cases, the new meanings are generalized and intensified. The four lines in bold replace “and eat ye that which is good,” perhaps with an implication of *feasting on the words*, a metaphor that Nephi will develop more fully at 31.20 and 32.3. *Fatness*, rich food. **52:** *Give thanks unto his holy name*, only here and Alma 26.8, which are both based on Ps 106.47. **53–54:** Ch. 9 is about the plan of salvation, but ends with salvation history; ch. 10 is about salvation history, but ends with the plan of salvation. **53:** *Righteous branch*, see 3.5n.

CHAPTER 10

1–2: After an original chapter break, Jacob’s address resumes the next day with references to a *righteous branch* and *promises* that their descendants would persist, both from 9.53. **2:** *According to the flesh*, while the previous chapter focused on individual salvation in the next life, Jacob here returns to the this-worldly, communal salvation of the Isaiah passages quoted in chs. 7–8. He refers to the same sort of revelatory experiences he mentioned at 6.8–11, which similarly focused on the fates of peoples several centuries and even millennia in the future. *Perish . . . because of unbelief*, perhaps a poignant allusion to 1 Ne 4.13; cf. 1 Ne 13.35n. *Many of our children shall perish . . . shall be restored*, Jacob may be speaking of Nephite revival at the time of Christ’s visit in 3 Ne, or of the destiny of the latter-day Lamanites, who will include some of their own descendants; cf. 1 Ne 13.30. *True knowledge*, only here and Hel 15.13 (which seems to allude to this verse). The person or text or event that will give them the “true knowledge” is left unspecified.

³ “Wherefore, as I said unto you, it must needs be expedient that Christ (for in the last night the angel spake unto me that this should be his name) should come among the Jews, among those who are the more wicked part of the world; and they shall crucify him—for thus it behooveth our God, and there is none other nation on earth that would crucify their God. ⁴ For should the mighty miracles be wrought among other nations they would repent, and know that he be their God. ⁵ But because of priestcrafts and iniquities, they at Jerusalem will stiffen their necks against him, that he be crucified. ⁶ Wherefore, because of their iniquities, destructions, famines, pestilences, and bloodshed shall come upon them; and they who shall not be destroyed shall be scattered among all nations.

⁷ “But behold, thus saith the Lord God: ‘When the day cometh that they shall believe in me, that I am Christ, then have I covenanted with their fathers that they shall be restored in the flesh, upon the earth, unto the

lands of their inheritance. ⁸ And it shall come to pass that they shall be gathered in from their long dispersion, from the isles of the sea, and from the four parts of the earth.’

“And the nations of the Gentiles shall be great in the eyes of me,’ saith God, ‘in carrying them forth to the lands of their inheritance. ⁹ Yea, the kings of the Gentiles shall be nursing fathers unto them, and their queens shall become nursing mothers.’ Wherefore, the promises of the Lord are great unto the Gentiles, for he hath spoken it, and who can dispute?”

God’s Promises concerning the Gentiles and the Americas

¹⁰ “‘But behold, this land,’ said God, ‘shall be a land of thine inheritance, and the Gentiles shall be blessed upon the land. ¹¹ And this land shall be a land of liberty unto the Gentiles, and there shall be no kings upon the land, who shall raise up unto the Gentiles. ¹² And I will fortify this land against all other nations.’ ¹³ ‘And he that fighteth against Zion shall

3–9: A recapitulation of 6.9–12. In a book that consistently asserts the continuance, and even primacy, of God’s covenant with Israel, and which is generally sympathetic to the Jews (cf. 1 Ne 13.25; 2 Ne 25.5; 29.4), the anti-Semitic tone of these verses is atypical. Jacob describes the Jews as uniquely wicked, and being communally responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus, but perhaps he is speaking against the future leaders of Jerusalem with the bitterness of a child of refugees who were forced to flee that city. In any case, blaming Jews for Jesus’s death is an anti-Semitic slur with a terrible history and horrendous consequences. 3: *As I said unto you*, the previous day (6.9). Jacob treats *Christ*, that is, Messiah, as a name rather than a title. At 1 Ne 12.18, in the original manuscript, Nephi reported that an angel had told him that the name of the Lamb of God would be “Jesus Christ”; Jacob, however, hears “Christ” directly from an angel rather than from his brother. 4: The sentiment expressed is similar to Mt 11.21. 5: *Priestcraft(s)*, non-biblical, but ten times in the BoM; WB: “fraud or imposition in religious concerns; management of selfish and ambitious priests to gain wealth and power, or to impose on the credulity of others” (cf. the definition given at 26.29). 7: The chronology in this verse is that the Jews and other Israelites will be converted to Christ and then restored to their covenantal homelands (also 6.11; 9.2; 25.15–16; 30.7; 3 Ne 5.23–26; 20.29–33); the sequence is more ambiguous at 1 Ne 10.14; 22.12; 2 Ne 29.14. *In the flesh* and *upon the earth* both indicate a political, this-worldly type of national restoration. 9: The Lord is now interpreting Isa 49.22–23, which was quoted earlier by Nephi at 1 Ne 21.22–23 and by Jacob at 2 Ne 6.6–7. Comparing the quoted phrases in 1 Ne 22.6; 2 Ne 6.13, 15; and 2 Ne 10.9 makes it apparent that each of these three interpreters highlights different phrases from Isa 49.22–23, though between them they cover most of the passage. For another example of multiple interpretations, see Jacob 6.2n. *Of the Gentiles* has been added to the description of kings at Isa 49.23, indicating foreign rather than domestic monarchs according to vv. 10–11. 11: The Gentiles will not have a king in the land, though by this point Nephi has already been appointed king to the Nephites. 13: *Fighteth against Zion*, Isa 29.8; 1 Ne 22.14, 19; 2 Ne 6.12–13; 27.3; in this context “Zion” refers to God’s kingdom rather than specifically to Jerusalem.

perish,' saith God, ¹⁴ 'for he that raiseth up a king against me shall perish, for I, the Lord, the king of heaven, will be their king, and I will be a light unto them forever, that hear my words.'

¹⁵ "Wherefore, for this cause, that my covenants may be fulfilled which I have made unto the children of men, that I will do unto them while they are in the flesh, I must needs destroy the secret works of darkness, and of murders, and of abominations. ¹⁶ Wherefore, he that fighteth against Zion, both Jew and Gentile, both bond and free, both male and female, shall perish; for they are they who are the whore of all the earth; for they who are not for me are against me,' saith our God. ¹⁷ 'For I will fulfil my promises which I have made unto the children of men, that I will do unto them while they are in the flesh'—

¹⁸ "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, thus saith our God: 'I will afflict thy seed by the hand of the Gentiles; nevertheless, I will soften the hearts of the Gentiles, that they shall be like unto a father to them; wherefore, the Gentiles shall be blessed and numbered among the house of Israel. ¹⁹ Wherefore, I will consecrate

this land unto thy seed, and them who shall be numbered among thy seed, forever, for the land of their inheritance; for it is a choice land,' saith God, 'unto me, above all other lands,'^a 'Wherefore I will have all men that dwell thereon that they shall worship me,' saith God.

Jacob₂'s Assurance: We Have Been Led Away, Not Cast Off

²⁰ "And now, my beloved brethren, seeing that our merciful God has given us so great knowledge concerning these things, let us remember him, and lay aside our sins, and not hang down our heads, for we are not cast off; nevertheless, we have been driven out of the land of our inheritance; but we have been led to a better land, for the Lord has made the sea our path, and we are upon an isle of the sea. ²¹ But great are the promises of the Lord unto them who are upon the isles of the sea; wherefore as it says 'isles,' there must needs be more than this, and they are inhabited also by our brethren. ²² For

^a ¹⁹ Or 'choice land,' saith God unto me, 'above all other lands.'

14: First Sam 8.7 similarly suggests that earthly kings are an affront to God's kingship. **15:** The phrasing here alludes to the sort of secret combinations found among the Jaredites; see Alma 37.21–22, 29. **16:** *Both bond and free, both male and female*, cf. Gal 3.28. Slavery in the BoM is hinted at, but seldom discussed openly; see Mos 2.13; Alma 5.49; 27.8–9; 48.11; 3 Ne 3.7; 4 Ne 1.3. The major exceptions are the bondages of King Limhi's people at Mos 7–22 and of Alma's people at Mos 23–24. **18–19:** *Like unto a father to them* picks up the imagery from the Isa 49.23 quotation in v. 9 above, yet in this case it is the parental figure rather than the children who is adopted, as the Gentiles are *numbered among thy seed forever* and hence have a share in their *inheritance*. **20–22:** This passage begins and ends with a reciprocity of caring: *let us remember him* and *he remembers us also*. **20:** It appears that there were discussions among the people concerning their status with God; Jacob assures them that rather than seeing themselves as *cast off*, they should regard themselves as having been *led away* by God to an even *better land*. *Not hang down our heads*, reaffirming Jacob's admonition at 9.3. *Made the sea our path*, cf. Ps 77.19 (which follows the question in v. 7, "Will the Lord cast off for ever?"); Isa 43.16. **21–22:** *Great are the promises... unto them who are upon the isles of the sea*, Isaiah mentions "isles" or "islands" more than a dozen times in his prophecies. *More than this*, the Nephites thought of themselves as living on an island, and they believed that other groups of Israelites had been led away by God to other islands as well; see 1 Ne 19.10, 15–16; 21.1, 8; 22.3–4; 2 Ne 10.7–8; 29.7. Note also the mention of "isles" in Isa 51.5, which Jacob quoted at 2 Ne 8.5. **22:** *Broken off*, the description assumes a branch metaphor (see 9.53; 10.1), and the phrase appears nine times in the BoM (all in 1 Ne–Jacob); cf. Rom 11.16–24.

behold, the Lord God has led away from time to time from the house of Israel, according to his will and pleasure. And now behold, the Lord remembereth all them who have been broken off, wherefore he remembereth us also.

²³ “Therefore, cheer up your hearts, and remember that ye are free to act for yourselves—to choose the way of everlasting death or the way of eternal life. ²⁴ Wherefore, my beloved brethren, reconcile yourselves to the will of God, and not to the will of the devil and the flesh; and remember, after ye are reconciled unto God, that it is only in and through the grace of God that ye are saved. ²⁵ Wherefore, may God raise you from death by the power of the resurrection, and also from everlasting death by the power of the atonement, that ye may be received into the eternal kingdom of God, that ye may praise him through grace divine. Amen.”

Witnesses of Christ

[VIII] **11** ¹ And now, Jacob spake many more things to my people at that time; nevertheless only these things have I caused to be written, for the things which I have written sufficeth me. ² And now I, Nephi, write more of the words of Isaiah, for my soul delighteth in his words. For I will liken his words unto my people, and I will send them forth unto all my children, for he verily saw my Redeemer, even as I have seen him. ³ And my brother, Jacob, also has seen him as I have seen him; wherefore, I will send their words forth unto my children to prove unto them that my words are true. Wherefore, “by the words of three,” God hath said, “I will establish my word.”^a Nevertheless, God sendeth more witnesses, and he proveth all his words.

^a ³ Deut 19.15; Mt 18.16; 2 Cor 13.1

23–25: Jacob concludes by referencing the plan of salvation; see 9.53–54n. **23:** A synopsis of Lehi’s words at 2.26–29, which were an elaboration of Deut 30.19. Here, however, the expression is conflated with Jeremiah’s interpretation of the same Deut verse at Jer 21.8: “I set before you the way of life, and the way of death.” **24:** There is a difference between being *reconciled to the will of God* (accepting the contingencies of salvation history, even as they may apply negatively to one’s posterity), unique here, and being *reconciled unto God* (repenting of personal sins in accordance with the plan of salvation), which occurs three times in the NT and four times in the BoM. In the NT, God always reconciles humans to himself through Christ; the BoM, by contrast, invites people to reconcile themselves to God, by availing themselves of Christ’s atonement; cf. 33.9; Jacob 4.11. Nevertheless, even if salvation requires an element of human volition, the process is initiated and completed *through the grace of God*; see 25.23n. **25:** *Everlasting death*, here and in v. 23, can be contrasted with the temporary death that everyone will experience and then be rescued from by the Resurrection. Elsewhere the BoM uses the term “second death” to describe the post-resurrection, post-judgment separation from God that will never end (e.g., Alma 12.32: “a second death, which was an everlasting death”).

CHAPTER II

1: An admission of selective editing is a regular refrain in the BoM. **2:** *My soul delighteth in* [Isaiah’s] words, 25.5; see 4.15n. *Unto all my children*, at this point, Nephi thinks that he is writing the Small Plates primarily for his people or his descendants; cf. 1 Ne 19.18–19; 2 Ne 25.3. *Verily*, a common NT expression translating *amen*, the Hebrew word (transliterated into Greek) meaning “truly.” **3:** *My brother, Jacob, also has seen him*, see 6.9. With the quotation of Deut 19.15, Nephi adapts a judicial standard to proselytizing purposes and, as sometimes happens, the wording of the BoM version is closer to NT citations than to the OT original (see Mt 18.16; 2 Cor 13.1); for other examples, see the notes at 1 Ne 10.8; 22.18, 20; Mos 27.31; Alma 5.57; 7.12–13; Morm 3.15. *Prove* in the Bible generally means “to test”; only at Acts 24.13 and 25.7 does it mean “to establish truth by testimony or argument,” as here. The three witnesses in this instance are Isaiah, Nephi, and Jacob; it is curious that Lehi was not included among Nephi’s three witnesses.

⁴ Behold, my soul delighteth in proving unto my people the truth of the coming of Christ; for, for this end hath the law of Moses been given; and all things which have been given of God from the beginning of the world, unto man, are the typifying of him. ⁵ And also my soul delighteth in the covenants of the Lord which he hath made to our fathers; yea, my soul delighteth in his grace, and in his justice, and power, and mercy in the great and eternal plan of deliverance from death. ⁶ And my soul

delighteth in proving unto my people that save Christ should come all men must perish. ⁷ For if there be no Christ there be no God; and if there be no God we are not, for there could have been no creation. But there is a God, and he is Christ, and he cometh in the fulness of his own time.

⁸ And now I write some of the words of Isaiah, that whoso of my people shall see these words may lift up their hearts and rejoice for all men. Now these are the words, and ye may liken them unto you and unto all men.

2 NEPHI 12–24: ISAIAH IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

Contemporary scholars typically divide the book of Isaiah into three parts: First Isaiah (chs. 1–39), written by Isaiah ben Amoz, a Judean prophet living in the latter half of the eighth century BCE; Second Isaiah (chs. 40–55) written by an anonymous prophet during the Babylonian Exile in the sixth century BCE; and Third Isaiah (chs. 56–66), written during the Persian period when Jews rebuilt Jerusalem, in the late sixth–fifth centuries BCE. These Isaiah chapters in 2 Nephi are from First Isaiah, so the idea that they might have been included in the Brass Plates before 600 BCE is less problematic than the lengthy quotations from Second Isaiah (specifically, from chs. 48–54) that appear elsewhere in the BoM. Nevertheless, it is likely that even Isaiah 1–39 underwent considerable editing and revisions during the exilic period, so the fact that the BoM quotes them in standard Masoretic form, and indeed in the language of the KJV, indicates that the English Book of Mormon draws on versions of the Bible that postdate Lehi’s departure from Jerusalem. Latter-day Saints may regard this as a feature of the translation. In the earliest Book of Mormon manuscripts and editions, this lengthy excerpt from Isaiah was organized into three chapters, rather than the thirteen chapters that became standard for Bibles beginning in the thirteenth century.

^{4–7}: Nephi lists four additional things his *soul delights in*. ⁴: The various elements of the *law of Moses*—perhaps especially the sacrifices—are symbolic of Christ’s atonement. Since the Mosaic law is traditionally considered to have included 613 commandments, many of which are difficult to connect to the life and ministry of Jesus, Nephi’s statement is something of a hyperbole, as is his next assertion that everything God has ever given humankind is a metaphor for Christ. *Typify*, WB: “to represent by an image, form, model or resemblance.” Interpretation by typology has a long history in Christianity. Nephi will return to the subject of Christ and the Law at 25.24–27. ⁵: *Covenants . . . made to our fathers*, references to the covenant (singular) made with the fathers occur regularly in the Bible, but the plural is unique to the BoM, and limited to 1–2 Ne; see 1 Ne 17.40; 19.15; 22.6; 2 Ne 3.7. These covenants likely refer to those made with Abraham, Moses, and Lehi. ⁷: A quick counterfactual argument, which presupposes that Christ is God, and that God is our creator; cf. 2.13–14, which shares similar wording in a similar pattern of sorites. *He cometh in the fulness of his own time*, as taught by Lehi at 2.3, 26; cf. Gal 4.4. ⁸: The Isaiah chapters that follow consist primarily of specific warnings to nations and peoples in the 8th c. BCE, though Nephi believes they also contain admonitions and promises that are more universally applicable, such that enlightened readers may *rejoice for all men*. *Lift up their hearts*, variations on this phrase in the Bible and BoM are almost always negative, that is, hearts are lifted up in pride; one wonders whether “hearts” here may be a transcription error for “heads,” with Nephi echoing Jacob’s opening words: “I speak unto you these things that ye may rejoice, and lift up your heads forever” (9.3; cf. Mos 7.19; Alma 1.4; 8.15). *Liken them unto you*, a phrase repeated from Nephi’s earlier introduction to Isaiah quotations (1 Ne 19.24).

Nephi's Quotation of Isaiah 2–14: 2 Nephi 12–24

(with significant changes and additions to
the King James Bible in bold)

The Mountain of the Lord's House (Isaiah 2.1–4)

12 ¹ The word that Isaiah, the son of Amoz, saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem:

² And it shall come to pass in the last days,
when the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains,
and shall be exalted above the hills,
and all nations shall flow unto it.

³ And many people shall go and say,
“Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the house of the God of Jacob;
and he will teach us of his ways,
and we will walk in his paths.”
For out of Zion shall go forth the law,
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.
⁴ And he shall judge among the nations,
and shall rebuke many people:
and they shall beat their swords into plow-shares,
and their spears into pruning-hooks.
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more.

CHAPTERS 12–24

This is the longest quotation of the Bible in the BoM, and is here presented in language of the KJV, with only minor variations. From Nephi's perspective these chapters would have affirmed the reality and justice of God's judgments, and constituted an argument from fulfilled prophecy (since the predicted fall of Assyria, for instance, had already happened, the remainder of Isaiah's prophecies will similarly be fulfilled); see 25.3; WoM 1.4n; Alma 37.17n. As mentioned in his introduction (ch. 11), Nephi is particularly interested in what Isaiah has to say about God's covenants with Israel, the balance between divine justice and mercy (condemnation and comfort), and predictions of Christ—all of which are amply illustrated in the prophecies of Isa 2–14 concerning Judah, Jerusalem, and the great nations of the day. (Nephi primarily finds Christ in the Messianic promises of Isa 11, which he will quote again at 2 Ne 30, but since he identifies Jesus as “the Holy One of Israel” [1 Ne 19.13–14; 2 Ne 25.29], he may also regard the four instances of that title in the following chapters as references to Christ.) Note that from this point, 2 Ne will adopt the model of Jacob's discourse in chs. 6–10: quoted chapters from Isaiah (2 Ne 7–8; 12–24), followed by prophetic interpretations (2 Ne 9–10; 25–30), that toward the end include direct words from the Lord (2 Ne 10.7–19; 28.30–29.14); cf. the pattern of 1 Ne 20–22. Both Nephi and Jacob believe that Isaiah's writings had application not only to the 8th–6th c. BCE but also to the last days, and perhaps to Jesus's coming among the Nephites as well; see 6.4n; 26.1–11.

CHAPTER 12

1–4: Someday, all nations will make a pilgrimage to the Lord's temple in Jerusalem, looking for guidance and instruction. Disputes between nations will be settled by God's judgment rather than through warfare. LDS commentators have sometimes seen two religious capitals in v. 3, Zion and Jerusalem, but the poetic parallelism makes it more likely that a single city is referred to twice. Note that vv. 2–4 are nearly identical to Mic 4.1–3. **1:** The odd formulation that Isaiah *saw* God's word visually (also at Mic 1.1) may be applicable to the BoM and its dictation; see 1 Ne 1.11n; 2 Ne 27.21–22n. **2:** The substitution of *when* for “that” (italicized in the KJV) makes the phrase a temporal marker, thus emphasizing the coming of diverse peoples rather than the prestige of the Temple. **3:** *Mountain of the Lord*, Jerusalem, or the Temple Mount. *House of the God of Jacob*, the Temple. *The law*, Hebrew *torah*, “teaching, instruction.”

The Day of the Lord (Isaiah 2.5–22)

⁵ O house of Jacob, come ye
and let us walk in the light of the
Lord;
**yea, come, for ye have all gone astray,
every one to his wicked ways.**

⁶ Therefore, **O Lord**, thou hast
forsaken thy people,
the house of Jacob,
because they be replenished from the
east,
and **hearken unto** soothsayers like
the Philistines,
and they please themselves in the
children of strangers.

⁷ Their land also is full of silver and gold,
neither is there any end of their
treasures;
their land is also full of horses,
neither is there any end of their
chariots.

⁸ Their land is also full of idols;
they worship the work of their own
hands,
that which their own fingers have
made.

⁹ And the mean man boweth **not**
down,^a
and the great man humbleth
himself **not**,
therefore, forgive **him** not.

¹⁰ **O ye wicked ones**, enter into the rock,
and hide thee in the dust,
for **the** fear of the Lord
and the glory of his majesty **shall
smite thee.**

¹¹ **And it shall come to pass that**
the lofty looks of man shall be
humbled,
and the haughtiness of men shall be
bowed down,
and the Lord alone shall be exalted in
that day.

¹² For the day of the Lord of Hosts
soon cometh upon all nations,
yea, upon every one;
yea, upon the proud and lofty,
and upon every one **who** is lifted up,
and he shall be brought low.

¹³ **Yea**, and **the day of the Lord shall
come** upon all the cedars of
Lebanon,
for they are high and lifted up;
and upon all the oaks of Bashan;
¹⁴ and upon all the high mountains,
and upon all the hills,
**and upon all the nations which are
lifted up,**

^a 9 P *boweth down*; 1837 boweth not down

5–22: The invitation to the nations begins with the *house of Jacob*, or Israel, who have been led astray by foreigners, materialism, militarism, and idolatry. **5:** The BoM addition is derived from Isa 53.6: “all we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.” **6:** *Replenished from the east*, full [of diviners] from the east, that is, from the Arameans. *Please themselves in*, clasp hands with. **9:** There is some confusion in the textual history of this BoM verse, which originally meant that those who bowed down and humbled themselves before idols should not be forgiven. *The mean man . . . the great man*, both commoners and elites are similarly indicted, though the contrasting adjectives were added by the King James translators. **10:** Isaiah continues to address the wayward, with the BoM clarifying that the warning is directed toward *wicked ones*, who will eventually be smitten. *Shall smite thee*, the BoM makes the threat explicit as it adds the phrase three times in this chapter; see vv. 19, 21. **12:** *The day of the Lord* is the time when God will humble the proud along with everything that is high and lifted up, including cedars, oaks, mountains, nations, towers, fortified walls, and ships. In that day, only the Lord will remain in a lofty position. *Soon cometh upon all nations* adds urgency and politics as it substitutes for “shall be upon every one.” **13:** *Bashan*, an area east of the Sea of Galilee. **14:** The BoM version universalizes Isaiah’s message by adding references to *all the nations* and *every people*.

- and upon every people;**
¹⁵ and upon every high tower,
 and upon every fenced wall;
¹⁶ **and upon all the ships of the sea,**
 and upon all the ships of Tarshish,
 and upon all pleasant pictures.
¹⁷ And the loftiness of man shall be
 bowed down,
 and the haughtiness of men shall be
 made low;
 and the Lord alone shall be exalted
 in that day.
¹⁸ And the idols he shall utterly abolish.
- ¹⁹ And they shall go into the holes of
 the rocks,
 and into the caves of the earth,
 for **the fear of the Lord shall come**
upon them
 and the glory of his majesty **shall**
smite them,
 when he ariseth to shake terribly
 the earth.
- ²⁰ In that day a man shall cast his idols
 of silver,
 and his idols of gold,
 which **he hath** made for himself to
 worship,
 to the moles and to the bats;
²¹ to go into the clefts of the rocks,

- and into the tops of the ragged rocks,
 for **the fear of the Lord shall come**
upon them
 and the **majesty of his glory^a shall**
smite them,
 when he ariseth to shake terribly
 the earth.
²² Cease ye from man, whose breath is
 in his nostrils;
 for wherein is he to be accounted of?

Judgment against Judah's Leaders (Isaiah 3.1–15)

- 13** ¹ For behold, the Lord, the Lord of
 Hosts,
 doth take away from Jerusalem, and
 from Judah,
 the stay and the staff,
 the whole **staff** of bread,
 and the whole stay of water—
² the mighty man, and the man of war,
 the judge, and the prophet,
 and the prudent, and the ancient;
³ the captain of fifty, and the honorable
 man,
 and the counselor, and the cunning
 artificer,

^a ²¹ Isa 2.21 reads “the glory of his majesty”

16: *And upon all the ships of the sea*, although not in the MT, this line does appear in the Septuagint (LXX), where it replaces *and upon all the ships of Tarshish* as either an accidental or an interpretive variant. It is unclear why the BoM would have both versions. *Pleasant pictures*, perhaps “stately vessels.” *Tarshish*, either in Turkey (the city later known as Tarsus) or in southern Spain. **19–22:** Idolaters will be particularly fearful on the day when the glory of the Lord’s majesty is manifest, and they will attempt to hide themselves and dispose of their idols as quickly as possible. **19:** *When he ariseth to shake terribly the earth*, the Lord’s coming will be heralded by an earthquake (also v. 21). **21:** *Majesty of his glory* may be a BoM scribal error for “glory of his majesty,” as in vv. 10, 19, and at Isa 2.21. The additions *shall come upon them* and *shall smite them* are repeated from v. 19. **22:** This injunction, addressed to plural recipients, seems to have been a late addition (it does not appear in the LXX), and counsels listeners to not put their trust in mere mortals.

CHAPTER 13

1–5: Judah’s leaders, here compared to the necessities of food and water, will be taken away and replaced by the young and inexperienced, resulting in a social order that is turned upside down. **1:** *Stay*, support. *Staff of bread*, substitutes for the KJV “stay of bread” and inserts a chiasm into the lines. “Staff of bread” occurs four times in the OT, and refers to the food people need to remain upright. **2:** *Prudent . . . ancient*, diviner and elder. **3:** *Cunning artificer*, skilled craftsman.

and the eloquent orator.
⁴ “And I will give children **unto them**
to be their princes,
and babes shall rule over them.”
⁵ And the people shall be oppressed,
every one by another,
and every one by his neighbor;
the child shall behave himself proudly
against the ancient,
and the base against the honorable.
⁶ When a man shall take hold of his
brother of the house of his
father,
and shall say, “Thou hast clothing,
be thou our ruler,
and let **not** this ruin **come** under
thy hand.”
⁷ In that day shall he swear, saying,
“I will not be a healer;
for in my house **there** is neither
bread nor clothing;
make me not a ruler of the people.”
⁸ For Jerusalem is ruined,
and Judah is fallen,
because their **tongues** and their doings
have been against the Lord,
to provoke the eyes of his glory.
⁹ The show of their countenance doth
witness against them,
and **doth** declare their sin **to be**
even as Sodom,

and they cannot hide it.
Wo unto their **souls**,
for they have rewarded evil unto
themselves!
¹⁰ Say **unto** the righteous that it **is** well
with **them**;
for they shall eat the fruit of their
doings.
¹¹ Wo unto the wicked, **for they shall**
perish;
for the reward of **their** hands shall
be **upon them!**
¹² **And** my people, children are their
oppressors,
and women rule over them.
O my people, they who lead thee cause
thee to err
and destroy the way of thy paths.
¹³ The Lord standeth up to plead,
and standeth to judge the
people.
¹⁴ The Lord will enter into judgment
with the ancients of his people and
the princes thereof:
“For ye have eaten up the vineyard
and the spoil of the poor in your
houses.
¹⁵ What mean ye? Ye beat my people
to pieces,
and grind the faces of the
poor;”
saith the Lord God of Hosts.

6–7: In a time of devastation and scarcity, no one will want to lead and family ties will be strained. The BoM inserts a *not*, suggesting that the coming ruin may be avoidable, but in either reading, the speaker is asking for protection. **9**: *The show of their countenances*, the look on their faces. *Sin to be even as Sodom*, in Gen 19 the sin of Sodom was inhospitality and rape; at Jer 23.14 it was adultery and lying; according to Ezek 16.49 their sin was injustice to the poor and needy. The main point here seems to be that the people are responsible for their own destruction, on account of their sins. In changing “they hide it not” to *they cannot hide it*, the BoM emphasizes enormity of their wickedness rather than their brazenness. **11**: *For they shall perish* is more direct than the original “it shall be ill with him” and echoes the thrice repeated “they shall perish” in Jacob’s list of woes at 9.27–38; cf. 23.22n. **13–15**: In imagery drawn from a courtroom, leaders who exploit the poor are condemned. *Plead*, argue his case.

Judgment against the Daughters of Zion (Isaiah 3.16–4.1)

¹⁶ Moreover, the Lord saith:
Because the daughters of Zion are
haughty,
and walk with stretched-forth
necks and wanton eyes,
walking and mincing as they go,
and making a tinkling with their
feet—
¹⁷ Therefore the Lord will smite with
a scab
the crown of the head of the
daughters of Zion,
and the Lord will discover their
secret parts.

¹⁸ In that day the Lord will take away the
bravery of their tinkling ornaments,⁴ and caul,
and round tires like the moon;¹⁹ the chains
and the bracelets, and the mufflers;²⁰ the bon-
nets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the
headbands, and the tablets, and the ear-rings;
²¹ the rings, and nose jewels;²² the changeable
suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wim-
ples, and the crisping-pins;²³ the glasses, and
the fine linen, and hoods, and the veils.

²⁴ And it shall come to pass,
instead of sweet smell there shall be stink;

and instead of a girdle, a rent;
and instead of well set hair, baldness;
and instead of a stomacher, a
girding of sackcloth;
burning instead of beauty.
²⁵ Thy men shall fall by the sword
and thy mighty in the war.
²⁶ And her gates shall lament and
mourn;
and she **shall** be desolate,
and shall sit upon the ground.

14 ¹And in that day, seven women shall
take hold of one man, saying,
“We will eat our own bread,
and wear our own apparel;
only let us be called by thy name
to take away our reproach.”

Jerusalem to Be Renewed (Isaiah 4.2–6)

² In that day shall the branch of the Lord be
beautiful and glorious; the fruit of the earth
excellent and comely to them that are escaped
of Israel. ³ And it shall come to pass, **they** that
are left in Zion and remain in Jerusalem shall
be called holy, every one that is written among
the living in Jerusalem— ⁴ when the Lord shall
have washed away the filth of the daughters

⁴ 18 Nephi, here omits “about their feet” from
Isa 3.18.

13.16–14.1: Pridelul, stylish women are also indicted. In the coming military invasion, luxuries will be swept away. **17:** *Discover their secret parts*, probably, uncover their heads. **18–23:** The KJV vocabulary for items of women’s clothing and accessories only loosely represents the Hebrew terms. Modern translations speak of bangles, anklets, bracelets, sashes, scarfs, perfume boxes, handbags, amulets, turbans, etc. **18:** *Bravery*, splendor; finery. **24:** *Instead of a girdle, a rent*, instead of a sash, a rope. *Stomacher*, robe. *Burning*, shame. **26–14.1:** The city of Jerusalem is compared to a bereaved, conquered woman in the aftermath of war. So many men will die that they will be far outnumbered by women, who will be willing to accept demeaning marriage arrangements, as concubines, in return for respectability and children. *Reproach* may imply childlessness.

CHAPTER 14

2–6: An optimistic oracle that complements 12.2–4. After the purging and destruction, those in the renewed Jerusalem will be cleansed and once again enjoy the presence of the Lord, as manifest in a *cloud by day* and *fire by night* reminiscent of the Exodus (see Ex 13.21–22; 40.34–38), and perhaps referring to the smoke and fire of sacrifices on the temple altar as well. The city will offer protection from turmoil, represented here by harsh weather. **2:** *The branch of the Lord*, probably a righteous remnant, or perhaps the Messiah; compare Nephi’s use of the image at 1 Ne 15.12 and 19.24; Lehi’s at 2 Ne 3.5; and Jacob’s at 2 Ne 9.53 and 10.1.

of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning.⁵ And the Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for upon all the glory of Zion shall be a defence.⁶ And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and a covert from storm and from rain.

The Song of the Vineyard (Isaiah 5.1–7)

15¹ And then^a will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved, touching his vineyard:

“My well-beloved hath a vineyard
in a very fruitful hill.

² And he fenced it,
and gathered out the stones thereof,
and planted it with the choicest vine,
and built a tower in the midst of it,
and also made a wine-press therein.
And he looked that it should bring
forth grapes,
and it brought forth wild grapes.

³ And now, O inhabitants of
Jerusalem, and men of Judah,

judge, I pray you, betwixt me and
my vineyard.

⁴ What could have been done more to
my vineyard
that I have not done in it?

Wherefore, when I looked that it
should bring forth grapes
it brought forth wild grapes.

⁵ And now go to; I will tell you what I
will do to my vineyard:

I will take away the hedge thereof,
and it shall be eaten up;
and **I will** break down the wall
thereof,
and it shall be trodden down;

⁶ and I will lay it waste;
it shall not be pruned nor digged;
but there shall come up briars and
thorns.

I will also command the clouds that
they rain no rain upon it.”

⁷ For the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts
is the house of Israel,
and the men of Judah his pleasant
plant;
and he looked for judgment—**and**
behold, oppression;
for righteousness—but behold,
a cry.

^a 1 Isa 5.1 reads “Now”

6: *Tabernacle*, a pavilion or canopy. *Covert*, a shelter.

CHAPTER 15

1–7: This metaphor may be related to the extended allegory at Jacob 5 of an olive tree in a vineyard; for instance, compare the wild fruit and servant’s lament at vv. 3–4 below with Jacob 5.41, 45, 47, 49. Isaiah’s friend (his “well-beloved”) is the Lord, who is the owner of a vineyard, which represents the house of Israel (v. 7). After a disappointing harvest, the Lord allows the vineyard to be ruined. **1:** The replacement of “now” by *and then* more clearly connects the song of the vineyard with events of “that day” (14.1), perhaps a reference to the last days. **2:** *Wild*, that is, sour. **3:** Again drawing on courtroom imagery, the owner asks the people of Israel to acknowledge his blamelessness before they realize that the vineyard represents them, and they are actually passing judgment on themselves. **4:** What was originally a question in the second sentence of this verse has been changed to a declarative statement. **7:** The conclusion features two pairs of puns; the Hebrew for “judgment” sounds like “oppression” (*mishpat... mispah*), and “righteousness” sounds like “a cry” (*tsedaqah... tse’aqah*).

Woes and Judgments (Isaiah 5.8–25)

- ⁸ Wo unto them that join house to house,^a
till there **can** be no place,
that they may be placed alone in the
midst of the earth!
- ⁹ “In mine ears,” said the Lord of
Hosts,
“of a truth many houses shall be
desolate,
and great and fair **cities** without
inhabitant.
- ¹⁰ Yea, ten acres of vineyard shall yield
one bath,^b
and the seed of a homer^c shall yield
an ephah.”^d
- ¹¹ Wo unto them that rise up early in
the morning,
that they may follow strong drink,
that continue until night,
and wine inflame them!
- ¹² And the harp, and the viol,
the tabret, and pipe, and wine are in
their feasts;
but they regard not the work of the
Lord,
neither consider the operation of
his hands.
- ¹³ Therefore, my people are gone into
captivity,
because they have no knowledge;
and their honorable men are famished,
and their multitude dried up with
thirst.
- ¹⁴ Therefore, hell hath enlarged herself,

- and opened her mouth without
measure;
and their glory, and their multitude,
and their pomp,
and he that rejoiceth, shall descend
into it.
- ¹⁵ And the mean man shall be brought
down,
and the mighty man shall be
humbled,
and the eyes of the lofty shall be
humbled.
- ¹⁶ But the Lord of Hosts shall be
exalted in judgment,
and God that is holy shall be
sanctified in righteousness.
- ¹⁷ Then shall the lambs feed after their
manner,
and the waste places of the fat ones
shall strangers eat.
- ¹⁸ Wo unto them that draw iniquity
with cords of vanity,
and sin as it were with a cart rope;
¹⁹ that say, “Let him make speed,
hasten his work,
that we may see it;
and let the counsel of the Holy One of
Israel draw nigh and come,
that we may know it.”

^a 8 Nephi₁ here omits “that lay field to field”
from Isa 5.8.

^b ¹⁰ About 6 gallons (22 liters)

^c ¹⁰ About 360 pounds (160 kilograms)

^d ¹⁰ About 36 pounds (16 kilograms)

8–25: 2 Ne 9.27–38 and 28.24–32 also feature lists of woes. **8–10:** Isaiah condemns the wealthy who seize the land of their neighbors, prophesying meager harvests as a consequence. **11–15:** The prophet continues by chastising drunkenness and indulgence, with nobility and commoners alike suffering as a result. **14:** *Hell*, death, or, perhaps metaphorically, exile. **16–17:** The Lord will remain in power, as animals take over the ruined land. *Fat ones*, the rich. *Strangers* may be an ancient scribal error for “goats.” **18–19:** A warning to those who doubt that the Lord will ever bring justice, while they themselves work to promote iniquity and sin.

²⁰ Wo unto them that call evil good,
and good evil,
that put darkness for light, and light
for darkness,
that put bitter for sweet, and sweet
for bitter!

²¹ Wo unto **the** wise in their own
eyes
and prudent in their own sight!

²² Wo unto **the** mighty to drink wine,
and men of strength to mingle
strong drink;

²³ who justify the wicked for reward,
and take away the righteousness of
the righteous from him!

²⁴ Therefore, as the fire devoureth the
stubble,
and the flame consumeth the
chaff,

their root shall be rottenness,
and their **blossoms** shall go up
as dust;

because they have cast away the law of
the Lord of Hosts,
and despised the word of the Holy
One of Israel.

²⁵ Therefore, is the anger of the Lord
kindled against his people,
and he hath stretched forth his
hand against them,

and hath smitten them; and the hills
did tremble,
and their carcasses were torn in the
midst of the streets.

For all this his anger is not turned
away,
but his hand is stretched out still.

The Coming Invasion (Isaiah 5.26–30)

²⁶ And he will lift up an ensign to the
nations from far,
and will hiss unto them from the
end of the earth;
and behold, they shall come with
speed swiftly.

^aNone shall be weary nor stumble
among them,

²⁷ none shall slumber nor sleep;
neither shall the girdle of their loins be
loosed,
nor the latchet of their shoes be
broken;

²⁸ whose arrows **shall be** sharp,
and all their bows bent,
and their horses' hoofs shall be
counted like flint,
and their wheels like a whirlwind.

^bTheir roaring like a lion,

²⁹ they shall roar like young lions;
yea, they shall roar,
and lay hold of the prey,
and shall carry away safe,
and none shall deliver.

^a ²⁶ Verse ²⁷ should probably begin here, to match the versification in the Bible.

^b ²⁸ Verse ²⁹ should probably begin here, to match the versification in the Bible.

20–23: More warnings for the morally obtuse, the arrogant, drunkards, and bribe-takers. **24–25:** Returning to the agricultural imagery of the vineyard, destruction will overtake them. *His hand is stretched out still*, a threatening gesture suggesting more blows to come; repeated at 19.12, 17, 21; 20.4. Verse 25 may have originally belonged with Isa 9.8–10.4 (2 Ne 19.8–20.4), where the same closing couplet appears four more times. **26–30:** God will send the signal to an invading army, and nothing will stop, or even slow down, their coming. In Isaiah's original writing, this probably referred to the Assyrian army, which invaded and conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 BCE. Many scholars believe these verses have been displaced from the end of Isa 9, where they would fit better. **26:** *Hiss*, whistle (as a summoning signal). **28:** The BoM substitutes *shall be* for "are," which keeps the entire passage in the future tense.

³⁰ And in that day they shall roar
 against them
 like the roaring of the sea;
 and if **they** look unto the land,
 behold, darkness and sorrow,
 and the light is darkened in the
 heavens thereof.

Isaiah's Commission (Isaiah 6.1–13)

[IX] **16** ¹ In the year that king Uzziah died,⁴ I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. ² Above it stood the seraphim; each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. ³ And one cried unto another, and said:

“Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts;
 the whole earth is full of his glory.”

⁴ And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

⁵ Then said I, “Wo is **unto** me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips; and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.”

⁶ Then flew one of the **seraphim** unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar; ⁷ and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, “Lo, this has touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.”

⁸ Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?”

Then **I said**, “Here am I; send me.”

⁹ And he said:

“Go and tell this people:

‘Hear ye indeed;’ but **they understood**
 not;

and ‘see ye indeed;’ but **they**
perceived not.

¹⁰ Make the heart of this people fat,
 and make their ears heavy,
 and shut their eyes—

lest they see with their eyes,
 and hear with their ears,
 and understand with their heart,
 and **be converted** and be healed.”

¹¹ Then said I, “Lord, how long?”

And he **said**:

“Until the cities be wasted without
 inhabitant,

⁴ 1 Either 742 or 733 BCE

CHAPTER 16

1–13: The account of Isaiah's first vision and call to be a prophet is similar to those of Jeremiah (ch. 1), Ezekiel (chs. 1–3), and Lehi (1 Ne 1). The fact that this incident appears in the sixth chapter of Isaiah may be evidence for how the book was rearranged through the centuries. **1:** *Train*, the hem of a robe. **2:** *Seraphim*, winged, fiery celestial beings (*saraph* means “burn” in Hebrew) who serve as God's attendants. *Twain*, two. **4–7:** *Smoke* was indicative of God's presence at Sinai and in the wilderness tabernacle; here perhaps emanating from the temple altar and incense. Isaiah recognizes his unworthiness to be in the presence of the Lord, and is cleansed by a symbolic gesture from a seraph. **8:** Isaiah's readiness to serve can be compared with the hesitancy of Moses (Ex 3.11; 4.10) and Jeremiah (1.6). **9–10:** This command has long puzzled readers, since God seems to be telling Isaiah to prophesy in such a way that the people will not understand. The BoM changes the Hebrew second-person plural verbs “understand” and “perceive” to the third person, and thus makes the people themselves culpable for their ignorance, rather than God or Isaiah. A similar revision of Isa 6.9 occurs in Jesus's paraphrase at Lk 8.10. *Make the heart of this people fat*, dull their minds. **11:** When the prophet questions how long such ineffective preaching should continue, the answer is essentially “until there is no one left to hear.” At 3 Ne 9.13, however, the resurrected Jesus proclaims that the time for the people to be *converted* and *healed* has arrived.

and the houses without man,
 and the land be utterly desolate,
¹² and the Lord have removed men
 far away,
 for there shall be a great forsaking
 in the midst of the land.
¹³ But yet there shall be a tenth,
 and they shall return, and shall
 be eaten,
 as a teil tree, and as an oak
 whose substance is in them when
 they cast their leaves;
 so the holy seed shall be the
 substance thereof.”

Isaiah, Reassures King Ahaz (Isaiah 7.1–9)

17 ¹ And it came to pass in the days of
 Ahaz^a the son of Jotham, the son of
 Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin,^b king of
 Syria, and Pekah^c the son of Remaliah, king
 of Israel, went up toward Jerusalem to war
 against it, but could not prevail against it.
² And it was told the house of David, saying,
 “Syria is confederate with Ephraim.” And his
 heart was moved, and the heart of his people,
 as the trees of the wood are moved with the
 wind.

³ Then said the Lord unto Isaiah, “Go forth
 now to meet Ahaz, thou and Shearjashub^d thy
 son, at the end of the conduit of the upper
 pool in the highway of the fuller’s field; ⁴ and
 say unto him: “Take heed, and be quiet; fear
 not, neither be faint-hearted for the two tails
 of these smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger
 of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah.
⁵ Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of
 Remaliah, have taken evil counsel against
 thee, saying, ⁶ “Let us go up against Judah and
 vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us,
 and set a king in the midst of it, yea, the son
 of Tabeal.”

⁷ Thus saith the Lord God:
 It shall not stand,
 neither shall it come to pass.
⁸ For the head of Syria is Damascus,
 and the head of Damascus, Rezin;
 and within threescore and five years
 shall Ephraim be broken that it be
 not a people.
⁹ And the head of Ephraim is Samaria,

^a ¹ King Ahaz of Judah (743–727 BCE or 735–715 BCE)

^b ¹ King Rezin of Syria (750–732 BCE)

^c ¹ King Pekah of Israel (735–732 BCE)

^d ³ Hebrew *a remnant will return*

12–13: *Removed far away* refers to deportations and exile. The devastation will be so thorough that even if a tenth of the people remain (probably Judah, in contrast to the ten tribes), they too will be ruined (*eaten*) like a tree reduced to a stump, though in this case the stump will still be able to put forth new shoots (*seed*) and eventually be restored. *A great forsaking*, a great emptiness or desolation. *Teil tree*, terebinth tree. *Substance*, stump. *When they cast their leaves*, when they are cut down.

CHAPTER 17

1–2: An incident from the Syro-Ephraimite War of 735–732 BCE, when the kings of Syria and Israel attempted to force the king of Judah into an alliance against the much larger empire of Assyria. Kings Rezin and Pekah, referred to as *Syria* and *Ephraim*, form an alliance (*confederate*) to attack Judah, and although their initial invasion was unsuccessful, King Ahaz and his people were frightened. **3–9:** God commands Isaiah to find Ahaz and tell him not to fear Rezin and Pekah, even though they have plotted to overthrow and replace him. **3:** *Fuller*, someone who processes wool. **4:** *Tails of these smoking firebrands*, burnt-out torches. **8:** The prophesied destruction of Ephraim (the Northern Kingdom of Israel) at the hands of the Assyrians took place within two decades, well short of the sixty-five years mentioned here. **9:** The NRSV translates the last sentence as “If you do not stand firm in faith, you shall not stand at all,” which reflects the wordplay in Hebrew.

and the head of Samaria is
Remaliah's son.
If ye will not believe
surely ye shall not be established.”

The Sign of Immanuel (Isaiah 7.10–17)

¹⁰ Moreover, the Lord spake again unto Ahaz, saying, ¹¹ “Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God; ask it either in the **depths**, or in the **heights** above.”

¹² But Ahaz said: “I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord.”

¹³ And he said, “Hear ye now, O house of David; is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also? ¹⁴ Therefore, the Lord himself shall give you a sign—Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and **shall** bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.^a ¹⁵ Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil and **to** choose the good. ¹⁶ For before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings. ¹⁷ The Lord shall bring upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon thy father's house, days that have not come from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah, the king^b of Assyria.”

Devastation at the Hands of Assyria (Isaiah 7.18–25)

¹⁸ And it shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall hiss for the fly that is in the

uttermost part^c of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria. ¹⁹ And they shall come, and shall rest all of them in the desolate valleys, and in the holes of the rocks, and upon all thorns, and upon all bushes.

²⁰ In the same day shall the Lord shave with a razor that is hired—by them beyond the river, by the king of Assyria—the head, and the hair of the feet; and it shall also consume the beard.

²¹ And it shall come to pass in that day, a man shall nourish a young cow and two sheep; ²² and it shall come to pass, for the abundance of milk they shall give he shall eat butter; for butter and honey shall every one eat that is left in the land.

²³ And it shall come to pass in that day, every place shall be, where there were a thousand vines at a thousand silverlings,^d **which** shall be for briers and thorns. ²⁴ With arrows and with bows shall men come thither, because all the land shall become briers and thorns. ²⁵ And all hills that shall be digged with the mattock, there shall not come thither the fear of briers and thorns; but it shall be for the

^a ¹⁴ Hebrew *God is with us*

^b ¹⁷ Isa 7.17 reads “from Judah, even the king”

^c ¹⁸ Nephi, here omits “of the rivers” from Isa 7.18.

^d ²³ About 25 pounds (12 kilograms) of silver

10–17: When the Lord invites Ahaz to ask for some physical confirmation of the prophecy, he hesitates, and consequently God himself provides a sign: a young woman will become pregnant with a son, and before he is old enough to know right from wrong—a time span of perhaps eight or nine years—both Rezin and Pekah will no longer be kings. Christian readers later saw in this passage a prophecy of the birth of Jesus. **14:** *A virgin*, the Hebrew means “a young woman” who may or may not be married, though the LXX used the Greek word for “virgin,” a reading that was adopted by Matthew at Mt 1.23. In his interpretations of these Isaiah chapters, Nephi does not seem to connect this verse with the birth of Christ; nevertheless, the BoM affirms the virgin birth at 1 Ne 11.14–20 and Alma 7.10. The young woman referred to here may be Isaiah's wife, or the wife of King Ahaz. **15:** *That he may know*, that is, “by the time he knows.” **18:** *Hiss*, whistle (as a signal to attack, as at 15.26). *Uttermost part of Egypt*, the delta region, as the omitted phrase makes clear. *Fly* is a metaphor for Egyptian troops; *bee* is a metaphor for Assyrian troops. **19:** *Holes*, clefts. **20:** Shaving of body hair was a mark of subjugation for prisoners. *Feet*, a euphemism for genitals. **21–25:** The desolation of war will be so great that the land will revert to its natural state, suitable for hunting and grazing. The people who remain will be so few that they can eat *butter* and *honey*. **23:** *Silverlings*, shekels of silver. **25:** *Mattock*, hoe.

sending forth of oxen, and the treading of lesser cattle.

Isaiah's Son as a Sign of the Coming Assyrian Invasion (Isaiah 8.1–18)

18¹ Moreover, **the word of** the Lord said unto me, “Take thee a great roll, and write in it with a man’s pen, concerning Maher-shalal-hash-baz.”^a ² And I took unto me faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah. ³ And I went unto the prophetess; and she conceived and bare a son. Then said the Lord to me, “Call his name, Maher-shalal-hash-baz. ⁴ For **behold**, the child shall **not** have knowledge to cry, ‘my father,’ and ‘my mother,’ **before** the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria.”

⁵ The Lord spake also unto me again, saying:

⁶ “Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin

and Remaliah’s son;

⁷ now therefore, behold,

the Lord bringeth up upon them

the waters of the river, strong and many,

even the king of Assyria and all his glory;

and he shall come up over all his channels,

and go over all his banks.

⁸ And he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel.”

⁹ Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces; and give ear all ye of far countries; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces.

¹⁰ Take counsel together, and it shall come to naught; speak the word, and it shall not stand; for God is with us.^b

¹¹ For the Lord spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying:

^a ¹ Hebrew *quick to the plunder, swift to the spoil*

^b ¹⁰ Hebrew *Immanuel*; cf. 2 Ne 17.14; 18.8

CHAPTER 18

1–18: The narrative shifts to a first-person account of events surrounding the Assyrian invasion of 732 BCE. Against Isaiah’s advice, King Ahaz of Judah had asked Assyria for help against the alliance of Syria and Israel, and the Assyrians then conquered much of those two countries. Three decades later, however, in the time of Ahaz’s son Hezekiah, the Assyrians similarly invade Judah, in 701 BCE. **1:** *The word of the Lord said unto me*, the additional words make this a unique expression; OT convention would have been “the word of the Lord came unto me, saying...” (46 times, nearly all in Jer and Ezek). **3:** *Prophetess*, Isaiah’s wife. *Call his name*, this is the third oracular name given to a child in this section of Isaiah; see 17.3, 14. **4:** The meaning is that Assyria will destroy Syria and Israel within a year or two, when the baby begins to speak. **6–8:** Because the Judahites refused to put their trust in the Lord, symbolized by the *waters of Shiloah*, a spring-fed stream that brought water to Jerusalem, they will face the devastating torrent of the Assyrians. *The river*, the Euphrates. *Even to the neck*, meaning that the head of Judah (Jerusalem), will be spared. **9–15:** The Lord is more reliable than any political or military alliance, all of which will end in disaster. **9:** *Gird yourselves*, prepare for battle. The repeated line conveys a tone of taunting.

¹² “Say ye not, ‘A confederacy,’
to all to whom this people shall say,
‘A confederacy’;
neither fear ye their fear,
nor be afraid.

¹³ Sanctify the Lord of Hosts
himself,
and let him be your fear,
and let him be your dread.

¹⁴ And he shall be for a sanctuary;
but for a stone of stumbling,
and for a rock of offense to both the
houses of Israel,
for a gin and a snare to the
inhabitants of Jerusalem.

¹⁵ And many among them shall
stumble and fall,
and be broken, and be snared, and
be taken.”

¹⁶ Bind up the testimony,
seal the law among my disciples.

¹⁷ And I will wait upon the Lord,
that hideth his face from the house
of Jacob,
and I will look for him.

¹⁸ Behold, I and the children whom the
Lord hath given me are for signs and for won-
ders in Israel from the Lord of Hosts, which
dwelleth in Mount Zion.

From Darkness to the Light of the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 8.19–9.7)

¹⁹ And when they shall say unto you, “Seek
unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto
wizards that peep and mutter”—should not a
people seek unto their God for the living to
hear from the dead? ²⁰ To the law and to the
testimony; **and** if they speak not according to
this word, it is because there is no light in
them. ²¹ And they shall pass through it hardly
bestead and hungry; and it shall come to pass
that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret
themselves, and curse their king and their
God, and look upward. ²² And they shall look
unto the earth and behold trouble, and dark-
ness, dimness of anguish, and shall be driven
to darkness.

19 ¹ Nevertheless, the dimness shall not
be such as was in her vexation, when
at first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun,
and the land of Naphtali, and afterwards did
more grievously afflict by the way of the **Red**
Sea beyond Jordan in Galilee of the nations.

² The people that walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
they that dwell in the land of the
shadow of death,
upon them hath the light shined.

³ Thou hast multiplied the nation,

14: *Gin*, a trap. *Stone of stumbling*, this imagery will be picked up at Jacob 4.15. **16–18:** Isaiah’s prophecies, including the names he has given his children, will someday be vindicated, even if for the moment it appears that God is absent, *hiding his face* (the image occurs regularly in the OT; e.g., Deut 31.17–18; Pss 44.24; 88.14). **16:** *Bind up* and *seal*, poorly received by the people of his day, Isaiah wants to preserve his words for later generations. The idea that prophets write for future readers when they are rejected by their contemporaries would have been resonant for Nephi. *The law*, the teaching or instruction. **19–22:** Consulting with necromancers will only lead to darkness. *Hardly bestead*, greatly distressed. *Fret themselves*, become angry.

CHAPTER 19

1: The territories of *Zebulun* and *Naphtali*, both part of Israel, were taken over by the Assyrians in 732 BCE. The sea referred to here is the Sea of Galilee rather than the Red Sea; since *Red* appears in the earliest extant manuscript (P), the error may have been made by JS, OC, or, from a believer’s point of view, by Nephi. **3:** The “not” that was omitted from the KJV is problematic in the original Hebrew, and modern translations tend to render the phrase as “you have increased its joy” (NRSV).

and increased the joy^a—
 they joy before thee according to the
 joy in harvest,
 and as men rejoice when they divide
 the spoil.

⁴ For thou hast broken the yoke of his
 burden,
 and the staff of his shoulder,
 the rod of his oppressor.^b

⁵ For every battle of the warrior is with
 confused noise,
 and garments rolled in blood;
 but this shall be with burning
 and fuel of fire.

⁶ For unto us a child is born,
 unto us a son is given;
 and the government shall be upon
 his shoulder;
 and his name shall be called:
 Wonderful, Counselor,^c The
 Mighty God,
 The Everlasting Father, The Prince
 of Peace.

⁷ Of the increase of government and peace
 there **is** no end,
 upon the throne of David,
 and upon his kingdom to order it,
 and to establish it with judgment
 and with justice from henceforth,
 even forever.

The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will
 perform this.

The Anger of the Lord (Isaiah 9.8–10.4)

⁸ The Lord sent **his** word **unto** Jacob
 and it hath lighted upon Israel.

⁹ And all the people shall know,
 even Ephraim and the **inhabitants**
 of Samaria,
 that say in the pride
 and stoutness of heart:

¹⁰ “The bricks are fallen down,
 but we will build with hewn stones;
 the sycamores are cut down,
 but we will change them into
 cedars.”

¹¹ Therefore the Lord shall set up the
 adversaries of Rezin against him,
 and join his enemies together;
¹² the Syrians before and the Philistines
 behind;
 and they shall devour Israel with
 open mouth.

For all this his anger is not turned
 away,
 but his hand is stretched out still.

¹³ For the people turneth not unto him
 that smiteth them,
 neither do they seek the Lord of
 Hosts.

¹⁴ Therefore **will the Lord** cut off from
 Israel head and tail,
 branch and rush in one day.

¹⁵ The ancient,^d he is the head;

^a ³ Isa 9.3 reads “and not increased the joy”

^b ⁴ Nephi₁ here omits “as in the day of Midian”
 from Isa 9.4.

^c ⁶ Or *Wonderful Counselor*

^d ¹⁵ Nephi₁ here omits “and honorable” from Isa
 9.15.

⁶–⁷: The birth of a new Davidic king will usher in an era of peace and justice; see 17.14n. *Government*, authority. *Judgment* and *justice* are better rendered as “justice” and “righteousness.” ⁸–¹²: People in the Northern Kingdom of Israel who imagine they will rebuild on a grander scale underestimate the coming destruction. *Samaria* was the capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. *Rezin*, see 17.1–2n. Shifting alliances between Syria, Assyria, and Israel led to warfare and assassinations in the last decades of Israel’s history, which ended in 722 BCE. ⁸: *Lighted*, fallen. ¹²: *His hand is stretched out still*, a threatening gesture suggesting more blows to come (the couplet is repeated in vv. 17, 21; 20.4; see 15.24–25n). ¹³–¹⁷: The Lord will hold Israel’s leaders responsible for the kingdom’s sins. ¹⁴: *Branch and rush*, palm branch and reed.

- and the prophet that teacheth lies,
he is the tail.
- 16 For the leaders of this people cause
them to err;
and they that are led of them are
destroyed.
- 17 Therefore the Lord shall have no joy
in their young men,
neither shall have mercy on their
fatherless and widows;
for every one **of them** is a hypocrite
and an evildoer,
and every mouth speaketh folly.
For all this his anger is not turned away,
but his hand is stretched out still.
- 18 For wickedness burneth as the fire;
it shall devour the briars and thorns,
and shall kindle in the thickets of the
forests,
and they shall mount up like the
lifting up of smoke.
- 19 Through the wrath of the Lord of
Hosts is the land darkened,
and the people shall be as the fuel
of the fire;
no man shall spare his brother.
- 20 And he shall snatch on the right
hand and be hungry;
and he shall eat on the left hand and
they shall not be satisfied;
they shall eat every man the flesh of
his own arm—
- 21 Manasseh, Ephraim; and Ephraim,
Manasseh;

they together shall be against Judah.
For all this his anger is not turned away,
but his hand is stretched out still.

- 20** ¹ Wo unto them that decree unright-
eous decrees,
and that write grievousness which
they have prescribed;
² to turn **away** the needy from
judgment,
and to take away the right from the
poor of my people,
that widows may be their prey,
and that they may rob the fatherless!
³ And what will ye do in the day of
visitation,
and in the desolation which shall
come from far?
To whom will ye flee for help,
and where will ye leave your glory?
⁴ Without me they shall bow down
under the prisoners,
and they shall fall under the slain.
For all this his anger is not turned
away,
but his hand is stretched out still.

Assyria, the Rod of the Lord
(Isaiah 10.5–11)

- ⁵ O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger,
and the staff in their hand is **their**
indignation.
⁶ I will send him against a hypocritical
nation,

20: The invasion will result in famine and even cannibalism. *The flesh of his own arm*, the Hebrew is sometimes emended to “the flesh of his own kindred.” **21:** *Manasseh* and *Ephraim* were the two leading tribes in Israel.

CHAPTER 20

1–4: Oppression of the poor, widows, and orphans was an especially grievous sin, meriting God’s withdrawal of divine protection. Some scholars believe that this woe pronouncement was originally conjoined to the six woes of Isa 5.8–23 (2 Ne 15.8–23). *Write grievousness which they have prescribed*, write oppressive laws. **3:** *The day of visitation*, see 1.11–12n. *Glory*, in this case, (ill-gotten) wealth. **5–19:** The king of Assyria, probably Sargon II (721–705 BCE), boasts of his conquests, not realizing that it is actually the Lord working through him, and that Assyria in turn will be punished for its arrogance. **6:** *Hypocritical*, godless.

and against the people of my wrath
will I give him a charge to take the
spoil, and to take the prey,
and to tread them down like the
mire of the streets.

⁷ Howbeit he meaneth not so,
neither doth his heart think so;
but in his heart **it is** to destroy
and cut off nations not a few.

⁸ For he saith:

“Are not my princes altogether kings?

⁹ Is not Calno as Carchemish?

Is not Hamath as Arpad?

Is not Samaria as Damascus?

¹⁰ As my hand hath **founded** the
kingdoms of the idols,
and whose graven images did excel
them of Jerusalem and of
Samaria;

¹¹ shall I not, as I have done unto
Samaria and her idols,
so do to Jerusalem and **to** her idols?”

God’s Judgment on the King of Assyria (Isaiah 10.12–19)

¹² Wherefore it shall come to pass that when
the Lord hath performed his whole work
upon Mount Zion and **upon** Jerusalem, “I will
punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king
of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks.”

¹³ For he saith:

“By the strength of my hand **and by**

my wisdom

I have done **these things**;^a

for I am prudent;

and I have **moved** the **borders** of
the people,

and have robbed their treasures,
and I have put down the inhabitants
like a valiant man;

¹⁴ and my hand hath found as a nest
the riches of the people;
and as one gathereth eggs that
are left

have I gathered all the earth;
and there was none that moved the wing,
or opened the mouth, or peeped.”

¹⁵ Shall the ax boast itself against him
that heweth therewith?

Shall the saw magnify itself against
him that shaketh it?

As if the rod should shake itself against
them that lift it up,
or as if the staff should lift up itself
as if it were no wood!

¹⁶ Therefore shall the Lord, the Lord of
Hosts,
send among his fat ones, leanness;
and under his glory he shall kindle a
burning
like the burning of a fire.

¹⁷ And the light of Israel shall be for
a fire,
and his Holy One for a flame,
and shall burn and **shall** devour
his thorns and his briars in one day;

¹⁸ and shall consume the glory of his
forest,
and of his fruitful field, both soul
and body;
and they shall be as when a
standard-bearer fainteth.

^a ¹³ Nephi, here omits “and by my wisdom” from
Isa 10.13, though he added it to the previous line.

8–9: These were all cities in Syria conquered by the Assyrians between 740 and 732 BCE. 8: *Princes*, commanders. 10–11: Just as the idols of the Syrians did not save them, so also the idols of Israel and Judah will not save them (the Assyrians assume that the Israelite God is simply another idol). 14: The Assyrian king compares himself to someone stealing eggs from a nest. 15: The king is merely an instrument in God’s hand, like an ax or a saw, rather than the power that wields the tool. 16–19: *Fat ones*, strong men of the Assyrian army. *Leanness*, a wasting disease. The destruction coming upon Assyria is compared to a raging wildfire.

¹⁹ And the rest of the trees of his forest shall be few,
that a child may write them.

A Remnant of Israel to Return (Isaiah 10.20–23)

²⁰ And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them, but shall stay upon the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth.
²¹ The remnant shall return,^a **yea**, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God.
²² For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return; the consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness.
²³ For the Lord God of Hosts shall make a consumption, even determined in^b all the land.

The Destruction of the Assyrian Army (Isaiah 10.24–34)

²⁴ Therefore, thus saith the Lord God of Hosts: “O my people that dwellest in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian; he shall smite thee with a rod, and shall lift up his staff against thee, after the manner of Egypt.”²⁵ For yet a very little while, and the indignation shall cease, and mine anger in their destruction.”²⁶ And the Lord of Hosts shall stir up a scourge for him

according to the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb; and as his rod was upon the sea so shall he lift it up after the manner of Egypt.

²⁷ And it shall come to pass in that day that his burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing.

²⁸ He is come to Aiath, he is passed to Migron; at Michmash he hath laid up his carriages.

²⁹ They are gone over the passage; they have taken up their lodging at Geba; **Ramath** is afraid; Gibeah of Saul is fled.

³⁰ Lift up **the** voice, O daughter of Gallim; cause it to be heard unto Laish, O poor Anathoth.

³¹ Madmenah is removed; the inhabitants of Gebim gather themselves to flee.

³² As yet shall he remain at Nob that day; he shall shake his hand against the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem.

^a ²¹ Hebrew *Shearjashub*; also in v. 22. See 2 Ne 17.3.

^b ²³ Nephi₁ here omits “the midst of” from Isa 10.23.

20–23: Surviving Israelites will no longer rely on the political powers that have devastated them, but on the Lord, as they return to their lands. 20: *Stay upon*, lean on. 22: *Consumption*, destruction. 26: *Slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb*, referring to Gideon’s defeat of the Midianites at Judg 7.24–25. *Lift it [his rod] up after the manner of Egypt*, a reference to the drowning of the Egyptians during the Exodus; see Ex 14.16, 26–29. 27: *Because of the anointing*, problems in the underlying Hebrew make the meaning of this line very uncertain. 28–32: The Assyrian army advances south toward Jerusalem from Israel, taking these towns and villages along the way. This could be referring to Sargon II’s invasion of 720 BCE, or Sennacherib’s in 701 BCE. 28: *Carriages*, military gear.

³³ Behold, the Lord, the Lord of Hosts
shall lop the bough with terror;
and the high ones of stature shall be
hewn down;
and the haughty shall be humbled.
³⁴ And he shall cut down the thickets
of the **forests** with iron,
and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty
one.

The Coming Messianic Age (Isaiah 11.1–9)

21 ¹ And there shall come forth a rod
out of the stem of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his
roots.
² And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest
upon him,
the spirit of wisdom and
understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and of the
fear of the Lord;
³ and shall make him of quick
understanding
in the fear of the Lord;
and he shall not judge after the sight of
his eyes,
neither reprove after the hearing of
his ears.

⁴ But with righteousness shall he judge
the poor,
and reprove with equity for the
meek of the earth;
and he shall smite the earth with the
rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips shall
he slay the wicked.
⁵ And righteousness shall be the girdle
of his loins,
and faithfulness the girdle of his
reins.
⁶ The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb,
and the leopard shall lie down with
the kid,
and the calf and the young lion and
fatling together;
and a little child shall lead them.
⁷ And the cow and the bear shall feed;
their young ones shall lie down
together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
⁸ And the sucking child shall play on
the hole of the asp,
and the weaned child shall put his
hand on the cockatrice's den.
⁹ They shall not hurt nor destroy in all
my holy mountain,
for the earth shall be full of the
knowledge of the Lord,
as the waters cover the sea.

33–34: God will cut down Assyria and Lebanon like trees.

CHAPTER 21

1: *A rod out of the stem*, a shoot out of the stump. *Jesse* was the father of David; 1 Sam 16.1–13. The prophecy here foretells a future king from the line of David. **3:** *Not judge after the sight of his eyes*, not judge by outward appearance; cf. 1 Sam 16.7. **4–9:** Nephi will quote these verses again at 30.9–15. **4:** *With righteousness shall he judge the poor*, the subject of this sentence, the rod of Jesse, is identified as “the Lord God” at 30.9. *The rod of his mouth*, a poetic expression referring to strong words (the Hebrew word for *rod* here is different from that in v. 1). **5:** *Girdle*, a belt. *Reins*, here referring to the waist. **6:** Peace will reign on the earth, even among the animals. *Fatling*, a young animal fattened for slaughter; some scholars emend *and fatling together* to “shall feed together.” **8:** *Asp* and *cockatrice* were species of deadly snakes. The future harmony will extend even to the serpents. **9:** *My holy mountain*, Mount Zion, site of the Temple in Jerusalem.

The Gathering of Israel (Isaiah 11.10–16)

¹⁰ And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek; and his rest shall be glorious.

¹¹ And it shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.

¹² And he shall set up an ensign for the nations,
and shall assemble the outcasts of
Israel,
and gather together the dispersed of
Judah
from the four corners of the earth.

¹³ The envy of Ephraim **also** shall depart,
and the adversaries of Judah shall be
cut off;
Ephraim shall not envy Judah,
and Judah shall not vex Ephraim.

¹⁴ But they shall fly upon the shoulders
of the Philistines towards the
west;
they shall spoil them of the east
together;

they shall lay their hand upon Edom
and Moab;
and the children of Ammon shall
obey them.

¹⁵ And the Lord shall utterly destroy
the tongue of the Egyptian sea;
and with his mighty wind
he shall shake his hand over the
river,
and shall smite it in the seven streams,
and make men go over dry shod.

¹⁶ And there shall be a highway for the
remnant of his people
which shall be left, from Assyria,
like as it was to Israel
in the day that he came up out of
the land of Egypt.

**Two Hymns of Praise
(Isaiah 12.1–6)**

22 ¹ And in that day thou shalt say:

“O Lord, I will praise thee,
though thou wast angry with me;
thine anger is turned away,
and thou comfortedst me.

² Behold, God is my salvation;
I will trust, and not be afraid;

10: *Root*, descendant. *Ensign*, a summoning signal or banner. **11:** *Set his hand again the second time to recover . . . his people*, a phrase that is repeated and interpreted at 6.14; 25.17; 29.1; Jacob 6.2. *The second time*, the first was when the Lord brought his people back from Egypt in the Exodus. *Pathros*, in southern Egypt. *Cush*, Ethiopia. *Elam*, in southern Iran. *Shinar*, ancient Babylonia, in Iraq. *Hamath*, in Syria. *Islands of the sea*, the coastal regions and islands of the eastern Mediterranean, though the BoM interprets this term more broadly at 10.20–22 to include the Nephites and Lamanites in the New World. **12–14:** Israel and Judah will someday be reunited under a new Davidic king, and their combined forces will dominate the region. *Fly upon the shoulders*, “swoop down on the backs” (NRSV). *Them of the east*, the Syrians. **15–16:** *Tongue of the Egyptian sea*, perhaps the Gulf of Suez. The Lord will miraculously assist the exiles in their return, just as he aided the Israelites in their exodus from Egypt. *The river*, the Euphrates. *Dry shod*, they will pass through the river by foot, as the Israelites did through the Red Sea. *Highway*, a public road, usually large and direct.

CHAPTER 22

1–6: These brief songs include quotations from Moses’s Song of the Sea at Ex 15.1–2 (again looking back toward the Exodus), as well as from psalms such as 105.1; 118.14, 21; 148.13. *JEHOVAH*, the 1830 typesetter followed the KJV in setting this word in all capital letters, though it was not written this way in P (or presumably in O).

for the Lord JEHOVAH is my strength
and my song;
he also **has** become my salvation.”

³ Therefore, with joy shall ye draw
water
out of the wells of salvation.

⁴ And in that day shall ye say:

“Praise the Lord, call upon his name,
declare his doings among the
people,
make mention that his name is
exalted.

⁵ Sing unto the Lord; for he hath done
excellent things;
this is known in all the earth.

⁶ Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant
of Zion;
for great is the Holy One of Israel in
the midst of thee.”

A Prophecy against Babylon (Isaiah 13.1–22)

[X] **23** ¹ The burden of Babylon,
which Isaiah the son of Amoz
did see:

² Lift ye up a banner upon the high
mountain,
exalt the voice unto them,
shake the hand,
that they may go into the gates of
the nobles.

³ I have commanded my sanctified ones,
I have also called my mighty ones,
for mine anger is **not upon** them
that rejoice in my highness.

⁴ The noise of **the** multitude in the
mountains
like as of a great people,
a tumultuous noise of the kingdoms
of nations gathered together,
the Lord of Hosts mustereth the
hosts of the battle.

⁵ They come from a far country,
from the end of heaven,
yea, the Lord, and the weapons of his
indignation,
to destroy the whole land.

⁶ Howl ye, for the day of the Lord is at
hand;
it shall come as a destruction from
the Almighty.

⁷ Therefore shall all hands be faint,
every man’s heart shall melt;

⁸ and they shall be afraid;
pangs and sorrows shall take hold of
them;^a

they shall be amazed one at another;
their faces shall be as flames.

^a 8 Nephi₁ here omits “they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth” from Isa 13.8; alternatively, ATV suggests that this line may have been inadvertently lost during Oliver Cowdery’s transcription or copying.

CHAPTER 23

1: *Burden*, a prophetic oracle or pronouncement. The prophecies against Babylon in this chapter and the next would have been particularly meaningful at the time of the Exile, and may have been reworked by Jewish scribes to reflect that event. **2–5:** The Lord summons an army to fight against the Babylonians. *Sanctified ones*, soldiers consecrated for holy war. The addition of a negative smooths out what might seem contradictory in English (why would the Lord’s anger be directed against those who exalt him?). In the original, God’s soldiers are instruments of his wrath, as can be seen in the NRSV: “I myself have commanded my consecrated ones, / have summoned my warriors, my proudly exulting ones / to execute my anger.” **6–8:** The day of reckoning, or *day of the Lord* (see 12.12n), will bring fear and pains to the Lord’s enemies like those of a woman in labor.

⁹ Behold, the day of the Lord cometh,
 cruel both with wrath and fierce
 anger,
 to lay the land desolate;
 and he shall destroy the sinners
 thereof out of it.

¹⁰ For the stars of heaven and the
 constellations thereof
 shall not give their light;
 the sun shall be darkened in her going
 forth,
 and the moon shall not cause her
 light to shine.

¹¹ And I will punish the world for evil,
 and the wicked for their iniquity;
 I will cause the arrogancy of the proud
 to cease,
 and will lay **down** the haughtiness
 of the terrible.

¹² I will make a man more precious
 than fine gold;
 even a man than the golden wedge
 of Ophir.

¹³ Therefore, I will shake the heavens,
 and the earth shall remove out of
 her place,
 in the wrath of the Lord of Hosts,
 and in the day of his fierce anger.

¹⁴ And it shall be as the chased roe,
 and as a sheep that no man taketh up;
and they shall every man turn to his
 own people,
 and flee every one into his own land.

¹⁵ Every one that is **proud** shall be
 thrust through;

yea, and every one that is joined **to
 the wicked** shall fall by the
 sword.

¹⁶ Their children also shall be dashed
 to pieces before their eyes;
 their houses shall be spoiled and
 their wives ravished.

¹⁷ Behold, I will stir up the Medes
 against them,
 which shall not regard silver and
 gold,
nor shall **they** delight in it.

¹⁸ Their bows **shall also** dash the
 young men to pieces;
 and they shall have no pity on the
 fruit of the womb;
 their **eyes** shall not spare children.

¹⁹ And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms,
 the beauty of the Chaldees'
 excellency,
 shall be as when God overthrew
 Sodom and Gomorrah.

²⁰ It shall never be inhabited,
 neither shall it be dwelt in from
 generation to generation:
 neither shall the Arabian pitch tent
 there;
 neither shall the shepherds make
 their fold there.

²¹ But wild beasts of the desert shall lie
 there;
 and their houses shall be full of
 doleful creatures;
 and owls shall dwell there,
 and satyrs shall dance there.

9–13: Even the heavens will participate in God's judgment against the wicked. **12:** The survivors will be as rare as gold. *Ophir*, a region in Arabia known for its gold. **14:** *Chased roe*, hunted gazelle. *That no man taketh up*, left without a shepherd or protector. **15:** The replacement of "found" by *proud* is probably intentional since it correlates with the substitution of *to the wicked* for "unto them" in the next line. Both changes suggest that the wicked will disproportionately suffer in the coming invasion. **17:** The Medes, a people from northeast of Iran, joined with Cyrus and the Persians to destroy the Babylonian Empire in 539 BCE. Their brutality cannot be deflected by bribes or payments. **19:** *Babylon*, the city. *Chaldees*, Babylonians. *Sodom and Gomorrah*, cities that were destroyed by the Lord for their iniquity; see Gen 18–19. **21:** *Owls*, ostriches. *Satyrs*, goat-demons, depicted as living in the wilderness.

²² And the wild beasts of the islands
shall cry in their desolate houses,
and dragons in their pleasant
palaces;
and her time is near to come,
and her day shall not be prolonged.

**For I will destroy her speedily;
yea, for I will be merciful unto my
people,
but the wicked shall perish.**

Mercy for Israel (Isaiah 14.1–3)

24 ¹ For the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land; and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob. ² And the people shall take them and bring them to their place; **yea, from far unto the ends of the earth; and they shall return to their lands of promise.** And the house of Israel shall possess them, **and** the land of the Lord **shall be** for servants and handmaids; and they shall take them captives **unto whom they were captives;**^a and they shall rule over their oppressors.

³ And it shall come to pass in **that** day that the Lord shall give thee rest, from thy sorrow, and from thy fear, and from the hard bondage wherein thou wast made to serve.

God's Judgment on the King of Babylon (Isaiah 14.4–23)

⁴ **And it shall come to pass in that day,** that thou shalt take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say:

How hath the oppressor ceased,
the golden city ceased!

⁵ The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked,
the **scepters** of the rulers.

⁶ He who smote the people in wrath
with a continual stroke,
he that ruled the nations in anger,
is persecuted, and none hindereth.

⁷ The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet;
they break forth into singing.

⁸ Yea, the fir trees rejoice at thee,
and **also** the cedars of Lebanon,
saying:

“Since thou art laid down
no feller is come up against us.”

⁹ Hell from beneath is moved for thee
to meet thee at thy coming;
it stirreth up the dead for thee,
even all the chief ones of the earth;
it hath raised up from their thrones

^a 2 Isa 14.2 reads “captives, whose captives they were.”

22: *Wild beasts*, hyenas. *Dragons*, jackals. *The wicked shall perish*, a similar insertion occurred at 13.11. The added lines provide a smooth transition to the first verses of ch. 24.

CHAPTER 24

1: *Set them*, that is, give them rest. *Strangers*, converts. **2:** Nephi's addition expands the ingathering of Israel to include not just a single location in Palestine, but multiple *lands of promise* located at *the ends of the earth*. The plural “lands of promise” or “lands of their inheritance” is characteristic of the BoM; see 1 Ne 22.12; 2 Ne 6.11; 9.2; 10.7–8; 3 Ne 29.1. *Shall possess them*, in Isa this refers to *the people*, that is, other nations, who will now serve Israel as *servants and handmaids*, that is, male and female slaves; the insertion in the BoM makes *them* refer to lands of promise. **4–23:** The Lord provides a taunt song, or a satirical dirge, for his people to sing when the king of Babylon dies, celebrating his downfall. (It is possible that this song was composed with one of the kings of Assyria in mind, and then later adapted to Babylon.) **4:** *Golden city*, probably a Hebrew scribal error for “fury” or “arrogance.” **8:** Ancient kings made lavish use of expensive timber, which will now be left standing. *Feller*, a woodcutter. **9:** *Hell*, that is, Sheol, the world of the dead.

all the kings of the nations.
¹⁰ All they shall speak and say unto thee:
 “Art thou also become weak as we?
 Art thou become like unto us?
¹¹ Thy pomp is brought down to the grave;
 the noise of thy viols **is not heard**;
 the worm is spread under thee,
 and the worms cover thee.”

¹² How art thou fallen from heaven,
 O Lucifer, son of the morning!
 Art thou cut down to the ground,
 which did weaken the nations!
¹³ For thou hast said in thy heart:
 “I will ascend into heaven,
 I will exalt my throne above the stars of God;
 I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation,
 in the sides of the north;
¹⁴ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;
 I will be like the Most High.”
¹⁵ Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell,
 to the sides of the pit.

¹⁶ They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee,
 and **shall** consider thee, **and shall say**:
 “Is this the man that made the earth to tremble,
 that did shake kingdoms?”

¹⁷ **And** made the world as a wilderness,
 and destroyed the cities thereof,
and opened not the house of his prisoners?”
¹⁸ All the kings of the nations, **yea**, all of them, lie in glory,
 every one **of them** in his own house.
¹⁹ But thou art cast out of thy grave like an abominable branch,
 and the **remnant** of those that are slain,
 thrust through with a sword,
 that go down to the stones of the pit;
 as a carcass trodden under feet.
²⁰ Thou shalt not be joined with them in burial,
 because thou hast destroyed thy land and slain thy people.

The seed of evil-doers shall never be renowned.

²¹ Prepare slaughter for his children for the **iniquities** of their fathers, that they do not rise, nor possess the land,
 nor fill the face of the world with cities.

²² “For I will rise up against them,” saith the Lord of Hosts, “and cut off from Babylon the name, and remnant, and son, and nephew,” saith the Lord. ²³ “I will also make it a possession for the bittern, and pools of water; and I will sweep it with the besom of destruction,” saith the Lord of Hosts.

10–11: Dead kings ridicule the newly deceased monarch. *Viols*, harps. **12:** This verse was quoted by Lehi at 2.17. *Lucifer* and *son of the morning* were originally the names of two Canaanite deities. *Lucifer* (“light bearer”), the Latin translation of a Hebrew term meaning “Day Star,” was a title that early Church Fathers applied to Satan. Latter-day Saints read this as a reference to Satan’s fall from heaven in the premortal existence, especially in light of the blasphemous ambition described in the next verses. **13:** *Mount of the congregation*, meeting place of the council of gods in Canaanite mythology. **16–20a:** The living will also be amazed at the humiliation of the dead king, who lies on the ground unburied. *Narrowly look*, stare. *Branch*, perhaps “corpse,” as in the LXX. **20b–22:** The king’s clan will be exterminated and Babylon itself will lie in ruins. *Son and nephew*, offspring and posterity. **23:** *Bittern*, hedgehogs. *Besom*, broom.

A Prophecy against Assyria (Isaiah 14.24–27)

²⁴ The Lord of Hosts hath sworn, saying:

“Surely as I have thought,
so shall it come to pass;
and as I have purposed,
so shall it stand—

²⁵ That I will **bring** the Assyrian in my land,
and upon my mountains tread him
under foot;

then shall his yoke depart from off them,
and his burden depart from off
their shoulders.

²⁶ This is the purpose that is purposed
upon the whole earth;
and this is the hand that is stretched
out upon all nations.

²⁷ For the Lord of Hosts hath purposed,
and who shall disannul?
And his hand is stretched out,
and who shall turn it back?”

A Prophecy against the Philistines (Isaiah 14.28–32)

²⁸ In the year that king Ahaz died^a was this
burden:

²⁹ Rejoice not thou, whole Palestina,
because the rod of him that smote
thee is broken;

for out of the serpent’s root shall come
forth a cockatrice,
and his fruit shall be a fiery flying
serpent.

³⁰ And the firstborn of the poor shall
feed,
and the needy shall lie down in
safety;

and I will kill thy root with famine,
and he shall slay thy remnant.

³¹ Howl, O gate; cry, O city;
thou, whole Palestina, art
dissolved;

for there shall come from the north a
smoke,
and none shall be alone in his
appointed times.

³² What shall then answer the
messengers of the **nations**?
That “the Lord hath founded
Zion,
and the poor of his people shall
trust in it.”

^a 28 715 BCE

24–27: The Lord has already determined that the Assyrian domination of Israel will come to an end, and his resolve is unstoppable, with consequences not just for those two nations, but for *the whole earth*. 28: *Burden*, see 23.1n. After the death of King Ahaz of Judah, Philistia (*Palestina*) revolted against Assyria, likely looking for assistance from Ahaz’s son Hezekiah. Assyria put down the rebellion in 713 BCE. 29: As one snake gives rise to another, so also the demise of one Assyrian king will lead to another, or the end of the Assyrian Empire will bring in the Babylonians. *Fiery flying serpent*, a winged cobra found in Egyptian art, whose poisonous venom stung like fire; cf. 1 Ne 17.41. 30: The verse contrasts the Lord’s nurturing of the poor and needy (NAB: “in my pastures the poor shall graze”) with his destroying the Philistines through hunger. 31: *Smoke coming from the north* refers to the dust from the advancing Assyrian army. *None . . . appointed times*, there will be no stragglers. 32: Messengers from abroad will acknowledge that the Lord has designated Jerusalem as a refuge for his people, and that he will protect them. The BoM agrees with the LXX, which suggests that the messengers (or kings) of nations speak the quotation that follows. The MT and KJV (“What shall *one* then answer the messengers of the nation”) imply that these words will be spoken in response to messengers from a single country.

Nephi's Prophecies and Interpretations of Jacob₂ and Isaiah₁; 2 Nephi 25–30^a

Nephi Explains the Words of Isaiah₁

[XI] 25 ¹ Now I, Nephi, do speak somewhat concerning the words which I have written, which have been spoken by the mouth of Isaiah. For behold, Isaiah spake many things which were hard for many of my people to understand; for they know not concerning the manner of prophesying among the Jews. ² For I, Nephi, have not taught them many things concerning the manner of the Jews; for their works were works of darkness, and their doings were doings of abominations. ³ Wherefore, I write unto my people, unto all those that shall receive hereafter these things which I write, that they may know the judgments of God, that they come upon all nations, according to the word which he hath spoken.

⁴ Wherefore, **hearken, O my people**, which are of the house of Israel, and **give ear unto** my words;^b for because the words of Isaiah are not plain unto you, nevertheless they are plain unto all those that are filled with the spirit of prophecy. But I give unto you a prophecy, according to the spirit which is in me; wherefore I shall prophesy according to the plainness which hath been with me from the time that I came out from Jerusalem with my father; for behold, my soul delighteth in plainness unto my people, that they may learn. ⁵ Yea, and my soul delighteth in the words of Isaiah, for I came out from Jerusalem, and mine eyes hath beheld the things of the Jews, and I know that the Jews do understand the things of the prophets, and there is none other people that understand the things which were spoken

^a ¹ In these chapters, phrases just quoted from Isaiah appear in bold.

^b ⁴ Isa 51.4; cited at 2 Ne 8.4

CHAPTERS 25–30

After thirteen chapters borrowed from the book of Isaiah, Nephi will interweave his own prophecies (particularly from 1 Ne 11–14) with those of his brother Jacob and Isaiah, thus confirming the truth of his words through multiple witnesses (see 2 Ne 11.2–4). As Nephi adapts ideas and phrases from Jacob's sermon in chs. 6–10, it becomes clear that Nephi is capable of listening to and learning from his younger brother, unlike Laman and Lemuel. Nephi's recontextualization of wording from Isaiah makes the chapters that follow a commentary of sorts, focusing primarily on salvation history. It is striking that even though Nephi has quoted two of the most famous Christian prooftexts—"a virgin shall conceive" (Isa 7.14; 2 Ne 17.14) and "for unto us a child is born" (Isa 9.6–7; 2 Ne 19.6–7)—he does not comment on them, even as he explicitly prophesies of Christ. (He similarly ignores Isa 9.1–2, which was used as a prooftext at Mt 4.15–16.)

CHAPTER 25

1–8: The contrast between Isaiah's multivalent prophecies and Nephi's plainly articulated predictions of the last days is, quite literally, the difference between poetry and prose. Nephi begins with a brief narrator's comment, for his future readers, and then addresses his people directly beginning in v. 4. He regards the Jews at Jerusalem negatively (*works of darkness*), perhaps understandably given the persecution of his family, yet he acknowledges their unparalleled expertise in interpreting scripture (v. 5); see 29.4n. **4:** *The spirit of prophecy* appears eighteen times in the BoM and once in the Bible at Rev 19.10, where "the spirit [or essence] of prophecy" is equated with "the testimony of Jesus"; see Alma 4.20n. **5:** *My soul delighteth in the words of Isaiah*, this phrase completes an inclusio that began at 11.2; similarly, "my soul delights in plainness" in v. 4 above begins an overlapping inclusio that ends at 31.3.

unto the Jews like unto them, save it be that they are taught after the manner of the things of the Jews.⁶ But behold, I, Nephi, have not taught my children after the manner of the Jews; but behold, I, of myself, have dwelt at Jerusalem, wherefore I know concerning the regions round about; and I have made mention unto my children concerning the judgments of God, which hath come to pass among the Jews, unto my children, according to all that which Isaiah hath spoken, and I do not write them.

⁷ But behold, I proceed with mine own prophecy, according to my plainness; in the which I know that no man can err; nevertheless, in the days that the prophecies of Isaiah shall be fulfilled men shall know of a surety, at the times when they shall come to pass.⁸ Wherefore, they are of worth unto the children of men, and he that supposeth that they are not, unto them will I speak particularly, and confine the words unto mine own people; for I know that they shall be of great worth unto them in the last days; for in that day shall they understand them; wherefore, for their good have I written them.

Nephi, Prophecies of Christ and the Jews

⁹ And as one generation hath been destroyed among the Jews because of iniquity, even so have they been destroyed from generation to generation according to their iniquities; and never hath any of them been destroyed save it were foretold them by the prophets of the Lord.¹⁰ Wherefore, it hath been told them concerning the destruction which should come upon them, immediately after my father left Jerusalem; nevertheless, they hardened their hearts; and according to my prophecy they have been destroyed, save it be those which are carried away captive into Babylon.

¹¹ And now this I speak because of the spirit which is in me. And notwithstanding they have been carried away they shall return again, and possess the land of Jerusalem; wherefore, they shall be restored again to the land of their inheritance.¹² But, behold, they shall have wars, and rumors of wars; and when the day cometh that the Only Begotten of the Father, yea, even the Father of heaven and of earth, shall manifest himself unto them in the

6–8: Many of the prophecies in Isa 12–24, especially those concerning political events, had already been fulfilled by Nephi’s day (*the judgments of God, which had come to pass*), while others were still pending (*shall be fulfilled*). The idea seems to be that the reliability of Isaiah’s predictions for the 8th c. BCE should lend credence to prophecies still to be realized—the fall of Babylon, the gathering of Israel in the last days, and God’s millennial reign. **6:** The educational traditions that would allow the Nephites to fully understand the words of Isaiah in their original context will end with Nephi, who chooses not to pass them on to his children. For example, his children will not share in his knowledge of *the regions round about* Judah, including Lebanon, Philistia, Edom, and Moab (see 12.13; 20.28–32; 21.14). **7–8:** The meaning of both Isaiah’s and Nephi’s words will become clearer at the time when they begin to be fulfilled. Although the distinction between the universal *unto the children of men* and the more limited *unto my own people* is confusing, Nephi at this point seems to realize that he is writing not just for his own descendants, but also for readers *in the last days*, including Lamanites, Jews, and Gentiles; see 27.6n. **7:** *Plainness and no man can err* begin an inclusio that will conclude at v. 20. **8:** From this point, *last days* will displace Lehi and Nephi’s earlier usage of “latter days,” perhaps under the influence of Isa 2.2 (2 Ne 12.2). **9:** The idea that the Lord will always give a warning before destruction is hinted at in Am 3.7, and also emphasized in the Qur’an at suras 17.15; 26.208–209; 28.59. **10:** The destruction of Jerusalem happened in 586 BCE; see 1 Ne 7.13; 2 Ne 1.4; 6.8. **11–13:** The return of the Jews from exile would be initiated by a decree from Cyrus, the Persian king, in 538 BCE. Although it was one of the pivotal moments in Jewish history, Nephi only mentions it in passing before turning his attention to the coming of Christ. Even so, he has little to say about incidents from Jesus’s life; his focus is on Jesus’s death and resurrection, and how people will respond to him. **11:** *The spirit which is in me*, that is, the spirit of prophecy from v. 4. **12:** *Only Begotten of the Father*, Jn 1.14; Alma 5.48; 9.26; 13.9. *The Father of heaven and of earth* is a title that is consistently applied to Christ in the BoM; see Mos 3.8; Alma 11.38–39; Hel 14.12; 16.18; Ether 4.7.

flesh, behold, they will reject him, because of their iniquities, and the hardness of their hearts, and the stiffness of their necks.¹³ Behold, they will crucify him; and after he is laid in a sepulchre for the space of three days he shall rise from the dead, with healing in his wings; and all those who shall believe on his name shall be saved in the kingdom of God. Wherefore, my soul delighteth to prophesy concerning him, for I have seen his day, and my heart doth magnify his holy name.

¹⁴ And behold it shall come to pass that after the Messiah hath risen from the dead, and hath manifested himself unto his people, unto as many as will believe on his name, behold, Jerusalem shall be destroyed again; for wo unto them that fight against God and the people of his church.¹⁵ Wherefore, the Jews shall be scattered among all nations; yea, and also Babylon shall be destroyed; wherefore, the Jews shall be scattered by other nations.¹⁶ And after they have been scattered, and the Lord God hath scourged them by other nations for the space of many generations, yea, even down from generation to generation until they shall be persuaded to believe in Christ, the Son of God, and the atonement, which is infinite for all mankind—and when that day shall come that they shall believe in Christ, and worship the Father in his name, with pure hearts and clean hands, and look not forward any more for another Messiah, then, at that time, the day will come that it must needs

be expedient that they should believe these things.

¹⁷ And the Lord will set his hand again the second time to restore his people^a from their lost and fallen state. Wherefore, he will proceed to do a marvelous work and a wonder^b among the children of men.¹⁸ Wherefore, he shall bring forth his words unto them, which words shall judge them at the last day, for they shall be given them for the purpose of convincing them of the true Messiah, who was rejected by them; and unto the convincing of them that they need not look forward any more for a Messiah to come, for there should not any come, save it should be a false Messiah which should deceive the people; for there is save one Messiah spoken of by the prophets, and that Messiah is he who should be rejected of the Jews.¹⁹ For according to the words of the prophets, the Messiah cometh in six hundred years from the time that my father left Jerusalem; and according to the words of the prophets, and also the word of the angel of God, his name shall be Jesus Christ, the Son of God.^c

^a 17 Isa 11.11; cited at 2 Ne 21.11; 29.1

^b 17 Isa 29.14; cited at 2 Ne 27.26; 29.1; cf. 1 Ne 22.8

^c 19 *Jesus* is the Greek form of the Hebrew *Joshua*, “the Lord saves”; *Christ* is the Greek translation of the Hebrew *Messiah*, “the anointed one.”

13: *Crucify... sepulchre... three days*, cf. 1 Ne 19.10. *With healing in his wings*, Mal 4.2; another part of this verse is cited at 1 Ne 22.24. **14:** The second destruction of Jerusalem occurred at the hands of the Romans in 70 CE, which Nephi views as God’s retribution for Jewish persecutions of the early Christian church. **16:** When Jews in the last days begin to believe in Christ, they will also believe Nephi’s words. *Atonement, which is infinite*, see 9.7n. *Pure hearts and clean hands*, Ps 24.4; Alma 5.19. *These things*, the BoM. **17–19:** The combination of *lost and fallen state with Messiah* and *six hundred years* echoes Lehi’s prophecy at 1 Ne 10.4–6. **17–18:** The *marvelous work* that God will do in *bringing forth his words* refers to the coming forth of the BoM, which is intended to convince both Jews and Gentiles to believe in Christ (BoM title page). **18:** Being judged by God’s words (personified here) also appears at Jn 12.48; cf. 2 Ne 29.11. *False Messiah*, or “false Christ,” a term that appears at Mt 24.24; Mk 13.22; WoM 1.15. **19:** *In six hundred years*, 1 Ne 10.4; 19.8; *His name*, this verse seems to depend on the original reading of 1 Ne 12.18; cf. 2 Ne 10.3n. In both of the earlier verses, Christ’s name-title was conveyed by angels, to Nephi and Jacob, respectively.

Christ and the Book of Mormon

²⁰ And now, my brethren, I have spoken plainly that ye cannot err. And as the Lord God liveth that brought Israel up out of the land of Egypt, and gave unto Moses power that he should heal the nations after they had been bitten by the poisonous serpents, if they would cast their eyes unto the serpent which he did raise up before them, and also gave him power that he should smite the rock and the water should come forth; yea, behold I say unto you, that as these things are true, and as the Lord God liveth, there is none other name given under heaven save it be this Jesus Christ, of which I have spoken, whereby man can be saved.

²¹ Wherefore, for this cause hath the Lord God promised unto me that these things which I write shall be kept and preserved, and handed down unto my seed, from generation to generation, that the promise may be fulfilled unto Joseph, that his seed should never perish as long as the earth should stand.

²² Wherefore, these things shall go from generation to generation as long as the earth shall stand; and they shall go according to the will and pleasure of God; and the nations who shall possess them shall be judged of them according to the words which are written.

²³ For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.

Christ and the Law of Moses

²⁴ And, notwithstanding we believe in Christ, we keep the law of Moses, and look forward with steadfastness unto Christ, until the law shall be fulfilled. ²⁵ For, for this end was the law given; wherefore the law hath become dead unto us, and we are made alive in Christ because of our faith; yet we keep the law because of the commandments. ²⁶ And we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins. ²⁷ Wherefore, we speak concerning the law that our children may know the deadness of the law; and they, by knowing the deadness of the law, may look forward unto that life which is in Christ, and know for what end the law was given. And after the law is fulfilled in Christ, that they need not harden their hearts against him when the law ought to be done away.

20: The God who showed his power during the Exodus will show his power of salvation through Christ. *Poisonous serpents*, see Num 21.4–9, though the BoM makes the miracle of the bronze snake applicable to *the nations*, not just Israel. The BoM also interprets the KJV “fiery” as “poisonous”; see 1 Ne 17.41n. Somewhat unexpectedly, Nephi uses the bronze serpent story as an illustration of God’s power rather than a type of Christ, as at Jn 3.14–15; see chs. 25–30n. *Smite the rock*, see Ex 17.1–7; Num 20.2–13 (Nephi has reversed the order of events in Num). *None other name given under heaven . . . whereby man can be saved*, Acts 4.12; cf. 2 Ne 31.21; Mos 3.17. **21–22:** A prophecy that Nephi’s writings will be preserved. *The promise may be fulfilled unto Joseph*, 3.3, if this Joseph is Nephi’s younger brother; 3.16, if this refers to Joseph of Egypt. **23:** Nephi reveals his two goals in writing. *It is by grace that we are saved*, echoing Jacob’s words at 10.24; cf. Eph 2.5, 8. *After all we can do*, that is, “despite all we can do,” according to 19th c. usage; this phrase can be read as a clarification of Eph 2.8. **24–30:** Nephi’s understanding of the law of Moses is somewhat similar to that of Paul, in that he sees it as a temporary covenant having its fulfillment and termination in Christ (Rom 7.1–6; 10.4; Gal 3.24–26). Yet where Paul proclaims that Christians are dead to the law (Rom 7.4; Gal 2.19), Nephi asserts that the law itself is dead for believers. **26:** This oft-quoted verse repeats the name of Christ at the end of four successive clauses, in a memorable example of epistrophe. **27:** Nephi anticipates that some of his descendants will have difficulty giving up the law of Moses after Christ comes.

²⁸ And now behold, my people, ye are a stiff-necked people; wherefore, I have spoken plainly unto you, that ye cannot misunderstand. And the words which I have spoken shall stand as a testimony against you; for they are sufficient to teach any man the right way; for the right way is to believe in Christ and deny him not; for by denying him ye also deny the prophets and the law.²⁹ And now behold, I say unto you that the right way is to believe in Christ, and deny him not; and Christ is the Holy One of Israel; wherefore ye must bow down before him, and worship him with all your might, mind, and strength, and your whole soul; and if ye do this ye shall in nowise be cast out.³⁰ And, inasmuch as it shall be expedient, ye must keep the performances and ordinances of God until the law shall be fulfilled which was given unto Moses.

Christ and the Nephites

26 ¹ And after Christ shall have risen from the dead he shall show himself

unto you, my children, and my beloved brethren; and the words which he shall speak unto you shall be the law which ye shall do.² For behold, I say unto you that I have beheld that many generations shall pass away, and there shall be great wars and contentions among my people.³ And after the Messiah shall come there shall be signs given unto my people of his birth, and also of his death and resurrection; and great and terrible shall that day be unto the wicked, for they shall perish; and they perish because they cast out the prophets, and the saints, and stone them, and slay them; wherefore the cry of the blood of the saints shall ascend up to God from the ground against them.

⁴ “Wherefore, all those who are proud, and that do wickedly, the day that cometh shall burn them up,” saith the Lord of Hosts, “for they shall be as stubble.”^a ⁵ “And they that kill the prophets, and the saints, the depths of the earth shall swallow them up,” saith the Lord of

^a 4 Mal 4.1; cited at 1 Ne 22.15

28: *The right way* is emphatically defined twice, both here and in the next verse. *Deny him not*, the OT speaks twice of denying God (Josh 24.27; Prov 30.9) and the NT mentions denying God or his acts more than a dozen times, but the BoM—with nearly four dozen instances of denying God, his words, his revelations, his mercies, and his power—appears to have been written with a more skeptical age in mind. At the end of the verse, Christ is inextricably connected to *the prophets and the law*. In the NT these terms are regularly used to describe the developing Jewish canon, generally in the reverse order. **29:** *Christ is the Holy One of Israel*, see 1 Ne 19.10, 13–14. *Worship him*, this direct worship of Christ (also at 4 Ne 1.37) contrasts with worshipping the Father in Christ’s name at v. 16 and Jacob 4.5; cf. 3 Ne 11.17; 19.18. *Worship him with all your might, mind, and strength... soul*, a variation on the commandment at Deut 6.5 to love God with all your heart, soul, and might (Mt 22.37 says heart, soul, and mind). The combination “might, mind, and strength” also appears at Mos 2.11; Alma 39.13; Moro 10.32; and a few times in the early 19th c. **30:** *Performances*, in the BoM this term always refers to sacred ceremonies or rituals, particularly those associated with the law of Moses. *Ordinances*, general religious regulations, as opposed to the rituals required for salvation that would be designated by this term in later LDS usage.

CHAPTER 26

1: Jesus’s teachings among the Nephites (3 Ne 11–28) will replace the law of Moses for them; see 32.6; 3 Ne 15.1–10. *My beloved brethren*, for the first time Nephi adopts an expression that Jacob used thirteen times in chs. 6–10; Nephi will employ this phrase fifteen more times through the end of 2 Ne. **2–6:** Another example of Nephi combining his own revelations (12.2–5) with prophecies from the Brass Plates; see 1 Ne 22.15n. **2–3:** *I have beheld*, these prophecies will be fulfilled in the books of Alma, Helaman, and 3 Nephi. **3:** *Signs of Jesus’s birth and death* can be found at 3 Ne 1.10–21; 8.5–25; cf. Hel 14.1–29. *Cast out the prophets... and stone them*, 3 Ne 7.14. *The cry of the blood... against them*, 3 Ne 9.5–11. The idea that the blood of murder victims cries to God from the ground recurs at 28.10; Alma 20.18; Morm 8.40; Ether 8.22; but originated with the story of Cain and Abel at Gen 4.10. **4–6:** Earlier, Nephi had interpreted Mal 4.1 as pertaining to the last days (1 Ne 22.15–17); here he applies the verse to the events of 3 Ne. **5:** *Grind them to powder*, literalizing that metaphor at Mt 21.44; Lk 20.18.

Hosts; “and mountains shall cover them, and whirlwinds shall carry them away, and build-ings shall fall upon them and crush them to pieces and grind them to powder.⁶ And they shall be visited with thunderings, and lightnings, and earthquakes, and all manner of destructions, for the **fire of the anger of the Lord shall be kindled against them,**^a and they shall be as stubble, and the day that cometh shall consume them,”^b saith the Lord of Hosts.

⁷ O the pain, and the anguish of my soul for the loss of the slain of my people! For I, Nephi, have seen it, and it well nigh consumeth me before the presence of the Lord; but I must cry unto my God, “Thy ways are just.”⁸ But behold, the righteous that hearken unto the words of the prophets, and destroy them not, but look forward unto Christ with steadfastness for the signs which are given, notwithstanding all persecution—behold, they are they which shall not perish.⁹ But the Son of Righteousness shall appear unto them; and he shall heal them, and they shall have peace with him, until three generations shall have passed away, and many of the fourth generation shall have passed away in righteousness.

¹⁰ And when these things have passed away a speedy destruction cometh unto my people;

for, notwithstanding the pains of my soul, I have seen it; wherefore, I know that it shall come to pass; and they sell themselves for naught; for, for the reward of their pride and their foolishness they shall reap destruction; for because they yield unto the devil and choose works of darkness rather than light, therefore they must go down to hell.¹¹ For the Spirit of the Lord will not always strive with man. And when the Spirit ceaseth to strive with man then cometh speedy destruction, and this grieveth my soul.

Christ and the Gentiles

¹² And as I spake concerning the convincing of the Jews, that Jesus is the very Christ, it must needs be that the Gentiles be convinced also that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God;¹³ and that he manifesteth himself unto all those who believe in him, by the power of the Holy Ghost; yea, unto every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, working mighty miracles, signs, and wonders, among the children of men according to their faith.

^a 6 Isa 5.24–25; cited at 2 Ne 15.24–25

^b 6 Mal 4.1; cited at 1 Ne 22.15

6: These prophecies will be fulfilled at 3 Ne 8.5–18. *Fire of the anger of the Lord*, see 1 Ne 22.17n. **7:** *Thy ways are just*, Nephi has now reconciled himself to the will of God (as advised by Jacob at 10.24) regarding the future destruction of his posterity, despite the pain and anguish he has borne since his vision many years earlier (see 1 Ne 15.5). **8–9:** Righteous Nephites and Lamanites who survive the natural disasters sent as signs and judgment (3 Ne 9.13) will indeed see the risen Lord and be healed (3 Ne 11; 17). *Son of righteousness*, the close association of this passage with Mal 4.1–2 suggests that the original wording was “sun” rather than “son”; the two words would have been indistinguishable to the scribe taking JS’s dictation (cf. 3 Ne 25.2; Ether 9.22). *He shall heal them*, cf. 2 Ne 25.13: “with healing in his wings” (Mal 4.2). The three to four generations of peace are recounted in 4 Ne 1. **10:** Nephi saw the final destruction of his people in his vision at 1 Ne 12.19–20. *Sell themselves for naught*, Isa 52.3. **11:** *Spirit of the Lord will not always strive with man*, see 1 Ne 7.14n; Moro 8.28n. **12:** *As I spake*, 25.18 (with the understanding that “Messiah” and “Christ” are synonymous). The language of *convincing Jews and Gentiles that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God* is echoed in the BoM title page. **13:** This verse offers a synopsis of the message of the BoM: that Christ will manifest himself by the Holy Ghost, through miracles, to all who believe, regardless of era or location; see 1 Ne 10.11, 17; 3 Ne 15.23; Moro 10.4.

The Descendants of Lehi, in the Last Days (midrash on Isaiah 29.3–5)^a

¹⁴ But behold, I prophesy unto you concerning the last days; concerning the days when the Lord God shall bring these things forth unto the children of men. ¹⁵ After my seed and the seed of my brethren shall have dwindled in unbelief, and shall have been smitten by the Gentiles; yea, after the Lord God shall have **camped against them round about**, and shall have **laid siege against them with a mount**, and **raised forts against them**; and after they shall have **been brought down** low in the dust, even that they are not, yet the words of the righteous shall be written, and the prayers of the faithful shall be heard, and all those who have dwindled in unbelief shall not be forgotten. ¹⁶ For those who shall be destroyed shall **speak** unto them **out of the ground**, and **their speech shall be low out of the dust**, and **their voice shall be as one that hath a familiar spirit**; for the Lord God will give unto him power, that he may whisper concerning them, even as it were **out of the ground**; and **their speech shall whisper out of the dust**.

¹⁷ For thus saith the Lord God, “They shall write the things which shall be done among them, and they shall be written and sealed up in a book, and those who have dwindled in unbelief shall not have them, for they seek to destroy the things of God.” ¹⁸ Wherefore, as those who have been destroyed have been destroyed speedily; and **the multitude of their terrible ones shall be as chaff that passeth away**—yea, thus saith the Lord God, “**It shall be at an instant, suddenly**” — ¹⁹ and it shall come to pass, that those who have dwindled in unbelief shall be smitten by the hand of the Gentiles.

The Gentiles in the Last Days

²⁰ And the Gentiles are **lifted up**^b in the pride of their eyes, and have **stumbled**, because of the greatness of their **stumbling block**,^c that they have built up many churches; nevertheless, they put down the power and miracles of

^a 14 Note that the phrases in bold in vv. 14–19 reproduce Isa 29.3–5.

^b 20 Isa 2.12–14; cited at 2 Ne 12.12–14

^c 20 Isa 8.14–15; cited at 2 Ne 18.14–15

14–19: This passage interprets Isa 29.3–5 (originally referring to a devastating siege of Jerusalem) by recontextualizing its words within a prophecy concerning the Lamanites and the coming forth of the BoM in the last days. Just as Isa 29.3–5 can be seen in the bold phrases, most of the rest of Isaiah 29, in order, is interspersed through 2 Ne 26.14–27.35. The term *midrash* used in the heading here and at 27.6–23 is anachronistic, yet the creative reinterpretation of a scriptural passage in ways that highlight its hidden significance with regard to new contexts and situations is akin to this later form of rabbinic exegesis. The fact that this is done through insertions within a continual, phrase-by-phrase recitation of the original passage is extraordinary. **14–15:** Several phrases that appear before the bolded quotations echo the words of Jesus to Nephi, relayed through an angel, at 1 Ne 13.34–35: “I will bring forth unto them,” “after thy seed shall . . . dwindle in unbelief, and also the seed of thy brethren,” and “smitten them by the hand of the Gentiles.” **14:** *These things*, the BoM; see 25.21. **15–16:** After the descendants of Lehi have become alienated from their heritage, God will respond to the writings and prayers of their faithful forebears (e.g., 3.19–21; 29.2; Enos 1.11–18; WoM 1.11; Morm 8.23–26), and will make it possible for the voices of the dead to be heard again, through the BoM. *With a mount*, with a siege tower. *Familiar spirit*, a ghost. *Give unto him power*, the identity of the “him” is unclear; perhaps it refers to Moroni, or to the translator. **17–18:** *Those who have dwindled in unbelief* are the Lamanites; those who have *been destroyed speedily* are the Nephites. **17:** *Sealed up in a book*, the gold plates. **18:** *Terrible ones*, tyrants; in Nephi’s recontextualization, this refers to the vanquished Nephites. **20–23:** Competing Christian denominations in the latter days will *stumble*, perhaps as a result of lost scriptural texts (see 1 Ne 13.29), and they will not be able to recover because of their pride, self-interest, and rejection of God’s power and miracles. *Churches*, see 1 Ne 13.5n. **20:** *Pride of their eyes*, haughty looks; the phrase is quite rare before the 19th c. but appears seven times in the BoM.

God, and preach up unto themselves their own wisdom and their own learning, that they may get gain and **grind upon the face of the poor.**^a

²¹ And there are many churches built up which cause envyings, and strifes, and malice.

²² And there are also secret combinations, even as in times of old, according to the combinations of the devil, for he is the foundation^b of all these things; yea, the foundation of murder, and works of darkness; yea, and he leadeth them by the neck with a flaxen cord, until he bindeth them with his strong cords forever.^c

²³ For behold, my beloved brethren, I say unto you that the Lord God worketh not in darkness.

The Lord Invites and Commands

²⁴ He doeth not anything save it be for the benefit of the world; for he loveth the world, even that he layeth down his own life that he may draw all men unto him. Wherefore, he commandeth none that they shall not partake of his salvation. ²⁵ 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.**”^d

²⁶ 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. ²⁷ Hath he commanded any that they

should not partake of his salvation? Behold I say unto you, Nay; but he hath given it free for all men; and he hath commanded his people that they should persuade all men to repentance. ²⁸ Behold, hath the Lord commanded any that they should not partake of his goodness? Behold I say unto you, Nay; but all men are privileged the one like unto the other, and none are forbidden.

²⁹ He commandeth that there shall be no priestcrafts; for, behold, priestcrafts are that men preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world; but they seek not the welfare of Zion. ³⁰ Behold, the Lord hath forbidden this thing; wherefore, the Lord God hath given a commandment that all men should have charity, which charity is love. And except they should have charity they were nothing. Wherefore, if they should have charity they would not suffer the laborer in Zion to perish.

³¹ But the laborer in Zion shall labor for Zion; for if they labor for money they shall perish.

^a 20 Isa 3.15; cited at 2 Ne 13.15

^b 22 O, 1981 *founder* [twice in this verse]

^c 22 See Isa 5.18; cited at 2 Ne 15.18.

^d 25 Isa 55.1; cited at 2 Ne 9.50

22: *Even as in times of old*, see Hel 6.26–30. For more on the nature and origins of *secret combinations*, see Ether 8. *Flaxen cord*: a light linen string; the expression is unique here in scripture. **24:** *Layeth down his... life*, a Johannine expression (Jn 10.17–18; see 2.8n), here combined with *loved the world* (Jn 3.16) and *draw all men unto him* (Jn 12.32; see 3 Ne 27.14n). The first two expressions are paired again at Ether 12.33. **25:** *Depart from me*, God does not say this yet, but he will later; see Mt 7.23 (3 Ne 14.23); 25.41; Lk 13.27. Nephi transforms God’s general summons at Isa 55.1 into a personal invitation to come to Christ (see 1 Ne 8.15–18n), in the process replacing Isaiah’s “wine and milk” with *milk and honey*, a common OT description of the bounties of the promised land (note that Jacob had earlier quoted Isa 55.1–2 at 2 Ne 9.50–51). *All ye ends of the earth* is a non-biblical phrase that occurs eight times in the BoM, nearly always in invitations to repent or come to Christ. It is indicative of the Nephite writers’ awareness of the global scope of their message (but see also Isa 45.22; Morm 3.18; Moro 10.24 for prophets addressing “all the ends of the earth”). **27:** God’s freely given salvation stands in sharp contrast to churches whose ambition is to “get gain” or “grind upon the face of the poor” (v. 20). **29:** *Priestcrafts* are regularly condemned in the BoM; this verse provides a succinct definition of the term; cf. 10.5n. As often in the BoM, *Zion* here refers to God’s future kingdom on earth rather than to Jerusalem; cf. 1 Ne 13.37n. **30–31:** Charity is positioned here as the opposite of priestcraft. Without charity, *they were nothing*, cf. 1 Cor 13.2. Church leaders whose actions are characterized by charity will see to it that the basic needs of members (*laborers in Zion*) are met, but neither members nor leaders should do church work for the sake of remuneration; cf. Mos 18.26–28.

³² And again, the Lord God hath commanded that men should not murder; that they should not lie; that they should not steal; that they should not take the name of the Lord their God in vain; that they should not envy; that they should not have malice; that they should not contend one with another; that they should not commit whoredoms; and that they should do none of these things; for whoso doeth them shall perish. ³³ For none of these iniquities come of the Lord; for he doeth that which is good among the children of men; and he doeth nothing save it be plain unto the children of men; and he inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile.

Nephi, Quotes Isaiah 29.6–10: Those Who Fight against Zion

(with significant changes and additions to the King James Bible in bold)

27 ¹ But, behold, in the last days, or in the days of the Gentiles—yea, behold all the nations of the Gentiles and also the Jews, both those who shall come upon this land and those who shall be upon other lands, yea, even upon all the lands of the earth, behold, they will be drunken with iniquity and all manner of abominations^a—

² **And when that day shall come they shall be visited of the Lord of Hosts,**
with thunder and with earthquake,
and **with a great noise, and** with storm,
and **with** tempest,
and **with** the flame of devouring fire.
³ And^b all the nations that fight against **Zion,**^c and that distress her,
shall be as a dream of a night vision;
yea, it shall be unto them, even as
unto a hungry man **which**
dreameth,
and behold he eateth but he
awaketh and his soul is empty;
or **like unto** a thirsty man **which**
dreameth,
and behold he drinketh but he
awaketh and behold he is faint,
and his soul hath appetite;
yea, even so shall the multitude of all
the nations be
that fight against Mount Zion.

⁴ **For behold, all ye that doeth iniquity,**
stay yourselves and wonder,

^a ¹ This introductory verse is not from Isa 29.

^b ³ Nephi, here omits “the multitude of” from Isa 29.7.

^c ³ Nephi, here omits “even all that fight against her and her munition” from Isa 29.7.

32: This list includes six of the ten commandments; see Ex 20.7–17. 33: *Inviteth all to . . . partake of his goodness*, the question posed in v. 28 is answered a second time. Typical social distinctions are of no importance to God, who offers salvation to all people equally; three of the polarities here are also found in Gal 3.28; cf. 2 Ne 10.16.

CHAPTER 27

1: *In the last days*, continuing the prophecies that began with 26.14. *Drunken with iniquity* provides an explanation of v. 4 below. 2–3: After the Lord’s judgments come upon them, all the achievements of those *that fight against Zion* will seem as insubstantial as a dream. *Zion* has been substituted for “Ariel,” a poetic name for Jerusalem, literally “lion of God” or “hearth of God,” referring to the hearth atop the altar of the Temple. 4: *Stay yourselves and wonder*, “act stupid and be stupefied” (NJPS).

for ye shall cry out, and cry;
 yea, ye shall be drunken but not with
 wine,
 ye shall stagger but not with strong
 drink.

⁵ For **behold**, the Lord hath poured
 out upon you the spirit of deep
 sleep,
for behold, ye have closed your
 eyes;
and ye have rejected the prophets and
 your rulers,
and the seers hath he covered
because of your iniquity.

A Sealed Book (midrash on Isaiah 29.11–12)^a

⁶ And it shall come to pass that the Lord God shall bring forth unto you **the words of a book**, and they shall be the words of them which have slumbered. ⁷ And behold the book **shall be sealed**; and in the book shall be a revelation from God, from the beginning of the world to the ending thereof. ⁸ Wherefore, because of the things which are sealed up, the things which are sealed shall not be delivered in the day of the wickedness and abominations of the people. Wherefore the book shall be kept from them.

⁹ But the book shall be delivered unto a man, and he shall deliver the words of the book, which are the words of those who have slumbered in the dust, and **he shall deliver** these words unto another; ¹⁰ but the words which are sealed he shall not deliver, neither shall he deliver the book. For the book shall be sealed by the power of God, and the revelation which was sealed shall be kept in the book until the own due time of the Lord, that they may come forth; for behold, they reveal all things from the foundation of the world unto the end thereof. ¹¹ And the day cometh that the words of the book which were sealed shall be read upon the house tops; and they shall be read by the power of Christ; and all things shall be revealed unto the children of men which ever have been among the children of men, and which ever will be even unto the end of the earth.

¹² Wherefore, at that day when the book shall be delivered unto the man of whom I have spoken, the book shall be hid from the eyes of the world, that the eyes of none shall behold it save it be that three witnesses shall behold it, by the power of God, besides

^a 6 Note that the phrases in bold in vv. 6–19 reproduce Isa 29.11–12.

5: A striking reworking of the original Hebrew, as reflected in Robert Alter's translation: the Lord has "closed your eyes—the prophets, / and covered your heads—the seers." The added phrases make the people themselves, rather than the Lord, responsible for their confused, degenerate condition; cf. Rom 11.8. **6–23:** Nephi expands Isaiah's words, recontextualizing them as describing the coming forth of the Nephite record. JS believed the prophecies in this section were fulfilled when Martin Harris took some characters copied from the gold plates to Professor Charles Anthon in New York City in 1828; see Joseph Smith—History 1.62–65. Throughout the passage a distinction is made between the *book* (the gold plates) and the words therein. **6:** *Bring forth unto you*, the shift to a second-person pronoun, in which Nephi addresses his readers directly, is an indication of his realization that his ultimate audience will be Jews and Gentiles in the last days (v. 1); see 1 Ne 19.18–19n; 2 Ne 25.7–8n. The Bible never uses *slumber* as a euphemism for death, as here and v. 9; cf. Jacob 3.11. It may be an allusion to the "deep sleep" of the previous verse. **7:** A reference to the sealed portion of the gold plates; see Ether 3.25–28; 4.5–6. **9:** *The book shall be delivered to a man*, Joseph Smith. *He shall deliver these words to another*, Martin Harris. **10–11:** The sealed portion of the record contains a universal history of the world, which will someday be made accessible to all; cf. Ether 3.21–28. *The end of the earth* is a phrase that appears nearly a dozen times in the Bible and the BoM; this is the only instance in which it refers to time rather than geography. **12:** *Three witnesses*, see the "Testimony of Three Witnesses"; cf. Ether 5.2–4.

him to whom the book shall be delivered; and they shall testify to the truth of the book and the things therein.¹³ And there is none other which shall view it, save it be a few according to the will of God, to bear testimony of his word unto the children of men; for the Lord God hath said that the words of the faithful should speak as if it were from the dead.¹⁴ Wherefore, the Lord God will proceed to bring forth the words of the book; and in the mouth of as many witnesses as seemeth him good will he establish his word; and wo be unto him that rejecteth the word of God!

¹⁵ But behold, it shall come to pass that the Lord God shall say unto him to whom he shall deliver the book, “Take these words which are not sealed and deliver them to another, that he may show them **unto the learned, saying: ‘Read this, I pray thee.’**”

And the learned shall say, “Bring hither the book, and I will read them.”¹⁶ And now, because of the glory of the world and to get gain will they say this, and not for the glory of God.

¹⁷ And **the man shall say, “I cannot bring the book, for it is sealed.”**

¹⁸ Then shall the learned say, “I cannot read it.”

¹⁹ Wherefore it shall come to pass, that the Lord God will **deliver again the book** and the words thereof **to him that is not learned;** and the man that is not learned **shall say, “I am not learned.”**

²⁰ Then shall the Lord God say unto him, “The learned shall not read them, for they have rejected them, and I am able to do mine

own work; wherefore thou shalt read the words which I shall give unto thee.²¹ Touch not the things which are sealed, for I will bring them forth in mine own due time; for I will show unto the children of men that I am able to do mine own work.²² Wherefore, when thou hast read the words which I have commanded thee, and obtained the witnesses which I have promised unto thee, then shalt thou seal up the book again, and hide it up unto me, that I may preserve the words which thou hast not read, until I shall see fit in mine own wisdom to reveal all things unto the children of men.²³ For behold, I am God; and I am a God of miracles; and I will show unto the world that I am the same yesterday, today, and forever; and I work not among the children of men save it be according to their faith.”

Nephi, Quotes Isaiah 29.13–16: The Lord Knows All

(with significant changes and additions to the King James Bible in bold)

²⁴ And again it shall come to pass that the Lord shall say unto him that shall read the words that shall be delivered him:⁴

²⁵ “Forasmuch as this people draw near
unto me with their mouth,
and with their lips do honor me,
but have removed their **hearts** far
from me,

⁴ 24 This introductory verse is not from Isa 29.

13: *Save it be a few... to bear testimony*, see the “Testimony of Eight Witnesses.” *Speak as if it were from the dead*, cf. Isa 29.4; 2 Ne 3.19–21; Morm 8.23, 26; 9.30. **14:** The language of Mt 18.16 and 2 Cor 13.1 (both quoting Deut 19.15) has been modified to allow for more than just two or three witnesses, so that “every word may be established.” **15:** *Another*, Martin Harris. *The learned*, Charles Anthon. **19:** *The man that is not learned*, Joseph Smith. **20–23:** Instructions to the future translator of the BoM; cf. Ether 5.1–6. **21–22:** *I am able to do mine own work*, a declaration, repeated twice, that God will not be limited by the expectations or actions of human beings. *Read the words*, for some LDS scholars, this phrase suggests that JS dictated the BoM as he read the words in a seer stone. **22:** *Hide it up unto me*, this sounds like a command to rebury the gold plates, though JS later said that he had returned them to the angel (JS–History 1.60). **23:** *God of miracles*, non-biblical, but seven times in the BoM; see Morm 9.10–19n. **25:** *Quoted by Jesus at Mt 15.8–9; Mk 7.6–7; and again at JS’s first vision, according to Joseph Smith–History 1.19. Their fear towards me is taught by the precepts of men*, “[their] worship of me has been a commandment of men, learned by rote” (NJPS).

and their fear towards me is taught
by the **precepts** of men—
²⁶ Therefore, I will proceed to do a
marvelous work among this
people,
yea, a marvelous work and a
wonder,
for the wisdom of their wise **and**
learned shall perish,
and the understanding of their
prudent shall be hid.
²⁷ **And** wo unto them that seek deep to
hide their counsel from the
Lord!
And their works are in the dark;
and they say, ‘Who seeth us, and
who knoweth us?’
And they also say, ‘Surely, your
turning of things upside down
shall be esteemed as the potter’s clay.’”
“But behold, I will show unto them,”
saith the Lord of Hosts,
“that I know all their works.
For shall the work say of him that
made it,
‘He made me not’?
Or shall the thing framed say of him
that framed it,
‘He had no understanding’?”

**Nephi, Quotes Isaiah 29.17–24: Hope for
the Future**

*(with significant changes and additions to
the King James Bible in bold)*

²⁸ **But behold, saith the Lord of Hosts:**

**“I will show unto the children of
men**

that it is yet a very little while
and Lebanon shall be turned into a
fruitful field;
and the fruitful field shall be
esteemed as a forest.”

²⁹ And in that day shall the deaf hear
the words of the book,
and the eyes of the blind shall see
out of obscurity
and out of darkness.

³⁰ **And** the meek also shall increase,
and their joy shall be in the Lord,
and the poor among men
shall rejoice in the Holy One of
Israel.

³¹ For **assuredly as the Lord liveth**
they shall see that the terrible one is
brought to naught,
and the scorner is consumed,
and all that watch for iniquity are
cut off;

³² **and they** that make a man an
offender for a word,

²⁶: Nephi’s insertion *and learned* connects Isaiah’s prophecy with Jacob’s words at 2 Ne 9.28. *A marvelous work and a wonder*, “shocking and amazing [things]” (NRSV); Nephi took the KJV phrase as a reference to the BoM itself at 25.17–18; cf. 1 Ne 14.7n; 22.8–9n. ²⁷: *I will show unto them...*, the first of three related insertions in this chapter; the other two are “I will show unto the children of men...” (v. 28) and “they shall see that...” (v. 31). *Surely... potter’s clay*, traditionally, this accusation of getting things backward is thought to have been spoken by the prophet rather than by the wicked. **28–35**: Isaiah prophesies of a future era of reversal when the disabled and the poor will be lifted up, while tyrants and scoffers will be brought low. *The fear [of] the God of Israel* (v. 34) is inextricably connected to social justice. **28**: Images of reversal are taken from the landscape, as heavily forested Lebanon becomes farmland and farmland becomes a forest. **31**: *As the Lord liveth*, an oath that appears regularly in 1–2 Sam and 1–2 Kings. *All that watch for iniquity*, “those diligent for evil” (NJPS). **32**: This verse condemns those who use legal proceedings to take advantage of the vulnerable; city gates were often the places of judgment (e.g., 2 Sam 15.2). **32**: The creative reinterpretation in vv. 6–23 is an invitation for readers to see other references to the BoM in Isa 29, such as “the book” in v. 29 and *the word* in this verse; indeed, the allusion in 28.16 to *the just* mentioned here also seems to stand in for the BoM.

and lay a snare for him that
reproveth in the gate,
and turn aside the just for a thing of
naught.

- ³³ Therefore, thus saith the Lord, who
redeemed Abraham,
concerning the house of Jacob:
Jacob shall not now be ashamed,
neither shall his face now wax pale.
- ³⁴ But when he seeth his children,
the work of my hands,
in the midst of him,
they shall sanctify my name,
and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob,
and shall fear the God of Israel.
- ³⁵ They also that erred in spirit shall
come to understanding,
and they that murmured shall learn
doctrine.

Nephi, Speaks of Corrupt Churches in the Last Days

[XII] 28 ¹ And now, behold, my
brethren, I have spoken
unto you, according as the Spirit hath con-
strained me; wherefore, I know that they must
surely come to pass. ² The things which shall
be written out of the book shall be of great
worth unto the children of men, and especially
unto our seed, which is a remnant of the house
of Israel.

³ For it shall come to pass in that day that
the churches which are built up, and not unto

the Lord, when the one shall say unto the
other, “Behold, I, I am the Lord’s”; and the
others shall say, “I, I am the Lord’s”; and thus
shall every one say that hath built up churches,
and not unto the Lord— ⁴ And they shall
contend one with another; and their priests
shall contend one with another, and they shall
teach with their learning, and deny the Holy
Ghost, which giveth utterance. ⁵ And they deny
the power of God, the Holy One of Israel.

And they say unto the people, “Hearken
unto us, and hear ye our precept; for behold
there is no God today, for the Lord and the
Redeemer hath done his work, and he hath
given his power unto men. ⁶ Behold, hearken
ye unto my precept; if they shall say there is a
miracle wrought by the hand of the Lord,
believe it not; for this day he is not a God of
miracles; he hath done his work.”

⁷ Yea, and there shall be many which shall
say, “Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow
we die; and it shall be well with us.” ⁸ And
there shall also be many which shall say, “Eat,
drink, and be merry; nevertheless, fear
God—he will justify in committing a little
sin; yea, lie a little, take the advantage of one
because of his words, dig a pit for thy neigh-
bor; there is no harm in this; and do all these
things, for tomorrow we die; and if it so be
that we are guilty, God will beat us with a few
stripes, and at last we shall be saved in the
kingdom of God.” ⁹ Yea, and there shall be
many which shall teach after this manner,
false and vain and foolish doctrines, and shall
be puffed up in their hearts, and **shall seek
deep to hide their counsels from the Lord;**

33: Abraham is a model of someone who trusted in the Lord and was redeemed, perhaps from idolatry or from wandering.

CHAPTER 28

1–2: *My brethren*, Nephi returns to addressing his fellow Lehtes, whose *seed* would someday include the latter-day Lamanites; see 27.6n; 30.1. 1: *They*, these words. 2: *The book*, the BoM. 3–10: At a time of contending denominations, some will rely on their learning while rejecting miracles and gifts of the Spirit as obsolete and unnecessary, while others will preach hedonism or divine leniency. 3: *I am the Lord’s*, Isa 44.5. 7: The quotation adroitly conflates Isa 22.13 with phrases from Eccl 8.12, 15; cf. Lk 12.19. 8–9: *Stripe*, WB: “A stroke made with a lash, whip, rod, strap or scourge.”

and their works shall be in the dark.^{a 10} And the blood of the saints shall cry from the ground against them.

¹¹ Yea, they have all gone out of the way; they have become corrupted ¹² because of pride. And because of false teachers, and false doctrine,^b their churches have become corrupted, and their churches are **lifted up**;^c because of pride they are puffed up. ¹³ They rob the poor because of their fine sanctuaries; they rob the poor because of their fine clothing; and they persecute the meek and the poor in heart, because in their pride they are puffed up. ¹⁴ They wear stiff necks and high heads; yea, and because of pride, and wickedness, and abominations, and whoredoms, they have **all gone astray**^d save it be a few, who are the humble followers of Christ; nevertheless, they are led, that in many instances they do err because they are **taught by the precepts of men.**^e

The Kingdom of the Devil

¹⁵ O the wise, and the learned, and the rich, that are puffed up in the pride of their hearts, and all those who preach false doctrines, and all those who commit whoredoms, and pervert the right way of the Lord. “Wo, wo, wo be unto them,” saith the Lord God Almighty, “for they shall be thrust down to hell!”

¹⁶ Wo unto them that **turn aside the just for a thing of naught**^f and revile against that

which is good, and say that it is of no worth! For the day shall come that the Lord God will speedily visit the inhabitants of the earth; and in that day that they are fully ripe in iniquity they shall perish. ¹⁷ But behold, “if the inhabitants of the earth shall repent of their wickedness and abominations they shall not be destroyed,” saith the Lord of Hosts.

¹⁸ But behold, that great and abominable church, the whore of all the earth, must tumble to the earth, and great must be the fall thereof. ¹⁹ For the kingdom of the devil must shake, and they which belong to it must needs be stirred up unto repentance, or the devil will grasp them with his everlasting chains, and they be stirred up to anger, and perish; ²⁰ for behold, at that day shall he rage in the hearts of the children of men, and stir them up to anger against that which is good.

²¹ And others will he pacify, and lull them away into carnal security, that they will say, “All is well in Zion; yea, Zion prospereth, all is well”—and thus the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell.

^a 9 Isa 29.15; cited at 2 Ne 27.27

^b 12 P doctrines

^c 12 Isa 2.12–14; cited at 2 Ne 12.12–14

^d 14 Isa 53.6; cf. 2 Ne 12.5

^e 14 Isa 29.13; cited at 2 Ne 27.25

^f 16 Isa 29.21; cited at 2 Ne 27.32

12: In the BoM, plural “doctrines” (the reading in P) are always false, and the singular “doctrine” refers to true doctrine. **14:** *Wear stiff necks*, perhaps a reference to clerical collars. **15–23:** This section and the next (vv. 24–32) draw heavily on Jacob’s phrases in ch. 9, including the devil’s “grasp,” “the wise, and the learned, and they that are rich, who are puffed up,” “thrust down to hell,” “death and hell and the devil,” “judged of their works,” “lake of fire and brimstone, which is endless torment,” and multiple woes (some of these also occur in Rev; see v. 23n). In so doing, they fulfill Nephi’s desire at 11.1–3 to combine his witness with that of Isaiah and Jacob. **15:** The first four categories of people were also mentioned by Jacob at 9.42. Nephi further alludes to Jacob’s words at 9.34, reinterpreting “liars” as *those who preach false doctrines*. **16:** *For a thing of naught*, not “in return for nothing,” but rather “considering it to be nothing,” as at 33.2; see 27.32n. *Revile against that which is good*, the broader context suggests that this may refer to the BoM itself. *Of no worth*, see 1 Ne 22.8–9n. **18:** See 1 Ne 22.13–14. **19–23:** The devil’s tools include anger, duplicity, and deception. **21:** *All is well*, in both the Bible and BoM this phrase is always associated with duplicitous messages (2 Sam 18.28; 2 Kings 5.22; Hel 13.28). *Carefully*, WB: “watchfully, attentively” or “cautiously.”

²² And behold, others he flattereth away, and telleth them there is no hell; and he saith unto them, “I am no devil, for there is none”—and thus he whispereth in their ears, until he grasps them with his awful chains, from whence there is no deliverance. ²³ Yea, they are grasped with death, and hell; and death, and hell, and the devil, and all that have been seized therewith must stand before the throne of God, and be judged according to their works, from whence they must go into the place prepared for them, even a lake of fire and brimstone, which is endless torment.

Woe Pronouncements

- ²⁴ Therefore, wo be unto him that is at ease in Zion!
- ²⁵ Wo be unto him that crieth, “All is well!”
- ²⁶ Yea, wo be unto him that hearkeneth unto **the precepts of men**,^a and denieth the power of God, and the gift of the Holy Ghost!
- ²⁷ Yea, wo be unto him that saith, “We have received, and we need no more!”
- ²⁸ And in fine, wo unto all those who tremble, and are angry because of the truth of God!

For behold, he that is built upon the rock receiveth it with gladness; and he that is built upon a sandy foundation trembleth lest he shall fall.

²⁹ Wo be unto him that shall say, “We have received the word of God, and we need no more of the word of God, for we have enough!”

The Lord Speaks of the Bible and Additional Scriptures

³⁰ For behold, thus saith the Lord God, “I will give unto the children of men ‘line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little’;^b and blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts, and lend an ear unto my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom; for unto him that receiveth I will give more; and from them that shall say, ‘We have enough,’ from them shall be taken away even that which they have.”³¹ “Cursed is he that putteth his trust in man, or maketh flesh his arm,^c or shall hearken unto **the precepts of men**, save their precepts shall be given by the power of the Holy Ghost.”

^a 26 Isa 29.13; cited at 2 Ne 27.25 and 28.31 below

^b 30 Isa 28.10, 13

^c 31 Jer 17.5; cited at 2 Ne 4.34

23: *Stand before... God, and be judged according to their works*, Rev. 20.12, and eight times in the BoM. “Death and hell,” “the devil,” “throne” [of God], “lake of fire and brimstone,” and “tormented... for ever” all appear in Rev 20.10–13. **24–32:** This series of woes reprises and expands on the warnings in vv. 15–16 and 19–21 about pride, passivity, and anger, particularly with regard to rejecting additional revelation—a topic that will be taken up in the lengthy quotation of the Lord at 28.30–29.14. The genre of woe pronouncements echoes Jacob at 9.27–38 and Isaiah at 2 Ne 15.8–25. **24:** *Wo be unto him that is at ease in Zion*, Am 6.1. **26:** *Denieth the power of God*, see v. 5. **28:** *Receiveth it with gladness and built upon the rock... upon a sandy foundation* merge phrases from the parable of the sower (Mk 4.16) and the parable of the wise man and the foolish man (Mt 7.24–27). **30:** Beginning in this verse, the Lord’s words to Nephi are quoted directly, for the first time since 5.25. *Line upon line... there a little*, an obscure Hebrew expression at Isa 28.10—perhaps meant to represent prophetic words that sound like nonsense to the rebellious—is here interpreted as continuing, progressive revelation. *Lend an ear*, non-biblical, but famous from Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* 3.2.82. The giving and taking described here is similar to that in the parable of the talents (Mt 25.29; Lk 19.26).

³² “Wo be unto the Gentiles,” saith the Lord God of Hosts! “For notwithstanding I shall lengthen out mine arm unto them from day to day, they will deny me.” “Nevertheless, I will be merciful unto them,” saith the Lord God, “if they will repent and come unto me.” “For mine arm is lengthened out all the day long,” saith the Lord God of Hosts.

29 ¹ “But behold, there shall be many—**at that day when I shall proceed to do a marvelous work among them,**^a that I may remember my covenants which I have made unto the children of men, that I may **set my hand again the second time to recover my people,**^b which are of the house of Israel; ² and also, that I may remember the promises which I have made unto thee, Nephi, and also unto thy father, that I would remember your seed; and that the words of your seed should proceed forth out of my mouth unto your seed; and my words shall **hiss forth unto the ends of the earth,**^c for a standard unto my people,^d which are of the house of Israel; ³ and because my words shall hiss forth—many of the Gentiles shall say, ‘A Bible! A Bible!

We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible.’”

⁴ 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? ⁵ O ye Gentiles, have ye remembered the Jews, mine ancient covenant 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.

⁶ “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? ⁷ Know ye not that there are more nations

^a 1 Isa 29.14; cited at 2 Ne 25.17; 27.26

^b 1 Isa 11.11; cited at 2 Ne 21.11; 25.17

^c 2 Isa 5.26; cited at 2 Ne 15.26

^d 2 Isa 49.22; cited at 1 Ne 21.22 and 2 Ne 6.6

32: *Mine arm is lengthened out all the day long*, a gesture of mercy; cf. Isa 65.2 (quoted at Rom 10.21; Jacob 5.47; 6.4). The phrase contrasts with “his hand is stretched out still”; see 15.24–25n.

CHAPTER 29

1: *There shall be many*, the thought is not completed until v. 3: “many of the Gentiles shall say.” The Lord here picks up Nephi’s combining of Isa 11.11 and Isa 29.14 at 2 Ne 25.17 (in reverse order), and then extends the interpretation with two additional phrases from Isaiah in v. 2. **2:** The BoM (*the words of your seed*) will become a rallying *standard* for the house of Israel, even though many Gentiles will reject the possibility of new scripture. (At 1 Ne 22.6, the “standard” of Isa 49.22 was interpreted as the Gentiles themselves.) *Remember the promises . . . unto your seed*, see 1 Ne 13.41; 2 Ne 3.21; 25.21. The term “Bible” occurs only in this chapter of the BoM. *Hiss* generally has negative connotations, but the connection to Isa 5.26 suggests this is something like a summoning whistle. **4:** The entire Bible, including the NT, is considered to have come from the Jews (as at 1 Ne 13.20–28), who are here spoken of very favorably, in contrast to 25.1–2; indeed, it seems that the Lord is correcting Nephi’s earlier, overly harsh criticism. *Travails*, WB: “labor with pain, severe toil”; often referring to birth pains and here delivering *salvation unto the Gentiles*. **5:** *Return . . . upon their own heads*, a characteristic phrase from the Deuteronomistic History; it appears again at 3 Ne 20.28 (also with regard to latter-day Gentiles). *I . . . have not forgotten my people*, cf. Isa 44.21; 1 Ne 21.14. **6–8:** Because God loves his children equally (*I remember one nation like unto another*), he has revealed his words to more nations than just Israel, and their combined testimonies will stand as a witness of his universal care. **6:** Where skeptics in v. 3 rejected the possibility of additional scripture, here they dispute the need for it; cf. 28.27, 29. 7: *Isles of the sea*, see 10.21–22n. **7–8:** The three repetitions of *know ye not* are striking, as the Lord attempts to elicit agreement from his listeners; Paul uses the same technique in 1 Cor 6, where the question appears six times.

than one? Know ye not that I, the Lord your God, have created all men, and that I remember those who are upon the isles of the sea; and that I rule in the heavens above and in the earth beneath; and I bring forth my word unto the children of men, yea, even upon all the nations of the earth?⁸ Wherefore murmur ye, because that ye shall receive more of my word? Know ye not that the testimony of two nations is a witness unto you that I am God, that I remember one nation like unto another?

“Wherefore, I speak the same words unto one nation like unto another. And when the two nations shall run together the testimony of the two nations shall run together also.⁹ And I do this that I may prove unto many that I am the same yesterday, today, and forever; and that I speak forth my words according to mine own pleasure. And because that I have spoken one word ye need not suppose that I cannot speak another; for my work is not yet finished; neither shall it be until the end of man, neither from that time henceforth and forever.¹⁰ Wherefore, because that ye have a Bible ye need not suppose that it contains all my words; neither need ye suppose that I have not caused more to be written.¹¹ For I command all men, both in the east and in the west, and in the north, and in the south, and in the **islands of**

the sea,“ that they shall write the words which I speak unto them; for out of the books which shall be written I will judge the world, every man according to their works, according to that which is written.

¹² “For behold, I shall speak unto the Jews and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the Nephites and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the other tribes of the house of Israel, which I have led away, and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto all nations of the earth and they shall write it.¹³ And it shall come to pass that the Jews shall have the words of the Nephites, and the Nephites shall have the words of the Jews; and the Nephites and the Jews shall have the words of the lost tribes of Israel; and the lost tribes of Israel shall have the words of the Nephites and the Jews.¹⁴ And it shall come to pass that my people, which are of the house of Israel, shall be gathered home unto the lands of their possessions; and my word also shall be gathered in one. And I will show unto them that fight against my word and against my people, who are of the house of Israel, that I am God, and that I covenanted with Abraham that I would remember his seed forever.”

⁴ 11 Isa 11.11; cited at 2 Ne 21.11

8–14: God has spoken to various nations throughout history who have recorded his words, and when those nations discover one another, they will share their scriptures. A similar process is recounted at Mos 25.1–11, when the people of Limhi and the people of Alma are reunited with the Nephites at Zarahemla after a separation of eighty years. At a public ceremony, the records of the two long-lost groups are read aloud; see Mos 8.5; 22.14. **8:** *Testimony of two nations is a witness*, see Deut 19.15; Mt 18.16; 2 Cor 13.1. **11:** *Out of the books... according to their works*, the language is similar to Rev 20.12, but there the dead will be judged according to heavenly records of their deeds, whereas here they will be judged against the standards of earthly records containing God’s revelations; cf. 25.18; 3 Ne 27.23–26. **12:** Three collections of God’s words are specifically mentioned—the Bible of the Jews, the BoM of the Nephites, and a still-to-be-recovered record of the *lost tribes of Israel* (that is, the ten tribes carried away captive by the Assyrians in 722 BCE; cf. 1 Ne 22.4; 3 Ne 17.4)—yet apparently remnants of revelation can be found among *all nations of the earth* (cf. Alma 29.8). Like Hel 10.8–10, this verse features both anaphora and epistrophe. **13–14:** The gathering of Israel (to multiple *lands*) will be accompanied by a gathering of sacred texts. *Show unto them... that I am God*, as in v. 8 above. *Them that fight against my word*, those who reject additional scripture. *Covenanted with Abraham... forever*, see Gen 17.7.

Descendants of Lehi, Gentiles, and Jews

30¹ And now behold, my beloved brethren, I would speak unto you; for I, Nephi, would not suffer that ye should suppose that ye are more righteous than the Gentiles shall be. For behold, except ye shall keep the commandments of God ye shall all likewise perish; and because of the words which have been spoken ye need not suppose that the Gentiles are utterly destroyed.² For behold, I say unto you that as many of the Gentiles as will repent are the covenant people of the Lord; and as many of the Jews as will not repent shall be cast off; for the Lord covenanteth with none save it be with them that repent and believe in his Son, who is the Holy One of Israel.

³ And now, I would prophesy somewhat more concerning the Jews and the Gentiles. For after the book of which I have spoken shall come forth, and be written unto the Gentiles, and sealed up again unto the Lord, there shall be many which shall believe the words which are written; and they shall carry them forth unto the remnant of our seed.⁴ And then shall

the remnant of our seed know concerning us, how that we came out from Jerusalem, and that they are descendants of the Jews.⁵ And the gospel of Jesus Christ shall be declared among them; wherefore, they shall be restored unto the knowledge of their fathers, and also to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, which was had among their fathers.⁶ And then shall they rejoice; for they shall know that it is a blessing unto them from the hand of God; and their scales of darkness shall begin to fall from their eyes; and many generations shall not pass away among them, save they shall be a white^a and a delightful people.

⁷ And it shall come to pass that the Jews which are scattered also shall begin to believe in Christ; and they shall begin to gather in upon the face of the land; and as many as shall believe in Christ shall also become a delightful people.⁸ And it shall come to pass that the Lord God shall commence his work among all nations, kindreds, tongues,

^a 6 P, 1830, 1920 *white*; 1840, 1981 *pure*

CHAPTER 30

1–2: Despite Nephi’s interest in salvation history, in which God interacts with groups of people categorized by nation or lineage, here he emphasizes that none of these communities is intrinsically better than others, and that individuals will ultimately find a place within the appropriate group based on their faith in Christ and obedience rather than birthright. **1:** *My beloved brethren*, see 28.1–2n. **3–5:** A prophecy that many among the Gentiles will accept the BoM and take its message to the descendants of Lehi in the last days, that is, Native Americans, who will then realize their Israelite and Christian roots; cf. 1 Ne 15.13–14. The word *carry* here is reminiscent of the oft-quoted line from Isa 49.22 that at the time of gathering, Israelites would be carried upon the shoulders of the Gentiles; the allusion to the BoM in these verses implies that Nephi’s descendants, or at least their literary remains, would be carried by Gentile missionaries, perhaps in knapsacks on their shoulders. **3:** *Sealed up again to the Lord*, when the gold plates are returned to the angel; see 27.22n. *Our seed*, Nephi at this point considers the descendants of his older brothers, the latter-day Lamanites, as his own posterity. **6:** *Scales . . . their eyes*, cf. Acts 9.18, where the recovered sight is physical rather than spiritual. *White* is regularly paired with “pure” in the BoM to denote spiritual spotlessness (Alma 5.24; 13.12; Morm 9.6), though here it seems to indicate a reversal of the curse mentioned at 5.21 (cf. 3 Ne 2.14–16). JS changed “white” to “pure” for the 1840 edition, but because subsequent LDS editions were based on the 1837 edition, this change was not adopted into the official text until 1981. **7:** The coming forth of the BoM will herald the beginning of God’s work in the last days, including the conversion and gathering of the Jews, and culminating in the Messianic Age of the next section; cf. 3 Ne 21.1–7. **8:** As Nephi comes to an end of summarizing his vision of 1 Ne 11–14, he will conclude with a quotation from Isa 11 about the future Messianic Age, in place of what he was forbidden to write at 1 Ne 14.28. (Moroni will do something similar at Ether 13; see the introduction to that book.) The reference to God *commencing his work* links this verse to 1 Ne 14.17; cf. 2 Ne 3.13; 3 Ne 21.26–28; Ether 4.17.

and people, to bring about the restoration of his people upon the earth.

**Nephi, Quotes Isaiah 11.4–9:
The Messianic Age**

(with significant changes and additions to the King James Bible in bold)

⁹ **And** with righteousness shall the **Lord God** judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth. And he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth; and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

¹⁰ **For the time speedily cometh that the Lord God shall cause a great division among the people, and the wicked will he destroy; and he will spare his people, yea, even if it so be that he must destroy the wicked by fire.**

¹¹ And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.

¹² **And then shall** the wolf dwell with the lamb; and the leopard shall lie down with the kid,

and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling, together; and a little child shall lead them.

¹³ And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

¹⁴ And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den.

¹⁵ They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

¹⁶ Wherefore, the things of all nations shall be made known; yea, all things shall be made known unto the children of men. ¹⁷ There is nothing which is secret save it shall be revealed; there is no work of darkness save it shall be made manifest in the light; and there is nothing which is sealed upon the earth save it shall be loosed. ¹⁸ Wherefore, all things which have been revealed unto the children of men shall at that day be revealed; and Satan shall have power over the hearts of the children of men no more, for a long time. And now, my beloved brethren, I must make an end of my sayings.

9–15: These verses were also quoted at 21.4–9. **10:** This insertion appears to be connected to 1 Ne 22.15–17, where a prophet (Zenos?) foretells a day when God will divide the righteous from the wicked, and destroy the latter *by fire*. **15:** *Knowledge of the Lord*, the phrase here echoes v. 5 above. **16–18:** Eventually everything will be known openly, from God's revelations throughout history to all the dark doings of humanity, and such transparency will undermine Satan's power. **17:** *Nothing which is secret save it shall be revealed*, cf. Lk 8.17; 2 Ne 27.11. **18:** *Satan shall have power over the hearts of the children of men*, cf. 1 Ne 22.15, 26; Alma 48.17; Ether 15.19. *For a long time*, presumably for the thousand years of the Millennium; see Rev 20.2–3; 1 Ne 22.26.

Nephi's Conclusion—The Doctrine of Christ: 2 Nephi 31–33

A Few More Words

[XIII] **31** ¹ And now I, Nephi, make an end of my prophesying unto you, my beloved brethren. And I cannot write but a few things, which I know must surely come to pass; neither can I write but a few of the words of my brother Jacob. ² Wherefore, the things which I have written sufficeth me, save it be a few words which I must speak concerning the doctrine of Christ; wherefore, I shall speak unto you plainly, according to the plainness of my prophesying.

³ For my soul delighteth in plainness;
for after this manner doth the Lord
God work
among the children of men.
For the Lord God giveth light unto the
understanding;
for he speaketh unto men according
to their language,
unto their understanding.

Baptism and the Holy Ghost

⁴ Wherefore, I would that ye should remember that I have spoken unto you concerning that prophet which the Lord showed unto me, that should baptize the Lamb of God, which should take away the sins of the world. ⁵ And now, if the Lamb of God, he being holy, should have need to be baptized by water, to fulfil all righteousness, O then, how much more need have we, being unholy, to be baptized, yea, even by water!

⁶ And now, I would ask of you, my beloved brethren, wherein the Lamb of God did fulfil all righteousness in being baptized by water? ⁷ Know ye not that he was holy? But notwithstanding he being holy, he showeth unto the children of men that, according to the flesh he humbleth himself before the Father, and witnesseth unto the Father that he would be obedient unto him in keeping his commandments. ⁸ Wherefore, after he was baptized with water the Holy Ghost descended upon him in the form of a dove.

⁹ And again, it showeth unto the children of men the straitness of the path, and the narrowness of the gate, by which they should enter, he having set the example before them. ¹⁰ And he said unto the children of men, “Follow thou

CHAPTER 31

This chapter provides a definition of the “doctrine of Christ,” a phrase that appears at both the beginning and the end (vv. 2, 21; cf. 32.6). For similar passages, which are also framed by inclusios, see 3 Ne 11.31–40 and 27.13–21. Key elements here include faith, repentance, baptism, receiving the Holy Ghost, following Jesus’s example, and enduring to the end, a program of action foreshadowed by Jacob at 9.23–24. This basic *ordo salutis* (the “order, stages, or steps of salvation”; cf. Acts 2.38) is similar to the “faith, repentance, baptism, remission of sins, gift of the Holy Spirit, and eternal life” formula made popular by Restorationist preacher Walter Scott in the late 1820s. **1:** *A few of the words of . . . Jacob*, 2 Ne 6–10. **2:** *Doctrine of Christ*, Heb 6.1; 2 Jn 1.9. **3:** *My soul delighteth in plainness*, Nephi began his discourse focusing on salvation history (chs. 25–30) with these words (25.4); the same exclamation is repeated again as he shifts to concluding remarks concerning the plan of salvation. **4–13:** Nephi speaks in general terms of the necessity of baptism, though there are no accounts of any Nephites being baptized until Mos 18, when Alma appears to introduce it as a new practice. **4:** *That prophet*, see 1 Ne 10.10; 11.27. **5–7:** *Fulfil all righteousness*, Mt 3.15. Nephi interprets the phrase as referring to Jesus’s example, humility, and obedience, since, *being holy*, Christ had no need for baptism as a sign of repentance. In Mt, the term “righteousness” usually denotes “correct observance” or “acting in accordance with the will of God.” **8:** See 1 Ne 11.27. **9:** The *straitness of the path and the narrowness of the gate* will be explained below in vv. 17–19; cf. Mt 7.14. **10–13:** There are five references to following Christ in just four verses.

me.” Wherefore, my beloved brethren, can we follow Jesus save we shall be willing to keep the commandments of the Father?

¹¹ And the Father said, “Repent ye, repent ye, and be baptized in the name of my Beloved Son.”

¹² And also, the voice of the Son came unto me, saying, “He that is baptized in my name, to him will the Father give the Holy Ghost, like unto me; wherefore, follow me, and do the things which ye have seen me do.”

¹³ Wherefore, my beloved brethren, I know that if ye shall follow the Son, with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God, but with real intent, repenting of your sins, witnessing unto the Father that ye are willing to take upon you the name of Christ, by baptism—yea, by following your Lord and your Savior down into the water, according to his word, behold, then shall ye receive the Holy Ghost; yea, then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost; and then can ye speak with the tongue of angels, and shout praises unto the Holy One of Israel.

Endure to the End

¹⁴ But, behold, my beloved brethren, thus came the voice of the Son unto me, saying,

“After ye have repented of your sins, and witnessed unto the Father that ye are willing to keep my commandments, by the baptism of water, and have received the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost, and can speak with a new tongue, yea, even with the tongue of angels, and after this should deny me, it would have been better for you that ye had not known me.”

¹⁵ And I heard a voice from the Father, saying, “Yea, the words of my Beloved are true and faithful. He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.” ¹⁶ And now, my beloved brethren, I know by this that unless a man shall endure to the end, in following the example of the Son of the living God, he cannot be saved.

¹⁷ Wherefore, do the things which I have told you I have seen that your Lord and your Redeemer should do; for, for this cause have they been shown unto me, that ye might know the gate by which ye should enter. For the gate by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water; and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost. ¹⁸ And then are ye in this straight and narrow path which leads to eternal life; yea, ye

11: The voice of the Father, here and at vv. 15 and 20, is heard again at 3 Ne 11.7. This is very rare in Christian scripture, occurring in the NT only at Jesus's baptism and transfiguration. The words of the Father are quoted at 3 Ne 16.7–15; 20.20–29; 21.14–29. *Repent ye, repent ye*, the same non-biblical doubling recurs at Hel 5.29, 32; 7.17; 14.19, as well as Alma 7.9 and 9.25 in P; cf. Alma 10.20. *Be baptized in the name of* [Christ], cf. Acts 2.38; 10.48; and thirteen times in the BoM, often with an injunction to repent. **12:** The command to *do the things which ye have seen me do* will be repeated by the resurrected Christ at 3 Ne 18.24; 27.21. **13:** *Full purpose of heart*, non-biblical, but six times in the BoM, and several times in the early 19th c.; cf. Acts 11.23. *Take upon you the name of Christ*, this formulation, which does not appear in the Bible, occurs thirteen times in the BoM (e.g., Mos 5.8; 25.23; Alma 34.38; 3 Ne 27.5; Morm 8.38), perhaps in reciprocation for Christ taking upon himself sins (Mos 26.23; Alma 7.13). *Baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost*, see 1 Ne 10.9n. The BoM often speaks of the gift of the Holy Ghost as a natural consequence of baptism rather than a separate ordinance (v. 12; Mos 18.10; 3 Ne 12.1–2; 19.13; Moro 8.26), or something that might happen even apart from water baptism (3 Ne 9.20 [referring to Hel 5]; 11.35; Ether 12.14). However, after Christ's coming, the gift of the Holy Ghost could be bestowed by the disciples (3 Ne 18.37; Moro 2.1–3). *Tongue of angels*, celestial language, perhaps glossolalia; cf. 1 Cor 13.1; 2 Ne 32.2. **14:** *Speak with a new tongue*, Mk 16.17. *Better . . . that ye had not known me*, cf. 2 Pet 2.20–21. **15:** Words are similarly declared *true and faithful* at Rev 21.5. *He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved*, Mt 20.22; 24.13; Mk 13.13; Alma 32.13; 3 Ne 27.6; cf. 1 Ne 13.37; 22.31; Omni 1.26. **16:** *Son of the living God*, Mt 16.16; Jn 6.69; 3 Ne 30.1; Morm 5.14; 9.29. **17:** In the BoM, baptism does not wash away sins (except at Alma 7.14); rather, it functions as a witness of covenant-making (v. 14; Mos 18.10; 21.35; Alma 7.15), while the actual *remission of sins* comes *by fire and by the Holy Ghost*; see 3 Ne 12.2; Moro 6.4. **18:** *The promise* was recorded at v. 12, above.

have entered in by the gate; ye have done according to the commandments of the Father and the Son; and ye have received the Holy Ghost, which witnesses of the Father and the Son, unto the fulfilling of the promise which he hath made, that if ye entered in by the way ye should receive.

¹⁹ And now, my beloved brethren, after ye have gotten into this straight and narrow path, I would ask if all is done? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; for ye have not come thus far save it were by the word of Christ with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save.²⁰ Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father, “Ye shall have eternal life.”

²¹ And now, behold, my beloved brethren, this is the way; and there is none other way nor name given under heaven whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God. And now, behold, this is the doctrine of Christ,

and the only and true doctrine of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, which is one God, without end. Amen.

The Words of Christ

[XIV] **32** ¹ And now, behold, my beloved brethren, I suppose that ye ponder somewhat in your hearts concerning that which ye should do after ye have entered in by the way. But, behold, why do ye ponder these things in your hearts? ² Do ye not remember that I said unto you that after ye had received the Holy Ghost ye could speak with the tongue of angels? And now, how could ye speak with the tongue of angels save it were by the Holy Ghost? ³ Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ. Wherefore, I said unto you, feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do.

⁴ Wherefore, now after I have spoken these words, if ye cannot understand them it will be because ye ask not, neither do ye knock;

19–20: Nephi here echoes the Pauline formula of *faith, hope, and love/charity*; he will repeat it at 33:7–8. **19:** *Relying wholly upon the merits of* [Christ], Moro 6.4 (also with reference to baptism and the Holy Ghost); see Hel 14.13n. *Mighty to save*, Isa 63.1; Alma 7.14; 34.18. **20:** The imagery of vv. 17–20 (a straight and narrow path; pressing forward; the word of Christ) reflects that of Lehi’s dream at 1 Ne 8.19–22; that is to say, Nephi, after a long delay, is finally explaining those elements of his father’s dream. (It is also possible that the man in white who asked Lehi to follow him at 1 Ne 8.5–6 was identified as Christ in v. 10 above.) *A love of God and of all men*, reflecting Jesus’s two great commandments (Mt 22.34–40; cf. Mos 2.4). These are two of only four verses in the BoM that speak of loving God (also Moro 7.13; 10.32); see 1 Ne 11.22n. *Feasting upon the words of Christ* is a striking metaphor that recurs at 32.3; the image of eating God’s word with delight has precedents at Jer 15.16; Ezek 3.1–3. **21:** *There is none other . . . name given under heaven whereby man can be saved*, Acts 4.12, with the addition of *none other way* from 2 Ne 9.41, and the clarification *saved in the kingdom of God*; cf. 2 Ne 25.20; Mos 3.17. *Which is one God*, an affirmation of the three-person Godhead, which will be reiterated at Alma 11.44; 3 Ne 11.27; Morm 7.7. This concept will be a point of contention with Nephites and Mulekites who adhere to the Deuteronomic concept of God (Deut 6.4); see Mos 7.26–28; 15.1–5; Alma 11.26–40; 14.5; 33.1.

CHAPTER 32

1–6: Rather than providing detailed instructions for newly baptized Christians, Nephi suggests they should look to the *words of Christ* for guidance, noting that those words can come through both angels and humans who are moved by the Holy Ghost, and apparently through the Holy Ghost directly (v. 5). Christ’s words are not limited to what is found in the scriptures. **2:** *I said . . . tongue of angels*, see 31.13–14. Speaking in tongues is one of the gifts of the Spirit listed at 1 Cor 12.10; 13.1; Moro 10.15; cf. Morm 9.7. **3:** *I said . . . feast upon the words of Christ*, see 31.20. **4:** Asking and knocking are also paired at Mt 7.7–8 (3 Ne 14.7–8); Lk 11.9–10; 3 Ne 27.28–29. Failure to ask was discussed at 1 Ne 15.7–11.

wherefore, ye are not brought into the light, but must perish in the dark.⁵ For behold, again I say unto you that if ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do.⁶ Behold, this is the doctrine of Christ, and there will be no more doctrine given until after he shall manifest himself unto you in the flesh. And when he shall manifest himself unto you in the flesh, the things which he shall say unto you shall ye observe to do.

Prayer

⁷ And now I, Nephi, cannot say more; the Spirit stoppeth mine utterance, and I am left to mourn because of the unbelief, and the wickedness, and the ignorance, and the stiff-neckedness of men; for they will not search knowledge, nor understand great knowledge, when it is given unto them in plainness, even as plain as word can be.

⁸ And now, my beloved brethren, I perceive that ye ponder still in your hearts; and it grieveth me that I must speak concerning this thing. For if ye would hearken unto the Spirit which teacheth a man to pray, ye would know that ye must pray; for the evil spirit teacheth not a man to pray, but teacheth

him that he must not pray.⁹ But behold, I say unto you that ye must pray always, and not faint; that ye must not perform any thing unto the Lord save in the first place ye shall pray unto the Father in the name of Christ, that he will consecrate thy performance unto thee, that thy performance may be for the welfare of thy soul.

Nephi, Affirms the Truth of His Record

[XV] **33** ¹ And now I, Nephi, cannot write all the things which were taught among my people; neither am I mighty in writing, like unto speaking; for when a man speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth it unto the hearts of the children of men.² But behold, there are many that harden their hearts against the Holy Spirit, that it hath no place in them; wherefore, they cast many things away which are written and esteem them as things of naught.

³ But I, Nephi, have written what I have written, and I esteem it as of great worth, and especially unto my people.

6: Christ will manifest himself *in the flesh* (as a resurrected being) to the Nephites at 3 Ne 11–28, and his words in those chapters will expand on the doctrine articulated here, and also provide guidance for new modes of discipleship; see 1 Ne 22.20; 2 Ne 26.1. *Observe to do* is a characteristic Deuteronomistic expression. **7–9:** Nephi is stopped short in his explication of the plan of salvation, as he was in his description of salvation history at 1 Ne 14.28. Readers desiring more information must pray for their own revelation (see v. 4). *Faint*, to lose heart. *Pray unto the Father in the name of Christ* sets the standard for LDS prayer, though this formulation is not in the Bible; cf. 33.12; 3 Ne 20.31; Moro 3.2; 4.2. *Performance*, see 25.30n.

CHAPTER 33

This chapter includes several allusions to prophecies attributed to the biblical Joseph at 2 Ne 3, including “of great worth” (v. 3; 3.7), “cry . . . in faith” (v. 3; 3.19), “words . . . written in weakness will be made strong” (v. 4; 3.21), “crying from the dust” (v. 13; 3.20), and “words which shall proceed forth out of the mouth [of God]” (v. 14; 3.21). Even though Lehi had directed these words to his son Joseph, Nephi is here appropriating them with regard to his own work; cf. Ether 12.23–28. **1:** Nephi transitions from reporting a family discourse to addressing his readers directly, and he laments that his writing is not as powerful as his spirit-infused speaking. **2:** *Thing(s) of naught*, something worthless or baseless, here suggesting a connection between Christ and the BoM; see 1 Ne 19.9. The phrase appears at Isa 29.21, which was quoted at 2 Ne 27.32; see 28.16n. **3:** *Pray continually . . . by day*, 9.52; Nephi is here taking Jacob’s advice, though he is not yet able to “give thanks . . . by night.”

For I pray continually for them by day,
and mine eyes water my pillow by
night, because of them;
and I cry unto my God in faith,
and I know that he will hear my cry.

⁴ And I know that the Lord God will consecrate my prayers for the gain of my people. And the words which I have written in weakness will be made strong^a unto them; for it persuadeth them to do good; it maketh known unto them of their fathers; and it speaketh of Jesus, and persuadeth them^b to believe in him, and to endure to the end, which is life eternal. ⁵ And it speaketh harshly against sin, according to the plainness of the truth; wherefore, no man will be angry at the words which I have written save he shall be of the spirit of the devil.

⁶ I glory in plainness;
I glory in truth;
I glory in my Jesus,
for he hath redeemed my soul from
hell.

⁷ I have charity for my people, and great faith in Christ that I shall meet many souls spotless at his judgment-seat. ⁸ I have charity for the Jew (I say Jew, because I mean them from whence I came). ⁹ I also have charity for the Gentiles.

But behold, for none of these can I hope except they shall be reconciled unto Christ, and enter into the narrow gate, and walk in the strait path which leads to life, and continue in the path until the end of the day of probation.

Nephi's Farewell

¹⁰ And now, my beloved brethren, and also Jew, and all ye ends of the earth, hearken unto these words and believe in Christ; and if ye believe not in these words believe in Christ. And if ye shall believe in Christ ye will believe in these words, for they are the words of Christ, and he hath given them unto me; and they teach all men that they should do good. ¹¹ And if they are not the words of Christ, judge ye—for Christ will show unto you, with power and great glory, that they are his words, at the last day; and you and I shall stand face to face before his bar; and ye shall know that I have been commanded of him to write these things, notwithstanding my weakness. ¹² And I pray the Father in the name of Christ that many of us, if not all, may be saved in his kingdom at that great and last day.

¹³ And now, my beloved brethren, all those who are of the house of Israel, and all ye ends of the earth, I speak unto you as the

^a ⁴ P will be make strong

^b ⁴ P men

4–5: An enumeration of the purposes of the BoM. *Will be made strong*, the reading in P makes God the active agent in this process, and also more clearly alludes to 3.21. 5: Anger is connected to the devil, as at 28.19–20; 3 Ne 11.29; Moro 9.3. 6: *My Jesus*, only here in scripture. *He hath redeemed my soul from hell*, Nephi is finally able to share in his father's assurance of salvation; see 1.15n. 9: *For none of these* refers to all three of the previously mentioned groups: Nephi's people, the Jews, and the Gentiles. *Reconciled unto Christ*, elsewhere in scripture people are reconciled to God through Christ; see Rom 5.10; 2 Cor 5.18–21; 2 Ne 10.24; 25.23; Jacob 4.11. *Narrow gate... strait path which leads to life*, the return of these key terms from 31.9, 18 brings Nephi's concluding remarks to a close. 10: *All ye ends of the earth*, Gentiles, that is, everyone who is not of the house of Israel; see 26.25n. Belief in Christ and belief in the BoM are mutually reinforcing. 11–15: *If they are not... judge ye*, similar challenges, also with promises of vindication at the last day, appear at Ether 4.10; 5.6. Nephi warns his readers that they will someday meet him *face to face* at the judgment bar; cf. Jacob 6.13; Moro 10.27, 34. 12: At Hel 12.25, Mormon expresses a similar wish that *all* might be *saved* at the *great and last day*, though he admits this is unrealistic.

voice of one crying from the dust, Farewell until that great day shall come. ¹⁴ 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 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. ¹⁵ For what I seal on earth, shall be brought against you at the judgment bar; for thus hath the Lord commanded me, and I must obey. Amen.

14: *Respect the words of the Jews*, the Bible; see 29.4n; 1 Ne 13.24n. *The words . . . of the Lamb of God*, the BoM; see 29.2. *These words shall condemn you*, see Jn 12.48; 2 Ne 25.18; 29.11n. **15:** *I must obey*, Nephi ends his writings by affirming his obedience to God's commands, which was also the subject of his earliest words, see 1 Ne 3.7n.

INTRODUCTION TO JACOB

Some fifty-five years after Lehi's family fled Jerusalem, Nephi passed the Small Plates to his younger brother Jacob, who must have been in his early fifties at the time. Jacob had never seen Jerusalem, having been born in the wilderness (1 Ne 18.7), and it is intriguing to imagine what it would have been like to grow up knowing only one's relatives and apparently having only a single text to read (the Brass Plates), aside from his family's own writings. Both Nephi and Lehi refer to Jacob's vulnerabilities and tenderness as a child (1 Ne 18.17–19; 2 Ne 2.1–2), though by this point in the text readers have also heard his mature preaching (2 Ne 6–10) and learned of his remarkable experiences with visions and angels (2 Ne 2.3–4; 10.3; 11.2–3). Jacob was appointed a priest by Nephi, and in addition to his sacrificial duties under the law of Moses, he was also a teacher (1.18; cf. 2 Ne 5.26; 9.48), which is the function he portrays himself performing. The Nephites, in his day, would have consisted of less than a hundred souls. As in 2 Nephi, there is little narrative in Jacob's book.

When Nephi transferred the Small Plates, he gave specific instructions on how to continue and update the record, urging Jacob to only “touch . . . lightly” on historical events, and to focus instead on “preaching,” “revelation,” and “prophesying” (Jacob 1.2–4). This is a reasonable description of what Jacob includes: two sermons (chs. 2–3; 4–6), multiple references to revelations (1.6; 2.5, 23–33), two extended prophecies (chs. 4; 5), brief mentions of Nephi's royal successor and interactions with the Lamanites (1.9–12; 7.24–25), and a single narrative recounting a debate with a challenger (7.1–23). In general, Jacob reiterates the themes introduced by Lehi and Nephi: the coming of Christ, the preservation of scattered Israel (including the Lehites), the Lord's steadfast love for his people through alternating periods of judgment and blessing, and the need for obedience to commandments. Jacob's compositional methods also tend to follow those of Nephi: he frames his book with an *inclusio* (1.7 and 6.6; cf. 2 Ne 1.15 and 33.6), he provides a lengthy scriptural quotation followed by prophetic interpretation (chs. 5 and 6; cf. 2 Ne 12–24 and 25–30), and he concludes with a reference to meeting readers at the Judgment Day (6.13; cf. 2 Ne 33.11). Indeed, both Nephi and Jacob write with an awareness of a double audience—their contemporaries (chs. 2–3; cf. 2 Ne 1–4; 6–10; 25–32) as well as readers in the future (chs. 4–6; cf. 2 Ne 33).

Yet despite his broad continuities with Lehi and Nephi, and the fact that he is responsible for just twelve chapters in the Book of Mormon (2 Ne 6–10; Jacob 1–7), Jacob has a unique voice. Each of his three sermons begins with an expression of “anxiety” for the welfare of his audience (2 Ne 6.3; Jacob 2.3; 4.18). He employs a number of unique metaphors (at least unique to the Book of Mormon), including “wounded soul,” “feasting upon [God's] love,” “daggers . . . wound their delicate minds,” “[God's] piercing eye,” “sobblings of their hearts,” “the slumber of [spiritual] death,” becoming “angels to the devil,” and blindness that comes from “looking beyond the mark.” He was also the first to use several images that are picked up by later Nephite writers, such as ridding one's garments of the blood or sins of others, and being “nourished by the good word of God.” Jacob's relatively brief contributions convey an unusual degree of emotion, tenderness, and compassion—which also characterizes the allegory from Zenos that he quotes at length.

CONTENTS

Chapter 1: Jacob describes the transfer of the Small Plates and Nephi's death, which was followed by increasing wickedness among his people.

Chapters 2–3: He delivers an undated sermon at the temple that focuses on three specific sins: greed, pride, and polygamy. He contrasts the Nephites unfavorably with the Lamanites, whom they were prejudiced against.

Chapters 4–6: Jacob, referring to his own people in the third person, addresses future readers on the topics of revelation, prophecy, and Christian redemption. The centerpiece of his remarks is a lengthy, complex allegory of an olive tree, ostensibly copied from the Brass Plates, that provides an outline of salvation history for remnants of Israel scattered throughout the world.

Chapter 7: Although the book appears to end at 6.13 with Jacob's farewell, it continues with an appendix recounting a confrontation between Jacob and Sherem, an anti-Christian preacher. Jacob ends his writings on a poignant, melancholy note.

The books of Jacob and Enos cover events from ca. 545–420 BCE.

INTERPRETATION

In his temple sermon, Jacob denounces sin forthrightly, but he also pays particular attention to its repercussions on innocent community and family members whose sorrows and prayers have not escaped God's notice. This is his own story as well. Readers may recall his childhood anguish in response to his older brothers' mistreatment of Nephi, their mother, and later of himself (1 Ne 18.19; 2 Ne 2.1). The hardships he experienced during the wilderness years were a direct result of the wickedness of the Judahites—which may explain his rather negative attitudes toward the Jews of Jerusalem, whom he had never met in person (4.14; cf. 2 Ne 10.3–5). Jacob is also cognizant of the responsibility that incompetent or inattentive spiritual leaders may bear for the sins of their people (1.19; cf. 2 Ne 9.44).

Jacob mentions the sins of the Lamanites in passing, but his attitude toward his estranged relatives is different from that of Nephi. Indeed, he may be offering a slight correction to Nephi's account (perhaps because he realizes that the Small Plates would someday go to the Lamanites; see Jarom 1.2). In his last words to his children, Lehi had held out the possibility of both blessings and curses to the Lamanites, but Nephi's version of family history had emphasized the latter. Jacob, by contrast, speaks openly of the love and fidelity that characterized Lamanite families, who at least in this respect were "more righteous" than the Nephites, so much so that "because of this observance . . . the Lord God will not destroy them, but will be merciful unto them; and one day they shall become a blessed people" (3.5–6). Perhaps even more significant is that when Jacob is searching the Brass Plates for scriptural precedents to "liken" to his family's situation, he follows Lehi in finding Zenos's allegory of the olive tree more useful than Isaiah's condemnations of the nations (1 Ne 10.12–14). While Isaiah's interpretation of history infers God's judgments from the disasters of contemporary politics, Zenos's allegory focuses on God's benevolent plans for the house of Israel, leaving the political details rather vague. The master of the vineyard, according to Zenos, is tireless in his efforts to care for his orchard, laboring himself and enlisting his servants. Over and over, the allegory portrays the Lord as grieving for unhealthy or lost trees, and even weeping on their behalf. Similarly, Jacob seems much less resentful and condemning of his older brothers than Nephi was, and like Lehi, Jacob is deeply invested in the success and well-being of their descendants.

As the last leader drawn from Lehi's immediate family, Jacob might have depicted himself as at the end of the beginning of the Nephite experience. Instead, he seems to view his life and times as the beginning of the end. He chastises his people for being worse than the Lamanites (2.35), warns of their destruction

unless they repent (2.33; 3.3), and concludes with the ominous observation that they “became, *as yet*, conquerors of their enemies” (7.25; emphasis added). Even more telling is the contrast between the sermon Jacob delivered as a younger man (2 Ne 6–10) and the final words of his book. In his conclusion to the former, he encouraged his listeners to “not hang down [your] heads” and to “cheer up your hearts,” reminding them of God’s great promises, and assuring them that they had not been “cast off” when they were driven from Jerusalem, but instead had been “led to a better land” by the Lord (2 Ne 10.20–23). His assessment of the Nephites at the end of his life, however, is much gloomier, describing them as “a lonesome and a solemn people, wanderers, cast out from Jerusalem . . . and hated of our brethren” (Jacob 7.26). After Jacob, the Nephites begin a slow and seemingly inexorable political and spiritual decline, until a few survivors unexpectedly discover and merge with the Mulekites, which allows for a cultural resurgence (as summarized in the book of Omni).

GUIDE TO READING

The book of Jacob is relatively straightforward, but a few approaches might make it more meaningful. Readers first hear Jacob’s voice in 2 Nephi 6–10, and those chapters should be read in conjunction with his own book, perhaps looking for developments in his ideas. His discussion of the Lamanites in chapter 3 complicates the brief explanation of the curse reported at 2 Nephi 5, though it does not entirely alleviate the offensiveness. Jacob accepts, as do his people, the basic premise of colorism, preferring light complexions to dark skin, but he goes on to argue that skin color is not correlated with righteousness, and he scathingly observes how prejudice against other ethnicities can blind people to their own sins. It may be useful to follow the details of the allegory of the olive tree in chapter 5 (the section headings in this edition can be helpful), trying to determine what the various grafts and transplants may have meant to Jacob or to Joseph Smith. And finally, the incident with Sherem in chapter 7 can be compared with that of Korihor in Alma 30. The two apostates have similar, though not identical, objections to worshipping a future divine being known only through prophecy. Both men ask for a sign, are smitten by God, confess their errors, and then die shortly thereafter. The parallel stories reflect the sort of decisive, miraculous rebuttal of religious skepticism long hoped for by some beleaguered believers.

THE BOOK OF JACOB

The Brother of Nephi

The words of his preaching unto his brethren. He confoundeth a man who seeketh to overthrow the doctrine of Christ. A few words concerning the history of the people of Nephi.

Jacob₂'s Introduction

[1]¹ For behold, it came to pass that fifty and five years had passed away from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem;^a wherefore, Nephi gave me, Jacob, a commandment concerning the small plates, upon which these things are engraven.² And he gave me, Jacob, a commandment that I should write upon these plates a few of the things which I considered to be most precious; that I should not touch, save it were lightly, concerning the history of this people which are called the people of Nephi.³ For he said that the history of his people should be engraven upon his other plates, and that I should preserve these plates and hand them down unto my seed, from generation to generation.⁴ And if there were preaching which was sacred, or revelation which was great, or prophesying, that I should engraven the heads of them upon these plates,

and touch upon them as much as it were possible, for Christ's sake, and for the sake of our people.⁵ For because of faith and great anxiety, it truly had been made manifest unto us concerning our people, what things should happen unto them.

⁶ And we also had many revelations, and the spirit of much prophecy; wherefore, we knew of Christ and his kingdom, which should come.⁷ Wherefore we labored diligently among our people, that we might persuade them to come unto Christ, and partake of the goodness of God, that they might enter into his rest, lest by any means he should swear in his wrath they should not enter in, as in the provocation in the days of temptation while the children of Israel were in the wilderness.⁸ Wherefore, we would to God that we could

^a 1 542 BCE

CHAPTER 1

1–4: The Large Plates of Nephi recorded the political history of the Nephites, and were passed down through the lineage of kings, that is, Nephi's royal successors (see Omni 1.1; WoM 1.10). The Small Plates focused more on spiritual matters, and were kept and preserved by Jacob's priestly lineage (see 1 Ne 19.1–7; 2 Ne 5.29–34). *Heads*, WB: "chief point; a summary." In the 18th–19th c., it was common for preachers to give sermons based on "heads" or brief outlines, though this is not how the term is being used here. **5:** Jacob at 2 Ne 9.4 had mentioned his people's intense search "to know of things to come." **6:** *His kingdom, which should come*, the first specific reference in the BoM to Christ's future kingdom on earth (aside from a few mentions of "Zion"); up to this point the "kingdom of God" was viewed as a postmortal, heavenly dwelling place. **7:** *Enter into his rest... in the wilderness*, the language here is from Ps 95.8–11, which refers to an incident in the wilderness when the Israelites quarreled with Moses and tested the Lord (Ex 17.1–7; Num 20.2–13). The book of Jacob is framed by an inclusio demarcated by allusions to Ps 95; see 6.6n. **8:** *Would to God*, to wish that something had or would happen. The expression, which appears three times each in the KJV OT, the NT, and the BoM, is an English idiom rather than a literal translation from Hebrew or Greek.

persuade all men not to rebel against God, to provoke him to anger, but that all men would believe in Christ, and view his death, and suffer his cross and bear the shame of the world; wherefore, I, Jacob, take it upon me to fulfil the commandment of my brother Nephi.

Nephi's Successors

⁹ Now Nephi began to be old, and he saw that he must soon die; wherefore, he anointed a man to be a king and a ruler over his people. Now according to the reigns of the kings—¹⁰ the people having loved Nephi exceedingly, he having been a great protector for them, having wielded the sword of Laban in their defence, and having labored in all his days for their welfare—¹¹ wherefore, the people were desirous to retain in remembrance his name. And whoso should reign in his stead were called by the people, Second Nephi, Third Nephi, and so forth, according to the reigns of the kings; and thus they were called by the people, let them be of whatever name they would.¹² And it came to pass that Nephi died.

¹³ Now the people which were not Lamanites were Nephites; nevertheless, they were called Nephites, Jacobites, Josephites, Zoramites, Lamanites, Lemuelites, and Ishmaelites.¹⁴ But I, Jacob, shall not hereafter distinguish them by these names, but I shall call them Lamanites

that seek to destroy the people of Nephi, and those who are friendly to Nephi I shall call Nephites, or the people of Nephi, according to the reigns of the kings.

Introduction to Jacob₂'s Temple Discourse

¹⁵ And now it came to pass that the people of Nephi, under the reign of the second king, began to grow hard in their hearts, and indulge themselves somewhat in wicked practices, such as like unto David of old desiring many wives and concubines, and also Solomon, his son.¹⁶ Yea, and they also began to search much gold and silver, and began to be lifted up somewhat in pride.

¹⁷ Wherefore I, Jacob, gave unto them these words as I taught them in the temple, having first obtained mine errand from the Lord.¹⁸ For I, Jacob, and my brother Joseph had been consecrated priests and teachers of this people, by the hand of Nephi.¹⁹ And we did magnify our office unto the Lord, taking upon us the responsibility, answering the sins of the people upon our own heads if we did not teach them the word of God with all diligence; wherefore, by laboring with our might their blood might not come upon our garments; otherwise their blood would come upon our garments, and we would not be found spotless at the last day.

9: *Anointed a man to be a king*, this does not sound like Nephi was succeeded by a son, and the fact that this man changed his name to “Nephi” in v. 11 may be further evidence of something other than a father-son transmission of kingship. **10:** *Sword of Laban*, see 1 Ne 4.9, 38n. **11:** *Retain in remembrance*, non-biblical, but seven times in the BoM. **13–14:** The same list of seven tribes, in the same order, appears at 4 Ne 1.37–38 and Morm 1.8. Curiously, there are no “Samites”; see 2 Ne 4.11n. **15–16:** The problem seems to be increasing inequality, among what still would have been a rather small group of immigrants. For the *many wives and concubines* of David and Solomon, see 2 Sam 5.13; 12.7–10; 1 Kings 11.1–3. **17:** *Obtained mine errand from the Lord*, a non-biblical expression that may be original to the BoM. *Errand*, WB: “a verbal message; a mandate or order.” Here it seems to refer to the particular message mentioned at 2.11. **18:** *Consecrated priests and teachers*, see 2 Ne 5.26. **19:** This introductory sentence incorporates five key words or phrases from the beginning of the sermon that follows (cf. 2.2–3); for a similar example, see Alma 6.8n. *Answering... upon our heads*, see 2 Ne 2.7n; 4.6; Mos 29.30–31. The idea is that the collective sins of the people may come upon their insufficiently attentive parents, priests, or kings. *Blood... garments*, see Jacob’s words at 2 Ne 9.44.

Jacob₂'s Temple Discourse: Jacob 2–3

[III] 2 [*Jacob₂'s beading*]¹ The words which Jacob, the brother of Nephi, spake unto the people of Nephi, after the death of Nephi.

Jacob₂ Compelled to Admonish with Boldness

² “Now, my beloved brethren, I, Jacob, according to the responsibility which I am under to God, to magnify mine office with soberness, and that I might rid my garments of your sins, I come up into the temple this day that I might declare unto you the word of God.³ And ye yourselves know that I have hitherto been diligent in the office of my calling; but I this day am weighed down with much more desire and anxiety for the welfare of your souls than I have hitherto been.

⁴ “For behold, as yet, ye have been obedient unto the word of the Lord, which I have given unto you.⁵ But behold, hearken ye unto me, and know that by the help of the all-powerful Creator of heaven and earth I can tell you concerning your thoughts, how that ye are beginning to labor in sin, which sin appeareth very

abominable unto me, yea, and abominable unto God.⁶ Yea, it grieveth my soul and causeth me to shrink with shame before the presence of my Maker, that I might^a testify unto you concerning the wickedness of your hearts.⁷ And also it grieveth me that I must use so much boldness of speech concerning you, before your wives and your children, many of whose feelings are exceedingly tender and chaste and delicate before God, which thing is pleasing unto God;⁸ and it supposeth me that they have come up hither to hear the pleasing word of God, yea, the word which healeth the wounded soul.

⁹ “Wherefore, it burdeneth my soul that I should be constrained, because of the strict commandment which I have received from God, to admonish you according to your crimes, to enlarge the wounds of those who are already wounded, instead of consoling and healing their wounds; and those who have not been wounded, instead of feasting upon the pleasing word of God have daggers placed to pierce their souls and wound their delicate minds.¹⁰ But, notwithstanding the greatness of the task,

^a 6 P, 1981 *must*

CHAPTERS 2–3

Several significant public speeches in the BoM are described as having been given at a temple, including those by Benjamin (Mos 1.18; 2.5–7), Limhi (Mos 7.17), and Jesus (3 Ne 11.1). The three concerns that motivated this sermon were listed at 1.15–16; Jacob begins with the latter two (searching for riches; pride), saving the first (polygamy) for last. Since this address was delivered in the context of a transition to a new ruler (1.15), it may not be coincidental that all three topics were also included in the laws for kings at Deut 17.14–20.

CHAPTER 2

1: In this edition, v. 1 has been made into a heading; see 2 Ne 6.1n. **2–11:** Jacob begins his speech by apologizing for the directness of his criticism of sinners, in the presence of their innocent, brokenhearted wives and children. **3:** *Desire and anxiety for the welfare of your souls.* Jacob opened his sermon at 2 Ne 6.3 with this same comment. **5:** An unexpected reference to the Creator foreshadows the justification for equality in vv. 20–21. *Creator of heaven and earth* is a non-biblical phrase that appears in the Apostles’ Creed; see Moro 7.27n. The notion that God can read minds and reveal thoughts is found in several places in both the Bible and the BoM (e.g., Ps 44.21; Isa 66.18; Mt 9.4; Lk 9.47; Heb 4.12; Mos 24.12; Alma 12.3, 7; Hel 9.41). *Beginning to labor in sin*, incipient sin is reflected in a person’s thoughts. **8–9:** *Wound* is a key word in these verses, occurring six times. The idea that souls, like bodies, can be wounded, appears only here in scripture. *It supposeth me*, “I assume,” or “I imagine.” *The pleasing word of God* occurs only here and at 3.2. *Feasting upon . . . word of God*, 2 Ne 31.20; 32.3. **10:** Jacob is the only BoM writer to refer to the *commands* rather than the “commandments” of God, which he does four times (the current reading of Alma 30.7 is an error). *Pure in heart* appears only in this sermon (see 3.1–3) and the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5.8; 3 Ne 12.8); here it seems to refer primarily to women and children (cf. 2.7–10). *Piercing eye of the Almighty God*, compare Isaac Watts’s well-known hymn of 1715: “Almighty God, Thy Piercing Eye.”

I must do according to the strict commands of God, and tell you concerning your wickedness and abominations, in the presence of the pure in heart, and the broken heart, and under the glance of the piercing eye of the Almighty God. ¹¹ Wherefore, I must tell you the truth according to the plainness of the word of God. For behold, as I inquired of the Lord, thus came the word unto me, saying, ‘Jacob, get thou up into the temple on the morrow, and declare the word which I shall give thee unto this people.’”

Jacob₂ Warns of Riches and Pride

¹² “And now behold, my brethren, this is the word which I declare unto you, that many of you have begun to search for gold, and for silver, and for all manner of precious ores, in the which this land, which is a land of promise unto you and to your seed, doth abound most plentifully. ¹³ And the hand of providence hath smiled upon you most pleasingly, that you have obtained many riches; and because some of you have obtained more abundantly than that of your brethren ye are lifted up in the pride of your hearts, and wear stiff necks and high heads because of the costliness of your apparel, and persecute your brethren because ye suppose that ye are better than they. ¹⁴ And now, my brethren, do ye suppose that God justifieth you in this thing? Behold, I say unto you, Nay. But he condemneth you, and if ye persist in these things his judgments must speedily come unto you.

¹⁵ O that he would show you that he can pierce you,
and with one glance of his eye he can smite you to the dust!
¹⁶ O that he would rid you from this iniquity and abomination.
And, O that ye would listen unto the word of his commands,
and let not this pride of your hearts destroy your souls!

¹⁷ “Think of your brethren like unto yourselves, and be familiar with all and free with your substance, that they may be rich like unto you. ¹⁸ But before ye seek for riches, seek ye for the kingdom of God. ¹⁹ And after ye have obtained a hope in Christ ye shall obtain riches, if ye seek them; and ye will seek them for the intent to do good—to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry, and to liberate the captive, and administer relief to the sick and the afflicted.

²⁰ “And now, my brethren, I have spoken unto you concerning pride; and those of you which have afflicted your neighbor, and persecuted him because ye were proud in your hearts, of the things which God hath given you, what say ye of it? ²¹ Do ye not suppose that such things are abominable unto him who created all flesh? And the one being is as precious in his sight as the other. And all flesh is of the dust; and for the selfsame end hath he created them, that they should keep his commandments and glorify him forever. ²² And now

12: For precious metals in the promised land, see 1 Ne 18:25; 2 Ne 5:15. **13:** *Hand of providence hath smiled*, the mixed metaphor is unexpected, but “hand of providence” and “providence smiled” both occurred regularly in the 18th–19th c. *Lifted up in the pride your hearts*, non-biblical, but nine times in the BoM. *Costliness of your apparel*, references to “costly apparel” (a non-biblical expression) appear eight times in the BoM, always with a negative connotation. **17:** *Think . . . yourselves*, an alternative expression of the Golden Rule. *Be familiar with all*, treat everyone as family. **19:** *Hope in Christ* is associated with the Resurrection at 1 Cor 15:19 (its only other occurrence in scripture). For Christians, the point of accumulating wealth is to share it widely and freely. Compassionate service to the *naked, hungry*, and *captive* reflects Isaiah’s teaching on fasting at Isa 58:6–7. *Liberate the captive*, issues of slavery and manumission seem out of place in a small community of relatives, but perhaps Jacob has metaphorical meanings in mind (v. 33) or prisoners of war (see vv. 23–35n). **21:** All humans are equal in God’s eyes, and were created for the same two purposes—the second of which is reminiscent of the famous opening of the Westminster Shorter Catechism (1647): “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.” **22:** *Grosser*, greater.

I make an end of speaking unto you concerning this pride. And were it not that I must speak unto you concerning a grosser crime, my heart would rejoice exceedingly because of you.”

Jacob₂ Condemns Polygamy

²³ “But the word of God burdens me because of your grosser crimes. For behold, thus saith the Lord, “This people begin to wax in iniquity; they understand not the scriptures, for they seek to excuse themselves in committing whoredoms, because of the things which were written concerning David, and Solomon his son.’

²⁴ ‘Behold, David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines, which thing was abominable before me,’ saith the Lord. ²⁵ Wherefore, thus saith the Lord, ‘I have led this people forth out of the land of Jerusalem, by the power of mine arm, that I might raise up unto me a righteous branch from the fruit of the loins of Joseph. ²⁶ Wherefore, I the Lord God will not suffer that this people shall do like unto them of old.’

²⁷ “Wherefore, my brethren, hear me, and hearken to the word of the Lord: ‘For there shall not any man among you have save it be one wife; and concubines he shall have none; ²⁸ for I, the Lord God, delight in the chastity of women. And whoredoms are an abomination before me.’ Thus saith the Lord of Hosts.

²⁹ ‘Wherefore, this people shall keep my

commandments,’ saith the Lord of Hosts, ‘or cursed be the land for their sakes.’ ³⁰ ‘For if I will,’ saith the Lord of Hosts, ‘raise up seed unto me, I will command my people; otherwise they shall hearken unto these things.’

³¹ “‘For behold, I, the Lord, have seen the sorrow, and heard the mourning of the daughters of my people in the land of Jerusalem, yea, and in all the lands of my people, because of the wickedness and abominations of their husbands.’ ³² ‘And I will not suffer,’ saith the Lord of Hosts, ‘that the cries of the fair daughters of this people, which I have led out of the land of Jerusalem, shall come up unto me against the men of my people,’ saith the Lord of Hosts.

³³ ‘For they shall not lead away captive the daughters of my people because of their tenderness, save I shall visit them with a sore curse, even unto destruction; for they shall not commit whoredoms, like unto them of old,’ saith the Lord of Hosts.

³⁴ “And now behold, my brethren, ye know that these commandments were given to our father, Lehi; wherefore, ye have known them before; and ye have come unto great condemnation; for ye have done these things which ye ought not to have done. ³⁵ Behold, ye have done greater iniquities than the Lamanites, our brethren. Ye have broken the hearts of your tender wives, and lost the confidence of your children, because of your bad examples

23–35: The Nephites at this time were still a small, interrelated group, yet some women—single by widowhood or gender imbalance or spoils of war—were being taken into households as second-class wives, or concubines. **23:** *Burdens*, perhaps a pun; an oracle from God is often referred to as a “burden” in the OT (e.g., Isa 13.1; Jer 23.33; Nah 1.1; Hab 1.1; Mal 1.1). The Nephites are justifying their wicked actions with an appeal to scriptural precedent, in a striking example of “wresting the scriptures” (Alma 13.20; 41.1) or inappropriate “likening all scripture unto us” (1 Ne 19.23–24). **25:** *Raise up . . . righteous branch . . . of Joseph*, see 2 Ne 3.5; cf. 9.53. **28:** *Lord of Hosts*, that is, Lord of armies. This phrase, which occurs 245 times in the OT, appears in the BoM only in this chapter (6 times) and Hel 13 (3 times), apart from OT quotations and Nephi’s commentary on them at 2 Ne 26–28. *The chastity of women* is singled out, though the importance of male sexual purity is implied as well. **29:** *Cursed be the land*, see 1 Ne 17.38n. **31–33:** That women are portrayed as victims rather than agents here suggests that men were taking advantage of the vulnerable. **32:** *Suffer*, to allow or permit. *Led out of the land of Jerusalem*, see 2 Ne 10.20n. **34:** *Commandments . . . given to our father*, reference uncertain. Allusions to specific teachings or quotations without identifiable antecedents (indicated by “reference uncertain” in the notes and annotations) may offer clues as to what was included in the Large Plates or the lost 116 pages. **35:** A poignant description of the impact of infidelity on other family members (cf. 3.10). The iniquities of the Lamanites are described at 2 Ne 5.24; Jacob 7.24; Enos 1.20; the extended comparison in the next chapter (vv. 5–14) is intended to shock Jacob’s listeners. *Sobbing* go up, and the *word of God* comes down in response.

before them; and the sobbings of their hearts ascend up to God against you. And because of the strictness of the word of God, which cometh down against you, many hearts died, pierced with deep wounds.”

Jacob² Speaks to the Pure in Heart

3 ¹ “But behold, I, Jacob, would speak unto you that are pure in heart:

Look unto God with firmness of mind,
and pray unto him with exceeding faith,
and he will console you in your afflictions,
and he will plead your cause,
and send down justice upon those who seek your destruction.

² O all ye that are pure in heart, lift up your heads
and receive the pleasing word of God,
and feast upon his love;
for ye may, if your minds are firm,
forever.

³ “But, wo, wo, unto you that are not pure in heart, that are filthy this day before God; for except ye repent the land is cursed for your sakes; and the Lamanites, which are not filthy

like unto you (nevertheless they are cursed with a sore cursing), shall scourge you even unto destruction. ⁴ And the time speedily cometh, that except ye repent they shall possess the land of your inheritance, and the Lord God will lead away the righteous out from among you.”

The Example of the Lamanites

⁵ “Behold, the Lamanites your brethren, whom ye hate because of their filthiness and the cursing which hath come upon their skins, are more righteous than you; for they have not forgotten the commandment of the Lord, which was given unto our fathers^a—that they should have save it were one wife, and concubines they should have none, and there should not be whoredoms committed among them. ⁶ And now, this commandment they observe to keep; wherefore, because of this observance, in keeping this commandment, the Lord God will not destroy them, but will be merciful unto them; and one day they shall become a blessed people. ⁷ Behold, their husbands love their wives, and their wives love their husbands; and their husbands and their wives love their children; and their unbelief and their hatred towards you is because of the iniquity of their fathers; wherefore, how much better are you than they, in the sight of your great Creator?”

^a ⁵ P, 1981 *father*

CHAPTER 3

1: The image of God “pleading the cause” of a human being in a court-like setting occurs ten times in the OT, but only here in the BoM. **2:** *Feast upon his love*, a variation on the earlier “feasting on his word”; see 2:8–9n. **3:** *Except ye repent*, the first occurrence of a characteristic phrase of Nephite prophets (Lk 13.3, 5; and 19 times in the BoM). *Not filthy like unto you*; the Nephites regularly accused the Lamanites of “filthiness” (1 Ne 12.23; Jacob 3.5, 9; Enos 1.20; Morm 5.15); yet Jacob here accuses his people of an even greater, moral filth. *Lamanites... scourge you*, see 1 Ne 2.24; 2 Ne 5.25. **4:** This prophecy is fulfilled at Omni 1.12–13. **5–14:** Readers may wonder if Jacob’s generous words about the Lamanites were recorded with an understanding that the Small Plates were written for their benefit (Jarom 1.2). *Cursing*, see 2 Ne 5.21n. **5:** Reference uncertain, but see 2.27–34. **6:** The ultimate curse of the Nephites was annihilation, whereas the Lamanites were threatened with degradation, which nevertheless held out the hope of restoration; see 2 Ne 4.5–9n; Alma 9.13–24; Hel 15.10–17. One reason for the persistence of the Lamanites is given here; at 2 Ne 4.7, 9 their survival is ascribed to Lehi’s blessing. **7:** Throughout the BoM, it appears that Lamanite women were accorded more respect and autonomy than their Nephite counterparts. For example, Abish and the three queens in the book of Alma were all Lamanites (Alma 19, 22, 47), as were the celebrated mothers of the stripling warriors (Alma 56.47–48). *Iniquity of their fathers*, God makes allowances for the unbelief and hatred that the Lamanites inherited from their culture. *Great Creator*, a phrase used exclusively by Jacob in the BoM; see 2 Ne 9.5–6.

⁸ “O my brethren, I fear that unless ye shall repent of your sins that their skins will be whiter than yours, when ye shall be brought with them before the throne of God. ⁹ Wherefore, a commandment I give unto you, which is the word of God, that ye revile no more against them because of the darkness of their skins; neither shall ye revile against them because of their filthiness; but ye shall remember your own filthiness, and remember that their filthiness came because of their fathers. ¹⁰ Wherefore, ye shall remember your children, how that ye have grieved their hearts because of the example that ye have set before them; and also, remember that ye may, because of your filthiness, bring your children unto destruction, and their sins be heaped upon your heads at the last day. ¹¹ O my brethren, hearken unto my word; arouse the faculties of your soul; shake yourselves that ye may awake from the slumber of death; and loose yourselves from the pains of hell that ye may not become angels to the devil, to be cast into that lake of fire and brimstone which is the second death.”

¹² And now I, Jacob, spake many more things unto the people of Nephi, warning them

against fornication and lasciviousness, and every kind of sin, telling them the awful consequences of them. ¹³ And a hundredth part of the proceedings of this people, which now began to be numerous, cannot be written upon these plates; but many of their proceedings are written upon the larger plates, and their wars, and their contentions, and the reigns of their kings. ¹⁴ These plates are called the plates of Jacob, and they were made by the hand of Nephi. And I make an end of speaking these words.

Jacob₂ Addresses His Future Readers: Jacob 4–6

Writing on Metal Plates

[III] **4** ¹ Now behold, it came to pass that I, Jacob, having ministered much unto my people in word, (and I cannot write but a little of my words, because of the difficulty of engraving our words upon plates) and we know that the things which we write upon plates must remain; ² but whatsoever

8–10: Jacob here contrasts the spiritual and physical conditions of whiteness (which he associates with purity) and darkness, both in the present and at the Judgment Day. Although he pleads with the Nephites to not judge the Lamanites by the color of their skin, the racial assumptions he makes are uncomfortable or even offensive to modern readers. **11:** *Shake . . . awake*, cf. 2 Ne 1.13, 23. *Slumber of death* is used metaphorically to indicate spiritual torpor. *Pains of hell*, Ps 116.3 and four times in the BoM. *Angels to the devil*, see Jacob’s words at 2 Ne 9.9. *Lake of fire and brimstone which is the second death*, Rev 21.8. Jacob had identified this lake as the final destination for “they who are filthy” at 2 Ne 9.16. The phrase *second death*, which appears four times in the NT (all in Rev) and four times in the BoM, is defined at Alma 12.15–18 as the eternal separation of the wicked from God after the Final Judgment. **12:** Jacob shifts to address his future readers, whom he describes as “our children and also our beloved brethren” (4.2). The latter are probably the Lamanites (see 2.35), either in coming centuries or in the latter days. *Lasciviousness*, lustfulness or lewdness. **13:** *A hundredth part*, BoM narrators regularly complain that what they have inscribed on metal plates represents less than one percent of what they know; cf. WoM 1.5; Hel 3.14; 3 Ne 5.8; 26.6; Ether 15.33. *Numerous*, relatively speaking; Jacob, who was born in the wilderness, has never seen large groups of people. **14:** *Made by the hand of Nephi*, that is, Jacob’s writings are part of the Small Plates of Nephi.

CHAPTERS 4–6

Jacob here adapts the model of Nephi’s discourse from 2 Ne. An introduction testifying of Christ (2 Ne 11; Jacob 4) is followed by an extended quotation from the Brass Plates (2 Ne 12–24; Jacob 5), and then a prophetic interpretation (2 Ne 25–30; Jacob 6). Nephi focuses on Isaiah but also quotes Zenos (2 Ne 30.10, 15, referencing 1 Ne 22.15–17), while Jacob focuses on Zenos but also quotes Isaiah (Jacob 6.2, referencing Isa 11.11).

CHAPTER 4

1–2: *Vanish away*, Paul noted that knowledge would eventually “vanish away” (1 Cor 13.8); writing on metal plates can prevent that, at least for *a few words*.

things we write upon anything save it be upon plates must perish and vanish away; but we can write a few words upon plates, which will give our children, and also our beloved brethren, a small degree of knowledge concerning us, or concerning their fathers—³ Now in this thing we do rejoice; and we labor diligently to engraven these words upon plates, hoping that our beloved brethren and our children will receive them with thankful hearts, and look upon them that they may learn with joy and not with sorrow, neither with contempt, concerning their first parents.

Prophetic Knowledge of Christ

⁴ For, for this intent have we written these things, that they may know that we knew of Christ, and we had a hope of his glory many hundred years before his coming; and not only we ourselves had a hope of his glory, but also all the holy prophets which were before us. ⁵ Behold, they believed in Christ and worshiped the Father in his name, and also we worship the Father in his name. And for this intent we keep the law of Moses, it pointing our souls to him; and for this cause it is sanctified unto us for righteousness, even as it was accounted unto Abraham in the wilderness to be obedient unto the commands of God in offering up his son Isaac, which is a similitude of God and his Only Begotten Son.

⁶ Wherefore, we search the prophets, and we have many revelations and the spirit of prophecy; and having all these witnesses we obtain a hope, and our faith becometh unshaken, insomuch that we truly can command in the name of Jesus and the very trees obey us, or the mountains, or the waves of the sea. ⁷ Nevertheless, the Lord God showeth us our weakness that we may know that it is by his grace, and his great condescensions unto the children of men, that we have power to do these things.

⁸ Behold, great and marvelous are the works of the Lord. How unsearchable are the depths of the mysteries of him; and it is impossible that man should find out all his ways. And no man knoweth of his ways save it be revealed unto him; wherefore, brethren, despise not the revelations of God. ⁹ For behold, by the power of his word man came upon the face of the earth, which earth was created by the power of his word. Wherefore, if God being able to speak and the world was, and to speak and man was created, O then, why not able to command the earth, or the workmanship of his hands upon the face of it, according to his will and pleasure?

¹⁰ Wherefore, brethren, seek not to counsel the Lord, but to take counsel from his hand. For behold, ye yourselves know that he counseleth in wisdom, and in justice, and in great mercy, over all his works. ¹¹ Wherefore,

3: Jacob fears that without direct evidence of his and Nephi's intentions, the descendants of Lehi may judge the first generation harshly, which is precisely what is reported at Mos 10.11–17. *Labor diligently*, Nephi also used this expression to describe his writing to “our children, and also our brethren” (2 Ne 25.23). **5:** Like Paul, Jacob sees the law of Moses as directed toward Christ (Gal 3.24). *Sanctified unto us for righteousness*, the phrase is reminiscent of Gen 15.6, where Abraham's faith was “counted . . . to him for righteousness” (an expression that Paul uses to defend his thesis of salvation by faith apart from the law of Moses at Rom 4.1–25; Gal 3.6–9), but here Jacob views Abraham's faith as reaching its culmination in the sacrifice of Isaac (as at Jas 2.21–24, which also cites Gen 15.6). *Abraham . . . offering up his son Isaac*, see Gen 22.1–18. **6:** *We search the prophets*, in order to find corroboration for the new Nephite revelations; cf. 1 Ne 22.30–31. The ideal of “unshaken faith” links Jacob to both Nephi (2 Ne 31.19) and Enos (Enos 1.11). The Synoptic Gospels portray Jesus as commanding trees (Mt 21.18–22; Mk 11.12–24) and waves (Mt 8.23–27; Mk 4.35–41; Lk 8.22–25), with a promise that mountains would also obey the faithful (Mt 17.20; 21.21; Mk 11.23; cf. Ether 12.30). **7:** *God showeth us our weakness*, cf. Ether 12.27. **8:** Humans are incapable of understanding God without revelation. **9:** Ascribing the creation of the earth and humankind to the *power of [God's] word* draws upon Gen 1, which seems to ignore the physical molding and divine breath that were used to form man at Gen 2.7. **11:** *First-fruits*, see 2 Ne 2.9n. In that verse Christ is described as “the first-fruits unto God”; here Christ is compared to a devout farmer, with the faithful being his first-fruits offering.

beloved brethren, be reconciled unto him through the atonement of Christ, his Only Begotten Son, and ye may obtain a resurrection, according to the power of the resurrection which is in Christ, and be presented as the first-fruits of Christ unto God, having faith, and obtained a good hope of glory in him before he manifesteth himself in the flesh.

Prophecy and the Jews

¹² And now, beloved, marvel not that I tell you these things; for why not speak of the atonement of Christ, and attain to a perfect knowledge of him, as to attain to the knowledge of a resurrection and the world to come?

¹³ Behold, my brethren, he that prophesieth, let him prophesy to the understanding of men; for the Spirit speaketh the truth and lieth not. Wherefore, it speaketh of things as they really are, and of things as they really will be; wherefore, these things are manifested unto us plainly, for the salvation of our souls.

But behold, we are not witnesses alone in these things; for God also spake them unto prophets of old. ¹⁴ But behold, the Jews were a stiffnecked people; and they despised the words of plainness, and killed the prophets, and sought for things that they could not

understand. Wherefore, because of their blindness, which blindness came by looking beyond the mark, they must needs fall; for God hath taken away his plainness from them, and delivered unto them many things which they cannot understand, because they desired it. And because they desired it God hath done it, that they may stumble.

¹⁵ And now I, Jacob, am led on by the Spirit unto prophesying; for I perceive by the workings of the Spirit which is in me, that by the stumbling of the Jews they will reject the stone upon which they might build and have safe foundation. ¹⁶ But behold, according to the scriptures, this stone shall become the great, and the last, and the only “sure foundation,” upon which the Jews can build.^a ¹⁷ And now, my beloved, how is it possible that these, after having “rejected” the sure foundation, can ever build upon it, that it may “become the head of their corner?”^b ¹⁸ Behold, my beloved brethren, I will unfold this mystery unto you; if I do not, by any means, get shaken from my firmness in the Spirit, and stumble because of my over anxiety for you.

^a ¹⁶ Isa 28.16

^b ¹⁷ Ps 118.22; cf. Mt 21.42; Mk 12.10; Lk 20.17; Acts 4.11

12: *The atonement of Christ* and the *resurrection* are the two main concepts that Nephite revelation added to the traditions of ancient Israel; they are disputed by religious dissenters such as Sherem (Jacob 7), Nehor (Alma 1), the people of Ammonihah (Alma 11–12), Korihor (Alma 30), and the Zoramites (Alma 31), and doubted by Alma’s son Corianton (Alma 39–42). **13–14:** Jacob attempts to explain why doctrines that seem clear to Nephites as they read the scriptures were missed by Jews. **13:** *We are not witnesses alone . . . prophets of old*, see 1 Ne 19.24n; 22.30–31n. **14:** *Sought for things that they could not understand*, God sometimes gives people what they desire, to their detriment. This verse blames humans for their lack of understanding, rather than God (as implied at Isa 6.9–10 [quoted at 2 Ne 16.9–10]; 44.18). *Looking beyond the mark*, the expression may be original to the BoM. The metaphor appears to come from archery, with the “mark” being a target; cf. 1 Sam 20.20. **15–18:** The juxtaposition of Jewish intransigence and the word *stumble* reminds Jacob of scriptural precedents of cornerstones and rejected stones (Isa 28.16; Ps 118.22 [quoted at Mt 21.42]), perhaps by way of Isa 8.14 (quoted at 2 Ne 18.14), where the Lord is compared to a “stone of stumbling” (all three verses are quoted at 1 Pet 2.4–8). Yet even if the Jews have *rejected the sure foundation*, Jacob will explain—by reproducing a lengthy allegory of Zenos—how they can nevertheless be saved, if Jacob himself does not “stumble” in the telling of it. **15:** *Led on . . . unto prophesying*, which he will do beginning at 6.1, after the inserted chapter from Zenos. **16:** *The great and the last*, perhaps an allusion to Christ’s “great and last sacrifice,” mentioned four times at Alma 34.10–14.

Jacob₂ Quotes Zenos's Allegory of the Olive Tree: Jacob 5

First Decay and Remedy (pruning, digging, and nourishing)

5¹ Behold, my brethren, do ye not remember to have read the words of the prophet Zenos, which he spake unto the house of Israel, saying,² “Hearken, O ye house of Israel, and hear the words of me, a prophet of the Lord.³ For behold, thus saith the Lord:

I will liken thee, O house of Israel, like unto a tame olive tree, which a man took and nourished in his vineyard; and it grew, and waxed old, and began to decay.⁴ And it came to pass that the master of the vineyard went forth, and he saw that his olive tree began to decay; and he said, “I will prune it, and dig about it, and nourish it, that perhaps it may shoot forth young and tender branches, and it perish not.”

⁵ And it came to pass that he pruned it, and digged about it, and nourished it according to his word.

⁶ And it came to pass that after

many days it began to put forth somewhat a little, young and tender branches; but behold, the main top thereof began to perish.

Second Remedy (wild branches grafted in, withered branches burned, young branches transplanted elsewhere)

⁷ And it came to pass that the master of the vineyard saw it, and he said unto his servant, “It grieveth me that I should lose this tree; wherefore, go and pluck the branches from a wild olive tree, and bring them hither unto me; and we will pluck off those main branches which are beginning to wither away, and we will cast them into the fire that they may be burned.”⁸ “And behold,” saith the Lord of the vineyard, “I take away many of these young and tender branches, and I will graft them whithersoever I will—and it mattereth not—that if it so be that the root of this tree will perish, I may preserve the fruit thereof unto myself; wherefore, I will take these young and tender branches, and I will graft them

CHAPTER 5

This allegory was presumably on the Brass Plates. Note that the tale is related by the Lord, whom Zenos is quoting. Lehi uses a similar analogy at 1 Ne 10.12–14, which Nephi interprets at 15.12–18; for biblical parallels, see Ps 80.8–18; Isa 5.1–7; Mt 7.16–20; Lk 13.6–9; Rom 11.17–24. Only here, however, does the allegory offer a comprehensive overview of salvation history; the other accounts feature single episodes. **3:** Israel is also compared to an olive tree at Jer 11.16–17 and Hos 14.5–6. *Tame*, domesticated or cultivated. It is not obvious why an olive tree would be planted in a vineyard, though Lk 13:6–9 has a parallel example of an unfruitful fig tree in a vineyard, with a servant offering to “dig about it.” **4:** *Nourish*, the verb appears 22 times in this chapter (often with the Lord nourishing the trees himself, personally); **6.7** suggests that one of the ways this happens is through “the good word of God.” **5–6:** The first, incomplete recovery may correspond to reforms under Hezekiah or Josiah. **7–14:** The wild branches are Gentiles who will become Israelites (or later, Christians) by conversion and intermarriage. The young branches are Israelites who will be taken abroad, though they will retain their Israelite identity in foreign lands. The roots may be Israelite covenants or scriptures or nationhood. The fact that the last of the transplanted branches corresponds to the Lehites (vv. 24–28) suggests that this allegory begins with the scattering of Israel from the Assyrian conquest of Israel to the Babylonian conquest of Judah. **7:** *His servant*, one of God’s prophets. *It grieveth me that I should lose this tree*, the Lord’s lament will be repeated at vv. 11, 13, 32. **8:** Although the Lord regularly consults with and enlists the help of his servant, here the plan to transplant young branches to the nethermost part of the vineyard is undertaken by the Lord alone; cf. v. 13.

whithersoever I will. ⁹ Take thou the branches of the wild olive tree, and graft them in, in the stead thereof; and these which I have plucked off I will cast into the fire and burn them, that they may not cumber the ground of my vineyard.”

¹⁰ And it came to pass that the servant of the Lord of the vineyard did according to the word of the Lord of the vineyard, and grafted in the branches of the wild olive tree.

¹¹ And the Lord of the vineyard caused that it should be digged about, and pruned, and nourished, saying unto his servant, “It grieveth me that I should lose this tree; wherefore, that perhaps I might preserve the roots thereof that they perish not, that I might preserve them unto myself, I have done this thing.

¹² Wherefore, go thy way; watch the tree, and nourish it, according to my words. ¹³ And these will I place in the nethermost part of my vineyard, whithersoever I will, it mattereth not unto thee; and I do it that I may preserve unto myself the natural branches of the tree; and also, that I may lay up fruit thereof against the season, unto myself; for it grieveth me that I should lose this tree and the fruit thereof.” ¹⁴ And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard went his way, and hid the natural branches of the tame olive tree in the

nethermost parts of the vineyard, some in one and some in another, according to his will and pleasure.

General Success (additional time and care needed for the third transplant)

¹⁵ And it came to pass that a long time passed away, and the Lord of the vineyard said unto his servant, “Come, let us go down into the vineyard, that we may labor in the vineyard.” ¹⁶ And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard, and also the servant, went down into the vineyard to labor.

[The Main Tree]

And it came to pass that the servant said unto his master, “Behold, look here; behold the tree.” ¹⁷ And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard looked and beheld the tree in the which the wild olive branches had been grafted; and it had sprung forth and begun to bear fruit. And he beheld that it was good; and the fruit thereof was like unto the natural fruit. ¹⁸ And he said unto the servant, “Behold, the branches of the wild tree have taken hold of the moisture of the root thereof, that the root thereof hath brought forth much strength; and because of the much strength of the root thereof the wild branches have brought forth tame fruit. Now, if we

9: *Cumber*, WB: “to crowd; to obstruct with something useless”; see Lk 13.7. **12:** *Watch the tree*, the Lord and his servants are ever mindful of the vicissitudes of the chosen people. *Lay up fruit thereof against the season*, that is, harvest, process, and store olives for the off-season; the idiom occurs nine times in scripture, all in this chapter. **13:** *Nethermost*, WB: “lowest,” though the meaning here seems more like “farthest.” **15:** *A long time passed away*, the allegory shifts to events that would have been in the future for Jacob, since he himself was among the first generation of Nephite immigrants to the New World. See v. 29 for a nearly identical transition. **17–18:** When Paul uses the metaphor of wild branches being grafted into an olive tree, he is referring to Gentile converts to Christianity in the first century CE; this may be the time period indicated here as well. **17:** *Beheld that it was good*, a creation allusion (six times in Gen 1), cf. v. 20.

had not grafted in these branches, the tree thereof would have perished. And now, behold, I shall lay up much fruit, which the tree thereof hath brought forth; and the fruit thereof I shall lay up against the season, unto mine own self.”

[First Transplant]

¹⁹ And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard said unto the servant, “Come, let us go to the nethermost part of the vineyard, and behold if the natural branches of the tree have not brought forth much fruit also, that I may lay up of the fruit thereof against the season, unto mine own self.” ²⁰ And it came to pass that they went forth whither the master had hid the natural branches of the tree, and he said unto the servant, “Behold these.” And he beheld the first that it had brought forth much fruit; and he beheld also that it was good. And he said unto the servant, “Take of the fruit thereof, and lay it up against the season, that I may preserve it unto mine own self.” “For behold,” said he, “this long time have I nourished it, and it hath brought forth much fruit.”

²¹ And it came to pass that the servant said unto his master, “How comest thou hither to plant this tree, or this branch of the tree? For behold, it was the poorest spot in all the land of the vineyard.” ²² And the Lord of the vineyard said unto

him, “Counsel me not; I knew that it was a poor spot of ground; wherefore, I said unto thee, ‘I have nourished it this long time,’ and thou beholdest that it hath brought forth much fruit.”

[Second Transplant]

²³ And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard said unto his servant, “Look hither; behold I have planted another branch of the tree also; and thou knowest that this spot of ground was poorer than the first. But, behold the tree. I have nourished it this long time, and it hath brought forth much fruit; therefore, gather it, and lay it up against the season, that I may preserve it unto mine own self.”

[Third Transplant]

²⁴ And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard said again unto his servant, “Look hither, and behold another branch also, which I have planted; behold that I have nourished it also, and it hath brought forth fruit.” ²⁵ And he said unto the servant, “Look hither and behold the last. Behold, this have I planted in a good spot of ground; and I have nourished it this long time, and only a part of the tree hath brought forth tame fruit, and the other part of the tree hath brought forth wild fruit; behold, I have nourished this tree like unto the others.”

19–23: Two branches of Israel sent by the Lord to poor lands far from Judea have flourished. The locations are uncertain, though it is possible that the first branch represents the ten tribes led away by the Assyrians in 722 BCE. The BoM assumes that they kept a distinct identity and produced sacred records, at least for a time; see 1 Ne 22.3–4; 2 Ne 29.12–13; 3 Ne 17.4; 21.26. Perhaps the second branch refers to Jews who were taken to Babylon in 586 BCE. 24–29: A third branch, transplanted to a *good spot of ground* (the New World), has yielded the mixed fruit of Nephites and Lamanites (cf. vv. 43–45), though the Lord agrees to put off the destruction of the latter. In the first century CE, there will be a resurgence of faith among the Lehites after Christ’s visitation.

²⁶ And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard said unto the servant, “Pluck off the branches that have not brought forth good fruit, and cast them into the fire.”

²⁷ But behold, the servant said unto him, “Let us prune it, and dig about it, and nourish it a little longer, that perhaps it may bring forth good fruit unto thee, that thou canst lay it up against the season.” ²⁸ And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard and the servant of the Lord of the vineyard did nourish all the fruit of the vineyard.

Second Decay

²⁹ And it came to pass that a long time had passed away, and the Lord of the vineyard said unto his servant, “Come, let us go down into the vineyard, that we may labor again in the vineyard. For behold, the time draweth near, and the end soon cometh; wherefore, I must lay up fruit against the season, unto mine own self.”

[The Main Tree—good roots, but wild branches produce evil fruit]

³⁰ And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard and the servant went down into the vineyard; and they came to the tree whose natural branches had been broken off, and the wild branches had been grafted in; and behold all sorts of fruit did cumber the tree. ³¹ And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard

did taste of the fruit, every sort according to its number. And the Lord of the vineyard said, “Behold, this long time have we nourished this tree, and I have laid up unto myself against the season much fruit. ³² But behold, this time it hath brought forth much fruit, and there is none of it which is good. And behold, there are all kinds of bad fruit; and it profiteth me nothing, notwithstanding all our labor; and now it grieveth me that I should lose this tree.”

³³ And the Lord of the vineyard said unto the servant, “What shall we do unto the tree, that I may preserve again good fruit thereof unto mine own self?” ³⁴ And the servant said unto his master, “Behold, because thou didst graft in the branches of the wild olive tree they have nourished the roots, that they are alive and they have not perished; wherefore thou beholdest that they are yet good.”

³⁵ And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard said unto his servant, “The tree profiteth me nothing, and the roots thereof profit me nothing so long as it shall bring forth evil fruit.

³⁶ Nevertheless, I know that the roots are good, and for mine own purpose I have preserved them; and because of their much strength they have hitherto brought forth, from the wild branches, good fruit.

27: Here, and at v. 50, the servant (probably a prophet) speaks to dissuade the Lord from taking harsh action, much as Abraham and Moses did; cf. Gen 18.20–33; Ex 32.7–14; Num 14.11–23. 30–40: After several more centuries, there is a general apostasy among the combined Israelites and Gentiles, though there is still value in the roots of the mother tree. Similarly, apostasy has overtaken each of the three transplants, including the third, where the Lamanites will have overcome the Nephites in the 5th c. CE.

³⁷ But behold, the wild branches have grown and have overrun the roots thereof; and because that the wild branches have overcome the roots thereof it hath brought forth much evil fruit; and because that it hath brought forth so much evil fruit thou beholdest that it beginneth to perish; and it will soon become ripened, that it may be cast into the fire, except we should do something for it to preserve it.”

[Three Transplants—all produce wild fruit]

³⁸ And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard said unto his servant, “Let us go down into the nethermost parts of the vineyard, and behold if the natural branches have also brought forth evil fruit.”

³⁹ And it came to pass that they went down into the nethermost parts of the vineyard. And it came to pass that they beheld that the fruit of the natural branches had become corrupt also; yea, the first and the second and also the last; and they had all become corrupt. ⁴⁰ And the wild fruit of the last had overcome that part of the tree which brought forth good fruit, even that the branch had withered away and died.

⁴¹ And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard wept, and said unto the servant, “What could I have done more for my vineyard?”

⁴² Behold, I knew that all the fruit

of the vineyard, save it were these, had become corrupted. And now these which have once brought forth good fruit have also become corrupted; and now all the trees of my vineyard are good for nothing save it be to be hewn down and cast into the fire.

⁴³ “And behold this last, whose branch hath withered away, I did plant in a good spot of ground; yea, even that which was choice unto me above all other parts of the land of my vineyard. ⁴⁴ And thou beheldest that I also cut down that which cumbered this spot of ground, that I might plant this tree in the stead thereof. ⁴⁵ And thou beheldest that a part thereof brought forth good fruit, and a part thereof brought forth wild fruit; and because I plucked not the branches thereof and cast them into the fire, behold, they have overcome the good branch that it hath withered away.

⁴⁶ “And now, behold, notwithstanding all the care which we have taken of my vineyard, the trees thereof have become corrupted, that they bring forth no good fruit; and these I had hoped to preserve, to have laid up fruit thereof against the season, unto mine own self. But, behold, they have become like unto the wild olive tree, and they are of no worth but to be hewn down and cast into the fire; and it grieveth me that I should lose them.

³⁷: *Ripened*, that is, “ripened in iniquity” (also v. 58), a non-biblical phrase that occurs four times in the BoM. ⁴¹: *What could I have done more for my vineyard*, Isa 5:4, and repeated again in vv. 47, 49. ⁴²: *Good fruit . . . corrupted . . . hewn down and cast into the fire*, Mt 7:18–19. ⁴³: *A good spot . . . choice unto me above all other* [lands], the Americas; see 1 Ne 2:20n. ⁴⁴: *Cut down that which cumbered this spot of ground*, that is, the Jaredites. ⁴⁵: *Because I plucked not the branches thereof*; see v. 27. ^{46–47}: The Lord’s lament now expands to include the natural branches that he has transplanted and nourished (*all the trees of my vineyard*); cf. vv. 51, 66.

[*An Explanation—roots versus branches*]

⁴⁷ “But what could I have done more in my vineyard? Have I slackened mine hand, that I have not nourished it? Nay, I have nourished it, and I have digged about it, and I have pruned it, and I have dunged it; and I have stretched forth mine hand almost all the day long, and the end draweth nigh. And it grieveth me that I should hew down all the trees of my vineyard, and cast them into the fire that they should be burned. Who is it that has corrupted my vineyard?”

⁴⁸ And it came to pass that the servant said unto his master, “Is it not the loftiness of thy vineyard—have not the branches thereof overcome the roots which are good? And because the branches have overcome the roots thereof, behold they grew faster than the strength of the roots, taking strength unto themselves. Behold, I say, is not this the cause that the trees of thy vineyard have become corrupted?”

Third Remedy (cross-grafting between the main tree and the transplants; the worst branches are burned)

⁴⁹ And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard said unto the servant, “Let us go to and hew down the trees of the vineyard and cast them into the fire, that they shall not cumber the ground of my

vineyard, for I have done all. What could I have done more for my vineyard?”

⁵⁰ But, behold, the servant said unto the Lord of the vineyard, “Spare it a little longer.”

⁵¹ And the Lord said, “Yea, I will spare it a little longer, for it grieveth me that I should lose the trees of my vineyard. ⁵² Wherefore, let us take of the branches of these which I have planted in the nethermost parts of my vineyard, and let us graft them into the tree from whence they came; and let us pluck from the tree those branches whose fruit is most bitter, and graft in the natural branches of the tree in the stead thereof. ⁵³ And this will I do that the tree may not perish, that, perhaps, I may preserve unto myself the roots thereof for mine own purpose.

⁵⁴ “And, behold, the roots of the natural branches of the tree which I planted whithersoever I would are yet alive; wherefore, that I may preserve them also for mine own purpose, I will take of the branches of this tree, and I will graft them in unto them. Yea, I will graft in unto them the branches of their mother tree, that I may preserve the roots also unto mine own self, that when they shall be sufficiently strong perhaps they may bring forth good fruit unto me, and I may yet have glory in the fruit of my vineyard.”

⁴⁷: *Digged about it... dunged it*, cf. Lk 13.8. *Stretched forth mine hand almost all the day long*, cf. Isa 65.2 (quoted at Rom 10.21); see 2 Ne 28.32n. *Who is it*, the Lord seeks someone to blame for his thwarted efforts. **48**: The servant suggests instead that the decay was the result of natural causes. **50–59**: The Lord postpones judgment in order to give the trees one last chance to bear good fruit, and proposes regrafting the scattered natural branches back into the mother tree, indicating a gathering of scattered Israel in the last days. In addition, some of the newer branches of the mother tree will be grafted into the far-off trees. With regard to the Lehites, this may allude to Christian Gentiles joining with Native Americans. Only a few branches, the most bitter, will be destroyed at this point.

⁵⁵ And it came to pass that they took from the natural tree which had become wild, and grafted in unto the natural trees, which also had become wild. ⁵⁶ And they also took of the natural trees which had become wild, and grafted into their mother tree.

⁵⁷ And the Lord of the vineyard said unto the servant, “Pluck not the wild branches from the trees, save it be those which are most bitter; and in them ye shall graft according to that which I have said. ⁵⁸ And we will nourish again the trees of the vineyard, and we will trim up the branches thereof; and we will pluck from the trees those branches which are ripened, that must perish, and cast them into the fire. ⁵⁹ And this I do that, perhaps, the roots thereof may take strength because of their goodness and because of the change of the branches, that the good may overcome the evil.”

A Plan for One Last Effort (servants are called for additional grafting, pruning, digging, and nourishing; the bad branches are gradually removed)

⁶⁰ “And because that I have preserved the natural branches and the roots thereof, and that I have grafted in the natural branches again into their mother tree, and have preserved the roots of their

mother tree, that, perhaps, the trees of my vineyard may bring forth again good fruit; and that I may have joy again in the fruit of my vineyard, and, perhaps, that I may rejoice exceedingly that I have preserved the roots and the branches of the first fruit—

⁶¹ Wherefore, go to, and call servants, that we may labor diligently with our might in the vineyard, that we may prepare the way, that I may bring forth again the natural fruit, which natural fruit is good and the most precious above all other fruit.

⁶² “Wherefore, let us go to and labor with our might this last time, for behold the end draweth nigh, and this is for the last time that I shall prune my vineyard. ⁶³ Graft in the branches; begin at the last that they may be first, and that the first may be last, and dig about the trees, both old and young, the first and the last; and the last and the first, that all may be nourished once again for the last time. ⁶⁴ Wherefore, dig about them, and prune them, and dung them once more, for the last time, for the end draweth nigh. And if it be so that these last grafts shall grow, and bring forth the natural fruit, then shall ye prepare the way for them, that they may grow.

⁶⁵ “And as they begin to grow ye shall clear away the branches which

60–69: Additional servants are enlisted to continue the ingathering of Israel (v. 63) and to cultivate the various trees, in hope of producing good fruit. **61:** *Go to*, a biblical expression defined in WB as “come; move; begin; a phrase of exhortation.” *Fruit... most precious above all other fruit*, 1 Ne 15.36. **62–64:** This is the last time such effort will be expended before the Final Judgment. **65–66:** As the good branches mature, the bad branches are gradually cleared away, thus maintaining the health of both roots and grafts. The idea that the wicked will be burned in order to preserve the righteous was seen earlier at 1 Ne 22.15–17 and 2 Ne 30.10.

bring forth bitter fruit, according to the strength of the good and the size thereof; and ye shall not clear away the bad thereof all at once, lest the roots thereof should be too strong for the graft, and the graft thereof shall perish, and I lose the trees of my vineyard.⁶⁶ For it grieveth me that I should lose the trees of my vineyard; wherefore ye shall clear away the bad according as the good shall grow, that the root and the top may be equal in strength, until the good shall overcome the bad, and the bad be hewn down and cast into the fire, that they cumber not the ground of my vineyard; and thus will I sweep away the bad out of my vineyard.

⁶⁷ “And the branches of the natural tree will I graft in again into the natural tree; ⁶⁸ and the branches of the natural tree will I graft into the natural branches of the tree; and thus will I bring them together again, that they shall bring forth the natural fruit, and they shall be one.

⁶⁹ And the bad shall be cast away, yea, even out of all the land of my vineyard; for behold, only this once will I prune my vineyard.”

Success Again

⁷⁰ And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard sent his servant; and the servant went and did as the Lord had commanded him, and brought other servants; and they were few.⁷¹ And the Lord of the

vineyard said unto them, “Go to, and labor in the vineyard, with your might. For behold, this is the last time that I shall nourish my vineyard; for the end is nigh at hand, and the season speedily cometh; and if ye labor with your might with me ye shall have joy in the fruit which I shall lay up unto myself against the time which will soon come.”

⁷² And it came to pass that the servants did go and labor with their might; and the Lord of the vineyard labored also with them; and they did obey the commandments of the Lord of the vineyard in all things.⁷³ And there began to be the natural fruit again in the vineyard; and the natural branches began to grow and thrive exceedingly; and the wild branches began to be plucked off and to be cast away; and they did keep the root and the top thereof equal, according to the strength thereof.⁷⁴ And thus they labored, with all diligence, according to the commandments of the Lord of the vineyard, even until the bad had been cast away out of the vineyard, and the Lord had preserved unto himself that the trees had become again the natural fruit; and they became like unto one body; and the fruits were equal; and the Lord of the vineyard had preserved unto himself the natural fruit, which was most precious unto him from the beginning.

67–68: These verses refer to both ingrafting and outgrafting, paralleling vv. 52, 54. **70–74:** Following the plan laid out in vv. 60–69, the Lord and a few servants increase the yield of good fruit by nourishing the good branches and pruning away the bad.

A Prophecy of a Third Decay and the End of the Vineyard

⁷⁵ And it came to pass that when the Lord of the vineyard saw that his fruit was good, and that his vineyard was no more corrupt, he called up his servants, and said unto them, “Behold, for this last time have we nourished my vineyard; and thou beholdest that I have done according to my will; and I have preserved the natural fruit, that it is good, even like as it was in the beginning. And blessed art thou; for because ye have been diligent in laboring with me in my vineyard, and have kept my commandments, and have brought unto me again the natural fruit, that my vineyard is no more corrupted, and the bad is cast away, behold ye shall have joy with me because of the fruit of my vineyard.

⁷⁶ “For behold, for a long time will I lay up of the fruit of my vineyard unto mine own self against the season, which speedily cometh; and for the last time have I nourished my vineyard, and pruned it, and dug about it, and dunged it; wherefore I will lay up unto mine own self of the fruit, for a long time, according to that which I have spoken. ⁷⁷ And when the time

cometh that evil fruit shall again come into my vineyard, then will I cause the good and the bad to be gathered; and the good will I preserve unto myself, and the bad will I cast away into its own place. And then cometh the season and the end; and my vineyard will I cause to be burned with fire.”

Jacob₂ Interprets Zenos’s Allegory and Bids Farewell

(with words and phrases borrowed from chapter 5 in bold)

[IV] **6** ¹ And now, behold, my brethren, as I said unto you that I would prophesy, behold, this is my prophecy—that the things which this prophet Zenos spake, concerning the house of Israel, in the which he **likened**^a them unto a **tame olive tree**,^b must surely come to pass. ² And the day that he shall “set his hand again the second time to recover his people,”^c is the day, yea, even **the last time**,^d that the **servants** of the Lord shall go forth in his power, to **nourish** and **prune** his **vineyard**; and after that **the end soon cometh**.^e

^a 1 Jacob 5.3

^b 1 Jacob 5.3, 14

^c 2 Isa 11.11; cf. 2 Ne 6.14; 21.11; 25.17; 29.1

^d 2 Jacob 5.62–64, 71, 75–76

^e 2 Jacob 5.29, 71

75–77: After the Lord and his servants have rejuvenated and restored all the olive trees in the vineyard, they will enjoy a long harvest season, until bad fruit reappears. At that time, the good and bad will be separated (see 2 Ne 30.10), and the vineyard itself will be burned. Matthew 13.40 also suggests that the world will end in fire; cf. Nah 1.5; 2 Pet 3.10–12; 1 Ne 22.17; 3 Ne 26.3; Morm 9.2.

CHAPTER 6

1–4: After a brief synopsis of Zenos’s prophecy of the gathering and nourishing of Israel in the last days, Jacob affirms God’s blessings, curses, and mercies upon the various groups described in the allegory. In addition, he reconciles Zenos’s allegory with Isaiah’s prophecies of salvation history. **1:** *I said unto you that I would prophesy*, see 4.15. **2:** *Set his hand again the second time to recover his people*, Jacob is here interpreting a phrase from Isa 11.11, which was quoted by Nephi at 2 Ne 21.11. The same phrase was interpreted earlier by Jacob himself at 2 Ne 6.14, by Nephi at 25.17, and by the Lord at 29.1. For another example of multiple interpretations, see 2 Ne 10.9n.

³ And how **blest**^a are they who have
**labored diligently in his
vineyard;**^b

and how cursed are they who shall
be **cast out into their own
place;**^c

And the world shall be **burned
with fire.**^d

⁴ And how merciful is our God
unto us,
for he remembereth the **house
of Israel,**
both **roots and branches;**
and **“he stretches forth his hands
unto them all the day long”;**^e
and they are a stiffnecked and a
gainsaying people;
but as many as will not harden their
hearts
shall be saved in the kingdom of
God.

⁵ Wherefore, my beloved brethren, I beseech
of you in words of soberness that ye would
repent, and come with full purpose of heart,
and cleave unto God as he cleaveth unto
you. And while his arm of mercy is extended
towards you in the light of the day, harden not
your hearts. ⁶ Yea, “today, if ye will hear his
voice, harden not your hearts”;^f for why will
ye die? ⁷ For behold, after ye have been **nour-**
ished by the good word of God **all the day**

long;^g will ye **bring forth evil fruit,**^h that ye
must be **hewn down and cast into the fire?**ⁱ

⁸ Behold, will ye reject these words? Will ye
reject the words of the prophets; and will ye
reject all the words which have been spoken
concerning Christ, after so many have spoken
concerning him; and deny the good word of
Christ, and the power of God, and the gift of
the Holy Ghost, and quench the Holy Spirit,
and make a mock of the great plan of redemp-
tion, which hath been laid for you?

⁹ Know ye not that if ye will do these
things, that the power of the redemption and
the resurrection, which is in Christ, will bring
you to stand with shame and awful guilt before
the bar of God? ¹⁰ And according to the power
of justice (for justice cannot be denied) ye
must go away into that lake of fire and brim-
stone, whose flames are unquenchable, and
whose smoke ascendeth up forever and ever,
which lake of fire and brimstone is endless
torment.

^a 3 Jacob 5.75

^b 3 Jacob 5.61, 75

^c 3 Jacob 5.77

^d 3 Jacob 5.77

^e 4 Jacob 5.47; Isa 65.2; cf. Rom 10.21; 2 Ne
28.32

^f 6 Ps 95.7–8

^g 7 Jacob 5.47

^h 7 Jacob 5.35, 37, 38

ⁱ 7 Jacob 5.42, 46, 66

⁴: Jacob sees his own people as having been portrayed in the allegory, producing both bad and good fruit. *Gainsaying*, WB: “contradicting; denying”; the addition of this word aligns the verse with Rom 10.21. **5–11**: Jacob urges his readers to heed the words of the prophets and of Christ, before the Final Judgment comes. **5**: *With full purpose of heart and cleave unto God*, cf. Acts 11.23. *Arm of mercy is extended*, non-biblical, but six times in the BoM. **6**: *Today... hearts*, this quotation from Ps 95.7–8 is the first part of the passage that was alluded to at 1.7, which means that Jacob begins and ends his book with the same psalm. *Why will ye die*, Ezek 18.31 (pleading for Israel to repent and make a “new heart”); cf. Ezek 33.11; Hel 7.17. **7**: *Nourished by the good word of God*, Moro 6.4; see 5.4n. In a similar gastronomic metaphor, Heb 6.5 has “tasted the good word of God.” **8**: Quenching the Holy Spirit will eventually lead to unquenchable flames (v. 10); cf. 1 Thess 5.19. The combination of *reject and laid for you* points back to the stone foundation of 4.15–17, with which Jacob introduced Zenos’s allegory. *Plan of redemption*, non-biblical, but seventeen times in the BoM (all the other occurrences are in Alma); this phrase, as well as “plan of salvation,” was common in the 19th c. **9**: *Bar of God*, non-biblical, but six times in the BoM. **10**: Similar phrases can be found in the NT: “lake of fire and brimstone” (Rev 20.10; cf. Rev 19.10; 21.8), “unquenchable fire” (Mt 3.12; Lk 3.17), “smoke...ascendeth up for ever and ever” (Rev 14.11). Mosiah 3.27 includes these same elements (cf. 2 Ne 9.16).

¹¹ O then, my beloved brethren, repent ye, and enter in at the strait gate, and continue in the way which is narrow, until ye shall obtain eternal life. ¹² O be wise; what can I say more? ¹³ Finally, I bid you farewell, until I shall meet you before the pleasing bar of God, which bar striketh the wicked with awful dread and fear. Amen.

Sherem Preaches against Christ

[V] **7** ¹ And now it came to pass after some years had passed away, there came a man among the people of Nephi, whose name was Sherem. ² And it came to pass that he began to preach among the people, and to declare unto them that there should be no Christ. And he preached many things which were flattering unto the people; and this he did that he might overthrow the doctrine of Christ. ³ And he labored diligently that he might lead away the hearts of the people, inso-much that he did lead away many hearts.

And he knowing that I, Jacob, had faith in Christ who should come, he sought much

opportunity that he might come unto me. ⁴ And he was learned, that he had a perfect knowledge of the language of the people; wherefore, he could use much flattery, and much power of speech, according to the power of the devil. ⁵ And he had hope to shake me from the faith, notwithstanding the many revelations and the many things which I had seen concerning these things; for I truly had seen angels, and they had ministered unto me. And also, I had heard the voice of the Lord speaking unto me in very word, from time to time; wherefore, I could not be shaken.

⁶ And it came to pass that he came unto me, and on this wise did he speak unto me, saying, “Brother Jacob, I have sought much opportunity that I might speak unto you; for I have heard and also know that thou goest about much, preaching that which ye call the gospel, or the doctrine of Christ. ⁷ And ye have led away much of this people that they pervert the right way of God, and keep not the law of Moses which is the right way; and convert the law of Moses into the worship of a being which ye say shall come many hundred

11: Jacob alludes to 2 Ne 31.17–18, but compare Mt 7.13–14 and his own words at 2 Ne 9.41. **12:** *O be wise*, pleas for readers to “be wise” are extended by writers in both the first and last generations of the Nephites, thus functioning as admonitory bookends; see Morm 9.31. **13:** Like Nephi and Moroni, Jacob assures his readers that he will meet them at the Judgment Day; see 2 Ne 33.11; Moro 10.27, 34. The *bar of God* will be *pleasing* to Jacob and other righteous souls (see Enos 1.27), but not so much for the wicked.

CHAPTER 7

This chapter seems to be an afterthought given Jacob’s farewell at 6.13, yet it is mentioned in the book preface. The incident revolves around belief in *the Christ who shall come* (v. 9), which also appeared at the beginning of the book (1.6). Sherem’s origins are mysterious. He appears to be an outsider to the small group of people calling themselves Nephites at the time, yet he is described as “learned” and perfectly at home in their language. Perhaps he came from the Lamanites, or even from the Mulekites. **3:** *Labored diligently*, Sherem’s efforts to mislead are described as a negative counterweight to Nephi and Jacob; see 2 Ne 25.23 and Jacob 1.7. **5:** *I truly had seen angels*, see 2 Ne 6.9, 11; 10.3. *I had heard the voice of the Lord*, see 2.11; cf. 2 Ne 2.3–4; 11.3. **6:** *On this wise*, “in this manner.” *Brother Jacob*, this is the only instance in the BoM where someone is directly addressed by name after the word *brother*; in this context, it seems overly familiar. Although the word *gospel* appears occasionally in prophecies, this is the only time the Nephites are said to have it until 3 Ne 27; the term is entirely absent from Mos, Alma, and Hel. *Doctrine of Christ*, 2 Ne 31.2, 21; 32.6; Jacob preface. **7:** Sherem offers three objections to the distinguishing belief of the Nephites: faith in Christ is not in accordance with the law of Moses; it introduces the worship of a new God; and it is based on unreliable prophecy—all of which amount to blasphemy. Similar concerns will be raised by the priests of Noah (Mos 12.28; 17.7–8), the lawyers at Ammonihah (Alma 11.26–35; 14.5), the Amlicites at the Lamanite city of Jerusalem (Alma 21.4–8), Korihor (Alma 30.13–16), and the Zoramites (Alma 31.15–18). The only other accusation of *blasphemy* in the BoM is in the Korihor story at Alma 30.30.

years hence. And now behold, I, Sherem, declare unto you that this is blasphemy; for no man knoweth of such things; for he cannot tell of things to come.” And after this manner did Sherem contend against me.

⁸ But behold, the Lord God poured in his Spirit into my soul, insomuch that I did confound him in all his words. ⁹ And I said unto him, “Deniest thou the Christ who should come?”

And he said, “If there should be a Christ, I would not deny him; but I know that there is no Christ, neither has been, nor ever will be.”

¹⁰ And I said unto him, “Believest thou the scriptures?”

And he said, “Yea.”

¹¹ And I said unto him, “Then ye do not understand them; for they truly testify of Christ. Behold, I say unto you that none of the prophets have written, nor prophesied, save they have spoken concerning this Christ. ¹² And this is not all—it has been made manifest unto me, for I have heard and seen; and it also has been made manifest unto me by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, I know if there should be no atonement made all mankind must be lost.”

¹³ And it came to pass that he said unto me, “Show me a sign by this power of the Holy Ghost, in the which ye know so much.”

¹⁴ And I said unto him, “What am I that I should tempt God to show unto thee a sign in the thing which thou knowest to be true? Yet thou wilt deny it, because thou art of the devil. Nevertheless, not my will be done; but if God shall smite thee, let that be a sign unto thee that he has power, both in heaven and in earth; and also, that Christ shall come. And thy will, O Lord, be done, and not mine.”

¹⁵ And it came to pass that when I, Jacob, had spoken these words, the power of the Lord came upon him, insomuch that he fell to the earth. And it came to pass that he was nourished for the space of many days. ¹⁶ And it came to pass that he said unto the people, “Gather together on the morrow, for I shall die; wherefore, I desire to speak unto the people before I shall die.”

¹⁷ And it came to pass that on the morrow the multitude were gathered together; and he spake plainly unto them and denied the things which he had taught them, and confessed the Christ, and the power of the Holy Ghost, and the ministering of angels. ¹⁸ And he spake plainly unto them, that he had been deceived by the power of the devil. And he spake of hell, and of eternity, and of eternal punishment. ¹⁹ And he said, “I fear lest I have committed the unpardonable sin, for I have lied unto God; for I denied the Christ, and said

9: Sherem’s sure knowledge of what will *not* happen in the future seems to contradict the epistemological limits he espoused in v. 7. **10–13:** Jacob argues that the doctrine of Christ is supported by the scriptures, and that, in fact, every prophet has testified of the coming Messiah (cf. 4.4–5; 6.8). Nevertheless, rather than citing specific prophecies, he refers to his own revelations through the Holy Ghost. Hearing that knowledge of Christ comes by the power of the Holy Ghost, Sherem challenges Jacob to produce a sign by that same power. **13–14:** Jacob accuses Sherem of seeking signs in bad faith, and suggests that divine smiting might be an appropriate response, which could also function as a sign (cf. Alma 30.43–51, where Korihor is struck dumb as a sign from God). On the negative implications of seeking signs, see Mt 12.38–39; 16.4; Mk 8.11–12; Lk 11.29, but contrast 2 Kings 20.8–9; Isa 7.10–14; Mt 24.3; Mk 13.4; Lk 21.7. *Thy will, O Lord, be done, and not mine;* cf. 2 Ne 1.19; Mt 26.42; Lk 22.42. **15:** People in the BoM who are overcome by the power of God or the Spirit regularly *fall to the earth*; see v. 21; Mos 4.1; Alma 18.42; 19.14; 27.17; 3 Ne 1.16–17. **17:** *Ministering of angels*, Omni 1.25; Moro 7.25; cf. Mt 4.11; Mk 1.13. **18:** Plainness of speech is a mark of truth, in contrast to his language at v. 4. **19:** *The unpardonable sin* is a common but non-biblical expression related to the NT idea that blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is unforgivable (Mt 12.31–32; Mk 3.28–29; Lk 12.10). Here it refers to lying to God about truths known through the Holy Ghost; at Alma 39.6, it is defined as knowingly denying the Holy Ghost.

that I believed the scriptures; and they truly testify of him. And because I have thus lied unto God I greatly fear lest my case shall be awful; but I confess unto God.”

²⁰ And it came to pass that when he had said these words he could say no more, and he gave up the ghost. ²¹ And when the multitude had witnessed that he spake these things as he was about to give up the ghost, they were astonished exceedingly; insomuch that the power of God came down upon them, and they were overcome that they fell to the earth. ²² Now, this thing was pleasing unto me, Jacob, for I had requested it of my Father who was in heaven; for he had heard my cry and answered my prayer. ²³ And it came to pass that peace and the love of God was restored again among the people; and they searched the scriptures, and hearkened no more to the words of this wicked man.

Relations with the Lamanites

²⁴ And it came to pass that many means were devised to reclaim and restore the Lamanites to the knowledge of the truth; but it all was vain, for they delighted in wars and bloodshed, and they had an eternal hatred against us, their brethren. And they sought by the power of their arms to destroy us continually. ²⁵ Wherefore, the people of Nephi did fortify against them with their armies,^a and with all their might, trusting in the God and rock of their salvation; wherefore, they became as yet, conquerors of their enemies.

Jacob₂'s Final Farewell and Charge to Enos

²⁶ And it came to pass that I, Jacob, began to be old; and the record of this people being kept on the other plates of Nephi, wherefore, I conclude this record, declaring that I have written according to the best of my knowledge, by saying that:

The time passed away with us,
and also our lives passed away
like as it were unto us a dream,
we being a lonesome and a solemn
people,
wanderers, cast out from Jerusalem,
born in tribulation, in a wilderness,^b
and hated of our brethren,
which caused wars and contentions;
wherefore, we did mourn out our days.

²⁷ And I, Jacob, saw that I must soon go down to my grave; wherefore, I said unto my son Enos, “Take these plates.” And I told him the things which my brother Nephi had commanded me, and he promised obedience unto the commands. And I make an end of my writing upon these plates, which writing has been small; and to the reader I bid farewell, hoping that many of my brethren may read my words. Brethren, adieu.

^a ²⁵ O, P, 1981 *arms*

^b ²⁶ O, P *in a wild wilderness*

²⁰: *Gave up the ghost*, that is, died. The expression occurs nine times in the OT, six times in the NT, and twice in the BoM (in this verse and the next). ²⁴: *Eternal hatred* [on the part of the Lamanites], Mos 10.17. *Arms*, weapons. ²⁵: *As yet* suggests that Jacob prophetically knows the Nephites will not always prevail, when they cease to trust in God. ²⁶: Jacob concludes on a somber note, reflecting on the dream-like qualities of life: quickly vanishing, strange, distressing. The phrase *wanderers, cast out from Jerusalem* recalls a prophecy regarding the fate of the Northern Kingdom of Israel at Hos 9.16–17. *Cast out*, this melancholy assessment contrasts with Jacob's more optimistic views at 2 Ne 10.20. *Born in tribulation, in a wilderness* describes Jacob himself (1 Ne 18.7; 2 Ne 2.1), as well as the second and third generations of Nephites. The phrase *wild wilderness*, from O and P, is found in a poem by Edmund Spenser and a hymn by Isaac Watts, among other places. ²⁷: *The things... commanded me*, see 1.1–4. *I bid farewell*, this is Jacob's second conclusion; see 6.13. *Adieu*, French, but in 19th c. American usage; WB: “an expression of kind wishes at the parting of friends,” as well as a “commendation to the care of God.”

INTRODUCTION TO ENOS

Enos was the first of the Nephite record keepers who had not sailed across the ocean, and hence had only known life in the Americas. He tells just one story, of a revelation in answer to a prayer, and then notes that attempts to convert the Lamanites had failed, while preaching efforts directed toward his own people were only partially successful. In general, Enos hews closely to Nephi's instructions regarding the Small Plates, which had been reiterated by Jacob (Jacob 1.2–4; 7.27), that is, to pass lightly over historical events and instead record highlights of preaching, revelation, and prophesying. In all, Enos quotes seven revelations from the Lord, including a future pronouncement (v. 27), which he expects to hear at the Judgment Day. (Seven is often regarded in the Bible as the number of completion or perfection.)

Of special note is the compassion that Enos shows for the Lamanites, who at the time were fearsome, deadly enemies (1.14, 20). In the story recounted in verses 1–18, he first prays for his own salvation, and then, in an expanding circle of concern, for the welfare of his people, the Nephites, and then for the Lamanites, and finally for their descendants in the latter days (through the safeguarding of the Nephite records). It is also remarkable that, unlike his predecessors, Enos never directly quotes scripture, though he does frame his book with an inclusio drawn from Psalm 95 (1.4, 27), much as his Jacob had done in his own book (Jacob 1.7; 6.6).

There is something of a chronology problem in that the books of Jacob and Enos cover more than 120 years, which would seem to exceed the lifespan of a father and son, given that the former did not begin writing until after he was fifty. Some interpreters have suggested that the Enos of this book may have been the grandson of Jacob, especially since he does not explicitly name his father, whom he mentions in 1.1–3.

The books of Jacob and Enos cover events from ca. 545–420 BCE.

THE BOOK OF ENOS

Enos's Conversion

[1] **1** Behold, it came to pass that I, Enos, knowing my father that he was a just man—for he taught me in his language, and also in the nurture and admonition of the Lord—and blessed be the name of my God for it—² and I will tell you of the wrestle which I had before God, before I received a remission of my sins.

³ Behold, I went to hunt beasts in the forests; and the words which I had often heard my father speak concerning eternal life, and the joy of the saints, sunk deep into my heart. ⁴ And my soul hungered; and I kneeled down before my Maker, and I cried unto him in mighty prayer and supplication for mine own soul; and all the day long did I cry unto him; yea, and when the night came I did still raise my voice high that it reached the heavens.

⁵ And there came a voice unto me, saying, “Enos, thy sins are forgiven thee, and thou shalt

be blessed.”⁶ And I, Enos, knew that God could not lie; wherefore, my guilt was swept away.

⁷ And I said, “Lord, how is it done?”

⁸ And he said unto me, “Because of thy faith in Christ, whom thou hast never before heard nor seen. And many years pass away before he shall manifest himself in the flesh; wherefore, go to, thy faith hath made thee whole.”

⁹ Now, it came to pass that when I had heard these words I began to feel a desire for the welfare of my brethren, the Nephites; wherefore, I did pour out my whole soul unto God for them. ¹⁰ And while I was thus struggling in the spirit, behold, the voice of the Lord came into my mind again, saying, “I will visit thy brethren according to their diligence in keeping my commandments. I have given unto them this land, and it is a holy land; and I curse it not save it be for the cause of iniquity; wherefore, I will visit thy brethren according as I have said; and their transgressions will I bring down with sorrow upon their own heads.”

CHAPTER 1

1–18: Enos, inspired by his father's teachings, prays first for forgiveness of his own sins, then for the Nephites, and then for the Lamanites. God promises justice for the Nephites and mercy for the Lamanites. **1:** *My father*, presumably Jacob, but see 1.25n. The wording here reflects Paul's advice to the Ephesians to bring up their children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph 6.4). *Blessed be the name of... God*, Dan 2.20; and ten times in the BoM. In the OT people regularly bless God, as opposed to asking God to bless them. The BoM continues this practice (e.g., Alma 7.4; 19.29; 26.8, 36; 57.35; 3 Ne 4.32; 5.20), though it is fairly rare in the NT (e.g., Lk 1.68; 2 Cor 1.3; Jas 3.9). **2:** Enos's spiritual *wrestle... before God* may be reminiscent of the biblical Jacob's wrestle with an angel (Gen 32.22–32), which resulted in his receiving a blessing. In this case, *remission of sins* does not come through baptism, as it does at Mk 1.4; Lk 3.3; Acts 2.38; 2 Ne 31.17; 3 Ne 1.23; 30.2; Moro 8.11, 25; cf. Mos 4.3, 11. **3:** Jacob had spoken of the *joy of the saints* at 2 Ne 9.18. Kneeling down before one's Maker occurs only here and Ps 95.6, the same psalm that is alluded to at v. 27. This means that like Jacob, Enos begins and ends his book with references to Ps 95; see Jacob 1.7n; 6.6n. **4:** *Kneeled down*, before the Exile, Jewish prayers were usually offered from a standing rather than a kneeling position; cf. Alma 19.14; 22.17. *Supplication*, WB: “earnest request.” **5:** The voice of the Lord comes to his mind rather than his ears; see v. 10. *Thy sins are forgiven thee* is an expression that appears six times in the NT, but only here in the BoM. **6:** The idea that God cannot lie occurs at Num 23.19; Titus 1.2; Ether 3.12. **8:** The Lord grants Enos's request *because of [his] faith*, as he did with Nephi and the brother of Jared (1 Ne 2.19; Ether 3.9); cf. v. 12 below. *Go to, thy faith hath made thee whole*, Mk 10.52; Lk 17.19; cf. Mt 9.22; Mk 5.34; Lk 8.48. The healings are physical in the Gospels, but spiritual for Enos. **9–10:** Like Lehi and Nephi before him, Enos's revelation follows fervent prayer on behalf of others; see 1 Ne 1.5–6; 2.18–19. **9:** *Pour out... soul* [in prayer], 1 Sam 1.15 (Hannah is the only person in the Bible who does this), and nine times in the BoM. **10:** *Visit*, punish; see 1 Ne 2.16n; 2 Ne 1.11–12n. *Visit... as I have said*, 2 Ne 26.6; Jacob 2.33.

¹¹ And after I, Enos, had heard these words, my faith began to be unshaken in the Lord; and I prayed unto him with many long strugglings for my brethren, the Lamanites. ¹² And it came to pass that after I had prayed and labored with all diligence, the Lord said unto me, “I will grant unto thee according to thy desires, because of thy faith.” ¹³ And now behold, this was the desire which I desired of him—that if it should so be, that my people, the Nephites, should fall into transgression, and by any means be destroyed, and the Lamanites should not be destroyed, that the Lord God would preserve a record of my people, the Nephites; even if it so be by the power of his holy arm, that it might be brought forth at some future day unto the Lamanites, that, perhaps, they might be brought unto salvation— ¹⁴ for at the present our strugglings were vain in restoring them to the true faith. And they swore in their wrath that, if it were possible, they would destroy our records and us, and also all the traditions of our fathers.

¹⁵ Wherefore, I knowing that the Lord God was able to preserve our records, I cried unto him continually, for he had said unto me, “Whatsoever thing ye shall ask in faith, believing that ye shall receive in the name of Christ, ye shall receive it.” ¹⁶ And I had faith, and I did cry unto God that he would preserve the records; and he covenanted with me that he would bring them forth unto the Lamanites in

his own due time. ¹⁷ And I, Enos, knew it would be according to the covenant which he had made; wherefore my soul did rest. ¹⁸ And the Lord said unto me, “Thy fathers have also required of me this thing; and it shall be done unto them according to their faith; for their faith was like unto thine.”

Lamanites and Nephites

¹⁹ And now it came to pass that I, Enos, went about among the people of Nephi, prophesying of things to come, and testifying of the things which I had heard and seen. ²⁰ And I bear record that the people of Nephi did seek diligently to restore the Lamanites unto the true faith in God. But our labors were vain; their hatred was fixed, and they were led by their evil nature that they became wild, and ferocious, and a blood-thirsty people, full of idolatry and filthiness; feeding upon beasts of prey; dwelling in tents, and wandering about in the wilderness with a short skin girdle^a about their loins and their heads shaven; and their skill was in the bow, and in the cimeter,^b and the ax. And many of them did eat nothing save it was raw meat; and they were continually seeking to destroy us.

²¹ And it came to pass that the people of Nephi did till the land, and raise all manner

^a 20 P *girted*; 1830 *girded*

^b 20 Or *scimitar* [standard spelling]

11: *Faith* that is *unshaken* appears elsewhere only at 2 Ne 31.19 and Jacob 4.6. **13:** *If it so be...Nephites...destroyed*, as Nephi had prophesied; see 1 Ne 12.19–20; 2 Ne 26.9–10. Enos prays that a literary remnant of the Nephites—that is, the BoM—might someday bring the descendants of the Lamanites to salvation. The rare phrase *holy arm*, combined with *salvation*, suggests that this request will be a fulfillment of Isa 52.10; cf. 1 Ne 22.6–11. **14:** A fear that Lamanites would destroy the Nephite records persists throughout the BoM; see 2 Ne 26.17; Morm 2.17; 6.6. *Tradition(s) of [someone’s] fathers*, Gal 1.14 and 28 times in the BoM (usually with references to Lamanite beliefs and customs). **15:** The Lord’s promise here seems related to 1 Ne 15.11 and Mt 21.22; similar assurances appear at Mos 4.21; 3 Ne 18.20; Moro 7.26. **18:** *Thy fathers have also required of me this thing*, see 2 Ne 3.19–21; 29.2. *Require(d)*, WB: “to request.” **19–24:** Enos describes the Lamanites in negative terms, particularly disparaging their nomadic, hunter-gatherer lifestyle, in contrast with the settled agriculture of the Nephites. **20:** Dwelling in tents, wandering in the wilderness, and eating raw meat (1 Ne 17.2, 12) were all part of the Nephites’ origin story; here, by contrast, they are regarded as signs of degradation. **21:** *Flocks of herds* is a puzzling phrase; ATV suggests that it might refer to sheep. Cattle, domesticated sheep and goats, and horses were all foreign to the New World; see 1 Ne 18.25n.

of grain, and of fruit, and flocks of herds, and flocks of all manner of cattle of every kind, and goats, and wild goats, and also many horses.²² And there were exceeding many prophets among us. And the people were a stiffnecked people, hard to understand.²³ And there was nothing save it was exceeding harshness, preaching and prophesying of wars, and contentions, and destructions, and continually reminding them of death, and the duration of eternity, and the judgments and the power of God, and all these things—stirring them up continually to keep them in the fear of the Lord. I say there was nothing short of these things, and exceeding great plainness of speech, would keep them from going down speedily to destruction. And after this manner do I write concerning them.²⁴ And I saw wars between the Nephites and Lamanites in the course of my days.

Enos's Farewell

²⁵ And it came to pass that I began to be old, and an hundred and seventy and nine years had passed away from the time that our father Lehi left Jerusalem.^a ²⁶ And I saw that I must soon go down to my grave, having been wrought upon by the power of God that I must preach and prophesy unto this people, and declare the word according to the truth which is in Christ. And I have declared it in all my days, and have rejoiced in it above that of the world.²⁷ And I soon go to the place of my rest, which is with my Redeemer; for I know that in him I shall rest. And I rejoice in the day when my mortal shall put on immortality, and shall stand before him; then shall I see his face with pleasure, and he will say unto me, “Come unto me, ye blessed, there is a place prepared for you in the mansions of my Father.” Amen.

^a 25 418 BCE

22: *Hard*, reluctant or unwilling. **25–26:** *I began to be old* and *I saw that I must soon go down to my grave*—phrases repeated from Jacob's farewell at Jacob 7.26–27. **25:** There is a chronological puzzle here: since Jacob was born just a few years after Lehi's flight from Jerusalem, the combined lifespans of Jacob and Enos must have been about 175 years, which is improbable. Some readers have suggested that Enos may have actually been Jacob's grandson, who was named after his father Enos (Enos the writer does not name his father in vv. 1–3 above, but see Jacob 7.27), or perhaps a grandson (through a daughter) who was adopted as a son and heir. Others see an error on the part of JS. **27:** *In him I shall rest* alludes to Ps 95.11; cf. Heb 4.1–11; Jacob 1.7. *Mortal shall put on immortality*, 1 Cor 15.53–54. In the BoM, this phrase is connected to the idea of standing before God to be judged; see Mos 16.10; Alma 5.15; Morm 6.21. *Come unto me, ye blessed*, the same welcoming words that Alma imagines at Alma 5.16. *A place prepared for you in the mansions of my Father*, cf. Jn 14.2; Ether 12.32–37.

INTRODUCTION TO JAROM

Jarom portrays himself as a spiritual leader limited by the circumstances of his era. He has received revelations and pronounced prophecies, but they seem minor in comparison to those of his predecessors, so he does not feel that he has much to add. He lives at a time of Nephite political and economic power, which according to his Deuteronomistic view of historiography, should be an indication of their righteousness. He even quotes the Lord's covenant with Lehi: "Inasmuch as ye will keep my commandments ye shall prosper in the land" (1.9). Yet he is clearly aware of the unstated second half of that promise, regarding those who do not keep the commandments. He describes his people as being hard in their hearts and blind in their minds.

Thus far, the Nephites have been preserved in their battles with the Lamanites; however, Jarom hints several times that the situation may soon change, especially given the rapid increase in Lamanite numbers. Indeed, there is ominous foreshadowing in Jarom's observation that God, in his mercy, "has not **as yet** swept them [the Nephites] off from the face of the land" (1.3; emphasis added). He seems to believe that Lamanite domination is nearly inevitable, and the Small Plates themselves are a preparation for that day, having been written for "the benefit of our brethren the Lamanites" (1.2). For the most part, the book's spiritual concerns are focused inward, on the Nephites. In contrast to Jacob and Enos, Jarom and his people have given up any hope of converting the Lamanites (cf. Jacob 7.24; Enos 1.20).

Unusually for the Book of Mormon, Jarom offers a glimpse of what it feels like to be part of a religious community, albeit a dwindling one. He notes the "many revelations" and "communion with the Holy Spirit" enjoyed by fellow believers (1.4). He speaks of their adherence to the law of Moses, including one of only two references to the Sabbath being kept by the Nephites (1.5); the urgent pleas and worries of their leaders; and their looking forward to the Messiah, having been taught to "believe in him to come as though he already was" (1.10–12). Jarom indicates that the Small Plates, which had been manufactured by Nephi himself (2 Ne 5.31; Jacob 3.14), are almost full. He makes his brief contribution, and then after keeping the plates for fifty-nine years, transfers them to his son, Omni. The book as a whole is framed by a two-part, chiasmic inclusio: "according to the commandment of my father(s)" and "these plates are small" (1.1–2; 1.14–15).

The book of Jarom covers events from ca. 420–361 BCE.

THE BOOK OF JAROM

Jarom's Introduction

[1]¹ Now behold, I, Jarom, write a few words according to the commandment of my father, Enos, that our genealogy may be kept.² And as these plates are small, and as these things are written for the intent of the benefit of our brethren the Lamanites, wherefore, it must needs be that I write a little; but I shall not write the things of my prophesying, nor of my revelations. For what could I write more than my fathers have written? For have not they revealed the plan of salvation? I say unto you, Yea; and this sufficeth me.

³ Behold, it is expedient that much should be done among this people, because of the hardness of their hearts, and the deafness of their ears, and the blindness of their minds, and the stiffness of their necks; nevertheless, God is exceeding merciful unto them, and has not as yet swept them off from the face of the land.⁴ And there are many among us who have many revelations, for they are not all stiffnecked. And as many as are not stiff-necked and have faith, have communion with the Holy Spirit, which maketh manifest unto the children of men, according to their faith.

Precarious Prosperity

⁵ And now, behold, two hundred years had passed away,⁴ and the people of Nephi had waxed strong in the land. They observed to keep the law of Moses and the sabbath day holy unto the Lord. And they profaned not; neither did they blaspheme. And the laws of the land were exceedingly strict.⁶ And they were scattered upon much of the face of the land, and the Lamanites also. And they were exceeding more numerous than were they of the Nephites; and they loved murder and would drink the blood of beasts.⁷ And it came to pass that they came many times against us, the Nephites, to battle. But our kings and our leaders were mighty men in the faith of the Lord; and they taught the people the ways of the Lord; wherefore, we withstood the Lamanites and swept them away out of our lands, and began to fortify our cities, or whatsoever place of our inheritance.

⁸ And we multiplied exceedingly, and spread upon the face of the land, and became exceeding rich in gold, and in silver, and in precious things, and in fine workmanship of

⁴ 5 397 BCE

CHAPTER 1

1–2: According to the commandment of my father and these plates are small begin a chiasmic inclusio that will frame this short book; see vv. 14–15. 1: That our genealogy may be kept is precisely what Nephi disavowed in his intentions for the Small Plates at 1 Ne 6.1. 2: This explicit statement that the Small Plates were written for the benefit of the Lamanites could have application for future Nephite-Lamanite interactions, such as the missionary efforts of the sons of Mosiah, as well as for the descendants of the Lamanites in the last days. It might also be read as an explanation for why later Nephites seem relatively unfamiliar with the contents of the Small Plates; see WoM 1.3. The phrase *plan of salvation* first appears in this verse, with two subsequent occurrences at Alma 24.14 and 42.5; like “plan of redemption” (Jacob 6.8n), the expression was common in the early 19th c. 3: *Deafness of their ears* is unique here. Blindness of minds occurs at 2 Cor 3.14; 4.4; and eleven times in the BoM (10 times in conjunction with hard hearts). *As yet*, see Jacob 7.25n. 4: *Communion with the Holy Spirit*, cf. 2 Cor 13.14. 5: The Sabbath is mentioned only here and at Mos 18.23 in the BoM, apart from the quotations of the Ten Commandments at Mos 13.16–19. *Profane*, WB: “to violate any thing sacred.” 6: The comparatively rapid growth of the Lamanites suggests intermarriage with indigenous peoples. Their ingestion of blood makes for a sharp contrast with the Nephites’ keeping of the Mosaic law (see Lev 7.26; 17.10–14; Deut 12.23–25). 7: *Our kings*, Jacob and his descendants, including Jarom, belonged to the priestly line rather than to the royal line of Nephi. 8: There is evidence of metallurgy for gold, silver, and copper in pre-Columbian America, though not for iron, brass, or steel (though very limited amounts of bronze were produced in South America). The definition of *machinery* here is unclear; it may refer to simple mechanical devices.

wood, in buildings, and in machinery, and also in iron and copper, and brass and steel, making all manner of tools of every kind to till the ground, and weapons of war—yea, the sharp pointed arrow, and the quiver, and the dart, and the javelin, and all preparations for war.⁹ And thus being prepared to meet the Lamanites, they did not prosper against us. But the word of the Lord was verified, which he spake unto our fathers, saying that “Inasmuch as ye will keep my commandments ye shall prosper in the land.”^a

¹⁰ And it came to pass that the prophets of the Lord did threaten the people of Nephi, according to the word of God, that if they did not keep the commandments, but should fall into transgression, they should be destroyed from off the face of the land.¹¹ Wherefore, the prophets, and the priests, and the teachers, did labor diligently, exhorting with all long-suffering the people to diligence; teaching the law of Moses, and the intent for which it was given; persuading them to look forward unto the Messiah, and believe in him to come as

though he already was. And after this manner did they teach them.¹² And it came to pass that by so doing they kept them from being destroyed upon the face of the land; for they did prick their hearts with the word, continually stirring them up unto repentance.¹³ And it came to pass that two hundred and thirty and eight years had passed away^b—after the manner of wars, and contentions, and dissensions, for the space of much of the time.

¹⁴ And I, Jarom, do not write more, for the plates are small. But behold, my brethren, ye can go to the other plates of Nephi; for behold, upon them the records of our wars are engraven, according to the writings of the kings, or those which they caused to be written.¹⁵ And I deliver these plates into the hands of my son Omni, that they may be kept according to the commandments of my fathers.

^a 9 1 Ne 2.20; 2 Ne 1.20

^b 13 359 BCE

9: Words are *verified* three times in the OT and seven times in the BoM, almost always referring to the word of the Lord. **11:** *The priests*, the Small Plates were intended to be a priestly record that would complement the royal record of the kings (the Large Plates), but Jarom here does not identify himself as a priest, and the Small Plates appear to have become simply a lineage record of Jacob’s descendants; cf. WoM 1.3. In the BoM, the intent of the law of Moses was to prepare people for the coming of Christ; see 2 Ne 11.4; 25.24–30; Jacob 4.5; Mos 3.14–15; 13.27–32; 16.14–15; Alma 25.15–16; 3 Ne 15.2–5. The idea that people living before the birth of Jesus could nevertheless have faith in and be redeemed by him, as if he had already come in the flesh, is integral to BoM theology; cf. Mos 3.13; 16.6. **12:** *Prick their hearts*, cf. Acts 2.37. *Prick*, WB: “to affect with sharp pain.” **13:** Jarom has kept the records for 59 years; see Enos 1.25. **14:** *Caused to be written*, unlike the priestly line, who inscribed the Small Plates themselves, Nephite kings apparently had scribes who could update the Large Plates on their behalf. **15:** *According to the commandments of my fathers*, Jacob 1.1–4; 7.27.

INTRODUCTION TO OMNI

Omni is the first of five writers who contribute to this book, which covers about two hundred years. By this time, record keeping in the Small Plates has mainly become a genealogical responsibility rather than an opportunity for preaching or testifying (cf. Jarom 1.1), and there is little indication that these lineal descendants of Jacob have continued in his priestly office. The very brief entries of the first four writers speak more about warfare than spiritual matters; indeed, although they feel obliged to write something, their light regard for the record is most evident in 1.9. The second half of the book, attributed to Amaleki, provides a few more details, though the sparseness of his account is regrettable since he is describing one of the most momentous eras in Nephite history.

Amaleki's fourth great-grandfather, Jacob, had received revelations and seen angels and even the Lord himself (2 Ne 6.9; 10.3; 11.3; Jacob 7.5), yet after his death the Nephites entered a period of political and spiritual decline, with later keepers of the Small Plates reporting fewer and fewer revelations and more and more military engagements, culminating in the first eleven verses of Omni. Amaleki then reports that Mosiah₁, having been warned by God to flee from the other Nephites, led his followers into the wilderness and eventually encountered the much more numerous people of Zarahemla, often referred to as the Mulekites (though the term does not appear in the Book of Mormon itself). Nothing more is said about the Nephites who stayed behind in Lehi-Nephi, the land of their first inheritance, who presumably perished or were assimilated into the Lamanites. The Mulekites were descended from Mulek, a scion of the Davidic dynasty (Hel 6.10; 8.21) who had been brought by God, with a few others, to the Americas at the time of the Judahite king Zedekiah, much like the Lehites. This group of Judahites, however, had lost touch with their native language and religious traditions because they had brought no written records with them, in contrast to the Lehites and the Brass Plates.

Mosiah, whose earlier status among the Nephites is unknown, is made king over the combined Nephite and Mulekite peoples, and this merging of populations will make possible the resurgence of Nephite civilization seen in the books of Mosiah and Alma. These books also reveal continuing disputations over kingship. It may well be that Mosiah was associated with the Nephite kingly line, since he arrives in Zarahemla with royal records and relics that he passes on to his son Benjamin, who in turn entrusts them to Mosiah₂ (Mos 1.16). At the same time, Amaleki pointedly never refers to Zarahemla as a "king," though the repeated phrase "the people of Zarahemla," as well as his leadership in dealing with the Nephite newcomers, clearly indicates royal position. After Mosiah gains the kingship at Omni 1.19, Zarahemla, the person, is never mentioned again. It is unlikely, however, that he and his relatives simply disappeared.

Amaleki's relatively brief narrative leaves a number of unanswered questions. Why did the Mulekites cede leadership to a small party of Nephites? Who exactly was Mosiah? What was the basis for his bid for rulership? Why did the Brass Plates seem so significant to the illiterate Mulekites? Amaleki notes that

INTRODUCTION TO OMNI

the last survivor of the Jaredites had lived among the Mulekites for a few months, but it is not clear when this happened, or how long the Jaredites and the Mulekites may have coexisted in the land. In any case, Amaleki notes that Mosiah's son, King Benjamin, successfully led his people in battle against the Lamanites and stabilized the kingdom. In light of Benjamin's political and spiritual accomplishments, as well as his adeptness in the reformed Egyptian of the Brass Plates (Mos 1.2–5), Amaleki determines that he is the best person to inherit the Small Plates when Amaleki reaches the end of his life, still childless. Benjamin sends them to the royal archives (WoM 1.10), where they would be preserved along with the Large Plates, which Mosiah presumably brought with him from the land of Nephi.

Like his forebears, Amaleki adds a few words of testimony and exhortation, but then concludes his book with a mystery, about a lost party of adventurers who wanted to return to and settle in the land of Nephi that Mosiah had fled many years earlier. This puzzle is not resolved until Mosiah 9.

The book of Omni covers events from ca. 360–130 BCE.

THE BOOK OF OMNI

Omni

[1] **1** ¹ Behold, it came to pass that I, Omni, being commanded by my father, Jarom, that I should write somewhat upon these plates, to preserve our genealogy—² wherefore, in my days, I would that ye should know that I fought much with the sword to preserve my people, the Nephites, from falling into the hands of their enemies, the Lamanites. But behold, I of myself am a wicked man, and I have not kept the statutes and the commandments of the Lord as I ought to have done.

³ And it came to pass that two hundred and seventy and six years had passed away,^a and we had many seasons of peace; and we had many seasons of serious war and bloodshed. Yea, and in fine, two hundred and eighty and two years had passed away,^b and I had kept these plates according to the commandments of my fathers; and I conferred them upon my son Amaron. And I make an end.

Amaron

⁴ And now I, Amaron, write the things whatsoever I write, which are few, in the book of my father. ⁵ Behold, it came to pass that three hundred and twenty years had passed away,^c

and the more wicked part of the Nephites were destroyed. ⁶ For the Lord would not suffer, after he had led them out of the land of Jerusalem and kept and preserved them from falling into the hands of their enemies, yea, he would not suffer that the words should not be verified, which he spake unto our fathers, saying that “Inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye shall not prosper in the land.”^d ⁷ Wherefore, the Lord did visit them in great judgment; nevertheless, he did spare the righteous that they should not perish, but did deliver them out of the hands of their enemies. ⁸ And it came to pass that I did deliver the plates unto my brother Chemish.

Chemish

⁹ Now I, Chemish, write what few things I write, in the same book with my brother; for behold, I saw the last which he wrote, that he wrote it with his own hand; and he wrote it in the day that he delivered them unto me. And after this manner we keep the records, for it

^a ₃ 321 BCE

^b ₃ 315 BCE

^c ₅ 277 BCE

^d ₆ Compare 2 Ne 1.20.

CHAPTER 1

1–3: Omni waits 38 years before making an entry in the family record he had received from his father (compare v. 3 with Jarom 1.13). **1:** *Somewhat*, something. **5–7:** These verses hint at significant historical developments, which would have been detailed in the (non-extant) Large Plates. Modern readers associate the destruction of the Nephites with 3 Ne 8 and Morm 6, but the writers of the Small Plates may have feared and eventually witnessed an earlier mass destruction of their people, mentioned here only in passing; see Jacob 7.25; Jarom 1.3. In any event, Amaron’s sole concern is to provide a theological explanation. **6:** This particular wording of God’s covenant with Lehi has not appeared before; typically, the negative result is to be cut off from God’s presence, as at 2 Ne 1.20. **8:** There are three other instances in the BoM of records being passed to a brother rather than a son: Nephi to Jacob (Jacob 1.1–2), Helaman to Shiblon (Alma 63.1–2), and Amos to Ammaron (4 Ne 1.47). **9:** Chemish suggests his brother did the minimum necessary to *keep the records... according to the commandments*—in this case, by simply adding to the genealogy—but he does not do much more himself.

is according to the commandments of our fathers. And I make an end.

Abinadom

¹⁰ Behold, I, Abinadom, am the son of Chemish. Behold, it came to pass that I saw much war and contention between my people, the Nephites, and the Lamanites; and I, with my own sword, have taken the lives of many of the Lamanites in the defence of my brethren.

¹¹ And behold, the record of this people is engraven upon plates which is had by the kings, according to the generations; and I know of no revelation save that which has been written, neither prophecy; wherefore, that which is sufficient is written. And I make an end.

Amaleki, Writes of King Mosiah, and the People of Zarahemla

¹² Behold, I am Amaleki, the son of Abinadom. Behold, I will speak unto you somewhat concerning Mosiah, who was made king over the land of Zarahemla; for behold, he being warned of the Lord that he should flee out of the land of Nephi, and as many as would hearken unto the voice of the Lord should also depart out of the land with him, into the wilderness—¹³ And it came to pass that he did according as the Lord had commanded him. And they departed out of the land into the wilderness, as many as would hearken unto

the voice of the Lord; and they were led by many preachings and prophesying. And they were admonished continually by the word of God; and they were led by the power of his arm, through the wilderness until they came down into the land which is called the land of Zarahemla. ¹⁴ And they discovered a people, who were called the people of Zarahemla.

Now, there was great rejoicing among the people of Zarahemla; and also Zarahemla did rejoice exceedingly, because the Lord had sent the people of Mosiah with the plates of brass which contained the record of the Jews. ¹⁵ Behold, it came to pass that Mosiah discovered that the people of Zarahemla came out from Jerusalem at the time that Zedekiah, king of Judah, was carried away captive into Babylon.^a ¹⁶ And they journeyed in the wilderness, and were brought by the hand of the Lord across the great waters, into the land where Mosiah discovered them; and they had dwelt there from that time forth.

¹⁷ And at the time that Mosiah discovered them, they had become exceeding numerous. Nevertheless, they had had many wars and serious contentions, and had fallen by the sword from time to time; and their language had become corrupted; and they had brought

^a 15 586 BCE

11: *The record... upon plates which is had by the kings*, the Large Plates of Nephi. Prophecies and revelations among the Nephites, which were the designated contents of the Small Plates (Jacob 1.4), have gradually come to an end; see Jarom 1.2; cf. WoM 1.6. **12–13:** Mosiah, like Lehi and Nephi (1 Ne 2.2; 2 Ne 5.5–6), is warned by the Lord to flee into the wilderness with all who would follow him. Such a flight was prophesied at Jacob 3.4. Revelations and prophecies continue within this small group. *Led by the power of his arm*, an allusion to the Lehites' escape from Jerusalem; see Jacob 2.25. Nothing more is known about the Nephites that Mosiah and his followers left behind; when Zeniff and his colonists return to the land of Nephi several decades later, they encounter only Lamanites (vv. 27–30; Mos 9). **14–16:** *The people of Zarahemla* are often referred to as the Mulekites, though the term never appears in the BoM. Here they are called by the name of their current leader, Zarahemla, but their ancestor Mulek, one of the sons of Zedekiah (the last king of Judah), had been brought by God along with a few others to the New World about the same time as Lehi's family (Mos 25.2; Hel 6.10; 8.21). The two migrant Jewish groups had lived in relative proximity for over four hundred years with no recorded contact between them. **17:** The corruption of Mulekite language and beliefs, due to their lack of records, was precisely the fate that Nephi hoped to avert for his descendants when he took the Brass Plates from Laban (1 Ne 4.12–18); cf. Mos 1.3–4.

no records with them; and they denied the being of their Creator; and Mosiah, nor the people of Mosiah, could understand them.

¹⁸ But it came to pass that Mosiah caused that they should be taught in his language. And it came to pass that after they were taught in the language of Mosiah, Zarahemla gave a genealogy of his fathers, according to his memory; and they are written, but not in these plates. ¹⁹ And it came to pass that the people of Zarahemla, and of Mosiah, did unite together; and Mosiah was appointed to be their king.

²⁰ And it came to pass in the days of Mosiah, there was a large stone brought unto him with engravings on it; and he did interpret the engravings by the gift and power of God.

²¹ And they gave an account of one Coriantumr, and the slain of his people. And Coriantumr was discovered by the people of Zarahemla; and he dwelt with them for the space of nine moons. ²² It also spake a few words concerning his fathers. And his first parents came out from the tower, at the time the Lord founded the language of the people; and the severity of the Lord fell upon them according

to his judgments, which are just; and their bones lay scattered in the land northward.

Amaleki, Writes of King Benjamin

²³ Behold, I, Amaleki, was born in the days of Mosiah; and I have lived to see his death; and Benjamin, his son, reigneth in his stead. ²⁴ And behold, I have seen, in the days of king Benjamin, a serious war and much bloodshed between the Nephites and the Lamanites. But behold, the Nephites did obtain much advantage over them; yea, insomuch that king Benjamin did drive them out of the land of Zarahemla.

²⁵ And it came to pass that I began to be old; and, having no seed, and knowing king Benjamin to be a just man before the Lord, wherefore, I shall deliver up these plates unto him, exhorting all men to come unto God, the Holy One of Israel, and believe in prophesying, and in revelations, and in the ministering of angels, and in the gift of speaking with tongues, and in the gift of interpreting languages, and in all things which are good; for there is nothing which is good save it comes from the Lord: and that which is evil cometh

18–19: Although the descendants of Mulek could have claimed the rights and succession of Davidic kingship, and were more numerous than Mosiah's people (Mos 25.3), they nevertheless join the culturally dominant Nephites as subjects of King Mosiah. It is not clear that Mosiah had been a king before his flight and discovery of Zarahemla (though he did have possession of the royal records). Once the Mulekites learned the Nephite language, they would have found evidence of the Davidic Covenant within the Brass Plates (v. 14), along with support for the legitimacy of their monarchical claims, but only with the assistance of Nephite elites who could read reformed Egyptian (1 Ne 1.2; Mos 1.2–5; Morm 9.32). Literacy in the vernacular is not equivalent to literacy in an archaic, sacred language. *A genealogy of his fathers*, Omni studiously avoids referring to Zarahemla as a king, though the recitation of his lineage would have made that obvious. **20–22:** Mosiah translated an inscription on a stone stele *by the gift and power of God*, apparently through a seer stone (cf. Mos 8.13–14; Alma 37.21–25). Coriantumr was the last of the Jaredites, and had been discovered by the Mulekites sometime during the previous four centuries. The history of the Jaredites, beginning at the tower of Babel (Gen 11.1–9), is found in the book of Ether; see Ether 12–15 for Coriantumr's story. JS borrowed the phrase "by the gift and power of God" to describe his own translating efforts; for example, in the 1830 preface, the Testimony of Three Witnesses, and the Wentworth Letter (1842). **22:** The assertion that God's judgments are just recurs at Mos 3.18; 16.1; 29.12; Alma 12.15; 14.11; cf. 2 Ne 26.7; Jn 5.30. *Their bones lay scattered in the land northward*, see Mos 8.8. **24:** Either the Lamanites had followed the Nephites into the land of Zarahemla or they had already been in conflict with the Mulekites. **25:** As Jacob's priestly lineage comes to an end, the transfer of the plates to Benjamin means that both the Large and Small Plates of Nephi are in the possession of the Nephite kings; cf. WoM 1.10. Amaleki's reference to spiritual gifts and his assertion about the sources of good and evil will be repeated at Moro 7.12, 16–17; 10.13–16; cf. Alma 5.40. The order of gifts listed generally reflects 1 Cor 12.10. *Speaking with tongues* here may be related to language barriers between Nephites and Mulekites (compare speaking with "the tongue of angels" at 2 Ne 31.13–14, which seems to refer to glossolalia).

OMNI 1.25–26: CITING PREDECESSORS IN A FAREWELL

Amaleki brings the Small Plates to an end by incorporating some key phrases from the Nephite founders into his last words:

Amaleki

I began to be old

exhorting all men to come unto God
come unto . . . the Holy One of Israel
come unto Christ . . . and partake of

the power of his redemption
endure to the end . . . ye will be saved

Jacob I, Jacob, began to be old (Jacob 7.26)

Enos I began to be old (Enos 1.25)

Lehi all men come unto God (2 Ne 2.10)

Jacob come unto the Holy One of Israel (2 Ne 9.51)

Nephi come unto him and partake of his goodness
his salvation (2 Ne 26.33; with “partake of his
salvation” in vv. 24, 27)

Jacob the power of the redemption (Jacob 6.9)

Nephi if ye . . . endure to the end, ye shall be saved
(1 Ne 22.31; cf. 2 Ne 31.15)

When Moroni concludes the Large Plates, he will adopt a similar strategy at Moro 10.24–34, with parallels to Amaleki’s list of spiritual gifts here (see Moro 10.13–16).

from the devil.²⁶ And now, my beloved brethren, I would that ye should come unto Christ, who is the Holy One of Israel, and partake of his salvation, and the power of his redemption. Yea, come unto him, and offer your whole souls as an offering unto him, and continue in fasting and praying, and endure to the end; and as the Lord liveth ye will be saved.

Expeditions to the Land of Nephi

²⁷ And now I would speak somewhat concerning a certain number who went up into the wilderness to return to the land of Nephi; for there was a large number who were desirous to possess the land of their inheritance.

²⁸ Wherefore, they went up into the wilderness. And their leader being a strong and mighty man, and a stiffnecked man, wherefore he caused a contention among them; and they were all slain, save fifty, in the wilderness, and they returned again to the land of Zarahemla.

²⁹ And it came to pass that they also took others to a considerable number, and took their journey again into the wilderness.³⁰ And I, Amaleki, had a brother, who also went with them; and I have not since known concerning them. And I am about to lie down in my grave; and these plates are full. And I make an end of my speaking.

26: *Christ, who is the Holy One of Israel*, 2 Ne 25.29. **27–30:** Some Nephites still consider the region near their first settlement to be *the land of their inheritance*; consequently, they send two exploratory parties to the land that Mosiah had fled from a generation earlier (1.12–13). These expeditions would have taken place sometime around 200 BCE. **28:** For another account of this incident, see Mos 9.1–2. **29:** The fate of the second party is revealed in the narrative that begins at Mos 7.1. **30:** *Make an end of my speaking*, BoM authors sometimes conflate speaking and writing; cf. v. 12; 1 Ne 14.30; 2 Ne 25.1–3; 31.2; 32.7; 3 Ne 28.24; Morm 8.13.

MORMON'S EXPLANATORY COMMENTS

(The Words of Mormon)

Words of Mormon catapults readers, who have just learned about King Benjamin, five centuries into the future for a brief editorial note from the Book of Mormon's primary editor, Mormon, writing about 385 CE, before returning them to 130 BCE to continue with the story of Benjamin's abdication in the first chapter of Mosiah. Mormon describes his own discovery of the Small Plates, which readers have just finished reading, and how he decided to append them to his abridgment of the Large Plates of Nephi. When readers turn the page and begin the book of Mosiah, they will find themselves in the midst of a different sort of story, retold by a narrator, as opposed to the first-person writing that characterized the Small Plates. The transition, spurred by Martin Harris's loss of the 116 pages, is not exactly smooth. It appears that the first two original chapters of Mosiah, which recounted the reigns of Mosiah¹ and Benjamin, were part of the stolen manuscript, and Mormon fills in the gap between the end of the Small Plates and the surviving portion of his abridgment with seven verses summarizing the highlights of Benjamin's reign (1.12–18). The Book of Mormon narrative would have been fuller and more cogent if Mormon had included additional details about the ways that kings Mosiah and Benjamin had rescued Nephite culture as it was faltering.

Words of Mormon is dated to ca. 385 CE.

THE WORDS OF MORMON

The Small Plates of Nephi,

[1] **1** And now I, Mormon, being about to deliver up the record which I have been making into the hands of my son Moroni, behold I have witnessed almost all the destruction of my people, the Nephites. ² And it is many hundred years after the coming of Christ that I deliver these records into the hands of my son; and it supposeth me that he will witness the entire destruction of my people. But may God grant that he may survive them, that he may write somewhat concerning them, and somewhat concerning Christ, that perhaps some day it may profit them.

³ And now, I speak somewhat concerning that which I have written; for after I had made an abridgment from the plates of Nephi, down to the reign of this king Benjamin, of whom Amaleki spake, I searched among the records which had been delivered into my hands, and I found these plates,⁴ which contained this small account of the prophets, from Jacob down to the reign of this king Benjamin, and also many of the words of

Nephi. ⁴ And the things which are upon these plates pleasing me, because of the prophecies of the coming of Christ; and my fathers knowing that many of them have been fulfilled (yea, and I also know that as many things as have been prophesied concerning us down to this day have been fulfilled, and as many as go beyond this day must surely come to pass), ⁵ wherefore, I chose these things, to finish my record upon them, which remainder of my record I shall take from the plates of Nephi; and I cannot write the hundredth part of the things of my people.

⁶ But behold, I shall take these plates, which contain these prophesyings and revelations, and put them with the remainder of my record, for they are choice unto me; and I know they will be choice unto my brethren. ⁷ And I do this for a wise purpose; for thus it whispereth me, according to the workings of the Spirit of the Lord which is in me. And now, I do not know all things; but the Lord

⁴ ³ About 385 CE

CHAPTER 1

1–11: Mormon, writing at the end of Nephite civilization, approximately 500 years after King Benjamin, explains his editorial decision to augment his abridged version of Nephite history by adding the Small Plates as an appendix. **2:** The referent of the final *them* shifts from the Nephites to the Lamanites in the last days, whom Mormon also regards as “my people.” **3:** *An abridgment from the plates of Nephi*, that is, the Large Plates. Mormon’s abridgment of this material constituted approximately the first 116 pages of JS’s dictation, which was subsequently lost by Martin Harris. *These plates*, the Small Plates. The description of the Small Plates as a record of Jacob and later prophets, along with “many of Nephi’s words,” is unexpected since Nephi is by far the dominant writer; such a perspective treats the record as a lineage history of Jacob and his descendants. **4:** Mormon’s desire to demonstrate the fulfillment of prophecies is better served by reproducing primary sources in full rather than providing paraphrased prophecies that may have been reshaped after the fact. He believes that because so many predictions have come to pass, there is ample reason to trust that the rest will similarly be fulfilled (the last *and* seems to mean “therefore”). **7–8:** *For a wise purpose*, the Small Plates (1 Nephi–Omni), which Mormon included as an appendix to his abridgment of the Large Plates, were eventually used to replace his account of Lehi through King Benjamin that was on the pages stolen from Martin Harris; see 1 Ne 9.5n. Since *my brethren* in v. 8 refers to the Lamanites and their descendants in the latter days, the Small Plates would seem to have particular value to them; cf. Jarom 1.2.

knoweth all things which are to come; wherefore, he worketh in me to do according to his will.⁸ And my prayer to God is concerning my brethren, that they may once again come to the knowledge of God, yea, the redemption of Christ; that they may once again be a delight- some people.

⁹ And now I, Mormon, proceed to finish out my record, which I take from the plates of Nephi; and I make it according to the knowledge and the understanding which God has given me.¹⁰ Wherefore, it came to pass that after Amaleki had delivered up these plates into the hands of king Benjamin, he took them and put them with the other plates, which contained records which had been handed down by the kings, from generation to generation until the days of king Benjamin.¹¹ And they were handed down from king Benjamin, from generation to generation until they have fallen into my hands. And I, Mormon, pray to God that they may be preserved from this time henceforth. And I know that they will be preserved; for there are great things written upon them, out of which my people and their brethren shall be judged at the great and last

day, according to the word of God which is written.

King Benjamin's Achievements

¹² And now, concerning this king Benjamin— he had somewhat of contentions among his own people.¹³ And it came to pass also that the armies of the Lamanites came down out of the land of Nephi, to battle against his people. But behold, king Benjamin gathered together his armies, and he did stand against them; and he did fight with the strength of his own arm, with the sword of Laban.¹⁴ And in the strength of the Lord they did contend against their enemies, until they had slain many thousands of the Lamanites. And it came to pass that they did contend against the Lamanites until they had driven them out of all the lands of their inheritance.

¹⁵ And it came to pass that after there had been false Christs, and their mouths had been shut, and they punished according to their crimes;¹⁶ and after there had been false prophets, and false preachers and teachers among the people, and all these having been punished

11: *Pray... that they may be preserved*, Enos had prayed for the same thing at Enos 1.13. Nephi had asserted that people would be judged by the words of the BoM at 2 Ne 25.21–22. **12–18:** Mormon connects the end of Omni's account with the beginning of the book of Mosiah (in its truncated form after the loss of the 116 pages) by providing additional information about the reign of King Benjamin. Readers may wonder whether this convenient editorial bridge was the result of revelation, prescience, translator interpolation, or authorial revision. **12:** The internal contentions among Benjamin's people were religious in nature, according to vv. 15–16, which may overlap with Nephite/Mulekite tensions. The warfare against the Lamanites seems to be the same conflict referred to at Omni 1.24. **13:** The *sword of Laban* was apparently passed on from king to king along with the records and the Liahona (see Mos 1.16). Benjamin is the first person described as using the sword in battle since Nephi (Jacob 1.10), and the last one to do so in the BoM. **14:** *In the strength of the Lord*, Ps 71.16; Mic 5.4; and eight times in the BoM (generally with regard to fighting). *The lands of their inheritance*, here referring to the land of Zarahemla, that is, Mulekite territory. Some of King Benjamin's people, however, still considered their ancestral inheritance to be near the coast, in the land of Nephi; see Omni 1.27. **15–18:** Benjamin is only able to maintain religious standards with the help of other *holy men*, and even so it requires his full attention and efforts. Given that Mormon is the narrator here, living in a much later era of warfare and spiritual decline, readers are invited to contrast Mormon's nearly solitary defense of religious standards with Benjamin's ability to work together with other prophets and holy men. **15:** *False Christs*, people claiming falsely to be the Messiah (the term is used at Mt 24.24; Mk 13.22, both of which also include "false prophets"). Given the recent union of Nephites and Mulekites, there may have been people from the latter group claiming the rights of kingship, since the title *messiah* was often used in the OT to refer to human kings, particularly in the line of David. In any case, the nature of their *crimes* is not specified.

according to their crimes; and after there having been much contention and many dissensions away unto the Lamanites, behold, it came to pass that king Benjamin, with the assistance of the holy prophets who were among his people—¹⁷ for behold, king Benjamin was a holy man, and he did reign over his people in righteousness; and there were many holy men

in the land, and they did speak the word of God with power and with authority; and they did use much sharpness because of the stiff-neckedness of the people—¹⁸ wherefore, with the help of these, king Benjamin, by laboring with all the might of his body and the faculty of his whole soul, and also the prophets, did once more establish peace in the land.

18: *Faculty* denotes “ability, skill.”

MORMON'S ABRIDGMENT OF THE LARGE PLATES OF NEPHI (Mosiah–Mormon 7)

In the Small Plates, Nephi outlines the sweep of Nephite history (1 Ne 12). From the beginning, he knows by prophecy how the story will end, and much of 2 Nephi is taken up with his attempts to understand and mitigate the tragic dimensions of what he has foreseen. Mormon, by contrast, knows the full story of the Nephites through his reading of historical records, and his task is to give that narrative shape and meaning through his editing of the sources at his disposal and by identifying the causes of his people's cataclysmic failure—a task somewhat similar to that faced by Deuteronomistic historians after the fall of Judah in the sixth century BCE. Mormon may have said more about himself and his literary ambitions in the first part of his abridged history, but because of the lost manuscript and its replacement by the Small Plates, readers only encounter his shortened version of the Large Plates halfway through his project, at about 130 BCE, or nearly 500 years into his account of Nephite civilization. As they begin the book of Mosiah, those reading in canonical order merely know that Mormon was a record keeper and historian writing several centuries after the coming of Christ, when the Nephites were on the verge of complete destruction, who cares about prophecy and revelation, and who has a son named Moroni (WoM 1.1–8). Later on, Mormon will share his rather pessimistic view of human nature (Hel 12) and then will formally introduce himself as “a disciple of Christ” who believes that God will someday gather in the remnants of Israel and restore them to a knowledge of their covenants (3 Ne 5.12–26). Finally, in Mormon's own small book he will briefly recount how he came into possession of the national records and was appointed commander of the Nephite armies.

The background of the Large Plates and the nature of Mormon's abridgment have to be pieced together from clues throughout the text. The Large Plates originated with Lehi and Nephi's first written records, which focused on “the reign of kings, and the wars and contentions” of the Nephites (1 Ne 9.4; Jacob 3.13). Thirty years after the family left Jerusalem, Nephi received a commandment to make a second, more spiritual record of his ministry (2 Ne 5.30), which became the Small Plates that were passed down through the lineage of his brother Jacob. In the meantime, the more detailed history of the Nephites, inscribed on the Large Plates and updated with each generation, remained in the control of the line of kings and the first chief judge, Alma₂ (Omni 1.11; Mos 28.20). Alma₂, however, gave the Large Plates and other records to his son Helaman₂ rather than to the next chief judge (perhaps in fear of the chief judgeship

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passing into Mulekite rather than Nephite hands; see Alma 50.37–38), and the Large Plates continued in the possession of descendants of Alma₂ until they reached Mormon in the mid-fourth century (Alma 37.1–2; 3 Ne 1.2; 4 Ne 1.19–21; Morm 1.1–5; 2.17–18). Mormon's shortened version of the Large Plates, written for readers in the distant future, retained its emphasis on Nephite culture, institutions, and concerns, to the point of diminishing or even obscuring the perspectives of Lamanites and Mulekites—even though both groups greatly outnumbered the Nephites (Mos 25.1–3; Hel 4.19, 25). Mormon, as a historian, generally writes from the third-person point of view, unlike the authors of the Small Plates, who were participants or witnesses to the events they recount.

Mormon's historiographical priorities become clear over the course of his writings. He wants to validate Nephite revelations and prophecies (often by noting their fulfillments), as well as God's covenant with Lehi that keeping commandments would lead to prospering in the land (2 Ne 1.20). He is interested in how the human proclivity to selfish behavior leads to political crises, and how moral suasion and repentance can result in different outcomes. He makes room for numerous examples of just or unjust warfare, along with stories of preaching and conversion. In addition, he is eager to ascribe religious causes to social and political developments. That is to say, he frequently sees the hand of God in disasters and deliverances. Within the framework of the narrative, however, it is somewhat difficult to determine how active or intrusive Mormon may have been as an editor. Mosiah and Alma 1–44 seem to exhibit more literary finesse than what follows, perhaps because they were written and organized by Alma₂ with relatively few emendations from Mormon, aside from deletions. (Alma's sermons suggest that he had a sophisticated rhetorical sensibility.) Yet Mormon is nevertheless presented as the final editor.

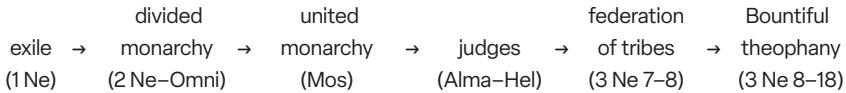
In the five centuries covered by his extant abridgment, Mormon focuses on the 150 years preceding Christ's visitation to the New World (Mos–Hel). He also gives particular attention to the Christian church founded by Alma, even though it seems to have been a minority religious movement for much of its existence. The dating of events taking place in Lamanite territory is unclear—that is, incidents from Zeniff's colony (Mos 9–24) and the missionary journeys of the sons of Mosiah (Alma 17–28)—but the chronological sequence of Nephite history is fairly precise once the reign of the judges begins in the book of Alma. Mormon inserts multiple primary sources into his history, including a memoir (Mos 9–10), a proclamation (Mos 29), transcripts of sermons (Alma 5; 7; 36–42; 3 Ne 12–14; 20–22), and letters (Alma 54; 56–58; 60; 61; 3 Ne 3). The narrative also includes brief editorial asides such as “thus we see” comments, notes on sources, instances of foreshadowing or summary, and observations of fulfilled prophecies, which may be ascribed either to Mormon or to the compilers of the earlier records he is said to have drawn upon, but they tend not to disrupt the flow of the narrative. (The lengthy comments at Hel 12 and 3 Ne 5 are exceptions.) Mormon appears to believe that facts about the past, set forth in an orderly fashion, can provide compelling evidence of God's regular interventions in human history.

There are, however, at least four literary patterns stretching across Mormon's abridgment that suggest a comprehensive design on his part (or Joseph Smith's). The first is that his history is structured as a reversal of Israel's history from the fall of Jerusalem and the Babylonian exile back to Sinai. In schematic form, substituting the Small Plates for the lost portion of Mormon's abridgment, the biblical narrative and its Book of Mormon sequel look something like this:

Israelites

Sinai	federation	united	divided		
theophany	→ of tribes	→ judges	→ monarchy	→ monarchy	→ exile
(Ex 19–24)	(Josh)	(Judg)	(1–2 Sam)	(1–2 Kings)	(2 Kings 25)

Lehites



For anyone familiar with the Bible, the Nephite shift from the reign of kings to the reign of judges is a striking contrast to the Israelite story, but additional parallels are notable. The biblical period of divided monarchy, when Israel and Judah were separate kingdoms, is mirrored by the disparate lines of kings among the Nephites and the Mulekites (also led, respectively, by the tribes of Joseph and Judah). In both cases, the era of united monarchy lasts for just three kings: Saul, David, and Solomon are paralleled by Mosiah₁, Benjamin, and Mosiah₂. The sin cycle in Judges is reflected by the pride cycle in Helaman and 3 Nephi. And the climactic moment of the Book of Mormon, that is, Christ’s post-resurrection visit, returns the Lehite/Mulekite Israelites into God’s presence as he fulfills the law given at Sinai, thus imparting a balanced, satisfying arc to the Lord’s covenantal relationship with this branch of his chosen people.

Just as Jesus’s coming to the New World fulfills patterns and prophecies associated with the Old Testament, so also his ministry among the Nephites recapitulates some of his key teachings and actions in the New Testament. He chooses twelve disciples as special representatives, preaches a version of the Sermon on the Mount, institutes the Lord’s Supper, heals the sick, and blesses children. In contrast to the Gospels, Jesus in 3 Nephi organizes a church, offers exegesis of scripture, foregoes teaching through parables, and prophesies more about the end times than the destruction of Jerusalem. Perhaps more important, the context is entirely different; Jesus comes to the Nephites as God, descending from the heavens, and he is joined on two occasions by multitudes of angels. All of this takes place over the course of three days in Bountiful, as opposed to his three years of teaching in Judea, though the Lord only allows Mormon to recount the events of the first two days (3 Ne 26.11–12). The implication is that Mormon has edited the Large Plates record written by Nephi₃, one of the twelve disciples, with an eye toward the spiritual needs of his readers in the last days (see 3 Ne 26.6–10; 29.1–30.2).

The second pattern is that after Jesus appears at Bountiful, Mormon quickly wraps up his history, covering 350 years in just a few pages. As seen from the very end of Nephite civilization, the narrative presumes that the audience will not be the Nephites, but rather Gentiles and descendants of the Lamanites in the latter days, and that these future readers will benefit more from details about the years leading up to Jesus’s coming than from the two centuries of peace and harmony that followed. Mormon appears to be structuring his history typologically, offering a reassuring precedent for future readers who themselves would be waiting for Christ’s second coming, who might be experiencing doubts or fending off criticisms from skeptics claiming that prophecies are wishful fantasies. (Excitement about Jesus’s imminent arrival reached a fever pitch in the United States just a few years after the Book of Mormon was published, especially among the followers of William Miller in 1844.) Nephite proto-Christianity, beginning with the revelations to Lehi and Nephi, was at odds with the Judaism of Deuteronomy—preaching that God had a divine son who would someday take human form, proclaiming a promised land other than Canaan, establishing a non-Levitical priesthood, and worshipping in temples outside of Jerusalem. This new Nephite religion was vulnerable to serious criticisms based on the Torah, but in the end Jesus actually came, thus rendering such objections superfluous. Mormon produced an account that justified the Nephite version of history, despite the questions raised by Lamanites and Nephite dissenters. So also, modern believers in the Book of Mormon, despite criticisms based in both secularism and the Bible, presume that they too will be vindicated when the Lord comes again and fulfills its prophecies.

In contrast to the scant attention given to the last centuries of the Nephites, Mormon devotes a great deal of his narrative to the church founded by Alma, in the Zeniffite colony about 150 BCE, which became

the preeminent Nephite institution dedicated to preserving traditions about the Christian gospel, including prophecies of Jesus's future birth, ministry, and atonement. This is the third pattern evident in Mormon's abridgment. Interspersed with episodes of warfare, political turmoil, religious crises, and natural disasters—all of which shape the fate of the Nephite nation as a whole—are lengthy transcripts of sermons from church leaders and missionaries such as Alma₂, Amulek, Ammon, and Samuel the Lamanite. They preach a standard version of Christian redemption, which is essentially a reversal of the fall of Adam: as a result of Adam and Eve's transgression, humans became separated from God by death and their own misused agency. Christ's atonement makes possible the resurrection, when reembodied souls will return to God's presence for judgment. Those who have exercised faith and repentance will have their sins forgiven and can continue in God's glory, while the rebellious and wicked will be cast out. Membership in a faith community, entered into by baptism, along with the gift of the Holy Spirit, can provide assistance to individuals seeking redemption.

By balancing national epic with stories of preaching and personal conversions, Mormon incorporates both salvation history and the plan of salvation into his historical account, thus integrating Old and New Testament perspectives of temporal and spiritual salvation, as well as collective and individual redemption. In the Small Plates, this synthesis was signaled by Lehi's descriptions of two allegorical trees: the tree of life in 1 Nephi 8 and the olive tree of 1 Nephi 10. In Mormon's abridgment, a recurring theme is the angel's instruction to Alma₂ to remember the deliverance of his fathers, which can refer to both modes of salvation, as at Alma 5.5–6: "they were brought into bondage by the hands of the Lamanites . . . they were in captivity, and again the Lord did deliver them out of bondage . . . have you sufficiently retained in remembrance the captivity of your fathers? . . . have ye sufficiently retained in remembrance that he has delivered their souls from hell?"

A final pattern to notice is that Mormon streamlines Nephite history, apparently in an effort to shape reader responses. Specifically, he reduces the story of three peoples—Mulekites, Nephites, and Lamanites—to just the latter two, thus avoiding any discussion of distinct Mulekite traditions, customs, or sensibilities. In the book of Omni, Amaleki reported that a few Nephite refugees, led by Mosiah₁, had discovered a city of Judahites who had come to the New World some 350 years earlier, shortly after the arrival of the Lehites, and had lived separately ever since. They were ruled by Zarahemla (never explicitly referred to as a "king," though this would obviously have been his position) and they no longer spoke Hebrew, having brought no written records with them. Zarahemla and his people were thrilled to learn of the Brass Plates, and indeed learned the language of the Nephites and invited Mosiah to become their king. It is a strange turn of events that invites further explanation, which Mormon never provides. Instead, there are brief references to the Nephites and "people of Zarahemla" continuing to be separate but allied peoples for at least three generations (Mos 1.10; 25.1–4), with the latter greatly outnumbering the former. At Mosiah 25.2, Zarahemla is identified as a descendant of Mulek, and then at Helaman 6.10, there is a stunning revelation noted only in passing: "the land north was called Mulek, which was after the son of Zedekiah [the last king of Judah]; for the Lord did bring Mulek into the land north, and Lehi into the land south" (cf. Hel 8.21). This means that Zarahemla belonged to the royal line of David, and thus would have had a legitimate claim to the throne of Judah according to the Davidic covenant, as preserved in the Nephites' Brass Plates—a bit of information with enormous significance for people reading the Book of Mormon as history, or even as historical fiction set in a biblical context.

Scholars generally agree that there are four major covenants in the Hebrew Bible: the Noahic (that God would never again flood the world; Gen 9.1–17); the Abrahamic (promising land and numerous descendants to Abraham, and through him blessings to all the families of the earth; Gen 15; 17); the Mosaic (in which God would bless and protect the Israelites so long as they kept his commandments; Ex 19–24); and the Davidic (that David's dynastic heirs would have the right to rule in perpetuity; 2 Sam 7 and Ps 89). In the

Book of Mormon, the Noahic covenant is not cited, the Abrahamic covenant is referenced eight times, the Mosaic covenant is pervasive, and the Davidic covenant is never mentioned, which is perhaps odd if members of the royal lineage lived among the Nephites. And given the close association of Davidic kings with the Levitical priests who served in the Jerusalem temple (e.g., Jer 33.17–22), it is reasonable to assume that a few priests would have accompanied Mulek, a son of the last king of Judah, when his party was led by God to the New World (according to the Book of Mormon). These are issues that readers might expect to be taken up in a historical account. Mormon never does so, but there are hints throughout his abridged version of the Large Plates. Numerous figures attempt to restore the monarchy after it is dissolved by King Mosiah, including a group known as “king-men,” who “professed the blood of nobility” (Alma 51.21). Perhaps these were direct descendants of Mulek wishing to assert their covenantal rights. And there is regular tension between groups of priests, with particular hostility directed against the non-Levitical priests who served in Alma’s church (Mos 23–24; Alma 13). Indeed, most of the stories of dissensions related by Mormon might be ascribed to the Mulekites, some of whom may well have resented both the political and religious hegemony asserted by the minority Nephites (as did the Lamanites, who were regularly allied with Nephite dissenters).

A plausible, if speculative, alternative account of Nephite history might run along these lines. When Mosiah, and his followers encountered the people of Zarahemla, who had preserved the memory of his genealogy (Omni 1.18), the two leaders realized that Zarahemla had the divine right to rule, but Mosiah had the sacred text that documented that right, as well as the linguistic skills to access the scripture (Mos 1.1–5). On the other hand, the Nephites, who were committed to living the law of Moses (2 Ne 5.10; Jarom 1.5) lacked the Levites necessary to fully implement the law. An arrangement was made whereby the Nephites would set up a caretaker government, that is, a period of tutelage in which the illiterate Mulekites could gain the knowledge and expertise needed to claim their rightful privileges. With the additional promise of service-oriented leadership and low taxes (Mos 2.10–18), it is perhaps not surprising that “the people of Zarahemla, and of Mosiah, did unite together; and Mosiah was appointed to be their king” (Omni 1.19). After three generations, namely, the reigns of Mosiah₁, Benjamin, and Mosiah₂, the original agreement was no longer tenable, though the Nephites did not wish to give up power. So Mosiah abrogated the monarchy in favor of a system of judges—which turned out to be Nephite rule by another name. The chief judges were all Nephites and the position tended to be passed from father to son. Naturally, there was opposition from Mulekite elements of the population. And the sons of Mosiah, as princes dispossessed of their kingdom, went on a mission to the Lamanites, taking their literacy and the scriptures (Alma 18.36–38; 22.12–13), perhaps hoping not only to win souls but also to establish a political alliance similar to what the Nephites had with the Mulekites.

Other interpretations are possible, of course. Were there factions among the Mulekites? Did Benjamin marry a Mulekite woman so that Mosiah₂ and his sons could claim both lineages? How common was intermarriage and what was the social status of their offspring? What was the ethnicity of the dissidents Nehor, Amlici, and their followers? Or the priests of Noah and the residents of Ammonihah? Did particular cities attract Nephite or Mulekite settlers? In any event, Mormon’s abridged history has significant gaps (even if he leaves no ambiguity about the correctness of the Nephite traditions). Perhaps he was afraid that if he provided a fuller account, it might have provoked reader sympathy for the legitimate claims of Nephite dissenters and Mulekites. To be sure, an account of the voyage of Mulek and his people to the Americas would have been a spectacular tale, especially if followed by the story of how remnants of Joseph and Judah reunited on the other side of the world after the destruction of their two kingdoms, but Mormon shows little interest in explaining any of this.

As readers follow the contours of Nephite history from the book of Mosiah on, it would be well to keep in mind the persona of the author-editor Mormon, who describes himself as “a pure descendant of Lehi

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(3 Ne 5.20), shaping the narrative for his own purposes. He is something of a tragic character, who will witness the utter collapse of Nephite society after his own preaching and military endeavors have failed. Perhaps this is why he seems so enamored of figures in Nephite history who managed to save their people in ways that he himself could not—men like Alma₂, Captain Moroni, Helaman₁, and Nephi₂. Nevertheless, Mormon sees his writing project as a bridge between the past and the future, bringing the desires of his prophetic predecessors to fruition, and also making it possible for his latter-day readers to return to covenantal faithfulness (see 3 Ne 5 and 29–30).

INTRODUCTION TO MOSIAH

The book of Mosiah is readers' first glimpse of the Large Plates, albeit in abridged form, which were described by Nephi as containing "a full account of the history of my people" (1 Ne 9.2). Much more attention is given here to politics than in the Small Plates, though religion is often combined with statecraft, and there are spiritual themes and references to scripture and revelations throughout. When the book opens—actually in its third chapter, since the first two had disappeared with the lost manuscript—the descendants of Nephi have provided two generations of successful kings to a population consisting of a majority of Mulekites and a smaller number of Nephites (see Omni 1.12–24). Their capital is the Mulekite city of Zarahemla, some distance from the land where Nephi had established a settlement and built a temple several centuries earlier. The current king, Benjamin, has reached old age and is ready to pass the kingdom on to his son, Mosiah₂. This goes smoothly enough, with Benjamin preaching a memorable sermon to the people, but then the narrative shifts its attention away from events in the capital to a colony that had been founded in the land of Nephi (or Lehi-Nephi) by an adventurer named Zeniff many years previously. A flashback recounting the history of the colonists (chs. 9–22), covering incidents that would have happened at the same time as the missing account of the reigns of Mosiah₁ and Benjamin, makes up the bulk of the extant book.

The reason that so much space is devoted to this seemingly peripheral aspect of Nephite history is that it explains the origins of the proto-Christian church that will become a major institution for the rest of the Nephite story, and it introduces the family line that will serve as keepers of the Large Plates from Alma₂ through Ammaron in the fourth century. In addition, the colonists discover a record of the Jaredites, an earlier people whose destruction will stand as a warning to the Nephites, and whose story will eventually be told in the book of Ether. After the main flashback of chapters 9–22, there is a second flashback in chapters 23–24 that narrates the experiences of a subset of the colonists, church members in fact, who get separated from the others. Again and again, people get lost in the wilderness between the land of Nephi and the land of Zarahemla. After the eventual reunion of the various groups, the church gains members from the combined Nephite and Mulekite population, and faces challenges in transmitting faith to the next generation.

CONTENTS

Chapter 1: King Benjamin decides to confer his kingdom on his son Mosiah₂ with a public ceremony.

Chapters 2–4: Benjamin gathers the people at the temple and delivers a sermon in which he preaches of Christ and social justice, and urges them to obey God's commandments.

Chapters 5–6: The assembled Nephites and Mulekites make a covenant to serve God and thereby become children of Christ, taking his name upon them. Mosiah becomes their new king.

INTRODUCTION TO MOSIAH

Chapters 7–8: Mosiah dispatches a search party to locate a group of Nephites who had returned to the land of Nephi about seventy years earlier to establish a colony and had not been heard from since. The searchers find the colony, now led by King Limhi and in bondage to the Lamanites. Earlier, a few colonists attempting to contact the main body of Nephites had come upon Jaredite ruins, which they assumed were the remains of Zarahemla, so the arrival of the search party was a welcome surprise. The history of the colony will be recounted in a long flashback comprising chapters 9–22.

Chapters 9–10: Abruptly, the narrative shifts to a first-person memoir written by Zeniff, the leader (and eventual king) of the first colonists. Zeniff successfully negotiates with the Lamanites for land, and then later has to defend his people from Lamanite incursions.

Chapters 11–17: Returning to third-person narration, the narrator recounts how Zeniff is succeeded by his son Noah, a wicked monarch who leads his people astray. He is confronted by the prophet Abinadi, who undergoes a trial that hinges on the interpretation of scripture (Isa 52.7–10). In the end, Abinadi is wrongfully found guilty and executed.

Chapter 18: Alma₁, one of Noah's priests, believes Abinadi's message, repents, and quietly establishes a church in the borders of the land, performing baptisms and ordaining priests. He leads about 450 followers into the wilderness to establish a separate settlement.

Chapters 19–22: The Lamanites overrun the main colony and reduce its inhabitants to servitude. This is the point at which Mosiah's search party arrives, and because they know the way back to Zarahemla, they are able to lead the colonists through the wilderness to the capital.

Chapters 23–24: A Lamanite army pursuing the colonists comes upon Alma's people in the wilderness and promptly enslaves them. Alma and his people are able to escape and make their way to Zarahemla after the Lord causes a deep sleep to come upon their captors.

Chapters 25–28: With all the colonists back in Zarahemla, Alma expands his religious organization throughout the land. Young unbelievers, including Alma's own son Alma₂ and four sons of King Mosiah, attempt to destroy the church. Eventually, Alma₂ and the sons of Mosiah are converted by an angel. Mosiah translates the Jaredite records, and his sons abdicate their princely positions in order to preach to the Lamanites.

Chapter 29: With his sons among the Lamanites, Mosiah discontinues the monarchy and replaces it with a system of judges. Alma₂ becomes the first chief judge and also the high priest over the church. The book of Mosiah covers events from ca. 130–90 BCE (with a flashback returning to ca. 200 BCE).

INTERPRETATION

Themes of unity and division play a central role in the Book of Mormon, beginning with the separations of Lehi's family from Jerusalem, the Nephites from the Lamanites, and Mosiah's followers from the remainder of the Nephites—all of which were described in the Small Plates. The book of Mosiah takes place shortly after the first major instance of convergence, when some of the Nephites, of the tribe of Joseph, encounter the Mulekites, of the tribe of Judah, who were also refugees from Jerusalem at the time of the Babylonian conquest. Their union in the New World under a single king, Mosiah₁, could have been depicted as a partial fulfillment of the prophecies and hopes of the biblical generations riven by conquest and exile. For example, desires for a reunification of the peoples of Judah and Israel (led by the Ephraimite branch of Joseph) can be seen at Hosea 1.10–11, Isaiah 11.12–13, Jeremiah 50.4–5, and Ezekiel 37.15–28. Yet this is not the interpretation adopted by Nephite record keepers, perhaps because Mosiah, a descendant of Joseph through Manasseh, could never be a promised Davidic king, or because the unification of the two peoples was still incomplete even after two or three generations of alliance (Mos 1.10; 25.2). In the Book of Mormon, the solution to political and religious divisions is the establishment of new covenants.

The Lehtes brought the Mosaic covenant with them, and their possession of the Brass Plates enabled them to remember and live by its precepts (1 Ne 4.14–15; Mos 1.4–5). The first additional covenant in the Book of Mormon, God’s promise to Lehi that “inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments ye shall prosper in the land; but inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye shall be cut off from my presence” (2 Ne 1.20), can be viewed as a codicil to the Mosaic covenant (e.g., Deut 5.32–33), with application to a new promised land in the Americas. But this was not enough to keep the Nephites and Lamanites together, and it was not enough to forge the Nephites and Mulekites into a single people. To that end, King Benjamin introduces an entirely new covenant. He instructs his son:

Make a proclamation throughout all this land among all this people, or the people of Zarahemla, and the people of Mosiah who dwell in the land, that thereby they may be gathered together . . . and moreover, I shall give this people a name, that thereby they may be distinguished above all the people which the Lord God hath brought out of the land of Jerusalem . . . and I give unto them a name that never shall be blotted out, except it be through transgression. (Mos 1.10–12)

At the conclusion of his sermon, his listeners covenant to obey God’s commandments and Benjamin reveals the name that will unite the two peoples:

Ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you . . . therefore, I would that ye should take upon you the name of Christ, all you that have entered into the covenant with God that ye should be obedient unto the end of your lives. . . . And I would that ye should remember also, that this is the name that I said I should give unto you that never should be blotted out, except it be through transgression. (5.7–11)

The hope, apparently, is that individuals will no longer identify primarily as Nephites or Mulekites, with their rival ancestral traditions, but rather as “children of Christ.” Unfortunately, this does not work out as planned, because those who were children at the time do not grow up to embrace the new covenant identity (26.1–6), in contrast to Jews who generation after generation have thought of themselves as having been among those who covenanted at Sinai (see Deut 4.9–10; 5.2–3).

At about the same time, however, another covenant was introduced independently in the Zeniffite colony. There Alma, who had been one of the wicked priests of King Noah, was converted by the prophet and martyr Abinadi. He established a clandestine church in the borders of the land, with baptism as a sign of the new covenant:

As ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another’s burdens . . . what have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him, that ye will serve him and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you? (18.8–10)

Shortly thereafter, Alma’s people flee into the wilderness, separating themselves from the main body of colonists, who are subsequently invaded by the Lamanites and enslaved. Through a complicated narrative, in which two simultaneous stories are recounted through flashbacks, the colonists, now led by King Noah’s son Limhi, make their way back to Zarahemla, followed by Alma’s people, who are likewise delivered from Lamanite bondage and brought back to Zarahemla. By chapter 25, the two groups from Zeniff’s colony are reunited with the main body of Nephites and Mulekites. Alma is able to spread his church widely among the people, with the covenant of baptism superseding or merging with the covenant established by Benjamin.

When King Mosiah₂ declares an end to the monarchy, his intention is to perpetuate a similar combination of political and religious power by investing one man, Alma’s wayward then repentant son Alma₂, with the dual offices of chief judge and high priest. This overlapping authority will prove difficult to maintain,

and in Alma 4 the two positions will be split, after which the Nephite church will be a unifying force for those identifying with the Nephite traditions, including Mulekites and converted Lamanites.

GUIDE TO READING

The first challenge for readers is simply keeping straight the divergent narrative strands. (The transition into and back from a flashback in the course of a single conversation, at 8.21 and 21.28, is notable.) But once the geographical and chronological shifts are accounted for, it can be useful to identify parallel stories and figures, with an eye toward contrasts. Kings Benjamin and Noah, for example, were paradigmatic good and bad rulers, with the latter being so wicked that he discredited the very institution of monarchy (29.13, 16–19). The peoples of Limhi and Alma, were both in bondage to the Lamanites and were similarly rescued, though with more miraculous manifestations in Alma’s case (chs. 21–22; 23–24). On a broader scale, the story of Alma₂’s conversion in chapter 27 can be read in conjunction with a first-person retelling of the same event that occurs at Alma 36.

Comparisons with biblical precedents can also be revealing. Abinadi in the court of King Noah is similar to Moses before the Egyptian pharaoh (with verbal parallels that seem intended to encourage readers to connect the two incidents). Alma’s encounter with a reproving angel is similar, in some ways, to Paul’s experience on the road to Damascus. With regard to theology, it is striking that Moses prophesies that God will put his name on a place, that is, the future temple in Jerusalem (e.g., Deut 12.5–6; 16.2; 26.2), while the people listening to King Benjamin choose to take God’s name upon themselves individually (Mos 5.6–12; 6.1–2). Biblical perspectives may also be helpful in imaginatively filling gaps in the narration. For instance, the motivations of the first colonists are left unspecified, other than their desire to “inherit . . . the land of their fathers” (7.9, 21; 9.3; 10.3). Did they regard the land of Nephi as their true promised land, analogous to the land of Canaan that God had promised Abraham? Did they find Zarahemla oppressive, like the Israelites in Egypt? Were they hoping to return from an exile of sorts and to rebuild the temple that Nephi had constructed (2 Ne 5.16; Mos 11.10), as Ezra had done in Judea? Was it their intention to go somewhere that they could live a higher, more integrated form of their religion? Note that they had taken priests with them—priests who would later be replaced by Noah’s political allies (11.5).

Readers might keep in mind modern parallels as well. The reactions of the Nephites to Benjamin’s sermon—crying out for mercy, falling to the ground, and confessing faith—could be compared to those of participants in nineteenth-century camp meetings (4.1–3; 5.1–5). Or the principles explicated in Mosiah’s proclamation dissolving the monarchy could be weighed against ideals of republicanism and liberty circulating in the late Colonial and Early National periods. The narratives in the book of Mosiah might even be interpreted as cautionary tales about the dangers of colonialism, whether that comes from displacing local populations to form separate settlements, as Zeniff’s colony did before they themselves were in turn exploited, or when a small group of outsiders, like Mosiah’s people, use claims of superior religion and culture to justify taking over a larger population (see 25.1) leading to resentment and conflict, as will happen in the book of Alma.

Finally, one of the most noticeable themes in Mosiah is deliverance, which takes several forms. There are instances of physical deliverance for entire communities, as when the peoples of Limhi and Alma were freed from Lamanite bondage, and of spiritual deliverance for groups like Benjamin’s subjects who received “a remission of their sins” and “peace of conscience” (4.3), and also for individuals such as Alma₂ (27.28–29). Yet while the overall message of God’s tender mercies is clear, the book of Mosiah is not naively didactic. It includes accounts of wicked people who escape the consequences of their sins, at least for a while (King Noah in ch. 19 and Noah’s priests in chs. 23–24), and innocent or good people who are not spared trials and suffering. These include Abinadi (ch. 17), the daughters of the Lamanites (ch. 20), and, again, the people of Alma (chs. 23–24).

THE BOOK OF MOSIAH

Benjamin Teaches His Sons

[1] **1** ¹ And now there was no more contention in all the land of Zarahemla, among all the people who belonged to king Benjamin, so that king Benjamin had continual peace all the remainder of his days. ² And it came to pass that he had three sons; and he called their names Mosiah, and Helorum, and Helaman. And he caused that they should be taught in all the language of his fathers, that thereby they might become men of understanding; and that they might know concerning the prophecies which had been spoken by the mouths of their fathers, which were delivered them by the hand of the Lord.

³ And he also taught them concerning the records which were engraven on the plates of brass, saying, “My sons, I would that ye should remember that were it not for these plates, which contain these records and these commandments, we must have suffered in ignorance, even at this present time, not knowing the mysteries of God. ⁴ For it were not possible

that our father, Lehi, could have remembered all these things, to have taught them to his children, except it were for the help of these plates; for he having been taught in the language of the Egyptians therefore he could read these engravings, and teach them to his children, and thereby they could teach them to their children, and so fulfilling the commandments of God, even down to this present time. ⁵ I say unto you, my sons, were it not for these things—which have been kept and preserved by the hand of God, that we might read and understand of his mysteries, and have his commandments always before our eyes—that even our fathers would have dwindled in unbelief, and we should have been like unto our brethren, the Lamanites, who know nothing concerning these things, or even do not believe them when they are taught them, because of the traditions of their fathers, which are not correct.

⁶ “O my sons, I would that ye should remember that these sayings are true, and also that these records are true. And behold, also

CHAPTER 1

Manuscript evidence suggests that the first two chapters of the book of Mosiah were among the 116 pages lost by Martin Harris and that what is currently Mos 1 was originally the third chapter in the book. This is why Mos has no summary preface. The missing chapters also raise the possibility that the book was named for Mosiah₁, rather than Mosiah₂, the son of Benjamin. **1:** The narrator subscribes to a theory of government in which the people *belong* to the king, and indeed were given to him by God (v. 10), though probably on the analogy of a family rather than possessions. *Continual peace*, the origins of this hard-won peace were recounted in WoM 1.12–18. **2:** *All the language of his fathers*, including the type of Egyptian on the Brass Plates (cf. v. 4), crucial to retaining a connection to their Israelite heritage, which the Mulekites had lost; see Omni 1.18–19n. **3–5:** Benjamin rules over a populace made up of a minority of Nephites and a majority of Mulekites (25.2). While he contrasts Nephites and Lamanites in v. 5, differences with the Mulekites may have been even more significant at a time of monarchical succession. **4–5:** *Teach them to his children* and so on to the next generation, recalls Deut 6.7. *Except it were for the help of these plates*, a similar point about record-assisted memory is made at Alma 37.8. **5:** *Have his commandments always before our eyes*, fulfilling the injunction at Deut 6.8, or at Deut 17.18–20 with regard to rulers. The Lamanite *tradition(s) of their fathers*, mentioned eighteen times in the BoM, are not only inaccurate, they also prevent the Lamanites from accepting the truths revealed by Nephite prophets. This verse seems to hint at prior unsuccessful missionary or diplomatic outreaches to the Lamanites; e.g., Jacob 7.24; Enos 1.20. **6:** *These records*, the Brass Plates. Benjamin affirms the veracity of the Brass Plates and then of the Plates of Nephi, suggesting that the writings of the Nephite fathers have gained scriptural status. *Because we have them before our eyes*, an allusion to canonical standing, as in v. 5, but also an example of the BoM tendency to equate knowledge with visual confirmation; cf. Alma 30.15; Hel 16.20; 3 Ne 12.2; Ether 12.5.

the plates of Nephi, which contain the records and the sayings of our fathers from the time they left Jerusalem until now, and they are true; and we can know of their surety because we have them before our eyes.⁷ And now, my sons, I would that ye should remember to search them diligently, that ye may profit thereby; and I would that ye should keep the commandments of God, that ye may ‘prosper in the land,’ according to the promises which the Lord made unto our fathers.”^a⁸ And many more things did king Benjamin teach his sons, which are not written in this book.

Benjamin Confers the Kingdom upon Mosiah₂

⁹ And it came to pass that after king Benjamin had made an end of teaching his sons, that he waxed old, and he saw that he must very soon go the way of all the earth; therefore, he thought it expedient that he should confer the kingdom upon one of his sons.¹⁰ Therefore, he had Mosiah brought before him; and these are the words which he spake unto him, saying, “My son, I would that ye should make a proclamation throughout all this land among all this people, or the people of Zarahemla, and the people of Mosiah who dwell in the land, that thereby they may be gathered together;

for on the morrow I shall proclaim unto this my people out of mine own mouth that thou art a king and a ruler over this people, whom the Lord our God hath given us.

¹¹ “And moreover, I shall give this people a name, that thereby they may be distinguished above all the people which the Lord God hath brought out of the land of Jerusalem; and this I do because they have been a diligent people in keeping the commandments of the Lord.¹² And I give unto them a name that never shall be blotted out, except it be through transgression.

¹³ “Yea, and moreover I say unto you, that if this highly favored people of the Lord should fall into transgression, and become a wicked and an adulterous people, that the Lord will deliver them up, that thereby they become weak like unto their brethren; and he will no more preserve them by his matchless and marvelous power, as he has hitherto preserved our fathers.¹⁴ For I say unto you, that if he had not extended his arm in the preservation of our fathers they must have fallen into the hands of the Lamanites, and become victims to their hatred.”

¹⁵ And it came to pass that after king Benjamin had made an end of these sayings to

^a 7 2 Ne 1.20

9: *Go the way of all the earth*, Josh 23.14; 1 Kings 2.1–2. Kingdoms are never “conferred” in the Bible, though there are ten such instances in the BoM. **10–12:** *The people of Zarahemla and the people of Mosiah*, after two generations of political unification, the two groups have maintained distinct ethnic identities. Nevertheless, Benjamin regards all his subjects as entrusted to him by God, and he apparently hopes to unify them more fully by giving them a new name that will replace former designations and allegiances. This name will be revealed at Mos 5.6–14. (The power of divine names is referred to more than a dozen times in Benjamin’s discourse.) **10:** The description *who dwell in the land* suggests that the people of Mosiah are still regarded as resident aliens or a minority population. **12:** In the Bible, the names of individuals can be blotted out of God’s book (Ex 32.32–33; Ps 69.28; Rev 3.5), and God can blot out transgressions as he forgives sin (Ps 51.1, 9; Isa 43.25; 44.22; Acts 3.19). Here, however, it is the divine name that is blotted out of the heart of a person who transgresses the law; cf. Mos 5.11. **13:** One fulfillment of this prophecy will be reported at Hel 4.24–26. *Weak like unto their brethren*, perhaps a reference to the Nephites that Mosiah₁ had left behind at Omni 1.12–13; the Lamanites seem quite strong, at least militarily. **15:** The book of Mosiah is framed at the beginning and end by King Benjamin giving his son Mosiah “charge concerning all the affairs of the kingdom” here, and then Alma₁ giving his son Alma₂ “charge concerning all the affairs of the church” at 29.42.

his son, that he gave him charge concerning all the affairs of the kingdom.¹⁶ And moreover, he also gave him charge concerning the records which were engraven on the plates of brass; and also the plates of Nephi; and also, the sword of Laban, and the ball or director, which led our fathers through the wilderness, which was prepared by the hand of the Lord that thereby they might be led, every one according to the heed and diligence which they gave unto him.¹⁷ Therefore, as they were unfaithful they did not prosper nor progress in their journey, but were driven back, and incurred the displeasure of God upon them; and therefore they were smitten with famine and sore afflictions, to stir them up in remembrance of their duty.

¹⁸ And now, it came to pass that Mosiah went and did as his father had commanded him, and proclaimed unto all the people who were in the land of Zarahemla that thereby they might gather themselves together, to go

up to the temple to hear the words which his father should speak unto them.

King Benjamin's Discourse: Mosiah 2–5

The People Gather at the Temple

2¹ And it came to pass that after Mosiah had done as his father had commanded him, and had made a proclamation throughout all the land, that the people gathered themselves together throughout all the land, that they might go up to the temple to hear the words which king Benjamin should speak unto them.² And there were a great number, even so many that they did not number them; for they had multiplied exceedingly and waxed great in the land.

³ And they also took of the firstlings of their flocks, that they might offer sacrifice and burnt offerings according to the law of Moses;⁴ and also that they might give thanks to the Lord

16: An additional inclusio begins here with Mosiah₂, receiving records and artifacts, and concludes with Alma₂, receiving the same objects from Mosiah at 28.20. The *ball or director* was the metallic directional device (named the “Liahona” at Alma 37.38) that led Lehi’s family at 1 Ne 16.9–16, 26–30; 18.12, 21. At this point, it apparently no longer functions, but has become a sacred relic. *According to the heed and diligence*, see 1 Ne 16.28–29, where the heed and diligence was directed toward the Liahona; here the Lord is the object. **17:** The Liahona figured prominently in both of the stories alluded to in this verse (1 Ne 16.17–22; 18.11–15), though the order of events is here reversed. **18:** This is the first mention of a temple in Zarahemla. It is not clear whether it was built by the Nephites or by the Mulekites.

CHAPTERS 2–5

Many readers have seen parallels in these chapters to 19th-c. camp meetings; others have pointed out similarities with ancient Israelite festivals. In any case, Benjamin’s people experience a life-changing, emotional response to preaching that lays out the divergent paths of righteousness and sin, and offers redemption through the blood of Christ. This speech is significant in Nephite history, being regularly alluded to throughout the BoM, and then explicitly cited nearly a century later at Hel 5.9.

CHAPTER 2

Although the people were too numerous to count (v. 2) or hear the speaker (v. 8), they nevertheless could gather together in a single place, with their tents (v. 6), and are later listed by name (6.1–2). Nephite temples are regularly described as gathering places (see Jacob 2.2; Mos 7.17; 3 Ne 11.1), but the BoM has very little to say about rituals that took place within their precincts, other than to suggest the offerings and sacrifices stipulated in the law of Moses. **3:** *Firstlings*, the first animal offspring of a season, which the law of Moses stipulated should be dedicated to the Lord (Ex 13.12; Deut 15.19–20). While firstlings were not typically used for burnt offerings, they could be used in other sacrifices. **4:** Both Nephites and Mulekites could claim that they had been *delivered from their enemies* and *brought out of the land of Jerusalem* by God; Benjamin is reminding his people of their common religious heritage rather than emphasizing their divisions. *A just man to be their king*, in accordance with David’s last words at 2 Sam 23.3 (cf. Mos 23.8; 29.16). The Davidic reference may have been included as a conciliatory gesture to his descendants among the Mulekites. The reading in P (“thereby”) implies that keeping the commandments leads to rejoicing and love.

their God, who had brought them out of the land of Jerusalem, and who had delivered them out of the hands of their enemies, and had appointed just men to be their teachers, and also a just man to be their king, who had established peace in the land of Zarahemla, and who had taught them to keep the commandments of God, that they might rejoice^a and be filled with love towards God and all men.

⁵ And it came to pass that when they came up to the temple, they pitched their tents round about, every man according to his family, consisting of his wife, and his sons, and his daughters, and their sons, and their daughters, from the eldest down to the youngest, every family being separate one from another. ⁶ And they pitched their tents round about the temple, every man having his tent with the door thereof towards the temple, that thereby they might remain in their tents and hear the words which king Benjamin should speak unto them; ⁷ for the multitude being so great that king Benjamin could not teach them all within the walls of the temple, therefore he caused a tower to be erected, that thereby his people might hear the words which he should speak unto them.

⁸ And it came to pass that he began to speak to his people from the tower; and they could not all hear his words because of the greatness of the multitude; therefore he caused that the words which he spake should be written and sent forth among those that

were not under the sound of his voice, that they might also receive his words.

Benjamin Recounts His Achievements

⁹ And these are the words which he spake and caused to be written, saying, “My brethren, all ye that have assembled yourselves together, you that can hear my words which I shall speak unto you this day; for I have not commanded you to come up hither to trifle with the words which I shall speak, but that you should hearken unto me,

and open your ears that ye may hear,
and your hearts that ye may
understand,
and your minds that the mysteries of
God may be unfolded to your view.

¹⁰ “I have not commanded you to come up hither that ye should fear me, or that ye should think that I of myself am more than a mortal man. ¹¹ But I am like as yourselves, subject to all manner of infirmities in body and mind; yet I have been chosen by this people, and consecrated by my father, and was suffered by the hand of the Lord that I should be a ruler and a king over this people; and have been kept and preserved by his matchless power, to serve you with all the might, mind and strength which the Lord hath granted unto me.

^a 4 P that thereby they might rejoice

5: The presence of *tents* suggests that some people had come a considerable distance. Alternatively, some LDS scholars have seen a connection with the Jewish holiday of Sukkot (Booths). For extended families to be separate, *daughters* must refer to unmarried daughters, with married women being integrated into their husbands' families.

8: This transcript was presumably the source of the account that follows. **9:** *My brethren*, Benjamin addresses his subjects in this fashion seven times in chs. 2–4, seemingly in accordance with the stipulations for a righteous king at Deut 17.20; cf. Mos 29.5. *Trifle with*, WB: “to treat without respect or seriousness.” Nephi also spoke of the *mysteries of God* being *unfolded* at 1 Ne 10.19. Ears that hear, hearts that understand, and minds that see mysteries represent stages in spiritual development, as well as a reversal of the divinely mandated obscuration of prophecy at Isa 6.10 (2 Ne 16.10). **10–11:** Benjamin seeks to diminish the inequality between himself and his subjects. He then traces the legitimacy of his rule to three sources—the people, his father, and God—and characterizes his reign as service to his people, indeed as a form of religious service.

¹² “I say unto you that as I have been suffered to spend my days in your service, even up to this time, and have not sought gold nor silver nor any manner of riches of you; ¹³ neither have I suffered that ye should be confined in dungeons, nor that ye should make slaves one of another, nor that ye should murder, or plunder, or steal, or commit adultery; nor even have I suffered that ye should commit any manner of wickedness, and have taught you that ye should keep the commandments of the Lord, in all things which he hath commanded you— ¹⁴ and even I, myself, have labored with mine own hands that I might serve you, and that ye should not be laden with taxes, and that there should nothing come upon you which was grievous to be borne—and of all these things which I have spoken, ye yourselves are witnesses this day.”

Serving God

¹⁵ “Yet, my brethren, I have not done these things that I might boast, neither do I tell these things that thereby I might accuse you; but I tell you these things that ye may know that I can answer a clear conscience before God this day. ¹⁶ Behold, I say unto you that because I said unto you that

I had spent my days in your service, I do not desire to boast, for I have only been in the service of God. ¹⁷ And behold, I tell you these things that ye may learn wisdom; that ye may learn that

when ye are in the service of your
fellow beings,
ye are only in the service of your God.

¹⁸ “Behold, ye have called me your king; and if I, whom ye call your king, do labor to serve you, then ought not ye to labor to serve one another? ¹⁹ And behold also, if I, whom ye call your king, who has spent his days in your service, and yet has been in the service of God, do merit any thanks from you, O how you ought to thank your heavenly King!

²⁰ “I say unto you, my brethren, that if you should render all the thanks and praise which your whole soul has power to possess, to that God who has created you, and has kept and preserved you, and has caused that ye should rejoice, and has granted that ye should live in peace one with another—

²¹ “I say unto you that if ye should serve him who has created you from the beginning,

12–19: In the OT, the word *service* appears over one hundred times, almost always with reference to priestly duties performed by Levites at the Temple. Here, in a temple setting, Benjamin depicts his kingship as a parallel form of service, apart from his own self-interest; cf. v. 17. There may have been descendants of the Levites among the Mulekites with legitimate claims to religious authority that could rival that of the Nephite kings and priests, though their livelihood would have come from the people’s tithes and offerings. **12–14:** Benjamin has preserved moral order rather than ruling oppressively or for his own benefit. In particular, he refrained from abusive imprisonments and outlawed slavery (though slavery was permissible under the Mosaic law). The same list of five crimes (murder, plunder, stealing, adultery, any manner of wickedness) appears five more times in the BoM: Mos 29.36; Alma 23.3; 30.10; Hel 3.14; 6.23 (cf. Hel 7.21; Ether 8.16). Not seeking gold or silver, teaching the commandments of the Lord through example, and not being lifted up above his people were three of the characteristics of a righteous king stipulated at Deut 17.17–20. **15–17:** In a speech that could have primarily been a reassertion of Benjamin’s authority and a celebration of his accomplishments, he turns the attention of his listeners to God. **17:** There are two ways to interpret this aphorism: (1) we show our devotion to God when we serve other people, or (2) God, in some sense, is within the people we serve, perhaps because all humans are his children or bear his image (cf. Mt 25.40). **18–19:** If difference in rank makes a king’s service to his subjects extraordinary, exemplary, and worthy of gratitude, then the even greater disparity between God and humans makes divine gifts all the more deserving of thanks. The threefold reference to one who is “called” a king sets up a contrast between a human holding an office temporarily and the true, eternal *heavenly king*. **20–21:** God’s grace toward his children in giving and preserving life can never be repaid. *Lending you breath* is a striking image, implying not just continuous dependence, but also that someday what is borrowed must be returned, as at Ps 104.29. *And do according to your own will*, the importance of human agency was highlighted by Lehi at 2 Ne 2.14–16, 27. At Lk 17.10, Jesus similarly applies the label *unprofitable servants* to slaves who have merely done what they were commanded.

and is preserving you from day to day, by lending you breath, that ye may live and move and do according to your own will, and even supporting you from one moment to another—

“I say, if ye should serve him with all your whole souls yet ye would be unprofitable servants.

²² “And behold, all that he requires of you is to keep his commandments; and he has promised you that ‘if ye would keep his commandments ye should prosper in the land’;^a and he never doth vary from that which he hath said; therefore, if ye do keep his commandments he doth bless you and prosper you. ²³ And now, in the first place, he hath created you, and granted unto you your lives, for which ye are indebted unto him. ²⁴ And secondly, he doth require that ye should do as he hath commanded you; for which if ye do, he doth immediately bless you; and therefore he hath paid you. And ye are still indebted unto him, and are, and will be, forever and ever; therefore, of what have ye to boast?

²⁵ “And now I ask, can ye say aught of yourselves? I answer you, Nay. Ye cannot say that ye are even as much as the dust of the earth; yet ye were created of the dust of the earth; but behold, it belongeth to him who created you.

²⁶ And I, even I, whom ye call your king, am no better than ye yourselves are; for I am also of the dust. And ye behold that I am old, and am about to yield up this mortal frame to its mother earth.”

Benjamin Completes His Reign

²⁷ “Therefore, as I said unto you that I had served you, walking with a clear conscience

before God, even so I at this time have caused that ye should assemble yourselves together, that I might be found blameless, and that your blood should not come upon me, when I shall stand to be judged of God of the things whereof he hath commanded me concerning you. ²⁸ I say unto you that I have caused that ye should assemble yourselves together that I might rid my garments of your blood, at this period of time when I am about to go down to my grave, that I might go down in peace, and my immortal spirit may join the choirs above in singing the praises of a just God.

²⁹ “And moreover, I say unto you that I have caused that ye should assemble yourselves together, that I might declare unto you that I can no longer be your teacher, nor your king; ³⁰ for even at this time, my whole frame doth tremble exceedingly while attempting to speak unto you; but the Lord God doth support me, and hath suffered me that I should speak unto you, and hath commanded me that I should declare unto you this day, that my son Mosiah is a king and a ruler over you.”

Benjamin Gives a Charge to His People

³¹ “And now, my brethren, I would that ye should do as ye have hitherto done. As ye have kept my commandments, and also the commandments of my father, and have prospered, and have been kept from falling into the hands of your enemies, even so if ye shall keep the commandments of my son, or the commandments of God which shall be delivered unto

^a 22. 2 Ne 1.20

22–24: In lieu of payment, God asks only that we keep his commandments, and because he bestows additional blessings when we do so, we are forever in arrears. Hence, the human condition is one of humble, perpetual indebtedness to God. 25–26: *Aught*, anything. Humans are all creatures of dust (cf. Gen 2.7; 3.19; Jacob 2.21), and thus when compared to God, the difference between a king and his subjects is negligible. At Hel 12.7–8, Mormon argues that humans are even less than dust because earth is more obedient to God’s commands. 27: *As I said unto you*, see v. 15. 28: *Rid my garments of your blood*, see 2 Ne 9.44n. The idea of heaven as a place where the souls of the righteous sing in heavenly choirs was common in the 19th c.; cf. Morm 7.7. 31: Benjamin equates the commandments of Nephite kings with the commandments of God.

you by him, ‘ye shall prosper in the land,’³² and your enemies shall have no power over you.³² But, O my people, beware lest there shall arise contentions among you, and ye list to obey the evil spirit, which was spoken of by my father Mosiah.³³ For behold, there is a wo pronounced upon him who listeth to obey that spirit; for if he listeth to obey him, and remaineth and dieth in his sins, the same drinketh damnation to his own soul; for he receiveth for his wages an everlasting punishment, having transgressed the law of God contrary to his own knowledge.

³⁴ “I say unto you, that there are not any among you, except it be your little children that have not been taught concerning these things, but what knoweth that ye are eternally indebted to your heavenly Father, to render to him all that you have and are; and also have been taught concerning the records which contain the prophecies which have been spoken by the holy prophets, even down to the time our father, Lehi, left Jerusalem;³⁵ and also, all that has been spoken by our fathers until now. And behold, also, they spake that which was commanded them of the Lord; therefore, they are just and true.

³⁶ “And now, I say unto you, my brethren, that after ye have known and have been taught all these things, if ye should transgress and go contrary to that which has been spoken, that ye do withdraw yourselves from the Spirit of the Lord, that it may have no place in you to guide you in wisdom’s paths that ye may be blessed, prospered, and preserved—³⁷ I say unto you, that the man that doeth this, the same cometh out in open rebellion against God; therefore he listeth to obey the evil spirit, and becometh an enemy to all righteousness; therefore, the Lord has no place in him, for he dwelleth not in unholy temples.

³⁸ “Therefore if that man repenteth not, and remaineth and dieth an enemy to God, the demands of divine justice do awaken his immortal soul to a lively sense of his own guilt, which doth cause him to shrink from the presence of the Lord, and doth fill his breast with guilt, and pain, and anguish, which is like an unquenchable fire, whose flame ascendeth up forever and ever.³⁹ And now I say unto you, that mercy hath no claim on that man; therefore his final doom is to endure a never-ending torment.

^a ³¹ 2 Ne 1.20

³²: *Spoken of by my father Mosiah*, reference uncertain; our only account of the reign of Mosiah, is Omni 1.12–23. *List*, WB: “to lean or incline; to desire or choose.” ³³: *Drinketh damnation to his own soul*, 1 Cor 11.29; Mos 3.18; 3 Ne 18.29. In 1 Cor and 3 Ne the metaphor is related to the Eucharist, but see Mos 3.25–26 and 5.5 for the alternative explanation here. The dismal *wages* for obedience to *the evil one* can be contrasted with the blessings and prosperity paid out by God in vv. 22–24 (cf. Rom 6.23, where “the wages of sin is death”). ^{34–35}: The inspired words of Nephite forefathers are equated with the prophecies on the Brass Plates, as at 1.5–6. Again, this represents the development of a Nephite canon. *Just and true*, it is unclear whether these adjectives apply to the fathers or their words; the parallel at 1 Ne 14.23 suggests the latter. ^{36–37}: The perils of disobedience despite knowledge are similarly warned against at Heb 6.4–6; 10.26–27; 2 Pet 2.20–22; 2 Ne 1.10; Alma 9.19–23. Elsewhere in the BoM, the Spirit withdraws itself from the wicked; here Benjamin refers to the opposite process; cf. Alma 34.35–36; Hel 4.24; 6.35; 13.8. *In wisdom’s paths*, only here and Hel 12.5; the expression may imply a personification of Wisdom, but see 8.20n. The phrase *enemy to all righteousness* here and at Acts 13.10 refers to apostates; at Mos 4.14; Alma 34.23; and Moro 9.6 it is a description of the devil. *Dwelleth not in unholy temples*, cf. 1 Cor 3.16–17, which compares people to temples for God’s indwelling Spirit. ^{38–41}: Benjamin draws a sharp contrast between the fates of the wicked and the righteous, with *never-ending torment* counterbalancing *never-ending happiness*. ^{38–39}: Those who withdraw from the Spirit of the Lord in this life through disobedience will similarly withdraw from God in the next life because of their feelings of guilt. The self-judgment of the wicked is also referred to at 2 Ne 9.14–16; Mos 3.23–27; and Morm 9.1–5 (all of which mention the metaphorical fires of guilt). The image of mercy asserting her claims is also seen at 3.26; Alma 42.21, 24 (where mercy is gendered).

⁴⁰ “O, all ye old men, and also ye young men, and you little children who can understand my words, for I have spoken plainly unto you that ye might understand, I pray that ye should awake to a remembrance of the awful situation of those that have fallen into transgression. ⁴¹ And moreover, I would desire that ye should consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual; and if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven, that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness. O remember, remember that these things are true; for the Lord God hath spoken it.”

Benjamin Reports an Angel's Prophecies about Christ

3 ¹ “And again my brethren, I would call your attention, for I have somewhat more to speak unto you; for behold, I have things to tell you concerning that which is to come. ² And the things which I shall tell you are made known unto me by an angel from God. And he said unto me, ‘Awake,’ and I awoke, and behold he stood before me.

³ “And he said unto me:

‘Awake, and hear the words which I shall tell thee;

for behold, I am come to declare unto you the glad tidings of great joy.

⁴ For the Lord hath heard thy prayers, and hath judged of thy righteousness, and hath sent me to declare unto thee that thou mayest rejoice; and that thou mayest declare unto thy people, that they may also be filled with joy.

⁵ For behold, the time cometh, and is not far distant, that with power, the Lord Omnipotent who reigneth, who was, and is from all eternity to all eternity, shall come down from heaven among the children of men, and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay, and shall go forth amongst men, working mighty miracles, such as healing the sick, raising the dead, causing the lame to walk, the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear, and curing all manner of diseases.

⁶ And he shall cast out devils, (or the evil spirits which dwell in the hearts of the children of men).

⁷ And lo, he shall suffer temptations,

40: As often happens in the BoM, women are passed over in silence. **41:** *Blessed and happy state*, as explained in the next sentence, they are blessed in this life and find happiness in the next. *Happy*, WB: “fortunate; successful.”

CHAPTER 3

2: Although much of the content of the prophecy that follows can be found in the Small Plates, Benjamin received his knowledge directly from an angel. **3:** *Glad tidings of great joy* (also at Alma 13.22; Hel 16.14) combines the angels’ annunciations to Zacharias (Lk 1.19) and to the shepherds (Lk 2.10). **4:** In this case, revelation comes as a response to prayers and righteousness. **5–10:** This prophecy of the life of Christ includes several distinct phrases from the NT Gospels. **5:** This same list of miracles appears at 4 Ne 1.5; cf. 3 Ne 26.15; Isa 35.5–6; Mt 11.5; Lk 7.22. *Lord Omnipotent who reigneth*; cf. Rev 19.6. Benjamin is the only BoM figure who uses this divine title (six times in Mos 3; 5). *Tabernacle of clay*, non-biblical, but common from the 17th c. on; cf. Moro 9.6. **7:** *Lo*, look or see. *Blood cometh from every pore* intensifies and literalizes Luke’s metaphorical description of Jesus at the Mount of Olives, where “his sweat was as it were great drops of blood” (Lk 22.44; some earlier Protestant biblical scholars had similarly interpreted the Lk passage, which may be a later addition). It is an interesting addition because crucifixion is not a particularly bloody mode of execution, though the BoM places emphasis on Christ’s atoning blood, as in vv. 11, 15, 16, and 18 below; cf. the focus on blood at Lev 17.11.

and pain of body, hunger, thirst,
 and fatigue,
 even more than man can suffer,
 except it be unto death;
 for behold, blood cometh from every
 pore,
 so great shall be his anguish for the
 wickedness
 and the abominations of his people.
⁸ And he shall be called Jesus Christ,
 the Son of God,
 the Father of heaven and earth,^a
 the Creator of all things from the
 beginning;
 and his mother shall be called Mary.
⁹ And lo, he cometh unto his own,
 that salvation might come unto the
 children of men
 even through faith on his name;
 and even after all this they shall
 consider him a man,
 and say that he hath a devil,
 and shall scourge him,
 and shall crucify him.
¹⁰ And he shall rise the third day from
 the dead;
 and behold, he standeth to judge
 the world.

“And behold, all these things are done that
 a righteous judgment might come upon the
 children of men. ¹¹ For behold, and also his
 blood atoneth for the sins of those who have
 fallen by the transgression of Adam, who have
 died not knowing the will of God concerning
 them, or who have ignorantly sinned. ¹² But
 wo, wo unto him who knoweth that he rebel-
 leth against God! For salvation cometh to
 none such except it be through repentance
 and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ.

¹³ “And the Lord God hath sent his holy
 prophets among all the children of men, to
 declare these things to every kindred, nation,
 and tongue, that thereby whosoever should
 believe that Christ should come, the same
 might receive remission of their sins, and
 rejoice with exceeding great joy, even as
 though he had already come among them.
¹⁴ Yet the Lord God saw that his people were a
 stiffnecked people, and he appointed unto
 them a law, even the law of Moses. ¹⁵ And
 many signs, and wonders, and types, and
 shadows showed he unto them, concerning
 his coming; and also holy prophets spake unto
 them concerning his coming; and yet they

^a 8 P *and of earth*

8: *Jesus Christ...from the beginning*, the restored *of* from P makes this extended title of Christ agree exactly with twenty-one words at Hel 14.12. **9:** *Cometh unto his own* may refer to either the Jewish people or to all humanity; cf. Jn 1.11. *Say that he hath a devil*, Jn 7.20; 8.52; 10.20. *Crucify*, see 1 Ne 11.33n. **11–12:** Christ’s atonement covers those who sin without knowledge, as well as those who knowingly sin and then repent. The wording suggests that Adam’s transgression is an inherited blemish on all humankind, though Christ’s sacrifice settles that particular account; see v. 16 below and Moro 8.8. **11:** *Or who have ignorantly sinned*, this phrase could either explain what immediately preceded, or identify a second group of innocent sinners. The question of how to deal with unintentional sin was addressed at Lev 4 and Num 15.22–28; Benjamin here offers a Christianized update to the law of Moses. **12:** An example of people who knowingly rebel against God is given at 3 Ne 6.18. **13:** The BoM asserts that God sent messengers to preach the Christian gospel throughout the world, before the birth of Jesus. Consequently, the Nephite prophets are a representative sample, and the BoM itself is only one record of such divine communications, among many others that are yet to be discovered; cf. 2 Ne 29.9–14. **14–15:** According to the angel, the law of Moses prefigures the Christian gospel, with sacrifices that look forward to the atonement of Christ; cf. Col 2.16–17; Heb 9.1–10:18 (though sacrifices for sin made up only a small subset of ritual offerings). As in the NT, the Mosaic law is regarded as a lesser, incomplete mode of God’s redemption, given as a result of Israel’s stubborn disobedience; cf. Gal 3.19–26; Heb 8.1–13. **15:** *Types and shadows*, signs, symbols, or figures of things to come. The word *type* does not occur in the KJV, though Paul uses the equivalent Greek word *typos* at Rom 5.14, describing Adam as “the figure of him that was to come”; cf. 2 Ne 11.4 and Alma 25.15, which also consider the law of Moses as a type of Christ. Typological readings of scripture became prominent in the Middle Ages.

hardened their hearts, and understood not that the law of Moses availeth nothing except it were through the atonement of his blood.”

The Angel Explains the Fall and the Atonement

¹⁶ “And even if it were possible that little children could sin they could not be saved; but I say unto you they are blessed; for behold, as in Adam (or by nature) they fall, even so the blood of Christ atoneth for their sins.

¹⁷ “And moreover, I say unto you, that there shall be no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent. ¹⁸ For behold he judgeth, and his judgment is just; and the infant perisheth not that dieth in his infancy; but men drink damnation to their own souls except they humble themselves and become as little children, and believe that salvation was, and is, and is to come, in and through the atoning blood of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent. ¹⁹ For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full

of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father.

²⁰ “And moreover, I say unto you, that the time shall come when the knowledge of a Savior shall spread throughout every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. ²¹ And behold, when that time cometh, none shall be found blameless before God, except it be little children, only through repentance and faith on the name of the Lord God Omnipotent. ²² And even at this time, when thou shalt have taught thy people the things which the Lord thy God hath commanded thee, even then are they found no more blameless in the sight of God, only according to the words which I have spoken unto thee.”

The Angel Concludes with a Warning from the Lord

²³ “And now I have spoken the words which the Lord God hath commanded me. ²⁴ And thus saith the Lord, “They shall stand as a bright testimony against this people, at the judgment day; whereof they shall be judged, every man according to his works, whether they be good, or whether they be evil.”

²⁵ “And if they be evil they are consigned to an awful view of their own guilt and abominations, which doth cause them to shrink from the presence of the Lord into a state of

16–19: Children who die young are saved, along with adults who become like children. At Mt 18.3, Jesus asserts that only those who “become as little children” will enter the kingdom of heaven. The angel teaches a similar principle here, but specifies which childlike attributes are desirable. **16:** *They could not be saved*, that is, were it not for Christ’s atonement. The assumption is that while children are incapable of sin, nevertheless *by nature* they have a share in Adam’s fall. **18–19:** *The infant . . . that dieth in his infancy*, JS’s first child, who was either stillborn or lived only a few hours, had been born a year prior to his translation of this passage; cf. 15.25. *Natural man*, defined as the opposite of a spiritual person at 1 Cor 2.14–15; cf. Alma 26.21. *Enticings*, the image of the Holy Spirit tempting people to do good is striking; elsewhere “entice” generally has a negative connotation, with the exception of Moro 7.13. *Saint*, a sanctified or holy person. The idealized list *submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love* reappears at Alma 13.28; not all children have these characteristics. **20–22:** Although v. 11 explained how those who sin ignorantly will escape punishment through Christ’s atonement, in the future this will not be possible since every adult will know of Christ and hence will need to repent through faith on his name. **23–24:** The idea that at the Judgment Day people’s actions will be measured against the divine word they have received can be seen at Jn 12.48; 2 Ne 25.18, 22; 29.11. **24:** *Judged, every man according to his works, whether they be good or whether they be evil*, conflates Rev 20.13 and 2 Cor 5.10; variations of this phrase occur six times in the BoM. **25:** *Consign*, WB: “to transfer or deliver into . . . a different state, with the sense of fixedness in that state.”

misery and endless torment, from whence they can no more return; therefore they have drunk damnation to their own souls.²⁶ Therefore, they have drunk out of the cup of the wrath of God, which justice could no more deny unto them than it could deny that Adam should fall because of his partaking of the forbidden fruit; therefore, mercy could have claim on them no more forever.²⁷ And their torment is as a lake of fire and brimstone, whose flames are unquenchable, and whose smoke ascendeth up forever and ever. Thus hath the Lord commanded me. Amen.”

The Reaction of the People

[III] **4**¹ And now, it came to pass that when king Benjamin had made an end of speaking the words which had been delivered unto him by the angel of the Lord, that he cast his eyes round about on the multitude, and behold they had fallen to the earth, for the fear of the Lord had come upon them.² And they had viewed themselves in their own carnal state, even less than the dust of the earth. And they all cried aloud with one voice, saying, “O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our hearts may be purified; for we believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who created heaven and earth, and all things; who shall come down among the children of

men.”³ And it came to pass that after they had spoken these words the Spirit of the Lord came upon them, and they were filled with joy, having received a remission of their sins, and having peace of conscience, because of the exceeding faith which they had in Jesus Christ who should come, according to the words which king Benjamin had spoken unto them.

Those Who Receive Salvation

⁴ And king Benjamin again opened his mouth and began to speak unto them, saying, “My friends and my brethren, my kindred and my people, I would again call your attention, that ye may hear and understand the remainder of my words which I shall speak unto you.⁵ For behold, if the knowledge of the goodness of God at this time has awakened you to a sense of your nothingness, and your worthless and fallen state—

⁶ “I say unto you, if ye have come to a knowledge of the goodness of God, and his matchless power, and his wisdom, and his patience, and his long-suffering towards the children of men; and also, the atonement which has been prepared from the foundation of the world, that thereby salvation might come to him that should put his trust in the Lord, and should be diligent in keeping his commandments, and continue in the faith even unto the end of his life (I mean the life of the mortal body)—

26–27: The angel confirms Benjamin’s teachings from 2.38–39. 27: This sentence repeats seventeen words exactly from Jacob 6.10; cf. Rev 14.10–11; 20.10.

CHAPTER 4

1: People in the BoM regularly fall to the ground when they are overcome with fear or with the Spirit (for a biblical example, see Acts 26.14). In this verse, it may be a gesture of humility appropriate to a monarchical culture, here acknowledging God’s sovereignty. **2:** Their confession of faith picks up several phrases from Benjamin’s quotation of the angel at 3.5, 8, 18 (in reverse order). *Less than the dust of the earth*, cf. 2.25. **3:** The people receive a *remission of sins*, as well as *peace of conscience*, through an expression of faith rather than through baptism—an ordinance that will be introduced in ch. 18; see Enos 1.2n. Through the remainder of this chapter, Benjamin informs his audience how they can retain their feelings of *joy* and their *remission of sins*; see vv. 11, 12, 20, 26. **6:** The meaning of *continue in the faith* is clarified in v. 30 below. *Unto the end of his life*, Benjamin, attuned to the possibility of eternal life, specifies that he has in mind the state of those who continue in faith until their death, in contrast to those who “die in their sins” (2.33).

⁷ “I say, that this is the man who receiveth salvation, through the atonement which was prepared from the foundation of the world for all mankind, which ever were since the fall of Adam, or who are, or who ever shall be, even unto the end of the world. ⁸ And this is the means whereby salvation cometh. And there is none other salvation save this which hath been spoken of; neither are there any conditions whereby man can be saved except the conditions which I have told you.”

Believe in God and Love One Another

⁹ “Believe in God; believe that he is, and that he created all things, both in heaven and in earth; believe that he has all wisdom, and all power, both in heaven and in earth; believe that man doth not comprehend all the things which the Lord can comprehend. ¹⁰ And again, believe that ye must repent of your sins and forsake them, and humble yourselves before God; and ask in sincerity of heart that he would forgive you; and now, if you believe all these things see that ye do them.

¹¹ “And again I say unto you as I have said before, that as ye have come to the knowledge of the glory of God, or if ye have known of his goodness and have tasted of his love, and have received a remission of your sins, which causeth such exceeding great joy in your souls, even so I would that ye should remember, and always retain in remembrance, the greatness of

God, and your own nothingness, and his goodness and long-suffering towards you, unworthy creatures, and humble yourselves even in the depths of humility, calling on the name of the Lord daily, and standing steadfastly in the faith of that which is to come, which was spoken by the mouth of the angel.

¹² “And behold, I say unto you that if ye do this ye shall always rejoice, and be filled with the love of God, and always retain a remission of your sins; and ye shall grow in the knowledge of the glory of him that created you, or in the knowledge of that which is just and true. ¹³ And ye will not have a mind to injure one another, but to live peaceably, and to render to every man according to that which is his due. ¹⁴ And ye will not suffer your children that they go hungry, or naked; neither will ye suffer that they transgress the laws of God, and fight and quarrel one with another, and serve the devil, who is the master of sin, or who is the evil spirit which hath been spoken of by our fathers, he being an enemy to all righteousness. ¹⁵ But ye will teach them to walk in the ways of truth and soberness; ye will teach them to love one another, and to serve one another.”

Benjamin Speaks of Beggars

¹⁶ “And also, ye yourselves will succor those that stand in need of your succor; ye will administer of your substance unto him that

7: Christ’s atonement is here described as universally applicable, in contrast to the idea of limited atonement prevalent in Calvinism. At the same time, the insistence on a single mode of salvation, based on repentance and faith in Christ, would have been at odds with Universalism. **9–10:** Benjamin urges his people to *believe* five (or six) doctrinal statements, and then match their actions to their beliefs. *Believe that he is*, Heb 11.6, meaning “believe that he exists.” **11:** *As I have said before*, see vv. 5–6 above. *Tasted of his love*, a possible allusion to the fruit of the tree in Lehi’s dream; see 1 Ne 8.11; 11.21–22; cf. Jacob 3.2. *By the mouth of the angel*, see 3.1–27. **12–13:** The benefits of humility, prayer, and faith begin with joy and love within individuals, and then extend throughout society. **12:** The phrase *rejoice and be filled with the love of God* was used by the narrator in his introduction to the sermon (2.4). *Retain a remission of your sins*, v. 26 and Alma 4.13–14; apparently it is possible for God to revoke his forgiveness of sin, in some circumstances. *That which is just and true*, perhaps a reference to the words of prophets, as at 2.35. **14–15:** Benjamin offers guidelines for Christian parenting. *The evil spirit . . . enemy to all righteousness*, see 2.36–37n. **16–30:** The moral argument for assisting strangers is more difficult than that of nurturing one’s own children, and therefore requires more discussion. **16:** *Succor*, WB: “literally, to run to, or run to support; hence, to help or relieve when in difficulty, want or distress.”

standeth in need; and ye will not suffer that the beggar putteth up his petition to you in vain, and turn him out to perish.¹⁷ Perhaps thou shalt say, ‘The man has brought upon himself his misery; therefore I will stay my hand, and will not give unto him of my food, nor impart unto him of my substance that he may not suffer, for his punishments are just.’¹⁸ But I say unto you, O man, whosoever doeth this the same hath great cause to repent; and except he repenteth of that which he hath done he perisheth forever, and hath no interest in the kingdom of God.

¹⁹ “For behold, are we not all beggars? Do we not all depend upon the same Being, even God, for all the substance which we have, for both food and raiment, and for gold, and for silver, and for all the riches which we have of every kind?²⁰ And behold, even at this time, ye have been calling on his name, and begging for a remission of your sins. And has he suffered that ye have begged in vain? Nay; he has poured out his Spirit upon you, and has caused that your hearts should be filled with joy, and has caused that your mouths should be stopped that ye could not find utterance, so exceeding great was your joy.

²¹ “And now, if God, who has created you, on whom you are dependent for your lives

and for all that ye have and are, doth grant unto you whatsoever ye ask that is right, in faith, believing that ye shall receive, O then, how ye ought to impart of the substance that ye have one to another.²² And if ye judge the man who putteth up his petition to you for your substance that he perish not, and condemn him, how much more just will be your condemnation for withholding your substance, which doth not belong to you but to God, to whom also your life belongeth; and yet ye put up no petition, nor repent of the thing which thou hast done.²³ I say unto you, we be unto that man, for his substance shall perish with him; and now, I say these things unto those who are rich as pertaining to the things of this world.

²⁴ “And again, I say unto the poor, ye who have not and yet have sufficient, that ye remain from day to day—I mean all you who deny the beggar, because ye have not—I would that ye say in your hearts that ‘I give not because I have not, but if I had I would give.’²⁵ And now, if ye say this in your hearts ye remain guiltless, otherwise ye are condemned; and your condemnation is just for ye covet that which ye have not received.

²⁶ “And now, for the sake of these things which I have spoken unto you—that is, for the

17–18: Benjamin urges nonjudgmental charity, with an emphasis on relieving suffering rather than on determining who is more or less worthy of such help. He also sternly warns against blaming the needy for putting themselves in dire circumstances, even if their actions did, in fact, contribute to their problems. Those who withhold assistance on such grounds will be excluded from God’s kingdom. *Perhaps thou shalt say*, a proleptic anticipation of possible objections from his listeners. *Stay*, WB: “to stop; to withhold.” *Interest*, WB: “share; portion.” **19–23:** Benjamin provides two justifications for nonjudgmental charity. First, humans should treat one another with the generosity that God has shown in dealing with mortals, who all beg unworthily for divine assistance. And second, the assets that humans so jealously hoard in actuality all belong to God. The difference, however, is that God will judge people and reward them accordingly, while we are cautioned not to judge others. **19:** *Food and raiment* recalls a key OT passage on the same subject: Deut 10.17–19. **20:** Joy is regarded as a characteristic response to an outpouring of the Spirit; indeed, a joy that transcends language. Compare Rom 8.26 for another description of experiences with the Spirit that are beyond words. **21:** The argument here is not only that we should be generous because we ourselves have received so much, but also that we should give because God is a giver, in parallel with Lev 19.2: “Ye shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy.” *Ask in faith . . . believing that ye shall receive*, 1 Ne 15.11; Enos 1.15; Moro 7.26 (the last reference, as here, includes the caveat that the request must be for something “good” or “right”; cf. 3 Ne 18.20). **24–25:** God respects our desires to do good, even if circumstances do not allow for action. *Remain*, survive. **26:** On feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and visiting the sick, see Mt 25.34–40; Jacob 2.19. *Want(s)*, WB: “deficiency; need.”

sake of retaining a remission of your sins from day to day, that ye may walk guiltless before God—I would that ye should impart of your substance to the poor, every man according to that which he hath, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally, according to their wants.

²⁷ And see that all these things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength. And again, it is expedient that he should be diligent, that thereby he might win the prize; therefore, all things must be done in order.

²⁸ And I would that ye should remember, that whosoever among you borroweth of his neighbor should return the thing that he borroweth, according as he doth agree, or else thou shalt commit sin; and perhaps thou shalt cause thy neighbor to commit sin also.

²⁹ “And finally, I cannot tell you all the things whereby ye may commit sin; for there are divers ways and means, even so many that I cannot number them.” ³⁰ But this much I can tell you, that if ye do not watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, and observe the commandments^a of God, and continue in the faith of what ye have heard concerning the coming of our Lord, even unto the end of your lives, ye must perish. And now, O man, remember, and perish not.”

The People Believe and Enter into a Covenant with God

[III] **5** ¹ And now, it came to pass that when king Benjamin had thus spoken to his people, he sent among them, desiring to know of his people if they believed the words which he had spoken unto them.

² And they all cried with one voice, saying, “Yea, we believe all the words which thou hast spoken unto us; and also, we know of their surety and truth, because of the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually.” ³ And we, ourselves, also, through the infinite goodness of God, and the manifestations of his Spirit, have great views of that which is to come; and were it expedient, we could prophesy of all things.

⁴ “And it is the faith which we have had on the things which our king has spoken unto us that has brought us to this great knowledge, whereby we do rejoice with such exceeding great joy.” ⁵ And we are willing to enter into a covenant with our God to do his will, and to be obedient to his commandments in all things that he shall command us, all the remainder of our days, that we may not bring

^a 30 P observe to keep the commandments

28: The highly specific example of the sin that results from not returning borrowed items may be reminiscent of JS’s experience with Martin Harris and the lost manuscript. **29:** While there are *divers ways and means* to sin, there is only one “way [or] means whereby salvation can come” (3.17; 4.8). **30:** The combination of *thoughts, words, and deeds* as the field for moral action is widespread in world religions, with Zoroastrianism being a notable example (the three terms are also combined in the last section of the 1646 Westminster Confession, 33.1).

CHAPTER 5

2: God rewards belief by granting an inclination to do good. *Wrought*, WB: “worked; produced.” *Mighty change*, non-biblical, but four times in the BoM (the others are all in Alma 5), always taking place within *hearts*; there are a few 18th c. precedents, but it is a rare formulation. On the other hand “change of heart” was a fairly common 19th c. expression. *Do good continually*, non-biblical, but five times in the BoM. **3:** *Views*, visions; as at 2 Ne 1.24. **4:** In the BoM, faith often leads to knowledge, as at Alma 32.21–43 or Moro 10.4–5. *We do rejoice with an exceedingly great joy*, in accordance with the angel’s intent at 3.3–4. **5:** Their response is similar to the covenant the Israelites made at Mount Sinai: “All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient” (Ex 24.7; cf. Ex 19.8 and 24.3, which also includes “with one voice”). Unlike the Israelites, however, Benjamin’s people will remain true to their word; it is the next generation that has difficulties (Mos 26.1–6). *Enter into a covenant*, in contrast to later LDS practice, this covenant is made without an accompanying ordinance. *As has been spoken by the angel*, see 3.25–26.

MOSIAH 5.10–12: CHIASMUS

- a) And now . . . whosoever shall not take upon him **the name** of Christ
 b) must **be called** by some other name;
 c) therefore, he **findeth himself on the left hand of God**.
 d) And **I would that ye should remember** also,
 e) that this is **the name** . . . that never should be **blotted out**,
 f) except it be through **transgression**;
 f') therefore, take heed that ye do not **transgress**,
 e') that **the name** be not **blotted out** of your hearts.
 d') I say unto you, **I would that ye should remember** to retain the name written always in
 your hearts,
 c') that ye are not **found on the left hand of God**,
 b') but that ye hear and know the voice by which ye shall **be called**,
 a') and also, **the name** by which he shall call you.

upon ourselves a never-ending torment, as has been spoken by the angel, that we may not drink out of the cup of the wrath of God.”

Children of Christ

⁶ And now, these are the words which king Benjamin desired of them; and therefore he said unto them, “Ye have spoken the words that I desired; and the covenant which ye have made is a righteous covenant.” ⁷ And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters. ⁸ And under this

head ye are made free, and there is no other head whereby ye can be made free. There is no other name given whereby salvation cometh; therefore, I would that ye should take upon you the name of Christ, all you that have entered into the covenant with God that ye should be obedient unto the end of your lives.

⁹ “And it shall come to pass that whosoever doeth this shall be found at the right hand of God, for he shall know the name by which he is called; for he shall be called by the name of Christ.” ¹⁰ And now it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall not take upon him the name of Christ must be called by some other name; therefore, he findeth himself on the left hand of God. ¹¹ And I would that ye should remember also, that this is the name that I said I should

6–15: The people are adopted as *children of Christ*, as they enter into a covenant and take his name upon them (the name that Benjamin had promised at 1.11–12). This new relationship is described as having been “born of him [God]” (v. 7), the same image that appears six times in the NT (all within 1 Jn), and nine times in the BoM. It is also possible that *children of Christ* is an updating of Deut 14.1: “Ye are the children of the Lord your God.” 7: This verse adapts Ps 2.7, describing the Lord’s relationship with King David (“this day have I begotten thee”), with the explanatory addition of *spiritually*; see Heb 5.5; Alma 5.14n. The specific mention of *daughters* is striking here, echoing 2 Cor 6.18. 8: *This head*, referring to Christ, cf. 1 Cor 11.3; Eph 4.15; 5.23. *Made free*, perhaps “made free from sin,” as at Rom 6.18, 22; cf. 2 Ne 2.26–27. 9: In the NT, a place at *the right hand of God* is reserved for Christ, while in the BoM believers may be there as well; see Alma 28.12; Hel 3.30; Ether 12.4. (Note, however, the distinction between this and sitting at the right hand of Jesus in his kingdom, as at Mt 20.21; 25.31–34; Mk 10.37.) 11: *Never should be blotted out, except it be through transgression*, as promised at 1.12.

give unto you that never should be blotted out, except it be through transgression; therefore, take heed that ye do not transgress, that the name be not blotted out of your hearts.¹² I say unto you, I would that ye should remember to retain the name written always in your hearts, that ye are not found on the left hand of God, but that ye hear and know the voice by which ye shall be called, and also, the name by which he shall call you.

¹³ “For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?”¹⁴ And again, doth a man take an ass which belongeth to his neighbor, and keep him? I say unto you, Nay; he will not even suffer that he shall feed among his flocks, but will drive him away, and cast him out. I say unto you, that even so shall it be among you if ye know not the name by which ye are called.

¹⁵ “Therefore, I would that ye should be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works, that Christ, the Lord God Omnipotent, may seal you his, that you may be brought to heaven, that ye may have everlasting salvation and eternal life, through the wisdom, and power, and justice, and mercy of him who created all things, in heaven and in earth, who is God above all. Amen.”

12: Having Christ’s name written in one’s heart, like an internal tattoo, is an arresting image, reminiscent of Jeremiah’s prophecy of a new covenant in which God’s law would be written in people’s hearts (Jer 31.33). Hearing and recognizing God’s voice calling one’s name echoes the discourse on the good shepherd at Jn 10.1–6; the shepherding context (see v. 14) is equally clear at Alma 5.38. **14:** Christ will expel persons from his flock who actually belong to someone else. **15:** *Steadfast . . . always abounding in good works*, a conflation of 1 Cor 15.58 and 2 Cor 9.8 that reappears at Ether 12.4; cf. Alma 7.24. *Christ . . . may seal you his*, cf. Alma 34.35, where the devil does this.

CHAPTER 6

1: *Take the names of all those*, even though the people have entered into a covenant as a community, they will still be held accountable as individuals. *Covenant with God to keep his commandments*, the language and context is reminiscent of 2 Kings 23.3 and 2 Chr 34.31–32, setting up a parallel between King Benjamin and King Josiah. Here, however, the responsibility for covenant fidelity is placed on the people themselves rather than on the monarch. This idea will be further extended later; see 29.30–32n. **2:** *Except it were little children*, covenant making requires mature knowledge and agency. Unfortunately, these young children will become a problem at 26.1–6. **3:** *Returned, every one . . . to their own houses* is similar to the biblical convention “[return] every man to his house” that concludes assemblies of the people at 1 Sam 10.25; 2 Sam 6.19; 1 Kings 12.24; cf. Mos 8.4; 3 Ne 19.1. **4:** Priests are *consecrated* in the Bible but never kings; however in the BoM this was done for both Benjamin (2.11) and Mosiah, perhaps in an attempt to provide religious legitimacy for the line of Nephite kings; cf. Alma 2.9.

Names Recorded and Mosiah₂ Consecrated as King

[IV] **6**¹ And now, king Benjamin thought it was expedient, after having finished speaking to the people, that he should take the names of all those who had entered into a covenant with God to keep his commandments.² And it came to pass that there was not one soul, except it were little children, but who had entered into the covenant and had taken upon them the name of Christ.

³ And again, it came to pass that when king Benjamin had made an end of all these things, and had consecrated his son Mosiah to be a ruler and a king over his people, and had given him all the charges concerning the kingdom, and also had appointed priests to teach the people, that thereby they might hear and know the commandments of God, and to stir them up in remembrance of the oath which they had made, he dismissed the multitude, and they returned, every one, according to their families, to their own houses.

Mosiah₂ Begins His Reign

⁴ And Mosiah began to reign in his father’s stead. And he began to reign in the thirtieth year of his age, making in the whole, about

four hundred and seventy-six years from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem.⁴ ⁵ And king Benjamin lived three years and he died.

⁶ And it came to pass that king Mosiah did walk in the ways of the Lord, and did observe his judgments and his statutes, and did keep his commandments in all things whatsoever he commanded him. ⁷ And king Mosiah did cause his people that they should till the earth. And he also, himself, did till the earth, that thereby he might not become burdensome to his people, that he might do according to that which his father had done in all things. And there was no contention among all his people for the space of three years.

An Account of the Nephite Colony in the Land of Lehi-Nephi: Mosiah 7–25

A Search Party

[V] **7** ¹ And now, it came to pass that after king Mosiah had had continual peace for the space of three years,^b he was desirous to know concerning the people who went up to dwell in the land of Lehi-Nephi, or in the city of Lehi-Nephi; for his people had heard nothing from them from the time they left the land of Zarahemla; therefore,

they wearied him with their teasings.² And it came to pass that king Mosiah granted that sixteen of their strong men might go up to the land of Lehi-Nephi, to inquire concerning their brethren.

³ And it came to pass that on the morrow they started to go up, having with them one Ammon, he being a strong and mighty man, and a descendant of Zarahemla; and he was also their leader. ⁴ And now, they knew not the course they should travel in the wilderness to go up to the land of Lehi-Nephi; therefore they wandered many days in the wilderness, even forty days did they wander. ⁵ And when they had wandered forty days they came to a hill, which is north of the land of Shilom, and there they pitched their tents. ⁶ And Ammon took three of his brethren, and their names were Amaleki, Helem, and Hem, and they went down into the land of Nephi.

An Interview with King Limhi

⁷ And behold, they met the king of the people who were in the land of Nephi, and in the land of Shilom; and they were surrounded by the king's guard, and were taken, and were bound, and were committed to prison. ⁸ And it came

^a ⁴ About 121 BCE; cf. Mos 29.46

^b ¹ About 118 BCE

6: Compare the Deuteronomistic language of Deut 26.17; 30.16; 1 Kings 2.3; 8.58—all of which include some combination of “walk in his [the Lord’s] ways... statutes... commandments... judgments,” in the contexts of covenant making and king’s speeches. **7:** Mosiah, like his father, presents himself as a servant-ruler rather than a king living off taxes and tribute; see 2.14.

CHAPTER 7

1: This group of colonists was mentioned at Omni 1.29–30, and had left Zarahemla about seventy years earlier (the chronology is uncertain). *Land of Lehi-Nephi*, earlier referred to as “the land of Nephi” at Omni 1.12, 27; WoM 1.13. This particular designation, for both the land and city, only appears seven times, all in Mos 7 and 9. **2:** The primary narrative of Mosiah and his people is not resumed until Mos 22.13–14 and 24.25. *Up to the land*, the land of Lehi-Nephi is consistently described as being at a higher elevation than Zarahemla; see e.g., Omni 1.13. **3:** It is unclear why Ammon, a Mulekite (*a descendant of Zarahemla*), was given charge of a mission dealing with Nephite traditions and inheritance; perhaps there were Mulekites among the colonists. **4–5:** Wandering for forty days is reminiscent of the Israelite scouts at Num 13.25, as well as the years that Israel spent in the wilderness; see Num 14.33–34. The precedent is not far from Limhi’s mind; see vv. 19–20. **6:** This is a different Amaleki than the record keeper at Omni 1.12; none of the three companions are ever mentioned again. **7:** For another account of this incident, see 21.23–24. **8:** The narrator initially picks up the word *permitted* from Limhi’s direct speech at v. 11, but then makes a correction when he realizes that it does not quite fit the circumstances.

to pass when they had been in prison two days they were again brought before the king, and their bands were loosed; and they stood before the king, and were permitted, or rather commanded, that they should answer the questions which he should ask them.

⁹ And he said unto them, “Behold, I am Limhi, the son of Noah, who was the son of Zeniff, who came up out of the land of Zarahemla to inherit this land, which was the land of their fathers, who was made a king by the voice of the people.”¹⁰ And now, I desire to know the cause whereby ye were so bold as to come near the walls of the city, when I, myself, was with my guards without the gate?¹¹ And now, for this cause have I suffered that ye should be preserved, that I might inquire of you, or else I should have caused that my guards should have put you to death. Ye are permitted to speak.”

¹² And now, when Ammon saw that he was permitted to speak, he went forth and bowed himself before the king; and rising again he said, “O king, I am very thankful before God this day that I am yet alive, and am permitted to speak; and I will endeavor to speak with boldness;¹³ for I am assured that if ye had known me ye would not have suffered that I should have worn these bands. For I am Ammon, and am a descendant of Zarahemla, and have come up out of the land of Zarahemla to inquire concerning our brethren, whom Zeniff brought up out of that land.”

¹⁴ And now, it came to pass that after Limhi had heard the words of Ammon, he was

exceeding glad, and said, “Now, I know of a surety that my brethren who were in the land of Zarahemla are yet alive. And now, I will rejoice; and on the morrow I will cause that my people shall rejoice also.”¹⁵ For behold, we are in bondage to the Lamanites, and are taxed with a tax which is grievous to be borne. And now, behold, our brethren will deliver us out of our bondage, or out of the hands of the Lamanites, and we will be their slaves; for it is better that we be slaves to the Nephites than to pay tribute to the king of the Lamanites.”

¹⁶ And now, king Limhi commanded his guards that they should no more bind Ammon nor his brethren, but caused that they should go to the hill which was north of Shilom, and bring their brethren into the city, that thereby they might eat, and drink, and rest themselves from the labors of their journey; for they had suffered many things; they had suffered hunger, thirst, and fatigue.

Limhi Addresses His People and Recounts Their History

¹⁷ And now, it came to pass on the morrow that king Limhi sent a proclamation among all his people, that thereby they might gather themselves together to the temple, to hear the words which he should speak unto them.

¹⁸ And it came to pass that when they had gathered themselves together that he spake unto them in this wise, saying, “O ye, my people, lift up your heads and be comforted; for behold, the time is at hand, or is not far distant, when we shall no longer be in subjection to our enemies,

9: *Land of their fathers*, the original colonists were Nephites at the time of King Benjamin seeking to recover ancestral lands that had been left behind by Mosiah, a generation earlier (see Omni 1.12–13). It is not clear how the *voice of the people* was ascertained, although Mos 22.1 suggests a mass meeting; cf. Alma 2.3–7. The phrase itself appears just once in the Bible (1 Sam 8.7), where it is similarly associated with the establishment of a king. **10:** *Without*, outside. **13:** *I am assured*, I am sure. **14:** *My brethren . . . are yet alive*, see 21.25–26 for an explanation of his concern. **15:** *We will be their slaves*, slavery had been abolished among the Nephites by 2.13, but perhaps after the departure of the colonists. **17:** In contrast to Judea at the time of Lehi, in the BoM different lands seem to have their own temples. Gathering people at a temple for instruction seems to have been a Nephite custom; see Jacob 1.17; Mos 1.18; 2.1. **18–20:** Zeniff, believing that deliverance is at hand but will take some time, encourages his people with examples from sacred, ancient history; see Ex 14.21–22; 16.35. **18:** *Effectual*, WB: “producing . . . the effect desired or intended.”

notwithstanding our many strugglings, which have been in vain; yet I trust there remaineth an effectual struggle to be made.¹⁹ Therefore, lift up your heads, and rejoice, and put your trust in God, in that God who was the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob; and also, that God who brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, and caused that they should walk through the Red Sea on dry ground, and fed them with manna that they might not perish in the wilderness; and many more things did he do for them.²⁰ And again, that same God has brought our fathers out of the land of Jerusalem, and has kept and preserved his people even until now; and behold, it is because of our iniquities and abominations that he has brought us into bondage.^a

²¹ “And ye all are witnesses this day, that Zeniff, who was made king over this people, he being over-zealous to inherit the land of his fathers, therefore being deceived by the cunning and craftiness of king Laman, who having entered into a treaty with king Zeniff, and having yielded up into his hands the possessions of a part of the land, or even the city of Lehi-Nephi, and the city of Shilom; and the land round about—²² And all this he did, for the sole purpose of bringing this people into subjection or into bondage. And behold, we at this time do pay tribute to the king of the

Lamanites, to the amount of one half of our corn, and our barley, and even all our grain of every kind, and one half of the increase of our flocks and our herds; and even one half of all we have or possess the king of the Lamanites doth exact of us, or our lives.²³ And now, is not this grievous to be borne? And is not this, our affliction, great?

“Now behold, how great reason we have to mourn.²⁴ Yea, I say unto you, great are the reasons which we have to mourn; for behold how many of our brethren have been slain, and their blood has been spilt in vain, and all because of iniquity.²⁵ For if this people had not fallen into transgression the Lord would not have suffered that this great evil should come upon them. But behold, they would not hearken unto his words; but there arose contentions among them, even so much that they did shed blood among themselves.

²⁶ “And a prophet of the Lord have they slain; yea, a chosen man of God, who told them of their wickedness and abominations, and prophesied of many things which are to come, yea, even the coming of Christ.²⁷ And because he said unto them that Christ was the God, the Father of all things, and said that he should take upon him the image of man, and

^a 20 P that has brought us into bondage

19: *The God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob*, this title is strongly associated with Moses delivering Israel from bondage, appearing in the OT only in Ex 3–4. It is similarly connected to deliverance in the BoM; see 1 Ne 19.10; Mos 23.23; Alma 29.11; 36.2. **20:** The reading of P suggests that the people’s iniquities, not God, have brought them into bondage. **21:** Limhi’s explanation in this verse and the next draws on language from Zeniff’s personal record in chs. 9–10. *Ye all are witnesses this day, that Zeniff*; in actuality Limhi’s people were a generation or two removed from the time of Zeniff, though Deut 5.2–4 and 29.2–3 have a similar usage, when Moses tells the Israelites about to enter the promised land that they were witnesses of the Exodus and had covenanted at Sinai. *Over-zealous to inherit the land of his fathers*, only here and 9.3, where Zeniff uses the phrase to describe himself. Apparently, this characterization was part of the colonists’ cultural memory. *Cunning* and *craftiness* are paired three times in the BoM, always referring to this particular Lamanite king; see 9.10; 10.18. **22:** For the origin of this agreement, see 19.15. In the KJV, “corn” refers to grain in general; in the New World context of the BoM, it may refer to maize. **25:** *Evil*, WB: “misfortune.” **26:** *A prophet of the Lord have they slain*, Abinadi, whose story is told at Mos 11.20–17.20. In the OT, the term “man of God” often refers to a prophet whose every word comes true (e.g., 1 Sam 9.6); that meaning fits both here and Hel 11.8. **27:** After receiving the image of God, humanity in turn provides an image for God to take upon himself when he comes in the flesh. Abinadi taught these things at Mos 13.33–34; 15.1–4; 17.7–8. The odd expression *Christ was the God* may have been intended as “Christ was the Son of God, the Father of all things”; see the discussion in ATV. *Created after the image of God*, see Gen 1.26–27.

it should be the image after which man was created in the beginning; or in other words, he said that man was created after the image of God, and that God should come down among the children of men, and take upon him flesh and blood, and go forth upon the face of the earth—²⁸ And now, because he said this, they did put him to death; and many more things did they do which brought down the wrath of God upon them. Therefore, who wondereth that they are in bondage, and that they are smitten with sore afflictions?

²⁹ “For behold, the Lord hath said, ‘I will not succor my people in the day of their transgression; but I will hedge up their ways that they prosper not; and their doings shall be as a stumbling block before them.’

³⁰ “And again, he saith, ‘If my people shall sow filthiness they shall reap the chaff thereof in the whirlwind; and the effect thereof is poison.’

³¹ “And again he saith, ‘If my people shall sow filthiness they shall reap the east wind, which bringeth immediate destruction.’^a

³² “And now, behold, the promise of the Lord is fulfilled, and ye are smitten and afflicted. ³³ But if ye will turn to the Lord with full purpose of heart, and put your trust in him, and serve him with all diligence of mind, if ye do this, he will, according to his own will and pleasure, deliver you out of bondage.”

Ammon, Tells Limhi’s People of Events in Zarahemla

8 ¹ And it came to pass that after king Limhi had made an end of speaking to his people (for he spake many things unto them and only a few of them have I written in this book), he told his people all the things concerning their brethren who were in the land of Zarahemla. ² And he caused that Ammon should stand up before the multitude, and rehearse unto them all that had happened unto their brethren from the time that Zeniff went up out of the land even until the time that he himself came up out of the land. ³ And he also rehearsed unto them the last words which king Benjamin had taught them, and explained them to the people of king Limhi, so that they might understand all the words which he spake. ⁴ And it came to pass that after he had done all this, that king Limhi dismissed the multitude, and caused that they should return every one unto his own house.

Jaredite Records and Nephite Seers

⁵ And it came to pass that he caused that the plates which contained the record of his people from the time that they left the land of Zarahemla, should be brought before Ammon, that he might read them. ⁶ Now, as soon as

^a 31 References uncertain

29–31: These three warnings from the Lord are framed with an inclusio of “smitten . . . afflictions/afflicted” in vv. 28 and 32. The source of the quotations is uncertain; the first may have been in the Brass Plates (see 2 Ne 4.33n), while the present tense *saith* may indicate that the other two are new revelations, possibly from Abinadi. 31: In the Bible, the *east wind*, blowing from the desert, usually signals disaster, as it does in its two occurrences in the BoM, here and at 12.6. 32: The combination *smitten* and *afflicted* occurs in the Bible only at Isa 53.4, which will be quoted by Abinadi at Mos 14.4. 33: Several phrases in this verse suggest an allusion to Samuel’s words to Israel at 1 Sam 7.3. Turning to the Lord and serving him “with all your heart” is Deuteronomistic language.

CHAPTER 8

3: *Rehearse*, WB: “to narrate or recount events.” *The last words*, Ammon may have had a written copy of the speech, according to 2.8. The words of King Benjamin’s discourse were not by themselves sufficient; additional explanations were needed, perhaps of a political, cultural, or religious nature. 4: See 6.3n. 5–6: In another example of the bookishness of the BoM narrative, Ammon is invited to read a history of the colonists, rather than being given an oral summary; see 1 Ne. 1.11n. Limhi, apparently impressed with Ammon’s literacy, asks whether he has facility with other written languages as well.

Ammon had read the record, the king inquired of him to know if he could interpret languages, and Ammon told him that he could not.

⁷ And the king said unto him, “Being grieved for the afflictions of my people, I caused that forty and three of my people should take a journey into the wilderness, that thereby they might find the land of Zarahemla, that we might appeal unto our brethren to deliver us out of bondage.”⁸ And they were lost in the wilderness for the space of many days, yet they were diligent, and found not the land of Zarahemla but returned to this land, having traveled in a land among many waters, having discovered a land which was covered with bones of men, and of beasts, and was also covered with ruins of buildings of every kind, having discovered a land which had been peopled with a people who were as numerous as the hosts of Israel.

⁹ “And for a testimony that the things that they had said are true they have brought twenty-four plates which are filled with engravings, and they are of pure gold.”¹⁰ And behold, also, they have brought breastplates, which are large, and they are of brass and of copper, and are perfectly sound.”¹¹ And again, they have brought swords, the hilts thereof have perished, and the blades thereof were cankered with rust; and there is no one in the

land that is able to interpret the language or the engravings that are on the plates. Therefore I said unto thee: ‘Canst thou translate?’¹² And I say unto thee again: Knowest thou of any one that can translate? For I am desirous that these records should be translated into our language; for, perhaps, they will give us a knowledge of a remnant of the people who have been destroyed, from whence these records came; or, perhaps, they will give us a knowledge of this very people who have been destroyed; and I am desirous to know the cause of their destruction.”

¹³ Now Ammon said unto him, “I can assuredly tell thee, O king, of a man that can translate the records; for he has wherewith that he can look, and translate all records that are of ancient date; and it is a gift from God. And the things are called interpreters, and no man can look in them except he be commanded, lest he should look for that he ought not and he should perish. And whosoever is commanded to look in them, the same is called seer.”¹⁴ And behold, the king of the people who are in the land of Zarahemla is the man that is commanded to do these things, and who has this high gift from God.”

¹⁵ And the king said that a seer is greater than a prophet.

8: *Lost in the wilderness*, the area between the land of Nephi and the land of Zarahemla was apparently intractable terrain; Ammon and his companions had wandered for forty days before finding the colonists (Mos 7.4). Earlier, Limhi’s appointed emissaries, rather than finding Zarahemla, had discovered the ruins of a Jaredite city and assumed that Zarahemla had been destroyed (21.26). *Peopled with*, inhabited by. *Hosts*, armies. This story is told again at Mos 21.25–27. **9:** The records on these plates were translated by Mosiah and then abridged by Moroni in the book of Ether; see 28.10–19 and Ether 1.1–2. It is somewhat surprising that the scouts cannot distinguish Jaredite writing from Nephite script, though perhaps knowledge of reformed Egyptian was not widespread; see Omni 1.18–19n. **10:** *Perfectly sound*, not broken or decayed. These breastplates may have been the model for the innovative armor that Captain Moroni introduces at Alma 43.19, the next mention of breastplates in the BoM. *Breastplate(s)* in the OT refers almost exclusively to priestly vestments; in the BoM the reference is always to military equipment. **11:** *Cankered*, deteriorated or corroded. The word *rust* would seem to indicate iron, but Jas 5.3 describes gold and silver as being “cankered” with “rust.” **12:** Knowing the causes of the Jaredite cataclysm would satisfy Limhi’s curiosity, but perhaps also offer some useful lessons for the survival of his own culture. Note that Limhi’s failed emissaries had returned with Jaredite artifacts only a few days before the arrival of Ammon; see 21.25–26. **13–14:** The man able to translate by seer stones is King Mosiah₂, though in the original manuscript it was King Benjamin, the retired king; see 21.28; Ether 4.1. Benjamin’s father, Mosiah₁, had earlier translated a Jaredite stele through supernatural means, presumably the interpreters; see Omni 1.20–21. **15:** The distinction between a seer and a prophet is explained differently at 1 Sam 9.9.

¹⁶ And Ammon said that a seer is a revelator and a prophet also; and a gift which is greater can no man have, except he should possess the power of God, which no man can; yet a man may have great power given him from God. ¹⁷ But a seer can know of things which are past, and also of things which are to come, and by them shall all things be revealed, or, rather, shall secret things be made manifest, and hidden things shall come to light, and things which are not known shall be made known by them, and also things shall be made known by them which otherwise could not be known. ¹⁸ Thus God has provided a means that man, through faith, might work mighty miracles; therefore he becometh a great benefit to his fellow beings.

¹⁹ And now, when Ammon had made an end of speaking these words the king rejoiced exceedingly, and gave thanks to God, saying, “Doubtless a great mystery is contained within these plates, and these interpreters were doubtless prepared for the purpose of unfolding all such mysteries to the children of men.

²⁰ O how marvelous are the works of the Lord,
and how long doth he suffer with his people;
yea, and how blind and impenetrable

are the understandings of the children of men;
for they will not seek wisdom,
neither do they desire that she should rule over them!
²¹ Yea, they are as a wild flock which fleeth from the shepherd,
and scattereth, and are driven,
and are devoured by the beasts of the forest.”

The History of the People of Zeniff (a flashback): Mosiah 9.1–21.27

[*Mormon*₂'s heading] The Record of Zeniff—An account of his people, from the time they left the land of Zarahemla until the time that they were delivered out of the hands of the Lamanites.

Zeniff's Personal Record: Mosiah 9–10

An Unsuccessful Attempt to Establish a Colony by Force

[VI] **9** ¹ I, Zeniff, having been taught in all the language of the Nephites, and having had a knowledge of the land of Nephi, or of the land of our fathers'

16–18: Seers, apparently working through devices such as seer stones, have access to secret knowledge, which they can reveal to the world. **16:** *Yet a man . . . from God* seems like a corrective gloss. **20:** *Suffer*, WB: “to endure; to support.” The personification of *wisdom* as a woman, common in Proverbs and the Wisdom of Solomon (in the Apocrypha), occurs only here in the BoM where wisdom rules as a queen (but see 2.36 and Hel 12.5 for other possible personifications). **21:** Limhi may here be quoting Abinadi; see 17.17 (the only other instance of *wild flock*).

CHAPTERS 9–21

This lengthy section is a historical digression that summarizes the records read by Ammon at Mos 8.5. The account of Ammon and Limhi's conversation about seers is resumed at Mos 21.28. Chapters 9–10 are Zeniff's first-person account, copied directly into the plates by the editor as an embedded document.

CHAPTER 9

1–2: This expedition was previously described at Omni 1.27–28. Zeniff's desire for a peaceful settlement with the Lamanites results in terrible bloodshed among the Nephite colonists. **1:** The mention of language study is puzzling, unless *all the language of the Nephites* included the Egyptian of the Brass Plates or the reformed Egyptian of the Nephite records (see 1.1–4; Morm 9.32–34).

first inheritance, and having been sent as a spy among the Lamanites that I might spy out their forces, that our army might come upon them and destroy them—but when I saw that which was good among them I was desirous that they should not be destroyed.^{a 2} Therefore, I contended with my brethren in the wilderness, for I would that our ruler should make a treaty with them; but he being an austere and a blood-thirsty man commanded that I should be slain; but I was rescued by the shedding of much blood; for father fought against father, and brother against brother, until the greater number of our army was destroyed in the wilderness; and we returned, those of us that were spared, to the land of Zarahemla, to relate that tale to their wives and their children.

A Treaty with King Laman²

³ And yet, I being over-zealous to inherit the land of our fathers, collected as many as were desirous to go up to possess the land, and started again on our journey into the wilderness to go up to the land; but we were smitten with famine and sore afflictions; for we were slow to remember the Lord our God.⁴ Nevertheless, after many days wandering in the wilderness we pitched our tents in the place where our brethren were slain, which was near to the land of our fathers.

⁵ And it came to pass that I went again with four of my men into the city, in unto the king, that I might know of the disposition of the king, and that I might know if I might go in with my people and possess the land in peace.⁶ And I went in unto the king, and he covenanted with me that I might possess the land of Lehi-Nephi, and the land of Shilom.⁷ And he also commanded that his people should depart out of the land, and I and my people went into the land that we might possess it.

⁸ And we began to build buildings, and to repair the walls of the city, yea, even the walls of the city of Lehi-Nephi, and the city of Shilom.⁹ And we began to till the ground, yea, even with all manner of seeds, with seeds of corn, and of wheat, and of barley, and with neas, and with sheum, and with seeds of all manner of fruits; and we did begin to multiply and prosper in the land.¹⁰ Now it was the cunning and the craftiness of king Laman, to bring my people into bondage, that he yielded up the land that we might possess it.

First Battle with the Lamanites

¹¹ Therefore it came to pass, that after we had dwelt in the land for the space of twelve years^b that king

^a I About 200 BCE

^b II About 185 BCE

2: The reference to giving explanations to *their* wives (now widows) and children, rather than “our” family members adds a poignant note to a tragic incident. *Austere*, WB: “severe; harsh.” **3:** *Over-zealous*, see 7.21n. *Smitten with famine and sore afflictions*, like Lehi’s family, as recounted at Mos 1.17. **4:** *Where our brethren were slain*, the earlier expedition had fallen apart just short of their goal. **5:** *Again* suggests that there had been an earlier embassy as part of the first expedition. **7:** The Lamanite king is willing to dispossess his own people, but only because he plans to later retake the land and enslave the colonists (v. 10). **9:** *Neas* and *sheum* seem to refer to grains of some kind, but their exact identification is uncertain. **11–19:** After an interval of twelve years, during which the colonists have improved the land and prospered, King Laman puts his original plan into effect.

Laman began to grow uneasy, lest by any means my people should wax strong in the land, and that they could not overpower them and bring them into bondage. ¹² Now they were a lazy and an idolatrous people; therefore they were desirous to bring us into bondage, that they might glut themselves with the labors of our hands; yea, that they might feast themselves upon the flocks of our fields. ¹³ Therefore it came to pass that king Laman began to stir up his people that they should contend with my people; therefore there began to be wars and contentions in the land.

¹⁴ For, in the thirteenth year of my reign in the land of Nephi,^a away on the south of the land of Shilom, when my people were watering and feeding their flocks, and tilling their lands, a numerous host of Lamanites came upon them and began to slay them, and to take off their flocks, and the corn of their fields. ¹⁵ Yea, and it came to pass that they fled, all that were not overtaken, even into the city of Nephi, and did call upon me for protection. ¹⁶ And it came to pass that I did arm them with bows, and with arrows, with swords, and with cimeters,^b and with clubs, and with slings, and with all manner of weapons which we could invent, and I and my people did go forth against the Lamanites to battle.

¹⁷ Yea, in the strength of the Lord did we go forth to battle against the Lamanites; for I and my people did cry mightily to the Lord that he would deliver us out of the hands of our enemies, for we were awakened to a remembrance of the deliverance of our fathers. ¹⁸ And God did hear our cries and did answer our prayers; and we did go forth in his might; yea, we did go forth against the Lamanites, and in one day and a night we did slay three thousand and forty-three; we did slay them even until we had driven them out of our land. ¹⁹ And I, myself, with mine own hands, did help to bury their dead. And behold, to our great sorrow and lamentation, two hundred and seventy-nine of our brethren were slain.

Prosperity and Preparations for War

10 ¹ And it came to pass that we again began to establish the kingdom and we again began to possess the land in peace. And I caused that there should be weapons of war made of every kind, that thereby I might have weapons for my people against the time the Lamanites should come up again to war against my people. ² And I set

^a 14 About 185 BCE

^b 16 Or *scimitars*

14: *My reign*, this is the first indication that Zeniff has taken the title of king. **16:** The evidence for the use of bows and arrows in the Americas during BoM times is sparse. **17–19:** Prayers for divine deliverance and memories of past deliverances result in a lopsided victory for the colonists. **17:** It is not clear which ancestral deliverance Zeniff has in mind. **19:** Zeniff makes it a point that he personally helped to bury the enemy dead.

CHAPTER 10

1: *Against*, WB: “in preparation for.” **2:** *Unawares*, WB: “suddenly, unexpectedly.”

guards round about the land, that the Lamanites might not come upon us again unawares and destroy us; and thus I did guard my people and my flocks, and keep them from falling into the hands of our enemies.

³ And it came to pass that we did inherit the land of our fathers for many years, yea, for the space of twenty and two years.^a ⁴ And I did cause that the men should till the ground, and raise all manner of grain and all manner of fruit of every kind. ⁵ And I did cause that the women should spin, and toil, and work, and work all manner of fine linen, yea, and cloth of every kind, that we might clothe our nakedness; and thus we did prosper in the land—thus we did have continual peace in the land for the space of twenty and two years.

Going Up to Battle a Second Time

⁶ And it came to pass that king Laman died, and his son began to reign in his stead. And he began to stir his people up in rebellion against my people; therefore they began to prepare for war, and to come up to battle against my people. ⁷ But I had sent my spies out round about the land of Shemlon, that I might discover their preparations, that I might guard against them,

that they might not come upon my people and destroy them. ⁸ And it came to pass that they came up upon the north of the land of Shilom, with their numerous hosts, men armed with bows, and with arrows, and with swords, and with cimeters, and with stones, and with slings; and they had their heads shaved that they were naked; and they were girded with a leathern girdle about their loins.

⁹ And it came to pass that I caused that the women and children of my people should be hid in the wilderness; and I also caused that all my old men that could bear arms, and also all my young men that were able to bear arms, should gather themselves together to go to battle against the Lamanites; and I did place them in their ranks, every man according to his age. ¹⁰ And it came to pass that we did go up to battle against the Lamanites; and I, even I, in my old age, did go up to battle against the Lamanites. And it came to pass that we did go up in the strength of the Lord to battle.

Traditions of the Lamanites

¹¹ Now, the Lamanites knew nothing concerning the Lord, nor

^a ³ About 160 BCE

3: *Inherit*, WB: “possess.” **4–5:** Note the gendered division of labor. Women’s work is described in very similar language at Hel 6.13; cf. Ether 10.24. **6:** As happens regularly, a royal successor attempts to complete business his father left unfinished. The new king was also named Laman; see 24.3. **7:** The *land of Shemlon* was close by, but held by the Lamanites (11.12). **8:** Although the *land of Shilom* was adjacent to the land of Nephi-Lehi (7.21), it was vulnerable to Lamanite attacks from both the south (9.14) and the north. Enos, some two hundred years earlier, had also commented on the shaven heads and leather loincloths of the Lamanites; apparently such customs presented a stark contrast to the Nephites; see Enos 1.20. **11–19:** At this point readers expect an account of the ensuing battle; instead Zeniff explains the beliefs and motivations of the Lamanites, keeping readers in suspense until v. 19, when he resumes the story. The passage is structured by three instances of *they were wronged* followed by four *wroth with him*. **11:** There is an implicit contrast between *the strength of the Lord* and *the strength of men*.

the strength of the Lord, therefore they depended upon their own strength. Yet they were a strong people, as to the strength of men.¹² They were a wild, and ferocious, and a blood-thirsty people, believing in the tradition of their fathers, which is this—believing that they were driven out of the land of Jerusalem because of the iniquities of their fathers, and that they were wronged in the wilderness by their brethren, and they were also wronged while crossing the sea;¹³ and again, that they were wronged while in the land of their first inheritance, after they had crossed the sea, and all this because that Nephi was more faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord—therefore he was favored of the Lord, for the Lord heard his prayers and answered them, and he took the lead of their journey in the wilderness.

¹⁴ And his brethren were wroth with him because they understood not the dealings of the Lord; they were also wroth with him upon the waters because they hardened their hearts against the Lord.¹⁵ And again, they were wroth with him when they had arrived in the promised land, because they said

that he had taken the ruling of the people out of their hands; and they sought to kill him.¹⁶ And again, they were wroth with him because he departed into the wilderness as the Lord had commanded him, and took the records which were engraven on the plates of brass, for they said that he robbed them.

¹⁷ And thus they have taught their children that they should hate them, and that they should murder them, and that they should rob and plunder them, and do all they could to destroy them; therefore they have an eternal hatred towards the children of Nephi.¹⁸ For this very cause has king Laman, by his cunning, and lying craftiness, and his fair promises, deceived me, that I have brought this my people up into this land, that they may destroy them; yea, and we have suffered these many years in the land.

Nephite Victory

¹⁹ And now I, Zeniff, after having told all these things unto my people concerning the Lamanites, I did stimulate them to go to battle with their might, putting their trust in the Lord; therefore, we did contend with them, face to face.²⁰ And it

12–13: Lamanite traditions are the reversed, mirror image of those of the Nephites: their ancestors were driven out of Jerusalem because of the iniquities of their fathers, Lehi and Ishmael, and then were mistreated by Nephi during their travels and in the promised land. *A wild, and ferocious, and a blood-thirsty people*, again echoing the words of Enos 1.20. The Lamanites are also characterized as “wild” and “ferocious” at Alma 17.14; 47.36; Hel 3.16. **13:** *Favored of the Lord* was how Nephi perceived himself at 1 Ne 1.1; 3.6. *He took the lead*, even in Nephi’s own account, his older brothers resented his attempts to take a position of leadership in the family; see 1 Ne 16.38; 18.10; 2 Ne 5.3. **14:** *They understood not the dealings of the Lord*, see 1 Ne 2.12. *Wroth . . . upon the waters*, see 1 Ne 18.10. **15:** *They were wroth with him*, see 2 Ne 4.13; 5.1–3. **16:** See 2 Ne 5.5–7, 12; the grudge is still held as late as Alma 20.13. **17:** *Eternal hatred*, only here and Jacob 7.24, which also describes Lamanite feelings toward the Nephites. **19:** Rather than dehumanizing their enemies, Zeniff makes sure his people understand Lamanite concerns and perspectives before going into battle against them. *Stimulate*, WB: “to excite, rouse, or animate to action . . . by persuasion.”

came to pass that we did drive them again out of our land; and we slew them with a great slaughter, even so many that we did not number them.²¹ And it came to pass that we returned again to our own land, and my people again began to tend their flocks, and to till their ground.²² And now I, being old, did confer the kingdom upon one of my sons; therefore, I say no more. And may the Lord bless my people. Amen.

Wicked King Noah₃

[VII] **11**¹ And now it came to pass that Zeniff conferred the kingdom upon Noah, one of his sons;^a therefore Noah began to reign in his stead; and he did not walk in the ways of his father.² For behold, he did not keep the commandments of God, but he did walk after the desires of his own heart. And he had many wives and concubines. And he did cause his people to commit sin, and do that which was abominable in the sight of the Lord. Yea, and they did commit whoredoms and all manner of wickedness.

³ And he laid a tax of one fifth part of all they possessed: a fifth part of their gold and of their silver, and a fifth part of their ziff, and

of their copper, and of their brass and their iron; and a fifth part of their fatlings; and also a fifth part of all their grain.⁴ And all this did he take to support himself, and his wives and his concubines; and also his priests, and their wives and their concubines; thus he had changed the affairs of the kingdom.⁵ 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.⁶ 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.⁷ Yea, and they also became idolatrous, because they were deceived by the vain and flattering words of the king and priests; for they did speak flattering things unto them.

⁸ And it came to pass that king Noah built many elegant and spacious buildings; and he ornamented them with fine work of wood, and of all manner of precious things, of gold, and of silver, and of iron, and of brass, and of ziff, and of copper;⁹ and he also built him a spacious palace, and a throne in the midst thereof, all of which was of fine wood and was

^a 1 Probably about 160 BCE

CHAPTER 11

Just as Benjamin is an archetypal good king in the BoM, Noah is a paradigmatic evil monarch; see 29.13, 16–24. **1:** *Walk in the way(s) of his father* is a common construction from 1–2 Kings; it also appears at Hel 3.20, 37. **2–5:** Accumulating wives, gold, and silver were some of the key characteristics of wicked kings, according to Deut 17.17. **2:** *Wives and concubines*, Noah has abandoned the counsel given by Jacob at Jacob 2.23–35. *Abominable in the sight of the Lord*, only here and 23.9, where Alma confesses that he had participated in Noah's wicked practices; cf. Alma 39.5. **3–5:** Modern readers may or may not regard a tax rate of twenty percent as onerous, but the revenue in this case goes to support the lavish lifestyle of the court rather than benefiting the people in any way. *One fifth part* matches the taxation that Joseph imposed on Egypt; see Gen 47.24–26. **3:** The precise identification of *ziff* is uncertain, though it seems to be some kind of metal. **5:** The replacement of legitimate priests with loyalists signals rapid spiritual decline. It also recapitulates Jeroboam's appointment of new, non-Levite priests as an essential component of his rebellion at 1 Kings 12.31. In the context of the BoM, the deposed priests could have been either the descendants of Jacob (see 2 Ne 5.26) or Levites from the Mulekite population. **6:** *Idolatry* among the Lehiters is mentioned sixteen times in the BoM, but never with any details as to what or who was being worshiped. The characterization of the priests as lazy, idolatrous, and generally parasitic may echo the description of the Lamanites at Mos 9.12. **8–12:** Noah's consolidation of political and religious power is reflected in his building program.

ornamented with gold and silver and with precious things.¹⁰ And he also caused that his workmen should work all manner of fine work within the walls of the temple, of fine wood, and of copper, and of brass.¹¹ 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 while they should speak lying and vain words to his people.

¹² And it came to pass that he built a tower near the temple; yea, a very high tower, even so high that he could stand upon the top thereof and overlook the land of Shilom, and also the land of Shemlon, which was possessed by the Lamanites; and he could even look over all the land round about.¹³ And it came to pass that he caused many buildings to be built in the land Shilom; and he caused a great tower to be built on the hill north of the land Shilom, which had been a resort for the children of Nephi at the time they fled out of the land; and thus he did do with the riches which he obtained by the taxation of his people.

¹⁴ And it came to pass that he placed his heart upon his riches, and he spent his time in riotous living with his wives and his concubines; and so did also his priests spend their

time with harlots.¹⁵ And it came to pass that he planted vineyards round about in the land; and he built wine-presses, and made wine in abundance; and therefore he became a wine-bibber, and also his people.

Skirmishes with the Lamanites

¹⁶ And it came to pass that the Lamanites began to come in upon his people, upon small numbers, and to slay them in their fields, and while they were tending their flocks.¹⁷ And king Noah sent guards round about the land to keep them off; but he did not send a sufficient number, and the Lamanites came upon them and killed them, and drove many of their flocks out of the land; thus the Lamanites began to destroy them, and to exercise their hatred upon them.

¹⁸ And it came to pass that king Noah sent his armies against them, and they were driven back, or they drove them back for a time; therefore, they returned rejoicing in their spoil.¹⁹ And now, because of this great victory they were lifted up in the pride of their hearts; they did boast in their own strength, saying that their fifty could stand against thousands of the Lamanites; and thus they did boast, and did delight in blood, and the shedding of the blood of their brethren, and this because of the wickedness of their king and priests.

10: This may refer to a new temple, or to a renovation of the temple Nephi built about 400 years earlier (2 Ne 5.15–16). **11:** *High priests*, this is the first mention of the office in the BoM and it may be an ecclesiastical innovation; in the Bible there is only one high priest (closely associated with temple rites) at any given time. **12–13:** The initial center of operations for the colonists was in the land of Nephi; here Noah extends his power into the land of Shilom by building a great tower in each land. *A resort . . . at the time they fled out of the land*, see 10.8–9, or perhaps this refers to the events of Omni 1.12–13. *Resort*, a place of escape or refuge. **14:** This is the first mention of *harlots* among the Nephites; it is uncertain whether the reference is to prostitutes or to otherwise promiscuous women (Alma 39.3, 11 is similarly ambiguous). *Riotous living* occurs only here and at Lk 15.13, suggesting an interpretation of the colonists as analogous to the prodigal son. In both cases, after going off to seek one's fortune, a dissolute lifestyle leads to bondage and a desire to return home, even if that means becoming a servant. **15:** *Vineyards*, an anachronism. The ancient Americas had neither grapes nor wine, though alcoholic beverages were made from maguey juice or maize or honey. *Wine-bibber*, a biblical term for a drunkard (Mt 11.19; Lk 7.34). **16–19:** After inadequate defenses at the beginning, a Nephite victory over the Lamanites leads to overconfidence and bloodthirstiness. **19:** *Delight in . . . the shedding of blood* is viewed negatively throughout the BoM; see Alma 26.24; 48.23; Morm 4.11; 7.4.

The Prophet Abinadi

²⁰ And it came to pass that there was a man among them whose name was Abinadi; and he went forth among them, and began to prophesy,^a saying, “Behold, thus saith the Lord, and thus hath he commanded me, saying, ‘Go forth, and say unto this people:

Thus saith the Lord—“Wo be unto this people, for I have seen their abominations, and their wickedness, and their whoredoms; and except they repent I will visit them in mine anger.”²¹ And except they repent and turn to the Lord their God, behold, I will deliver them into the hands of their enemies; yea, and they shall be brought into bondage; and they shall be afflicted by the hand of their enemies.”²² And it shall come to pass that they shall know that ‘I am the Lord their God, and am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of my people.’^b

²³ “And it shall come to pass that except this people repent and turn unto the Lord their God, they shall

be brought into bondage; and none shall deliver them, except it be the Lord the Almighty God.”²⁴ Yea, and it shall come to pass that when they shall cry unto me I will be slow to hear their cries; yea, and I will suffer them that they be smitten by their enemies.”²⁵ And except they repent in sackcloth and ashes, and cry mightily to the Lord their God, I will not hear their prayers, neither will I deliver them out of their afflictions.”

And thus saith the Lord, and thus hath he commanded me.”

²⁶ Now it came to pass that when Abinadi had spoken these words unto them they were wroth with him, and sought to take away his life; but the Lord delivered him out of their hands.

²⁷ Now when king Noah had heard of the words which Abinadi had spoken unto the people, he was also wroth; and he said, “Who

^a 20 About 150 BCE

^b 22 Ex 20.5

20–29: The story of Abinadi shares a number of key phrases with the story of Moses confronting the Egyptian pharaoh in Ex, including “know that I am the Lord,” “who is the Lord?” “harden hearts,” “stretch forth thy hand,” “hail,” and “east wind.” Abinadi also recapitulates key events of Moses’s life when he contends with rival priests, proclaims the Ten Commandments, and his countenance shines. **20:** The two occurrences of *thus saith the Lord* in this verse suggest that it serves as an indication of prophetic discourse. The phrase appears 415 times in the OT, never in the NT, and 39 times in the BoM. The extended phrase *thus saith the Lord, and thus hath he commanded me*, which also appears at the end of v. 25, frames the divine word in an inclusio. **21:** Fulfilled at Mos 19.13–15, 25–28; cf. Mos 7.15, 22, 28. **22:** Quoting Ex 20.5, from the Ten Commandments, which will play an important role in chs. 12–13, though there is a substitution here of *visiting the iniquities of my people* for the biblical “visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children” (cf. 13.13). The BoM generally prefers individual responsibility to inherited retribution. **23:** *None shall deliver them, except it be the Lord*, this prophecy will become an important, repeated element of the narrative; see 23.23; 24.21; 25.16; Alma 36.2. **24:** Fulfilled at Mos 21.15. *Slow to hear their cries* is non-biblical, but there are instances when God refuses to hear his people’s prayers at 1 Sam 8.18; Isa 1.15; Jer 11.11, 14; Mic 3.4. **25:** *Sackcloth*, coarse cloth. *Sackcloth* and *ashes* are paired several times in the Bible, usually as a sign of sorrow or humility. **27:** *Who is the Lord?* was the ill-fated question that Pharaoh posed after Moses delivered his message; see Ex 5.2. It would be unexpected for Noah and his priests, who teach the law of Moses (12.28), to deny the God of Israel; instead, they will deny Abinadi’s conception of a deity who takes human form (17.7; cf. Deut 13.6–10). The linked questions *who is Abinadi* and *who is the Lord* will be matched by the disbelieving inhabitants of Ammonihah at Alma 9.2, 6.

is Abinadi, that I and my people should be judged of him, or who is the Lord, that shall bring upon my people such great affliction?²⁸ I command you to bring Abinadi hither, that I may slay him, for he has said these things that he might stir up my people to anger one with another, and to raise contentions among my people; therefore I will slay him.”

²⁹ Now the eyes of the people were blinded; therefore they hardened their hearts against the words of Abinadi, and they sought from that time forward to take him. And king Noah hardened his heart against the word of the Lord, and he did not repent of his evil doings.

Abinadi Prophecies of Destruction

12¹ And it came to pass that after the space of two years^a that Abinadi came among them in disguise, that they knew him not, and began to prophesy among them, saying, “Thus has the Lord commanded me, saying—‘Abinadi, go and prophesy unto this my people, for they have hardened their hearts against my words; they have repented not of their evil doings; therefore, I will visit them in my anger, yea, in my fierce anger will I visit them in their iniquities and abominations.

² Yea, wo be unto this generation!”

“And the Lord said unto me, ‘Stretch forth thy hand and prophesy, saying:

Thus saith the Lord—“It shall come to pass that this generation, because of their iniquities, shall be brought into bondage, and shall be smitten on the cheek; yea, and shall be driven by men, and shall be slain. And the vultures of the air, and the dogs, yea, and the wild beasts, shall devour their flesh.

³ “And it shall come to pass that the life of king Noah shall be valued even as a garment in a hot furnace; for he shall know that I am the Lord.

⁴ “And it shall come to pass that I will smite this my people with sore afflictions, yea, with famine and with pestilence; and I will cause that they shall howl all the day long.
⁵ Yea, and I will cause that they shall have burdens lashed upon their backs; and they shall be driven before like a dumb ass.⁶ And it shall come to pass that I will send forth hail among them, and it shall smite them; and they shall also be smitten with the east wind; and insects shall pester their land also,

29: The response of Noah and his people to Abinadi’s messages stands in sharp contrast to the reaction of the people of Zarahemla to Benjamin’s preaching; compare 4.1–3; 5.1–5.

CHAPTER 12

After an absence of two years, Abinadi’s message has changed. In 11.20–25 his prophecies were conditional, with “except they repent” repeated four times; now divine punishment is sure, though there is still a chance to avoid complete annihilation (v. 8). There are also a number of echoes of Jer in this episode. **1:** Speaking his own name would seem to defeat the purpose of being in disguise, but perhaps the subterfuge was no longer necessary once he had gotten through a city gate or past guards. *Hardened their hearts against my words... evil doings*, sins attributed to Noah at 11.29 now characterize the people as a whole. **2:** *Stretch forth thy hand and prophesy*, like Moses performing miracles in the book of Exodus; in the BoM it is a gesture regularly used to accompany prophetic speech, see 16.1; Alma 10.25; 13.21; 32.7; Hel 13.4; 3 Ne 11.9; 12.1. *Smitten on the cheek*, fulfilled at 21.3. *Vultures... beasts... devour*, cf. Alma 2.37–38. **3:** Fulfilled at 19.20. *He shall know that I am the Lord*, again a phrase that appears multiple times in the Exodus story; it also answers Noah’s question at 11.27. **5:** Fulfilled at Mos 21.2–4. **6:** *East wind*, see 7.31n. *Pester*, OED: “infest.”

^a 1 About 150 BCE

and devour their grain.⁷ And they shall be smitten with a great pestilence—and all this will I do because of their iniquities and abominations.

⁸ “And it shall come to pass that except they repent I will utterly destroy them from off the face of the earth; yet they shall leave a record behind them, and I will preserve them for other nations which shall possess the land; yea, even this will I do that I may discover the abominations of this people to other nations.”⁹”

And many things did Abinadi prophesy against this people.

Abinadi Arrested and Accused

⁹ And it came to pass that they were angry with him; and they took him and carried him bound before the king, and said unto the king, “Behold, we have brought a man before thee who has prophesied evil concerning thy people, and saith that God will destroy them.

¹⁰ And he also prophesieth evil concerning thy life, and saith that thy life shall be as a garment in a furnace of fire.¹¹ And again, he saith that thou shalt be as a stalk, even as a dry stalk of the field, which is run over by the beasts and trodden under foot.¹² And again, he saith thou shalt be as the blossoms of a thistle, which, when it is fully ripe, if the wind

bloweth, it is driven forth upon the face of the land. And he pretendeth the Lord hath spoken it. And he saith all this shall come upon thee except thou repent, and this because of thine iniquities.

¹³ “And now, O king, what great evil hast thou done, or what great sins have thy people committed, that we should be condemned of God or judged of this man?¹⁴ And now, O king, behold, we are guiltless, and thou, O king, hast not sinned; therefore, this man has lied concerning you, and he has prophesied in vain.¹⁵ And behold, we are strong, we shall not come into bondage, or be taken captive by our enemies; yea, and thou hast prospered in the land, and thou shalt also prosper.¹⁶ Behold, here is the man, we deliver him into thy hands; thou mayest do with him as seemeth thee good.”

The Trial of Abinadi: Mosiah 12.17–17.20

Abinadi Questioned about Isaiah 52.7–10

¹⁷ And it came to pass that king Noah caused that Abinadi should be cast into prison; and he commanded that the priests should gather themselves together that he might hold a council with them what he should do with him.¹⁸ And it came to pass that they said unto the king, “Bring him hither that we may question him”; and the king commanded that he should be brought

⁷: *Great pestilence*, only here and Jer 21.6, where the Lord is taking personal responsibility for the impending destruction of his people. ⁸: By the time that Limhi was sharing these records with Ammon, the recent discovery of the ruins and bones of the Jaredites would have given this earlier prophecy considerable credibility. The prophecy, with application to both Jaredites and Nephites, will be alluded to again at Alma 37.23–25, 28. *Preserve them*, that is, the records. *Discover*, WB: “to reveal; to make known.” ⁹: *Evil*, calamity or disaster. **10–12**: Abinadi’s accusers summarize his message by quoting three similes that seem to be original to the BoM (the first was included in the excerpt above, at v. 3). They also personalize Abinadi’s offense by emphasizing his prophecies against the king himself rather than his people; see 17.12n. **15**: Their confidence seems to be the result of reading God’s covenant with Lehi (2 Ne 1.20) inversely: if we are prospering in the land, then we must be good. In addition, their recent military victories (11.18) could have been taken as evidence that they were favored by God and that Abinadi was a false prophet. **16**: The crowd’s words echo both the deceivers at Josh 9.25 and Jeremiah himself at Jer 26.14, leaving open the question as to whether Abinadi is a prophet or a fraud. The question is resolved at 17.10, which cites the rest of Jeremiah’s testimony from Jer 26.15.

before them.¹⁹ And they began to question him, that they might cross him, that thereby they might have wherewith to accuse him; but he answered them boldly, and withstood all their questions, yea, to their astonishment; for he did withstand them in all their questions, and did confound them in all their words.

²⁰ And it came to pass that one of them said unto him, “What meaneth the words which are written, and which have been taught by our fathers, saying:

²¹ ‘How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of him that bringeth
good tidings;
that publisheth peace;
that bringeth good tidings of good;
that publisheth salvation;
that saith unto Zion, ‘Thy God
reigneth!’

²² Thy watchmen shall lift up the
voice;
with the voice together shall they
sing,
for they shall see eye to eye
when the Lord shall bring again
Zion.

²³ Break forth into joy,
sing together, ye waste places of
Jerusalem;

for the Lord hath comforted his
people,
he hath redeemed Jerusalem.
²⁴ The Lord hath made bare his holy
arm
in the eyes of all the nations;
and all the ends of the earth
shall see the salvation of our God.’”^a

Noah’s Priests Are Questioned by Abinadi: Exodus 20.1–4

(with significant changes to the King James Bible in bold)

²⁵ And now Abinadi said unto them, “Are you priests, and pretend to teach this people, and to understand the spirit of prophesying, and yet desire to know of me what these things mean? ²⁶ I say unto you, wo be unto you for perverting the ways of the Lord! For if ye understand these things ye have not taught them; therefore, ye have perverted the ways of the Lord. ²⁷ Ye have not applied your hearts to understanding; therefore, ye have not been wise. Therefore, what teach ye this people?”

²⁸ And they said, “We teach the law of Moses.”

²⁹ And again he said unto them, “If ye teach the law of Moses why do ye not keep it?”

^a 24 Verses 21–24 reproduce Isa 52.7–10 in the King James Bible exactly.

19: The priests, as educated religious specialists, assume they can easily trip up Abinadi. *Cross*, cause him to contradict himself; cf. Alma 10.16. *Withstand*, WB: “to oppose, to resist.” *Confound them in all their words*, in the same way that Jacob overpowered Sherem (see Jacob 7.8). **20–24:** They ask Abinadi about a passage from Isaiah whose message of hope seems to contradict Abinadi’s prophecies of doom. The image conveys the welcome sight of a swift messenger bringing news of the Lord’s victory over his enemies and of his return to Jerusalem as its king. **21:** The *feet* (a synecdoche, or a part that stands for the whole) are particularly noted because the messenger is running. *Publisheth*, announces. **22:** *Eye to eye*, with their own eyes; *bring again*, return to. **23:** *Waste places*, ruins. **24:** *Made bare his holy arm*, demonstrated his power. **25–31:** Rather than explaining Isaiah’s words, Abinadi shifts attention to the meaning of his own prophecies in vv. 2–8. Nevertheless, he will eventually answer the priest’s question at 15.15. **26–27:** The priests stand condemned either by their ignorance or by their unwillingness to teach what they know; cf. 24.5. **27:** *Applied your hearts to understanding*, Prov 2.2, with both verses also referring to wisdom. Abinadi here suggests that knowledge is accessible for those who diligently seek it. **29:** There are ten references in the BoM to people who *set your/their hearts upon riches*, echoing Ps 62.10; by contrast, at Deut 32.46 Moses tells his people to set their hearts on the words of the law. Abinadi accuses the priests of hypocrisy, as they *commit whoredoms and cause this people to commit sin*, like Noah at 11.2. He prophesies of *great evil* coming to the people (cf. Jer 16.10; 32.42; Mos 7.25; Hel 11.34), in response to the “great [moral] evil” they refused to acknowledge in v. 13.

Why do ye set your hearts upon riches? Why do ye commit whoredoms and spend your strength with harlots, yea, and cause this people to commit sin, that the Lord has cause to send me to prophesy against this people, yea, even a great evil against this people?³⁰ Know ye not that I speak the truth? Yea, ye know that I speak the truth; and you ought to tremble before God.³¹ And it shall come to pass that ye shall be smitten for your iniquities, for ye have said that ye teach the law of Moses. And what know ye concerning the law of Moses? Doth salvation come by the law of Moses? What say ye?”

³² And they answered and said that salvation did come by the law of Moses.

³³ But now Abinadi said unto them, “I know if ye keep the commandments of God ye shall be saved; yea, if ye keep the commandments which the Lord delivered unto Moses in the mount of Sinai, saying:

³⁴ I am the Lord thy God, who hath brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

³⁵ Thou shalt have no other **God**^a before me.

³⁶ Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing in heaven above, or **things which are** in the earth beneath.”

³⁷ Now Abinadi said unto them, “Have ye done all this? I say unto you, Nay, ye have not. And have ye taught this people that they

should do all these things? I say unto you, Nay, ye have not.”

An Attempt to Silence Abinadi

13¹ And now when the king had heard these words, he said unto his priests, “Away with this fellow, and slay him; for what have we to do with him, for he is mad.”

² And they stood forth and attempted to lay their hands on him; but he withstood them, and said unto them,³ “Touch me not, for God shall smite you if ye lay your hands upon me, for I have not delivered the message which the Lord sent me to deliver; neither have I told you that which ye requested that I should tell; therefore, God will not suffer that I shall be destroyed at this time.⁴ But I must fulfil the commandments wherewith God has commanded me; and because I have told you the truth ye are angry with me. And again, because I have spoken the word of God ye have judged me that I am mad.”

⁵ Now it came to pass after Abinadi had spoken these words that the people of king Noah durst not lay their hands on him, for the Spirit of the Lord was upon him; and his face shone with exceeding luster, even as Moses’ did while in the mount of Sinai, while speaking with the Lord.

⁶ And he spake with power and authority from God.

^a 35 Ex 20.3 reads “gods”

30: The idea that some people *ought to tremble* is distinctive to Abinadi; the only other occurrences are 15.26–27 and 16.13. **33:** *Ye shall be saved... if ye keep the commandments which the Lord delivered unto Moses*, this assertion appears to contradict Abinadi’s words at 13.28, yet perhaps there is an assumption in the later verse that no one can keep all the commandments all the time. **34–36:** As the pronoun *thou* indicates, in Hebrew the Ten Commandments are in the second-person singular; that is to say, they are addressed to every person individually.

CHAPTER 13

3: Having cleverly posed a difficult question, the priests are now forced to wait for Abinadi’s answer. **5:** *His face shone... even as Moses’*, see Ex 34.29–35.

The Ten Commandments: Exodus 20.4–17

(with significant changes to the King James Bible in bold)

And he continued his words, saying, ⁷ “Ye see that ye have not power to slay me, therefore I finish my message. Yea, and I perceive that it cuts you to your hearts because I tell you the truth concerning your iniquities. ⁸ Yea, and my words fill you with wonder and amazement, and with anger. ⁹ But I finish my message; and then it matters not whither I go, if it so be that I am saved. ¹⁰ But this much I tell you, what you do with me, after this, shall be as a type and a shadow of things which are to come.

¹¹ “And now I read unto you the remainder of the commandments of God, for I perceive that they are not written in your hearts; I perceive that ye have studied and taught iniquity the most part of your lives. ¹² And now, ye remember that I said unto you:

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of **things which are** in heaven above, or **which are** in the earth beneath, or **which are** in the water under the earth.

¹³ “And again:

Thou shalt not bow down thyself **unto** them, nor serve them; for I

the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the **iniquities** of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth **generations** of them that hate me; ¹⁴ and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.

¹⁵ Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

¹⁶ Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. ¹⁷ Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work; ¹⁸ but the seventh day, the sabbath of the Lord thy God, thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates. ¹⁹ For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, **and** the sea, and all that in them is;^a wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

²⁰ Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the

^a ¹⁹ Abinadi here omits “and rested the seventh day” from Ex 20.11.

⁷: *Cuts you to your hearts*, an expression used twice in Acts (5.33; 7.54) to describe the effect of a prophet’s words on a crowd that then wants to kill him. ⁹: *Saved*, spiritually redeemed; Abinadi’s life will not be spared. ¹⁰: His words will be fulfilled at Mos 19.20 and Alma 25.9–12. *Type and a shadow*, see 3.15n. **11–24**: Over the course of the Abinadi narrative, Noah and his priests are portrayed as breaking most of the Ten Commandments. **11**: This is the first indication that Abinadi is reading scripture aloud, rather than reciting it from memory. *Written in your hearts*, the image of commandments written in hearts appears at Jer 31.33; cf. Rom 2.15; Heb 8.10; 10.16; 2 Ne 8.7. **12**: This verse picks up the quotation of Ex 20.4 from Mos 12.36, although the verse is here quoted slightly differently. **13**: This verse from Ex was alluded to at 11.22 above. The idea of inherited punishment for sin also occurs at Ex 34.7, but was later challenged at Deut 24.16; Jer 31.29–30; Ezek 18.2–4. *Unto thousands*, probably meaning “to the thousandth generation,” thus showing that God’s mercy vastly outweighs his anger; cf. Deut 7.9. **15**: The BoM’s repeated injunction for believers to “take upon [themselves] the name of Christ” suggests an adoptionist interpretation of this verse, rather than limiting it to improper speech; see 3 Ne 27.16n, as well as examples at 2 Ne 31.13; Mos 5.8, 10; 25.23; Alma 34.38; 3 Ne 27.5. *In vain*, falsely, or to no good purpose. **16**: *Remember*, in both the OT and BoM, memory often involves action.

land which the Lord thy God
giveth thee.

²¹ Thou shalt not kill.

²² Thou shalt not commit adultery.
Thou shalt not steal.

²³ Thou shalt not bear false witness
against thy neighbor.

²⁴ Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's
house, thou shalt not covet thy
neighbor's wife, nor his man-ser-
vant, nor his maid-servant, nor his
ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is
thy neighbor's."

The Law of Moses

[VIII] ²⁵ And it came to pass that after
Abinadi had made an end of these
sayings that he said unto them, "Have ye
taught this people that they should observe to
do all these things for to keep these command-
ments?" ²⁶ I say unto you, Nay; for if ye had, the
Lord would not have caused me to come forth
and to prophesy evil concerning this people.

²⁷ "And now ye have said that salvation
cometh by the law of Moses. I say unto you
that it is expedient that ye should keep the law
of Moses as yet; but I say unto you, that the
time shall come when it shall no more be
expedient to keep the law of Moses. ²⁸ And
moreover, I say unto you, that salvation doth
not come by the law alone; and were it not for
the atonement, which God himself shall make
for the sins and iniquities of his people, that
they must unavoidably perish, notwithstand-
ing the law of Moses.

²⁹ "And now I say unto you that it was
expedient that there should be a law given to
the children of Israel, yea, even a very strict
law; for they were a stiffnecked people,
quick to do iniquity, and slow to remember
the Lord their God. ³⁰ Therefore there was a
law given them, yea, a law of performances
and of ordinances, a law which they were to
observe strictly from day to day, to keep
them in remembrance of God and their
duty towards him. ³¹ But behold, I say unto
you, that all these things were types of things
to come. ³² And now, did they understand
the law? I say unto you, Nay, they did not
all understand the law; and this because of
the hardness of their hearts; for they under-
stood not that there could not any man be
saved except it were through the redemption
of God."

Abinadi Cites Prophecies of Christ: Isaiah 53.1–12

*(with significant changes to the King James
Bible in bold)*

³³ "For behold, did not Moses prophesy unto
them concerning the coming of the Messiah,
and that God should redeem his people? Yea,
and even all the prophets who have prophes-
ied ever since the world began—have they not
spoken more or less concerning these things?
³⁴ Have they not said that God himself should
come down among the children of men, and take
upon him the form of man, and go forth in
mighty power upon the face of the earth?
³⁵ Yea, and have they not said also that he
should bring to pass the resurrection of the

21: Kill, murder. **25:** *Have ye taught this people... commandments*, according to Lev 10.11, this was the explicit responsibility of priests; cf. Deut 33.10. *Observe to do* is a characteristic Deuteronomistic expression. **27–28:** Abinadi argues that the Mosaic law has only a temporary, partial validity. It comes from God, but by itself it cannot save those who keep its precepts; salvation requires the atonement of Christ; cf. 3.15. **29–32:** The Mosaic law was tailored to the capacity of ancient Israel, but they did not fully understand its meaning, in particular the way that it pointed forward to Christ. **29:** *Quick to do iniquity, and slow to remember the Lord*, see 1 Ne 17.45n. **30:** *Performances and ordinances*, see 2 Ne 25.30n. *Duty toward God* is mentioned only here, Alma 7.22, and 43.46. **33:** *Did not Moses prophesy*, perhaps Deut 18.15, 18–19; see 1 Ne 22.20–21; Acts 3.21–23. **34:** This teaching was referred to by King Limhi at 7.27, and will be the basis for the capital charge levied against Abinadi at 17.7–8.

dead, and that he, himself, should be ‘oppressed and afflicted’?^a

14 ¹ “Yea, even doth not Isaiah say:

‘Who hath believed our report,
and to whom is the arm of the Lord
revealed?’

² For he shall grow up before him as a
tender plant,
and as a root out of dry ground;
he hath no form nor comeliness;
and when we shall see him
there is no beauty that we should
desire him.

³ He is despised and rejected of men;
a man of sorrows, and acquainted
with grief;
and we hid as it were our face from him;
he was despised, and we esteemed
him not.

⁴ Surely he has borne our griefs,
and carried our sorrows;
yet we did esteem him stricken,
smitten of God, and afflicted.

⁵ But he was wounded for our transgressions,
he was bruised for our iniquities;
the chastisement of our peace was
upon him;
and with his stripes we are healed.

⁶ All we, like sheep, have gone astray;
we have turned every one to his
own way;
and the Lord hath laid on him the
iniquities of us all.

⁷ He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
yet he opened not his mouth;
he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter,
and as a sheep before her shearers
is dumb
so he **opened** not his mouth.

⁸ He was taken from prison and from
judgment;
and who shall declare his generation?
For he was cut off out of the land of
the living;
for the **transgressions** of my people
was he stricken.

⁹ And he made his grave with the
wicked,
and with the rich in his death;
because he had done **no evil**,
neither was any deceit in his mouth.

¹⁰ Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him;
he hath put him to grief;
when thou shalt make his soul an
offering for sin

^a 35 Isa 53.7; Mos 14.7

CHAPTER 14

1–12: This is the fourth and final servant song in Isaiah, one that Christians have associated with Jesus since the NT (see Acts 8.32–35), though Jews have interpreted the servant as Moses, as Isaiah himself, or as a personification of Israel. The poem describes a man who suffered and was mistreated, taking the sins of the people upon himself, though they did not realize who he was or what he was doing for them. **1:** *Doth not Isaiah say*, by quoting a chapter of Isaiah that closely follows the excerpt the priests had asked about, Abinadi is suggesting that scripture is best understood when read within its broader context. **2:** *As a root*, perhaps an allusion to the Messianic expectations of Isa 11.1, 10. *Comeliness*, majesty. **3:** *Grief*, sickness. *We hid... from him*, like a person from whom people turn away. **4:** *Smitten of God*, punished by God. **5:** *The chastisement of our peace was upon him*, “upon him was the punishment that made us whole” (NRSV). *Stripes*, bruises or wounds. **7:** *Dumb*, silent. **8:** *He was taken from prison and from judgment*, “by a perversion of justice he was taken away” (NRSV). *Who shall declare his generation?* the meaning of the original Hebrew is uncertain; perhaps “who would have thought any more of his destiny?” (NAB) or “who could have imagined his future?” (NRSV). Abinadi seems to interpret *generation* as “descendants,” and in 15.10–12, he will answer the question posed in this verse by referring to “his seed” (from v. 10). **9:** The substitution of *evil* for “violence” highlights Jesus’s sinlessness. **10:** *His seed*, compare King Benjamin’s words about becoming “children of Christ” at 5.7.

he shall see his seed,
 he shall prolong his days,
 and the pleasure of the Lord shall
 prosper in his hand.
¹¹ He shall see the travail of his soul,
 and shall be satisfied;
 by his knowledge shall my righteous
 servant justify many;
 for he shall bear their iniquities.
¹² Therefore will I divide him a portion
 with the great,
 and he shall divide the spoil with
 the strong;
 because he hath poured out his soul
 unto death;
 and he was numbered with the
 transgressors;
 and he bore the **sins** of many,
 and made intercession for the
 transgressors.”

Abinadi Interprets Isaiah 52–53: Mosiah 15–16

*(with quotations from passages cited in
 chapters 12 and 14 in bold)*

11: *He shall see the travail*, P and early editions to 1911 followed the KJV: “he shall see of the travail.” It is a difficult reading, probably because the Masoretic Hebrew text is defective; the Dead Sea Scroll versions, along with the Greek Septuagint, suggest something like “out of his anguish he shall see light” (NRSV). **12:** In the end, God will vindicate his servant, who saved so many through his vicarious suffering.

CHAPTER 15

This chapter shares a number of key phrases with Benjamin’s speech (including the angel’s words), such as “come down among the children of men,” “Father of heaven and of earth,” “working mighty miracles,” “demands of justice,” “holy prophets,” “prepared from the foundation of the world,” and “salvation cometh to none such,” even though Abinadi was a contemporary of Benjamin and there were no contacts between Benjamin’s people and the colonists before Ammon’s arrival. **1–9:** Abinadi here seems to be describing a single divine being who at times functions as both the Father and the Son, that is, a variation of modalism. In other BoM passages, the Father and the Son are depicted as separate persons who are nevertheless one God; e.g., 3 Ne 11.6–11; 17.2–4. **1:** *God himself shall come down among the children of men*, picking up the thought from before the Isaiah quotation, at 13.34. Limhi remembers this teaching specifically at 7.27. **2:** *Having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father*, the pre-existent Christ clarifies at 3 Ne 1.13–14 that his impending incarnation comes by his own will, as well as the will of the Father. **3–4:** The identification of Christ with the Father here (and at 16.15) may be an attempt to avoid violating the First Commandment at 12.35 above; see 2 Ne 31.21n. **5:** The relationship of the Son to the Father is analogous to the flesh being subject to the spirit. The concept is similar to passages in John where the Father is an unseen spirit, and Jesus is his physical manifestation on earth; see Jn 1.18; 4.24; 14.8–11. JS later refined his ideas of the Godhead based on additional revelations. **7:** John 5.30 also describes the subordination of Jesus’s will to that of the Father.

Christ as the Father and the Son

15 ¹ And now Abinadi said unto them, “I would that ye should understand that God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people. ² And because he dwelleth in flesh he shall be called the Son of God, and having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, being the Father and the Son— ³ the Father, because he was conceived by the power of God; and the Son, because of the flesh; thus becoming the Father and Son— ⁴ and they are one God, yea, the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth. ⁵ And thus the flesh becoming subject to the Spirit, or the Son to the Father, being one God, suffereth temptation, and yieldeth not to the temptation, but suffereth himself to be mocked, and scourged, and cast out, and disowned by his people.

⁶ “And after all this, after working many mighty miracles among the children of men, he shall be led, yea, even as Isaiah said, ‘**as a sheep before the shearer is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.**’” ⁷ Yea, even so he

^a 6 Isa 53.7; cited at Mos 14.7

shall be led, crucified, and slain, the flesh becoming subject even unto death, the will of the Son being swallowed up in the will of the Father.⁸ And thus God breaketh the bands of death, having gained the victory over death; giving the Son power to **make intercession^a** for the children of men—⁹ having ascended into heaven, having the bowels of mercy; being filled with compassion towards the children of men; standing betwixt them and justice; having broken the bands of death, taken upon himself **their iniquity and their transgressions,^b** having redeemed them, and satisfied the demands of justice.”

The Seed of Christ

¹⁰ “And now I say unto you, **who shall declare his generation?^c** Behold, I say unto you, that **when his soul has been made an offering for sin he shall see his seed.^d** And now what say ye? And who shall be his seed?

¹¹ “Behold I say unto you, that whosoever has heard the words of the prophets, yea, all the holy prophets who have prophesied concerning the coming of the Lord—I say unto you, that all those who have hearkened unto their words, and believed that the Lord would redeem his people, and have looked forward to that day for a remission of their sins, I say unto you, that these are his seed, or they are the heirs of the kingdom of God.¹² For these are they **whose sins he has borne;^e** these are they for whom he has died, to redeem them from their transgressions. And now, are they not his seed?

¹³ “Yea, and are not the prophets, every one that has opened his mouth to prophesy, that

has not fallen into transgression, I mean all the holy prophets ever since the world began? I say unto you that they are his seed.

¹⁴ And these are they who have
published peace,
who have **brought good tidings**
of good,
who have **published salvation,**
and **said unto Zion: ‘Thy God**
reigneth!’

¹⁵ And O **how beautiful upon the**
mountains were their feet!^f

¹⁶ And again, **how beautiful upon the**
mountains
are the feet of those that are still
publishing peace!

¹⁷ And again, **how beautiful upon the**
mountains
are the feet of those who shall
hereafter **publish peace,**
yea, from this time henceforth and
forever!

¹⁸ “And behold, I say unto you, this is
not all.

For O **how beautiful upon the mountains**
are the feet of him that bringeth
good tidings,^g

^a 8 Isa 53.12; cited at Mos 14.12

^b 9 Isa 53.5; cited at Mos 14.5

^c 10 Isa 53.8; cited at Mos 14.8

^d 10 Isa 53.10; cited at Mos 14.10

^e 12 Isa 53.12; cited at Mos 14.12

^f 15 Isa 52.7; cited at Mos 12.21

^g 18 Isa 52.7; cited at Mos 12.21

8: *Band(s) of death*, a non-biblical phrase that occurs 13 times in the BoM. **9:** The *bowels*, or intestines, were considered the source of emotion in the OT; WB: “the seat of pity or kindness.” *Betwixt*, between. **10–12:** Benjamin connected the status of being “children of Christ” (5.6–8) to covenant making, while Abinadi asserts that belief in prophetic teaching is all that is required to become *his seed*. Nevertheless, the colonists will be eager to join the covenant when they learn of it; see 8.3; 21.31–33. **11–13:** The offspring of Christ include ordinary believers as well as prophets. **11:** *The coming of the Lord* refers to Christ’s second coming in the NT (1 Thess 4.15; Jas 5.7–8); here it refers to Jesus’s incarnation. **14–15:** With a volley of phrases from Isa 52.7, Abinadi is now finally answering the question posed to him at Mos 12.20–24. **18:** In addition to the prophets, Jesus himself is envisioned as the ultimate, good-news-bearing messenger. *Founder of peace* seems to be original to Abinadi.

that is the founder of peace,
 yea, even the Lord, who has
 redeemed his people;
 yea, him who has granted salvation
 unto his people.”

The First Resurrection

¹⁹ “For were it not for the redemption which he hath made for his people, which was prepared from the foundation of the world, I say unto you, were it not for this, all mankind must have perished. ²⁰ But behold, the bands of death shall be broken, and the Son reigneth, and hath power over the dead; therefore, he bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead. ²¹ And there cometh a resurrection, even a first resurrection; yea, even a resurrection of those that have been, and who are, and who shall be, even until the resurrection of Christ—for so shall he be called.

²² “And now, the resurrection of all the prophets, and all those that have believed in their words, or all those that have kept the commandments of God, shall come forth in the first resurrection; therefore, they are the first resurrection. ²³ They are raised to dwell with God who has redeemed them; thus they have eternal life through Christ, who has broken the bands of death.

²⁴ “And these are those^a who have part in the first resurrection; and these are they that have died before Christ came, in their ignorance, not having salvation declared unto them. And thus the Lord bringeth about the restoration of these; and they have a part in the first resurrection, or have eternal life, being redeemed by the Lord. ²⁵ And little children also have eternal life.

²⁶ “But behold, and fear, and tremble before God, for ye ought to tremble; for the Lord redeemeth none such that rebel against him and die in their sins; yea, even all those that have perished in their sins ever since the world began, that have wilfully rebelled against God, that have known the commandments of God, and would not keep them; these are they that have no part in the first resurrection. ²⁷ Therefore ought ye not to tremble? For salvation cometh to none such; for the Lord hath redeemed none such; yea, neither can the Lord redeem such; for he cannot deny himself; for he cannot deny justice when it has its claim.

²⁸ “And now I say unto you that the time shall come that the salvation of the Lord shall

^a 24 P *there are those*

19–21: According to Abinadi, the *first resurrection* encompasses those who died before Christ’s coming who will be raised from the dead at the time of his resurrection. In the book of Revelation, however, the term refers to all those who will be resurrected at the beginning of his millennial reign; see Rev 20.5–6, as well as Alma’s discussion at Alma 40.15–19. **22–25:** The text identifies three groups who will be part of the first resurrection: the righteous (v. 22), those who never heard of Christ (v. 24), and little children (v. 25). *Not having salvation declared unto them*, that is, those who never had the opportunity to hear the messengers who “publish salvation” (Isa 52.7, quoted in v. 14 above). The angel who spoke to Benjamin identified the same three groups: the righteous (3.13), the uninformed (3.11), and children (3.16). **25:** This may be a comment interpolated by the editor; the fate of children who die young is discussed more fully by Mormon at Moro 8. **26–27:** The people who will not be part of the first resurrection are those who knowingly reject God and his commandments. The idea that some people have placed themselves beyond the power of God’s redemption is foreign to the OT, though it appears at Heb 10.26–27 and in the BoM at Mos 3.12; 26.25–26; Alma 11.34–45. Here the exclusion of willful, unrepentant sinners is considered a necessary corollary to God’s attribute of justice. *Die in their sins*, Jn 8.21, 24; 2 Ne 9.38; Mos 2.33; Alma 12.16; Moro 10.26; the phrase was used in anti-Universalist rhetoric in the 19th c.

be declared to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.²⁹ Yea, Lord,

**“Thy watchmen shall lift up their voice;
with the voice together shall they
sing,
for they shall see eye to eye
when the Lord shall bring again
Zion.**

³⁰ **Break forth into joy,
sing together, ye waste places of
Jerusalem;
for the Lord hath comforted his
people,
he hath redeemed Jerusalem.**

³¹ **The Lord hath made bare his holy
arm
in the eyes of all the nations;
and all the ends of the earth
shall see the salvation of our
God.”^a**

Redemption and Judgment

16¹ And now, it came to pass that after Abinadi had spoken these words he stretched forth his hand and said, “The time shall come when **all shall see the salvation of the Lord;**^b when every nation, kindred, tongue, and people shall **see eye to eye**^c and

shall confess before God that his judgments are just.

² “And then shall the wicked be cast out, and they shall have cause to howl, and weep, and wail, and gnash their teeth; and this because they would not hearken unto the voice of the Lord; therefore the Lord redeemeth them not.³ For they are carnal and devilish, and the devil has power over them; yea, even that old serpent that did beguile our first parents, which was the cause of their fall; which was the cause of all mankind becoming carnal, sensual, devilish, knowing evil from good, subjecting themselves to the devil.

⁴ “Thus all mankind were lost; and behold, they would have been endlessly lost were it not that God redeemed his people from their lost and fallen state.⁵ But remember that he that persists in his own carnal nature, and goes on in the ways of sin and rebellion against God, remaineth in his fallen state and the devil hath all power over him. Therefore he is as though there was no redemption made, being an enemy to God; and also is the devil an enemy to God.

^a ³¹ Verses 29–31 reproduce Isa 52.8–10, which was also cited at Mos 12.22–24.

^b ¹ Isa 52.10; cited at Mos 12.24; 15.31.

^c ¹ Isa 52.8; cited at Mos 12.22; 15.29.

29–31: These verses from Isaiah will be quoted again by Jesus at 3 Ne 16.18–20 and 20.32–35. **30:** In its original context in Isaiah, this statement is directed to the ruined city of Jerusalem; here the introductory “yea, Lord” in the previous verse makes the watchmen servants of God rather than ordinary sentinels of the city.

CHAPTER 16

1: With more allusions to Isa 52.7–10, Abinadi continues to answer the question asked by Noah’s priests at 12.20–24. Here he reinterprets Isa 52.8–10 as referring to the Final Judgment rather than the return of the Lord to Jerusalem. The idea that sinners at the last day will *confess* that God’s *judgments* are *just* is also found at 27.31; Alma 12.15; cf. 2 Ne 26.7. There may also be an allusion to Moses at the Red Sea in the conjunction of *stretched forth his hand* and *see the salvation of the Lord*; see Ex 14.13, 27. **2:** *Gnash*, WB: “to strike the teeth together, as in anger or pain.” **3:** *Beguile our first parents*, see Gen 3.13. *Carnal, sensual*, [and] *devilish*, only here and Alma 42.10: non-biblical but regularly used in 18th–19th c. and apparently derived from Jas 3.15 (“earthly, sensual, devilish”). The phrase *subjecting themselves to the devil* assigns primary agency to humans rather than to Satan, as at Alma 5.20 and Moro 7.17; after the Resurrection, however, the devil’s power over such people will be inescapable (see v. 11). **4:** Similar statements occur at 1 Ne 10.6; Alma 12.22; 34.9; cf. Alma 42.6. **5:** *As though there was no redemption made*, this very specific theological wording recurs at Alma 11.41; 12.18; Moro 7.38.

⁶ “And now if Christ had not come into the world (speaking of things to come as though they had already come), there could have been no redemption. ⁷ And if Christ had not risen from the dead, or have broken the bands of death that the grave should have no victory, and that death should have no sting, there could have been no resurrection. ⁸ But there is a resurrection, therefore the grave hath no victory, and the sting of death is swallowed up in Christ.

⁹ “He is the light and the life of the world; yea, a light that is endless, that can never be darkened; yea, and also a life which is endless, that there can be no more death. ¹⁰ Even this mortal shall put on immortality, and this corruption shall put on incorruption, and shall be brought to stand before the bar of God, to be judged of him according to their works whether they be good or whether they be evil— ¹¹ if they be good, to the resurrection of endless life and happiness; and if they be evil, to the resurrection of endless damnation, being delivered up to the devil, who hath subjected them, which is damnation— ¹² having gone according to their own carnal wills and desires; having never called upon the Lord while the arms of mercy were extended towards them; for the arms of mercy were extended towards them, and they would not; they being warned of their iniquities and yet they would not depart from them; and they were commanded to repent and yet they would not repent.

¹³ “And now, ought ye not to tremble and repent of your sins, and remember that only in and through Christ ye can be saved? ¹⁴ Therefore, if ye teach the law of Moses, also teach that it is a shadow of those things which are to come— ¹⁵ Teach them that redemption cometh through Christ the Lord, who is the very Eternal Father. Amen.”

Alma, Believes

[IX] **17** ¹ And now it came to pass that when Abinadi had finished these sayings, that the king commanded that the priests should take him and cause that he should be put to death.

² But there was one among them whose name was Alma, he also being a descendant of Nephi. And he was a young man, and 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. ³ 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. ⁴ But he fled from before them and hid himself that they found him not. And he being concealed for many days did write all the words which Abinadi had spoken.

6: *As though they had already come* may seem like a correction, but similar phrasing has already appeared at 3.13 and Jarom 1.11. **7–8:** *Sting of death is swallowed up in Christ* is an adaptation of 1 Cor 15.54–56, which in turn quotes Isa 25.8; cf. Alma 22.14; 27.28; Morm 7.5. **9:** Just as Christ’s eternal light has banished darkness, his everlasting life has overcome death. **10:** *Mortal shall put on immortality, and this corruption shall put on incorruption*, 1 Cor 15.53–54; the same description of resurrection, followed by standing before God to be judged, is found at Alma 5.15; Morm 6.21; cf. Enos 1.27. **11:** The verse appears to be an expansion of Jn 5.29; cf. Hel 12.26; 3 Ne 26.5. **12:** The evil works of the previous verse are defined as rejecting God’s mercy, warnings, and commandments to repent. *They would not*, they refused. **14:** *If ye teach the law of Moses*, a continuation of Abinadi’s reproof from 12.28–31.

CHAPTER 17

2: *Also being a descendant of Nephi*, Alma’s Nephite ancestry may distinguish him from other priests of Mulekite ethnicity; see 25.12n. **4:** *Did write all the words . . . had spoken*, much like Baruch at Jer 36.4. This record might have been a source for the preceding transcript. Alma’s story is continued at Mos 18.1.

Abinadi Is Slain

⁵ And it came to pass that the king caused that his guards should surround Abinadi and take him; and they bound him and cast him into prison. ⁶ And after three days, having counseled with his priests, he caused that he should again be brought before him.

⁷ And he said unto him, “Abinadi, we have found an accusation against thee, and thou art worthy of death.” ⁸ For thou hast said that God himself should come down among the children of men; and now, for this cause thou shalt be put to death unless thou wilt recall all the words which thou hast spoken evil concerning me and my people.”

⁹ Now Abinadi said unto him, “I say unto you, I will not recall the words which I have spoken unto you concerning this people, for they are true; and that ye may know of their surety I have suffered myself that I have fallen into your hands. ¹⁰ Yea, and I will suffer even until death, and I will not recall my words, and they shall stand as a testimony against you. And if ye slay me ye will shed innocent blood, and this shall also stand as a testimony against you at the last day.”

¹¹ And now king Noah was about to release him, for he feared his word; for he feared that the judgments of God would come upon him.

¹² But the priests lifted up their voices against

him, and began to accuse him, saying, “He has reviled the king.” Therefore the king was stirred up in anger against him, and he delivered him up that he might be slain.

¹³ And it came to pass that they took him and bound him, and scourged his skin with faggots, yea, even unto death. ¹⁴ And now when the flames began to scorch him, he cried unto them, saying, ¹⁵ “Behold, even as ye have done unto me, so shall it come to pass that thy seed shall cause that many shall suffer even^a the pains of death by fire; and this because they believe in the salvation of the Lord their God. ¹⁶ And it will come to pass that ye shall be afflicted with all manner of diseases because of your iniquities. ¹⁷ Yea, and ye shall be smitten on every hand, and shall be driven and scattered to and fro, even as a wild flock is driven by wild and ferocious beasts. ¹⁸ And in that day ye shall be hunted, and ye shall be taken by the hand of your enemies, and then ye shall suffer, as I suffer, the pains of death by fire. ¹⁹ Thus God executeth vengeance upon those that destroy his people. O God, receive my soul.”

²⁰ And now, when Abinadi had said these words, he fell, having suffered death by fire; yea, having been put to death because he would

^a 15 P, 1981 suffer the pains that I do suffer even

8: Noah condemns Abinadi for his theology (citing, specifically, his words at 13.34; 15.1), but his offer of clemency is connected to the criticisms Abinadi directed at the king and his people. *Evil*, here used as an adverb meaning “maliciously” or “slanderingly.” **9:** *That ye may know of their surety*, perhaps as a result of Abinadi sealing the truth of his words by his death (v. 20). **10:** *If ye slay me ye will shed innocent blood*, Jeremiah made a similar declaration when his life was threatened at Jer 26.15; see 12.16n. The idea that prophetic words will stand as a testimony against their recipients at the Judgment Day occurs regularly in the BoM; see 2 Ne 25.28; Mos 3.24; Ether 5.4; Moro 8.21; cf. Deut 31.26. In addition, the blood of martyrs (v. 10; Alma 14.11), unused weapons (Alma 24.15), and crimes (Alma 39.8) will also testify at the last day; cf. Alma 5.22. **11–12:** Noah’s brief moment of spiritual receptivity ends when the priests remind him of the personal nature of Abinadi’s accusations. **12:** *Reviled the king*, prohibited in the law of Moses at Ex 22.28; the priests seem to have in mind the prophecies reported at 12.10–12. **13–20:** In contrast to Protestant precedents known to JS, there is no mention in Abinadi’s fiery martyrdom of being burned at a stake. **13:** *Faggots*, bundles of sticks. **15–18:** The punishments enumerated here will take effect in this world rather than in the eternities, and are fulfilled at Mos 19.20; Alma 25.4–12. **17:** *On every hand*, on all sides; from every direction. *Wild flock*, at 8.21 they fled from a shepherd; here they are driven by predators. **18:** *Hunted* is a chilling verb when the object is human beings; cf. Alma 25.8–9, 12; Hel 15.12; Morm 8.2, 7. **19:** *O God, receive my soul*, compare Stephen’s last words at Acts 7.59.

not deny the commandments of God, having sealed the truth of his words by his death.

Alma, Continues Abinadi's Work

18 ¹ And now, it came to pass that Alma, who had fled from the servants of king Noah, repented of his sins and iniquities, and went about privately among the people, and began to teach the words of Abinadi—² yea, concerning that which was to come, and also concerning the resurrection of the dead, and the redemption of the people, which was to be brought to pass through the power, and sufferings, and death of Christ, and his resurrection and ascension into heaven. ³ And as many as would hear his word he did teach. And he taught them privately, that it might not come to the knowledge of the king. And many did believe his words.

⁴ 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. ⁵ Now, 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. ⁶ And it came to pass that as many as believed him went thither to hear his words.

Alma, Baptizes

⁷ 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.

⁸ And it came to pass that he said unto them, "Behold, here are the waters of Mormon (for thus were they called) and now,

as ye are desirous to come into the fold
of God,
and to be called his people,
and are willing to bear one another's
burdens,
that they may be light;
⁹ yea, and are willing to mourn with
those that mourn;
yea, and comfort those that stand in
need of comfort,
and to stand as witnesses of God

CHAPTER 18

The narrative here is picked up from Mos 17.4. Alma preaches and establishes a small, covert community of believers. **2:** *Ascension into heaven*, mentioned at 15.9. **3–4:** *Might not come to the knowledge of the king and in the borders of the land* are repeated at v. 31, creating a chiasmic inclusio for the key episode of Alma founding a church. **4:** From the derivation given here, the name *Mormon* appears to have something to do with *wild beasts*. The primary narrator/editor of the BoM was named after this place, see 3 Ne 5.12. *By times*, from time to time. **7–16:** Baptism has been mentioned several times thus far in the BoM (esp. at 2 Ne 31), but this is the first account of any Nephites actually being baptized. Since Alma baptizes himself (vv. 14–15), it seems to be a new practice (there is apparently a distinction between what Alma is doing and the ritual immersions that were part of the law of Moses). Note also that no one else among the colonists has the authority to baptize, and even Ammon, from Zarahemla, believes that he cannot perform the ordinance (21.33). **8–9:** In some of the loveliest verses in the BoM, redemption—here defined as resurrection and eternal life—is granted to those who continually bear witness of God and serve others. Being part of a covenant community can facilitate these actions. The requirements for baptism include not only a desire to be associated with God but also a willingness to assist and support others; compare the association of baptism with a "love of God and of all men" at 2 Ne 31.17–20. **8:** *Fold of God*, a shepherding image that will reappear at Alma 26.4; cf. 1 Ne 15.15; 2 Ne 9.2; Alma 5.60. **9:** *Mourn with those that mourn*, non-biblical, but see Rom 12.15. *Even until death*, given the recent martyrdom of Abinadi, the attempted murder of Alma, and the continuing hostility of the king and priests that made secrecy necessary, the idea of death was not an abstract concept for those contemplating baptism.

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—

¹⁰ “Now I say unto you, if this be the desire of your hearts, what have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him, that ye will serve him and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you?”

¹¹ And now when the people had heard these words, they clapped their hands for joy, and exclaimed, “This is the desire of our hearts.”

¹² And now it came to pass that Alma took Helam, he being one of the first, and went and stood forth in the water, and cried, saying, “O Lord, pour out thy Spirit upon thy servant, that he may do this work with holiness of heart.”

¹³ And when he had said these words, the Spirit of the Lord was upon him, and he said, “Helam, I baptize thee, having authority from the Almighty God, as a testimony that ye have entered into a covenant to serve him until you are dead as to the mortal body; and may the

Spirit of the Lord be poured out upon you; and may he grant unto you eternal life, through the redemption of Christ, whom he has prepared from the foundation of the world.” ¹⁴ And after Alma had said these words, both Alma and Helam were buried in the water; and they arose and came forth out of the water rejoicing, being filled with the Spirit.

¹⁵ And again, Alma took another, and went forth a second time into the water, and baptized him according to the first, only he did not bury himself again in the water. ¹⁶ And after this manner he did baptize every one that went forth to the place of Mormon; and they were in number about two hundred and four souls; yea, and they were baptized in the waters of Mormon, and were filled with the grace of God.

Alma, Establishes a Church and Ordains Priests

¹⁷ And they were called the church of God, or the church of Christ, from that time forward. And it came to pass that whosoever was baptized by the power and authority of God was added to his church.

¹⁸ And it came to pass that Alma, having authority from God, ordained priests; even one priest to every fifty of their number did he ordain to preach unto them, and to teach

10–11: Here baptism is a visible sign of a covenant that believers make with God rather than a sacrament that offers the remission of sins; later references to baptism, such as Alma 7.14–15 and 3 Ne 7.25, combine these ideas. *The desire of your/our hearts*, the use of this rare phrase emphasizes how different Alma’s people are from King Noah; see 11.2 (the only other occurrences are at Ps 37.4 and Alma 41.3). God pouring out his spirit upon people is an OT concept that recurs regularly in the BoM. **11:** *Clapped their hands for joy*, unique here, but see the reading from P at Alma 19.30. **12:** *He being one of the first*, perhaps one of the first to believe Alma’s preaching. **13:** Alma’s baptismal declaration encapsulates the gospel message. *The Spirit of the Lord was upon him*, a variant of the OT “spirit of the Lord came upon [someone],” though this precise wording only occurs here and in the description of Abinadi at 13.5, suggesting that at this moment Alma has inherited Abinadi’s prophetic mission. *I baptize thee, having authority*, cf. 3 Ne 11.25. Alma’s authority to baptize comes directly from God rather than from human intermediaries. **17–30:** Alma’s new church includes a name, an initiation ritual, a priesthood, core doctrine, institutionalized worship, and the practice of charity. **18:** The only previous occurrence of *authority from God* was at 13.6, again suggesting that Alma has become Abinadi’s successor. *Ordained priests*, the third set of priests among the colonists; see 11.5. Four priests would have been needed to minister to the 204 souls of v. 16, and nine priests for the 450 of v. 35.

them concerning the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

¹⁹ And he commanded them that they should teach nothing save it were the things which he had taught, and which had been spoken by the mouth of the holy prophets.

²⁰ Yea, even he commanded them that they should preach nothing save it were repentance and faith on the Lord, who had redeemed his people.

²¹ And he 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.

²² And thus he commanded them to preach. And thus they became the children of God.

²³ And he commanded them that they should observe the sabbath day, and keep it holy, and also every day they should give thanks to the Lord their God.

²⁴ And he also commanded them that the priests whom he had ordained should labor with their own hands for their support.

²⁵ And there was one day in every week that was set apart that they should gather themselves together to teach the people, and to

worship the Lord their God, and also, as often as it was in their power, to assemble themselves together. ²⁶ And the priests were not to depend upon the people for their support; but for their labor they were to receive the grace of God, that they might wax strong in the Spirit, having the knowledge of God, that they might teach with power and authority from God.

²⁷ And again Alma commanded that the people of the church should impart of their substance, every one according to that which he had; if he have more abundantly he should impart more abundantly; and of him that had but little, but little should be required; and to him that had not should be given. ²⁸ And thus they should impart of their substance of their own free will and good desires towards God, and to those priests that stood in need, yea, and to every needy, naked soul. ²⁹ And thus he said unto them, having been commanded of God; and they did walk uprightly before God, imparting to one another both temporally and spiritually according to their needs and their wants.

³⁰ And now it came to pass that all this was done in Mormon, yea, by the waters of Mormon,

19–29: Alma issues a series of seven commands, with the first four apparently directed to the new priests and the last three to the people. The passage would read more smoothly if vv. 24 and 25 were reversed. **20:** *Preach nothing save it were repentance and faith on the Lord* (Alma's message at v. 7), the same restriction is continued when the church is taken into Zarahemla; see 25.15, 22; cf. Alma 37.33. **21:** *Look forward*, to the coming of Christ. *With one eye*, with a single viewpoint, or a singular focus, or doctrinal unity. This verse features a fluent pastiche of NT phrases: *one faith and one baptism* (Eph 4.5), *hearts knit together... in love* (Col 2.2), *in love one toward(s) another* (1 Thess 3.12). **22:** *Children of God*, this NT expression occurs five times in the BoM, usually with the sense of being set apart from ordinary humans, as God's people. The phrase may allude to 15.10–12, where Abinadi identified "the seed" of Christ; cf. the similar title given to Benjamin's people at 5.6–8. **23:** *Observe the sabbath day... keep it holy*, Ex 20.8; Jarom 1.5 offers the only other mention of the Sabbath in the BoM, aside from the citation in the Ten Commandments at Mos 13.16–19. There may be an additional connection between *give thanks to the Lord* and Ps 92.1, which mentions the Sabbath in the superscription. **24:** Alma's priests, unlike Levitical priests or Noah's priests, were self-sufficient. **25:** These weekly gatherings may or may not have been on the Sabbath; cf. v. 32. **27–28:** Charitable giving will be judged according to the resources and desires of the giver. **29:** *Wants*, see 4.26n. **30:** The six repetitions of *Mormon* make this a poignant, poetic passage; the place, the waters, and the forest were all mentioned previously in vv. 4–5, contributing to the inclusio effect of vv. 3–4 and 31. *How beautiful*, an allusion to Isa 52.7, a key scripture in Abinadi's trial (see 12.21; 15.14–18). *Sing to his praise*, also at Alma 26.8; the phrase occurred in the 18th–19th c. and probably means "sing in order to praise him."

in the forest that was near the
waters of Mormon;
yea, the place of Mormon,
the waters of Mormon,
the forest of Mormon,
how beautiful are they to the eyes of
them
who there came to the knowledge
of their Redeemer;
yea, and how blessed are they,
for they shall sing to his praise
forever.

Alma₁'s People Flee

³¹ And these things were done in the borders of the land, that they might not come to the knowledge of the king. ³² But behold, it came to pass that the king, having discovered a movement among the people, sent his servants to watch them. Therefore on the day that they were assembling themselves together to hear the word of the Lord they were discovered unto the king.

³³ And now the king said that Alma was stirring up the people to rebellion against him; therefore he sent his army to destroy them. ³⁴ And it came to pass that Alma and the people of the Lord were apprised of the coming of the king's army; therefore they took their tents and their families and departed into the wilderness. ³⁵ And they were in number about four hundred and fifty souls.

A Lamanite Invasion Saves Noah₃

19 ¹ And it came to pass that the army of the king returned, having searched in vain for the people of the Lord. ² And now behold, the forces of the king were small, having been reduced, and there began to be a division among the remainder of the people. ³ And the lesser part began to breathe out threatenings against the king, and there began to be a great contention among them.

⁴ And now there was a man among them whose name was Gideon, and he being a strong man and an enemy to the king, therefore he drew his sword, and swore in his wrath that he would slay the king. ⁵ And it came to pass that he fought with the king; and when the king saw that he was about to overpower him, he fled and ran and got upon the tower which was near the temple.

⁶ And Gideon pursued after him and was about to get upon the tower to slay the king, and the king cast his eyes round about towards the land of Shemlon, and behold, the army of the Lamanites were within the borders of the land. ⁷ And now the king cried out in the anguish of his soul, saying, "Gideon, spare me, for the Lamanites are upon us, and they will destroy us; yea, they will destroy my people." ⁸ And now the king was not so much concerned about his people as he was about his own life; nevertheless, Gideon did spare his life.

32: *A movement among the people*, likely physical travels rather than an ideological coalition or alliance. **34:** *People of the Lord* is a new designation for Alma's converts; cf. Deut 27.9; Mos 23.1 heading; 25.24. *Apprised*, WB: "informed." It is uncertain whether they were forewarned by human agents or by God (as at 23.1). **35:** The numbers have more than doubled since v. 16. The story of these people is continued at Mos 23.1.

CHAPTER 19

2: No explanation is given for how or why the king's forces were reduced. **4:** Gideon shares a name with one of the hero-judges from Israelite history; see Judg 6–8. He will become the "king's captain" under Noah's son Limhi (20.17). **5:** *The tower which was near the temple*, see 11.12. **6:** Since one of the primary functions of kings in antiquity was military leadership (see 1 Sam 8.20), Noah's death during an invasion would have left his people vulnerable. **8:** The narrator adds a negative assessment of Noah's motivations.

The People of Noah₃ in Bondage

⁹ And the king commanded the people that they should flee before the Lamanites, and he himself did go before them, and they did flee into the wilderness, with their women and their children. ¹⁰ And it came to pass that the Lamanites did pursue them, and did overtake them, and began to slay them. ¹¹ Now it came to pass that the king commanded them that all the men should leave their wives and their children, and flee before the Lamanites. ¹² Now there were many that would not leave them, but had rather stay and perish with them. And the rest left their wives and their children and fled.

¹³ And it came to pass that those who tarried with their wives and their children caused that their fair daughters should stand forth and plead with the Lamanites that they would not slay them. ¹⁴ And it came to pass that the Lamanites had compassion on them, for they were charmed with the beauty of their women. ¹⁵ Therefore the Lamanites did spare their lives, and took them captives and carried them back to the land of Nephi, and granted unto them that they might possess the land, under the conditions that they would deliver up king Noah into the hands of the Lamanites, and deliver up their property, even one half of all they possessed, one half of their gold, and their silver, and all their precious things, and thus they should pay tribute to the king of the Lamanites from year to year.

Noah₃'s Men Return; Noah₃ Is Killed

¹⁶ And now there was one of the sons of the king among those that were taken captive, whose name was Limhi. ¹⁷ And now Limhi was desirous that his father should not be destroyed; nevertheless, Limhi was not ignorant of the iniquities of his father, he himself being a just man.

¹⁸ And it came to pass that Gideon sent men into the wilderness secretly, to search for the king and those that were with him. And it came to pass that they met the people in the wilderness, all save the king and his priests. ¹⁹ Now they had sworn in their hearts that they would return to the land of Nephi, and if their wives and their children were slain, and also those that had tarried with them, that they would seek revenge, and also perish with them. ²⁰ And the king commanded them that they should not return; and they were angry with the king, and caused that he should suffer, even unto death by fire. ²¹ And they were about to take the priests also and put them to death, and they fled before them.

²² And it came to pass that they were about to return to the land of Nephi, and they met the men of Gideon. And the men of Gideon told them of all that had happened to their wives and their children; and that the Lamanites had granted unto them that they might possess the land by paying a tribute to the Lamanites of one half of all they possessed. ²³ And the people told the men of Gideon

9–15: This fulfills Abinadi's prophecy at 11.21. **9–10:** Rather than leading his men into battle, King Noah leads them in flight, expecting that they will prioritize his personal safety over their loyalty to their families. **13:** In a bid to escape death, the colonists offer up their daughters and themselves as slaves. Note that they become property of the Lamanite nation rather than slaves to individual Lamanite households, much like the Israelites in Egypt. **15:** This is the origin of the situation described by King Limhi at 7.22. The treaty appears to require a one-time payment of half of their possessions, followed by annual payments of half of their production. **16–18:** Limhi illustrates the principle of kindness toward imperfect parents (note that he never mentions his father in his account of the colonists' troubles at 7.21–32). Gideon, with different loyalties, wants to capture Noah and deliver him to the Lamanites, in accordance with the stipulations of the treaty; see 20.22. *Just man*, see 2.4n. **19:** They regret their earlier decision to abandon their families, and later will rejoice to discover that their wives and children have survived (v. 24). **20:** Noah's death by fire fulfills Abinadi's prophecies at Mos 12.3; 13.10; 17.18; cf. Alma 25.4–12.

that they had slain the king, and his priests had fled from them farther into the wilderness.²⁴ And it came to pass that after they had ended the ceremony, that they returned to the land of Nephi, rejoicing, because their wives and their children were not slain; and they told Gideon what they had done to the king.

Peace with the Lamanites

²⁵ And it came to pass that the king of the Lamanites made an oath unto them, that his people should not slay them.²⁶ And also Limhi, being the son of the king, having the kingdom conferred upon him by the people, made oath unto the king of the Lamanites that his people should pay tribute unto him, even one half of all they possessed.²⁷ And it came to pass that Limhi began to establish the kingdom and to establish peace among his people.²⁸ And the king of the Lamanites set guards round about the land, that he might keep the people of Limhi in the land, that they might not depart into the wilderness; and he did support his guards out of the tribute which he did receive from the Nephites.²⁹ And now king Limhi did have continual peace in his kingdom for the space of two years,⁴ that the Lamanites did not molest them nor seek to destroy them.

Stolen Daughters of the Lamanites

20¹ Now there was a place in Shemlon where the daughters of the Lamanites

did gather themselves together to sing, and to dance, and to make themselves merry.² And it came to pass that there was one day a small number of them gathered together to sing and to dance.³ And now the priests of king Noah, being ashamed to return to the city of Nephi, yea, and also fearing that the people would slay them, therefore they durst not return to their wives and their children.⁴ And having tarried in the wilderness, and having discovered the daughters of the Lamanites, they laid and watched them;⁵ and when there were but few of them gathered together to dance, they came forth out of their secret places and took them and carried them into the wilderness; yea, twenty and four of the daughters of the Lamanites they carried into the wilderness.

⁶ And it came to pass that when the Lamanites found that their daughters had been missing, they were angry with the people of Limhi, for they thought it was the people of Limhi.⁷ Therefore they sent their armies forth; yea, even the king himself went before his people; and they went up to the land of Nephi to destroy the people of Limhi.

⁸ And now Limhi had discovered them from the tower, even all their preparations for war did he discover; therefore he gathered his people together, and laid wait for them in the fields and in the forests.⁹ And it came to pass that when the Lamanites had come up, that the people of Limhi began to fall upon them from their waiting places, and began to slay

⁴ 29 About 145 BCE

24: *Ceremony*, perhaps a ritual of reconciliation or of contrition for killing the king. **25–29:** The colonists continue to live separately from the Lamanites, with a king of their own choosing, but they are not free to leave. **29:** *Molest*, WB: “to trouble; to disturb.”

CHAPTER 20

1: Shemlon was the Lamanite territory adjacent to the colonists’ lands of Nephi and Shilom; see 11.12. **4–5:** Having abandoned their own families, the priests abduct the young women to make them wives. The priests and the Lamanite daughters reappear at Mos 23.30–35. A biblical story of young women abducted for wives while they were dancing is recounted at Judg 21.16–23. **6–11:** The disappearance of the young women leads to war.

them.¹⁰ And it came to pass that the battle became exceeding sore, for they fought like lions for their prey.¹¹ And it came to pass that the people of Limhi began to drive the Lamanites before them; yet they were not half so numerous as the Lamanites. But they fought for their lives, and for their wives, and for their children; therefore they exerted themselves and like dragons did they fight.

Limhi Questions the Captured Lamanite King

¹² And it came to pass that they found the king of the Lamanites among the number of their dead; yet he was not dead, having been wounded and left upon the ground, so speedy was the flight of his people.¹³ And they took him and bound up his wounds, and brought him before Limhi, and said, “Behold, here is the king of the Lamanites; he having received a wound has fallen among their dead, and they have left him; and behold, we have brought him before you; and now let us slay him.”

¹⁴ But Limhi said unto them, “Ye shall not slay him, but bring him hither that I may see him.” And they brought him.

And Limhi said unto him, “What cause have ye to come up to war against my people? Behold, my people have not broken the oath that I made unto you; therefore, why should ye break the oath which ye made unto my people?”

¹⁵ And now the king said, “I have broken the oath because thy people did carry away the

daughters of my people; therefore, in my anger I did cause my people to come up to war against thy people.”

¹⁶ And now Limhi had heard nothing concerning this matter; therefore he said, “I will search among my people and whosoever has done this thing shall perish.” Therefore he caused a search to be made among his people.

Gideon and Limhi Restore the Peace

¹⁷ Now when Gideon had heard these things, he being the king’s captain, he went forth and said unto the king, “I pray thee forbear, and do not search this people, and lay not this thing to their charge.¹⁸ For do ye not remember the priests of thy father, whom this people sought to destroy? And are they not in the wilderness? And are not they the ones who have stolen the daughters of the Lamanites?¹⁹ And now, behold, and tell the king of these things, that he may tell his people that they may be pacified towards us; for behold they are already preparing to come against us; and behold also there are but few of us.²⁰ And behold, they come with their numerous hosts; and except the king doth pacify them towards us we must perish.²¹ For are not the words of Abinadi fulfilled, which he prophesied against us—and all this because we would not hearken unto the words of the Lord, and turn from our iniquities?²² And now let us pacify the king, and we fulfil the oath which we have made unto him; for it is better that we should be in bondage than that we should lose our

10: Metaphors involving lions and their prey appear about a dozen times in the OT. **11:** The narrator explains that the Nephites were fighting for their families, but neglects to mention that the Lamanites were fighting for their own kidnapped daughters. His point, however, appears to be the contrast with Noah and his priests, who had abandoned their wives and children; see 19.11–12. In the KJV, the word *dragon* is used to refer to snakes, crocodiles, jackals, and a primordial mythological sea monster; perhaps in a New World setting the reference is to crocodiles. **13–14:** Rather than exacting revenge, Limhi seeks to understand the cause of the conflict. The oaths were recorded at Mos 19.25–26. Oaths are never “broken” in the Bible, although covenants are; cf. Alma 44.8; 53.14. **17–18:** Gideon suspects that the culprits are Noah’s fugitive priests. Because of the order in which the narrator has told the story, readers know that Gideon’s hypothesis is correct. *Pray*, to ask earnestly for something. *Forbear*, WB: “to stop; to cease.” *Lay not this thing to their charge*, the phrasing is similar to Acts 7.60. **21:** *Words of Abinadi... prophesied against us*, see 11.20–25; 12.1–8. **22:** *Pacify the king*, the five fold repetition of “pacify” in vv. 19–26 is perhaps an allusion to Prov 16.14.

lives; therefore, let us put a stop to the shedding of so much blood.”

²³ And now Limhi told the king all the things concerning his father, and the priests that had fled into the wilderness, and attributed the carrying away of their daughters to them. ²⁴ And it came to pass that the king was pacified towards his people; and he said unto them, “Let us go forth to meet my people, without arms; and I swear unto you with an oath that my people shall not slay thy people.”

²⁵ And it came to pass that they followed the king, and went forth without arms to meet the Lamanites. And it came to pass that they did meet the Lamanites; and the king of the Lamanites did bow himself down before them, and did plead in behalf of the people of Limhi. ²⁶ And when the Lamanites saw the people of Limhi, that they were without arms, they had compassion on them and were pacified towards them, and returned with their king in peace to their own land.

21 ¹ And it came to pass that Limhi and his people returned to the city of Nephi, and began to dwell in the land again in peace.

Afflictions and Defeats

(with phrases from Abinadi’s prophecies in bold)

² And it came to pass that after many days the Lamanites began again to be stirred up in anger against the Nephites, and they began to

come into the borders of the land round about. ³ Now they durst not slay them, because of the oath which their king had made unto Limhi; but they would **smite them on their cheeks**, and exercise authority over them; and began to put heavy **burdens upon their backs**, and **drive them as they would a dumb ass**— ⁴ Yea, all this was done that the word of the Lord might be fulfilled.^a ⁵ And now the afflictions of the Nephites were great, and there was no way that they could deliver themselves out of their hands, for the Lamanites had surrounded them on every side.

⁶ And it came to pass that the people began to murmur with the king because of their afflictions; and they began to be desirous to go against them to battle. And they did afflict the king sorely with their complaints; therefore he granted unto them that they should do according to their desires. ⁷ And they gathered themselves together again, and put on their armor, and went forth against the Lamanites to drive them out of their land. ⁸ And it came to pass that the Lamanites did beat them, and drove them back, and slew many of them.

⁹ And now there was a great mourning and lamentation among the people of Limhi, the widow mourning for her husband, the son and the daughter mourning for their father, and the brothers for their brethren. ¹⁰ Now there

^a 4 Mos 12.2, 5

24–26: *Without arms*, without weapons; repeated three times for emphasis. The de-escalation of conflict requires the colonists to appeal personally to the Lamanites, from a position of deference and vulnerability, though the Lamanite king guarantees their safety and pleads on their behalf. In the end, the Lamanites are moved not by rational conjectures and explanations, but by compassion. It is a remarkable tale of forgiveness, generosity, and the admission of error, with the Lamanites taking the lead.

CHAPTER 21

2–12: Lamanite harassment of the colonists both fulfills Abinadi’s prophecies and leads to war, resulting in three defeats. 2: *Stirred up in anger*, perhaps because at this point the abductors of their daughters are still at large. 5: *No way that they could deliver themselves*, as prophesied at 11.23; cf. v. 36; 23.23; 24.21; 25.16. 6: The initiative for a forceful response comes from the people rather than from Limhi, who grants permission but does not lead them into battle; see 19.6n. 7: The Nephites, feeling that their situation is intolerable, break the oath that they had made at 19.25–26, even though the Lamanites had been technically abiding by the agreement (v. 3). *Gathered themselves together again*, the first time was at Mos 11.18–19. The *armor* here and at Alma 3.5 must refer to fairly primitive defensive gear since the armor (breastplates, arm-shields, and helmets) at Alma 43.18–21 is depicted as a crucial Nephite military innovation; cf. Alma 43.38; 44.9; 49.6. 9: This verse is closely mirrored at Alma 28.4–5.

were a great many widows in the land, and they did **cry mightily**^a from day to day, for a great fear of the Lamanites had come upon them.

¹¹ And it came to pass that their continual cries did stir up the remainder of the people of Limhi to anger against the Lamanites; and they went again to battle, but they were driven back again, suffering much loss. ¹² Yea, they went again even the third time, and suffered in the like manner; and those that were not slain returned again to the city of Nephi.

Humility and Relief

(with phrases from Abinadi's prophecies in bold)

¹³ And they did humble themselves even to the dust, subjecting themselves to the yoke of **bondage**, submitting themselves to be **smit-ten**, and to be **driven to and fro**, and burdened, according to the desires of **their enemies**.^b ¹⁴ And they did humble themselves even in the depths of humility; and they did **cry mightily to God**; yea, even **all the day long** did they cry unto their God that he would **deliver them out of their afflictions**.^c

¹⁵ And now **the Lord was slow to hear their cry** because of their iniquities;^d nevertheless the Lord did hear their cries, and began to soften the hearts of the Lamanites that they began to ease their burdens; yet the Lord did not see fit to **deliver them out of bondage**.^e

¹⁶ And it came to pass that they began to prosper by degrees in the land, and began to raise grain more abundantly, and flocks, and herds, that they did not suffer with hunger. ¹⁷ Now there was a great number of women, more than there was of men; therefore king Limhi commanded that every man should impart to the support of the widows and their children,

that they might not perish with hunger; and this they did because of the greatness of their number that had been slain.

Ammon, and His Companions Discovered

¹⁸ Now the people of Limhi kept together in a body as much as it was possible, and secured their grain and their flocks; ¹⁹ and the king himself did not trust his person without the walls of the city, unless he took his guards with him, fearing that he might by some means fall into the hands of the Lamanites.

²⁰ And he caused that his people should watch the land round about, that by some means they might take those priests that fled into the wilderness, who had stolen the daughters of the Lamanites, and that had caused such a great destruction to come upon them.

²¹ For they were desirous to take them that they might punish them; for they had come into the land of Nephi by night, and carried off their grain and many of their precious things; therefore they laid wait for them.

²² And it came to pass that there was no more disturbance between the Lamanites and the people of Limhi, even until the time that Ammon and his brethren came into the land.^f

²³ And the king having been without the gates of the city with his guard, discovered Ammon and his brethren; and supposing them to be priests of Noah therefore he caused that they should be taken, and bound, and cast

^a 10 Mos 11.25; cf. 24.10

^b 13 Mos 11.23–24; 17.17

^c 14 Mos 11.25; 12.4

^d 15 Mos 11.24

^e 15 Mos 11.23

^f 22 About 118 BCE; see Mos 7.1–3

15: The narrator adds information about the Lord's thoughts and actions. **16:** Hunger had previously been a problem, in apparent fulfillment of Abinadi's prophecies of famine and grain-devouring insects at 12.4, 6. **17:** Limhi implements a relief program for the bereft and vulnerable. As a result of bitter tragedy, his people come around to doing what Alma's people had done voluntarily at 18.28; the same is true with regard to covenanting to serve God and keep his commandments at v. 31 below and 18.10. **18–19:** Given the incursions of the Lamanites, individual colonists out alone could be in danger. **23:** A case of mistaken identity leads to harsh treatment—a detail not found in the earlier account of this event at 7.7–14.

into prison. And had they been the priests of Noah he would have caused that they should be put to death.²⁴ But when he found that they were not, but that they were his brethren, and had come from the land of Zarahemla, he was filled with exceeding great joy.

A Second Account of Limhi's Search Party

²⁵ Now king Limhi had sent, previous to the coming of Ammon, a small number of men to search for the land of Zarahemla; but they could not find it, and they were lost in the wilderness.²⁶ Nevertheless, they did find a land which had been peopled; yea, a land which was covered with dry bones; yea, a land which had been peopled and which had been destroyed; and they, having supposed it to be the land of Zarahemla, returned to the land of Nephi, having arrived in the borders of the land not many days before the coming of Ammon.²⁷ And they brought a record with them, even a record of the people whose bones they had found; and it was engraven on plates of ore.

Sorrow for the Past and Plans for the Future

²⁸ And now Limhi was again filled with joy on learning from the mouth of Ammon that king Mosiah^a had a gift from God, whereby he

could interpret such engravings; yea, and Ammon also did rejoice.²⁹ Yet Ammon and his brethren were filled with sorrow because so many of their brethren had been slain;³⁰ and also that king Noah and his priests had caused the people to commit so many sins and iniquities against God; and they also did mourn for the death of Abinadi; and also for the departure of Alma and the people that went with him, who had formed a church of God through the strength and power of God, and faith on the words which had been spoken by Abinadi.³¹ Yea, they did mourn for their departure, for they knew not whither they had fled. Now they would have gladly joined with them, for they themselves had entered into a covenant with God to serve him and keep his commandments.

³² And now since the coming of Ammon, king Limhi had also entered into a covenant with God, and also many of his people, to serve him and keep his commandments.³³ And it came to pass that king Limhi and many of his people were desirous to be baptized; but there was none in the land that had authority from God. And Ammon declined doing this thing, considering himself an unworthy servant.

³⁴ Therefore they did not at that time form

^a 28 P Benjamin; 1837 Mosiah; cf. Ether 4.1

25–27: The first account was at Mos 8.7–11. 26–27: Limhi's men *supposed it was the land of Zarahemla*, but Limhi himself, being literate, would have realized that the unknown script on the plates was not the reformed Egyptian of the Nephites. 27: *Plates of ore*, that is, plates made of metal smelted from ore; cf. 1 Ne 19.1. 28: With the long flashback concluded, the narrative picks up from Mos 8.21 and returns to the conversation of Ammon and Limhi about seers. *King Mosiah*, this 1837 revision is one of the very few narrative corrections in the text. Chronologically, Mosiah makes more sense, though it is possible that Ammon's search party left Zarahemla in the third year after Benjamin's abdication, but before his death; see 6.4–7.1. In any case, Mosiah is the one who actually translates the Jaredite record; see 28.10–19. 29–31: These verses describe the emotional reaction of Ammon and his men upon learning the history of the colonists, which Ammon had read at 8.5. 30: *Caused the people to commit so many sins*, see 11.2; 12.29. The idea that rulers can influence their people for good or for ill is further developed in ch. 29. 31: That is, Ammon and his companions, having made the covenant described at 6.1–2, would have gladly joined with Alma's people. *A covenant... to serve [God] and keep his commandments* are two major components of both Benjamin and Alma's covenants; see 5.5 and 18.10. 32–35: News of King Benjamin's covenant has inspired Limhi's people to undertake similar vows. Although they would like to be baptized as a witness of that covenant, there is no one with authority to perform the ritual, and they do not know of anyone other than Alma who could do so, hence the necessity of *waiting upon the Spirit of the Lord*; cf. 18.12–13. It is not clear that there was anyone back in Zarahemla, among the people of King Mosiah, with the authority to baptize.

themselves into a church, waiting upon the Spirit of the Lord. Now they were desirous to become even as Alma and his brethren, who had fled into the wilderness.³⁵ They were desirous to be baptized as a witness and a testimony that they were willing to serve God with all their hearts; nevertheless they did prolong the time; and an account of their baptism shall be given hereafter.

³⁶ And now all the study of Ammon and his people, and king Limhi and his people, was to deliver themselves out of the hands of the Lamanites and from bondage.

The People of Limhi Escape and Return to Zarahemla

[X] **22** ¹ And now it came to pass that Ammon and king Limhi began to consult with the people how they should deliver themselves out of bondage; and even they did cause that all the people should gather themselves together; and this they did that they might have the voice of the people concerning the matter.² And it came to pass that they could find no way to deliver themselves out of bondage, except it were to take their women and children, and their flocks, and their herds, and their tents, and depart into the wilderness; for the Lamanites being so numerous, it was impossible for the people

of Limhi to contend with them, thinking to deliver themselves out of bondage by the sword.

³ Now it came to pass that Gideon went forth and stood before the king, and said unto him, “Now O king, thou hast hitherto hearkened unto my words many times when we have been contending with our brethren, the Lamanites.⁴ And now O king, if thou hast not found me to be an unprofitable servant, or if thou hast hitherto listened to my words in any degree, and they have been of service to thee, even so I desire that thou wouldst listen to my words at this time, and I will be thy servant and deliver this people out of bondage.”

⁵ And the king granted unto him that he might speak. And Gideon said unto him, ⁶ “Behold the back pass, through the back wall, on the back side of the city. The Lamanites, or the guards of the Lamanites, by night are drunken; therefore let us send a proclamation among all this people that they gather together their flocks and herds, that they may drive them into the wilderness by night.⁷ And I will go according to thy command and pay the last tribute of wine to the Lamanites, and they will be drunken; and we will pass through the secret pass on the left of the camp when they are drunken and asleep.⁸ Thus we will depart with our women and our children, our flocks,

35: *As a witness and a testimony* combines a phrase from Alma’s invitation to baptism with one from the baptismal prayer itself; see 18.10, *Serve God with all their hearts*, Deut 10.12; 11.13; Josh 22.5; 1 Sam 12.20, 24; the significance of this Christian ritual is described in Deuteronomistic terms, 13. *Prolong*, delay or postpone. *An account . . . hereafter*, see 25.17–18, when they are baptized by Alma. **36:** *Study*, OED: “thought or attention directed to the accomplishment of a purpose.” *Deliver themselves out of . . . bondage* (and three more times at 22.1–2), this is unexpected since the colonists would have remembered Abinadi’s prophecy that “none shall deliver them except it be the Lord” (11.23). Chapter 22 offers a secular account of how Limhi’s people devise and execute a plan to escape captivity, though at 25.16 and 29.18–20 both Alma and Mosiah remind the colonists that, despite appearances, it was actually God who had delivered them (certainly the fortuitous arrival of the search party from Zarahemla made a difference).

CHAPTER 22

1: *The voice of the people*, see 7.9n. **3:** *Hearkened unto my words many times*, for example, at 20.17–22. Despite ongoing, brutal hostilities, Gideon still refers to the Lamanites as *our brethren*. **6:** The threefold repetition of *back* highlights the furtive nature of the plan. *Guards of the Lamanites*, that is, Lamanite guards. **7–8:** Not to notice an entire population passing by, including their flocks and herds, would require extraordinary inebriation; the plan was quite risky.

and our herds into the wilderness; and we will travel around the land of Shilom.”

⁹ And it came to pass that the king hearkened unto the words of Gideon. ¹⁰ And king Limhi caused that his people should gather their flocks together; and he sent the tribute of wine to the Lamanites; and he also sent more wine, as a present unto them; and they did drink freely of the wine which king Limhi did send unto them. ¹¹ And it came to pass that the people of king Limhi did depart by night into the wilderness with their flocks and their herds, and they went round about the land of Shilom in the wilderness, and bent their course towards the land of Zarahemla, being led by Ammon and his brethren. ¹² And they had taken all their gold, and silver, and their precious things, which they could carry, and also their provisions with them, into the wilderness; and they pursued their journey. ¹³ And after being many days in the wilderness they arrived in the land of Zarahemla, and joined Mosiah’s people, and became his subjects. ¹⁴ And it came to pass that Mosiah received them with joy; and he also received their records, and also the records which had been found by the people of Limhi.

¹⁵ And now it came to pass when the Lamanites had found that the people of Limhi had departed out of the land by night, that they sent an army into the wilderness to

pursue them; ¹⁶ and after they had pursued them two days, they could no longer follow their tracks; therefore they were lost in the wilderness.

An Account of Alma’s People (a flashback): Mosiah 23–24

[*Mormon*₂’s heading] An account of Alma and the people of the Lord, who were driven into the wilderness by the people of King Noah.

Alma, and His People Flee from King Noah’s Armies

[XI] **23** ¹ Now Alma, having been warned of the Lord that the armies of king Noah would come upon them, and having made it known to his people, therefore they gathered together their flocks, and took of their grain, and departed into the wilderness before the armies of king Noah. ² And the Lord did strengthen them, that the people of king Noah could not overtake them to destroy them. ³ And they fled eight days’ journey into the wilderness. ⁴ And they came to a land, yea, even a very beautiful and pleasant land, a land of pure water. ⁵ And they pitched their tents, and began to till the ground, and began to build buildings; yea, they were industrious, and did labor exceedingly.

10: King Noah’s winemaking innovations (11.15) at this moment come in handy. The fact that the Lamanites accept a gift, over and above the obligatory tribute, suggests that the two groups had settled into a working relationship; see 21.15. **11:** The repetition of phrases from v. 8 implies that Gideon’s plan was executed with exactness. *Bent their course*, unique here in scripture, though common in English from the 17th c. on. **13:** We last heard of Mosiah and his people at Mos 7.2. **14:** As is common in the BoM, the transference of records is given prominence; indeed, the merging of peoples is matched by a merging of records. *The records which had been found*, see 8.9; 21.25–27; 2 Ne 29.8–14n. **15–16:** Not being able to follow the tracks of so many people and animals seems miraculous (perhaps there was a torrential rainstorm); the story of the Lamanite army is continued at 23.30.

CHAPTER 23

1: This narrative is picked up from 18.34–35. Alma’s flight, after a divine warning, is reminiscent of those of Lehi, Nephi, and Mosiah₁; see 1 Ne 2.1–3; 2 Ne 5.5–6; Omni 1.12–13. **2:** It seems unlikely that a party composed of men, women, children, and domesticated animals could outrun pursuing soldiers and then lose them entirely, but the narrator describes it as a miracle. **3:** An eight days’ journey for a group that included women, old people, and children is not that far. Perhaps they had crossed a natural barrier, or perhaps Noah’s soldiers were not enthusiastic about carrying out their mission. **4:** This is the second time Alma’s people have come upon *pure water*; see 18.5.

Alma₁ Rejects an Offer of Kingship

⁶ And the people were desirous that Alma should be their king, for he was beloved by his people. ⁷ But he said unto them, “Behold, it is not expedient that we should have a king; for thus saith the Lord: ‘Ye shall not esteem one flesh above another, or one man shall not think himself above another.’ Therefore I say unto you it is not expedient that ye should have a king. ⁸ Nevertheless, if it were possible that ye could always have just men to be your kings it would be well for you to have a king. ⁹ But remember the iniquity of king Noah and his priests; and I myself was caught in a snare, and did many things which were abominable in the sight of the Lord, which caused me sore repentance; ¹⁰ nevertheless, after much tribulation, the Lord did hear my cries, and did answer my prayers, and has made me an instrument in his hands in bringing so many of you to a knowledge of his truth. ¹¹ Nevertheless, in this I do not glory, for I am unworthy to glory of myself.

¹² “And now I say unto you, ye have been oppressed by king Noah, and have been in bondage to him and his priests, and have been brought into iniquity by them; therefore ye were bound with the bands of iniquity. ¹³ And now as ye have been delivered by the power of

God out of these bonds; yea, even out of the hands of king Noah and his people, and also from the bonds of iniquity, even so I desire that ye should stand fast in this liberty wherewith ye have been made free, and that ye trust no man to be a king over you. ¹⁴ And also trust no one to be your teacher nor your minister, except he be a man of God, walking in his ways and keeping his commandments.” ¹⁵ Thus did Alma teach his people, that every man should love his neighbor as himself, that there should be no contention among them.

¹⁶ And now, Alma was their high priest, he being the founder of their church. ¹⁷ And it came to pass that none received authority to preach or to teach except it were by him from God. Therefore he consecrated all their priests and all their teachers; and none were consecrated except they were just men. ¹⁸ Therefore they did watch over their people, and did nourish them with things pertaining to righteousness.

Mormon₂ Explains Why the Lord Tries His People

¹⁹ And it came to pass that they began to prosper exceedingly in the land; and they called the land Helam. ²⁰ And it came to pass that they did multiply and prosper exceedingly in

6–9: Alma’s main objection to monarchy is not the resulting loss of freedom or the displacement of God as heavenly king (as at Judg 8.22–23 or 1 Sam 8.4–7), but rather the introduction of social inequality. Nevertheless, kingship could be good in theory, even if it seldom works out in practice; cf. 29.12–13. He may be citing a new revelation here. In the end, he is more successful than Nephi in fending off a request to become king; see 2 Ne 5.18. *Just men to be your kings*, see 2.4n. **9:** *Sore*, WB: “severe; distressing.” **12:** *In bondage to him and his priests*, this seems to have been spiritual bondage, in contrast with the physical bondage to the Lamanites, under the oversight of these same priests, which will shortly befall Alma’s people (vv. 25–39). *Bands, fetters*. **13:** *Stand fast in this liberty wherewith ye have been made free*, Gal 5.1; Alma 58.40; 61.9, 21. In the BoM the phrase refers to both political and spiritual freedom; the NT usage, by contrast, focuses solely on spiritual liberation. **14:** This is the only occurrence of *minister* as a noun in the BoM, aside from Nephi’s prophecies of the twelve BoM disciples at 1 Ne 12.9–10. The combination of “walk in his ways” and “keep his commandments” is a Deuteronomistic formula. **15:** *Love his neighbor as himself*; the Golden Rule, originating at Lev 19.18 and often cited in the NT. **16:** The title *founder of their church* will again be applied to Alma at 29.47. **17:** In consecrating priests and teachers, Alma is following the precedent set by Nephi at 2 Ne 5.26; his son will do the same at Alma 4.7 and 15.13. **19:** *Helam*, presumably named for one of Alma’s first converts; see 18.12–14. **20:** The term “city” is used generously here, since the population would have been about 500 people; see 18.35.

the land of Helam; and they built a city, which they called the city of Helam.

²¹ Nevertheless the Lord seeth fit to chasten his people; yea, he trieth their patience and their faith. ²² Nevertheless—whosoever putteth his trust in him the same shall be lifted up at the last day. Yea, and thus it was with this people. ²³ For behold, I will show unto you that they were brought into bondage, and none could deliver them but the Lord their God, yea, even the God of Abraham and Isaac and of Jacob. ²⁴ And it came to pass that he did deliver them, and he did show forth his mighty power unto them, and great were their rejoicings.

The People of Alma, in Bondage

²⁵ For behold, it came to pass that while they were in the land of Helam, yea, in the city of Helam, while tilling the land round about, behold an army of the Lamanites was in the borders of the land. ²⁶ Now it came to pass that the brethren of Alma fled from their fields, and gathered themselves together in the city of Helam; and they were much frightened because of the appearance of the Lamanites.

²⁷ But Alma went forth and stood among them, and exhorted them that they should not be frightened, but that they should remember the Lord their God and he would deliver them. ²⁸ Therefore they hushed their

fears, and began to cry unto the Lord that he would soften the hearts of the Lamanites, that they would spare them, and their wives, and their children. ²⁹ And it came to pass that the Lord did soften the hearts of the Lamanites. And Alma and his brethren went forth and delivered themselves up into their hands; and the Lamanites took possession of the land of Helam.

³⁰ Now the armies of the Lamanites, which had followed after the people of king Limhi, had been lost in the wilderness for many days.

³¹ And behold, they had found those priests of king Noah, in a place which they called Amulon; and they had begun to possess the land of Amulon and had begun to till the ground. ³² Now the name of the leader of those priests was Amulon. ³³ And it came to pass that Amulon did plead with the Lamanites; and he also sent forth their wives, who were the daughters of the Lamanites, to plead with their brethren, that they should not destroy their husbands. ³⁴ And the Lamanites had compassion on Amulon and his brethren, and did not destroy them, because of their wives. ³⁵ And Amulon and his brethren did join the Lamanites, and they were traveling in the wilderness in search of the land of Nephi when they discovered the land of Helam, which was possessed by Alma and his brethren.

21–24: Mormon, as the narrator, is eager to defend the justice of God despite the oppression and sorrow that will come upon the righteous people of Alma; before the story even begins he proleptically explains that the suffering was a test of their patience and faith, and he assures readers of their ultimate deliverance. A few verses in the Bible describe those whom the Lord chastens as “blessed” or “loved”; see Ps 94:12; Prov 3:11–12; Heb 12:5–11. **22:** *Whosoever putteth his trust in him... lifted up at the last day* is repeated again at Alma 36:3 and 38:5. The moral principle cited here does not directly apply to the narrative that follows, which shows God rescuing Alma’s people from tribulation in this life, rather than waiting until the Resurrection and Final Judgment. **23:** *None could deliver them but the Lord*, see 24:21n. **25–29:** The people of Alma surrender to the Lamanite army—the same army that had unsuccessfully pursued the people of Limhi—without a fight. **26:** *The appearance of the Lamanites* likely refers to their unexpected arrival, but could also describe their imposing physiques. **28:** *Hushed*, the only instance of this verb in scripture. **29:** The liberty they enjoyed at v. 13 did not last long, as they now deliver themselves over to the Lamanites. **30–35:** This brief explanatory digression continues the narrative from Mos 22:16. **33:** These wives had been abducted at 20:5; they have since that time become emotionally attached to their captors, perhaps as a result of their youthfulness and trauma. Their pleas are reminiscent of the story of the Sabine women in Livy’s history of Rome. **35:** The priests decide that their future will be better with the Lamanites than in their isolated settlement.

³⁶ And it came to pass that the Lamanites promised unto Alma and his brethren, that if they would show them the way which led to the land of Nephi that they would grant unto them their lives and their liberty.³⁷ But after Alma had shown them the way that led to the land of Nephi the Lamanites would not keep their promise; but they set guards round about the land of Helam, over Alma and his brethren.³⁸ And the remainder of them went to the land of Nephi; and a part of them returned to the land of Helam, and also brought with them the wives and the children of the guards who had been left in the land.³⁹ And the king of the Lamanites had granted unto Amulon that he should be a king and a ruler over his people, who were in the land of Helam; nevertheless he should have no power to do anything contrary to the will of the king of the Lamanites.

The Priests of Noah₃ Teach the Lamanites

24¹ And it came to pass that Amulon did gain favor in the eyes of the king of the Lamanites; therefore, the king of the Lamanites granted unto him and his brethren that they should be appointed teachers over his people, yea, even over the people who were in the land of Shemlon, and in the land of Shilom, and in the land of Amulon.² For the

Lamanites had taken possession of all these lands; therefore, the king of the Lamanites had appointed kings over all these lands.³ And now the name of the king of the Lamanites was Laman, being called after the name of his father; and therefore he was called king Laman. And he was king over a numerous people.⁴ And he appointed teachers of the brethren of Amulon in every land which was possessed by his people; and thus the language of Nephi began to be taught among all the people of the Lamanites.

⁵ And they were a people friendly one with another; nevertheless they knew not God; neither did the brethren of Amulon teach them anything concerning the Lord their God, neither the law of Moses; nor did they teach them the words of Abinadi;⁶ but they taught them that they should keep their record, and that they might write one to another.⁷ And thus the Lamanites began to increase in riches, and began to trade one with another and wax great, and began to be a cunning and a wise people, as to the wisdom of the world, yea, a very cunning people, delighting in all manner of wickedness and plunder, except it were among their own brethren.

Alma, 's People Persecuted and Comforted

⁸ And now it came to pass that Amulon began to exercise authority over Alma and his brethren,

36–37: Through deception, the Lamanites bring the people of Alma into bondage, with Alma's former colleague, the ex-priest Amulon, as their overseer. In the BoM, *promises* are less reliable than oaths, unless they are made by the Lord; cf. 10.18; Alma 51.10; Ether 8.17.

CHAPTER 24

1–2: The land of Nephi is not mentioned, perhaps because King Laman exercised direct control there. The lands of Shemlon and Shilom will reappear in the narrative at Alma 23.12; the land of Amulon is next mentioned at Alma 24.1. 4: This is the first indication of a linguistic division between Nephites and Lamanites, though it may be that written language was the subject of the priests' lessons (v. 6). The priests are themselves wicked, yet their actions may have unintended positive consequences: this educational initiative in the Nephite language could have laid the foundation for the successful missionary labors of the sons of Mosiah a generation later, at Alma 17–27. 5: *A people friendly one with another*, referring to the combined Amulonites and Lamanites. *Neither the Law of Moses*, cf. 12.27–28. 6–7: Literacy is seen as a key to economic prosperity. 8: The fact that Amulon has had children with a kidnapped Lamanite wife is an indication of how much time has passed.

and began to persecute him, and cause that his children should persecute their children.⁹ For 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, and therefore he was wroth with him; for he was subject to king Laman, yet he exercised authority over them, and put tasks upon them, and put task-masters over them.

¹⁰ And it came to pass that so great were their afflictions that they began to cry mightily to God.¹¹ And Amulon commanded them that they should stop their cries; and he put guards over them to watch them, that whosoever should be found calling upon God should be put to death.¹² 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.

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ 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."¹⁵ 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.

Alma's People Delivered

¹⁶ And it came to pass that so great was their faith and their patience that the voice of the Lord came unto them again, saying, "Be of good comfort, for on the morrow I will deliver you out of bondage."¹⁷ And he said unto Alma, "Thou shalt go before this people, and I will go with thee and deliver this people out of bondage."

¹⁸ Now it came to pass that Alma and his people in the night-time gathered their flocks together, and also of their grain; yea, even all the night-time were they gathering their flocks together.¹⁹ And in the morning the Lord caused a deep sleep to come upon the Lamanites, yea, and all their task-masters were in a profound sleep.²⁰ And Alma and his people departed into the wilderness; and when they had traveled all day they pitched their tents in a valley, and they called the valley Alma, because he led their way

9: *Driven out before the king*, see 17.1–3. The word *taskmasters* appears six times in the OT, all in the Exodus story. **10:** Both the people of Alma and the people of Limhi *cry mightily* to God (Mos 21.10, 14), as had been prophesied by Abinadi at 11.25. **11–12:** Alma's people are forced into silent prayer, which seems to have been a less common practice. Their decision to cease praying aloud contrasts with that of Daniel at Dan 6.6–13. **12:** The BoM regularly asserts that God knows the thoughts of one's heart (see Jacob 2.5n; Alma 12.3, 7; 18.32; Hel 9.41; 3 Ne 28.6); the mortal Jesus was said at Mt 9.4; Lk 11.17 to have the same power. **13–14:** *Lift up your heads and be of good comfort*, echoing the words of King Limhi at 7.18. Note that the revelation seems to come to the people as a whole, directly, rather than through a prophet (also v. 16). *The covenant which ye have made*, at 18.10, 13. God's offering *comfort* and easing *burdens* so they were made light, thus enabling the people to *stand as witnesses* (vv. 13–15), suggests that he is acting as their covenant partner; cf. 18.8–9. **14–15:** *That even ye cannot feel them upon your backs*, a promise that reflects both Mos 12.5 and 18.8 (with the key word *burdens* linking all three verses). God does not take away their burdens, but rather makes them bearable. **16:** Apparently *their faith and their patience* passed the test posed at 23.21. A similar revelation that a deliverance would come the next day occurs at 3 Ne 1.10–14. **17:** *I will go with thee* echoes the assurance God gave to the patriarch Israel when he was taking his family down to Egypt to escape the famine; see Gen 46.2–4. **19:** The deliverance of Alma's people from the Lamanites is more miraculous than that of Limhi's people, which involved alcohol. A similar miracle, including a "deep sleep from the Lord," was recounted at 1 Sam 26.12.

in the wilderness.²¹ Yea, and in the valley of Alma they poured out their thanks to God because he had been merciful unto them, and eased their burdens, and had delivered them out of bondage; for they were in bondage, and none could deliver them except it were the Lord their God.²² And they gave thanks to God, yea, all their men and all their women and all their children that could speak lifted their voices in the praises of their God.

²³ And now the Lord said unto Alma, “Haste thee and get thou and this people out of this land, for the Lamanites have awakened and do pursue thee; therefore get thee out of this land, and I will stop the Lamanites in this valley that they come no further in pursuit of this people.”

²⁴ And it came to pass that they departed out of the valley, and took their journey into the wilderness.²⁵ And after they had been in the wilderness twelve days they arrived in the land of Zarahemla; and king Mosiah did also receive them with joy.^a

Reunion at Zarahemla

25¹ And now king Mosiah caused that all the people should be gathered

together.² Now there were not so many of the children of Nephi, or so many of those who were descendants of Nephi, as there were of the people of Zarahemla, who was a descendant of Mulek, and those who came with him into the wilderness.³ And there were not so many of the people of Nephi and of the people of Zarahemla as there were of the Lamanites; yea, they were not half so numerous.⁴ And now all the people of Nephi were assembled together, and also all the people of Zarahemla, and they were gathered together in two bodies.

⁵ And it came to pass that Mosiah did read, and caused to be read, the records of Zeniff to his people; yea, he read the records of the people of Zeniff, from the time they left the land of Zarahemla until they returned again.

⁶ And he also read the account of Alma and his brethren, and all their afflictions, from the time they left the land of Zarahemla until the time they returned again.

⁷ And now, when Mosiah had made an end of reading the records, his people who tarried in the land were struck with wonder and

^a 25 About 118 BCE; see Mos 7.1–3

21: *None could deliver them except... God*, as prophesied at Mos 11.23. **22–23:** The revelation to Alma tells his people to stop praying and start moving; cf. Ex 14.15 for similar instructions to the Israelites at the Red Sea. **22:** *All their children that could speak*, that is, children over the age of three or four. Apparently even small children could sense the gravity of their situation, or at least respond to their parents' fears and relief. **23:** Nothing further is known about how the Lord stopped the Lamanites in the valley of Alma. **25:** The land of Nephi was about a twenty-one day journey from Zarahemla for a large multigenerational group traveling with their animals. Twelve days are mentioned here, plus one day at v. 20 above, and eight days from the land of Nephi to the land of Helam (23.3). This is evidence that the events of the BoM played out over a few hundred miles, rather than thousands of miles. *King Mosiah did also receive them with joy*, just as he did with the people of Limhi at 22.14.

CHAPTER 25

1: At this point, three separate narratives (the stories of the people of Mosiah, the people of Limhi, and the people of Alma) have come together. **2–3:** The Nephite discovery of the Mulekites was recounted at Omni 1.15–16. The number of Nephites had been greatly reduced at Omni 1.5. Some readers explain the disproportionate population sizes as the result of Lamanite intermarriage with indigenous peoples. **4:** In the third generation of political union under Nephite kings, and about three years following King Benjamin's covenant-making, the Nephites and Mulekites still remain ethnically distinct. **5–6:** Through his inclusion of lengthy quotations and primary sources, Mormon has duplicated the experience of Mosiah's people for his own readers. As is typical in the BoM, different peoples keep records of their respective histories. The records of Zeniff are at Mos 9–10; the records of the people of Limhi are at Mos 11; 19–22; the account of Alma and his brethren is at Mos 12–18; 23–24. **6:** There seems to be something missing here or faulty parallelism, since Alma and his brethren had never left Zarahemla. **7–11:** In this description, the crowd reacts as one, perhaps in response to each episode as it is read aloud. An account of similar reactions to the relating of community history occurred at 21.28–30.

amazement.⁸ For they knew not what to think; for when they beheld those that had been delivered out of bondage they were filled with exceeding great joy.⁹ And again, when they thought of their brethren who had been slain by the Lamanites they were filled with sorrow, and even shed many tears of sorrow.¹⁰ And again, when they thought of the immediate goodness of God, and his power in delivering Alma and his brethren out of the hands of the Lamanites and of bondage, they did raise their voices and give thanks to God.¹¹ And again, when they thought upon the Lamanites, who were their brethren, of their sinful and polluted state, they were filled with pain and anguish for the welfare of their souls.

¹² And it came to pass that those who were the children of Amulon and his brethren, who had taken to wife the daughters of the Lamanites, were displeased with the conduct of their fathers, and they would no longer be called by the names of their fathers, therefore they took upon themselves the name of Nephi, that they might be called the children of Nephi and be numbered among those who were called Nephites.¹³ And now all the people of Zarahemla were numbered with the Nephites, and this because the kingdom had been conferred upon none but those who were descendants of Nephi.

A Church Is Established at Zarahemla

¹⁴ And now it came to pass that when Mosiah had made an end of speaking and reading to the people, he desired that Alma should also speak to the people.¹⁵ And Alma did speak unto them, when they were assembled together in large bodies, and he went from one body to another, preaching unto the people repentance and faith on the Lord.¹⁶ And he did exhort the people of Limhi and his brethren, all those that had been delivered out of bondage, that they should remember that it was the Lord that did deliver them.

¹⁷ And it came to pass that after Alma had taught the people many things, and had made an end of speaking to them, that king Limhi was desirous that he might be baptized; and all his people were desirous that they might be baptized also.¹⁸ Therefore, Alma did go forth into the water and did baptize them; yea, he did baptize them after the manner he did his brethren in the waters of Mormon; yea, and as many as he did baptize did belong to the church of God; and this because of their belief on the words of Alma.

¹⁹ And it came to pass that king Mosiah granted unto Alma that he might establish churches throughout all the land of Zarahemla; and gave him power to ordain priests and teachers over every church.²⁰ Now this was

10: *Immediate*, with no intermediaries, rather than “with no delay.” **12:** The older children of the priests, who had been abandoned at 20.3, were unhappy to learn from the people of Alma of their fathers’ new families and wicked ways. This rejection of paternal heritage suggests that the priests of King Noah were of Mulekite descent. **13:** Apparently religious unity under the designation “children of Christ” (5.7) was not entirely successful; the two groups are now combined politically as *Nephites*, which may have been an attempt to erase Mulekite identity and opposing claims to kingship. **15:** *Repentance and faith on the Lord* were the same subjects that Alma had commanded the priests to preach at the waters of Mormon; see 18.20 (cf. v. 22 below and Alma₂’s advice to Helaman at Alma 37.33). **16:** Without Alma’s exhortation, the people of Limhi might have been tempted to assume that they had delivered themselves, through their plan to get the Lamanite guards drunk; see 21.36n. **17:** Limhi’s baptism is his last action reported in the Nephite records even though he had been a king in the land of Nephi. Nothing more is known of his later life or of his people as a distinct group. **18:** This account was promised at 21.35. Admittance into the *church of God* through baptism follows the precedent at 18.14–17. **19–22:** Having made converts of all the former colonists, Alma takes his new religious movement to the main body of Nephites and Mulekites in the land of Zarahemla. **19:** *Churches*, that is, congregations; see 1 Ne 13.5n. *Gave him power to ordain*, Alma’s church operates under state approval; cf. 26.8. According to Alma 1.7–8, the Limhite military hero Gideon was ordained as a teacher.

done because there were so many people that they could not all be governed by one teacher; neither could they all hear the word of God in one assembly; ²¹ therefore they did assemble themselves together in different bodies, being called churches; every church having their priests and their teachers, and every priest preaching the word according as it was delivered to him by the mouth of Alma. ²² And thus, notwithstanding there being many churches they were all one church, yea, even the church of God; for there was nothing preached in all the churches except it were repentance and faith in God.

²³ And now there were seven churches in the land of Zarahemla. And it came to pass that whosoever were desirous to take upon them the name of Christ, or of God, they did join the churches of God; ²⁴ and they were called the people of God. And the Lord did pour out his Spirit upon them, and they were blessed, and prospered in the land.

Young Unbelievers

26 ¹ Now it came to pass that there were many of the rising generation that could not understand the words of king

Benjamin, being little children at the time he spake unto his people; and they did not believe the tradition of their fathers. ² They did not believe what had been said concerning the resurrection of the dead, neither did they believe concerning the coming of Christ. ³ And now because of their unbelief they could not understand the word of God; and their hearts were hardened. ⁴ And they would not be baptized; neither would they join the church. And they were a separate people as to their faith, and remained so ever after, even in their carnal and sinful state; for they would not call upon the Lord their God.

⁵ And now in the reign of Mosiah they were not half so numerous as the people of God; but because of the dissensions among the brethren they became more numerous. ⁶ For it came to pass that they did deceive many with their flattering words, who were in the church, and did cause them to commit many sins; therefore it became expedient that those who committed sin, that were in the church, should be admonished by the church.

Questions of Church Discipline

⁷ And it came to pass that they were brought before the priests, and delivered up unto the

23: *Seven churches*, reminiscent of Rev 1.4, 11, 20; cf. Alma 23.8–13. *Take upon them the name of Christ*, Alma's church offers an organization that supplemented the covenant that King Benjamin had offered to his people; see 5.8–10. The need for this type of organized religion becomes apparent in the next chapter. In the BoM the label *people of God* usually refers to members of the church, though at Alma 2.11 the term is used for the Nephites in general.

CHAPTER 26

1: These children were mentioned at 6.2. Fear that the next generation will not continue the religious traditions of their parents is nearly universal, especially when the children have no firsthand knowledge of what their mothers and fathers experienced. **2:** These two doctrines are at the heart of the Nephite religion, and are repeatedly challenged by dissenters. **3:** Tellingly, unbelief leads to a lack of understanding, rather than vice versa. **4:** *They would not be baptized*, the Nephites must have been practicing adult baptism, rather than child baptism. **5:** Apparently conflict among church members is discouraging people from being baptized. **6:** *Flattering words* had been a tool of King Noah and his priests; see 11.7; cf. Alma 30.47. These unnamed sins were apparently not crimes, and therefore were dealt with by ecclesiastical rather than civil authorities. *Admonish*, WB: "in ecclesiastical affairs, to reprove a member of the church for a fault, either publicly or privately; the first step of church discipline." **7–33:** The pattern of an unprecedented case being brought to a religious leader, who seeks divine guidance, receives revelation, and then implements the new law, follows the example of Moses at Lev 24.10–16, 23; Num 9.6–14; 15.32–36; 27.1–11. **7:** *Who was the high priest*, Alma has continued in this position since his days in the city of Helam; see 23.16.

priests by the teachers; and the priests brought them before Alma, who was the high priest.
⁸ Now king Mosiah had given Alma the authority over the church. ⁹ And it came to pass that Alma did not know concerning them; but there were many witnesses^a against them; yea, the people stood and testified of their iniquity in abundance.

¹⁰ Now there had not any such thing happened before in the church; therefore Alma was troubled in his spirit, and he caused that they should be brought before the king. ¹¹ And he said unto the king, “Behold, here are many whom we have brought before thee, who are accused of their brethren; yea, and they have been taken in divers iniquities. And they do not repent of their iniquities; therefore we have brought them before thee, that thou mayest judge them according to their crimes.”

¹² But king Mosiah said unto Alma, “Behold, I judge them not; therefore I deliver them into thy hands to be judged.”

¹³ And now the spirit of Alma was again troubled; and he went and inquired of the Lord what he should do concerning this matter, for he feared that he should do wrong in the sight of God. ¹⁴ And it came to pass that after he had poured out his whole soul to God, the voice of the Lord came to him, saying:

¹⁵ “Blessed art thou, Alma,
 and blessed are they who were
 baptized in the waters of
 Mormon.

Thou art blessed because of thy
 exceeding faith
 in the words alone of my servant
 Abinadi.

¹⁶ And blessed are they because of their
 exceeding faith
 in the words alone which thou hast
 spoken unto them.

¹⁷ And blessed art thou because thou
 hast established a church among
 this people;
 and they shall be established, and
 they shall be my people.

¹⁸ Yea, blessed is this people who are
 willing to bear my name;
 for in my name shall they be called;
 and they are mine.

¹⁹ “And because thou hast inquired of me
 concerning the transgressor, thou art blessed.

²⁰ Thou art my servant; and I covenant with
 thee that thou shalt have eternal life; and thou
 shalt serve me and go forth in my name, and
 shalt gather together my sheep. ²¹ And he that

^a ⁹ P Alma did know concerning them, for there were many witnesses

11–12: Mosiah declines to take action, although there was precedent for kings punishing people “according to their [religious] crimes” at WoM 1:15–16. **15–18:** God pronounces blessings upon those who have heeded Alma’s words, and upon Alma himself for inquiring of the Lord. These six beatitudes may be precursors of the extra blessings added at 3 Ne 12.1–2 to the Nephite version of the Sermon on the Mount. **15:** *Baptized in the waters of Mormon*, see 18.16 and 25.18, the blessedness of these people was noted at 18.30. For Alma’s faith in Abinadi’s words, see 17.2. *Words alone* implies words without accompanying miracles. **16:** For the people’s faith in Alma’s words, see 18.3. **17:** *They shall be established*, that is, built up or made secure; the verb applies to both the new church and also its members. *They shall be my people* echoes Lev 26.12 and suggests continuity with God’s dealings with Israel in the Torah; similar declarations appear regularly in Jer and Ezek. **18:** *Willing to bear my name*, see 5.8; 6.2; 25.23. **21–28:** This passage features strong allusions to Mt 25.31–46, which describes how at the Judgment Day Christ will identify his *sheep* and place them *at his right hand*, while dismissing those who ignored the needy, with the words *depart . . . into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels* (Mt. 25.41; v. 27 below). The original issue was how to deal with transgressors who were members of the church; the allusions to Mt 25 shift the focus to requirements for baptism (vv. 21, 28) and those who “never knew me” (v. 25). **21:** *He that will hear my voice shall be my sheep*, see Jn 10.27.

will hear my voice shall be my sheep; and him shall ye receive into the church, and him will I also receive.²² For behold, this is my church; whosoever is baptized shall be baptized unto repentance. And whomsoever ye receive shall believe in my name; and him will I freely forgive.²³ For it is I that taketh upon me the sins of the world; for it is I that hath created them; and it is I that granteth unto him that believeth unto the end^a a place at my right hand.²⁴ For behold, in my name are they called; and if they know me they shall come forth, and shall have a place eternally at my right hand.

²⁵ “And it shall come to pass that when the second trump shall sound then shall they that never knew me come forth and shall stand before me.²⁶ And then shall they know that I am the Lord their God, that I am their Redeemer; but they would not be redeemed.²⁷ And then I will confess unto them that I never knew them; and they shall depart into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.²⁸ Therefore I say unto you, that he that will not hear my voice, the same shall ye not receive into my church, for him I will not receive at the last day.

²⁹ “Therefore I say unto you, Go; and whosoever transgresseth against me, him shall ye judge according to the sins which he has committed; and if he confess his sins before thee and me, and repenteth in the sincerity of his

heart, him shall ye forgive, and I will forgive him also.³⁰ Yea, and as often as my people repent will I forgive them their trespasses against me.³¹ And ye shall also forgive one another your trespasses; for verily I say unto you, he that forgiveth not his neighbor’s trespasses when he says that he repents, the same hath brought himself under condemnation.³² Now I say unto you, Go; and whosoever will not repent of his sins the same shall not be numbered among my people; and this shall be observed from this time forward.”

³³ And it came to pass when Alma had heard these words he wrote them down that he might have them, and that he might judge the people of that church according to the commandments of God.

Alma, Regulates the Church

³⁴ And it came to pass that Alma went and judged those that had been taken in iniquity, according to the word of the Lord.³⁵ And whosoever repented of their sins and did confess them, them he did number among the people of the church;³⁶ and those that would not confess their sins and repent of their iniquity, the same were not numbered among the people of the church, and their names were blotted out.

^a 23 P in the end; 1840 unto the end

22: *Baptized unto repentance* is the type of baptism offered by John the Baptist at Mt 3:11; the expression occurs 14 times in the BoM but ends after the resurrected Jesus gives new instructions; see 3 Ne 11:21–26n. **23–24:** The Lord establishes a reciprocal relationship in which he takes upon himself the sins of the world (cf. Jn 1:29; 1 Ne 10:10), and his people take upon themselves his name; see 2 Ne 31:13n. **23:** The earlier reading from P indicated that, in the end, believers would be granted a place at God’s right hand. **25:** No first trump was mentioned, but it seems to be implied as a signal for believers to “come forth” from the grave in v. 24; cf. 1 Thess 4:16; 1 Cor 15:52; Morm 9:13. *They that never knew me*, a reversal of Jesus’s disowning of false Christians at Mt 7:23 “I never knew you,” which is echoed at v. 27. **26:** *Would not*, refused to. **27:** *Then I will confess/profess unto . . . I never knew them/you . . . depart*, Mt 7:23 (in P “I will” was “will I,” which matches the biblical wording). **29–31:** The Lord finally answers Alma’s question: those who confess and say they have repented should be forgiven, while those who do not are to be excluded from the faith community. **30:** An admonition to forgive penitent sinners multiple times is also found at Lk 17:3–4. **33:** This is yet another example of the significance of literacy and record keeping in the BoM; it is better for revelations to be written down rather than just remembered; cf. 17:4. **36:** *Those that would not confess their sins*, despite the “many witnesses” testifying of their iniquities (v. 9 above). *Their names were blotted out* suggests a written register of church members; see 1.12n.

³⁷ And it came to pass that Alma did regulate all the affairs of the church; and they began again to have peace and to prosper exceedingly in the affairs of the church, walking circumspectly before God, receiving many, and baptizing many. ³⁸ And now all these things did Alma and his fellow laborers do who were over the church, walking in all diligence, teaching the word of God in all things, suffering all manner of afflictions, being persecuted by all those who did not belong to the church of God. ³⁹ And they did admonish their brethren; and they were also admonished, every one by the word of God, according to his sins, or to the sins which he had committed, being commanded of God to pray without ceasing, and to give thanks in all things.

An End to Persecutions

27 ¹ And now it came to pass that the persecutions which were inflicted on the church by the unbelievers became so great that the church began to murmur, and complain to their leaders concerning the matter; and they did complain to Alma. And Alma laid the case before their king, Mosiah. And Mosiah consulted with his priests. ² And it came to pass that king Mosiah sent a proclama-

tion throughout the land round about that there should not any unbeliever persecute any of those who belonged to the church of God.

³ And there was a strict command throughout all the churches that there should be no persecutions among them, that there should be an equality among all men; ⁴ that they should let no pride nor haughtiness disturb their peace; that every man should esteem his neighbor as himself, laboring with their own hands for their support. ⁵ Yea, and all their priests and teachers should labor with their own hands for their support, in all cases save it were in sickness, or in much want; and doing these things, they did abound in the grace of God.

⁶ And there began to be much peace again in the land; and the people began to be very numerous, and began to scatter abroad upon the face of the earth, yea, on the north and on the south, on the east and on the west, building large cities and villages in all quarters of the land. ⁷ And the Lord did visit them and prosper them, and they became a large and wealthy people.

Alma₂ and the Sons of Mosiah₂ Are Rebuked by an Angel

⁸ Now the sons of Mosiah were numbered among the unbelievers; and also one of the

37: *Regulate*, WB: “to put in good order” or “to subject to rules or restrictions.” *Walking circumspectly*, Eph 5.15, appears three times in the BoM, always followed by *before God*. **39:** Those who were “over the church” warned church members, and were themselves warned in turn, in accordance with God’s word. *Pray without ceasing... give thanks in all things*, 1 Thess 5.17–18.

CHAPTER 27

1: *Mosiah consulted with his priests*, these priests are separate from the new priests and teachers that Alma had ordained as officers in his church (see 18.18; 25.19–21). In other words, Alma’s church is operating outside the boundaries of official religious institutions involving hereditary priests, temple worship, and the law of Moses. **5:** *Priests... should labor with their own hands*, see 18.24–26 where self-supporting priests were similarly promised the *grace of God*. **7:** *The Lord did visit them*, here in a good sense, i.e., not in judgment; see 1 Ne 2.16n. **8–17:** For other versions of this incident, see Alma 26.17–20; 36.6–23; 38.6–8. This particular account focuses almost exclusively on Alma’s experience, saying very little about the sons of Mosiah. The narrative is reminiscent of Paul’s conversion on the road to Damascus (Acts 9.1–8; 22.6–11; 26.12–18), though there are significant differences as well, including the nature of their sins, God’s motivation for divine intervention, the voice of the Lord versus an angelic visitation, and the physical disabilities with which Paul and Alma were stricken. **8:** The sons of the king and a son of the church’s high priest were companions in unbelief and wickedness. Given the fact Alma, was nearly twenty years older than Mosiah₂ (Mos 29.45–46), Alma₂ may have been considerably older than the sons of Mosiah.

sons of Alma was numbered among them, he being called Alma, after his father; nevertheless, he became a very wicked and an idolatrous man. And he was a man of many words, and did speak much flattery to the people; therefore he led many of the people to do after the manner of his iniquities.⁹ And he became a great hinderment to the prosperity of the church of God; stealing away the hearts of the people; causing much dissension among the people; giving a chance for the enemy of God to exercise his power over them.

¹⁰ And now it came to pass that while he was going about to destroy the church of God, for he did go about secretly with the sons of Mosiah seeking to destroy the church, and to lead astray the people of the Lord, contrary to the commandments of God, or even the king—¹¹ And as I said unto you, as they were going about rebelling against God, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto them; and he descended as it were in a cloud; and he spake as it were with a voice of thunder, which caused the earth to shake upon which they stood;¹² and so great was their astonishment, that they fell to the earth, and understood not the words which he spake unto them.¹³ Nevertheless he cried again, saying, “Alma, arise and stand forth, for why persecutest thou

the church of God? For the Lord hath said, “This is my church, and I will establish it; and nothing shall overthrow it, save it is the transgression of my people.”

¹⁴ And again, the angel said, “Behold, the Lord hath heard the prayers of his people, and also the prayers of his servant, Alma, who is thy father; for he has prayed with much faith concerning thee that thou mightest be brought to the knowledge of the truth; therefore, for this purpose have I come to convince thee of the power and authority of God, that the prayers of his servants might be answered according to their faith.¹⁵ And now behold, can ye dispute the power of God? For behold, doth not my voice shake the earth? And can ye not also behold me before you? And I am sent from God.¹⁶ Now I say unto thee: Go, and remember the captivity of thy fathers in the land of Helam, and in the land of Nephi; and remember how great things he has done for them; for they were in bondage, and he has delivered them. And now I say unto thee, Alma, go thy way, and seek to destroy the church no more, that their prayers may be answered, and this even if thou wilt of thyself be cast off.”¹⁷ And now it came to pass that these were the last words which the angel spake unto Alma, and he departed.

9: *Hinderment*, “hindrance.” **10:** *He did go about secretly*, Alma₂’s furtive attempts to destroy the church contrast with his father’s surreptitious endeavors to preach the gospel and establish that same church several decades earlier (18.1–3, 31). *Contrary to the commandments of... the king* (see v. 2), perhaps the king’s sons assumed that their privileged position would protect them from the law. **11:** *And as I said unto you*, the narrator is addressing his readers directly. *Rebelling against God* is non-biblical, but was warned against by Jacob, Benjamin, and Abinadi (Jacob 1.8; Mos 2.37; 3.12; 15.26; 16.5). *As it were in a cloud*, other references to heavenly beings coming down in clouds include Ex 34.5; Num 11.25; Lk 21.27; Rev 10.1; Ether 2.4, 14. *Voice of thunder*, a non-biblical expression that occurs five times in the BoM; at 1 Ne 17.45 such a voice is accompanied, as here, by an earthquake. **13–14:** *Saying... And again, the angel said*, the absence of a response from Alma is telling; see Alma 9.1–6n. **13:** *Arise and stand forth*, stand up and be accountable. *This is my church*, reiterating a declaration made by the Lord to Alma’s father at 26.22. **14:** This divine manifestation has come, at least in part, because of the prayers of an anxious parent. **16:** In most of Alma’s subsequent recorded sermons, he heeds the words of the angel and mentions the captivities and deliverances of his fathers. *They were in bondage and he has delivered them*, that is, the people of Alma in the land of Helam (24.13–25) and the people of Limhi in the land of Nephi (22.1–16). *Even if thou wilt of thyself be cast off*, that is, even if you have no concern for your own soul, change your ways for the sake of those who have been praying on your behalf. **17:** *These were the last words*, according to Alma 36.11, the angel spoke more things but Alma did not hear them. This same angel will return at Alma 8.15.

Prayers for Alma₂'s Recovery

¹⁸ And now Alma and those that were with him fell again to the earth, for great was their astonishment; for with their own eyes they had beheld an angel of the Lord; and his voice was as thunder, which shook the earth; and they knew that there was nothing save the power of God that could shake the earth and cause it to tremble as though it would part asunder. ¹⁹ And now the astonishment of Alma was so great that he became dumb, that he could not open his mouth; yea, and he became weak, even that he could not move his hands; therefore he was taken by those that were with him, and carried helpless, even until he was laid before his father. ²⁰ And they rehearsed unto his father all that had happened unto them.

And his father rejoiced, for he knew that it was the power of God. ²¹ And he caused that a multitude should be gathered together that they might witness what the Lord had done for his son, and also for those that were with him. ²² And he caused that the priests should assemble themselves together; and they began to fast, and to pray to the Lord their God that he would open the mouth of Alma, that he might speak, and also that his limbs might receive their strength—that the eyes of the people might be opened to see and know of the goodness and glory of God.

Alma₂'s Confession

²³ And it came to pass after they had fasted and prayed for the space of two days and two nights, the limbs of Alma received their strength, and he stood up and began to speak unto them, bidding them to be of good comfort. ²⁴ “For,” said he, “I have repented of my sins, and have been redeemed of the Lord; behold I am born of the Spirit. ²⁵ And the Lord said unto me, ‘Marvel not that all mankind, yea, men and women, all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, must be born again; yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters; ²⁶ and thus they become new creatures; and unless they do this, they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God.’

²⁷ “I say unto you, unless this be the case, they must be cast off; and this I know, because I was like to be cast off. ²⁸ Nevertheless, after wandering^a through much tribulation, repenting nigh unto death, the Lord in mercy hath seen fit to snatch me out of an everlasting burning, and I am born of God.

²⁹ My soul hath been redeemed
from the gall of bitterness

^a 28 P, 1981 *wading*

18: *Nothing save it were the power of God*, Laman and Lemuel came to the same conclusion at 1 Ne 18.20, as will Korihor at Alma 30.52. The earth moving as though it might “divide asunder” is mentioned at 1 Ne 17.45; Hel 5.33; 12.8; 3 Ne 8.6 (always in response to a divine voice, with the exception of the last reference). **19:** *He became weak*, perhaps an extreme form of the phenomenon Nephi reported at 1 Ne 17.47 and 19.20. **20:** *Rehearse*, WB: “to narrate or recount events.” **21–22:** Rather than keeping his son’s affliction private, Alma₁ summons a crowd, in part to bear witness but also to join in his prayers. **24–29:** Alma employs a high density of metaphorical language (often echoing NT phrases) in an attempt to articulate a deeply personal, perhaps ineffable, experience. **24:** *Born of the Spirit*, only here and Jn 3.5–6, 8. **25:** This verse appears to universalize Jn 3.7, which says “marvel not...ye must be born again.” The phrase *born again* occurs three times in the NT and four times in the BoM, always in the words of Alma₂. *Born of God* occurs six times in the NT (all in 1 Jn) and nine times in the BoM. *Becoming* [God’s] *sons and daughters*, as the people of King Benjamin did at 5.7. **27:** *Like to be*, likely to be. **28:** *Nigh unto death*, Alma describes the intensity of his repentance as life-threatening. *Snatch*, a vivid verb used in the BoM only to refer to the conversion of Alma and the sons of Mosiah, cf. Alma 26.17. **29:** *Gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity*, Acts 8.23. *Abyss*, WB: “a bottomless gulf.” *Behold the marvelous light of God*, cf. 1 Pet 2.9 and Alma 26.3, where one of the sons of Mosiah describes the conversion of the Lamanites (which also includes the only other instance of *darkest abyss*). *Rack*, WB: “to torment; to affect with extreme pain or anguish.”

and bonds of iniquity.
 I was in the darkest abyss;
 but now I behold the marvelous
 light of God.
 My soul was racked with eternal
 torment;
 but I am snatched,
 and my soul is pained no more.

³⁰ “I rejected my Redeemer, and denied that which had been spoken of by our fathers; but now that they may foresee that he will come, and that he remembereth every creature of his creating, he will make himself manifest unto all. ³¹ Yea, every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess before him. Yea, even at the last day, when all men shall stand to be judged of him, then shall they confess that he is God; then shall they confess, who live without God in the world, that the judgment of an everlasting punishment is just upon them; and they shall quake, and tremble, and shrink beneath the glance of his all-searching eye.”

Alma₂ and the Sons of Mosiah₂ Strengthen the Church

³² And now it came to pass that Alma began from this time forward to teach the people, and those who were with Alma at the time the angel appeared unto them, traveling round about through all the land, publishing to all

the people the things which they had heard and seen, and preaching the word of God in much tribulation, being greatly persecuted by those who were unbelievers, being smitten by many of them. ³³ But notwithstanding all this, they did impart much consolation to the church, confirming their faith, and exhorting them with long-suffering and much travail to keep the commandments of God. ³⁴ And four of them were the sons of Mosiah; and their names were Ammon, and Aaron, and Omner, and Himni; these were the names of the sons of Mosiah.

³⁵ And they traveled throughout all the land of Zarahemla, and among all the people who were under the reign of king Mosiah, zealously striving to repair all the injuries which they had done to the church, confessing all their sins, and publishing all the things which they had seen, and explaining the prophecies and the scriptures to all who desired to hear them. ³⁶ And thus they were instruments in the hands of God in bringing many to the knowledge of the truth, yea, to the knowledge of their Redeemer.

³⁷ And how blessed are they!
 For they did publish peace;
 they did publish good tidings of
 good;
 and they did declare unto the people
 that the Lord reigneth.

31: *Every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess*, Rom 14.11 (quoting Isa 45.23); cf. Phil 2.10–11. *Without God in the world*, Eph 2.12. *All-searching eye*, a non-biblical expression occurring only here and 2 Ne 9.44 (which also notes that “at the last day... all men shall be judged”). The phrase was common in Christian literature of the 17th–19th c.

32: Having left the ranks of the unbelievers to preach the gospel, Alma and his companions are now persecuted by them, sometimes violently. *Publishing*, proclaiming (with an echo of Isa 52.7; see v. 37 below). **34:** The brothers are probably listed by order of birth, as is typical in the BoM. The same order recurs in each of the five times the sons of Mosiah are named, but see 29.2n. **36:** *Instruments in the hands of God in bringing many to the knowledge of the truth* replicates Alma₁’s self-description at 23.10. In addition, bringing many to the knowledge of their Redeemer echoes the description of Alma₁’s ministry at the water of Mormon (18.30). The narrator has employed both phrases here to suggest that Alma₂ and his friends are now carrying forward his father’s work. Alma₂ himself will repeat his father’s words at Alma 29.9. **37:** The narrator alludes to Isa 52.7 (cited and explained by Abinadi at Mos 15.13–18), with the addition of *how blessed are they*, also from Mos 18.30; cf. 26.15–18. This connects Alma₁’s church with Abinadi’s message, and suggests that the new missionaries have joined the ranks of prophets and heirs of Christ.

The Sons of Mosiah₂ Desire to Preach to the Lamanites

[XII] **28** ¹ Now it came to pass that after the sons of Mosiah had done all these things, they took a small number with them and returned to their father, the king, and desired of him that he would grant unto them that they might, with these whom they had selected, go up to the land of Nephi that they might preach the things which they had heard, and that they might impart the word of God to their brethren, the Lamanites—² that perhaps they might bring them to the knowledge of the Lord their God, and convince them of the iniquity of their fathers; and that perhaps they might cure them of their hatred towards the Nephites, that they might also be brought to rejoice in the Lord their God, that they might become friendly to one another, and that there should be no more contentions in all the land which the Lord their God had given them.

³ Now they were desirous that salvation should be declared to every creature, for they could not bear that any human soul should perish; yea, even the very thoughts that any soul should endure endless torment did cause them to quake and tremble. ⁴ And thus did the

Spirit of the Lord work upon them, for they were the very vilest of sinners. And the Lord saw fit in his infinite mercy to spare them; nevertheless they suffered much anguish of soul because of their iniquities, suffering much and fearing that they should be cast off forever. ⁵ And it came to pass that they did plead with their father many days that they might go up to the land of Nephi.

⁶ And king Mosiah went and inquired of the Lord if he should let his sons go up among the Lamanites to preach the word. ⁷ And the Lord said unto Mosiah, “Let them go up, for many shall believe on their words, and they shall have eternal life; and I will deliver thy sons out of the hands of the Lamanites.” ⁸ And it came to pass that Mosiah granted that they might go and do according to their request. ⁹ And they took their journey into the wilderness to go up to preach the word among the Lamanites; and I shall give an account of their proceedings hereafter.

Mosiah₂ Translates the Plates Found by the People of Limhi

¹⁰ Now king Mosiah had no one to confer the kingdom upon, for there was not any of his sons who would accept of the kingdom. ¹¹ Therefore

CHAPTER 28

1–8: After their own conversion, the sons of Mosiah want to share the message of salvation with everyone, including their enemies, the Lamanites. In so doing, they will act on the sentiments described at 25.11. **1–2:** The sevenfold repetition of *that they might* emphasizes their post-conversion desires. Earlier Nephite attempts to convert the Lamanites, described at Jacob 7.24 and Enos 1.20, had not been successful. **1:** These friends of the sons of Mosiah included Muloki and Ammah, according to Alma 20.2. **2:** *Cure them of their hatred*, the verb *cure* suggests that their enmity was like an inherited disease rather than a volitional sin. *The land which . . . God had given them*, that is, given the Nephites and Lamanites jointly. **3:** *Salvation . . . declared to every creature* seems to reflect Mk 16.15; cf. Morm 9.22. **5:** *To the land of Nephi*, that is, to the Lamanite-held land where Zeniff had led the Nephite colonists. **6:** Mosiah inquires of the Lord because he has doubts about the feasibility of missionary work among the Lamanites. He is not the only one; see Alma 26.23–25. **7:** *For many shall believe on their words*, King Benjamin had declared that the Lamanites would “not believe [the things of God] when they are taught them, because of the traditions of their fathers” (1.5); the Lord here tells Mosiah that this particular tradition of the Nephites is incorrect. *And they shall have eternal life* may refer to either Lamanite converts or to the sons of Mosiah themselves. **9:** *An account of their proceedings hereafter*, see Alma 17–27. **10–19:** It is not clear whether Mosiah had waited nearly three decades to translate the gold plates that the people of Limhi had brought to Zarahemla at the time of ch. 25, or whether this section recounts earlier events as background information for the transfer of records at v. 20. **11:** The discovery of the plates and their transmission from Limhi were narrated at 8.9; 21.26–27; 22.14. *Translated and caused to be written*, Mosiah apparently translated orally and had a scribe take his dictation, just as JS did.

he took the records which were engraven on the plates of brass, and also the plates of Nephi, and all the things which he had kept and preserved according to the commandments of God, after having translated and caused to be written the records which were on the plates of gold which had been found by the people of Limhi, which were delivered to him by the hand of Limhi;¹² and this he did because of the great anxiety of his people; for they were desirous beyond measure to know concerning those people who had been destroyed.

¹³ And now he translated them by the means of those two stones which were fastened into the two rims of a bow.¹⁴ Now these things were prepared from the beginning, and were handed down from generation to generation, for the purpose of interpreting languages;¹⁵ and they have been kept and preserved by the hand of the Lord, that he should discover to every creature who should possess the land the iniquities and abominations of his people;¹⁶ and whosoever has these things is called seer, after the manner of old times.

¹⁷ Now after Mosiah had finished translating these records, behold, it gave an account of the people who were destroyed, from the time

that they were destroyed back to the building of the great tower, at the time the Lord confounded the language of the people and they were scattered abroad upon the face of all the earth, yea, and even from that time back until the creation of Adam.¹⁸ Now this account did cause the people of Mosiah to mourn exceedingly, yea, they were filled with sorrow; nevertheless it gave them much knowledge, in the which they did rejoice.¹⁹ And this account shall be written hereafter; for behold, it is expedient that all people should know the things which are written in this account.

Mosiah₂ Entrusts the Records to Alma₂

[XIII] ²⁰ And now, as I said unto you, that after king Mosiah had done these things, he took the plates of brass, and all the things which he had kept, and conferred them upon Alma, who was the son of Alma; yea, all the records, and also the interpreters, and conferred them upon him, and commanded him that he should keep and preserve them, and also keep a record of the people, handing them down from one generation to

13–14: *Two stones*, that is, the “interpreters” referred to at 8.13–14 and 21.28. *The two rims of a bow*, that is, a figure-eight shape. At JS-History 1.35, the seer stones that JS found with the gold plates are described in similar terms: “two stones in silver bows . . . prepared . . . for the purpose of translating.” These appear to have been the seer stones the Lord gave the brother of Jared at Ether 3.21–28 (cf. Ether 4.5; DC 17.1). The seer stones used by Mosiah₂ (or Benjamin; see 8.13–14n), which were in his possession before the Jaredite records were discovered by the people of Limhi (8.19), may have been a separate set, or perhaps the Jaredite interpreters had come through Coriantumr and the Mulekites to Mosiah₁ (see Omni 1.20–21). 15: The language here echoes Abinadi’s prophecy at 12.8, as well as the description of a seer stone at Alma 37.23–25. 16: *Called seer, after the manner of old times*; cf. 1 Sam 9.9; see 8.15n. 17: *The great tower*, that is, the tower of Babel; see Gen 11.1–9; Ether 1.2–4. 18: The reaction of the people, alternating sorrow and joy as they heard the Jaredite records being read, is reminiscent of 25.4–11. According to Alma 37.27–29 and Ether 4.1–2, it appears that Mosiah at this time gave his people only an oral summary of Jaredite history, without details of the brother of Jared’s vision or the oaths and covenants of their secret combinations; cf. Hel 6.25–26. 19: *This account shall be written hereafter*, Mormon’s editorial promise will be fulfilled by his son Moroni with the book of Ether. 20: Mosiah had received these records and treasures himself at 1.16, supplemented by those he had received at 22.14. Mosiah’s giving the records and other national treasures to Alma signals the end of the monarchy and the consolidation of political and religious authority in Alma’s lineage, culminating at Mos 29.41–42. It will not last long; see Alma 4.15–18. When Orson Pratt divided the BoM into verses and added new chapter divisions in 1879, he kept this verse with the preceding chapter in order to allow for the completion of the thought that began in v. 11. The phrases “king Mosiah . . . took . . . the plates of brass . . . and all the things which he had kept” in that verse are picked up again here to carry the story forward, in an example of resumptive repetition.

another, even as they had been handed down from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem.

Mosiah₂ Writes against Kingship

29¹ Now when Mosiah had done this he sent out throughout all the land, among all the people, desiring to know their will concerning who should be their king.² And it came to pass that the voice of the people came, saying, “We are desirous that Aaron thy son should be our king and our ruler.”³ Now Aaron had gone up to the land of Nephi, therefore the king could not confer the kingdom upon him; neither would Aaron take upon him the kingdom; neither were any of the sons of Mosiah willing to take upon them the kingdom.

⁴ Therefore king Mosiah sent again among the people; yea, even a written word sent he among the people. And these were the words that were written, saying:

⁵ Behold, O ye my people, or my brethren, for I esteem you as such, I desire that ye should consider the cause which ye are called to consider—for ye are desirous to

have a king.⁶ Now I declare unto you that he to whom the kingdom doth rightly belong has declined, and will not take upon him the kingdom.⁷ And now if there should be another appointed in his stead, behold I fear there would rise contentions among you. And who knoweth but what my son, to whom the kingdom doth belong, should turn to be angry and draw away a part of this people after him, which would cause wars and contentions among you—which would be the cause of shedding much blood and perverting the way of the Lord—yea, and destroy the souls of many people.

⁸ Now I say unto you let us be wise and consider these things, for we have no right to destroy my son, neither should we have any right to destroy another if he should be appointed in his stead.⁹ And if my son should turn again to his pride and vain things he would recall the things which he had said, and claim his right to the kingdom, which

CHAPTER 29

Since Mosiah has no sons willing to assume the throne, he decides to abolish the monarchy and replace it with a system of judges. Nevertheless, this chapter seems more concerned with righteousness and the law of God than with describing an actual government system or political philosophy. An alternative historical interpretation is that tension with descendants of David’s royal line among the Mulekites poses a problem to the authority of Mosiah, and the solution is to replace the monarchy with judges. **2:** The people’s choice of Aaron is unexpected since Ammon’s leadership in the Lamanite mission and consistent position in lists of the sons of Mosiah (27.34n) suggest that he was the firstborn son and thus heir apparent. Perhaps Aaron was more popular, or the two brothers had different mothers and Aaron’s mother was a Mulekite noblewoman. **4:** King Mosiah communicates this fundamental change in government to his people not through a mass meeting, as Benjamin did, but rather through a widely disseminated written document, reproduced here. **5:** Like Benjamin, Mosiah refers to his subjects as *my brethren*; see 2.9n. *Cause*, WB: “a suit or action in court; any legal process which a party institutes to obtain his demand.” **6:** *He to whom the kingdom doth rightly belong* may be Ammon, the eldest son. **7:** The newly translated record of the Jaredites would have offered abundant evidence of the ill effects of internecine conflict within ruling families, as seen in the book of Ether. In addition, Ether includes an account of sons who refuse the throne (6.25–27) and a warning that monarchy “leadeth into captivity” (6.22–23; cf. Mos 29.18). **8–9:** Mosiah is as concerned for the well-being of his son as for his people, particularly in light of his son’s troubled past. *If my son should turn again*, Mosiah is still somewhat wary of the permanence of his son’s recent conversion. *Recall*, “revoke,” rather than “remember.”

would cause him and also this people to commit much sin.

¹⁰ And now let us be wise and look forward to these things, and do that which will make for the peace of this people. ¹¹ Therefore I will be your king the remainder of my days; nevertheless, let us appoint judges, to judge this people according to our law; and we will newly arrange the affairs of this people, for we will appoint wise men to be judges, that will judge this people according to the commandments of God. ¹² Now it is better that a man should be judged of God than of man, for the judgments of God are always just, but the judgments of man are not always just. ¹³ Therefore, if it were possible that you could have just men to be your kings, who would establish the laws of God, and judge this people according to his commandments, yea, if ye could have men for your kings who would do even as my father Benjamin did for this people—I say unto you, if this could always be the case then it would be expedient that ye should always have kings to rule over you.

¹⁴ And even I myself have labored with all the power and faculties which I have possessed, to teach you the commandments of God, and to establish peace throughout the land,

that there should be no wars nor contentions, no stealing, nor plundering, nor murdering, nor any manner of iniquity; ¹⁵ and whosoever has committed iniquity, him have I punished according^a to the law which has been given to us by our fathers.

¹⁶ Now I say unto you, that because all men are not just it is not expedient that ye should have a king or kings to rule over you. ¹⁷ For behold, how much iniquity doth one wicked king cause to be committed, yea, and what great destruction! ¹⁸ Yea, remember king Noah, his wickedness and his abominations, and also the wickedness and abominations of his people. Behold what great destruction did come upon them; and also because of their iniquities they were brought into bondage. ¹⁹ And were it not for the interposition of their all-wise Creator, and this because of their sincere repentance, they must unavoidably remain in bondage until now. ²⁰ But behold, he did deliver them because they did humble themselves before him; and because they cried mightily unto him he did deliver them out of

^a 15 P, 1981 punished *according to the crime which he hath committed*, according

11: *Newly*, WB: “with a new form; in a manner not existing before.” Mosiah equates *our law* with *the commandments of God*, citing both as the standard of judgment; see 2.31n. **13:** Mosiah asserts that monarchy is a superior form of government in the ideal, though in practice it falls short; Alma, said the same thing at 23.8–9. **16:** For the connection of “just men” and kingship, see 2.4n. **17:** The idea that a king can cause transgressions among his people is reminiscent of the much-repeated denunciation in 1–2 Kings of Jeroboam, who “made Israel to sin”; cf. Mos 11.2; 21.29–30. **18:** The people of Zarahemla would have been acquainted with Noah’s disastrous reign from the public reading of the records of the Zeniffite colony at 25.5. **19:** *Interposition*, WB: “intervention, intervenient agency.” **20:** *Because they cried mightily unto him*, this was a key element in the stories of both Limhi’s people and Alma’s people, as well as in the prophecies of Abinadi to them; see 11.25; 21.14; 24.10.

bondage; and thus doth the Lord work with his power in all cases among the children of men, extending the arm of mercy towards them that put their trust in him.

²¹ And behold, now I say unto you, ye cannot dethrone an iniquitous king save it be through much contention, and the shedding of much blood. ²² For behold, he has his friends in iniquity, and he keepeth his guards about him; and he teareth up the laws of those who have reigned in righteousness before him; and he trampleth under his feet the commandments of God; ²³ and he enacteth laws, and sendeth them forth among his people, yea, laws after the manner of his own wickedness; and whosoever doth not obey his laws he causeth to be destroyed; and whosoever doth rebel against him he will send his armies against them to war, and if he can he will destroy them; and thus an unrighteous king doth pervert the ways of all righteousness.

²⁴ And now behold I say unto you, it is not expedient that such abominations should come upon you. ²⁵ Therefore, choose you by the voice of this people, judges, that ye

may be judged according to the laws which have been given you by our fathers, which are correct, and which were given them by the hand of the Lord. ²⁶ Now it is not common that the voice of the people desireth anything contrary to that which is right; but it is common for the lesser part of the people to desire that which is not right; therefore this shall ye observe and make it your law—to do your business by the voice of the people. ²⁷ And if the time comes that the voice of the people doth choose iniquity, then is the time that the judgments of God will come upon you; yea, then is the time he will visit you with great destruction even as he has hitherto visited this land.

²⁸ And now if ye have judges, and they do not judge you according to the law which has been given, ye can cause that they may be judged of a higher judge. ²⁹ If your higher judges do not judge righteous judgments, ye shall cause that a small number of your lower judges should be gathered together, and they shall judge your higher judges, according to the voice of the people.

21–25: Mosiah believes that judges will be more constrained by traditional laws than an absolute monarch would be. **22–23:** An enumeration of the tactics used by a wicked king to stay in power. *Teareth up*, the verb seems to assume laws written on paper. **25:** *The voice of the people*, there was apparently some way to assess popular opinion among the Nephites, though there is no evidence of democratic elections. In contrast to 1 Sam 8.7, here the voice of the people is crucial to ending the reign of kings; see 7.9n. **26–27:** Mosiah believes that a majority of people will choose the right, most of the time. *As he has hitherto visited this land*, when the Jaredites were destroyed. A warning against kingship from the Jaredite experience is added to that at v. 18 from the Nephite colony in Nephi-Lehi. **28–29:** A hierarchical system of judges provides a check on power that is lacking in a monarchy, thus preventing the problems of vv. 12, 16–18. These verses outline a primitive form of checks and balances, with the *voice of the people* being a significant arbiter. There is no record of how such a system might have worked in practice, though at Hel 5.1–4 it appears that Nephi₃ was forced to resign the judgment seat because the voice of the people had gone against him. In any case, v. 27 makes God the ultimate judge if the people choose iniquity.

³⁰ And I command you to do these things in the fear of the Lord; and I command you to do these things, and that ye have no king; that if these people commit sins and iniquities they shall be answered upon their own heads. ³¹ For behold I say unto you, the sins of many people have been caused by the iniquities of their kings; therefore their iniquities are answered upon the heads of their kings. ³² And now I desire that this inequality should be no more in this land, especially among this my people; but I desire that this land be a land of liberty, and every man may enjoy his rights and privileges alike, so long as the Lord sees fit that we may live and inherit the land, yea, even as long as any of our posterity remains upon the face of the land.

³³ And many more things did king Mosiah write unto them, unfolding unto them all the trials and troubles of a righteous king, yea, all the travails of soul for their people, and also all the murmurings of the people to their king; and he explained it all unto them. ³⁴ And he told them that these things ought not to be; but that the burden should come upon all the

people, that every man might bear his part. ³⁵ And he also unfolded unto them all the disadvantages they labored under, by having an unrighteous king to rule over them; ³⁶ yea, all his iniquities and abominations, and all the wars, and contentions, and bloodshed, and the stealing, and the plundering, and the committing of whoredoms, and all manner of iniquities which cannot be enumerated—telling them that these things ought not to be, that they were expressly repugnant to the commandments of God.

The End of the Monarchy; Alma₂ Appointed as Chief Judge

³⁷ And now it came to pass, after king Mosiah had sent these things forth among the people they were convinced of the truth of his words. ³⁸ Therefore they relinquished their desires for a king, and became exceedingly anxious that every man should have an equal chance throughout all the land; yea, and every man expressed a willingness to answer for his own sins. ³⁹ Therefore, it came to pass that they assembled themselves together in bodies throughout the land, to cast in their voices concerning who should be their judges, to judge them according to the law which had been given them; and they were exceedingly rejoiced because of the liberty which had been granted unto them.

30–32: King Mosiah, like Jacob, believes that leaders can be held accountable for the sins of their people (see 2 Ne 9:44; Jacob 1:19); in addition, kings can cause their people to sin, as Noah did at 11:2. Equality of moral responsibility can only come when individuals are free from the constraints of monarchy. **30:** *Do these things in the fear of the Lord*, a very similar charge occurs at 2 Chr 19:9, in a passage where Judah's king Jehoshaphat establishes a new system of judges (19:5–11). **32:** *That we may live and inherit the land*, only here and Deut 16:18–20, where Moses specifies the requirements for judges in the land of Israel. **33–36:** The troubles of a righteous king ruling over wicked people are matched by the troubles of good people who are ruled by an unrighteous king. Each of the two ideas concludes with the phrase *told them that these things ought not to be*. **33–34:** As the excerpted document gives way to paraphrase, Mosiah offers his people a personal, intimate glimpse of what it is like to be a ruler and bear responsibility for the people. Mosiah is careful to explain to his people how kingship has been a burden to him, as opposed to the nearly universal suspicion that kings enjoy an easy life while being a burden to their people. *The travails of soul*, only here and Isa 53:11 (quoted at Mos 14:11); the phrase suggests an image of the king as a suffering servant. **37:** Although Mosiah has made a rational argument based on historical precedents and moral principles, at Hel 4:22 Mormon asserts that Mosiah's governmental reforms had come to him as a commandment from God. **38:** *Have an equal chance* seems to mean “be equally and individually responsible for their actions”; see vv. 30–32 above.

⁴⁰ And they did wax strong in love towards Mosiah; yea, they did esteem him more than any other man; for they did not look upon him as a tyrant who was seeking for gain, yea, for that lucre which doth corrupt the soul; for he had not exacted riches of them, neither had he delighted in the shedding of blood; but he had established peace in the land, and he had granted unto his people that they should be delivered from all manner of bondage; therefore they did esteem him, yea, exceedingly, beyond measure.

⁴¹ And it came to pass that they did appoint judges to rule over them, or to judge them according to the law; and this they did throughout all the land. ⁴² And it came to pass that Alma was appointed to be the first chief judge, he being also the high priest, his father having conferred the office upon him, and having given him the charge concerning all the affairs of the church.

⁴³ And now it came to pass that Alma did walk in the ways of the Lord, and he did keep his commandments, and he did judge righteous judgments; and there was continual

peace through the land. ⁴⁴ And thus commenced the reign of the judges throughout all the land of Zarahemla, among all the people who were called the Nephites; and Alma was the first and chief judge.⁴

⁴⁵ And now it came to pass that his father died, being eighty and two years old, having lived to fulfil the commandments of God. ⁴⁶ And it came to pass that Mosiah died also, in the thirty and third year of his reign, being sixty and three years old; making in the whole, five hundred and nine years from the time Lehi left Jerusalem. ⁴⁷ And thus ended the reign of the kings over the people of Nephi; and thus ended the days of Alma, who was the founder of their church.

⁴ ⁴⁴ First year of the judges = Year -91 (i.e., ninety-one years before the sign of Christ's birth). From this point on, years in the footnotes will be designated by a countdown to Jesus's birth, indicated by a minus sign before the number; after Jesus's birth the years will count up with a plus sign.

40: *Lucre*, WB: "gain in money or goods; usually in an ill sense." *All manner of bondage*, perhaps a reference to spiritual captivity as well as actual slavery; see 2.13 for Benjamin's efforts in this regard. **41:** The monarchical phrase *rule over them* is immediately corrected. **42:** The new governmental organization does not separate religious and civil power. This strong form of theocracy lasts for less than a decade, however, until Alma appoints Nephiah to take over the office of chief judge, though even then Nephiah is identified as one of "the elders of the church" (see Alma 4.15–18). This verse implies that there is only one high priest over the entire church, just as there was only one high priest in Jerusalem (cf. Alma preface; Alma 4.4; 8.23). Later, however, there seem to be multiple high priests at the same time, with jurisdiction over different territories; see Alma 30.20, 21; Alma 46.6, 38; Hel 3.25; 3 Ne 6.21 (note also that before the founding of a church by Alma, King Noah had appointed multiple high priests at Mos 11.11). **43:** *Walk in the ways of the Lord*, just like King Mosiah in 6.6. *Judge righteous judgments* (also v. 29), Jn 7.24. **47:** *The founder of their church*, see 18.17–30; 25.14–24.

INTRODUCTION TO ALMA

The book of Alma, the longest in the Book of Mormon, is presented as Mormon’s abridgment of portions of the Large Plates written by three record keepers: Alma₂ for chapters 1–44, Alma’s son Helaman for chapters 45–62, and Helaman’s younger brother Shiblon for chapter 63. Alma is a central figure in Nephite history, having inherited the position of high priest over the church from his father, Alma₁, at the end of the book of Mosiah, and also having been appointed as the first chief judge when the monarchy was terminated (Mos 29.42). The book named after him begins in the first year of his judgeship, while the sons of the last king, Mosiah, who would have had a claim to their father’s throne, are away from Zarahemla on a long preaching mission to the Lamanites. Even though the book is written in the third-person narrative voice, the first two-thirds would originally have been composed as a memoir in which Alma narrated his own life and works (ch. 9 is still in the first-person voice). Notably, Alma₂ is the only figure in the Book of Mormon who is fully portrayed as both a son and a father.

This book includes more details of politics and warfare than any other in the Book of Mormon, as well as numerous episodes of preaching, stories of conversions, and transcripts of sermons. The Nephites’ new system of government is never clearly described, though it included a hierarchy of judges and some role for “the voice of the people” (Mos 29.28–29). Shortly into Alma’s regime, the positions of chief judge and high priest are separated (Alma passes the former on to Nephiah and retains the latter). Unlike in the Bible, where the book of Judges recounts stories of informal chieftains and military leaders, judges in the Book of Mormon administer the law within a centralized government, in conjunction with the chief captain of the armies. This last position was held for most of the book of Alma by a man named Moroni₁, often referred to as Captain Moroni in LDS writings to distinguish him from the last Nephite record keeper, Moroni₂.

CONTENTS

Chapter 1: Nehor argues that priests should be supported financially by their followers and establishes his own church. After killing a detractor, he is convicted and executed.

Chapters 2–3: Amlici begins a rebellion after his bid to become king is rejected by a majority of the people. Although he has Lamanite support, his insurrection is eventually put down.

Chapters 4–16: Alma resigns as chief judge to focus on his responsibilities as high priest. He preaches in several cities, with transcripts provided for his sermons in Zarahemla, Gideon, and Ammonihah, where he is joined by Amulek. The people of Ammonihah imprison Alma and Amulek (who later escape), expel believers and kill their families, and then are themselves destroyed by the Lamanites.

Chapters 17–29: These chapters begin with Alma unexpectedly running into the sons of Mosiah, followed by a flashback that covers the latter’s fourteen-year preaching journey among the Lamanites.

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Two of the brothers, Ammon and Aaron, have some success converting local kings and their subjects, who take the name of Anti-Nephi-Lehies and practice pacifism. Their fellow Lamanites attack the converts, and then attack the city of Ammonihah (the same event that was recounted in ch. 16). The Anti-Nephi-Lehies join the Nephites (this is when the sons of Mosiah meet Alma), and are given the land of Jershon. Ammon and Alma offer parallel reflections on their preaching efforts and the goodness of God in chapters 26 and 29.

Chapter 30: Korihor preaches against Christ and the church, confronts Alma, asks for a sign, and is struck dumb. Shortly thereafter, he dies among the Zoramites.

Chapters 31–35: On becoming aware of apostasy among the Zoramites, Alma takes Amulek, Zeezrom (a convert from Ammonihah), three sons of Mosiah, and two of his own three sons on a mission to reform them. They have some success among the poorer people, but believers are expelled and the unrepentant Zoramites join with Lamanites coming to invade Nephite lands.

Chapters 36–42: The narrative is interrupted by transcripts of sermons that Alma preached to each of his three sons—Helaman, Shiblon, and Corianton—the last of whom had significant doctrinal doubts and moral transgressions.

Chapters 43–44: The Nephites, led by their innovative commander Moroni, defeat the combined armies of the Lamanites and Zoramites. Moroni will be the primary Nephite figure for the rest of the book of Alma.

Chapter 45: Alma prophesies of the final destruction of the Nephites and departs.

Chapters 46–50: The Nephites fight a war with the Lamanites, who are led by a Nephite dissenter named Amalickiah. This first Amalickiahite war lasts for two years, and Moroni rallies the Nephites with his Title of Liberty.

Chapters 51–62: A second Amalickiahite war lasts for seven years, with the rebellion of the king-men putting the Nephites in a precarious situation. The Nephites are forced to fight on two fronts, with Moroni's army in the east and Helaman's army in the west (which includes 2,060 young men from the Anti-Nephi-Lehies). There are many details of cities lost and retaken, and the Nephites are finally victorious after Moroni puts down a coup that had overthrown the government.

Chapter 63: Many Nephites migrate to the land northward. The Nephite scriptures are widely disseminated. Moroni dies, Helaman dies, and Shiblon inherits the records.

The book of Alma covers events from ca. 90–50 BCE.

INTERPRETATION

Literary form can often reveal an author's thinking or intentions, and may also reinforce the points that he or she wishes to convey. The book of Alma, particularly the parts ostensibly based on Alma's writings, appears to be carefully constructed. The first thing to notice is that Alma's three sermons to cities (chs. 5–13) roughly match his three sermons to his sons (chs. 36–42) in length, content, style, and genre (that is, embedded documents preceded by headings). This is a result of deliberate editing, since Alma preached in at least two additional cities, Melek (8.1–5) and Sidon (15.13–14), for which there are no recorded sermons. It is also telling that Alma's literary contributions, as well as his tenure as high priest, begin and end with war in the vicinity of the river Sidon—an observation highlighted by a poignant inclusio:

Now the number of the slain were not numbered, because of the greatness of their number . . . many of the Lamanites and the Amlicites who had been slain upon the bank of the river Sidon were cast into the waters of Sidon; and behold their bones are in the depths of the sea. (3.1–3)

Now the number of their dead was not numbered because of the greatness of the number . . . they did cast their dead into the waters of Sidon, and they have gone forth and are buried in the depths of the sea. (44.21–22)

Thus despite his considerable successes, it appears that Alma's efforts have not significantly changed the precarious spiritual and political situation of the Nephites, who will be drawn into even more devastating wars in the chapters that follow.

In looking more closely for literary forms and patterns, it will become apparent that the chapters making up Mormon's abridgment of Alma's records can be arranged into an aesthetically pleasing, chiasmic structure:

- a) Nehor and the Amlicite rebellion: chapters 1–3
- b) The preaching journeys of Alma (featuring three sermons): chapters 4–16
- c) The missionary journeys of the sons of Mosiah: chapters 17–29
- d) Korihor's apostasy: chapter 30
- c') Alma's mission to the Zoramites (with the sons of Mosiah): chapters 31–35
- b') Alma preaches to his sons (featuring three sermons): chapters 36–42
- a') The Zoramite war: chapters 43–44

Scholars conventionally assign particular significance to the pivotal element in a chiasmus, so it is perhaps unexpected that Korihor, an anti-Christ, occupies this position. Yet Korihor's story in the end dramatically affirms the existence of God and Christ. The preceding narrative about cultivating faith among non-believers (the sons of Mosiah converting Lamanite kings and courtiers) is balanced by the account that follows of nourishing faith among the wavering (Alma bringing Zoramites back into the fold), and, as mentioned previously, the three city sermons parallel the three son sermons in the next level of the chiasmus. Taken as a whole, Alma 1–44 can be read as a meditation on the reasonableness of belief, with illustrative stories.

Additional insight into how the author intended these stories to be read can come from the chapter divisions of the 1830 edition, which were part of the original dictation. Sometimes the breaks are easily justifiable, as when each of Alma's sermons to his sons is put into its own chapter (chs. XVII, XVIII, XIX). There are other places, however, where the intentions are more opaque. For example, the story of Korihor is included in the same original chapter as Alma's mission to the Zoramites (ch. XVI). Apparently, the author—whether Alma or Mormon or Joseph Smith—wanted readers to see those two episodes as somehow related or mutually illuminating. Author intentionality may also be seen in unexpected disruptions of the narrative. For instance, the Zoramite alliance with the Lamanites and preparations for war are described in chapter 35, though the narrator puts off the war itself until chapter 43, when he says, "And now I return to an account of the wars between the Nephites and the Lamanites" (43.3). In between, the narrator has inserted transcripts of Alma's sermons to his sons, that is, several chapters rich in theological, cultural, and literary material. Perhaps he hopes they might distract readers from realizing that Alma's preaching to the Zoramites in chapters 31–35 was a direct cause of the war described in chapters 43–44 (a development at odds with Alma's stated intentions at 31.5–6).

The transition at Alma 45 from Alma's record to Helaman's record is accompanied by a shift in narrative style and content. Once again, the section is framed by an inclusio—"it became expedient . . . that a regulation should be made throughout the church" (45.21) and "it had become expedient that a regulation should be made again in the church" (62.44)—but there seems to be less literary fashioning than in the earlier chapters. The narrator is mostly interested in providing a detailed account of complex events

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happening in multiple locations, sometimes simultaneously. The last third of the book of Alma begins ominously, with Alma's prophecy of the eventual destruction of the Nephites (45.8–14), and then is almost entirely taken up with military matters. There are no sermons, and five of the six letters reproduced in Mormon's abridgment occur in this part of Alma (Alma 54.4–14; 54.15–24; 56–58; 60; 61; the sixth is at 3 Ne 3). It is also curious that this later portion of Alma was not made into a separate book, named after its author, Helaman. Perhaps readers are meant to infer that Helaman had gathered materials but died before finishing his record (no formal handover to Shiblon is recorded at 63.1). Or Helaman may have written a narrative that did not suit Mormon's purposes. In either case, Mormon would have had to become a more active editor for these chapters.

While the first two-thirds of the book of Alma convey a strong religious perspective, especially in the sermons and missionary stories, some readers have felt that the spiritual message gets diluted in the war chapters (chs. 43–62; basically those ascribed to Helaman), which take up the theme of effective military leadership in the context of faith, but devote very little space to preaching or doctrine or scriptural interpretation. A few of Mormon's biases become clearer in this part of Alma. He seems to have held some prejudices against the Lamanites, as seen in his portrayal of them as passively following the lead of Nephite dissenters. He likewise minimizes the perspectives and contributions of the Mulekites, who presumably continue to make up the majority of the Zarahemla-based polity. Are they to be associated with the king-men of chapter 51 or the seditious "men of Pachus" in chapter 62?

In any case, Mormon presents a narrative that is dominated by Captain Moroni, whom he praises extravagantly in chapter 48. Indeed, it appears that Mormon, who commanded armies himself, named his own son after this military hero. After Alma's death, the rest of the book becomes something of a character study, with the resolute, patriotic, God-fearing Moroni being contrasted with the scheming, traitorous Amalickiah—a Nephite dissenter who becomes king of the Lamanites—and then his equally wicked brother Ammoron. One way that Mormon keeps the focus on Moroni is that he relegates Helaman's military achievements to a flashback relayed through a letter (chs. 56–58). This chronological adjustment is different from the flashbacks to the Zeniffite colony and the Lamanite mission of the sons of Mosiah, since Moroni and Helaman were in regular contact with each other throughout the period in question. In fact, it appears that some of Moroni's military strategies were adapted from Helaman, though readers see Moroni's subsequent implementation first, before they are recounted retrospectively in Helaman's letter. As exciting as Captain Moroni's military adventures may be, his exploits on the battlefield can be viewed in contrast to the pacificism of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies, or the more overtly spiritual leadership style of Helaman, or the final, tragic result of centuries of Nephite militarism that culminates in the fourth century CE, in Mormon's own time.

GUIDE TO READING

Given the geographical and chronological complexities of narratives in the book of Alma, readers may find it useful to consult a hypothetical map such as the one at the end of this volume. In addition, references in the text to specific years are highlighted by footnotes. (The precision of the regular chronological markers in Alma is remarkable, whether the events of a particular year take place over a few verses or several chapters.) Other details to notice include the connections between missionary work and warfare, as well as the critical roles played by both Nephite dissenters and Lamanite converts. Recurring patterns are similarly noteworthy, as when Alma and Amulek preach in tandem, with alternating sermons both at Ammonihah and also among the Zoramites (chs. 9–14; 32–34), a practice that may have modern as well as ancient parallels. A thread running through most of the book is the waxing and waning of the Nephite church, in accordance with how its members treat one another and outsiders, particularly the poor and the needy.

In attempting to ascertain the editorial agendas of Alma and Mormon, as revealed in the book's form and narration, it can be helpful to notice gaps in the stories. For instance, four sons of Mosiah go on a mission to the Lamanites, but the book only includes stories about two of the four, Ammon and Aaron. It may also be significant that the narrator recounts the story of Ammon's dramatic success first, and then Aaron's futile efforts, even though the two men were preaching at the same time. So also, readers are informed that Alma was joined by three of the sons of Mosiah in his mission to the Zoramites, yet nothing is said about the experiences or accomplishments of the latter missionaries. And similar to the way in which the opinions of Paul's opponents in 2 Corinthians must be reconstructed by reading between the lines of that epistle, it may be instructive to try to understand the figures who oppose or question Alma in chapters 1–44: Nehor, the people of Ammonihah, Korihor, and Corianton. They seem to share doubts about the legitimacy of priests and prophecy, the need for Christ's atonement, the idea of resurrection, and the nature of divine justice. Were these separate concerns voiced by individuals? Or were they part of an alternative religious movement, such as the shadowy order of Nehors? Did they reflect concerns of the Mulekite majority? And how might they have been related to positions that Alma himself had advocated in his early days, prior to his conversion?

Another exercise would be to read against the grain of the narrative, identifying areas in which the stories, as told, provide details that might not neatly line up with the avowed intentions of the narrators. Mormon greatly admires Captain Moroni, obviously, but some of the details he includes reveal instances of Moroni's anger and impetuosity that do not necessarily reflect well on him. Such inconsistencies may indicate a lapse of attention on the part of the author, or they might be interpreted as endowing the characters of both narrator and subject with additional complexity and interest. So rather than simply comparing Captain Moroni to Amalickiah, as Mormon seems to have intended, it may be illuminating to weigh his personality and actions against those of Helaman, a religious leader rather than a professional soldier who became a military commander at the request of young Anti-Nephi-Lehies. And while Mormon's history is steadfastly Nephite-centric and patriarchal, the decisive actions of Lamanite women—two queens and a woman named Abish—in chapters 19 and 22 are worth noting, as is the praise given to Lamanite mothers at 56.48.

Examples of particularly sophisticated rhetoric in this book include Alma's sermon at Zarahemla in chapter 5, where he works about fifty questions into his discourse; his tightly structured prayer on behalf of the Zoramites in chapter 31; and his testimony to his son Helaman in chapters 36–37, in which intricate allusions, poetic passages, and a carefully developed argument are joined to a recounting of his conversion that takes the form of a lengthy chiasmus. A psalm-like poem in chapter 33, attributed to writings of the prophet Zenos on the Brass Plates, fits the narrative context remarkably well, and Alma's discourse on how to develop faith, comparing it to nurturing a seed, has long been a favorite among Latter-day Saints. As noted above, the rhetorical quality of the latter part of Alma is less evident, but if the first two-thirds of the book were about gaining and retaining faith, the last third demonstrates the political and military implications of attempting to defend that faith, not altogether successfully, which may have a different sort of resonance for readers.

THE BOOK OF ALMA

The Son of Alma

The account of Alma, who was the son of Alma, the first and chief judge over the people of Nephi, and also the high priest over the Church. An account of the reign of the judges, and the wars and contentions among the people. And also an account of a war between the Nephites and the Lamanites, according to the record of Alma, the first and chief judge.

Mormon₂'s Abridgment of the Record of Alma₂: Alma 1–44

Nehor Introduces Priestcraft and Slays Gideon

[1] 1 ¹ Now it came to pass that in the first year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi,^a from this time forward, king Mosiah having gone the way of all the earth, having warred a good warfare, walking uprightly before God, leaving none to reign in his stead; nevertheless he had established laws, and they were acknowledged by the people; therefore they were obliged to abide by the laws which he had made.

² And it came to pass that in the first year of the reign of Alma in the judgment-seat, there was a man brought before him to be judged, a man who was large, and was noted for his much strength. ³ And he had gone about among the people, preaching to them that which he termed to be the word of God, bearing down against the church; declaring unto the people that every priest and teacher ought to become popular; and they ought not to labor with their hands, but that they ought to be supported by the people. ⁴ And he also testified unto the people that all mankind

^a 1 –91 years; see the note at Mos 29.44

Preface This description of contents seems to cover only chs. 1–44, a period of 17 years. Helaman₂ takes possession of the records at 45.1, and 63.1 marks the transition to Shiblon₂'s account. *A war*, specifically, the Zoramite war of chs. 43–44.

CHAPTER 1

Alma must deal with several challenges to the rules proclaimed by King Mosiah at Mos 27.2–5 establishing a self-supporting clergy and forbidding religious persecution or destabilizing inequality. **1:** Among the Nephites, public acknowledgment of laws established by royal decree is necessary for them to become binding (cf. v. 14). **2:** *A man*, perhaps as a sign of editorial disapproval, his name, Nehor, is not given until his death in v. 15. For better or for worse, a physically imposing presence is often associated with leadership, as with Saul, Nephi, and Mormon; see 1 Sam 9.2; 1 Ne 4.31; Morm 2.1. **3:** Nehor, claiming divine authorization, proposes the establishment of a professional clergy. *Bear down*, WB: “to urge; to overthrow or crush by force.” *Popular*, WB: “enjoying the favor of the people,” here the meaning is “financially supported by the people”; contrast this with v. 26. **4:** Nehor preaches a universal salvation that is similar to the Universalism of JS’s day; elsewhere in the BoM only those who take Christ’s name, obey God’s commandments, and endure to the end will be *saved at the last day*; e.g., 1 Ne 22.31; 3 Ne 27.6. Later Nehorites are said “not to believe in the repentance of sins” (15.15). Early readers, both believers and skeptics, recognized the parallels between Nehor’s teachings and contemporary theological debates; an LDS reference guide to the BoM dated to 1835 included the headings “Nehor the universalian” and “Amlici the universalist” (Amlici is a follower of Nehor who will be introduced in the next chapter). *Need not fear and tremble*, the opposite of Abinadi’s message at Mos 15.26–27. *Lift up their heads and rejoice*, a rare expression suggesting that Nehor is offering an alternative to the salvation preached by King Limhi at Mos 7.19. Later Nephite prophets will teach that Christ will redeem all mankind in the sense of raising them from the dead and bringing them back into God’s presence for judgment, but *eternal life* (presumably in God’s kingdom) is a separate matter; see Hel 14.16–17; Morm 9.13.

should be saved at the last day, and that they need not fear nor tremble, but that they might lift up their heads and rejoice; for the Lord had created all men, and had also redeemed all men; and, in the end, all men should have eternal life.

⁵ And it came to pass that he did teach these things so much that many did believe on his words, even so many that they began to support him and give him money. ⁶ And he began to be lifted up in the pride of his heart, and to wear very costly apparel, yea, and even began to establish a church after the manner of his preaching.

⁷ And it came to pass as he was going, to preach to those who believed on his word, he met a man who belonged to the church of God, yea, even one of their teachers; and he began to contend with him sharply, that he might lead away the people of the church; but the man withstood him, admonishing him with the words of God. ⁸ Now the name of the man was Gideon; and it was he who was an instrument in the hands of God in delivering the people of Limhi out of bondage. ⁹ Now, because Gideon withstood him with the words of God he was wroth with Gideon, and drew his sword and began to smite him. Now Gideon being stricken with many years, therefore

he was not able to withstand his blows, therefore he was slain by the sword.

¹⁰ And the man who slew him was taken by the people of the church, and was brought before Alma, to be judged according to the crimes which he had committed. ¹¹ And it came to pass that he stood before Alma and pleaded for himself with much boldness.

¹² But Alma said unto him, "Behold, this is the first time that priestcraft has been introduced among this people. And behold, thou art not only guilty of priestcraft, but hast endeavored to enforce it by the sword; and were priestcraft to be enforced among this people it would prove their entire destruction.

¹³ And thou hast shed the blood of a righteous man, yea, a man who has done much good among this people; and were we to spare thee his blood would come upon us for vengeance.

¹⁴ Therefore thou art condemned to die, according to the law which has been given us by Mosiah, our last king; and it has been acknowledged by this people; therefore this people must abide by the law."

¹⁵ And it came to pass that they took him (and his name was Nehor), and they carried him upon the top of the hill Manti, and there he was caused, or rather did acknowledge, between the heavens and the earth, that what

6: In the BoM, being *lifted up in the pride of one's heart* is regularly associated with expensive clothing; see Jacob 2.13; Alma 5.53; 4 Ne 1.24; Morm 8.36. *Establish a church*, this is the first religious organization among the Nephites designed to compete directly with the church established by Alma₁ at Mos 18.17 (cf. Mos 23.16; 25.19). At 21.4–6 we learn that Nehorites built separate synagogues or sanctuaries for their worship services. **7–8:** Gideon, one of the heroes among Limhi's people, had been appointed as a teacher in Alma's church, perhaps as early as Mos 25.19–21. **8:** See Mos 22.3–14, which recounts events from about thirty years earlier; cf. Mos 19.4–8. **9:** There may be an implication here that Nehor's violence stemmed from his disbelief in eternal consequences. **12–13:** Alma identifies three crimes: priestcraft, religious coercion, and murder. *Priestcraft*, that is, religious fraud perpetrated for the sake of wealth and power, was referred to in prophecies at 2 Ne 10.5 and 26.29, but this is the first reported occurrence of its practice among the Nephites. It may be that Nehor's transgression was not only advocating for a professional clergy (in contrast to Mos 18.26), but claiming to do so by the word of God (v. 3). The idea that innocent blood calls out to God for justice is derived from Gen 4.10; see 2 Ne 26.3n. Here Alma suggests that the vengeance due a murderer could be transferred to those who allow the murderer to go unpunished. **12:** *Prove*, WB: "make certain" or OED: "turn out to be." **14:** *The law which has been given us by Mosiah*, see Mos 29.14–15. **15:** Nehor renounces his heretical teachings rather than confessing to murder. *Between the heavens and the earth* may suggest hanging; cf. 2 Sam 18.9. *Ignominious*, WB: "very shameful; dishonorable." The term "ignominious death" was regularly applied to hanging in the 18th and 19th c., though within the context of Jewish law, stoning could also fall into that category.

he had taught to the people was contrary to the word of God; and there he suffered an ignominious death.

Troubles for the Church

¹⁶ Nevertheless, this did not put an end to the spreading of priestcraft through the land; for there were many who loved the vain things of the world, and they went forth preaching false doctrines; and this they did for the sake of riches and honor. ¹⁷ Nevertheless, they durst not lie, if it were known, for fear of the law, for liars were punished; therefore they pretended to preach according to their belief; and now the law could have no power on any man for his belief. ¹⁸ And they durst not steal, for fear of the law, for such were punished; neither durst they rob, nor murder, for he that murdered was punished unto death.

¹⁹ But it came to pass that whosoever did not belong to the church of God began to persecute those that did belong to the church of God, and had taken upon them the name of Christ. ²⁰ Yea, they did persecute them, and afflict them with all manner of words, and this because of their humility; because they were not proud in their own eyes, and because they did impart the word of God, one with another, without money and without price.

²¹ Now there was a strict law among the people of the church, that there should not any man, belonging to the church, arise and persecute those that did not belong to the church, and that there should be no persecution among themselves. ²² Nevertheless, there were many among them who began to be proud, and began to contend warmly with their adversaries, even unto blows; yea, they would smite one another with their fists.

²³ Now this was in the second year of the reign of Alma,^a and it was a cause of much affliction to the church; yea, it was the cause of much trial with the church. ²⁴ For the hearts of many were hardened, and their names were blotted out, that they were remembered no more among the people of God. And also many withdrew themselves from among them.

The Church Prospers after Peace Is Restored

²⁵ Now this was a great trial to those that did stand fast in the faith; nevertheless, they were steadfast and immovable in keeping the commandments of God, and they bore with patience the persecution which was heaped upon them.

²⁶ And when the priests left their labor to impart the word of God unto the people, the people also left their labors to hear the word of God. And when the priest had imparted unto them the word of God they all returned again diligently unto their labors; and the priest, not esteeming himself above his hearers, for the preacher was no better than the hearer, neither was the teacher any better than the learner; and thus they were all equal, and they did all labor, every man according to his strength. ²⁷ And they did impart of their substance, every man according to that which he had, to the poor, and the needy, and the sick, and the afflicted; and they did not wear costly apparel, yet they were neat and comely. ²⁸ And thus they did establish the affairs of the church; and thus they began to have continual peace again, notwithstanding all their persecutions.

^a 23 –90 years

16: *This did not put an end*, followers of Nehor are mentioned later at 14.16, 18; 15.15; 16.11; 21.4–6; 24.28–29.

17: The narrator makes an accusation of religious fraud—that these preachers knew their doctrines were false. Freedom of belief, protected by law, would have been rare in the ancient world; cf. 30.7. **20:** *Without money and without price*, Isa 55.1 (quoted at 2 Ne 9.50). **25:** *Stand fast in the faith*, 1 Cor 16.13 and three times in the BoM.

26: *Preachers* are mentioned in the BoM only here and at WōM 1.16. **27:** The same list of *the poor, and the needy, and the sick, and the afflicted* recurs at Morm 8.37.

²⁹ And now, because of the steadiness of the church they began to be exceeding rich, having abundance of all things whatsoever they stood in need—an abundance of flocks and herds, and fatlings of every kind, and also abundance of grain, and of gold, and of silver, and of precious things, and abundance of silk and fine-twined linen, and all manner of good homely cloth. ³⁰ And thus, in their prosperous circumstances, they did not send away any who were naked, or that were hungry, or that were athirst, or that were sick, or that had not been nourished; and they did not set their hearts upon riches; therefore they were liberal to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, whether out of the church or in the church, having no respect to persons as to those who stood in need.

³¹ And thus they did prosper and become far more wealthy than those who did not belong to their church. ³² For those who did not belong to their church did indulge themselves in sorceries, and in idolatry or idleness, and in babblings, and in envyings and strife; wearing costly apparel; being lifted up in the pride of their own eyes; lying,^a thieving, robbing, committing whoredoms, and murdering, and all manner of wickedness; nevertheless, the law was put in force upon all those

who did transgress it, inasmuch as it was possible. ³³ And it came to pass that by thus exercising the law upon them, every man suffering according to that which he had done, they became more still, and durst not commit any wickedness if it were known; therefore, there was much peace among the people of Nephi until the fifth year of the reign of the judges.

The Amlicite Rebellion: Alma 2–3

Amlici's Unsuccessful Attempt to Be Appointed King

2 ¹ And it came to pass in the commencement of the fifth year of their reign^b there began to be a contention among the people; for a certain man, being called Amlici, he being a very cunning man, yea, a wise man as to the wisdom of the world, he being after the order of the man that slew Gideon by the sword, who was executed according to the law—² now this Amlici had, by his cunning, drawn away much people after him; even so much that they began to be very powerful;

^a ³² P, 1981 *persecuting*, lying

^b ¹ –87 years

29: *Homely*, homemade. **30:** The inclusion of both the *hungry* and those *that had not been nourished* suggests that there are some types of nourishing that go beyond merely providing food; cf. Jacob 6.7; Mos 4.26. *Liberal*, generous. *Both bond and free, both male and female*, cf. Gal 3.28; 2 Ne 10.16; 26.33; Alma 11.44 (which also includes *old and young*). It is unclear who was included in the category of *bond*, since kings Benjamin and Mosiah had outlawed slavery among the Nephites; see Mos 2.13; Alma 27.9. Alternatively, the BoM may simply be following a familiar NT cadence; the combination “bond/free” occurs six times in the NT and six times in the BoM. *Having no respect to persons*, impartially; e.g., Lev 19.15; Rom 2.11; Jas 2.8–9; Alma 16.14. **31–32:** While church members are blessed with prosperity, outsiders suffer the natural consequences of superstition, contention, profligacy, and criminality. The narrator assumes a connection between *idolatry* and *idleness*; cf. 17.15. **33:** *Still*, quiescent.

CHAPTER 2

1–5: Throughout the book of Alma, there are factions who wish to restore the monarchy that had been dissolved by King Mosiah. Since Nephites effectively control the new office of chief judge, the discontented may have come from the Mulekite majority of the population, particularly those who might legitimately claim descent from Zedekiah, the last Davidic king of Judah; see Mos 25.2; Hel 6.10; 8.21. **1:** *After the order of*, an idiom derived from Ps 110.4, which seems to denote an organized priesthood or religious fraternity; compare 13.1–9. The order of Nehor is mentioned again at 14.16; 21.4; 24.28–29. **2:** *Cunning... wise man as to the wisdom of the world*, the description echoes that of the Lamanites at Mos 24.7, foreshadowing the Amlicite-Lamanite alliance at v. 24.

and they began to endeavor to establish Amlici to be a king over the people.

³ Now this was alarming to the people of the church, and also to all those who had not been drawn away after the persuasions of Amlici; for they knew that according to their law that such things must be established by the voice of the people. ⁴ Therefore, if it were possible that Amlici should gain the voice of the people, he, being a wicked man, would deprive them of their rights and privileges of the church; for it was his intent to destroy the church of God.

⁵ And it came to pass that the people assembled themselves together throughout all the land, every man according to his mind, whether it were for or against Amlici, in separate bodies, having much dispute and wonderful contentions one with another. ⁶ And thus they did assemble themselves together to cast in their voices concerning the matter; and they were laid before the judges. ⁷ And it came to pass that the voice of the people came against Amlici, that he was not made king over the people.

Amlici and His Followers Battle the Nephites

⁸ Now this did cause much joy in the hearts of those who were against him; but Amlici did stir up those who were in his favor to anger against those who were not in his favor. ⁹ And it came to pass that they gathered themselves

together, and did consecrate Amlici to be their king. ¹⁰ Now when Amlici was made king over them he commanded them that they should take up arms against their brethren; and this he did that he might subject them to him. ¹¹ Now the people of Amlici were distinguished by the name of Amlici, being called Amlicites; and the remainder were called Nephites, or the people of God.

¹² Therefore the people of the Nephites were aware of the intent of the Amlicites, and therefore they did prepare to meet them; yea, they did arm themselves with swords, and with cimeters,^a and with bows, and with arrows, and with stones, and with slings, and with all manner of weapons of war, of every kind. ¹³ And thus they were prepared to meet the Amlicites at the time of their coming. And there were appointed captains, and higher captains, and chief captains, according to their numbers.

¹⁴ And it came to pass that Amlici did arm his men with all manner of weapons of war of every kind; and he also appointed rulers and leaders over his people, to lead them to war against their brethren. ¹⁵ And it came to pass that the Amlicites came upon the hill Amnihu, which was east of the river Sidon, which ran by the land of Zarahemla, and there they began to make war with the Nephites.

¹⁶ Now Alma, being the chief judge and the governor of the people of Nephi, therefore

^a 12. Or *scimitars*

3–4: The political conflict has religious implications, perhaps reflecting long-standing Nephite/Mulekite tensions. 5–6: The issue is decided by some sort of male-only democratic process, overseen by judges. *Wonderful*, causing wonder; astonishing. 8–19: Amlici’s political movement becomes a rebellion against the government. 10: One of the primary functions of ancient kings was to lead their people in battle; see Mos 19.6n. *Subject them* probably refers to the other Nephites rather than Amlici’s followers, but the grammar is ambiguous. 11: Amlici’s polarizing rebellion results in a linguistic shift—the term “Nephites” now includes both the actual descendants of Nephi and also the non-royalist Mulekites. Similarly, the term “people of God,” which previously referred to Alma’s church (Mos 25.24; 26.5; Alma 1.24), now seems to encompass the nonmembers of v. 3 as well. 16: *Governor*, this is the first mention of this office in the BoM. The position of *chief judge* apparently included significant military responsibilities, as would have been expected of a king.

he went up with his people, yea, with his captains, and chief captains, yea, at the head of his armies, against the Amlicites to battle. ¹⁷ And they began to slay the Amlicites upon the hill east of Sidon. And the Amlicites did contend with the Nephites with great strength, insomuch that many of the Nephites did fall before the Amlicites. ¹⁸ Nevertheless the Lord did strengthen the hand of the Nephites, that they slew the Amlicites with great slaughter, that they began to flee before them. ¹⁹ And it came to pass that the Nephites did pursue the Amlicites all that day, and did slay them with much slaughter, insomuch that there were slain of the Amlicites twelve thousand five hundred thirty and two souls; and there were slain of the Nephites six thousand five hundred sixty and two souls.

The Nephites Defeat the Amlicites and the Lamanites Near the Valley of Gideon

²⁰ And it came to pass that when Alma could pursue the Amlicites no longer he caused that his people should pitch their tents in the valley of Gideon, the valley being called after that Gideon who was slain by the hand of Nehor with the sword; and in this valley the Nephites did pitch their tents for the night. ²¹ And Alma sent spies to follow the remnant of the Amlicites, that he might know of their plans and their plots, whereby he might guard himself against them, that he might preserve his people from being destroyed. ²² Now those whom he had sent out to watch the camp of the Amlicites were called Zeram, and Amnor, and Manti, and Limher; these were they who

went out with their men to watch the camp of the Amlicites.

²³ And it came to pass that on the morrow they returned into the camp of the Nephites in great haste, being greatly astonished, and struck with much fear, saying, ²⁴ “Behold, we followed the camp of the Amlicites, and to our great astonishment, in the land of Minon, above the land of Zarahemla, in the course of the land of Nephi, we saw a numerous host of the Lamanites; and behold, the Amlicites have joined them; ²⁵ and they are upon our brethren in that land; and they are fleeing before them with their flocks, and their wives, and their children, towards our city; and except we make haste they obtain possession of our city, and our fathers, and our wives, and our children be slain.”

²⁶ And it came to pass that the people of Nephi took their tents, and departed out of the valley of Gideon towards their city, which was the city of Zarahemla. ²⁷ And behold, as they were crossing the river Sidon, the Lamanites and the Amlicites, being as numerous almost, as it were, as the sands of the sea, came upon them to destroy them. ²⁸ Nevertheless, the Nephites being strengthened by the hand of the Lord, having prayed mightily to him that he would deliver them out of the hands of their enemies, therefore the Lord did hear their cries, and did strengthen them, and the Lamanites and the Amlicites did fall before them.

²⁹ And it came to pass that Alma fought with Amlici with the sword, face to face; and they did contend mightily, one with another.

19: The Amlicites suffer nearly twice as many deaths as the Nephites, though these are remarkably precise numbers in the aftermath of the chaos of battle and flight. **20:** *That Gideon who was slain*, 1.9. **24–25:** The addition of Lamanite invaders to Amlicite rebels changes the situation considerably, particularly for Nephites in the vulnerable city of Zarahemla. The run-on sentence beginning with *and* reproduces the spies’ hurried, breathless report. *In the course of*, on the way to; or perhaps *course* means “direction.” **25:** *Fathers*, oddly enough, there is no corresponding mention of mothers. **29–30:** In a dramatic climax, the two opposing leaders fight one-on-one, with Alma pausing for a quick prayer that is recounted with a direct quotation. In v. 32 Alma will fight with the king of the Lamanites as well. *O Lord, have mercy and spare my life*, this is the second time Alma has offered such a prayer; the first time was during his conversion experience in Mos 27, but the words he uttered at that moment are not reported until Alma 36.18.

³⁰ And it came to pass that Alma, being a man of God, being exercised with much faith, cried, saying, “O Lord, have mercy and spare my life, that I may be an instrument in thy hands to save and preserve this people.”

³¹ Now when Alma had said these words he contended again with Amlici; and he was strengthened, insomuch that he slew Amlici with the sword. ³² And he also contended with the king of the Lamanites; but the king of the Lamanites fled back from before Alma and sent his guards to contend with Alma. ³³ But Alma, with his guards, contended with the guards of the king of the Lamanites until he slew and drove them back. ³⁴ And thus he cleared the ground, or rather the bank, which was on the west of the river Sidon, throwing the bodies of the Lamanites who had been slain into the waters of Sidon, that thereby his people might have room to cross and contend with the Lamanites and the Amlicites on the west side of the river Sidon.

³⁵ And it came to pass that when they had all crossed the river Sidon that the Lamanites and the Amlicites began to flee before them, notwithstanding they were so numerous that they could not be numbered. ³⁶ And they fled before the Nephites towards the wilderness which was west and north, away beyond the borders of the land; and the Nephites did pursue them with their might, and did slay them. ³⁷ Yea, they were met on every hand, and slain and driven, until they were scattered on the west, and on the north, until they had reached the wilderness, which was called Hermounts;

and it was that part of the wilderness which was infested by wild and ravenous beasts. ³⁸ And it came to pass that many died in the wilderness of their wounds, and were devoured by those beasts and also the vultures of the air; and their bones have been found, and have been heaped up on the earth.

3 ¹ And it came to pass that the Nephites who were not slain by the weapons of war, after having buried those who had been slain—now the number of the slain were not numbered, because of the greatness of their number—after they had finished burying their dead they all returned to their lands, and to their houses, and their wives, and their children. ² Now many women and children had been slain with the sword, and also many of their flocks and their herds; and also many of their fields of grain were destroyed, for they were trodden down by the hosts of men. ³ And now as many of the Lamanites and the Amlicites who had been slain upon the bank of the river Sidon were cast into the waters of Sidon; and behold their bones are in the depths of the sea, and they are many.

The Amlicites Take the Lamanite Curse upon Themselves

⁴ And the Amlicites were distinguished from the Nephites, for they had marked themselves with red in their foreheads after the manner of the Lamanites; nevertheless they had not shorn their heads like unto the Lamanites. ⁵ Now the heads of the Lamanites were shorn; and they were naked, save it were skin which was girded

38: Being devoured by *wild beasts* and *the vultures of the air* echo Abinadi’s prophecy at Mos 12.2.

CHAPTER 3

1–3: This tragic act of throwing bodies into the river Sidon near the beginning of Alma’s ministry is matched by a parallel scene toward the end of his life; see 44.21–22. The similar phrasing marks a formal inclusio. 4–9: For the narrator, the Amlicites’ adoption of Lamanite facial marking represents their assimilation into the Lamanite curse; see 2 Ne 5.20–21. Just as the dark skin of the Lamanites—the mark of their curse for rebellion—kept them separate from the Nephites, so also the self-applied facial markings of the Amlicites served to distinguish them from their Nephite brethren. 4: *Marked themselves with red* may refer to either war paint or tattooing; 3 Ne 4.7 suggests daubing with blood. 5: *Armor*, see Mos 21.7n.

about their loins, and also their armor, which was girded about them, and their bows, and their arrows, and their stones, and their slings, and so forth.

⁶ And the skins of the Lamanites were dark, according to the mark which was set upon their fathers, which was a curse upon them because of their transgression and their rebellion against their brethren, who consisted of Nephi, Jacob, and Joseph, and Sam, who were just and holy men. ⁷ And their brethren sought to destroy them, therefore they were cursed; and the Lord God set a mark upon them, yea, upon Laman and Lemuel, and also the sons of Ishmael, and Ishmaelitish women.

⁸ And this was done that their seed might be distinguished from the seed of their brethren, that thereby the Lord God might preserve his people, that they might not mix and believe in incorrect traditions which would prove their destruction. ⁹ And it came to pass that whosoever did mingle his seed with that of the Lamanites did bring the same curse upon his seed. ¹⁰ Therefore, whosoever suffered himself to be led away by the Lamanites was called under that head, and there was a mark set upon him.

¹¹ And it came to pass that whosoever would not believe in the tradition of the Lamanites, but believed those records which were brought

out of the land of Jerusalem, and also in the tradition of their fathers, which were correct, who believed in the commandments of God and kept them, were called the Nephites, or the people of Nephi, from that time forth—¹² And it is they who have kept the records, which are true, of their people, and also of the people of the Lamanites.

¹³ Now we will return again to the Amlicites, for they also had a mark set upon them; yea, they set the mark upon themselves, yea, even a mark of red upon their foreheads. ¹⁴ Thus the word of God is fulfilled, for these are the words which he said to Nephi, “Behold, the Lamanites have I cursed, and I will set a mark on them that they and their seed may be separated from thee and thy seed, from this time henceforth and forever, except they repent of their wickedness and turn to me that I may have mercy upon them.”^a

¹⁵ And again, “I will set a mark upon him that mingleth his seed with thy brethren, that they may be cursed also.”^b

¹⁶ And again, “I will set a mark upon him that fighteth against thee and thy seed.”^c

^a ¹⁴ See 2 Ne 5.22.

^b ¹⁵ See 2 Ne 5.23.

^c ¹⁶ Reference uncertain

6–10: The Nephite assumptions that dark skin was associated with sin and a divine curse, and that it should be a barrier to social interactions and intermarriage, are, from a modern perspective, offensively racist. It is remarkable when such assumptions are overturned later in the BoM, in the books of Helaman and 4 Nephi. **6:** *A curse*, see 2 Ne 5.20–23. The brothers are listed in order of prominence rather than birth; Sam was the eldest of the four, though his descendants were absorbed into Nephi’s lineage at 2 Ne 4.11. **7:** *Ishmaelitish women*, the single reference to women in these ancestral lists is striking; the term “Ishmaelitish” may simply be an adjectival form, or it may imply indigenous women who married Ishmaelite men; cf. “Lamanitish” at 17.26 and 19.16. **9–12:** The curse and its mark are regarded as inheritable, with intermarriage generally making Nephites into Lamanites, rather than vice versa. By contrast, Nephite identity is cultural, and is closely connected to literacy, records, and religion. Nevertheless, there are a few examples of Lamanite converts who join with the Nephites, such as the Anti-Nephi-Lehies at 27.27 and the Lamanites at 3 Ne 2.14–16, whose skin becomes lighter, a phenomenon particularly noticeable in the next generation—which may imply intermarriage with the Nephites. **10:** *Head*, heading or category. **11:** *Those records*, the Brass Plates. *From that time forth*, again, this appears to reflect greater cohesion between the Nephites and Mulekites; see 2.11n. BoM narrators regularly attempt to reduce social, political, and religious complexity into the polarized opposite camps of Nephites and Lamanites; cf. Jacob 1.13–14; Morm 1.8–9. **13–19:** By adopting Lamanite face-marking practices, the Amlicites were unwittingly fulfilling a series of prophecies given nearly 500 years earlier.

¹⁷ And again, “I say he that departeth from thee shall no more be called thy seed; and I will bless thee, and whomsoever shall be called thy seed, henceforth and forever.”^a And these were the promises of the Lord unto Nephi and to his seed.

¹⁸ Now the Amlicites knew not that they were fulfilling the words of God when they began to mark themselves in their foreheads; nevertheless they had come out in open rebellion against God; therefore it was expedient that the curse should fall upon them. ¹⁹ Now I would that ye should see that they brought upon themselves the curse; and even so doth every man that is cursed bring upon himself his own condemnation.

Another Battle with the Lamanites

²⁰ Now it came to pass that not many days after the battle which was fought in the land of Zarahemla, by the Lamanites and the Amlicites, that there was another army of the Lamanites came in upon the people of Nephi, in the same place where the first army met the Amlicites.

²¹ And it came to pass that there was an army sent to drive them out of their land. ²² Now Alma himself being afflicted with a wound did not go up to battle at this time against the Lamanites; ²³ but he sent up a numerous army against them; and they went up and slew many of the Lamanites, and drove the remainder of them out of the borders of their land.

²⁴ And then they returned again and began to

establish peace in the land, being troubled no more for a time with their enemies.

²⁵ Now all these things were done, yea, all these wars and contentions were commenced and ended in the fifth year of the reign of the judges.^b ²⁶ And in one year were thousands and tens of thousands of souls sent to the eternal world, that they might reap their rewards according to their works, whether they were good or whether they were bad, to reap eternal happiness or eternal misery, according to the spirit which they listed to obey, whether it be a good spirit or a bad one. ²⁷ For every man receiveth wages of him whom he listeth to obey, and this according to the words of the spirit of prophecy; therefore let it be according to the truth. And thus endeth the fifth year of the reign of the judges.

Repentance and Recovery

[II] **4** ¹ Now it came to pass in the sixth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi,^c there were no contentions nor wars in the land of Zarahemla; ² but the people were afflicted, yea, greatly afflicted for the loss of their brethren, and also for the loss of their flocks and herds, and also for the loss of their fields of grain, which were trodden

^a ¹⁷ Reference uncertain

^b ²⁵ –87 years; see Alma 2.1

^c ¹ –86 years

17: *Shall no more be called thy seed*, these words, spoken by the Lord to Nephi, suggest that Nephi himself had wayward children who did not follow him. *Whomsoever shall be called thy seed*, indicates the possibility of outsiders, such as the Mulekites, being assimilated into Nephite culture (see Mos 25.13; Alma 2.11). **18–19:** This summary conclusion is the narrator’s main point—that divine curses are not arbitrary acts of God, but rather people bring curses upon themselves, through their own choices; cf. Hel 14.29. *Come out in open rebellion against God*, Benjamin had warned his people about this at Mos 2.36–37. **22:** In the many sermons of Alma recorded in the BoM, he never mentions his war injury. **26:** This verse features three pairs of linked opposites: good or bad works, eternal happiness or misery, obeying a good or bad spirit. *Listed to obey... bad* [spirit], another reference to Benjamin’s discourse; see Mos 2.32–33, 37. **27:** *Let it be according to the truth* is the narrator’s quick invocation.

CHAPTER 4

2: This list of losses reflects 3.2.

under foot and destroyed by the Lamanites.³ And so great were their afflictions that every soul had cause to mourn; and they believed that it was the judgments of God sent upon them because of their wickedness and their abominations; therefore they were awakened to a remembrance of their duty.

⁴ And they began to establish the church more fully; yea, and many were baptized in the waters of Sidon and were joined to the church of God; yea, they were baptized by the hand of Alma, who had been consecrated the high priest over the people of the church, by the hand of his father Alma.⁵ And it came to pass in the seventh year of the reign of the judges^a there were about three thousand five hundred souls that united themselves to the church of God and were baptized. And thus endeth the seventh year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi; and there was continual peace in all that time.

Pride Slows the Progress of the Church

⁶ And it came to pass in the eighth year of the reign of the judges,^b that the people of the church began to wax proud, because of their exceeding riches, and their fine silks, and their fine-twined linen, and because of their many flocks and herds, and their gold and their silver, and all manner of precious things, which they had obtained by their industry; and in all these things were they lifted up in the pride of their eyes, for they began to wear very costly apparel.

⁷ Now this was the cause of much affliction to Alma, yea, and to many of the people whom Alma had consecrated to be teachers, and priests, and elders over the church; yea, many of them were sorely grieved for the wickedness which they saw had begun to be among their people.⁸ For they saw and beheld with great sorrow that the people of the church began to be lifted up in the pride of their eyes, and to set their hearts upon riches and upon the vain things of the world, that they began to be scornful, one towards another, and they began to persecute those that did not believe, according to their own will and pleasure.

⁹ And thus, in this eighth year of the reign of the judges, there began to be great contentions among the people of the church; yea, there were envyings, and strife, and malice, and persecutions, and pride, even to exceed the pride of those who did not belong to the church of God.¹⁰ And thus ended the eighth year of the reign of the judges; and the wickedness of the church was a great stumbling-block to those who did not belong to the church; and thus the church began to fail in its progress.

Alma₂ Resigns His Judgeship in Order to Preach

¹¹ And it came to pass in the commencement of the ninth year,^c Alma saw the wickedness of

^a 5 –85 years

^b 6 –84 years

^c 11 –83 years

4: *Baptized in the waters of Sidon*, the same place where the war dead had been disposed just a year earlier; see 3.3. The fact that the head of the church is personally baptizing suggests that baptismal authority was not widely distributed. *Consecrated high priest... by the hand of his father*, see Mos 29:42; cf. Alma 5.3.

6: Church members have begun to follow Nehor's example of pride and expensive clothing; see 1.6. **7:** *Elders*, this is the first mention of this ecclesiastical position among the Nephites. Very little is known about these church officers, who are only referred to at v. 16 below, 6.1, and four times in Moro 3–6 (among the instructions for church organization). Note that neither bishops nor deacons are ever mentioned in the BoM, though both offices appear in the NT.

11–12: The moral example of the church had previously played a restraining role for the people as a whole. Now, however, the church is leading society in the opposite direction, with unfortunate results, particularly with regard to inequality and the treatment of the most vulnerable members of the population. This represents a complete reversal of the situation described at 1.30, just seven years earlier.

the church, and he saw also that the example of the church began to lead those who were unbelievers on from one piece of iniquity to another, thus bringing on the destruction of the people.¹² Yea, he saw great inequality among the people, some lifting themselves up with their pride, despising others, turning their backs upon the needy and the naked and those who were hungry, and those who were athirst, and those who were sick and afflicted—¹³ now this was a great cause for lamentations among the people—while others were abasing themselves, succoring those who stood in need of their succor, such as imparting their substance to the poor and the needy, feeding the hungry, and suffering all manner of afflictions, for Christ's sake, who should come according to the spirit of prophecy;¹⁴ looking forward to that day, thus retaining a remission of their sins; being filled with great joy because of the resurrection of the dead, according to the will and power and deliverance of Jesus Christ from the bands of death.

¹⁵ And now it came to pass that Alma, having seen the afflictions of the humble followers of God, and the persecutions which were heaped upon them by the remainder of his people, and seeing all their inequality, began to be very sorrowful; nevertheless the Spirit of the Lord did not fail him.¹⁶ And he selected a wise man who was among the elders of the

church, and gave him power according to the voice of the people, that he might have power to enact laws according to the laws which had been given, and to put them in force according to the wickedness and the crimes of the people.¹⁷ Now this man's name was Nephiah, and he was appointed chief judge; and he sat in the judgment-seat to judge and to govern the people.

¹⁸ Now Alma did not grant unto him the office of being high priest over the church, but he retained the office of high priest unto himself; but he delivered the judgment-seat unto Nephiah.¹⁹ And this he did that he himself might go forth among his people, or among the people of Nephi, that he might preach the word of God unto them, to stir them up in remembrance of their duty, and that he might pull down, by the word of God, all the pride and craftiness and all the contentions which were among his people, seeing no way that he might reclaim them save it were in bearing down in pure testimony against them.

²⁰ And thus in the commencement of the ninth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi, Alma delivered up the judgment-seat to Nephiah, and confined himself wholly to the high priesthood of the holy order of God, to the testimony of the word, according to the spirit of revelation and prophecy.

13–14: Some church members, however, continued to manifest their faith in Christ through their kindness to the needy and the afflicted. *Abasing*, humbling. *Succoring those who stood in need of their succor*, the same expression was used by King Benjamin at Mos 4.16. The idea of “retaining” a remission of sins by *imparting their substance to the poor* and *feeding the hungry* also appeared at Mos 4.26; cf. Alma 34.28. **15–17:** Alma resigns as chief judge and appoints his successor, as confirmed by the voice of the people. The name *Nephiah* implies that he is a Nephite rather than a Mulekite. **18–19:** Alma intends to devote his full time to the ministry, retaining his ecclesiastical position as high priest. Nevertheless, he will be preaching to all the people, not just members of the church, as evidenced by the correction from *his people* to *the people of Nephi*; see 2.11n; 8.11–12. *Bearing down*, Alma employs the same intensity that Amlici did (1.3 is the only other instance of this expression). *Pure testimony*, a common expression in the 18th–19th c. **20:** *Revelation and prophecy* is a non-biblical combination that appears a dozen times in the BoM, usually in conjunction with “the spirit of.”

The Preaching Journeys of

Alma₂: Alma 5–16

[Mormon₂'s heading] The words which Alma, the High Priest according to the holy order of God, delivered to the people in their cities and villages throughout the land.

Alma₂'s Sermon at Zarahemla:

Alma 5^a

Remember the Deliverances of Your Fathers

[III] **5**¹ Now it came to pass that Alma began to deliver the word of God unto the people, first in the land of Zarahemla, and from thence throughout all the land.² And these are the words which he spake to the people in the church which was established in the city of Zarahemla, according to his own record, saying:

³ "I, Alma, having been consecrated by my father, Alma, to be a high priest over the church of God (he having power and authority from God to do these things), behold, I say unto you that he began to establish a church in the land which was in the borders of Nephi; yea, the land which was called the land of Mormon; yea, and he did baptize his brethren in the waters of Mormon.⁴ And behold, I say

unto you, they were delivered out of the hands of the people of king Noah, by the mercy and power of God.⁵ And behold, after that, they were brought into bondage by the hands of the Lamanites in the wilderness; yea, I say unto you, they were in captivity, and again the Lord did deliver them out of bondage by the power of his word; and we were brought into this land, and here we began to establish the church of God throughout this land also.

⁶ "And now behold, I say unto you, my brethren, you that belong to this church:

Have you sufficiently retained in remembrance
the captivity of your fathers?
Yea, and have you sufficiently retained in remembrance
his mercy and long-suffering towards them?
And moreover, have ye sufficiently retained in remembrance
that he has delivered their souls from hell?

^a 1 Mormon₂ here interrupts his abridgment and quotes directly from Alma₂'s own record. Atypically, Alma₂'s sermon at Zarahemla incorporates about fifty questions.

CHAPTERS 5–16:

In these chapters, Alma preaches in four named cities: Zarahemla, Gideon, Melek, and Ammonihah, with transcripts from his sermons in three of them. He also establishes a church in Sidom. His efforts initiate a wider social movement of preaching and religious renewal.

CHAPTER 5

Mormon here interrupts his abridgment and quotes directly from Alma's own record. Atypically, Alma's sermon at Zarahemla incorporates about fifty questions. This sermon recapitulates many of the points from the address that King Benjamin delivered in Zarahemla a generation earlier. **2:** While Alma taught all the people throughout the land, this particular sermon was given primarily to members of the church (cf. vv. 6 and 14, but also 62). **3–5:** See Mos 18; 23–25. The shift from "they" to "we" may indicate that Alma took part in these events himself, as a child. **6:** Here, and elsewhere, Alma heeds the words of the angel at Mos 27.16 to "remember the captivity of thy fathers," cf. Alma 9.9–10; 29.11–12; 36.2, 29. Physical deliverance from *captivity* in the land of Helam was followed by the spiritual deliverance of *their souls from hell* (cf. Ps 86.13).

⁷ “Behold, he changed their hearts; yea, he awakened them out of a deep sleep, and they awoke unto God. Behold, they were in the midst of darkness; nevertheless, their souls were illuminated by the light of the everlasting word; yea, they were encircled about by the bands of death, and the chains of hell, and an everlasting destruction did await them.

⁸ “And now I ask of you, my brethren, were they destroyed? Behold, I say unto you, Nay, they were not.

⁹ “And again I ask, were the bands of death broken, and the chains of hell which encircled them about, were they loosed? I say unto you, Yea, they were loosed, and their souls did expand, and they did sing redeeming love. And I say unto you that they are saved.

¹⁰ “And now I ask of you on what conditions are they saved? Yea, what grounds had they to hope for salvation? What is the cause of their being loosed from the bands of death, yea, and also the chains of hell?

¹¹ “Behold, I can tell you—did not my father Alma believe in the words which were delivered

by the mouth of Abinadi? And was he not a holy prophet? Did he not speak the words of God, and my father Alma believe them?¹² And according to his faith there was a mighty change wrought in his heart. Behold I say unto you that this is all true.¹³ And behold, he preached the word unto your fathers, and a mighty change was also wrought in their hearts, and they humbled themselves and put their trust in the true and living God. And behold, they were faithful until the end; therefore they were saved.”

Imagine the Judgment Day

¹⁴ “And now behold, I ask of you, my brethren of the church, have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts?¹⁵ Do ye exercise faith in the redemption of him who created you? Do you look forward with an eye of faith, and view this mortal body raised in immortality, and this corruption raised in incorruption, to stand before God to be judged according to the deeds which have been done in the mortal body?

7–9: Spiritual deliverance is emphasized with three analogies—going from sleep to wakefulness, from darkness to light, and from chains to freedom. *Changed their hearts*, a reference to the covenant made by the people of Zarahemla under King Benjamin, which preceded the deliverance of Alma and Limhi’s peoples; see Mos 5.2, 7.7: *Death and hell* are paired, referring to physical and spiritual death, that is, the separation of the body from the spirit, and the spirit from God. *Chains of hell*, a non-biblical expression that is defined at 12.11. **9:** Alma describes this spiritual deliverance as having already taken place, although the restoration of souls and bodies will not occur until after Christ’s coming. *Redeeming love*, a non-biblical expression that recurs at 5.26 and 26.13. In the BoM people “sing redeeming love” or sing “the song of redeeming love”; both expressions appeared regularly in the early 19th c. **10:** *On what conditions*, at Mos 4.6–8, salvation is described as conditioned upon trusting in God, keeping his commandments, and continuing in faith to the end; two of the three appear in v. 13 below. **11–13:** Words ascribed to Abinadi, to God, and to Alma, all result in changed hearts. Alma holds up his father as a model for belief rather than citing his own conversion experience because his father heeded the words of a prophet, just as Alma is hoping that his listeners will do, whereas angelic visitations of the sort that changed Alma’s own life are rare. **11:** See Mos 17.1–4. **13:** The phrase *mighty change*, which occurs only at Mos 5.2 and three times in Alma 5, connects Alma’s sermon to that of King Benjamin. In the 18th–19th c., “mighty change” could refer to either the Resurrection or Christian conversion. **14:** Bearing God’s image in one’s countenance (only here and v. 19) seems to refer to more than simply being made in the image of God, the common heritage of all humankind (Gen 1.26–27). The expression may be original to the BoM, but perhaps it is related to 2 Cor 3.18. *Born of God*, while the phrase appears six times in 1 Jn, its only previous occurrence in the BoM was at Mos 27.25–28, describing Alma’s conversion (which probably drew on Benjamin’s teachings at Mos 5.7). Alma, like Benjamin, clarifies its metaphorical nature with the adverb *spiritually*. **15:** *Look forward with an eye of faith*, non-biblical, but Alma also uses it at 32.40 (cf. Ether 12.19). The phrase can be found in the 18th–19th c. *Mortal body... deeds*, Alma is alluding to Abinadi’s words at Mos 16.10, which offer a similar conflation of 1 Cor 15.53–54 and Rev 20.12; cf. Morm 6.21.

¹⁶ “I say unto you, can you imagine to yourselves that ye hear the voice of the Lord, saying unto you, in that day, ‘Come unto me ye blessed, for behold, your works have been the works of righteousness upon the face of the earth?’ ¹⁷ Or do ye imagine to yourselves that ye can lie unto the Lord in that day, and say, ‘Lord, our works have been righteous works upon the face of the earth’—and that he will save you? ¹⁸ Or otherwise, can ye imagine yourselves brought before the tribunal of God with your souls filled with guilt and remorse, having a remembrance of all your guilt, yea, a perfect remembrance of all your wickedness, yea, a remembrance that ye have set at defiance the commandments of God?”

¹⁹ I say unto you,
can ye look up to God at that day
with a pure heart and clean hands?

I say unto you,
can you look up,
having the image of God engraven
upon your countenances?

²⁰ I say unto you,
can ye think of being saved
when you have yielded yourselves to
become subjects to the devil?

²¹ “I say unto you, ye will know at that day that ye cannot be saved; for there can no man be saved except his garments are washed white; yea, his garments must be purified until

they are cleansed from all stain, through the blood of him of whom it has been spoken by our fathers, who should come to redeem his people from their sins.

²² “And now I ask of you, my brethren, how will any of you feel, if ye shall stand before the bar of God, having your garments stained with blood and all manner of filthiness? Behold, what will these things testify against you? ²³ Behold will they not testify that ye are murderers, yea, and also that ye are guilty of all manner of wickedness?”

²⁴ “Behold, my brethren, do ye suppose that such an one can have a place to sit down in the kingdom of God, with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob, and also all the holy prophets, whose garments are cleansed and are spotless, pure and white? ²⁵ I say unto you, Nay; except ye make our Creator a liar from the beginning, or suppose that he is a liar from the beginning, ye cannot suppose that such can have place in the kingdom of heaven; but they shall be cast out for they are the children of the kingdom of the devil.”

Repent and Prepare

²⁶ “And now behold, I say unto you, my brethren, if ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now? ²⁷ Have ye walked, keeping yourselves blameless before God? Could ye say—if ye were

16–18: Three possibilities are presented: (1) God acknowledges your righteousness, (2) you attempt to lie about your unrighteousness, or (3) you acknowledge your wickedness. **19:** *Pure heart and clean hands*, Ps 24.4 (in reverse order). **21:** *Garments are washed white . . . through the blood [of Christ]*, Alma will also use this image at 13.11; cf. Rev 7.14. *Redeem his people from their sins*, cf. Mt 1.21; Alma 6.8; Hel 5.10–11. **22–23:** For metaphorical blood on one’s clothing that testifies of sin, see 2 Ne 9.44; a literal instance can be found at Hel 9.31–35. **24–25:** *Sit down in the kingdom of God, with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob*, see Mt 8.11–12; Lk 13.28–29; Alma 7.25; Hel 3.30. *Children of the kingdom of the devil* expands and clarifies the phrase “children of the kingdom” in Mt 8.12. Apparently, Alma knows of a tradition in which God proclaimed at the beginning of the world that only the righteous would eventually enter into his kingdom. *Kingdom of heaven* is often used in Mt in place of “kingdom of God,” which appears regularly in Mk and Lk. In the BoM, the two phrases are used interchangeably. *Kingdom of the devil*, see 1 Ne 22.22n. **26–27:** Alma’s sermon has moved from a remembrance of historical deliverances to imagining a future judgment; here it transitions to remembering individual experiences of conversion, perhaps at the time of King Benjamin’s covenant making (Benjamin also used the phrase *blameless before God* at Mos 3.21).

called to die at this time—within yourselves, that ye have been sufficiently humble? That your garments have been cleansed and made white through the blood of Christ, who will come to redeem his people from their sins?

²⁸ “Behold, are ye stripped of pride? I say unto you, if ye are not ye are not prepared to meet God. Behold ye must prepare quickly; for the kingdom of heaven is soon at hand, and such an one hath not eternal life.

²⁹ “Behold, I say, is there one among you who is not stripped of envy? I say unto you that such an one is not prepared; and I would that he should prepare quickly, for the hour is close at hand, and he knoweth not when the time shall come; for such an one is not found guiltless.

³⁰ “And again I say unto you, is there one among you that doth make a mock of his brother, or that heapeth upon him persecutions? ³¹ Wo unto such an one, for he is not prepared, and the time is at hand that he must repent or he cannot be saved! ³² Yea, even wo unto all ye workers of iniquity; repent, repent, for the Lord God hath spoken it!”

Hearken to the Call of the Good Shepherd

³³ “Behold, he sendeth an invitation unto all men, for the arms of mercy are extended towards them, and he saith, ‘Repent, and I will receive you.’ ³⁴ Yea, he saith, ‘Come unto me and ye shall partake of the fruit of the tree of life; yea, ye shall eat and drink of the bread and the waters of life freely;’ ³⁵ yea, come unto

me and bring forth works of righteousness, and ye shall not be hewn down and cast into the fire’ — ³⁶ For behold, the time is at hand that whosoever bringeth forth not good fruit, or whosoever doeth not the works of righteousness, the same have cause to wail and mourn.

³⁷ “O ye workers of iniquity; ye that are puffed up in the vain things of the world, ye that have professed to have known the ways of righteousness nevertheless have gone astray, as sheep having no shepherd, notwithstanding a shepherd hath called after you and is still calling after you, but ye will not hearken unto his voice!

³⁸ “Behold, I say unto you, that the good shepherd doth call you; yea, and in his own name he doth call you, which is the name of Christ; and if ye will not hearken unto the voice of the good shepherd, to the name by which ye are called, behold, ye are not the sheep of the good shepherd. ³⁹ And now if ye are not the sheep of the good shepherd, of what fold are ye? Behold, I say unto you, that the devil is your shepherd, and ye are of his fold; and now, who can deny this? Behold, I say unto you, whosoever denieth this is a liar and a child of the devil.

⁴⁰ “For I say unto you that whatsoever is good cometh from God, and whatsoever is evil cometh from the devil. ⁴¹ Therefore, if a man bringeth forth good works he hearkeneth unto the voice of the good shepherd, and he doth follow him; but whosoever bringeth forth evil works, the same becometh a child of the devil, for he hearkeneth unto his voice,

28: The three BoM references to being *prepared to meet God* (cf. 12.24; 34.32) are related to Am 4.12.

34: *Come unto me... eat and drink of the bread and the waters of life freely* conflates Jn 6.35 and Rev 22.17.

35–36: *Hewn down and cast into the fire* echoes the teachings of John the Baptist at Mt 3.10 and Lk 3.9 (cf. Mt 7.19), as well as Zenos’s allegory (Jacob 5.42, 46, 66). The reference to *bringeth forth not good fruit* reinforces the connection to both.

37: *Gone astray, as sheep having no shepherd*, a conflation of Isa 53.6 and Num 27.17. **38:** *Good shepherd*, Jesus. The phrase appears at Jn 10.11, 14 and eight times in the BoM (all but one in Alma 5). At Jn 10.3 the sheep are called by their individual names; here they are called by the name of their shepherd. The idea that the Lord would call after people in his own name (perhaps as “Christians”) is similar to what King Benjamin taught at Mos 5.9, 12. **39–41:** As is often the case, the BoM here draws a sharp contrast between those who follow Christ and those who follow the devil, but the final determination is given to their works rather than their professions of belief. *Whatsoever is good... the devil*, the same idea appears at Omni 1.25 and Moro 7.12.

and doth follow him.⁴² And whosoever doeth this must receive his wages of him; therefore, for his wages he receiveth death, as to things pertaining unto righteousness, being dead unto all good works.”

Alma₂'s Testimony

⁴³ “And now, my brethren, I would that ye should hear me, for I speak in the energy of my soul; for behold, I have spoken unto you plainly that ye cannot err, or have spoken according to the commandments of God.⁴⁴ For I am called to speak after this manner, according to the holy order of God, which is in Christ Jesus; yea, I am commanded to stand and testify unto this people the things which have been spoken by our fathers concerning the things which are to come.

⁴⁵ “And this is not all. Do ye not suppose that I know of these things myself? Behold, I testify unto you that I do know that these things whereof I have spoken are true. And how do ye suppose that I know of their surety?

⁴⁶ Behold, I say unto you they are made known unto me by the Holy Spirit of God. Behold, I have fasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit; and this is the spirit of revelation which is in me.

⁴⁷ “And moreover, I say unto you that it has thus been revealed unto me, that the words which have been spoken by our fathers are

true, even so according to the spirit of prophecy which is in me, which is also by the manifestation of the Spirit of God.⁴⁸ I say unto you, that I know of myself that whatsoever I shall say unto you, concerning that which is to come, is true; and I say unto you, that I know that Jesus Christ shall come, yea, the Son, the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace, and mercy, and truth. And behold, it is he that cometh to take away the sins of the world, yea, the sins of every man who steadfastly believeth on his name.

⁴⁹ “And now I say unto you that this is the order after which I am called, yea, to preach unto my beloved brethren, yea, and every one that dwelleth in the land; yea, to preach unto all, both old and young, both bond and free; yea, I say unto you the aged, and also the middle aged, and the rising generation; yea, to cry unto them that they must repent and be born again.”

The Words of the Spirit

⁵⁰ “Yea, thus saith the Spirit, ‘Repent, all ye ends of the earth, for the kingdom of heaven is soon at hand; yea, the Son of God cometh in his glory, in his might, majesty, power, and dominion.’

“Yea, my beloved brethren, I say unto you, that the Spirit saith, ‘Behold, the glory of the King of all the earth and also the King of heaven shall very soon shine forth among all the children of men.’

⁵¹ “And also the Spirit saith unto me, yea, crieth unto me with a mighty voice, saying,

42: The BoM offers a metaphorical interpretation of Rom 6.23 (“the wages of sin is death”), in the sense that while followers of the devil may not immediately die, they become insensible to righteousness and “all good works.” Other BoM verses, however, suggest that death “pertaining to righteousness” is fulfilled in being cut off from God in the postmortal realm—a condition referred to as “spiritual death” or “second death”; see 1 Ne 15.33; Alma 12.16; 40.26; Hel 14.18. 43–49: Alma defends his strong, polarizing language as necessary due to his ecclesiastical responsibility (“according to the holy order of God”) and direct divine command. 43: *Spoken unto you plainly that ye cannot err*, like Nephi at 2 Ne 25.20. 48: *The Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and... truth*, Jn 1.14; cf. Alma 9.26; 13.9. *Take away the sins of the world*, Jn 1.29, with a clarification that salvation does not come to everyone universally, but only to believers (in contrast with Nehor’s teachings at 1.4). 50–52: Four sayings of the Spirit urging repentance before the Lord comes in judgment. 50: *Repent... for the kingdom of heaven is soon at hand*, echoing John the Baptist’s message at Mt 3.2. 51: *Except ye repent ye can in no wise inherit the kingdom of heaven*, an allusion to Alma’s own conversion experience at Mos 27.26; cf. Alma 9.12; 39.9; 3 Ne 11.38.

‘Go forth and say unto this people—Repent, for except ye repent ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of heaven.’

⁵² “And again I say unto you, the Spirit saith, ‘Behold, the ax is laid at the root of the tree; therefore every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be hewn down and cast into the fire, yea, a fire which cannot be consumed, even an unquenchable fire.’ Behold, and remember, the Holy One hath spoken it.”

To Those Who Persist in Wickedness

⁵³ “And now my beloved brethren, I say unto you:

Can ye withstand these sayings?
Yea, can ye lay aside these things,
and trample the Holy One under
your feet?
Yea, can ye be puffed up in the pride of
your hearts?

Yea, will ye still persist in the wearing
of costly apparel
and setting your hearts upon the
vain things of the world,
upon your riches?

⁵⁴ Yea, will ye persist in supposing that
ye are better one than another?

Yea, will ye persist in the persecution of
your brethren,
who humble themselves and do
walk after the holy order of God,
wherewith they have been brought
into this church,
having been sanctified by the Holy
Spirit,
and they do bring forth works which
are meet for repentance—

⁵⁵ Yea, and will you persist in turning
your backs upon the poor, and
the needy,
and in withholding your substance
from them?

⁵⁶ And finally, all ye that will persist in
your wickedness,
I say unto you that these are they
who shall be hewn down and
cast into the fire
except they speedily repent.”

To Those Who Desire to Follow the Good Shepherd

⁵⁷ “And now I say unto you—all you that are desirous to follow the voice of the good shepherd—come ye out from the wicked, and be ye separate, and touch not their unclean

52: *The ax is laid at the root of the tree* and *unquenchable fire*, Mt 3.10, 12; Lk 3.9, 17; again, the words of John the Baptist (see vv. 35–36). **53–56:** This list of sins—pride, costly apparel, hearts set on vain things of the world and riches, inequality, persecution, neglect of the poor and needy—closely tracks those mentioned at 4.6–12 as motivating Alma’s preaching journey. These verses also feature anaphora, with four repetitions of “will ye persist,” followed by “all ye that will persist.” **54:** *Walk after the holy order of God*, perhaps meaning “follow the example or counsel of church leaders”; the same expression recurs at 7.22. Persecution within the church seems directed at recent converts. *Meet for repentance*, appropriate for one who has repented. **56:** The shift from second to third person allows Alma’s listeners to begin distancing themselves from their sinful ways. **57–62:** Alma, returning to the shepherd analogy of vv. 37–41, calls for a separation of the righteous from the wicked, presumably by ecclesiastical discipline. Several of the images and phrases in this passage echo his father’s regulation of the church at Mos 26, including hearing the voice of the shepherd (26.21), “names were/shall be blotted out” (26.36), names of the wicked not being numbered among the righteous (26.32, 36), “a place . . . at my [God’s] right hand” (26.23), and “baptized unto repentance” (26.22). **57:** *Come ye out from the wicked . . . and be ye separate . . . touch not their unclean things*, 2 Cor 6.17 (with “the wicked” replacing the ambiguous “them”); the NT verse is quoting Isa 52.11 (3 Ne 20.41).

things; and behold, their names shall be blotted out, that the names of the wicked shall not be numbered among the names of the righteous, that the word of God may be fulfilled, which saith, ‘The names of the wicked shall not be mingled with the names of my people;’⁵⁸ for the names of the righteous shall be written in the book of life, and unto them will I grant an inheritance at my right hand.^a

“And now, my brethren, what have ye to say against this? I say unto you, if ye speak against it, it matters not, for the word of God must be fulfilled.⁵⁹ For what shepherd is there among you having many sheep doth not watch over them, that the wolves enter not and devour his flock? And behold, if a wolf enter his flock doth he not drive him out? Yea, and at the last, if he can, he will destroy him.

⁶⁰ “And now I say unto you that the good shepherd doth call after you; and if you will hearken unto his voice he will bring you into his fold, and ye are his sheep; and he commandeth you that ye suffer no ravenous wolf to enter among you, that ye may not be destroyed.

⁶¹ “And now I, Alma, do command you in the language of him who hath commanded me, that ye observe to do the words which I have spoken unto you. ⁶² I speak by way of command unto you that belong to the church; and unto those who do not belong to the church

I speak by way of invitation, saying, ‘Come and be baptized unto repentance, that ye also may be partakers of the fruit of the tree of life.’”

The Church in Zarahemla

[IV] **6** ¹ And now it came to pass that after Alma had made an end of speaking unto the people of the church, which was established in the city of Zarahemla, he ordained priests and elders, by laying on his hands according to the order of God, to preside and watch over the church. ² And it came to pass that whosoever did not belong to the church who repented of their sins were baptized unto repentance, and were received into the church. ³ And it also came to pass that whosoever did belong to the church that did not repent of their wickedness and humble themselves before God—I mean those who were lifted up in the pride of their hearts—the same were rejected, and their names were blotted out, that their names were not numbered among those of the righteous. ⁴ And thus they began to establish the order of the church in the city of Zarahemla.

⁵ Now I would that ye should understand that the word of God was liberal unto all, that

^a 58 Reference uncertain

58: *The names of the righteous shall be written in the book of life*, this concept, alluded to several times in the NT (especially in Rev), is derived from Ps 69.28; cf. Ex 32.32. **59:** *For what shepherd is there among you*, Alma’s listeners in the New World would not have known sheep or shepherding in their own lives, though they may have recognized the practice from the Brass Plates. **60:** The church is likened to a *fold*, that is, a flock of sheep or an enclosure for such a flock, at 2 Ne 9.2 and Mos 18.8; cf. Jn 10.16; 1 Ne 15.15; 22.25; Alma 26.4; 3 Ne 15.17, 21; 16.3—all of which speak of being in the fold of God. *Ravenous wolf* may be a reference to false prophets, as at Mt 7.15 (3 Ne 14.15). **62:** A reiteration of the invitation at vv. 33–34.

CHAPTER 6

1–6: Alma’s sermon has the intended result (cf. 7.4). **1:** Alma had already consecrated priests and elders at 4.7; these new church officers may be additional clergy, or replacements for those who had gone astray (v. 3). *Laying on... hands* (in the context of consecration or ordination) occurs half a dozen times in the Bible, but in the BoM only here and Moro 2.1; 3.2. *Preside*, non-biblical and only here in the BoM. **3:** In accordance with 5.57; cf. Mos 26.36. **5–6:** An editorial comment addressed directly to readers, perhaps intended to soften the harshness of excommunication. While anyone was welcome to attend church meetings, including those whose names had been blotted out, regular members were commanded to do so. *Liberal to all*, given freely to everyone. *Children of God... gather themselves together oft*, in accordance with Alma’s instructions at the founding of the church; cf. Mos 18.22, 25.

none were deprived of the privilege of assembling themselves together to hear the word of God.⁶ Nevertheless the children of God were commanded that they should gather themselves together oft, and join in fasting and mighty prayer in behalf of the welfare of the souls of those who knew not God.

Alma₂ Travels to Gideon

⁷ And now it came to pass that when Alma had made these regulations he departed from them, yea, from the church which was in the city of Zarahemla, and went over upon the east of the river Sidon, into the valley of Gideon, there having been a city built, which was called the city of Gideon, which was in the valley that was called Gideon, being called after the man who was slain by the hand of Nehor with the sword.

⁸ And Alma went and began to declare the word of God unto the church which was established in the valley of Gideon, according to the revelation of the truth of the word which had been spoken by his fathers, and according to the spirit of prophecy which was in him, according to the testimony of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who should come to redeem his people from their sins, and the holy order by which he was called. And thus it is written. Amen.

Alma₂'s Sermon at Gideon: *Alma 7*

[*Mormon₂'s heading*] The words of Alma which he delivered to the people in Gideon, according to his own record.

Alma₂'s Hopes for the People of Gideon

[V] **7**¹ “Behold my beloved brethren, seeing that I have been permitted to come unto you, therefore I attempt to address you in my language; yea, by my own mouth, seeing that it is the first time that I have spoken unto you by the words of my mouth, I having been wholly confined to the judgment-seat, having had much business that I could not come unto you.² And even I could not have come now at this time were it not that the judgment-seat hath been given to another, to reign in my stead; and the Lord in much mercy hath granted that I should come unto you.

³ “And behold, I have come having great hopes and much desire

that I should find
that ye had humbled yourselves
before God,
and that ye had continued in the
supplicating of his grace,

⁷: *Regulations*, changes in rules or management; see Mos 26.37n. *The man who was slain*, see 1.7–9; cf. 2.20, 26.

⁸: The narrator’s summary of Alma’s preaching closely follows Alma’s own description at 5.47–49; for a similar example, see Jacob 1.19n.

CHAPTER 7

One of the notable features of this chapter is the sequence of three lists of things that Alma *desires to find* (v. 3), *trusts*, or is confident of (vv. 5–6), and *perceives* (vv. 19–20). **1:** Again, as at Alma 5, Mormon interrupts his abridgment to insert a transcript of a sermon from Alma’s writings. *I could not come unto you*, nevertheless, Alma has been in the region before, at the time of a terribly destructive battle in the valley of Gideon four years earlier; see 2.20–3.3. The narrator has prepared readers to recognize this by using the phrase “the valley of Gideon” three times in 6.7–8. **2:** *Reign*, the verb hints at the quasi-monarchical nature of the new office of chief judge. *Given to another*, that is, to Nephiah; see 4.16–20. **3:** *Supplicate*, WB: “to seek in earnest prayer.”

that I should find
 that ye were blameless before him,
 that I should find
 that ye were not in the awful
 dilemma
 that our brethren were in at
 Zarahemla.

⁴ But blessed be the name of God, that he hath given me to know, yea, hath given unto me the exceeding great joy of knowing that they are established again in the way of his righteousness.

⁵ “And I trust, according to the Spirit of God which is in me, that I shall also have joy over you; nevertheless I do not desire that my joy over you should come by the cause of so much afflictions and sorrow which I have had for the brethren at Zarahemla, for behold, my joy cometh over them after wading through much affliction and sorrow. ⁶ And behold,

I trust that ye are not in a state of so
 much unbelief as were your
 brethren;
 I trust that ye are not lifted up in the
 pride of your hearts;
 yea, I trust that ye have not set your
 hearts upon riches
 and the vain things of the world;
 yea, I trust that you do not worship
 idols,

but that ye do worship the true and
 the living God,
 and that ye look forward for the
 remission of your sins,
 with an everlasting faith, which is to
 come.”

Alma₂ Testifies of Christ

⁷ “For behold, I say unto you there be many things to come; and behold, there is one thing which is of more importance than they all—for behold, the time is not far distant that the Redeemer liveth and cometh among his people.

⁸ Behold, I do not say that he will come among us at the time of his dwelling in his mortal tabernacle; for behold, the Spirit hath not said unto me that this should be the case. Now as to this thing I do not know; but this much I do know, that the Lord God hath power to do all things which are according to his word.

⁹ “But behold, the Spirit hath said this much unto me, saying, ‘Cry unto this people, saying:

“Repent ye, and prepare the way of the
 Lord,
 and walk in his paths, which are
 straight;
 for behold, the kingdom of heaven is at
 hand,
 and the Son of God cometh upon
 the face of the earth.”’

6: Pride, riches, and vain things were all mentioned at 4.8, in the rationale for Alma’s preaching journeys; idol worship was last mentioned at 1.32, and only among those not belonging to the church. **7–8:** Despite the preeminent importance of the Incarnation, Alma does not know whether the Redeemer will visit the Nephites in his mortal body, and he seems unaware of Nephi’s prophecies of a precise timeline and details of a post-resurrection visitation in the New World (1 Ne 10.4; 12.1–12; 19.8–11; 2 Ne 25.19; 26.1–9). Because 1–2 Ne was dictated after 3 Ne (which included an account of Christ’s appearance among the Nephites), some have taken this as evidence that at the time JS dictated the book of Alma, he was still working out the plot of the BoM. Alternatively, it may be that Alma had not yet read the Small Plates—which were intended for the Lamanites (Jarom 1.2). In either case, Alma later comes to understand that Christ will indeed come among the Nephites after his resurrection (Alma 16.20). **7:** *The time is not far distant*, 82 years. **8:** Alma is careful not to speak beyond his knowledge; similar caution is shown by Mormon at 3 Ne 28.17–18. **9:** *Prepare the way of the Lord*, Isa 40.3; the addition of *repent*, *straight paths*, and *the kingdom of heaven is at hand* strengthens the parallels to John the Baptist (as at 5.35–36, 50, 52), especially at Mt 3.2–3; cf. Mk 1.3; Lk 3.4; 1 Ne 10.8. The words of the Spirit may continue through v. 12.

¹⁰ “And behold, he shall be born of Mary, at Jerusalem which is the land of our forefathers, she being a virgin, a precious and chosen vessel, who shall be overshadowed and conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost, and bring forth a son, yea, even the Son of God.” ¹¹ And he shall go forth, suffering pains and 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.

¹² 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.

¹³ “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.”

Repent and Be Baptized

¹⁴ “Now I say unto you that ye must repent, and be born again; for the Spirit saith, ‘If ye are not born again ye cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven.’ Therefore come and be baptized unto repentance, that ye may be washed from your sins, that ye may have faith on the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world, who is mighty to save and to cleanse from all unrighteousness.

¹⁵ “Yea, I say unto you come and fear not, and lay aside every sin, which easily doth beset you, which doth bind you down to destruction, yea, come and go forth, and show unto your God that ye are willing to repent of your sins and enter into a covenant with him to keep his commandments, and witness it unto him this day by going into the waters of baptism.” ¹⁶ And whosoever doeth this, and keepeth the commandments of God from thenceforth, the same will remember that I say unto him, yea, he will remember that I have said unto him, he shall have eternal life, according to the testimony of the Holy Spirit, which testifieth in me.”

Alma₂'s Hopes Fulfilled

¹⁷ “And now my beloved brethren, do you believe these things? Behold, I say unto you, yea, I know that ye believe them; and the way

10: From a transoceanic perspective, Bethlehem was in the land of Jerusalem. This affirmation of the virgin birth combines phrases from the accounts at Mt 1.20–21 and Lk 1.31, 35. **11–13:** By taking upon himself the pains of others, Christ will know through experience how best to help them. A similar idea, that Christ shares in our infirmities and temptations, occurs at Heb 4.14–15. Alma hastens to add, however, that this is not simply a matter of gaining knowledge, since the Spirit already knows all things, but of vicarious suffering that actually absolves sin. *Take upon him their infirmities*, Mt 8.17 (quoting Isa 53.4); in Mt, this refers to Jesus’s miraculous healings; here it is connected to his own human frailties and the atonement. **14:** This is the only instance in the BoM of baptism being described as washing away sins; cf. Acts 22.16. Several biblical phrases are combined here, including “Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (Jn 1.29), “mighty to save” (Isa 63.1), and “cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 Jn 1.9). **15:** *Lay aside . . . sin, which easily doth beset you*, Heb 12.1. *Beset*, WB: “to entangle, so as to render escape difficult or impossible.” Baptism is here described as a sign of repentance and a covenant of obedience. *Enter into a covenant . . . to keep his commandments* puts Alma’s listeners in the same position as the peoples of Benjamin, Alma₁, and Limhi at Mos 6.1; 18.10; 21.31–32, as befits Alma’s preaching journey of covenant renewal. **16:** A curious construction: those who continue in faithfulness will someday look back and remember this moment, when Alma promised them eternal life. **17:** In Zarahemla, Alma had also claimed knowledge by the *manifestation of the Spirit* (5.46–47).

that I know that ye believe them is by the manifestation of the Spirit which is in me. And now because your faith is strong concerning that, yea, concerning the things which I have spoken, great is my joy. ¹⁸ For as I said unto you from the beginning, that I had much desire that ye were not in the state of dilemma like your brethren, even so I have found that my desires have been gratified.

¹⁹ For I perceive that ye are in the paths of righteousness;

I perceive that ye are in the path which leads to the kingdom of God;

yea, I perceive that ye are making his paths straight.

²⁰ I perceive that it has been made known unto you, by the testimony of his word, that he cannot walk in crooked paths; neither doth he vary from that which he hath said; neither hath he a shadow of turning from the right to the left, (or from that which is right to that which is wrong): therefore, his course is one eternal round.

²¹ And he doth not dwell in unholy temples; neither can filthiness or anything which is unclean be received into the kingdom of

God; therefore I say unto you the time shall come, yea, and it shall be at the last day, that he who is filthy shall remain in his filthiness.”

Alma₂'s Concluding Exhortation and Blessing

²² “And now my beloved brethren, I have said these things unto you that I might awaken you to a sense of your duty to God, that ye may walk blameless before him, that ye may walk after the holy order of God, after which ye have been received. ²³ And now I would that ye should be humble, and be submissive and gentle; easy to be entreated; full of patience and long-suffering; being temperate in all things; being diligent in keeping the commandments of God at all times; asking for whatsoever things ye stand in need, both spiritual and temporal; always returning thanks unto God for whatsoever things ye do receive. ²⁴ And see that ye have faith, hope, and charity, and then ye will always abound in good works.

²⁵ “And may the Lord bless you, and keep your garments spotless, that ye may at last be brought to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the holy prophets who have been ever since the world began, having your garments spotless even as their garments are spotless, in the kingdom of heaven to go no more out.

²⁶ “And now my beloved brethren, I have spoken these words unto you according to the Spirit which testifieth in me; and my soul doth

18: *As I said unto you from the beginning*, an allusion to v. 3 above. **20:** *Shadow of turning*, Jas 1.17, where it refers to variations in light and darkness due to the motions of heavenly bodies. Here the phrase is redefined as indicating changes in direction, and then as changes in morality. *His course is one eternal round*, see 1 Ne 10.19n. **23:** Similar lists of self-effacing qualities appear at Mos 3.19 and Alma 13.28. *Gentle, easy to be entreated* (that is, willing to yield), Jas 3.17. *Temperate in all things*, 1 Cor 9.25 (meaning “having self-control in all things”); Alma 38.10. **25–27:** Alma pronounces a blessing on people and possessions that had been devastated by war just four years earlier. For fighting in the vicinity of Gideon, see 2.20–3.3. Indeed, the persons and things blessed in v. 27 mirror the losses listed at 3.1–2. The passage’s opening with *may the Lord bless you and keep* and ending with *peace* recalls the priestly blessing of Num 6.24–26; see 3 Ne 19.25n. **25:** The imagery here is repeated from 5.24. *Go no more out*, Rev 3.12; Alma 29.17; 34.36; Hel 3.30; 3 Ne 28.40 (the Rev verse refers to the Temple; all the BoM examples are about God’s kingdom).

exceedingly rejoice, because of the exceeding diligence and heed which ye have given unto my word.²⁷ And now, may the peace of God rest upon you, and upon your houses and lands, and upon your flocks and herds, and all that you possess, your women and your children, according to your faith and good works, from this time forth and forever. And thus I have spoken. Amen.”

Alma₂ Preaches and Baptizes in the Land of Melek

[VI] **8**¹ And now it came to pass that Alma returned from the land of Gideon, after having taught the people of Gideon many things which cannot be written, having established the order of the church, according as he had before done in the land of Zarahemla, yea, he returned to his own house at Zarahemla to rest himself from the labors which he had performed.² And thus ended the ninth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi.^a

³ And it came to pass in the commencement of the tenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi,^b that Alma departed from thence and took his journey over into the land of Melek, on the west of the river Sidon, on the west by the borders of the wilderness.⁴ And he began to teach the people in the land of Melek according to the holy order of God, by which he had been called; and he began to teach the people throughout all the land of Melek.⁵ And it came to pass that the people came to him

throughout all the borders of the land which was by the wilderness side. And they were baptized throughout all the land.

Alma₂ Cast Out of Ammonihah

⁶ So that when he had finished his work at Melek he departed thence, and traveled three days’ journey on the north of the land of Melek; and he came to a city which was called Ammonihah.⁷ Now it was the custom of the people of Nephi to call their lands, and their cities, and their villages, yea, even all their small villages, after the name of him who first possessed them; and thus it was with the land of Ammonihah.

⁸ And it came to pass that when Alma had come to the city of Ammonihah he began to preach the word of God unto them.⁹ Now Satan had gotten great hold upon the hearts of the people of the city of Ammonihah; therefore they would not hearken unto the words of Alma.¹⁰ Nevertheless Alma labored much in the spirit, wrestling with God in mighty prayer, that he would pour out his Spirit upon the people who were in the city; that he would also grant that he might baptize them unto repentance.

¹¹ Nevertheless, they hardened their hearts, saying unto him, “Behold, we know that thou art Alma; and we know that thou art high priest over the church which thou hast established in many parts of the land, according to your tradition; and we are not of thy church, and we do not believe in such foolish traditions.

¹² And now we know that because we are not

^a 2 –83 years; see Alma 4.11

^b 3 –82 years

CHAPTER 8

4: Mormon does not provide a transcript of any of Alma’s teachings in Melek. **7:** Nothing more is known about the founder of this city. **9:** *Satan had gotten great hold upon the hearts*, a non-biblical, uncommon image that appears eight times in the BoM. **10:** *Wrestling with God in mighty prayer* recalls the experience of Enos at Enos 1.2, 4. Despite Alma’s fervent petition, the people of Ammonihah will neither repent nor be baptized. **11:** In Ammonihah, Alma is preaching to people who do not belong to the church, and hence reject his ecclesiastical authority. Ammonihah seems to have been a predominantly Mulekite city that also included disaffected Nephites. **12:** *Delivered up the judgment-seat*, see 4.16–18.

of thy church we know that thou hast no power over us; and thou hast delivered up the judgment-seat unto Nephiah; therefore thou art not the chief judge over us.”

¹³ Now when the people had said this, and withstood all his words, and reviled him, and spit upon him, and caused that he should be cast out of their city, he departed thence and took his journey towards the city which was called Aaron.

An Angel Commands Alma₂ to Return to Ammonihah

¹⁴ And it came to pass that while he was journeying thither, being weighed down with sorrow, wading through much tribulation and anguish of soul, because of the wickedness of the people who were in the city of Ammonihah, it came to pass while Alma was thus weighed down with sorrow, behold an angel of the Lord appeared unto him, saying, ¹⁵ “Blessed art thou, Alma; therefore, lift up thy head and rejoice, for thou hast great cause to rejoice; for thou hast been faithful in keeping the commandments of God from the time which thou receivedst thy first message from him. Behold, I am he that delivered it unto you. ¹⁶ And behold, I am sent to command thee that thou return to the city of Ammonihah, and preach again unto the people of the city; yea, preach unto them. Yea, say unto them, except they

repent the Lord God will destroy them. ¹⁷ For behold, they do study at this time that they may destroy the liberty of thy people, (for thus saith the Lord) which is contrary to the statutes, and judgments, and commandments which he has given unto his people.”

Amulek Joins Alma₂ in Preaching

¹⁸ Now it came to pass that after Alma had received his message from the angel of the Lord he returned speedily to the land of Ammonihah. And he entered the city by another way, yea, by the way which is on the south of the city of Ammonihah. ¹⁹ And as he entered the city he was an hungered, and he said to a man, “Will ye give to an humble servant of God something to eat?”

²⁰ And the man said unto him, “I am a Nephite, and I know that thou art a holy prophet of God, for thou art the man whom an angel said in a vision, ‘Thou shalt receive.’ Therefore, go with me into my house and I will impart unto thee of my food; and I know that thou wilt be a blessing unto me and my house.”

²¹ And it came to pass that the man received him into his house; and the man was called Amulek; and he brought forth bread and meat and set before Alma. ²² And it came to pass that Alma ate bread and was filled; and he blessed Amulek and his house, and he gave thanks unto God.

14: The double usage of *weighed down with sorrow* is an example of resumptive repetition, where the narrator adds an explanation after the first occurrence, and then repeats the phrase when he resumes the story. This literary device is a regular feature of BoM prose. **15:** The angel who first spoke to Alma at Mos 27.11–17, more than a decade earlier, has returned. *Blessed art thou, Alma*, the same words were spoken to his father at Mos 26.15. *Lift up thy head and rejoice*, at 1.4, Nehor offered a false promise with these words; here an angel offers genuine spiritual comfort and assurance. **17:** *Study*, WB: “to fix the mind closely upon a subject; to endeavor diligently.” The intelligence provided by the angel is echoed by Amulek at 10.27, with lawyers and judges being the chief culprits. **18:** Alma apparently never reaches his destination in the city of Aaron, but turns back immediately to Ammonihah. Both Nephi₂ and Samuel the Lamanite have similar experiences; see Hel 10.3–4, 11–12; 13.2–3. **20:** Amulek’s self-identification as a Nephite suggests that many in the city were not. He has also received advance information from an angel, and apparently recognized Alma from a vision. For a fuller account of this revelation, see 10.7. *Thou wilt be a blessing unto me and my house*, like Elijah in the home of the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17), or Elisha staying at the house of the Shunammite woman (2 Kings 4); cf. Gen 39.5. **22:** Rather than offering a blessing before eating, Alma waits until the meal is finished, as stipulated at Deut 8.10.

²³ And after he had eaten and was filled he said unto Amulek, “I am Alma, and am the high priest over the church^a of God throughout the land. ²⁴ And behold, I have been called to preach the word of God among all this people, according to the spirit of revelation and prophecy; and I was in this land and they would not receive me, but they cast me out and I was about to set my back towards this land forever. ²⁵ But behold, I have been commanded that I should turn again and prophesy unto this people, yea, and to testify against them concerning their iniquities. ²⁶ And now, Amulek, because thou hast fed me and taken me in, thou art blessed; for I was an hungered, for I had fasted many days.” ²⁷ And Alma tarried many days with Amulek before he began to preach unto the people.

²⁸ And it came to pass that the people did wax more gross in their iniquities. ²⁹ And the word came to Alma, saying, “Go; and also say unto my servant Amulek, go forth and prophesy unto this people, saying—‘Repent ye, for thus saith the Lord, except ye repent I will visit this people in mine anger; yea, and I will not turn my fierce anger away.’”

³⁰ And Alma went forth, and also Amulek, among the people, to declare the words of God unto them; and they were filled with the

Holy Ghost. ³¹ And they had power given unto them, insomuch that they could not be confined in dungeons; neither was it possible that any man could slay them; nevertheless they did not exercise their power until they were bound in bands and cast into prison. Now, this was done that the Lord might show forth his power in them. ³² And it came to pass that they went forth and began to preach and to prophesy unto the people, according to the spirit and power which the Lord had given them.

Alma₂ and Amulek’s Preaching at Ammonihah: Alma 9–14

The Unbelief of the People of Ammonihah

[*Mormon*₂’s heading] The words of Alma, and also the words of Amulek, which were declared unto the people who were in the land of Ammonihah. And also they are cast into prison, and delivered by the miraculous power of God which was in them, according to the record of Alma.

^a 23 P churches

23: It appears that while Amulek knew his guest was a prophet, he was not aware of his exact identity. **25:** *Turn again*, return. **26:** *Fasted many days* refers not to the deprivations of travel, but rather to a religious act in response to the sins of the people, according to 10.7. **27:** *Many days*, perhaps weeks or even months; in any case, enough time for Alma to notice increasing wickedness (v. 28), and for Amulek to recognize the effects of the Lord’s blessings upon his household (10.11). **28:** *Wax . . . gross*, the usage here suggests “became more evident or coarser.” **29:** Alma will deliver this message at 9.12. For examples of God’s *fierce anger* being *turned away*, see Num 25.4; Jon 3.9; Hel 11.11–12; such anger was not turned back at Jer 4.8. **31–32:** As an example of prolepsis, these verses offer a preview of what will take place in ch. 14. The narrator explains beforehand why Alma and Amulek had to suffer such afflictions, in similar fashion to Alma’s father’s people at Mos 23.21–24.

CHAPTERS 9–14

Most of the people of Ammonihah follow the teachings of Nehor (16.11). In trying to persuade them to repent, Alma and Amulek each report encounters with angels and respond to direct questions from named city leaders. Their message begins with a warning that God “has commanded you to repent” or “he will visit you in his anger” (9.12), and it concludes similarly: “may the Lord grant unto you repentance, that ye may not bring down his wrath upon you” (13.30). In some ways, Alma and Amulek’s preaching in tandem is similar to the 19th c. Methodist practice of pairing an ordained minister with an exhorter, that is, an unordained lay preacher, but note also the pattern of “two or three witnesses” described at Deut 19.15. The two men will reprise these roles in chs. 32–34 when they preach to the Zoramites.

[VII] **9**¹ And again, I, Alma, having been commanded of God that I should take Amulek and go forth and preach again unto this people, or the people who were in the city of Ammonihah, it came to pass as I began to preach unto them, they began to contend with me, saying,² “Who art thou? Suppose ye that we shall believe the testimony of one man, although he should preach unto us that the earth should pass away?”³ (Now they understood not the words which they spake; for they knew not that the earth should pass away.)

⁴ And they said also, “We will not believe thy words if thou shouldst prophesy that this great city should be destroyed in one day.”⁵ (Now they knew not that God could do such marvelous works, for they were a hard-hearted and a stiffnecked people.)

⁶ And they said, “Who is God, that sendeth no more authority than one man among this people, to declare unto them the truth of such great and marvelous things?”⁷ And they

stood forth to lay their hands on me; but behold, they did not.

Alma₂'s Sermon at Ammonihah: Alma 9.7–30

Alma₂ Recounts Past Deliverances

And I stood with boldness to declare unto them, yea, I did boldly testify unto them, saying:

⁸ “Behold, O ye wicked and perverse generation, how have ye forgotten the tradition of your fathers? Yea, how soon ye have forgotten the commandments of God!”⁹ Do ye not remember that our father, Lehi, was brought out of Jerusalem by the hand of God? Do ye not remember that they were all led by him through the wilderness?¹⁰ And have ye forgotten so soon how many times he delivered our fathers out of the hands of their enemies, and preserved them from being destroyed, even by the hands of their own brethren?¹¹ Yea,

CHAPTER 9

Heading: Reiterating the final verses of the previous chapter, the narrator again signals that this literary unit will culminate in an imprisonment and miraculous deliverance. Like the priests of Noah at Mos 12–17, the people of Ammonihah accept the authority of the Brass Plates (see 12.19–21) but reject additional Nephite revelations concerning the Son of God and Christian redemption. **1–6:** *Saying... And they said also... And they said*, as in the Deuteronomistic History, repetition of the formula introducing dialogue, with no intervening response, indicates that the hearer has been left speechless in surprise or amazement; Alma cannot quite believe what he is hearing. For other examples, see Judg 8.23–24; 11.36–37; 1 Sam 17.34–37; 1 Kings 22.28; as well as Mos 27.13–14; Alma 18.14–16; 20.9–10. **1:** With this verse there is a shift from the third-person to the first-person narrative voice. As the heading indicates, Mormon is again copying verbatim from Alma’s personal record, as in chs. 5 and 7. The first-person narrative voice ends at 9.34, though speeches by Alma and Amulek will continue to be quoted directly. **2:** *Testimony of one man*, perhaps alluding to Deut 19.15, the people of Ammonihah believe that strong accusations should be supported by multiple witnesses (also v. 6). They are surprised when Amulek, one of their neighbors, adds his witness to Alma’s; see 10.12. **4:** These words will be bitterly recalled at 16.9–10. **6:** *Who is God*, a question that echoes the words of the pharaoh at Ex 5.2 and King Noah at Mos 11.27. **8:** At 8.11, the people of Ammonihah had explicitly rejected Nephite traditions as “foolish”; here Alma returns to the topic. By contrast, the Lamanites have remained true to the traditions of their fathers; see v. 16. The phrase *wicked and perverse generation*, especially in the context of forgetfulness of divine deliverance and covenant obligations, is reminiscent of “perverse and crooked generation” (Deut 32.5) from the Song of Moses—a passage that included fierce denunciations of rebellious Israel, which they were to memorize and teach to their children as a witness against their future sins (Deut 31.19–21). The people of Ammonihah will exhibit a strong negative reaction to Alma’s condemnation of their character (9.31–32); Amulek will repeat the phrase “wicked and perverse generation” twice more (10.17, 25). **9–10:** See 5.6n. **11:** Examples of physical deliverance in the past culminate in the possibility of spiritual deliverance.

and if it had not been for his matchless power, and his mercy, and his long-suffering towards us, we should unavoidably have been cut off from the face of the earth long before this period of time, and perhaps been consigned to a state of endless misery and woe.

¹² “Behold, now I say unto you that he commandeth you to repent; and except ye repent, ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God. But behold, this is not all—he has commanded you to repent, or he will utterly destroy you from off the face of the earth; yea, he will visit you in his anger, and in his fierce anger he will not turn away.”

Alma₂ Contrasts the Nephites and the Lamanites

¹³ “Behold, do ye not remember the words which he spake unto Lehi, saying that ‘Inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper in the land’? And again it is said that ‘Inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord.’^a ¹⁴ Now I would that ye should remember, that inasmuch as the Lamanites have not kept the commandments of God, they have been cut off from the presence of the Lord. Now we see that the word of the Lord has been verified in this thing, and the

Lamanites have been cut off from his presence, from the beginning of their transgressions in the land.

¹⁵ “Nevertheless I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for them in the day of judgment than for you, if ye remain in your sins, yea, and even more tolerable for them in this life than for you, except ye repent. ¹⁶ For there are many promises which are extended to the Lamanites; for it is because of the traditions of their fathers that caused them to remain in their state of ignorance; therefore the Lord will be merciful unto them and prolong their existence in the land. ¹⁷ And at some period of time they will be brought to believe in his word, and to know of the incorrectness of the traditions of their fathers; and many of them will be saved, for the Lord will be merciful unto all who call on his name.

¹⁸ “But behold, I say unto you that if ye persist in your wickedness that your days shall not be prolonged in the land, for the Lamanites shall be sent upon you; and if ye repent not they shall come in a time when you know not, and ye shall be visited with utter destruction; and it shall be according to the fierce anger of the Lord. ¹⁹ For he will not

^a ¹³ 2 Ne 1.20

12: *Except ye repent... kingdom of God*, this same warning was given to Zarahemla at 5.51. *Utterly destroy you from off the face of the earth*, the warning given by Abinadi at Mos 12.8; here the warning, repeated in v. 24, works as an inclusio framing a comparison with the Lamanites. *Visit... turn away*, the words of the angel at 8.29; cf. 8.16. Each of these warnings makes the fate of the Ammonihabites—both in this life and the next—conditional on their repentance. **13–24:** Although the Lamanites have been cursed with separation from God, they will be better off in both this life and the next than unrepentant Nephites. **14:** *Cut off from his presence, from the beginning of their transgressions* seems to refer to the time when Nephi and his followers fled from their brethren at 2 Ne 5. **15:** The phrases in this verse are nicely balanced. *More tolerable for them in the day of judgment than for you*, Mt 11.22 (with an intensifying repetition in v. 24). **16:** Lamanite sin is attributed more to ignorance than to malice, and hence they will receive mercy. In addition, because they respect *the traditions of their fathers*, even if those are incorrect, God will *prolong their existence in the land* in accordance with the promise of the fifth commandment, about honoring one’s parents (Ex 20.12; cf. Deut 5.16). *Many promises... to the Lamanites*, e.g., 1 Ne 13.31, 38–39; 2 Ne 4.7, 9; Jacob 3.6; Enos 1.11–18. **17:** Unbeknownst to Alma, the Lamanites are being converted by the sons of Mosiah at the very time he is delivering this message; see chs. 17–25. **18:** This prophecy will be fulfilled at 16.1–3; cf. 25.1–2. *Days not prolonged in the land*, see Deut 4.25–26 and 30.18, where this phrase is part of a covenant curse. *In a time when you know not*, unexpectedly. **19:** Alma finds it hard to imagine that the Nephites could sin so grievously after all the revelations the Lord had given them; cf. 2 Ne 1.10; Mos 1.13 (which includes the phrase “highly favored people of the Lord”). This verse provides a rationale for the eventual destruction of the Nephites.

suffer you that ye shall live in your iniquities, to destroy his people. I say unto you, Nay; he would rather suffer that the Lamanites might destroy all his people who are called the people of Nephi, if it were possible that they could fall into sins and transgressions, after having had so much light and so much knowledge given unto them of the Lord their God:

- ²⁰ Yea, after having been such a highly favored people of the Lord; yea, after having been favored above every other nation, kindred, tongue, or people; after having had all things made known unto them, according to their desires, and their faith, and prayers, of that which has been, and which is, and which is to come;
- ²¹ having been visited by the Spirit of God; having conversed with angels, and having been spoken unto by the voice of the Lord; and having the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and also many gifts, the gift of speaking with tongues, and the gift of preaching, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the gift of translation;
- ²² yea, and after having been delivered of God out of the land of Jerusalem, by the hand of the Lord;

having been saved from famine, and from sickness, and all manner of diseases of every kind; and they having waxed strong in battle, that they might not be destroyed; having been brought out of bondage time after time, and having been kept and preserved until now; and they have been prospered until they are rich in all manner of things—

²³ “And now behold I say unto you, that if this people, who have received so many blessings from the hand of the Lord, should transgress contrary to the light and knowledge which they do have—I say unto you that if this be the case, that if they should fall into transgression—it would be far more tolerable for the Lamanites than for them.” ²⁴ For behold, the promises of the Lord are extended to the Lamanites, but they are not unto you if ye transgress; for has not the Lord expressly promised and firmly decreed, that if ye will rebel against him that ye shall utterly be destroyed from off the face of the earth?”

Alma₂ Quotes an Angel

²⁵ “And now for this cause, that ye may not be destroyed, the Lord has sent his angel to visit many of his people, declaring unto them that they must go forth and cry mightily unto this people, saying, ‘Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is nigh at hand;’ ²⁶ and not many days

20–22: Alma lists the blessings the Lord has bestowed upon the Nephites, including unusually clear prophecies of the future. **23:** Alma repeats and intensifies his assessment at v. 15 with the addition of a word: “it would be *far* more tolerable.” **24:** The promises of the Lord are extended to the Lamanites, see 1 Ne 13.38; Jacob 3.6; Enos 1.13. *If ye will rebel...face of the earth*, perhaps alluding to Deut 6.15 (esp. if the Lord’s anger in v. 12 is taken into account) or Jarom 1.10 or Mos 12.8. **25–26:** The phrasing here echoes the biblical allusions at 5.48, 50. **26:** *Mercy* and *long-suffering*, paired seven times in the BoM, are two of the thirteen attributes of God from Ex 34.6–7. This verse adds *grace* and *truth*, two more of those attributes, along with compassion, if that is implied in *quick to hear the cries of his people*. *Equity*, WB: “justice,” particularly “the impartial distribution of justice.” The term is used in the OT but not in the NT.

hence the Son of God shall come in his glory; and his glory shall be the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace, equity, and truth, full of patience, mercy, and long-suffering, quick to hear the cries of his people and to answer their prayers.²⁷ And behold, he cometh to redeem those who will be baptized unto repentance, through faith on his name.²⁸ Therefore, prepare ye the way of the Lord,

for the time is at hand that all men
shall reap a reward of their
works,
according to that which they have
been—
if they have been righteous they shall
reap the salvation of their souls,
according to the power and
deliverance of Jesus Christ;
and if they have been evil they shall
reap the damnation of their
souls,
according to the power and
captivation of the devil.²⁹

²⁹ Now behold, this is the voice of the angel, crying unto the people.

³⁰ “And now, my beloved brethren, for ye are my brethren, and ye ought to be beloved, and ye ought to bring forth works which are meet for repentance, seeing that your hearts have been grossly hardened against the word of God, and seeing that ye are a lost and a fallen people.”

28: *According to that which they have been*, the use of “been” rather than “done” suggests that God will judge people by their characters, not just their actions. **31:** *Hard-hearted and stiffnecked people*, Alma never used these words, but see v. 5 above. **32:** *A lost and a fallen people*, the phrase had been used earlier by Lehi and Abinadi to describe the spiritual state of all humankind (1 Ne 10.6; Mos 16.4), which is how Alma will later explain it (Alma 12.22). At v. 30 above, however, Alma’s usage indicates something particular regarding the Ammonihahites, much as Nephi used the phrase to refer to the condition of latter-day Israelites (2 Ne 25.17). It is this salvation-history meaning that the people of Ammonihah find so objectionable. **33:** *At that time*, Alma and Amulek, however, will be cast into prison in ch. 14.

CHAPTER 10

2: *Written by the finger of God*, nothing further is known of this incident, but compare Dan 5.

The Reaction of the People of Ammonihah

³¹ Now it came to pass that when I, Alma, had spoken these words, behold, the people were wroth with me because I said unto them that they were a hard-hearted and a stiffnecked people.³² And also because I said unto them that they were a lost and a fallen people they were angry with me, and sought to lay their hands upon me, that they might cast me into prison.³³ But it came to pass that the Lord did not suffer them that they should take me at that time and cast me into prison.

³⁴ And it came to pass that Amulek went and stood forth, and began to preach unto them also. And now the words of Amulek are not all written, nevertheless a part of his words are written in this book.

Amulek’s Sermon at Ammonihah: Alma 10–11

Amulek Addresses the Crowd to Bear Witness of an Angel and Alma₂

[VIII] **10** ¹ Now these are the words which Amulek preached unto the people who were in the land of Ammonihah, saying:

² “I am Amulek; I am the son of Giddonah, who was the son of Ishmael, who was a descendant of Aminadi; and it was the same Aminadi who interpreted the writing which was upon the wall of the temple, which was

written by the finger of God.³ And Aminadi was a descendant of Nephi, who was the son of Lehi, who came out of the land of Jerusalem, who was a descendant of Manasseh, who was the son of Joseph who was sold into Egypt by the hands of his brethren.

⁴ “And behold, I am also a man of no small reputation among all those who know me; yea, and behold, I have many kindreds and friends, and I have also acquired much riches by the hand of my industry.⁵ Nevertheless, after all this, I never have known much of the ways of the Lord, and his mysteries and marvelous power. I said I never had known much of these things; but behold, I mistake, for I have seen much of his mysteries and his marvelous power; yea, even in the preservation of the lives of this people.⁶ Nevertheless, I did harden my heart, for I was called many times and I would not hear; therefore I knew concerning these things, yet I would not know; therefore I went on rebelling against God, in the wickedness of my heart, even until the fourth day of this seventh month, which is in the tenth year of the reign of the judges.⁴

⁷ “As I was journeying to see a very near kindred, behold an angel of the Lord appeared unto me and said, ‘Amulek, return to thine own house, for thou shalt feed a prophet of the Lord; yea, a holy man, who is a chosen

man of God; for he has fasted many days because of the sins of this people, and he is an hungered, and thou shalt receive him into thy house and feed him, and he shall bless thee and thy house; and the blessing of the Lord shall rest upon thee and thy house.’⁸ And it came to pass that I obeyed the voice of the angel, and returned towards my house. And as I was going thither I found the man whom the angel said unto me, ‘Thou shalt receive into thy house’—and behold it was this same man who has been speaking unto you concerning the things of God.

⁹ “And the angel said unto me, ‘He is a holy man’; wherefore I know he is a holy man because it was said by an angel of God.¹⁰ And again, I know that the things whereof he hath testified are true; for behold I say unto you, that as the Lord liveth, even so has he sent his angel to make these things manifest unto me; and this he has done while this Alma hath dwelt at my house.¹¹ For behold, he hath blessed mine house, he hath blessed me, and my women, and my children, and my father and my kinsfolk; yea, even all my kindred hath he blessed, and the blessing of the Lord hath rested upon us according to the words which he spake.”

⁴ 6 –82 years

3: It is in this verse that we first learn that Lehi was from the tribe of Manasseh; heretofore, Lehi and Nephi had simply described themselves as descendants of Joseph; e.g., 1 Ne 5.14; 2 Ne 3.4; 25.21. Later Nephites will also highlight their connection to Joseph; e.g., Alma 46.23–24; 3 Ne 10.17; Ether 13.6–8. **4:** *Of no small reputation*, held in high esteem. **5:** Amulek immediately corrects his initial statement to say that while he had witnessed the effects of God’s power, he had never acknowledged it as such. **6:** *Called many times, but would not hear*, as at 5.37. *Would not hear*, refused to listen, Amulek had denied what he actually knew, with regard to spiritual matters. **7–11:** Amulek’s version of the story recounted at 8.18–27. **7:** *Very near kindred*, in terms of familial relationship rather than location. *Holy man*, the only other figures referred to by name in the BoM as “holy men” are King Benjamin (WoM 1.17) and Nephi, Jacob, Joseph, and Sam (Alma 3.6); in the Bible the designation is given to Elisha at 2 Kings 4.9. *Chosen man of God*, a description also applied to Abinadi (Mos 7.26) and Nephi₂ (Hel 9.16, used sarcastically). *The blessing of the Lord shall rest upon... thy house*, cf. Gen 39.5. **11:** *My women*, given the Nephite prohibition of polygamy at Jacob 2.27, this may refer to servants or dependent sisters, aunts, or nieces in Amulek’s household. His mother is not mentioned.

Lawyers Attempt to Destroy Alma₂ and Amulek

¹² And now, when Amulek had spoken these words the people began to be astonished, seeing there was more than one witness who testified of the things whereof they were accused, and also of the things which were to come, according to the spirit of prophecy which was in them. ¹³ Nevertheless, there were some among them who thought to question them, that by their cunning devices they might catch them in their words, that they might find witness against them, that they might deliver them to their judges that they might be judged according to the law, and that they might be slain or cast into prison, according to the crime which they could make appear or witness against them.

¹⁴ Now it was those men who sought to destroy them, who were lawyers, who were hired or appointed by the people to administer the law at their times of trials, or at the trials of the crimes of the people before the judges. ¹⁵ Now these lawyers were learned in all the arts and cunning of the people; and this was to enable them that they might be skilful in their profession. ¹⁶ And it came to pass that they began to question Amulek, that thereby they might make him cross his words, or contradict the words which he should speak.

Amulek Rebukes the Lawyers

¹⁷ Now they knew not that Amulek could know of their designs. But it came to pass as they began to question him, he perceived their thoughts, and he said unto them, “O ye wicked and perverse generation, ye lawyers and hypocrites, for ye are laying the foundations of the devil; for ye are laying traps and snares to catch the holy ones of God. ¹⁸ Ye are laying plans to pervert the ways of the righteous, and to bring down the wrath of God upon your heads, even to the utter destruction of this people.

¹⁹ “Yea, well did Mosiah say, who was our last king, when he was about to deliver up the kingdom, having no one to confer it upon, causing that this people should be governed by their own voices—yea, well did he say that if the time should come that the voice of this people should choose iniquity, that is, if the time should come that this people should fall into transgression, they would be ripe for destruction.

²⁰ “And now I say unto you that well doth the Lord judge of your iniquities; well doth he cry unto this people, by the voice of his angels, ‘Repent ye, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’^a ²¹ Yea, well doth he cry, by the voice of his angels that ‘I will come down

^a 20 Alma 9.25

12: *More than one witness*, thus countering their objection at 9.2, 6. Amulek’s testimony of Ammonihah’s sins has thus far only been indirect, in that he testified of Alma’s status as a prophet and a holy man. **13:** *Cunning devices*, sly tricks or deceitful strategies; the phrase appears in the 17th–19th c.; cf. Alma 46.10. *Find witness*, find evidence. **14:** *Lawyers*, this is the first mention of this profession in the BoM, and seems to have been an innovation among the people of Ammonihah. Of the 18 occurrences in the BoM, 13 are in the story of Ammonihah at Alma 10–14; the other five are all in 3 Ne 6. It is not clear from this description whether Ammonihahite lawyers were hired by individuals to represent them in court, or whether they were appointed by the people as a whole to serve as officers of the court, perhaps as clerks for the judges. **17:** The lawyers’ intentions seem fairly transparent; nevertheless, Amulek *perceived their thoughts*, see Jacob 2.5n. *Designs*; WB: “purpose; intention; aim; implying a scheme or plan in the mind.” *O ye wicked and perverse generation*, Amulek repeats Alma’s words from 9.8. Amulek’s denunciation may also be conflating Deut 32.5 and Jer 5.26. **19:** *That if... transgression*, a clarification of King Mosiah’s words at Mos 29.27, indicating the problem would be public morality rather than choosing poor leaders or policies. The two occurrences of *well did Mosiah/he say* are an example of resumptive repetition. The idea of being *ripe for destruction* will become a recurrent theme in the book of Helaman.

among my people, with equity and justice in my hands.²⁴

²² “Yea, and I say unto you that if it were not for the prayers of the righteous, who are now in the land, that ye would even now be visited with utter destruction; yet it would not be by flood, as were the people in the days of Noah, but it would be by famine, and by pestilence, and the sword.²³ But it is by the prayers of the righteous that ye are spared; now therefore, if ye will cast out the righteous from among you then will not the Lord stay his hand; but in his fierce anger he will come out against you; then ye shall be smitten by famine, and by pestilence, and by the sword; and the time is soon at hand except ye repent.”

Amulek’s Words Are Misconstrued

²⁴ And now it came to pass that the people were more angry with Amulek, and they cried out, saying, “This man doth revile against our laws which are just, and our wise lawyers whom we have selected.”

²⁵ But Amulek stretched forth his hand, and cried the mightier unto them, saying, “O ye wicked and perverse generation, why hath Satan got such great hold upon your hearts? Why will ye yield yourselves unto him that he may have power over you, to blind your eyes, that ye will not understand the words which

are spoken, according to their truth?²⁶ For behold, have I testified against your law? Ye do not understand; ye say that I have spoken against your law; but I have not, but I have spoken in favor of your law, to your condemnation.²⁷ And now behold, I say unto you, that the foundation of the destruction of this people is beginning to be laid by the unrighteousness of your lawyers and your judges.”

²⁸ And now it came to pass that when Amulek had spoken these words the people cried out against him, saying, “Now we know that this man is a child of the devil, for he hath lied unto us; for he hath spoken against our law. And now he says that he has not spoken against it.²⁹ And again, he has reviled against our lawyers, and our judges.”

³⁰ And it came to pass that the lawyers put it into their hearts that they should remember these things against him.³¹ And there was one among them whose name was Zeezrom. Now he was the foremost to accuse Amulek and Alma, he being one of the most expert among them, having much business to do among the people.³² Now the object of these lawyers was to get gain; and they got gain according to their employ.

²⁴ 21 Reference uncertain

22–23: *The prayers of the righteous*, Prov 15.29; Alma 62.40 (also averting destruction); Morm 5.21. *The days of Noah*, Gen 6.5–8.22. The triadic calamity of *famine* with *pestilence* and *sword* occurs 24 times in the OT (esp. in Jer and Ezek) and four times in the BoM. **23:** *Cast out the righteous from among you*, the Ammonihahites do precisely this at 14.7; see also 15.1. This prophecy of destruction will be fulfilled at 16.1–3; cf. 25.1–2. **24:** *Revile against our laws*, this is apparently a sensitive matter with the Ammonihahites, since Amulek has so far said nothing about their laws, at least in the record we have (see 9.34); cf. v. 26 below. **25:** Satan’s power is the result of human beings giving themselves over to him; cf. 1 Ne 22.26; Alma 48.17; 3 Ne 7.5. A blindness that renders one unable to understand what is heard is either a spiritual blindness or a mixed metaphor like the mind blindness referred to ten times in the BoM; cf. 2 Cor 3.14; 4.4. **26:** *Your law*, seems to refer to regulations that are peculiar to Ammonihah. **28:** *Child of the devil*, Acts 13.10. Alma himself had used this harsh description at 5.39, 41, now he is hearing it hurled at Amulek. The association of “child of the devil” with lying at 5.39 and here is reminiscent of Jn 8.44. **29:** *Reviled against... our judges* [who have taken the place of kings]; see Mos 17.12n.

A Digression on the Nephite Legal and Monetary Systems

11 ¹ Now it was in the law of Mosiah that every man who was a judge of the law, or those who were appointed to be judges, should receive wages according to the time which they labored to judge those who were brought before them to be judged. ² Now if a man owed another, and he would not pay that which he did owe, he was complained of to the judge; and the judge executed authority, and sent forth officers that the man should be brought before him; and he judged the man according to the law and the evidences which were brought against him, and thus the man was compelled to pay that which he owed, or be stripped, or be cast out from among the people as a thief and a robber. ³ And the judge received for his wages according to his time—a senine of gold for a day, or a senum of silver, which is equal to a senine of gold; and this is according to the law which was given.

⁴ Now these are the names of the different pieces of their gold, and of their silver, according to their value. And the names are given by the Nephites, for they did not reckon after the manner of the Jews who were at Jerusalem; neither did they measure after the manner of the Jews; but they altered their reckoning and their measure, according to the minds and the circumstances of the people, in every

generation, until the reign of the judges, they having been established by king Mosiah.

⁵ Now the reckoning is thus:

a senine of gold,	⁶ A senum of silver,
a seon of gold,	an amnor of silver,
a shum of gold,	an ezrom of silver,
and a limnah of gold.	and an onti of silver.

⁷ A senum of silver was equal to a senine of gold, and either for a measure of barley, and also for a measure of every kind of grain.

⁸ Now the amount of a seon of gold was twice the value of a senine.

⁹ And a shum of gold was twice the value of a seon.

¹⁰ And a limnah of gold was the value of them all.

¹¹ And an amnor of silver was as great as two senums.

¹² And an ezrom of silver was as great as four senums.

¹³ And an onti was as great as them all.

¹⁴ Now this is the value of the lesser numbers of their reckoning—

¹⁵ A shiblon is half of a senum; therefore, a shiblon for half a measure of barley.

¹⁶ And a shiblum is a half of a shiblon.

CHAPTER II

1–20: This description of the Nephite legal system explains how judges were remunerated, but not how lawyers were, as one might expect from 10.32. **1:** Since judges were compensated by the day, they may not have been full-time professionals. **2:** Judges dealt with a wide range of lawsuits (see v. 20), but the only one mentioned here is nonpayment of debts. **4:** The monetary system in the verses that follow is described as being unique to the Nephites and arising by trial and error out of their particular experiences, before being codified by King Mosiah. As early as 1841, an index inserted into copies of the BoM, influenced by the word *pieces*, referred to these monetary units as “coins,” a term that persisted in LDS editions until 2013. The text itself, however, refers to a system of equivalent weights and measures that correlated precious metals with grain. **5–6:** These verses are set in parallel since the gold and silver measurements on each line are equivalent. They are also listed in ascending order, according to vv. 8–13. **7:** Barley has not been found in ancient Mesoamerica, although there is evidence of a form of barley in pre-Columbian North America. **10:** *A limnah of gold was the value of them all*, that is, a limnah of gold was worth seven senines (and an onti of silver was worth seven senums; see v. 13).

¹⁷ And a leah is the half of a shiblum.

¹⁹ Now an antion of gold is equal to three shiblons.

¹⁸ Now this is their number, according to their reckoning.⁴

²⁰ Now, it was for the sole purpose to get gain, because they received their wages according to their employ, therefore, they did stir up the people to riotings, and all manner of disturbances and wickedness, that they might have more employ, that they might get money according to the suits which were brought before them; therefore they did stir up the people against Alma and Amulek.

Zeezrom Questions Amulek

²¹ And this Zeezrom began to question Amulek, saying, “Will ye answer me a few questions which I shall ask you?” (Now Zeezrom was a man who was expert in the devices of the devil, that he might destroy that which was good; therefore, he said unto Amulek, “Will ye answer the questions which I shall put unto you?”)

²² And Amulek said unto him, “Yea, if it be according to the Spirit of the Lord, which is in me; for I shall say nothing which is contrary to the Spirit of the Lord.”

And Zeezrom said unto him, “Behold, here are six onties of silver, and all these will I give thee if thou wilt deny the existence of a Supreme Being.”

²³ Now Amulek said, “O thou child of hell, why tempt ye me? Knowest thou that the

righteous yieldeth to no such temptations?

²⁴ Believest thou that there is no God? I say unto you, Nay, thou knowest that there is a God, but thou lovest that lucre more than him. ²⁵ And now thou hast lied before God unto me. Thou saidst unto me—‘Behold these six onties, which are of great worth, I will give unto thee’—when thou hadst it in thy heart to retain them from me; and it was only thy desire that I should deny the true and living God, that thou mightest have cause to destroy me. And now behold, for this great evil thou shalt have thy reward.”

²⁶ And Zeezrom said unto him, “Thou sayest there is a true and living God?”

²⁷ And Amulek said, “Yea, there is a true and living God.”

²⁸ Now Zeezrom said, “Is there more than one God?”

²⁹ And he answered, “No.”

³⁰ Now Zeezrom said unto him again, “How knowest thou these things?”

³¹ And he said, “An angel hath made them known unto me.”

³² And Zeezrom said again, “Who is he that shall come? Is it the Son of God?”

³³ And he said unto him, “Yea.”

³⁴ And Zeezrom said again, “Shall he save his people in their sins?”

⁴ 18 The sentences later given the verse numbers of 18 and 19 were accidentally reversed by the 1830 typesetter. The sentence order here reproduces that of O and P.

20–21: *To get gain according to their employ* is an example of resumptive repetition, as the narrative is picked up again from 10.31–32. 22: *Six onties of silver*, that is, the equivalent of forty-two days of wages for a judge; see v. 3 above. *All these will I give thee if thou wilt*, echoing the devil’s temptation of Jesus at Mt 4.9. *Supreme Being*, unique here, but the term appeared regularly in the 17th–19th c. 24: Zeezrom’s current spiritual state is similar to that of Amulek before he met Alma; see 10.4–6. Eventually he, like Amulek, will repent of his misplaced priorities. 25–26: Zeezrom does not deny the accusation. 28–35: Zeezrom’s questions are designed to elicit admissions of polytheism and of a God without the power or the will to save his people. 31: See 10.10. 34–36: The question of whether God would save his people “in their sins” or “from their sins” was part of the debate about Universalism in the 19th c. (the latter phrase is from Mt 1.21; see Alma 5.21n). Amulek’s words will be cited later by Helaman, at Hel 5.10. 34: *His word* will be revealed in v. 37.

And Amulek answered and said unto him, “I say unto you he shall not, for it is impossible for him to deny his word.”

³⁵ Now Zeezrom said unto the people, “See that ye remember these things; for he said there is but one God; yet he saith that the Son of God shall come, but he shall not save his people—as though he had authority to command God.”

³⁶ Now Amulek saith again unto him, “Behold thou hast lied, for thou sayest that I spake as though I had authority to command God because I said he shall not save his people in their sins.” ³⁷ And I say unto you again that he cannot save them in their sins; for I cannot deny his word, and he hath said that ‘no unclean thing can inherit the kingdom of heaven’;^a therefore, how can ye be saved, except ye inherit the kingdom of heaven? Therefore, ye cannot be saved in your sins.”

Amulek Explains the Resurrection

³⁸ Now Zeezrom saith again unto him, “Is the Son of God the very Eternal Father?”

³⁹ And Amulek said unto him, “Yea, he is the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth, and all things which in them are; he is the beginning and the end, the first and the last; ⁴⁰ and he shall come into the world to redeem his people; and he shall take upon him the transgressions of those who believe on his name; and these are they that shall have eternal life, and salvation cometh to none else.

⁴¹ Therefore the wicked remain as though there had been no redemption made, except it be the loosing of the bands of death; for behold, the day cometh that all shall rise from the dead and stand before God, and be judged according to their works.

⁴² “Now, there is a death which is called a temporal death; and the death of Christ shall loose the bands of this temporal death, that all shall be raised from this temporal death.” ⁴³ The spirit and the body shall be reunited again in its perfect form; both limb and joint shall be restored to its proper frame, even as we now are at this time; and we shall be brought to stand before God, knowing even as we know now, and have a bright recollection of all our guilt.

⁴⁴ “Now, this restoration shall come to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, both the wicked and the righteous; and even there shall not so much as a hair of their heads be lost; but every thing shall be restored to its perfect frame, as it is now, or in the body, and shall be brought and be arraigned before the bar of Christ the Son, and God the Father, and the Holy Spirit, which is one Eternal God, to be judged according to their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil.

⁴⁵ “Now, behold, I have spoken unto you concerning the death of the mortal body, and

^a 37 1 Ne 10.21; 15.34; Alma 7.21; cf. Eph 5.5

38–45: Zeezrom’s brief question provokes a rather lengthy answer, which will draw substantially on Abinadi’s teachings. Amulek affirms that the Son of God is, in some sense, the Father, and that he will only save those who believe on his name and repent of their sins. Nevertheless, all people will be raised from the dead to be judged by God. 38: *The very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth*, the phrase was used by Abinadi at Mos 15.4. 39: *The beginning and the end, the first and the last*, Rev 22.13. 41–45: Several of the phrases herein can be found at Mos 16.10. 41: *As though there had been no redemption made*, Mos 16.5. 42: *Temporal death*, death of the body, that is, the separation of the spirit from the body. 43: The same point about resurrection and guilt appears at 2 Ne 9.14–15; Jacob 6.9; Alma 5.18. 44: *This restoration*, that is, the reuniting of spirit and body in the Resurrection, which will also bring people back into God’s presence for judgment. *Arraigned*, WB: “called before a tribunal to answer.” *Before the bar . . . to be judged according to their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil*, Mos 16.10. 45: The combination of “mortal,” “raised,” “immortal,” and “corruption,” is reminiscent of 1 Cor 15.52–54; but again see Mos 16.10. *They can die no more*, the reunification of spirit and body in the Resurrection will be permanent.

also concerning the resurrection of the mortal body. I say unto you that this mortal body is raised to an immortal body, that is from death, even from the first death unto life, that they can die no more; their spirits uniting with their bodies, never to be divided; thus the whole becoming spiritual and immortal, that they can no more see corruption.”

⁴⁶ Now, when Amulek had finished these words the people began again to be astonished, and also Zeezrom began to tremble. And thus ended the words of Amulek, or this is all that I have written.

Alma₂ Addresses Zeezrom

[IX] **12** ¹ Now Alma, seeing that the words of Amulek had silenced Zeezrom, for he beheld that Amulek had caught him in his lying and deceiving to destroy him, and seeing that he began to tremble under a consciousness of his guilt, he opened his mouth and began to speak unto him, and to establish the words of Amulek, and to explain things beyond, or to unfold the scriptures beyond that which Amulek had done. ² Now the words that Alma spake unto Zeezrom were heard by the people round about; for the multitude was great, and he spake on this wise:

³ “Now Zeezrom, seeing that thou hast been taken in thy lying and craftiness, for thou

hast not lied unto men only but thou hast lied unto God; for behold, he knows all thy thoughts, and thou seest that thy thoughts are made known unto us by his Spirit; ⁴ and thou seest that we know that thy plan was a very subtle plan, as to the subtlety of the devil, for to lie and to deceive this people that thou mightest set them against us, to revile us and to cast us out— ⁵ Now this was a plan of thine adversary, and he hath exercised his power in thee. Now I would that ye should remember that what I say unto thee I say unto all.

⁶ “And behold I say unto you all that this was a snare of the adversary, which he has laid to catch this people, that he might bring you into subjection unto him, that he might encircle you about with his chains, that he might chain you down to everlasting destruction, according to the power of his captivity.”

Alma₂ Answers Zeezrom’s Question about Resurrection and Judgment

⁷ Now when Alma had spoken these words, Zeezrom began to tremble more exceedingly, for he was convinced more and more of the power of God; and he was also convinced that Alma and Amulek had a knowledge of him, for he was convinced that they knew the thoughts and intents of his heart; for power was given unto them that they might know of these things according to the spirit of prophecy.

46: *Zeezrom began to tremble* (and again at 12.7), an appropriate response to Abinadi’s teachings; see his refrain “you ought to tremble” at Mos 12.30; 15.26–27; 16.13. The verse concludes with an editorial comment that could have been written by either Alma or Mormon.

CHAPTER 12

1: *Unfold the scriptures beyond that which Amulek had done*, Amulek tended to rely on the words of angels for his testimony (10.10, 20; 11.30–31). He never quoted the Brass Plates, though he did cite Mosiah (10.19), Nephi (11.37), and several phrases from Abinadi in 11.38–45. This may be one of the first instances in which the writings of Nephites are accorded the status of “scripture”; cf. Alma 18.38. **3:** A reference to Zeezrom’s lies at 11.23–25, 35–36. *He knows all thy thoughts... known unto us*, referring to 10.17. **5–6:** *Plan of thine adversary*, Zeezrom’s scheme to ensnare Amulek (see 10.13, 17) was part of the devil’s larger plan to ensnare the people of Ammonihah. *Ye should remember*, just as Zeezrom had admonished bystanders at 11.35, so also Alma charges the crowd to store a key point in their minds for later.

⁸ And Zeezrom began to inquire of them diligently, that he might know more concerning the kingdom of God. And he said unto Alma, “What does this mean which Amulek hath spoken concerning the resurrection of the dead, that all shall rise from the dead, both the just and the unjust, and are brought to stand before God to be judged according to their works?”

⁹ And now Alma began to expound these things unto him, saying, “It is given unto many to know the mysteries of God; nevertheless they are laid under a strict command that they shall not impart, only according to the portion of his word which he doth grant unto the children of men, according to the heed and diligence which they give unto him. ¹⁰ And therefore, he that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word; and he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word, until it is given unto him to know the mysteries of God until he know them in full. ¹¹ And they that will harden their hearts, to them is given the lesser portion of the word until they know nothing concerning his mysteries; and then they are taken captive by the devil, and led by his will down to destruction. Now this is what is meant by ‘the chains of hell.’^a

¹² “And Amulek hath spoken plainly concerning death, and being raised from this mortality to a state of immortality, and being brought before the bar of God, to be judged according to our works. ¹³ Then if our hearts have been hardened, yea, if we have hardened our hearts against the word, insomuch that it has not been found in us, then will our state be awful, for then we shall be condemned.

¹⁴ “For our words will condemn us, yea, all our works will condemn us; we shall not be found spotless; and our thoughts will also condemn us; and in this awful state we shall not dare to look up to our God; and we would fain be glad if we could command the rocks and the mountains to fall upon us to hide us from his presence. ¹⁵ But this cannot be; we must come forth and stand before him in his glory, and in his power, and in his might, majesty, and dominion, and acknowledge to our everlasting shame that all his judgments are just; that he is just in all his works, and that he is merciful unto the children of men, and that he has all power to save every man that believeth on his name and bringeth forth fruit meet for repentance.

^a ¹¹ See Alma 5.7, 9, 10, as well as v. 6 above.

8: Zeezrom shifts from interrogating to inquiring as he asks for an explanation of Amulek’s words from 11.41. **9–11:** God’s granting of revelation, either directly or through his representatives, varies with the receptivity of listeners. Hardened hearts lead to ignorance, then to spiritual captivity and destruction. In this formulation, lack of knowledge, rather than temptation or rebellion, leads to sin, though the process begins with a closed or stubborn heart. **9:** *Only*, except. **10:** *Mysteries of God*, here, as elsewhere in the BoM, “mysteries” refers not to secret esoteric doctrines but rather to the basic principles of resurrection and redemption through Christ; cf. 10.5–6. The definition of *mystery* at WB includes “that which is beyond human comprehension until explained. In this sense, *mystery* often conveys the idea of something awfully sublime or important.” **13–15:** By using the first-person plural, Alma includes himself among potential sinners. **13:** The correction from a passive to an active verbal construction places the responsibility for hardened hearts on the individuals themselves; see v. 31n for a contrasting example. **14:** *Words . . . works . . . thoughts*, see Mos 4.30n. *Fain*, willingly or gladly, here with the sense of “even.” *Fain be glad* seems redundant, but the phrase occurs a few times in the history of English, including the early 19th c. *If we could command the rocks and the mountains to fall upon us to hide us from* [God], Rev 6.16; cf. Hos 10.8. **15:** *All power to save every man that believeth . . . repentance*, Alma counters Zeezrom’s accusation (11.35) by affirming that God has “all power to save,” while supporting Amulek’s assertion of God’s self-limitation with regard to salvation (11.37, 39–40).

¹⁶ “And now behold, I say unto you then cometh a death, even a second death, which is a spiritual death; then is a time that whosoever dieth in his sins, as to a temporal death, shall also die a spiritual death; yea, he shall die as to things pertaining unto righteousness. ¹⁷ Then is the time when their torments shall be as a lake of fire and brimstone, whose flame ascendeth up forever and ever; and then is the time that they shall be chained down to an everlasting destruction, according to the power and captivity of Satan, he having subjected them according to his will. ¹⁸ Then, I say unto you, they shall be as though there had been no redemption made; for they cannot be redeemed according to God’s justice; and they cannot die, seeing there is no more corruption.”

Antionah Questions Alma₂ about Adam’s Fall

¹⁹ Now it came to pass that when Alma had made an end of speaking these words, the people began to be more astonished; ²⁰ but there was one Antionah, who was a chief ruler among them, came forth and said unto him, “What is this that thou hast said, that man should rise from the dead and be changed from this mortal to an immortal state, that the soul can never die? ²¹ What does the scripture mean, which saith that God placed cherubim

and a flaming sword on the east of the garden of Eden, lest our first parents should enter and partake of the fruit of the tree of life, and live forever? And thus we see that there was no possible chance that they should live forever.”

Alma₂’s Answer to Antionah: Alma 12.22–13.20

Alma₂ Explains the Plan of Redemption

²² Now Alma said unto him, “This is the thing which I was about to explain. Now we see that Adam did fall by the partaking of the forbidden fruit, according to the word of God; and thus we see, that by his fall, all mankind became a lost and fallen people. ²³ And now behold, I say unto you that if it had been possible for Adam to have partaken of the fruit of the tree of life at that time, there would have been no death, and the word would have been void, making God a liar, for he said, ‘If thou eat thou shalt surely die.’^a ²⁴ And we see that death comes upon mankind, yea, the death which has been spoken of by Amulek, which is the temporal death; nevertheless there was a space granted unto man in which he might repent; therefore this life became a probationary

^a ²³ Gen 2.17

16: Those who experience mortal death without having repented will be subject to a spiritual death after the Resurrection. *Then cometh a death*, that is, after the Resurrection and Judgment. *Second death*, also in v. 32, a term that appears four times in Rev, as well as Jacob 3.11; Alma 13.30; Hel 14.18–19; the “first death” was mentioned at 11.45. *Spiritual death*, that is, separation from God. **17:** Compare v. 6 above. **18:** *They cannot die*, after the Last Judgment, even the wicked will remain conscious beings composed of body and spirit; this assertion can be read as a rejection of the theological position of Annihilationism, which argues that after the Judgment, the wicked will cease to exist. **19–21:** Antionah challenges Alma’s assertion of a universal resurrection by citing the Brass Plates and interpreting Gen 3.22–24 as an indication that God’s actions in the garden of Eden put immortality forever out of the reach of humans. **22:** *The thing which I was about to explain*, Alma earlier had been cut off at the words “a lost and a fallen people” (9.30); had he been allowed to continue, he may well have cited Abinadi’s explanation of the Edenic origins of humanity’s “lost and fallen state” at Mos 16.3–4. Amulek apparently picked up on this cue, repeatedly alluding to Abinadi’s teachings from Mos 15–16 in his response to Zeezrom at 11.39–45. **23:** *The word would have been void* (also v. 26); cf. Isa 55.11. Alma’s version of Gen 2.17 omits the time constraint: “in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” *Void*, WB: “having no legal or binding force.” **24:** [Temporal] *death* . . . *spoken of by Amulek*, at 11.42. Similar teachings about this life as a *probationary state* allowing a chance to repent can be found at 2 Ne 2.21 and Alma 42.10, both of which are also explications of the Eden story.

state; a time to prepare to meet God; a time to prepare for that endless state which has been spoken of by us, which is after the resurrection of the dead.

²⁵ “Now, if it had not been for the plan of redemption, which was laid from the foundation of the world, there could have been no resurrection of the dead; but there was a plan of redemption laid, which shall bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, of which has been spoken.²⁶ And now behold, if it were possible that our first parents could have gone forth and partaken of the tree of life they would have been forever miserable, having no preparatory state; and thus the plan of redemption would have been frustrated, and the word of God would have been void, taking none effect.²⁷ But behold, it was not so; but it was appointed unto men that they must die; and after death, they must come to judgment, even that same judgment of which we have spoken, which is the end.

²⁸ “And after God had appointed that these things should come unto man, behold, then he saw that it was expedient that man should know concerning the things whereof he had appointed unto them;²⁹ therefore he sent angels to converse with them, who caused men to behold of his glory.³⁰ And they began from that time forth to call on his name; therefore God conversed with men, and made known unto them the plan of redemption, which had been prepared from the foundation

of the world; and this he made known unto them according to their faith and repentance and their holy works.

³¹ “Wherefore, he gave commandments unto men, they having first transgressed the first commandments as to things which were temporal, and becoming as gods, knowing good from evil, placing themselves in a state to act, or being placed in a state to act according to their wills and pleasures, whether to do evil or to do good—³² Therefore God gave unto them commandments, after having made known unto them the plan of redemption, that they should not do evil, the penalty thereof being a second death, which was an everlasting death as to things pertaining unto righteousness; for on such the plan of redemption could have no power, for the works of justice could not be destroyed, according to the supreme goodness of God.

³³ “But God did call on men, in the name of his Son, (this being the plan of redemption which was laid) saying, ‘If ye will repent, and **harden not your hearts,**^a then will I have mercy upon you, through mine Only Begotten Son; ³⁴ therefore, whosoever repenteth, and hardeneth not his heart, he shall have claim on mercy through mine Only Begotten Son,

^a ³³ Much of the remainder of this chapter and the next is, like Heb 3.7–4.11, an explication of Ps 95.8–11. Key phrases from Ps 95 are bolded at their first occurrence.

^{25–27}: The Resurrection was part of God’s design for this world from the beginning. If there had been no death (the result of eating from the tree of life), there could be no resurrection and no redemption. *Frustrated*, WB: “defeated; rendered vain or null.” ^{28–30}: The plan of redemption, with its emphasis on repentance, is only efficacious to the extent that it is known and acted upon. Conversations with angels are preparatory for conversations with God himself. ³¹: *Transgressed the first commandments*, when Adam and Eve ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. *Placing themselves in a state to act*, according to 2 Ne 2.26, knowing the difference between right and wrong is a prerequisite for human agency. *Or being placed*, the correction from an active to a passive construction suggests that agency itself is a gift from God; see v. 13n. ³²: This second set of commandments remains binding on Adam and Eve’s posterity; see v. 37. God’s *goodness* is inextricably connected with his *works of justice*. ³⁴: *Claim on mercy*, elsewhere in the BoM, it is mercy that asserts a claim on individuals; see Mos 2.39; 3.26; Alma 42.21. *Enter into my rest*, at Ps 95.11 this referred to the children of Israel entering into the promised land; at Jacob 1.7 and Enos 1.27 the phrase points to a reunion with God in the afterlife; cf. 13.12–16.

unto a remission of his sins; and these shall enter into my rest.³⁵ And whosoever will harden his heart and will do iniquity, behold, **I swear in my wrath that he shall not enter into my rest.**'

³⁶ "And now, my brethren, behold I say unto you, that if ye will harden your hearts ye shall not enter into the rest of the Lord; therefore your iniquity provoketh him that he sendeth down his wrath upon you **as in the first provocation**, yea, according to his word in the last provocation as well as the first, to the everlasting destruction of your souls; therefore, according to his word, unto the last death, as well as the first.

³⁷ "And now, my brethren, seeing we know these things, and they are true, let us repent, and harden not our hearts, that we provoke

not the Lord our God to pull down his wrath upon us in these his second commandments which he has given unto us; but let us enter into the rest of God, which is prepared according to his word."

Alma₂ Explains the Ordination of Priests

13 ¹ "And again, my brethren, I would cite your minds forward to the time when the Lord God gave these commandments unto his children; and I would that ye should remember that the Lord God ordained priests, after his holy order, which was after the order of his Son, to teach these things unto the people.² And those priests were ordained

36: *The first provocation* in this context points to Adam's transgression (as opposed to the rebellion at Meribah referred to at Ps 95.8; cf. Jacob 1.7n), such that *the last provocation* may be dying without repentance. The two provocations seem related to the first and second commandments mentioned in vv. 31–32 and 37. *The everlasting destruction of your souls*, ongoing punishment rather than annihilation, according to vv. 17–18. *Last death* is obviously a counterpart to "first death" (2 Ne 9.15; Alma 11.45; Hel 14.16) but is unique here; it seems to be synonymous with "second death." In other words, just as the first provocation brought the first (physical) death upon humankind, the second, or last, provocation will result in a second, or last, (spiritual) death. The people of Ammonihah, at this moment, are in imminent danger of both types of death; see 9.12, 18, 24. **37:** *Pull down his wrath upon us* makes humans the initiators of disaster rather than God; the same non-biblical phrasing appears again at 54.9. *Second commandments*, to avoid sin, to repent, and to not harden their hearts (see vv. 33–35). Alma again shifts to the first-person plural (cf. vv. 13–15) as he transitions to a discussion of priesthood in ch. 13; the words of the Lord in vv. 33–34 apply to priests as well as those they are called to teach.

CHAPTER 13

The arguments in the opening verses of this chapter are more repetitive and less clear than is typical in the BoM. From an internal narrative perspective, readers may wonder whether Mormon's editing may have omitted additional scriptural citations, comments, or questions from Antionah; see v. 31. **1–9:** Alma's description of a priesthood that is both higher and older than that of the Levites is similar to the explanation given at Heb 7 for how Jesus, though not a descendant of Aaron, could be "made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec" (Heb 6.20; cf. Ps 110.4). The Nephite church claims that its authority comes from this type of priesthood, which it calls "the holy order of God" in vv. 6 and 18 below (also Alma 4.20; 5.44, 54; 7.22; 8.4; 43.2; 49.30; Ether 12.10), or simply "the holy order" (2 Ne 6.2n; Alma 6.8; 13.1, 8, 10). **1:** *Cite your minds forward*, that is, forward from the time of Adam and Eve, the subject of 12.22–32. *Cite*, WB: "to direct." *These commandments*, that is, the "second commandments" specified at 12.32–37. *Ordained*, WB: "to appoint." *Ordained priests after his holy order*, this refers to a type of priesthood distinct from that of Aaron and the Levites, one that is explicitly associated with the Son of God, and whose primary function is instruction rather than ritual sacrifice (see v. 6). **2:** Their ordination included a specific charge to teach people to look forward to Jesus's future remission of sins; see v. 16. *In a manner* [related to Christ's redemption], may be a reference to ordination by the laying on of hands (6.1; cf. Acts 6.5–6; 1 Tim 5.22) and its echoing of the scapegoat ritual of Lev 16.21–22, or ordination by anointing oil and the blood of a sacrificed animal, which purified both the priests and their garments (vv. 11–12, 16; cf. Lev 8.1–30; 1 Ne 12.10–11; Alma 5.21, 24, 27).

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.

³ “And this is the manner after which they were ordained—being called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of their exceeding faith and good works; in the first place being left to choose good or evil; therefore they having chosen good, and exercising exceeding great faith, are called with a holy calling, yea, with that holy calling which was prepared with, and according to, a preparatory redemption for such. ⁴ And thus they have been called to this holy calling on account of their faith, while others would reject the Spirit of God on account of the hardness of their hearts and blindness of their minds, while, if it had not been for this they might have had as great privilege as their brethren.

⁵ “Or in fine, in the first place they were on the same standing with their brethren; thus this holy calling being prepared from the foundation of the world for such as would not harden their hearts, being in and through the atonement of the Only Begotten Son, who was prepared— ⁶ and thus being called by this holy calling, and ordained unto the high priesthood of the holy order of God, to teach his commandments unto the children of men,

that they also might enter into his rest— ⁷ this high priesthood being after the order of his Son, which order was from the foundation of the world; or in other words, being without beginning of days or end of years, being prepared from eternity to all eternity, according to his foreknowledge of all things—

⁸ “Now they were ordained after this manner—being called with a holy calling, and ordained with a holy ordinance, and taking upon them the high priesthood of the holy order, which calling, and ordinance, and high priesthood, is without beginning or end— ⁹ thus they become high priests forever, after the order of the Son, the Only Begotten of the Father, who is without beginning of days or end of years, who is full of grace, equity, and truth. And thus it is. Amen.”

Alma₂ Cites the Example of Melchizedek

[X] ¹⁰ “Now, as I said concerning the holy order of^a this high priesthood, there were many who were ordained and became high priests of God; and it was on account of their exceeding faith and repentance, and their righteousness before God—they choosing to repent and work righteousness rather than to perish— ¹¹ therefore they were called after this holy order, and were sanctified, and

^a 10 P, 1981 order, or

3: *In the first place* (also at v. 5) is ambiguous, but probably does not refer to the later LDS doctrine of premortal existence—a concept that is foreign to this chapter as a whole (and to the BoM in general). The meaning here seems to be closer to “first being placed in a state to act according to their wills” (at 12.31). *Called with a holy calling*, 2 Tim 1.9, but *on account of their... good works* here revises “not according to our works” there. **7:** *Without beginning of days or end of years*, Heb 7.3, where it refers to Melchizedek; here the reference is to the priesthood that he held, and in v. 9 it is applied to Christ. **8:** *Ordinance*, ordination. **9:** *High priests forever, after the order of*, Heb 6.20, which quotes Ps 110.4 and explicitly refers to Jesus as such a priest. Alma here names the order after the Son, rather than after Melchizedek. *And thus it is. Amen*, the original chapter break here suggests that the qualities of the high priests of God, including faith, good works, and unhardened hearts (as delineated in vv. 3–5), should be seen in the context of the “second commandments” of 12.33–37. **10–20:** Melchizedek, who only appears in the OT at Gen 14.18–20 and Ps 110.4, is identified as someone who received an alternative, non-Levitical priesthood. Another allusion to pre-Abrahamic priests called to this order is found at Hel 8.18, which like v. 3 above, links priesthood, foreknowledge of Christ, and redemption. **11:** For the idea of a priest being sanctified, along with his garments, through blood, see Lev 8.30.

their garments were washed white through the blood of the Lamb.¹⁶ (Now these ordinances were given after this manner, that thereby the people might look forward on the Son of God, it being a type of his order, or it being his order, and this that they might look forward to him for a remission of their sins, that they might enter into the rest of the Lord.)^a¹² Now they, after being sanctified by the Holy Ghost, having their garments made white, being pure and spotless before God, could not look upon sin save it were with abhorrence; and there were many, exceeding great many, who were made pure and entered into the rest of the Lord their God.

¹³ “And now, my brethren, I would that ye should humble yourselves before God, and bring forth fruit meet for repentance, that ye may also enter into that rest.”¹⁴ Yea, humble yourselves even as the people in the days of Melchizedek, who was also a high priest after this same order which I have spoken, who also took upon him the high priesthood forever.¹⁵ And it was this same Melchizedek to whom Abraham paid tithes; yea, even our

father Abraham paid tithes of one-tenth part of all he possessed.

¹⁷ “Now this Melchizedek was a king over the land of Salem; and his people had waxed strong in iniquity and abomination; yea, they had all gone astray; they were full of all manner of wickedness;¹⁸ but Melchizedek having exercised mighty faith, and received the office of the high priesthood according to the holy order of God, did preach repentance unto his people. And behold, they did repent; and Melchizedek did establish peace in the land in his days; therefore he was called the prince of peace, for he was the king of Salem; and he did reign under his father.¹⁹ Now, there were many before him, and also there were many afterwards, but none were greater; therefore, of him they have more particularly made mention.

²⁰ “Now I need not rehearse the matter; what I have said may suffice. Behold, the

^a 16 Verse 16 is a clarification that seems to belong between vv. 11 and 12, where it has been placed in this edition.

12: Being sanctified and forgiven changes their attitude toward sin, though their *abhorrence* is directed at sin in general rather than at sinners. *Garments made white . . . pure and spotless*, 5.24; by contrast, at Morm 9.6, the same adjectives are applied to individuals who have been “cleansed by the blood of the Lamb,” rather than to their clothing. **13–29:** In this passage, set off by an inclusio in vv. 13 and 27–29 (“And now, my brethren, I would . . . that ye should . . . humble yourselves before God . . . that ye may . . . enter into that rest”), Alma makes his first direct appeal to the people of Ammonihah: just as many people in Melchizedek’s day repented in response to his preaching and found peace, so too the Ammonihahites have a chance to avert disaster if they give heed to Alma, another high priest after the same order as Melchizedek. **14:** In the BoM it is Melchizedek who becomes a high priest forever after the order of the Son (see v. 9 above), rather than Jesus being a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek (as at Heb 6.20). **15:** *To whom Abraham paid tithes*, see Gen 14.20. *One-tenth part of all he possessed* differs slightly from “tithes of all” in the Gen account, which in context refers to the spoils of war, as recognized at Heb 7.4. **16:** *Ordinances*, referring to the ordinations of high priests who would teach the people about the plan of redemption. If this verse were moved to follow v. 11 (as has been done in this edition), the “many, exceedingly great many” in v. 12 would be those who heard the message of the priests, rather than a number of priests themselves. In its original position, v. 16 is simply an interruption within a discussion of Melchizedek. **17–19:** This biographical information concerning Melchizedek is not found in the Bible. **18:** Melchizedek obtained his priesthood through faith rather than inheritance; cf. Ether 12.10. The BoM substitutes *the prince of peace* from Isa 9.6 for Heb 7.2 “the King of peace” to highlight the christological connection that went unnoted in Nephi’s quotation at 2 Ne 19.6. *For he was the king of Salem*, a pun on the Hebrew name “Salem” (related to *shalom*, or peace), also found at Heb 7.2. *He did reign under his father*, an extra-biblical detail, perhaps provided as a counter to the description at Heb 7.3 that he was “without father, without mother.” **20:** This warning appears to refer to Antionah’s misuse of Gen 3 at 12.19–21. *Wrest [the scriptures] . . . to your own destruction*, 2 Pet 3.16. *Wrest*, WB: “to distort; to turn from truth or twist from its natural meaning.”

scriptures are before you; if ye will wrest them it shall be to your own destruction.”

Prepare for the Coming of the Lord

²¹ And now it came to pass that when Alma had said these words unto them, he stretched forth his hand unto them and cried with a mighty voice, saying, “Now is the time to repent, for the day of salvation draweth nigh; ²² yea, and the voice of the Lord, by the mouth of angels, doth declare it unto all nations; yea, doth declare it, that they may have glad tidings of great joy; yea, and he doth sound these glad tidings among all his people, yea, even to them that are scattered abroad upon the face of the earth; wherefore they have come unto us. ²³ And they are made known unto us in plain terms, that we may understand, that we cannot err; and this because of our being wanderers in a strange land; therefore, we are thus highly favored, for we have these glad tidings declared unto us in all parts of our vineyard. ²⁴ For behold, angels are declaring it unto many at this time in our land; and this is for the purpose of preparing the hearts of the children of men to receive his word at the time of his coming in his glory.

²⁵ “And now we only wait to hear the joyful news declared unto us by the mouth of angels, of his coming; for the time cometh, we know not how soon. Would to God that it might be in my day; but let it be sooner or later, in it I will rejoice. ²⁶ And it shall be made known unto just and holy men, by the mouth of angels, at the time of his coming, that the words of our fathers may be fulfilled, according to that which they have spoken concerning him, which was according to the spirit of prophecy which was in them.

²⁷ “And now, my brethren, I wish from the inmost part of my heart, yea, with great anxiety even unto pain, that ye would hearken unto my words, and cast off your sins, and not procrastinate the day of your repentance; ²⁸ but that ye would humble yourselves before the Lord, and call on his holy name, and watch and pray continually, that ye may not be tempted above that which ye can bear, and thus be led by the Holy Spirit, becoming humble, meek, submissive, patient, full of love and all long-suffering;

²⁹ having faith on the Lord;
having a hope that ye shall receive
eternal life;

21: Alma reiterates Amulek’s actions from 10.25 and the angel’s message from 9.25. *The day of salvation*, Isa 49.8 (quoted at 2 Cor 6.2 and 1 Ne 21.8). **22:** *By the mouth of angels*, both Alma and Amulek have seen and heard angels themselves (Mos 27; Alma 8.14–17, 20; 10.7–10). *Unto all nations*, the BoM assumes that the type of revelations given to the Nephites were being given to other peoples around the world. *Glad tidings of great joy*, see Mos 3.3n. **23:** Because the Nephites had been cut off from Israel’s original promised land, they had been granted extraordinarily clear revelations in recompense; cf. 9.20–21. *Wanderers in a strange land*, only here and 26.36; cf. Ex 2.22. **24–25:** Increased divine communication is a sign of the imminence of Christ’s coming. *We know not how soon*, at this point Alma seems to be unaware of the prophecies of a 600-year timetable included in the Small Plates, such as 1 Ne 10.4; 19.8; 2 Ne 25.19, but see Alma 7.7–8n; 16.20. **24:** Angelic visitations were happening among the Lamanites at about this same time, as reported at 19.34 and 24.14. **25:** *Would to God it might be in my day*, Alma will die about 73 years before Jesus’s birth; see ch. 45. **26:** This happens at Hel 16.14. **27:** *Procrastinate the day of your repentance*, non-biblical, but recurs at 34.33–35. There were a few instances of warnings against procrastinating, or putting off, one’s “day of repentance” in the early 19th c. **28:** *Watch and pray... not be tempted above that which ye can bear* conflates Mt 26.41 (Mk 14.38) and 1 Cor 10.13. *Humble... long-suffering*, this list is similar to the ones at Mos 3.19 and Alma 7.23. **29–30:** The combination of *faith* and *repentance* was essential for salvation at 12.15; for revelation at 12.30; and for receiving the high priesthood at 13.10. **29:** Faith, hope, and love is the familiar Pauline triad from 1 Cor 13.13; cf. Alma 7.24 and 2 Ne 31.19–20n. Here, however, each element is given a particular focus or object: faith in the Lord, hope for eternal life, and the love of God—the combination of which will allow people to enter into God’s rest. *Lifted up at the last day* and *enter into his rest* merge an expression of Nephi (1 Ne 13.37) with a quotation of Ps 95.11 earlier in this sermon.

having the love of God always in
 your hearts,
 that ye may be lifted up at the last
 day and enter into his rest.
³⁰ And may the Lord grant unto you
 repentance,
 that ye may not bring down his
 wrath upon you,
 that ye may not be bound down by
 the chains of hell,
 that ye may not suffer the second
 death.”

³¹ And Alma spake many more words unto
 the people, which are not written in this book.

Alma₂ and Amulek before the Chief Judge

14 ¹ And it came to pass after he had
 made an end of speaking unto the
 people many of them did believe on his words,
 and began to repent, and to search the scrip-
 tures. ² But the more part of them were desir-
 ous that they might destroy Alma and
 Amulek; for they were angry with Alma,
 because of the plainness of his words unto
 Zeezrom; and they also said that Amulek had
 lied unto them, and had reviled against their

law and also against their lawyers and judges—
³ and they were also angry with Alma and
 Amulek; and because they had testified so
 plainly against their wickedness, they sought
 to put them away privily. ⁴ But it came to pass
 that they did not; but they took them and
 bound them with strong cords, and took them
 before the chief judge of the land.

⁵ And the people went forth and witnessed
 against them—testifying that they had reviled
 against the law, and their lawyers and judges of
 the land, and also of all the people that were in
 the land; and also testified that there was but
 one God, and that he should send his Son
 among the people, but he should not save
 them; and many such things did the people
 testify against Alma and Amulek. Now this
 was done before the chief judge of the land.

Male Believers Are Cast Out; Their Believing Wives and Children Are Killed

⁶ And it came to pass that Zeezrom was aston-
 ished at the words which had been spoken;
 and he also knew concerning the blindness of
 the minds, which he had caused among the
 people by his lying words; and his soul began
 to be harrowed up under a consciousness of
 his own guilt; yea, he began to be encircled
 about by the pains of hell. ⁷ And it came to

30: The main phrases from this summarizing verse all appeared in the previous chapter (in order of citation: 12.24, 36, 11, 16). *Grant repentance*, repentance is a gift from God, either because he has allowed people time in which to change, or because the plan of redemption gives them a means by which to change. **31:** *Which are not written in this book*, Mormon regularly notes that these transcripts from Alma’s preaching journeys are being presented in truncated form; see 8.1; 9.34; 11.46.

CHAPTER 14

1–3: The time period covered in these verses is unclear. **2:** *Amulek had lied... had reviled against their law... lawyers and judges*, see 10.24, 28–29. **3:** *And they were also angry*, that is, the lawyers and judges; the crowd’s anger at Alma and Amulek was already noted in v. 2. *Put them away privily*, see Mt 1.19, where it refers to breaking off a marriage engagement; here it seems to mean imprisoning or killing them secretly. **4:** This is the first indication that there were chief judges in local jurisdictions; Alma, by contrast, had been “chief judge over the people of Nephi” (Alma preface; cf. 8.12). **5:** *But one God... his Son... not save them*, see 11.35. **6–7:** Zeezrom’s repentance comes too late to save the innocent from the violence that he himself had initiated. **7:** *Spotless before God*, only here and 13.12; Zeezrom is acknowledging that Alma and Amulek’s spiritual status is equal to legendary high priests of old. We will see Zeezrom again at 15.3. It is not clear how they identified the believers among the crowd, which appears to have consisted mostly of men. The people of Ammonihah were warned against this course of action at 10.23.

pass that he began to cry unto the people, saying, “Behold, I am guilty, and these men are spotless before God.”

And he began to plead for them from that time forth; but they reviled him, saying, “Art thou also possessed with the devil?” And they spit upon him, and cast him out from among them, and also all those who believed in the words which had been spoken by Alma and Amulek; and they cast them out, and sent men to cast stones at them.

⁸ And they brought their wives and children together, and whosoever believed or had been taught to believe in the word of God they caused that they should be cast into the fire; and they also brought forth their records which contained the holy scriptures, and cast them into the fire also, that they might be burned and destroyed by fire.

⁹ And it came to pass that they took Alma and Amulek, and carried them forth to the place of martyrdom, that they might witness the destruction of those who were consumed by fire. ¹⁰ And when Amulek saw the pains of the women and children who were consuming in the fire, he also was pained; and he said unto Alma, “How can we witness this awful scene? Therefore let us stretch forth our hands, and exercise the power of God which is in us, and save them from the flames.”

¹¹ But Alma said unto him, “The Spirit constraineth me that I must not stretch forth mine hand; for behold the Lord receiveth them up unto himself, in glory; and he doth suffer that they may do this thing, or that the people may do this thing unto them, according to the hardness of their hearts, that the judgments which he shall exercise upon them in his wrath may be just; and the blood of the innocent shall stand as a witness against them, yea, and cry mightily against them at the last day.”

¹² Now Amulek said unto Alma, “Behold, perhaps they will burn us also.”

¹³ And Alma said, “Be it according to the will of the Lord. But, behold, our work is not finished; therefore they burn us not.”

Alma₂ and Amulek in Prison

¹⁴ Now it came to pass that when the bodies of those who had been cast into the fire were consumed, and also the records which were cast in with them, the chief judge of the land came and stood before Alma and Amulek, as they were bound; and he smote them with his hand upon their cheeks, and said unto them, “After what ye have seen, will ye preach again unto this people, that they shall be cast into a lake of fire and brimstone?” ¹⁵ Behold, ye see that ye had not power to save those who had been cast into the fire; neither has God saved

8: The reference to wives and children who had already been “taught to believe” suggests a violent repression of a religious minority rather than an immediate reaction to a single instance of preaching. Their scriptures must have been written on some type of flammable material. Since their husbands and fathers had already been driven out, the dependent family members were helpless against atrocities. **9:** *Carried them forth*, apparently their bonds (v. 4) did not allow them to walk. **10:** The issue of whether Alma and Amulek had extraordinary power recurs in vv. 15, 20, 24, 28; an emphasis on such power was seen in the introduction to their labors at 8.31 and the heading preceding 9.1. **11–12:** This is a troubling interpretation of theodicy, in which God allows terrible suffering to be inflicted on the innocent in order to condemn the wicked perpetrators at the postmortal judgment. A similar point is made by Captain Moroni at 60.13. Readers may find it disconcerting how quickly Alma and Amulek turn away from a horrific scene in order to focus on their own situation. **11:** The martyrs enter immediately into God’s presence. The image of blood crying to God against murderers is an allusion to Gen 4.10; see Alma 1.12–13n. **13:** Abinadi’s life was similarly spared for a time, until he had completed his work; see Mos 13.1–6. **14:** The answer to the chief judge’s question is apparently no. Alma used this image of fire and brimstone at 12.17, and it appeared earlier at 2 Ne 9.16, 19, 26; 28.23; Jacob 3.11; 6.10; and Mos 3.27, but after this verse the metaphor is never used again in the BoM. **15:** The ability of Alma and Amulek’s God to save his people was questioned at 11.35. *Power to save*, only here and 12.15; the contrast is cruel as Alma has his own words thrown back at him.

them because they were of thy faith.” And the judge smote them again upon their cheeks, and asked, “What say ye for yourselves?”¹⁶ (Now this judge was after the order and faith of Nehor, who slew Gideon.)

¹⁷ And it came to pass that Alma and Amulek answered him nothing; and he smote them again, and delivered them to the officers to be cast into prison.¹⁸ And when they had been cast into prison three days, there came many lawyers, and judges, and priests, and teachers, who were of the profession of Nehor; and they came in unto the prison to see them, and they questioned them about many words; but they answered them nothing.

¹⁹ And it came to pass that the judge stood before them, and said, “Why do ye not answer the words of this people? Know ye not that I have power to deliver you up unto the flames?” And he commanded them to speak; but they answered nothing.

²⁰ And it came to pass that they departed and went their ways, but came again on the morrow; and the judge also smote them again on their cheeks. And many came forth also, and smote them, saying, “Will ye stand again and judge this people, and condemn our law? If ye have such great power why do ye not deliver yourselves?”²¹ And many such things did they say unto them, gnashing their teeth upon them, and spitting upon them, and saying, “How shall we look when we are damned?”

²² And many such things, yea, all manner of such things did they say unto them; and thus they did mock them for many days. And they did withhold food from them that they

might hunger, and water that they might thirst; and they also did take from them their clothes that they were naked; and thus they were bound with strong cords, and confined in prison.

Alma₂ and Amulek Delivered

²³ And it came to pass after they had thus suffered for many days, (and it was on the twelfth day, in the tenth month, in the tenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi)^a that the chief judge over the land of Ammonihah and many of their teachers and their lawyers went in unto the prison where Alma and Amulek were bound with cords.²⁴ And the chief judge stood before them, and smote them again, and said unto them, “If ye have the power of God deliver yourselves from these bands, and then we will believe that the Lord will destroy this people according to your words.”

²⁵ And it came to pass that they all went forth and smote them, saying the same words, even until the last; and when the last had spoken unto them the power of God was upon Alma and Amulek, and they rose and stood upon their feet.²⁶ And Alma cried, saying, “How long shall we suffer these great afflictions, O Lord? O Lord, give us strength according to our faith which is in Christ, even unto deliverance.” And they broke the cords with which they were bound.

And when the people saw this, they began to flee, for the fear of destruction had come upon them.²⁷ And it came to pass that so great was their fear that they fell to the earth,

^a 23 –82 years

16: *After the order and faith of Nehor*, see 1.2–16; apparently Nehor’s followers continued to spread his doctrines after his death (cf. 16.11). He preached of a God who would save all people, and his “order” (also at 24.29) may have been another alternative priesthood. **17–19:** Jesus also notably maintained silence in response to legal questioning, see Jesus at Mt 26.62–63; Mk 14.60–61; 15.3–4; Lk 23.9. **18:** *Of the profession of Nehor*, that is, they professed a belief in Nehor’s teachings. **21:** *Gnashing their teeth upon them*, snapping their jaws or grinding their teeth at them. *How shall we look when we are damned?* an odd question that presupposes some sense of the contortions or expressions of those suffering in hell (cf. Mos 16.2; Alma 40.13). **25:** The formalized abuse makes them all equally accountable. **26:** Alma’s prayer, and its answer, echoes that of Samson at Judg 16.28 or Nephi at 1 Ne 7.17. **27:** *Rent in twain*, split in two.

and did not obtain the outer door of the prison; and the earth shook mightily, and the walls of the prison were rent in twain, so that they fell to the earth; and the chief judge, and the lawyers, and priests, and teachers, who smote upon Alma and Amulek, were slain by the fall thereof.

²⁸ And Alma and Amulek came forth out of the prison, and they were not hurt; for the Lord had granted unto them power, according to their faith which was in Christ. And they straightway came forth out of the prison; and they were loosed from their bands; and the prison had fallen to the earth, and every soul within the walls thereof, save it were Alma and Amulek, was slain; and they straightway came forth into the city.

²⁹ Now the people having heard a great noise came running together by multitudes to know the cause of it; and when they saw Alma and Amulek coming forth out of the prison, and the walls thereof had fallen to the earth, they were struck with great fear, and fled from the presence of Alma and Amulek even as a goat fleeth with her young from two lions; and thus they did flee from the presence of Alma and Amulek.

Alma₂ and Amulek Travel to Sidom and Find the Cast-Out Believers

15 ¹ And it came to pass that Alma and Amulek were commanded to depart out of that city; and they departed, and came

out even into the land of Sidom; and behold, there they found all the people who had departed out of the land of Ammonihah, who had been cast out and stoned, because they believed in the words of Alma. ² And they related unto them all that had happened unto their wives and children, and also concerning themselves, and of their power of deliverance.

Zeezrom Is Healed

³ And also Zeezrom lay sick at Sidom, with a burning fever, which was caused by the great tribulations of his mind on account of his wickedness, for he supposed that Alma and Amulek were no more; and he supposed that they had been slain because of his iniquity. And this great sin, and his many other sins, did harrow up his mind until it did become exceeding sore, having no deliverance; therefore he began to be scorched with a burning heat.

⁴ Now, when he heard that Alma and Amulek were in the land of Sidom, his heart began to take courage; and he sent a message immediately unto them, desiring them to come unto him. ⁵ And it came to pass that they went immediately, obeying the message which he had sent unto them; and they went in unto the house unto Zeezrom; and they found him upon his bed, sick, being very low with a burning fever; and his mind also was exceeding sore because of his iniquities; and when he saw them he stretched forth his hand, and besought them that they would heal him.

28: *Straightway*, immediately. **29:** This incident was foreshadowed at 8.30–31. The conclusion to the story of Ammonihah is related at 16.1–12 and 25.1–2. *Even as a goat fleeth . . . from two lions*, original similes, such as seen here, are rare in the BoM, particularly in the narrative sections; cf. Mos 20.11; Alma 43.44; Morm 4.18.

CHAPTER 15

1: *Commanded*, it is unclear whether the order came from God or from civil authorities. *All the people who had departed*, 14.7; in this case, “people” means “men.” **2:** *All that had happened*, see 14.8–10. *And of their power of deliverance*, the tale of Alma and Amulek’s miraculous escape from prison would have been cold comfort to those whose wives and children had not been saved by God’s power. **3:** Zeezrom’s story is continued from Alma 14.6–7. He is suffering from a psychosomatic illness brought on by guilt for his actions and their imagined consequences. His *burning fever* echoes the torments of the women and children who were immolated.

⁶ And it came to pass that Alma said unto him, taking him by the hand, “Believest thou in the power of Christ unto salvation?”

⁷ And he answered and said, “Yea, I believe all the words that thou hast taught.”

⁸ And Alma said, “If thou believest in the redemption of Christ thou canst be healed.”

⁹ And he said, “Yea, I believe according to thy words.”

¹⁰ And then Alma cried unto the Lord, saying, “O Lord our God, have mercy on this man, and heal him according to his faith which is in Christ.” ¹¹ And when Alma had said these words, Zeezrom leaped upon his feet, and began to walk; and this was done to the great astonishment of all the people; and the knowledge of this went forth throughout all the land of Sidom. ¹² And Alma baptized Zeezrom unto the Lord; and he began from that time forth to preach unto the people.

Alma₂ Establishes a Church at Sidom, Takes Amulek to Zarahemla

¹³ And Alma established a church in the land of Sidom, and consecrated priests and teachers in the land, to baptize unto the Lord whosoever were desirous to be baptized. ¹⁴ And it came to pass that they were many; for they did flock in from all the region round about Sidom, and were baptized.

¹⁵ But as to the people that were in the land of Ammonihah, they yet remained a

hard-hearted and a stiffnecked people; and they repented not of their sins, ascribing all the power of Alma and Amulek to the devil; for they were of the profession of Nehor, and did not believe in the repentance of their sins.

¹⁶ And it came to pass that Alma and Amulek, Amulek having forsaken all his gold, and silver, and his precious things, which were in the land of Ammonihah, for the word of God, he being rejected by those who were once his friends and also by his father and his kindred; ¹⁷ therefore, after Alma having established the church at Sidom, seeing a great check, yea, seeing that the people were checked as to the pride of their hearts, and began to humble themselves before God, and began to assemble themselves together at their sanctuaries to worship God before the altar, watching and praying continually, that they might be delivered from Satan, and from death, and from destruction—

¹⁸ Now as I said, Alma having seen all these things, therefore he took Amulek and came over to the land of Zarahemla, and took him to his own house, and did administer unto him in his tribulations, and strengthened him in the Lord. ¹⁹ And thus ended the tenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi.^a

^a 19 —82 years; see Alma 8.3 (also 10.6; 14.23)

6–11: Healings contingent upon faith occur frequently in the NT. 12: Zeezrom will appear again at 31.6, 32. 13–14: Apparently there had not previously been a church in Sidom, in contrast to Zarahemla and Gideon. 15: *Did not believe in the repentance of their sins*, that is, they rejected teachings about the coming Christ, believing that all people would be saved unconditionally (1.4; 21.4, 6). 16: In heeding the words of the angel, Amulek has lost all his previous markers of identity. His riches were mentioned earlier at 10.4. *Rejected by... his father and his kindred*, even though they had earlier been blessed by the Lord for Amulek’s faithfulness; see 10.11. 17: *Check*, WB: “that which stops or restrains.” *Sanctuaries*, this is the first mention of such sites among the Nephites; at 16.13; 23.2; Hel 3.9, 14 they are listed alongside temples and synagogues, though they may have been associated with the latter. Since they included altars, their functions presumably included sacrifices. *Watch(ing) and pray(ing) continually*, only here and 13.28 (with an antecedent to *humble themselves before God* at 13.28 as well); the people of Sidom are doing what Alma had pleaded with the Ammonihahites to do. 18: Amulek moves into Alma’s house alone, even though there was a reference earlier to his wife and children (10.11). If they had been among those burned at Ammonihah, Amulek’s plea to exercise God’s power to save the victims (14.9–10) would have had a personal urgency, and his loss may explain his continuing *tribulations*.

Ammonihah Destroyed and Captives Rescued

[XI] **16** ¹ And it came to pass in the eleventh year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi,^a on the fifth day of the second month, there having been much peace in the land of Zarahemla, there having been no wars nor contentions for a certain number of years, even until the fifth day of the second month in the eleventh year, there was a cry of war heard throughout the land.² For behold, the armies of the Lamanites had come in upon the wilderness side, into the borders of the land, even into the city of Ammonihah, and began to slay the people and destroy the city.³ And now it came to pass, before the Nephites could raise a sufficient army to drive them out of the land, they had destroyed the people who were in the city of Ammonihah, and also some around the borders of Noah, and taken others captive into the wilderness.

⁴ Now it came to pass that the Nephites were desirous to obtain those who had been carried away captive into the wilderness.⁵ Therefore, he that had been appointed chief captain over the armies of the Nephites, (and his name was Zoram, and he had two sons, Lehi and Aha)—now Zoram and his two sons, knowing that Alma was high priest over the church, and having heard that he had the spirit of prophecy,

therefore they went unto him and desired of him to know whither the Lord would that they should go into the wilderness in search of their brethren, who had been taken captive by the Lamanites.

⁶ And it came to pass that Alma inquired of the Lord concerning the matter. And Alma returned and said unto them, “Behold, the Lamanites will cross the river Sidon in the south wilderness, away up beyond the borders of the land of Manti. And behold there shall ye meet them, on the east of the river Sidon, and there the Lord will deliver unto thee thy brethren who have been taken captive by the Lamanites.”

⁷ And it came to pass that Zoram and his sons crossed over the river Sidon, with their armies, and marched away beyond the borders of Manti into the south wilderness, which was on the east side of the river Sidon.⁸ And they came upon the armies of the Lamanites, and the Lamanites were scattered and driven into the wilderness; and they took their brethren who had been taken captive by the Lamanites, and there was not one soul of them had been lost that were taken captive. And they were brought by their brethren to possess their own lands.

⁹ And thus ended the eleventh year of the judges, the Lamanites having been driven out

^a 1 –81 years

CHAPTER 16

1: The sudden and unexpected nature of the attack on Ammonihah highlights its function as a manifestation of divine judgment, in direct consequence of Ammonihah’s sins. Chapters 24–25 provide a different sequence of causes and effects (from the Lamanite side) that will lead to this same destruction of Ammonihah. **3–8:** The narrator recounts the miraculous rescue of all the captives taken into the wilderness whose story affirms ideas about revelation, God’s tender care, and the worth of individuals. The people who were destroyed *around the borders of Noah* (v. 3), by contrast, are never mentioned again, perhaps because there were no obvious moral lessons to be found in their experience. **5:** It is unclear why Zoram’s sons are mentioned here, unless this Lehi is the military commander who figures prominently in chs. 43–62. *Whither*, where. **6:** At 2 Kings 6.8–12, the Lord revealed to Elisha the movements of Aramean troops (cf. 2 Chr 20.14–16); at 2 Sam 5.17–25 God gave David military advice. **6–8:** Alma’s revelation provides specific information, which is fulfilled precisely; see 43.22–24 for a similar incident concerning revelations of Lamanite troop movements in the same area seven years later. By contrast, earlier in his career Alma had employed more ordinary, secular means of reconnaissance; see 2.21–22. **9:** *Which they said God could not destroy*, see 9.4–5; this destruction fulfills Alma’s prophecies at 9.12, 18, 24; 10.23. There is no detailed account of driving the Lamanites from Nephite lands, although 25.3 suggests that it was a protracted process.

of the land, and the people of Ammonihah were destroyed; yea, every living soul of the Ammonihahites was destroyed, and also their great city, which they said God could not destroy, because of its greatness.¹⁰ But behold, in one day it was left desolate; and the carcasses were mangled by dogs and wild beasts of the wilderness.¹¹ Nevertheless, after many days their dead bodies were heaped up upon the face of the earth, and they were covered with a shallow covering. And now so great was the scent thereof that the people did not go in to possess the land of Ammonihah for many years. And it was called Desolation of Nehors; for they were of the profession of Nehor, who were slain; and their lands remained desolate.

¹² And the Lamanites did not come again to war against the Nephites until the fourteenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi.^a And thus for three years did the people of Nephi have continual peace in all the land.

Alma², Amulek, and Others Establish the Church throughout the Land

¹³ And Alma and Amulek went forth preaching repentance to the people in their temples, and in their sanctuaries, and also in their synagogues, which were built after the manner of the Jews.¹⁴ And as many as would hear their words, unto them they did impart the word of God, without any respect of persons, continually.¹⁵ And thus did Alma and Amulek

go forth, and also many more who had been chosen for the work, to preach the word throughout all the land.

And the establishment of the church became general throughout the land, in all the region round about, among all the people of the Nephites.¹⁶ And there was no inequality among them; the Lord^b did pour out his Spirit on all the face of the land to prepare the minds of the children of men, or to prepare their hearts to receive the word which should be taught among them at the time of his coming—¹⁷ that they might not be hardened against the word, that they might not be unbelieving, and go on to destruction, but that they might receive the word with joy, and as a branch be grafted into the true vine, that they might enter into the rest of the Lord their God.

¹⁸ Now those priests who did go forth among the people did preach against all lyings, and deceivings, and envyings, and strifes, and malice, and revilings, and stealing, robbing, plundering, murdering, committing adultery, and all manner of lasciviousness, crying that these things ought not so to be—¹⁹ holding forth things which must shortly come; yea, holding forth the coming of the Son of God, his sufferings and death, and also the resurrection of the dead.²⁰ And many of the people did inquire concerning the place where the

^a 12 –78 years

^b 16 P among them, for the Lord

10–11: The fate of the people of Ammonihah—bodies devoured by wild beasts and heaped up upon the earth—matches that of the Amlicite rebels who were also associated with Nehor (2.37–38); cf. Abinadi's prophecy at Mos 12.2. *In one day it was left desolate*, again see 9.4; the sudden desolation is comparable to that of the "great city" Babylon (Rome) at Rev 18.19. *The profession of Nehor*, see 1.2–6; 14.16–18; 15.15. **12:** Nothing further is recorded about this battle, but for fighting in the fifteenth year, see 28.1–7. **13:** *Synagogues*, consecrated spaces for Jewish prayer, study, and worship that are regularly referred to in the NT. The BoM describes both Nephites and Nephite dissenters worshipping in synagogues (this is the first reference), but the designation is anachronistic given that the earliest archaeological evidence for synagogues in the Old World (in Egypt) dates to the 3rd c. B.C.E. **14:** *Without any respect of persons*, impartially; the expression occurs regularly in the Bible. **16:** The reading of P makes it clear that the lack of inequality was a consequence rather than a cause of the Lord pouring out his Spirit. **17:** *Branch be grafted into the true vine*, 1 Ne 15.15–16; cf. Jn 15.1–2; 1 Ne 10.14. *Enter into the rest of the Lord*, Ps 95.11; the phrase appeared several times in chs. 12–13. **20:** At this point, the Nephites are aware that Jesus will visit the Americas after his death and resurrection; see 7.7–8n.

Son of God should come; and they were taught that he would appear unto them after his resurrection; and this the people did hear with great joy and gladness.

²¹ And now after the church had been established throughout all the land—having got the victory over the devil, and the word of God being preached in its purity in all the land, and the Lord pouring out his blessings upon the people—thus ended the fourteenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi.^a

The Missionary Journeys of the Sons of Mosiah₂ (a flashback): Alma 17–27

[*Mormon's heading*] An account of the sons of Mosiah, who rejected their rights to the kingdom for the word of God, and went up to the land of Nephi to preach to the Lamanites; their sufferings and deliverance—according to the record of Alma.

Alma₂ Meets the Sons of Mosiah₂ as They Return from Lamanite Lands

[XII] **17** ¹ And now it came to pass that as Alma was journeying from the land of Gideon southward, away to

the land of Manti, behold, to his astonishment, he met with the sons of Mosiah journeying towards the land of Zarahemla.² Now these sons of Mosiah were with Alma at the time the angel first appeared unto him; therefore Alma did rejoice exceedingly to see his brethren; and what added more to his joy, they were still his brethren in the Lord; yea, and they had waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth; for they were men of a sound understanding and they had searched the scriptures diligently, that they might know the word of God.³ But this is not all; they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting; therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they taught with power and authority of God.⁴ And they had been teaching the word of God for the space of fourteen years among the Lamanites,^b having had much success in bringing many to the knowledge of the truth; yea, by the power of their words many were brought before the altar of God, to call on his name and confess their sins before him.

^a ²¹ –78 years

^b ⁴ From about –91 to –77 years

21: After a lengthy digression describing the experiences of the sons of Mosiah during the past fourteen years, the main narrative will be picked up again at 27.16.

CHAPTERS 17–27

Heading: *Rejected their rights to the kingdom*, see Mos 29.3. *According to the record of Alma*, even though the narrative of the sons of Mosiah will conclude in ch. 27, Alma's account, apparently incorporated with few editorial revisions by Mormon, continues at least through ch. 29. For examples of Alma's narrative voice in these chapters, see 18.38; 23.5; 25.9.

CHAPTER 17

1: There is no further information about this visit of Alma to Gideon; his last recorded visit there, at ch. 7, had occurred five years earlier. The four sons of Mosiah are Ammon, Aaron, Omner, and Himni (Mos 27.34); we last heard of them at Mos 28.9. This reunion will be reported in greater detail at 27.16–19. **2–3:** *At the time the angel first appeared unto him*, see Mos 27.8–17; a second appearance of the same angel was recounted at Alma 8.14–17. *Taught with power and authority of God*, like Abinadi (Mos 13.6), the priests of Alma₁'s church (Mos 18.26), and Nephi₂ and Lehi₄ (Hel 5.18). **4:** The actions *before the altar of God* seem to reflect modern revivalist conventions rather than OT precedents. Earlier figures who called on God's name before an altar included Abram (Gen 12.8; 13.4) and Isaac (Gen 26.25), though such acts of worship entailed animal sacrifice; cf. 15.17.

The Flashback Begins: The Sons of Mosiah₂ Set Off on Their Missionary Journeys

⁵ Now these are the circumstances which attended them in their journeyings, for they had many afflictions; they did suffer much, both in body and in mind, such as hunger, thirst and fatigue, and also much labor in the spirit. ⁶ Now these were their journeyings: having taken leave of their father, Mosiah, in the first year of the judges; having refused the kingdom which their father was desirous to confer upon them, and also this was the minds of the people; ⁷ nevertheless they departed out of the land of Zarahemla, and took their swords, and their spears, and their bows, and their arrows, and their slings; and this they did that they might provide food for themselves while in the wilderness. ⁸ And thus they departed into the wilderness with their numbers which they had selected, to go up to the land of Nephi, to preach the word of God unto the Lamanites.

⁹ And it came to pass that they journeyed many days in the wilderness, and they fasted much and prayed much that the Lord would grant unto them a portion of his Spirit to go with them, and abide with them, that they

might be an instrument in the hands of God to bring, if it were possible, their brethren, the Lamanites, to the knowledge of the truth, to the knowledge of the baseness of the traditions of their fathers, which were not correct.

¹⁰ And it came to pass that the Lord did visit them with his Spirit, and said unto them, “Be comforted.” And they were comforted.

¹¹ And the Lord said unto them also, “Go forth among the Lamanites, thy brethren, and establish my word; yet ye shall be patient in long-suffering and afflictions, that ye may show forth good examples unto them in me, and I will make an instrument of thee in my hands unto the salvation of many souls.” ¹² And it came to pass that the hearts of the sons of Mosiah, and also those who were with them, took courage to go forth unto the Lamanites to declare unto them the word of God.

¹³ And it came to pass when they had arrived in the borders of the land of the Lamanites, that they separated themselves and departed one from another, trusting in the Lord that they should meet again at the close of their harvest; for they supposed that great was the work which they had undertaken.

¹⁴ And assuredly it was great, for they had undertaken to preach the word of God to a

5: *Much labor in the spirit*, 8.10; their experiences parallel those of Alma at Ammonihah. **6:** Mosiah had attempted to confer the kingdom on one of his sons before they left; see Mos 29.6. **7:** While the other types of weapons are suited for hunting, *swords* seems to indicate a possibility of fighting the Lamanites. Ammon will put his to use at 17.36–37; 20.20. Curiously, this verse includes the only mention of *spears* among the Nephites. **8:** *Their numbers which they had selected*, the only named missionaries in the following chapters who are not sons of Mosiah are Muloki and Ammah (20.2; 21.11). **9:** *A portion of his Spirit*, 2 Kings 2.9 (where it refers to a portion of Elijah’s spirit rather than the Lord’s); cf. Alma 18.35; 24.8. *An instrument in the hands of God to bring [people] to the knowledge of the truth*, Mos 27.36; that is to say, they wished to do among the Lamanites what they had already done among the Nephites (cf. v. 4 above and 21.17). **11–12:** Apparently before this revelation, the missionaries were so discouraged by their bleak prospects that they were about to turn back; see 26.26–27. *Establish my word*, perhaps with connotations of multiple witnesses, see 2 Ne 11.3 and 27.14, which both parallel the language of Mt 18.16, which itself alludes to Deut 19.15. *Be patient in long-suffering and afflictions*, Ammon will resort to violence twice in the following narrative, but both instances begin with his defending others rather than himself; see vv. 19–39 and 20.8–27. **13:** *Harvest* is a NT metaphor for missionary work (Mt 9.37–38; Lk 10.2; Jn 4.35–38); the only occurrences in the BoM are here and 26.5 (but see Zenos’s allegory at Jacob 5.29, 71, 77). **14–17:** These verses are an editorial interpolation; the narrative resumes at v. 18. Note the resumptive repetition, *they separated themselves one from another*, as v. 17 reiterates a phrase from v. 13. **14:** *Wild and ferocious* are adjectives regularly applied to the Lamanites.

wild and a hardened and a ferocious people; a people who delighted in murdering the Nephites, and robbing and plundering them; and their hearts were set upon riches, or upon gold and silver, and precious stones; yet they sought to obtain these things by murdering and plundering, that they might not labor for them with their own hands.¹⁵ Thus they were a very indolent people, many of whom did worship idols, and the curse of God had fallen upon them because of the traditions of their fathers; notwithstanding the promises of the Lord were extended unto them on the conditions of repentance.¹⁶ Therefore, this was the cause for which the sons of Mosiah had undertaken the work, that perhaps they might bring them unto repentance; that perhaps they might bring them to know of the plan of redemption.¹⁷ Therefore they separated themselves one from another, and went forth among them, every man alone, according to the word and power of God which was given unto him.

¹⁸ Now Ammon being the chief among them, or rather he did administer unto them, and he departed from them, after having blessed them according to their several stations, having imparted the word of God unto them, or administered unto them before his departure; and thus they took their several journeys throughout the land.

Ammon₂ in the Land of Ishmael: Alma 17.19–21.23

Ammon₂ Goes to the Land of Ishmael

¹⁹ And Ammon went to the land of Ishmael, the land being called after the sons of Ishmael, who also became Lamanites.²⁰ And as Ammon entered the land of Ishmael, the Lamanites took him and bound him, as was their custom to bind all the Nephites who fell into their hands, and carry them before the king; and thus it was left to the pleasure of the king to slay them, or to retain them in captivity, or to cast them into prison, or to cast them out of his land, according to his will and pleasure.²¹ And thus Ammon was carried before the king who was over the land of Ishmael; and his name was Lamoni; and he was a descendant of Ishmael.

²² And the king inquired of Ammon if it were his desire to dwell in the land among the Lamanites, or among his people.²³ And Ammon said unto him, “Yea, I desire to dwell among this people for a time; yea, and perhaps until the day I die.”

²⁴ And it came to pass that king Lamoni was much pleased with Ammon, and caused that his bands should be loosed; and he would that Ammon should take one of his daughters to wife.²⁵ But Ammon said unto him, “Nay, but

15: Laziness and idolatry were also linked at Mos 9.12; 11.6; Alma 1.32. *On the conditions of repentance*, conditional upon their repentance (also 42.13); at Hel 5.11 the phrase refers to the terms of repentance (also Hel 14.11, 18). **18:** The correction suggests a cooperative rather than a hierarchical relationship among the missionaries, or perhaps a notion of servant-leadership similar to Mt 20.26–27. *Their several stations*, probably, their assigned fields of labor (“several stations” was a common Methodist usage). **19–24:** The narrator places this story first, with its happy outcome. Aaron, preaching at the same time, was much less successful (see ch. 21), and there are no accounts of the experiences of any of the other missionaries. **21:** Ishmael joined Lehi’s family at 1 Ne 7, and then his sons remained with Laman and Lemuel when Nephi, along with his other brothers and their families, fled into the wilderness at 2 Ne 5:1–10. They also were allied with Laman and Lemuel in their rebellions and curses; see 1 Ne 7.6; 16.20, 37; 18.9; 2 Ne 4.13; Alma 3.7; 18.38. Even at this late date, the Ishmaelites seem to have retained a separate ethnic identity from their Lamanite allies; cf. Jacob 1.13; Alma 47.35; 4 Ne 1.38; Morm 1.8–9. **24:** Ammon must have revealed his identity as a son of the Nephite king; this would explain King Lamoni’s desire to make a politically advantageous marriage alliance through his daughter. *Servant*, perhaps “slave,” according to KJV usage; the king certainly has the power of life and death over such people in his household; see vv. 28–29 below. **25:** It is unclear in a New World context what sorts of animals may have been in his *flocks*.

I will be thy servant.” Therefore Ammon became a servant to king Lamoni.

Ammon₂ Defends the King’s Flocks

And it came to pass that he was set among other servants to watch the flocks of Lamoni, according to the custom of the Lamanites. ²⁶ And after he had been in the service of the king three days, as he was with the Lamanitish servants going forth with their flocks to the place of water, which was called the water of Sebus, and all the Lamanites drive their flocks hither, that they may have water— ²⁷ therefore, as Ammon and the servants of the king were driving forth their flocks to this place of water, behold, a certain number of the Lamanites, who had been with their flocks to water, stood and scattered the flocks of Ammon and the servants of the king, and they scattered them inasmuch that they fled many ways.

²⁸ Now the servants of the king began to murmur, saying, “Now the king will slay us, as he has our brethren because their flocks were scattered by the wickedness of these men.” And they began to weep exceedingly, saying, “Behold, our flocks are scattered already.” ²⁹ Now they wept because of the fear of being slain.

Now when Ammon saw this his heart was swollen within him with joy. “For,” said he, “I will show forth my power unto these my fellow-servants, or the power which is in me, in restoring these flocks unto the king, that I may win the hearts of these my fellow-servants, that I may lead them to believe in my words.”

³⁰ And now, these were the thoughts of Ammon, when he saw the afflictions of those whom he termed to be his brethren.

³¹ And it came to pass that he flattered them by his words, saying, “My brethren, be of good cheer and let us go in search of the flocks, and we will gather them together and bring them back unto the place of water; and thus we will preserve the flocks unto the king and he will not slay us.” ³² And it came to pass that they went in search of the flocks, and they did follow Ammon, and they rushed forth with much swiftness and did head the flocks of the king, and did gather them together again to the place of water.

³³ And those men again stood to scatter their flocks; but Ammon said unto his brethren, “Encircle the flocks round about that they flee not; and I go and contend with these men who do scatter our flocks.” ³⁴ Therefore, they did as Ammon commanded them, and he went forth and stood to contend with those who stood by the waters of Sebus; and they were in number not a few. ³⁵ Therefore they did not fear Ammon, for they supposed that one of their men could slay him according to their pleasure, for they knew not that the Lord had promised Mosiah that he would deliver his sons out of their hands; neither did they know anything concerning the Lord; therefore they delighted in the destruction of their brethren; and for this cause they stood to scatter the flocks of the king.

³⁶ But Ammon stood forth and began to cast stones at them with his sling; yea, with mighty

26: *Lamanitish*, only here and 19.16; the term may indicate “allied with the Lamanites, but of different ethnicity”; see v. 21n. **27:** This was a method of stealing animals, as well as an expression of sheer malice; see v. 35 below and 18.7. **29–30:** In the BoM, hearts can be swollen with joy (19.13; 3 Ne 4.33), sorrow (24.24; Hel 7.6), or thanksgiving (48.12); the metaphor is non-biblical. Ammon assumes that a show of miraculous power will give credibility to his religious message; also important, however, is his adoption of a brotherly relationship with those he seeks to convert. **29:** This verse features a rare instance of internal dialogue; Ammon is speaking only to himself. The correction suggests that the power was God’s rather than Ammon’s; the word *power* recurs regularly in the story that follows. **31:** In a metaphorical reading, Ammon’s proposal with the flocks mirrors his desire to gather Lamanites to God. *Flatter*, here without negative connotations; see WB: “to please; to soothe.” *Be of good cheer*, take heart. The phrase appears at 3 Ne 1.13 and seven times in the NT. **32:** *Head*, head off; WB: “to go in front of.” **35:** *The Lord had promised Mosiah*, see Mos 28.7. This reminder minimizes the significance of Ammon’s weapon skills and gives credit to God.

power he did sling stones amongst them; and thus he slew a certain number of them inso-much that they began to be astonished at his power; nevertheless they were angry because of the slain of their brethren, and they were determined that he should fall; therefore, seeing that they could not hit him with their stones, they came forth with clubs to slay him.³⁷ But behold, every man that lifted his club to smite Ammon, he smote off their arms with his sword; for he did withstand their blows by smiting their arms with the edge of his sword, insomuch that they began to be astonished, and began to flee before him; yea, and they were not few in number; and he caused them to flee by the strength of his arm.³⁸ Now six of them had fallen by the sling, but he slew none save it were their leader with his sword; and he smote off as many of their arms as were lifted against him, and they were not a few.

³⁹ And when he had driven them afar off, he returned and they watered their flocks and returned them to the pasture of the king, and then went in unto the king, bearing the arms which had been smitten off by the sword of Ammon, of those who sought to slay him; and they were carried in unto the king for a testimony of the things which they had done.

The Testimony of King Lamoni's Servants

18¹ And it came to pass that king Lamoni caused that his servants should stand forth and testify to all the things which they had seen concerning the matter.² And when

they had all testified to the things which they had seen, and he had learned of the faithfulness of Ammon in preserving his flocks, and also of his great power in contending against those who sought to slay him, he was astonished exceedingly, and said, "Surely, this is more than a man. Behold, is not this the Great Spirit who doth send such great punishments upon this people, because of their murders?"

³ And they answered the king, and said, "Whether he be the Great Spirit or a man, we know not; but this much we do know, that he cannot be slain by the enemies of the king; neither can they scatter the king's flocks when he is with us, because of his expertness and great strength; therefore, we know that he is a friend to the king. And now, O king, we do not believe that a man has such great power, for we know he cannot be slain."

⁴ And now, when the king heard these words, he said unto them, "Now I know that it is the Great Spirit; and he has come down at this time to preserve your lives, that I might not slay you as I did your brethren. Now this is the Great Spirit of whom our fathers have spoken."

⁵ Now this was the tradition of Lamoni, which he had received from his father, that there was a Great Spirit. Notwithstanding they believed in a Great Spirit, they supposed that whatsoever they did was right; nevertheless, Lamoni began to fear exceedingly, with fear lest he had done wrong in slaying his servants;⁶ for he had slain many of them because their brethren had scattered their flocks at the place of water; and thus, because they had had their flocks scattered they were slain.⁷ Now it was

37: The Lamanites are overwhelmed by Ammon's sword-handling technique. A weapon that could sever entire arms at one stroke would have been both heavy and sharp. 39: *For a testimony*, as evidence.

CHAPTER 18

The chapter presents a conversion story, which seems an appropriate sequel to a tale of gathering lost flocks. 2–5: *Great Spirit*, OED: "the supreme spirit or god recognized by North American Indians," with the first attested use in 1703. The term appears eighteen times in the BoM, all within Alma 18–22. In BoM usage, this traditional Lamanite deity was a creator god who punishes the wicked, can take human form, and is both invulnerable and all-knowing; cf. vv. 18, 28. 4: Paul and Barnabas were similarly mistaken for gods; see Acts 14:8–12; 28:6.

the practice of the Lamanites to stand by the waters of Sebus to scatter the flocks of the people, that thereby they might drive away many that were scattered unto their own land, it being a practice of plunder among them.

⁸ And it came to pass that king Lamoni inquired of his servants, saying, “Where is this man that has such great power?”

⁹ And they said unto him, “Behold, he is feeding thy horses.”

Now the king had commanded his servants, previous to the time of the watering of their flocks, that they should prepare his horses and chariots, and conduct him forth to the land of Nephi; for there had been a great feast appointed at the land of Nephi, by the father of Lamoni, who was king over all the land.

¹⁰ Now when king Lamoni heard that Ammon was preparing his horses and his chariots he was more astonished, because of the faithfulness of Ammon, saying, “Surely there has not been any servant among all my servants that has been so faithful as this man; for even he doth remember all my commandments to execute them.” ¹¹ Now I surely know that this is the Great Spirit, and I would desire him that he come in unto me, but I durst not.”

Ammon₂ Returns to the King

¹² And it came to pass that when Ammon had made ready the horses and the chariots for the king and his servants, he went in unto the king, and he saw that the countenance of the king was changed; therefore he was about to return out of his presence. ¹³ And one of the

king’s servants said unto him, “Rabbanah,” which is, being interpreted, “powerful or great king,” considering their kings to be powerful; and thus he said unto him, “Rabbanah, the king desireth thee to stay.”

¹⁴ Therefore Ammon turned himself unto the king, and said unto him, “What wilt thou that I should do for thee, O king?” And the king answered him not for the space of an hour, according to their time, for he knew not what he should say unto him.

¹⁵ And it came to pass that Ammon said unto him again, “What desirest thou of me?” But the king answered him not.

¹⁶ And it came to pass that Ammon, being filled with the Spirit of God, therefore he perceived the thoughts of the king. And he said unto him, “Is it because thou hast heard that I defended thy servants and thy flocks, and slew seven of their brethren with the sling and with the sword, and smote off the arms of others, in order to defend thy flocks and thy servants; behold, is it this that causeth thy marvelings?” ¹⁷ I say unto you, what is it, that thy marvelings are so great? Behold, I am a man, and am thy servant; therefore, whatsoever thou desirest which is right, that will I do.”

¹⁸ Now when the king had heard these words, he marveled again, for he beheld that Ammon could discern his thoughts; but notwithstanding this, king Lamoni did open his mouth, and said unto him, “Who art thou? Art thou that Great Spirit, who knows all things?”

¹⁹ Ammon answered and said unto him, “I am not.”

9–10: Almost equally astonishing as Ammon’s power is his nonchalance; he simply moves on to his next task. Aside from biblical quotations, chariots are mentioned five times in the BoM, always in conjunctions with horses; in a New World context without wheeled vehicles, the referent of the term is uncertain and likely anachronistic. **13:** Citing a term for a foreign language occurs in the NT as well (e.g., Mt 1.23; Mk 5.41; Acts 4.36); cf. 1 Ne 17.5; Alma 31.21; 37.38; Ether 2.3; 15.8. *Rabbanah* . . . *great king*, cf. Jn 1.38. In the Bible, the epithet “great king” is used by heathen rulers, but the Israelites generally reserved the term for God. **14–16:** *Said unto him . . . said unto him again . . . said unto him*, see 9.1–6n. **14:** *According to their time*, the implication is that a Lamanite “hour” is not equivalent to a Nephite “hour.” **16–20:** *Perceived the thoughts*, see Jacob 2.5n; Mos 24.12n, and v. 32 below; cf. Lk 5.22. Ascertaining what was on the king’s mind that day would not seem to require superhuman knowledge or revelation. **16:** *Slew seven . . . sword*, that is, six with his sling and one with his sword; see 17.38.

²⁰ And the king said, “How knowest thou the thoughts of my heart? Thou mayest speak boldly, and tell me concerning these things; and also tell me by what power ye slew and smote off the arms of my brethren that scattered my flocks—²¹ And now, if thou wilt tell me concerning these things, whatsoever thou desirest I will give unto thee; and if it were needed, I would guard thee with my armies; but I know that thou art more powerful than all they; nevertheless, whatsoever thou desirest of me I will grant it unto thee.”

Ammon₂ Teaches the Gospel to King Lamoni

²² Now Ammon being wise, yet harmless, he said unto Lamoni, “Wilt thou hearken unto my words, if I tell thee by what power I do these things? And this is the thing that I desire of thee.”

²³ And the king answered him, and said, “Yea, I will believe all thy words.” And thus he was caught with guile.

²⁴ And Ammon began to speak unto him with boldness, and said unto him, “Believest thou that there is a God?”

²⁵ And he answered, and said unto him, “I do not know what that meaneth.”

²⁶ And then Ammon said, “Believest thou that there is a Great Spirit?”

²⁷ And he said, “Yea.”

²⁸ And Ammon said, “This is God.” And Ammon said unto him again, “Believest thou

that this Great Spirit, who is God, created all things which are in heaven and in the earth?”

²⁹ And he said, “Yea, I believe that he created all things which are in the earth; but I do not know the heavens.”

³⁰ And Ammon said unto him, “The heavens is a place where God dwells and all his holy angels.”

³¹ And king Lamoni said, “Is it above the earth?”

³² And Ammon said, “Yea, and he looketh down upon all the children of men; and he knows all the thoughts and intents of the heart; for by his hand were they all created from the beginning.”

³³ And king Lamoni said, “I believe all these things which thou hast spoken. Art thou sent from God?”

³⁴ Ammon said unto him, “I am a man—and man in the beginning was created after the image of God—and I am called by his Holy Spirit to teach these things unto this people, that they may be brought to a knowledge of that which is just and true; ³⁵ and a portion of that Spirit dwelleth in me, which giveth me knowledge, and also power according to my faith and desires which are in God.”

³⁶ Now when Ammon had said these words, he began at the creation of the world, and also the creation of Adam, and told him all the things concerning the fall of man, and rehearsed and laid before him the records and the holy scriptures of the people, which

21: *Whatsoever thou desirest of me I will give it unto thee*, the king reverses Ammon’s offer in v. 17. **22:** *Wise yet harmless*, Mt 10.16. **23:** *Caught with guile*, 2 Cor 12.16. “Guile,” that is, deceit, has a negative meaning everywhere else in scripture; perhaps here it could be construed as something like “cleverness.” **24–35:** Ammon attempts to connect his message with Lamoni’s previously held beliefs. **24:** *With boldness*, taking up Lamoni’s invitation at v. 20. **32:** *He knows all the thoughts and intents of the heart*, Heb 4.12; Mos 5.13; Alma 12.7; 21.6. **33:** *Sent from God*, Lamoni has adopted Ammon’s religious vocabulary; cf. vv. 24–28. **34:** *Man . . . created after the image of God*, see Gen 1.26–27. **35:** *A portion of that Spirit*, this unusual usage, which also occurs at 17.9 and 24.8, appears to be an answer to the prayer of the missionaries at 17.9. *Power according to my faith and desires*, Ammon is identifying the source of his power, as he agreed to do in v. 22. **36–39:** A narrative that extends from the fall of Adam to redemption in Christ is a very Christian outline of sacred history. **36:** This would have been information from the Brass Plates. The wording suggests that Ammon has a physical copy with him.

had been spoken by the prophets, even down to the time that their father, Lehi, left Jerusalem.³⁷ And he also rehearsed unto them (for it was unto the king and to his servants) all the journeyings of their fathers in the wilderness, and all their sufferings with hunger and thirst, and their travail, and so forth.³⁸ And he also rehearsed unto them concerning the rebellions of Laman and Lemuel, and the sons of Ishmael, yea, all their rebellions did he relate unto them; and he expounded unto them all the records and scriptures from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem down to the present time.

³⁹ But this is not all; for he expounded unto them the plan of redemption, which was prepared from the foundation of the world; and he also made known unto them concerning the coming of Christ, and all the works of the Lord did he make known unto them.

King Lamoni Is Overcome

⁴⁰ And it came to pass that after he had said all these things, and expounded them to the king, that the king believed all his words.⁴¹ And he began to cry unto the Lord, saying, “O Lord, have mercy; according to thy abundant mercy which thou hast had upon the people of

Nephi, have upon me, and my people.”⁴² And now, when he had said this, he fell unto the earth, as if he were dead.

⁴³ And it came to pass that his servants took him and carried him in unto his wife, and laid him upon a bed; and he lay as if he were dead for the space of two days and two nights; and his wife, and his sons, and his daughters mourned over him, after the manner of the Lamanites, greatly lamenting his loss.

19 And it came to pass that after two days and two nights they were about to take his body and lay it in a sepulchre, which they had made for the purpose of burying their dead.

The Queen Sends for Ammon₂

^{1 2} Now the queen having heard of the fame of Ammon, therefore she sent and desired that he should come in unto her.³ And it came to pass that Ammon did as he was commanded, and went in unto the queen, and desired to know what she would that he should do.

⁴ And she said unto him, “The servants of my husband have made it known unto me that thou art a prophet of a holy God, and that

38: *And the sons of Ishmael*, Ammon is broaching the delicate matter of the rebellion of King Lamoni’s own forefathers, but he is also acknowledging their historical significance. *Scriptures*, this is the first time that writings of earlier Nephites are unequivocally given the status of “scripture”; see Mos 2.34–35n; Alma 12.1n. The reference here may be to the *records* on the Small Plates, which were specifically “written for the intent of the benefit of our brethren the Lamanites” (Jarom 1.2). *Down to the present time*, an indication that Alma, rather than Mormon, is the author of these words; see the note to the heading at chs. 17–27. **39:** *Redemption . . . prepared from the foundation of the world*, this was the same message delivered by Abinadi (Mos 15.19), Alma₁ (Mos 18.13), Alma₂ (Alma 12.30); and later by Aaron (Alma 22.13). *The coming of Christ*, again, a message previously given by Nephi (2 Ne 11.4), Jacob (Jacob 1.6; 7.14), King Benjamin (Mos 3.13), and Abinadi (Mos 7.26); and later by Aaron (Alma 21.9), Amulek (Alma 34.2), and Alma₂ (Alma 39.15). **43:** *After the manner of the Lamanites*, nothing more is known about Lamanite mourning rituals.

CHAPTER 19

3: *Did as he was commanded*, Ammon is now a subject of the Lamanite rulers. **4:** *Thou art a prophet*, it is fairly rare for individual Nephites to be given this designation; the only examples are Abinadi (Mos 7.26; Alma 5.11), Alma₂ (Alma 8.20; 10.7), Ammon (here and Alma 20.15); Nephi₂ (Hel 8.9; 9.40; 11.18); and Gidgiddoni (3 Ne 3.19); cf. Samuel the Lamanite (3 Ne 1.9; 8.3; Morm 2.10). Ether is the only Jaredite who is explicitly called a prophet (Ether 12.2). None of the New World figures in the BoM ever refers to himself as a prophet (but compare Zenos at Jacob 5.2). **4–10:** This narrative combines elements from the raising of Jairus’s daughter (“not dead but sleepeth”; Mt 9.24; Mk 5.39; Lk 8.52) and the raising of Lazarus (“stinketh,” “the glory of God,” “shall rise again,” “believest thou this?”; Jn 11.23–27, 39–40).

thou hast power to do many mighty works in his name;⁵ therefore, if this is the case, I would that ye should go in and see my husband, for he has been laid upon his bed for the space of two days and two nights; and some say that he is not dead, but others say that he is dead and that he stinketh, and that he ought to be placed in the sepulchre; but as for myself, to me he doth not stink.”

⁶ Now, this was what Ammon desired, for he knew that king Lamoni was under the power of God; he knew that the dark veil of unbelief was being cast away from his mind, and the light which did light up his mind, which was the light of the glory of God, which was a marvelous light of his goodness—yea, this light had infused such joy into his soul, the cloud of darkness having been dispelled, and that the light of everlasting life^a was lit up in his soul, yea, he knew that this had overcome his natural frame, and he was carried away in God—⁷ therefore, what the queen desired of him was his only desire. Therefore, he went in to see the king according as the queen had desired him; and he saw the king, and he knew that he was not dead.

⁸ And he said unto the queen, “He is not dead, but he sleepeth in God, and on the morrow he

shall rise again; therefore bury him not.”⁹ And Ammon said unto her, “Believest thou this?”

And she said unto him, “I have had no witness save thy word, and the word of our servants; nevertheless I believe that it shall be according as thou hast said.”

¹⁰ And Ammon said unto her, “Blessed art thou because of thy exceeding faith; I say unto thee, woman, there has not been such great faith among all the people of the Nephites.”

The King, the Queen, Ammon, and Other Servants Are Overcome

¹¹ And it came to pass that she watched over the bed of her husband, from that time even until that time on the morrow which Ammon had appointed that he should rise.¹² And it came to pass that he arose, according to the words of Ammon; and as he arose, he stretched forth his hand unto the woman, and said, “Blessed be the name of God, and blessed art thou.¹³ For as sure as thou livest, behold, I have seen my Redeemer; and he shall come forth, and be born of a woman, and he shall redeem all mankind who believe on his name.” Now, when he had said these words, his heart

^a 6 O, P *light*; 1852 *life*

5: Lamoni is in a coma-like state. His wife, the unnamed queen, exhibits independent judgment as to his condition. *For the space of two days and two nights*, the same amount of time that Ammon's friend Alma had been prayed over when he was in a comparable situation; see Mos 27.23. Both experiences lasted three days and nights in total (Alma 36.10, 16; 38.8; Lamoni will recover the next day), nevertheless the two phenomena are distinct. Alma merely exhibited a type of paralysis, as opposed to Lamoni's condition that was mistaken for death. **6:** Because Ammon has seen spiritual fainting before (he was with Alma when the angel appeared; see Mos 27.10–17), he understands that Lamoni's two days of unresponsiveness are part of a physiological/psychological process of spiritual regeneration. Both Lamoni and Alma will report having undergone a revelatory, perhaps out-of-body experience (v. 13; Mos 27.23–29; Alma 36.10–23); in Lamoni's case, however, his encounter with the divine is mainly intuited and described by Ammon in this verse. *Veil of unbelief*, only here and Ether 4.15, though this non-biblical phrase was common in the 18th–19th c; cf. 2 Cor 3.13–16. The *dark veil* and *cloud of darkness* are overwhelmed by the seven instances of *light* in this verse. *Everlasting light* (O and P) also occurs at 26.15 and Isa 60.19–20, where it is identified as the Lord. **8–9a:** *And he said. . . . And Ammon said*, on the lack of an intervening response, see 9.1–6n; 18.14–16. **9b–10:** Ammon commends the queen's extraordinary faith, based only on the words she has heard, with a declaration that echoes that given by God to Alma₁ and his followers (“thou art blessed because of thy exceeding faith in the words alone of my servant Abinadi. . .”), and also by Jesus to the centurion (“I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel”); see Mos 26.15–16; Mt 8.10. **11–16:** The religious swooning in this passage appears almost contagious. **13:** *Seen my redeemer*, as Nephi and Jacob had; cf. 2 Ne 11.2. Lamoni has gained direct, experiential knowledge of the truth of Ammon's message.

was swollen within him, and he sunk again with joy; and the queen also sunk down, being overpowered by the Spirit.

¹⁴ Now Ammon seeing the Spirit of the Lord poured out according to his prayers upon the Lamanites, his brethren, who had been the cause of so much mourning among the Nephites, or among all the people of God because of their iniquities and their traditions, he fell upon his knees, and began to pour out his soul in prayer and thanksgiving to God for what he had done for his brethren; and he was also overpowered with joy; and thus they all three had sunk to the earth.

¹⁵ Now, when the servants of the king had seen that they had fallen, they also began to cry unto God, for the fear of the Lord had come upon them also, for it was they who had stood before the king and testified unto him concerning the great power of Ammon.¹⁶ And it came to pass that they did call on the name of the Lord, in their might, even until they had all fallen to the earth, save it were one of the Lamanitish women, whose name was Abish, she having been converted unto the Lord for many years, on account of a remarkable vision of her father.

Abish Summons the People

¹⁷ Thus, having been converted to the Lord, and never having made it known, therefore, when she saw that all the servants of Lamoni had fallen to the earth, and also her mistress, the queen, and the king, and Ammon lay prostrate upon the earth, she knew that it was the power of God; and supposing that this opportunity, by making

known unto the people what had happened among them, that by beholding this scene it would cause them to believe in the power of God, therefore she ran forth from house to house, making it known unto the people.

¹⁸ And they began to assemble themselves together unto the house of the king. And there came a multitude, and to their astonishment, they beheld the king, and the queen, and their servants prostrate upon the earth, and they all lay there as though they were dead; and they also saw Ammon, and behold, he was a Nephite.

¹⁹ And now the people began to murmur among themselves; some saying that it was a great evil that had come upon them, or upon the king and his house, because he had suffered that the Nephite should remain in the land.²⁰ But others rebuked them, saying, "The king hath brought this evil upon his house, because he slew his servants who had had their flocks scattered at the waters of Sebus."²¹ And they were also rebuked by those men who had stood at the waters of Sebus and scattered the flocks which belonged to the king, for they were angry with Ammon because of the number which he had slain of their brethren at the waters of Sebus, while defending the flocks of the king.

²² Now, one of them, whose brother had been slain with the sword of Ammon, being exceedingly angry with Ammon, drew his sword and went forth that he might let it fall upon Ammon, to slay him; and as he lifted the sword to smite him, behold, he fell dead.²³ Now we see that Ammon could not be slain, for the

15: *Testified unto him concerning... Ammon*, see 18.1–3. **16:** *Lamanitish*, see 17.26n. Abish is one of only three named women in BoM history, the others being Sariah (1 Ne 2.5) and Isabel (Alma 39.3). Nothing more is known of this *vision*; indeed, it is unclear whether it was a vision her father saw, or a vision of her father that she herself saw. Her conversion to the Nephite religion seems to have come without direct contact with Nephites themselves. **17:** Again, there is an emphasis on divine power; Abish does not hope that the people will come to believe in God, but *in the power of God*. **18:** Ammon could have been identifiable as a Nephite by either his appearance or his clothing. **19–20:** Some in the crowd blame the king's leniency, others his harshness. *Great evil*, great disaster; see Mos 7.25n. *He slew his servants*, see 17.28. **21:** *The number which [Ammon] had slain*, see 17.36–38. **22–24:** This was the brother of their leader, the only one whom Ammon had killed with his sword. The sudden death of Ammon's would-be assassin is yet another manifestation of God's power, confirming Lamoni's observation at 18.21; cf. Mos 28.7. **23:** *Trusted*, entrusted.

Lord had said unto Mosiah, his father, “I will spare him, and it shall be unto him according to thy faith.”^a Therefore, Mosiah trusted him unto the Lord.²⁴ And it came to pass that when the multitude beheld that the man had fallen dead, who lifted the sword to slay Ammon, fear came upon them all, and they durst not put forth their hands to touch him or any of those who had fallen; and they began to marvel again among themselves what could be the cause of this great power, or what all these things could mean.

²⁵ And it came to pass that there were many among them who said that Ammon was the Great Spirit, and others said he was sent by the Great Spirit;²⁶ but others rebuked them all, saying that he was a monster, who had been sent from the Nephites to torment them.²⁷ And there were some who said that Ammon was sent by the Great Spirit to afflict them because of their iniquities; and that it was the Great Spirit that had always attended the Nephites, who had ever delivered them out of their hands; and they said that it was this Great Spirit who had destroyed so many of their brethren, the Lamanites.²⁸ And thus the contention began to be exceeding sharp among them.

Those Who Had Been Overcome Revive; Many Believe Their Words

And while they were thus contending, the woman servant who had caused the multitude to be gathered together came, and when she saw

the contention which was among the multitude she was exceeding sorrowful, even unto tears.²⁹ And it came to pass that she went and took the queen by the hand, that perhaps she might raise her from the ground; and as soon as she touched her hand she arose and stood upon her feet, and cried with a loud voice, saying:

“O blessed Jesus, who has saved me
from an awful hell!
O blessed God, have mercy on this
people!”

³⁰ And when she had said this, she clasped^b her hands, being filled with joy, speaking many words which were not understood.

And when she had done this, she took the king, Lamoni, by the hand, and behold he arose and stood upon his feet.³¹ And he, immediately, seeing the contention among his people, went forth and began to rebuke them, and to teach them the words which he had heard from the mouth of Ammon; and as many as heard his words believed, and were converted unto the Lord.³² But there were many among them who would not hear his words; therefore they went their way.

³³ And it came to pass that when Ammon arose he also administered unto them, and also did all the servants of Lamoni; and they

^a 23 Reference uncertain, but see Mos 28.7.

^b 30 P *clapped*

26: *Saying that he was a monster*, a creative explanation from those who regarded Ammon as an uncontrollable, deadly force or entity. Most of the crowd’s explanations rely on Lamanite traditions of the Great Spirit, some of which regarded the deity as an ally of the Nephites. **28:** *Sorrowful, even unto tears*, these lively disputations were not the responses that Abish had hoped for when she “ran forth from house to house.” Nevertheless she is the one who will perform the miracle of restoring the queen and the king to consciousness. **29:** *Took the queen by the hand . . . she arose*, cf. Mt 9.25; Mk 5.41–42; Lk 8.54–55; see vv. 4–10n. **30:** *Clapped her hands* [the reading of P], *being filled with joy*, also at Mos 18.11, when Alma’s people respond to his invitation to be baptized; cf. Ps 47.1. *Words which were not understood*, perhaps glossolalia. Many commentators have seen echoes of 19th c. revivalist patterns in this narrative of insensible swooning, Jesus praise, and tongue-speaking. It should be noted, however, that this behavior is rare in the BoM. Although people regularly fall to the ground in worship or fear, only Alma, and Lamoni’s court experience coma-like states of spiritual transformation (but see 27.17 for Ammon collapsing with joy). **33:** *Their hearts had been changed; that they had no more desire to do evil*, the same reaction was experienced by King Benjamin’s people after they heard his speech; see Mos 5.2.

did all declare unto the people the selfsame thing—that their hearts had been changed; that they had no more desire to do evil.³⁴ And behold, many did declare unto the people that they had seen angels and had conversed with them; and thus they had told them things of God, and of his righteousness.³⁵ And it came to pass that there were many that did believe in their words; and as many as did believe were baptized; and they became a righteous people, and they did establish a church among them.

³⁶ And thus the work of the Lord did commence among the Lamanites; thus the Lord did begin to pour out his Spirit upon them; and we see that his arm is extended to all people who will repent and believe on his name.

Ammon₂ and King Lamoni Travel to Middoni

20¹ And it came to pass that when they had established a church in that land, that king Lamoni desired that Ammon should go with him to the land of Nephi, that he might show him unto his father.² And the voice of the Lord came to Ammon, saying, “Thou shalt not go up to the land of Nephi, for behold, the king will seek thy life; but thou shalt go to the land of Middoni; for behold, thy brother Aaron, and also Muloki and Ammah are in prison.”

³ Now it came to pass that when Ammon had heard this, he said unto Lamoni, “Behold, my brother and brethren are in prison at Middoni, and I go that I may deliver them.”

⁴ Now Lamoni said unto Ammon, “I know, in the strength of the Lord thou canst do all things. But behold, I will go with thee to the land of Middoni; for the king of the land of Middoni, whose name is Antiomno, is a friend unto me; therefore I go to the land of Middoni, that I may flatter the king of the land, and he will cast thy brethren out of prison.” Now Lamoni said unto him, “Who told thee that thy brethren were in prison?”

⁵ And Ammon said unto him, “No one hath told me, save it be God; and he said unto me—‘Go and deliver thy brethren, for they are in prison in the land of Middoni.’”

⁶ Now when Lamoni had heard this he caused that his servants should make ready his horses and his chariots.⁷ And he said unto Ammon, “Come, I will go with thee down to the land of Middoni, and there I will plead with the king that he will cast thy brethren out of prison.”

Ammon₂ and Lamoni Meet Lamoni’s Father, the King over All the Land

⁸ And it came to pass that as Ammon and Lamoni were journeying thither, they met the father of Lamoni, who was king over all the

34–35: Ammon’s missionary efforts are successful because God sends angels to confirm his message, but also because converted Lamanites join him in proselytizing. *As many as believed were baptized*, this is the only reference to baptism in the Lamanite mission of the sons of Mosiah. **36:** The narrator adds a comment that universalizes the meaning of the story: *his arm is extended to all people*.

CHAPTER 20

1: *When they had established a church*, it is unclear how long this might have taken; see 19.35. **4–7:** Lamoni offers to use his connections to help free Ammon’s brethren. Ammon does not mention the other part of his revelation: that Lamoni’s father would try to kill him if he went to the land of Nephi. **4:** Elsewhere in the BoM, the phrase *in the strength of the Lord* is always associated with fighting battles (seven times); its appearance here suggests that Lamoni believes that Ammon is capable of rescuing his brethren through physical force (given the way Ammon had protected his flocks and servants), but he would prefer a more diplomatic approach. **8:** Ammon must have been surprised to meet on the road to Middoni the very man whom the Lord warned would try to kill him in the land of Nephi (vv. 1–2). *King over all the land*, because Lamoni’s father is an Ishmaelite, this suggests a usurpation of the monarchy from the descendants of Laman; cf. Mos 24.2–3. It is possible that this is the same king of the Lamanites who fought with Alma at 2.32.

land.⁹ And behold, the father of Lamoni said unto him, “Why did ye not come to the feast on that great day when I made a feast unto my sons, and unto my people?”¹⁰ And he also said, “Whither art thou going with this Nephite, who is one of the children of a liar?”

¹¹ And it came to pass that Lamoni rehearsed unto him whither he was going, for he feared to offend him.¹² And he also told him all the cause of his tarrying in his own kingdom, that he did not go unto his father to the feast which he had prepared.

¹³ And now when Lamoni had rehearsed unto him all these things, behold, to his astonishment, his father was angry with him, and said, “Lamoni, thou art going to deliver these Nephites, who are sons of a liar. Behold, he robbed our fathers; and now his children are also come amongst us that they may, by their cunning and their lyings, deceive us, that they again may rob us of our property.”¹⁴ Now the father of Lamoni commanded him that he should slay Ammon with the sword. And he also commanded him that he should not go to the land of Middoni, but that he should return with him to the land of Ishmael.

¹⁵ But Lamoni said unto him, “I will not slay Ammon, neither will I return to the land of Ishmael, but I go to the land of Middoni that I may release the brethren of Ammon, for I know that they are just men and holy prophets of the true God.”

¹⁶ Now when his father had heard these words, he was angry with him, and he drew his

sword that he might smite him to the earth.¹⁷ But Ammon stood forth and said unto him, “Behold, thou shalt not slay thy son; nevertheless, it were better that he should fall than thee, for behold, he has repented of his sins; but if thou shouldst fall at this time, in thine anger, thy soul could not be saved.”¹⁸ And again, it is expedient that thou shouldst forbear; for if thou shouldst slay thy son, he being an innocent man, his blood would cry from the ground to the Lord his God, for vengeance to come upon thee; and perhaps thou wouldst lose thy soul.”

¹⁹ Now when Ammon had said these words unto him, he answered him, saying, “I know that if I should slay my son, that I should shed innocent blood; for it is thou that hast sought to destroy him.”²⁰ And he stretched forth his hand to slay Ammon. But Ammon withstood his blows, and also smote his arm that he could not use it.

²¹ Now when the king saw that Ammon could slay him, he began to plead with Ammon that he would spare his life.²² But Ammon raised his sword, and said unto him, “Behold, I will smite thee except thou wilt grant unto me that my brethren may be cast out of prison.”

²³ Now the king, fearing he should lose his life, said, “If thou wilt spare me I will grant unto thee whatsoever thou wilt ask, even to half of the kingdom.”

²⁴ Now when Ammon saw that he had wrought upon the old king according to his

9–10: *Said unto him... and he also said*, see 9.1–6n. 9: *Why did ye not come to the feast*, although Lamoni had made preparations to go at 18.9, his religious conversion had hindered his making the journey. 10: *Children of a liar*, that is, descendants of Nephi, whom Lamanite tradition held to have deprived Laman and Lemuel of their dignity, position, and the Brass Plates; see Mos 10.11–16. 11: *Rehearsed*, WB: “To narrate or recount events.” 13: *To his astonishment*, after recounting his near-death and miraculous recovery, Lamoni is surprised when his father is angry rather than relieved or curious. 17: Ammon believes that a person’s spiritual state at the moment of death determines his or her eternal reward, as does Mormon (Moro 8.14). 18: *His blood would cry up from the ground*, see Gen 4.10; Alma 14.11n. The idea that the blood of the innocent cries out *for vengeance* appears several times in the BoM; see 1.13; 37.30; Morm 8.40; Ether 8.22, 24. *Lose thy soul*, perhaps the implication here is “lose thy soul to the devil.” 19: It is not clear in what respect Lamoni’s father thought that Ammon had tried to *destroy* his son. 20: Ammon uses a similar sword technique as at 17.37, though in this case he does not sever the king’s arm. 23: *Even to half of the kingdom*, see Esther 5.3; 7.2; Mk 6.23.

desire, he said unto him, “If thou wilt grant that my brethren may be cast out of prison, and also that Lamoni may retain his kingdom, and that ye be not displeased with him, but grant that he may do according to his own desires in whatsoever thing he thinketh, then will I spare thee; otherwise I will smite thee to the earth.”

²⁵ Now when Ammon had said these words, the king began to rejoice because of his life. ²⁶ And when he saw that Ammon had no desire to destroy him, and when he also saw the great love he had for his son Lamoni, he was astonished exceedingly, and said, “Because this is all that thou hast desired, that I would release thy brethren, and suffer that my son Lamoni should retain his kingdom, behold, I will grant unto you that my son may retain his kingdom from this time and forever; and I will govern him no more— ²⁷ And I will also grant unto thee that thy brethren may be cast out of prison, and thou and thy brethren may come unto me, in my kingdom; for I shall greatly desire to see thee.” For the king was greatly astonished at the words which he had spoken, and also at the words which had been spoken by his son Lamoni, therefore he was desirous to learn them.

Ammon₂ and Lamoni Rescue Ammon₂'s Brethren

²⁸ And it came to pass that Ammon and Lamoni proceeded on their journey towards the land of Middoni. And Lamoni found favor in the eyes of the king of the land;

therefore the brethren of Ammon were brought forth out of prison. ²⁹ And when Ammon did meet them he was exceeding sorrowful, for behold they were naked, and their skins were worn exceedingly because of being bound with strong cords. And they also had suffered hunger, thirst, and all kinds of afflictions; nevertheless they were patient in all their sufferings.

³⁰ And, as it happened, it was their lot to have fallen into the hands of a more hardened and a more stiffnecked people; therefore they would not hearken unto their words, and they had cast them out, and had smitten them, and had driven them from house to house, and from place to place, even until they had arrived in the land of Middoni; and there they were taken and cast into prison, and bound with strong cords, and kept in prison for many days, and were delivered by Lamoni and Ammon.

Aaron₂ in Jerusalem₂ and Middoni (a flashback within the Alma 17–27 flashback): Alma 21.1–21.17

[*Mormon₂'s heading*] An account of the preaching of Aaron, and Muloki, and their brethren, to the Lamanites.

Aaron₂ Preaches in Jerusalem₂

[XIII] **21** ¹ Now when Ammon and his brethren separated

²⁷: It is actually Aaron, rather than Ammon, who visits and teaches the king; see 22.1. ²⁸: Ammon and Lamoni complete the task they had begun in vv. 4–6. ²⁹: *Patient in all their sufferings*, as the Lord had commanded them at 17.11. ³⁰: The narrator hints at a lengthy series of preaching failures in various locations, some of which will be recounted in the next chapter. *A more hardened... stiffnecked people*, the problem seems to be the influence of Nephite dissenters, particularly Amalekites and Amulonites; see 21.3. The story of Ammon will be picked up again at 21.18.

CHAPTER 21

Heading: Aaron was probably the second oldest of Mosiah's sons (see Mos 27.34; 29.2n). We have no accounts of the preaching of the other sons, Omner and Himni, among the Lamanites. Muloki and Ammah, two of their friends (Mos 28.1; Alma 17.8), are mentioned in v. 11 below, but see 20.2. **1:** *Separated themselves in the borders,*

themselves in the borders of the land of the Lamanites, behold Aaron took his journey towards the land which was called by the Lamanites, Jerusalem, calling it after the land of their fathers' nativity; and it was away joining the borders of Mormon.² Now the Lamanites and the Amalekites^a and the people of Amulon had built a great city, which was called Jerusalem.³ Now the Lamanites of themselves were sufficiently hardened, but the Amalekites and the Amulonites were still harder; therefore they did cause the Lamanites that they should harden their hearts, that they should wax strong in wickedness and their abominations.⁴ And it came to pass that Aaron came to the city of Jerusalem, and first began to preach to the Amalekites. And he began to preach to them in their synagogues, for they had built synagogues after the order of the Nehors; for many of the Amalekites and the Amulonites were after the order of the Nehors.

⁵ Therefore, as Aaron entered into one of their synagogues to preach unto the people, and as he was speaking unto them, behold there arose an Amalekite and began to contend with him, saying: "What is that thou hast testified? Hast thou seen an angel? Why

do not angels appear unto us? Behold are not this people as good as thy people?"⁶ Thou also sayest, except we repent we shall perish. How knowest thou the thought and intent of our hearts? How knowest thou that we have cause to repent? How knowest thou that we are not a righteous people? Behold, we have built sanctuaries, and we do assemble ourselves together to worship God. We do believe that God will save all men."

⁷ Now Aaron said unto him, "Believest thou that the Son of God shall come to redeem mankind from their sins?"

⁸ And the man said unto him, "We do not believe that thou knowest any such thing. We do not believe in these foolish traditions. We do not believe that thou knowest of things to come, neither do we believe that thy fathers and also that our fathers did know concerning the things which they spake, of that which is to come."

⁹ Now Aaron began to open the scriptures unto them concerning the coming of Christ, and also concerning the resurrection of the

^a 2. Or *Amlicites*

see 17.13, 17. If this *Jerusalem* was near the *borders of Mormon*, it would have been in the vicinity of the lands of Nephi-Lehi, Shilom, Shemlon, and Amulon—all of which had been under Lamanite control and ruled by subordinate kings; see Mos 9.6; 10.7–8; and esp. 24.1. 2–4: A spelling variant led to the use of *Amalekites* in the 1830 edition to describe a group of Nephite dissenters in chs. 21–24, 27, and 43, but they are evidently the same people who were called "Amlicites" in chs. 2–3 (see the discussion in ATV). They are now Nephite dissenters living among the Lamanites, and they have been granted freedom to follow their distinctive religious traditions, based on the teachings of Nehor; see 22.7. For a list of Nephite dissenters, see 43.13. 2: It is not surprising that it was the Lamanites who had built a city called Jerusalem; Laman and Lemuel had a more positive attitude toward the Judean capital than did Nephi; see 1 Ne 7.7; 17.22. The Nephite dissenters who joined them may have been Mulekites, who similarly would have had fond feelings for Jerusalem and its Davidic kings. *The people of Amulon* were the descendants of the priests of Noah; see Mos 20.1–5; 23.30–24.12. 4: In Acts, Paul is often portrayed as beginning his preaching in a new city at the synagogue. *The order of Nehors*, see 1.2–6; 2.1; cf. 15.15. 5: The man questions Aaron's authority to make judgments and suggests that outward religiosity is a good indicator of inward righteousness. *Hast thou seen an angel?* Actually, Aaron had, in the company of Alma; see Mos 27.18. *Why do not angels appear unto us*, a reasonable question, given the importance of angelic communication in the BoM, but see 19.34 for a brief reference to angels among the Lamanites. 6: The *thought and intent* of one's heart are seen as a private domain, accessible only to God; see Alma 18.16–20n. 7–8: As a follower of Nehor, the man rejects Nephite traditions concerning two *things to come*: (1) Christ and his atonement, and (2) the Resurrection; cf. the Alma 9 heading note. Aaron will address both these issues in the next verse.

dead, and that there could be no redemption for mankind save it were through the death and sufferings of Christ, and the atonement of his blood.

¹⁰ And it came to pass as he began to expound these things unto them they were angry with him, and began to mock him; and they would not hear the words which he spake.

¹¹ Therefore, when he saw that they would not hear his words, he departed out of their synagogue, and came over to a village which was called Ani-Anti, and there he found Muloki preaching the word unto them; and also Ammah and his brethren. And they contended with many about the word.

Aaron₂ and His Brethren Imprisoned and Rescued

¹² And it came to pass that they saw that the people would harden their hearts, therefore they departed and came over into the land of Middoni. And they did preach the word unto many, and few believed on the words which they taught. ¹³ Nevertheless, Aaron and a certain number of his brethren were taken and cast into prison, and the remainder of them fled out of the land of Middoni unto the regions round about. ¹⁴ And those who were cast into prison suffered many things, and they were delivered by the hand of Lamoni and Ammon, and they were fed and clothed.

¹⁵ And they went forth again to declare the word, and thus they were delivered for the first time out of prison; and thus they had suffered. ¹⁶ And they went forth whithersoever they were led by the Spirit of the Lord, preach-

ing the word of God in every synagogue of the Amalekites, or in every assembly of the Lamanites where they could be admitted. ¹⁷ And it came to pass that the Lord began to bless them, insomuch that they brought many to the knowledge of the truth; yea, they did convince many of their sins, and of the traditions of their fathers, which were not correct.

Ammon₂ and Lamoni Return to the Land of Ishmael

¹⁸ And it came to pass that Ammon and Lamoni returned from the land of Middoni to the land of Ishmael, which was the land of their inheritance. ¹⁹ And king Lamoni would not suffer that Ammon should serve him, or be his servant. ²⁰ But he caused that there should be synagogues built in the land of Ishmael; and he caused that his people, or the people who were under his reign, should assemble themselves together. ²¹ And he did rejoice over them, and he did teach them many things. And he did also declare unto them that they were a people who were under him, and that they were a free people, that they were free from the oppressions of the king, his father; for that his father had granted unto him that he might reign over the people who were in the land of Ishmael, and in all the land round about. ²² And he also declared unto them that they might have the liberty of worshiping the Lord their God according to their desires, in whatsoever place they were in, if it were in the land which was under the reign of king Lamoni.

²³ And Ammon did preach unto the people of king Lamoni; and it came to pass that he

14: *Delivered by... Lamoni and Ammon*, see 20.28–30. **16:** The Amalekites and Lamanites worship separately, despite their living in close proximity. **17:** *Brought many to a knowledge of the truth... traditions of their fathers, which were not correct*, this was their original intent, at 17.9. The account of Aaron's preaching is continued at 22.1. **18:** The narrative resumes from Alma 20.30. *Their inheritance* suggests that Ammon has been granted land in Ishmael, which he intends to inhabit for the rest of his life and pass on to his descendants. However, he will eventually accompany the Anti-Nephi-Lehies in their immigration to Nephite territory; see ch. 27. (One wonders whether Ammon and his brethren married Lamanite women during the fourteen years of their missionary labors.) Lamoni was a descendant of Ishmael (17.21), which explains his claim to an inheritance in the land named after his forebear. **21:** For the origins of these new freedoms, see 20.20–24, 26. *For that*, because. **22:** Rather than a general declaration of religious freedom, this appears to give permission for the Lamanites in Lamoni's land to practice the Nephite religion.

did teach them all things concerning things pertaining to righteousness. And he did exhort them daily, with all diligence; and they gave heed unto his word, and they were zealous for keeping the commandments of God.

Aaron² Teaches the King over All the Land (Lamoni's Father) in the Land of Nephi

22¹ Now, as Ammon was thus teaching the people of Lamoni continually, we will return to the account of Aaron and his brethren; for after he departed from the land of Middoni he was led by the Spirit to the land of Nephi, even to the house of the king which was over all the land save it were the land of Ishmael; and he was the father of Lamoni.

² And it came to pass that he went in unto him into the king's palace, with his brethren, and bowed himself before the king, and said unto him, "Behold, O king, we are the brethren of Ammon, whom thou hast delivered out of prison. ³ And now, O king, if thou wilt spare our lives, we will be thy servants."

And the king said unto them, "Arise, for I will grant unto you your lives, and I will not suffer that ye shall be my servants; but I will insist that ye shall administer unto me; for I have been somewhat troubled in mind because of the generosity and the greatness of the words of thy brother Ammon; and I desire to know the cause why he has not come up out of Middoni with thee."

⁴ And Aaron said unto the king, "Behold, the Spirit of the Lord has called him another way; he has gone to the land of Ishmael, to teach the people of Lamoni."

⁵ Now the king said unto them, "What is this that ye have said concerning the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, this is the thing which doth trouble me. ⁶ And also, what is this that Ammon said—'If ye will repent ye shall be saved, and if ye will not repent, ye shall be cast off at the last day?'"^a

⁷ And Aaron answered him and said unto him, "Believest thou that there is a God?"

And the king said, "I know that the Amalekites^b say that there is a God, and I have granted unto them that they should build sanctuaries, that they may assemble themselves together to worship him. And if now thou sayest there is a God, behold I will believe."

⁸ And now when Aaron heard this, his heart began to rejoice, and he said, "Behold, assuredly as thou livest, O king, there is a God."

⁹ And the king said, "Is God that Great Spirit that brought our fathers out of the land of Jerusalem?"

¹⁰ And Aaron said unto him, "Yea, he is that Great Spirit, and he created all things both in heaven and in earth. Believest thou this?"

¹¹ And he said, "Yea, I believe that the Great Spirit created all things, and I desire

^a 6 Reference uncertain, but see Alma 20.17.

^b 7 Or *Amlicites*

CHAPTER 22

1: *We*, the narrator and his readers. The narrative resumes from Alma 21.17. *Led by the Spirit* [in a physical direction], Lk 4.1; 1 Ne 4.6; this detail continues the pattern set by 21.16, though in this case they had an invitation from the king; see 20.27. *Save it were the land of Ishmael*, see 20.26; 21.21. **2:** The negotiations that led to the release of Aaron and his brethren are not exactly clear; 20.24–27 imply that it was done at the command of Lamoni's father, while 20.28 and 21.14 give a larger role to Lamoni himself. The version here compliments Lamoni's father. **3:** *We will be thy servants*, compare 17.25; Aaron and his brethren are adopting Ammon's successful missionary strategy recounted in chs. 17–18. **5–11:** At this point the Lamanite king is remarkably open-minded to Nephtite perspectives, in stark contrast with his earlier attitude at 20.13. **6:** The narrative in ch. 20 omitted these words. **7:** *Believest thou that there is a God*, cf. 18.24 for similarities with Ammon's missionary approach. *Sanctuaries*, these seem to be synonymous with the "synagogues" at 21.4, but see 15.17n. **9–11:** *Is God that Great Spirit*, again Aaron is adopting Ammon's example, cf. 18.26–32. In Lamanite traditions, the Great Spirit was a creator god; see 18.28–29.

that ye should tell me concerning all these things, and I will believe thy words.”

¹² And it came to pass that when Aaron saw that the king would believe his words, he began from the creation of Adam, reading the scriptures unto the king—how God created man after his own image, and that God gave him commandments, and that because of transgression, man had fallen. ¹³ And Aaron did expound unto him the scriptures from the creation of Adam, laying the fall of man before him, and their carnal state and also the plan of redemption, which was prepared from the foundation of the world, through Christ, for all whosoever would believe on his name. ¹⁴ And since man had fallen he could not merit anything of himself; but the sufferings and death of Christ atone for their sins, through faith and repentance, and so forth; and that he breaketh the bands of death, that the grave shall have no victory, and that the sting of death should be swallowed up in the hopes of glory; and Aaron did expound all these things unto the king.

The King Is Overcome and Then Raised

¹⁵ And it came to pass that after Aaron had expounded these things unto him, the king said, “What shall I do that I may have this

eternal life of which thou hast spoken? Yea, what shall I do that I may be born of God, having this wicked spirit rooted out of my breast, and receive his Spirit, that I may be filled with joy, that I may not be cast off at the last day?” “Behold,” said he, “I will give up all that I possess, yea, I will forsake my kingdom, that I may receive this great joy.”

¹⁶ But Aaron said unto him, “If thou desirest this thing, if thou wilt bow down before God, yea, if thou wilt repent of all thy sins, and will bow down before God, and call on his name in faith, believing that ye shall receive, then shalt thou receive the hope which thou desirest.”

¹⁷ And it came to pass that when Aaron had said these words, the king did bow down before the Lord, upon his knees; yea, even he did prostrate himself upon the earth, and cried mightily, saying, ¹⁸ “O God, Aaron hath told me that there is a God; and if there is a God, and if thou art God, wilt thou make thyself known unto me, and I will give away all my sins to know thee, and that I may be raised from the dead, and be saved at the last day.” And now when the king had said these words, he was struck as if he were dead.

12–14: *He began from the creation of Adam*, Aaron is still following Ammon’s precedent closely; cf. 18.36–39. **12:** See Gen 1.26–3.24. *Reading the scriptures unto the king*, Aaron has a copy of at least some portion of the Brass Plates in his possession. Alma will later speak about how crucial these records were in the missionary labors of the sons of Mosiah; see 37.3–9. **14:** *Since man had fallen he could not merit anything of himself*, the utter inconsequence of human works with regard to salvation aligns with the ideas of Luther and Calvin. Aaron’s preaching here reflects Abinadi’s earlier teachings; see Mos 16.7–8 (cf. 1 Cor 15.54–56). **15:** The king hopes to replace one indwelling spirit with another. *Rooted out*, WB: “to eradicate; to remove or destroy root and branch.” *I will give up all that I possess*, a remarkable demonstration of faith, since at 20.23 he was only willing to give up half his kingdom in return for his life. **17:** *Prostrate himself upon the earth*, the same physical stance that characterized Lamoni and his court, though in this case the king takes the initiative rather than it being the effect of the Spirit; cf. 19.17–18. Rather than the typical pattern of beliefs being passed from parents to children, in this case Lamoni’s faith is being replicated in his father. **18:** *If there is a God, and if thou art God, wilt thou make thyself known to me*, a paradigmatic prayer from someone with scant religious background. *Give away all my sins*, a counterpart to his earlier offer to give up his kingdom (v. 15). The verb phrase “give away” suggests that there is a recipient, perhaps Christ. The difference between promises made in oaths and in vows is that the former are unconditional while the latter are conditioned upon the Lord fulfilling some request. Lamoni’s father promises that if God will make himself known, he in turn will forsake all of his sins. This is the only vow made with God in the BoM.

¹⁹ And it came to pass that his servants ran and told the queen all that had happened unto the king. And she came in unto the king; and when she saw him lay as if he were dead, and also Aaron and his brethren standing as though they had been the cause of his fall, she was angry with them, and commanded that her servants, or the servants of the king, should take them and slay them.²⁰ Now the servants had seen the cause of the king's fall, therefore they durst not lay their hands on Aaron and his brethren; and they pled with the queen saying, "Why commandest thou that we should slay these men, when behold one of them is mightier than us all? Therefore we shall fall before them."²¹ Now when the queen saw the fear of the servants she also began to fear exceedingly, lest there should some evil come upon her. And she commanded her servants that they should go and call the people, that they might slay Aaron and his brethren.

²² Now when Aaron saw the determination of the queen, he, also knowing the hardness of the hearts of the people, feared lest that a multitude should assemble themselves together, and there should be a great contention and a disturbance among them; therefore he put forth his hand and raised the king from the earth, and said unto him, "Stand." And he stood upon his feet, receiving

his strength.²³ Now this was done in the presence of the queen and many of the servants.²⁴ And when they saw it they greatly marveled, and began to fear. And the king stood forth, and began to minister unto them. And he did minister unto them, inso-much that his whole household were converted unto the Lord.

²⁴ Now there was a multitude gathered together because of the commandment of the queen, and there began to be great murmurings among them because of Aaron and his brethren.²⁵ But the king stood forth among them and administered unto them. And they were pacified towards Aaron and those who were with him.²⁶ And it came to pass that when the king saw that the people were pacified, he caused that Aaron and his brethren should stand forth in the midst of the multitude, and that they should preach the word unto them.

A Digression on the Geography of the Promised Land

²⁷ And it came to pass that the king sent a proclamation throughout all the land, amongst all his people who were in all his land, who were in all the regions round about, which was bordering even to the sea, on the east and on the west, and

^a 23 O, P *many of his servants*

19: This second Lamanite queen, the mother-in-law of Lamoni's queen, is less open to Nephite perspectives; cf. 19.2–10. The correction may reflect a possibility that the queen's servants were female, while the king's servants were male and more capable of violence; note that in v. 21 her servants have to summon others to physically contend with the missionaries. **21–23:** The queen fears the king's servants; Aaron fears the multitude. Both threats are averted when Aaron raises the king, after which there is a fear of the Lord that allows the king's ministering to meet with immediate success. **23:** The reading of O (*many of his servants*) refers to servants of the king; the queen had already sent her own servants out to summon the people at v. 21. **24:** In the conversions at both Lamoni's court and his father's court, a woman summoning the people is a crucial element of the story; see ch. 19. **27–35:** This digression, within the story of the missionary journeys of the sons of Mosiah, is positioned similarly to the digression on the Nephite monetary system that interrupted the narrative of Alma's preaching journeys at 11.1–20. The two sets of stories are structurally parallel within Alma's record in chs. 1–44. It should be noted, however, that the tone of this passage is strikingly out of step with the peace and religious cooperation described in the surrounding narrative. Phrases such as "where the Nephites had driven them," "taken possession," and "hemmed in" reflect the sort of strategic, militaristic viewpoint found in 50.7–8. **27:** The content of this proclamation is given at 23.1–3. **27–34:** The Lamanites lived in the south (*land of Nephi*) and the borders of the east and west seas. The Nephites controlled a central area to the north (*land of Zarahemla* and *land of Bountiful*), and even farther north was the land (*Desolation*) that had once been inhabited by the Jaredites.

which was divided from the land of Zarahemla by a narrow strip of wilderness, which ran from the sea east even to the sea west, and round about on the borders of the seashore, and the borders of the wilderness which was on the north by the land of Zarahemla, through the borders of Manti, by the head of the river Sidon, running from the east towards the west—and thus were the Lamanites and the Nephites divided.

²⁸ Now, the more idle part of the Lamanites lived in the wilderness, and dwelt in tents; and they were spread through the wilderness on the west, in the land of Nephi; yea, and also on the west of the land of Zarahemla, in the borders by the seashore, and on the west in the land of Nephi, in the place of their fathers' first inheritance, and thus bordering along by the seashore. ²⁹ And also there were many Lamanites on the east by the seashore, whither the Nephites had driven them.

And thus the Nephites were nearly surrounded by the Lamanites; nevertheless the Nephites had taken possession of all the northern parts of the land bordering on the wilderness, at the head of the river Sidon, from the east to the west, round about on the wilderness side; on the north, even until they came to the land which they called Bountiful. ³⁰ And it bordered upon the land which they called Desolation, it being so far northward that it came into the land which had been peopled and been destroyed, of whose bones we have spoken, which was discovered by the people of Zarahemla, it being the place of their first landing. ³¹ And they came from there up into the south wilderness. Thus the land on the northward was called Desolation, and the land on

the southward was called Bountiful, it being the wilderness which is filled with all manner of wild animals of every kind, a part of which had come from the land northward for food.

³² And now, it was only the distance of a day and a half's journey for a Nephite, on the line Bountiful and the land Desolation, from the east to the west sea; and thus the land of Nephi and the land of Zarahemla were nearly surrounded by water, there being a small neck of land between the land northward and the land southward. ³³ And it came to pass that the Nephites had inhabited the land Bountiful, even from the east unto the west sea, and thus the Nephites in their wisdom, with their guards and their armies, had hemmed in the Lamanites on the south, that thereby they should have no more possession on the north, that they might not overrun the land northward. ³⁴ Therefore the Lamanites could have no more possessions, only in the land of Nephi and the wilderness round about. Now this was wisdom in the Nephites—as the Lamanites were an enemy to them, they would not suffer their afflictions on every hand, and also that they might have a country whither they might flee, according to their desires. ³⁵ And now I, after having said this, return again to the account of Ammon and Aaron, Omner and Himni, and their brethren.

A Proclamation Protecting the Sons of Mosiah₂

[XIV] **23** ¹ Behold, now it came to pass that the king of the Lamanites sent a proclamation among all

30: *Discovered . . . Zarahemla* predating that of Limhi's people mos 8.8; see Omni 1.22. **31:** The Mulekites had migrated from north to south, in contrast to the Nephite pattern of settlement, which was from south to north. The highlands were in the south (with the north-flowing river Sidon as a central feature of the landscape). **32:** The distances involved were on the order of hundreds of miles rather than thousands. **33–34:** There is a Nephite tradition of fleeing from their enemies—as with Nephi, Mosiah₁, the peoples of Limhi and Alma₁—and they want to preserve that option. Again, in the immediate context of the narrative, this is an odd place to refer to the Lamanites as *an enemy*. **34:** *Only*, except.

CHAPTER 23

1: *Sent a proclamation among all his people*, an example of resumptive repetition from 22.27. *Either*, functioning as “any.”

his people, that they should not lay their hands on Ammon, or Aaron, or Omner, or Himni, nor either of their brethren who should go forth preaching the word of God, in whatsoever place they should be, in any part of their land.² Yea, he sent a decree among them, that they should not lay their hands on them to bind them, or to cast them into prison; neither should they spit upon them, nor smite them, nor cast them out of their synagogues, nor scourge them; neither should they cast stones at them, but that they should have free access to their houses, and also their temples, and their sanctuaries.

³ And thus they might go forth and preach the word according to their desires, for the king had been converted unto the Lord, and all his household; therefore he sent his proclamation throughout the land unto his people, that the word of God might have no obstruction, but that it might go forth throughout all the land, that his people might be convinced concerning the wicked traditions of their fathers, and that they might be convinced that they were all brethren, and that they ought not to murder, nor to plunder, nor to steal, nor to commit adultery, nor to commit any manner of wickedness.

The Origin of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies

⁴ And now it came to pass that when the king had sent forth this proclamation, that Aaron

and his brethren went forth from city to city, and from one house of worship to another, establishing churches, and consecrating priests and teachers throughout the land among the Lamanites, to preach and to teach the word of God among them; and thus they began to have great success.⁵ And thousands were brought to the knowledge of the Lord, yea, thousands were brought to believe in the traditions of the Nephites; and they were taught the records and prophecies which were handed down even to the present time.

⁶ And as sure as the Lord liveth, so sure as many as believed, or as many as were brought to the knowledge of the truth, through the preaching of Ammon and his brethren, according to the spirit of revelation and of prophecy, and the power of God working miracles in them—yea, I say unto you, as the Lord liveth, as many of the Lamanites as believed in their preaching, and were converted unto the Lord, never did fall away.⁷ For they became a righteous people; they did lay down the weapons of their rebellion, that they did not fight against God any more, neither against any of their brethren.

⁸ Now, these are they who were converted unto the Lord:

⁹ The people of the Lamanites who were in the land of Ishmael;

²: *Houses*, probably meaning “houses of worship”; see v. 4 below and 2 Ne 26.26. *Temples*, this and 26.29 are the only references to Lamanite temples. ³: *Converted unto the Lord, and all his household*, see 22.23. *That they were all brethren*, thus overcoming hostilities between Ishmaelites, Lamanites, and Nephites. This broadened sense of identity could counter the tradition that it was permissible to take advantage of non-relatives; see Mos 24.7. *Not to murder, nor to plunder, nor to steal, nor to commit adultery nor . . . to commit any manner of wickedness*, Mos 2.13; the significant similarity in wording suggests that the king has entered into the covenant made by Benjamin’s people. Both the king and his people would benefit from a reduction in these sorts of crimes. ⁵: *Thousands were brought to the knowledge of the Lord*, this was the original intent of the sons of Mosiah; see Mos 28.2; cf. Isa 11.9; Alma 37.9. *The records and prophecies which were handed down*, the records on the Brass Plates, and probably also the Small Plates of Nephi; see Jarom 1.2, along with Alma 18.36–38; 22.12; 37.1–10. *Even to the present time* suggests that Alma, rather than Mormon, is the author of these words; see the note to the heading at chs. 17–27. ⁶: The Lamanites were difficult to persuade, but when they were converted they generally were more committed and steadfast in the faith than the Nephites; similar observations are made at 27.27; Hel 15.7–8; 3 Ne 6.14. *I say unto you*, the narrator addresses his readers directly. ^{7–13}: This list of Lamanite cities is framed by a chiasmic inclusion with two reversed elements: *lay down the weapons of their rebellion* and *converted unto the Lord*. The lands of Ishmael, Middoni, Shilom, and Shemlon, along with the city of Nephi, have all figured in the narrative thus far; the cities of Lemuel and Shimmilom are only mentioned here. The seven converted cities match the number of churches at Mos 25.23. ⁷: *Lay down the weapons of their rebellion* is a non-biblical phrase, but it occurred regularly in 18th–19th c. religious literature.

- ¹⁰ And also of the people of the
Lamanites who were in the land
of Middoni;
- ¹¹ And also of the people of the Lamanites
who were in the city of Nephi;
- ¹² And also of the people of the
Lamanites who were in the land
of Shilom,
and who were in the land of Shemlon,
and in the city of Lemuel,
and in the city of Shimmilom.

¹³ And these are the names of the cities of the Lamanites which were converted unto the Lord; and these are they that laid down the weapons of their rebellion, yea, all their weapons of war; and they were all Lamanites. ¹⁴ And the Amalekites^a were not converted, save only one; neither were any of the Amulonites; but they did harden their hearts, and also the hearts of the Lamanites in that part of the land where-soever they dwelt, yea, and all their villages and all their cities. ¹⁵ Therefore, we have named all the cities of the Lamanites in which they did repent and come to the knowledge of the truth, and were converted.

¹⁶ And now it came to pass that the king and those who were converted were desirous that they might have a name, that thereby they might be distinguished from their brethren;

therefore the king consulted with Aaron and many of their priests, concerning the name that they should take upon them, that they might be distinguished. ¹⁷ And it came to pass that they called their names Anti-Nephi-Lehies; and they were called by this name and were no more called Lamanites. ¹⁸ And they began to be a very industrious people; yea, and they were friendly with the Nephites; therefore, they did open a correspondence with them, and the curse of God did no more follow them.

The Anti-Nephi-Lehies Choose Pacifism

24 ¹ And it came to pass that the Amalekites and the Amulonites and the Lamanites who were in the land of Amulon, and also in the land of Helam, and who were in the land of Jerusalem, and in fine, in all the land round about, who had not been converted and had not taken upon them the name of Anti-Nephi-Lehi, were stirred up by the Amalekites and by the Amulonites to anger against their brethren. ² And their hatred became exceeding sore against them, even insomuch that they began to rebel against their

^a 14 Or *Amlicites*

13: The fact that entire cities converted in unison suggests a strong hierarchical social structure or strong kinship ties. It is not surprising that the land of Jerusalem (21.1–10) is not included in the list. **14:** *The Amalekites were not converted*, despite the direct appeals mentioned at 21.16. Nothing more is known about the one Amalekite convert. In general, Nephite dissenters were a bad influence on their Lamanite hosts. **16–17:** Often in the BoM (and elsewhere), a new identity is marked by taking a new name; see Mos 5.7; 18.8; 25.12; Alma 2.11. *Anti-Nephi-Lehies*, a curious name since in English it would seem to indicate people who are opposed to Nephi and Lehi, which is the opposite of what they intend. LDS scholars have suggested several possibilities, including deriving *anti-* from the Egyptian relative marker *nty*, yielding “those who are (or are of) Nephi-Lehi”; or putting a hyphen between only the first two words (“Anti-Nephi Lehies”), meaning “descendants of Lehi who were (formerly) against Nephi” or were non-Nephite Lehites; or hypothesizing that the Nephite word *anti* had something to do with place names, as in “people from the land of Nephi-Lehi.” In any case, their name will be changed again at 27.26. **18:** *Correspondence*, harmonious relations rather than letter writing.

CHAPTER 24

1–3: Religious differences among the Lamanites lead to open rebellion, at the instigation of Nephite dissenters. *Land of Amulon*, Mos 23.31; 24.1. *Land of Helam*, Mos 23.19–39; 27.16. *Land of Jerusalem*, Alma 21.1–2, 4. *Called his name Anti-Nephi-Lehi*, the new king, probably Lamoni’s older brother, adopts a religiously influenced throne name.

king, insomuch that they would not that he should be their king; therefore, they took up arms against the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi.

³ Now the king conferred the kingdom upon his son, and he called his name Anti-Nephi-Lehi. ⁴ And the king died in that selfsame year that the Lamanites began to make preparations for war against the people of God.

⁵ Now when Ammon and his brethren and all those who had come up with him saw the preparations of the Lamanites to destroy their brethren, they came forth to the land of Midian,^a and there Ammon met all his brethren; and from thence they came to the land of Ishmael that they might hold a council with Lamoni and also with his brother Anti-Nephi-Lehi, what they should do to defend themselves against the Lamanites. ⁶ Now there was not one soul among all the people who had been converted unto the Lord that would take up arms against their brethren; nay, they would not even make any preparations for war; yea, and also their king commanded them that they should not.

King Anti-Nephi-Lehi's Address

⁷ Now, these are the words which he said unto the people concerning the matter:

"I thank my God, my beloved people, that our great God has in goodness sent these our

brethren, the Nephites, unto us to preach unto us, and to convince us of the traditions of our wicked fathers. ⁸ And behold, I thank my great God that he has given us a portion of his Spirit to soften our hearts, that we have opened a correspondence with these brethren, the Nephites. ⁹ And behold, I also thank my God, that by opening this correspondence we have been convinced of our sins, and of the many murders which we have committed. ¹⁰ And I also thank my God, yea, my great God, that he hath granted unto us that we might repent of these things, and also that he hath forgiven us of those our many sins and murders which we have committed, and taken away the guilt from our hearts, through the merits of his Son.

¹¹ "And now behold, my brethren, since it has been all that we could do (as we were the most lost of all mankind) to repent of all our sins and the many murders which we have committed, and to get God to take them away from our hearts, for it was all we could do to repent sufficiently before God that he would take away our stain— ¹² Now, my best beloved brethren, since God hath taken away our stains, and our swords have become bright, then let us stain our swords no more with the blood of our brethren. ¹³ Behold, I say unto

^a 5 Or *Middoni*

5–6: There is no indication that the Nephite missionaries initiated or recommended the remarkable course of action that came from this council. Certainly Ammon was not an example of pacifism in his service to King Lamoni (17.26–39); see 17.7n. **7–16:** Nothing is known of King Anti-Nephi-Lehi's conversion, but he has a unique voice in this passage. For example, the phrase *great God* appears only five times in the BoM, all in this section; perhaps it is a Nephite-influenced adaptation of the traditional Lamanite "Great Spirit." Similarly, the repeated phrase *I thank my God* (v. 7 with variations in vv. 8, 9, 10) appears nowhere else in the BoM (though it has NT parallels). **7:** *Traditions of our wicked fathers*, Lamanite conversions were dependent not only on accepting new information from the sons of Mosiah but also on rejecting their former beliefs; see 21.17n. **9:** They knew they had killed many people, but had not previously considered it to be murder; e.g., 18.5–6. **10:** *Through the merits of his Son*, see Hel 14.13n. **11–12:** In commemoration of the erasure of their metaphorical stains, or sins, the Anti-Nephi-Lehies will commit to preventing any physical stains to come upon their weapons in the future, by vowing to never use their swords again, for good or ill. *Best beloved brethren*, this superlative expression is found nowhere else in the BoM. **13:** King Anti-Nephi-Lehi is unsure whether Christ's atonement will cover sins committed again after repentance. Washing one's garments in the blood of Christ is a recurring image in the NT and BoM; washing swords in atoning blood occurs only here. *Swords*, some LDS scholars have suggested that these may have been Mesoamerican *macuahuitl*—wooden clubs embedded with obsidian blades. Such weapons could be more easily stained with blood than metal swords.

you, Nay, let us retain our swords that they be not stained with the blood of our brethren; for perhaps, if we should stain our swords again they can no more be washed bright through the blood of the Son of our great God, which shall be shed for the atonement of our sins.

¹⁴ “And the great God has had mercy on us, and made these things known unto us that we might not perish; yea, and he has made these things known unto us beforehand, because he loveth our souls as well as he loveth our children; therefore, in his mercy he doth visit us by his angels, that the plan of salvation might be made known unto us as well as unto future generations. ¹⁵ Oh, how merciful is our God!

“And now behold, since it has been as much as we could do to get our stains taken away from us, and our swords are made bright, let us hide them away that they may be kept bright, as a testimony to our God at the last day, or at the day that we shall be brought to stand before him to be judged, that we have not stained our swords in the blood of our brethren since he imparted his word unto us and has made us clean thereby. ¹⁶ And now, my brethren, if our brethren seek to destroy us, behold, we will hide away our swords, yea, even we will

bury them deep in the earth, that they may be kept bright, as a testimony that we have never used them, at the last day; and if our brethren destroy us, behold, we shall go to our God and shall be saved.”

The Anti-Nephi-Lehies Bury Their Weapons

¹⁷ And now it came to pass that when the king had made an end of these sayings, and all the people were assembled together, they took their swords, and all the weapons which were used for the shedding of man’s blood, and they did bury them up deep in the earth. ¹⁸ And this they did, it being in their view a testimony to God, and also to men, that they never would use weapons again for the shedding of man’s blood; and this they did, vouching and covenanting with God, that rather than shed the blood of their brethren they would give up their own lives; and rather than take away from a brother they would give unto him; and rather than spend their days in idleness they would labor abundantly with their hands.

¹⁹ And thus we see that, when these Lamanites were brought to believe and to know the truth, they were firm, and would suffer even

14: *Beforehand*, that is, before the Judgment Day, when sinners will *perish* in the second death. *Visit us by his angels*, this happened at 19.34. (As a side note, we learn at 27.4 that the Anti-Nephi-Lehies regarded Ammon and his brothers as metaphorical angels.) King Anti-Nephi-Lehi takes into account the blessings that will come to their children, as well as themselves, from their repentance and conversion. **15–16:** The burying of their swords would not only make them inaccessible in cases of future conflict, and thus beyond the reach of temptation, but it would also serve as a memorial of their covenant of nonviolence. **17:** *For the shedding of man’s blood*, the description particularly applies to swords; other lethal weapons, including bows and spears, have dual uses in hunting. **18:** This extraordinary vow, with restrictions not required for regular repentance, is perhaps akin to that of the Nazarites in Num 6. The covenant of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies goes beyond pacifism to include generosity and diligence. *In their view*, the narrator does not necessarily agree with their extreme response to being forgiven of sin. *Vouching*, WB: “to bear witness; to give testimony.” The renunciation of *idleness* is unexpected here, but its implication of producing rather than receiving follows from the earlier distinction of giving rather than taking. **19:** The custom among some northeastern Indian tribes of “burying the hatchet” after concluding peace negotiations was widely known in 18th and 19th c. America, with the first reference to such a ceremony dating to 1680, according to the OED. *Weapons of peace, or... weapons of war, for peace*, an interesting correction, perhaps representing a mistake made by the engraver of the plates, or a quick reversal in JS’s dictation. This is probably the best known of the “*or*-corrections” that occur with some regularity in the text. Other examples can be found at Mos 7.8; Alma 1.15; 2.34; 14.11; 22.19; 43.19, 38; 50.32; 53.3, 10; Hel 14.31. It is noteworthy that JS never revised these corrections even when he was updating the grammar of the BoM for the 1837 and 1840 editions, with the single exception of Ether 9.2.

unto death rather than commit sin; and thus we see that they buried their weapons of peace, or they buried the weapons of war, for peace.

Lamanites Are Converted by the Pacifism of Slain Anti-Nephi-Lehies

²⁰ And it came to pass that their brethren, the Lamanites, made preparations for war, and came up to the land of Nephi for the purpose of destroying^a the king, and to place another in his stead, and also of destroying the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi out of the land. ²¹ Now when the people saw that they were coming against them they went out to meet them, and prostrated themselves before them to the earth, and began to call on the name of the Lord; and thus they were in this attitude when the Lamanites began to fall upon them, and began to slay them with the sword. ²² And thus without meeting any resistance, they did slay a thousand and five of them; and we know that they are blessed, for they have gone to dwell with their God.

²³ Now when the Lamanites saw that their brethren would not flee from the sword, neither would they turn aside to the right hand or to the left, but that they would lie down and perish, and praised God even in the very act of perishing under the sword—²⁴ now when the Lamanites saw this they did forbear from slaying them; and there were many whose hearts had swollen in them for those of their brethren who had fallen under the sword, for they repented of the things which they had done.

²⁵ And it came to pass that they threw down

their weapons of war, and they would not take them again, for they were stung for the murders which they had committed; and they came down even as their brethren, relying upon the mercies of those whose arms were lifted to slay them.

²⁶ And it came to pass that the people of God were joined that day by more than the number who had been slain; and those who had been slain were righteous people, therefore we have no reason to doubt but what they were saved. ²⁷ And there was not a wicked man slain among them; but there were more than a thousand brought to the knowledge of the truth; thus we see that the Lord worketh in many ways to the salvation of his people.

²⁸ Now the greatest number of those of the Lamanites who slew so many of their brethren were Amalekites and Amulonites, the greatest number of whom were after the order of the Nehors. ²⁹ Now, among those who joined the people of the Lord, there were none who were Amalekites or Amulonites, or who were of the order of Nehor, but they were actual descendants of Laman and Lemuel. ³⁰ And thus we can plainly discern, that after a people have been once enlightened by the Spirit of God, and have had great knowledge of things pertaining to righteousness, and then have fallen away into sin and transgression, they become more hardened, and thus their state becomes worse than though they had never known these things.

^a 20 ○ *dethroning*

21: Rather than being killed in their homes or in flight, the Anti-Nephi-Lehies *go out to meet* their enemies, as a sign of solidarity and resolve. *Attitude*, WB: “posture; position of things or persons.” **23:** *Neither would they turn aside to the right hand or to the left*, this refers not to the prostrate Anti-Nephi-Lehies flinching, but rather to covenant language from Deut 5.32–33; cf. Josh 23.6. **25:** *Relying on the mercies*, a non-biblical phrase that appears four times in the BoM, all within the compass of Alma 24–27, where it provides a thread running through the tale of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies; see 26.28 (2x); 27.9. **26–27:** The addition of new converts who more than offset the number of deaths provides an uplifting moral to the story, but it could not have entirely alleviated the pain of the grieving families and friends of the martyrs. **29–30:** *People of the Lord*, see Mos 18.34n. Mormon makes the same observation in a different context at 47.36; cf. Heb 6.4–6 (with the key words *once enlightened* and *fallen away*).

Ammonihah Destroyed

25¹ And behold, now it came to pass that those Lamanites were more angry because they had slain their brethren; therefore they swore vengeance upon the Nephites; and they did no more attempt to slay the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi at that time.² But they took their armies and went over into the borders of the land of Zarahemla, and fell upon the people who were in the land of Ammonihah and destroyed them.³ And after that, they had many battles with the Nephites, in the which they were driven and slain.

The Descendants of Amulon and the Other Priests of Noah

⁴ And among the Lamanites who were slain were almost all the seed of Amulon and his brethren, who were the priests of Noah, and they were slain by the hands of the Nephites;⁵ and the remainder, having fled into the east wilderness, and having usurped the power and authority over the Lamanites, caused that many of the Lamanites should perish by fire because of their belief—⁶ for many of them, after having suffered much loss and so many afflictions, began to be stirred up in remembrance of the words which Aaron and his brethren had preached to them in their land; therefore they began to disbelieve the traditions of their fathers, and to believe in the Lord, and that he gave great power unto the Nephites;

and thus there were many of them converted in the wilderness.

⁷ And it came to pass that those rulers who were the remnant of the children of Amulon caused that they should be put to death, yea, all those that believed in these things.⁸ Now this martyrdom caused that many of their brethren should be stirred up to anger; and there began to be contention in the wilderness; and the Lamanites began to hunt the seed of Amulon and his brethren and began to slay them; and they fled into the east wilderness.⁹ And behold they are hunted at this day by the Lamanites.

Thus the words of Abinadi were brought to pass, which he said concerning the seed of the priests who caused that he should suffer death by fire.¹⁰ For he said unto them, “What ye shall do unto me shall be a type of things to come.”¹¹ And now Abinadi was the first that suffered death by fire because of his belief in God; now this is what he meant, that many should suffer death by fire, according as he had suffered.¹² And he said unto the priests of Noah that their seed should cause many to be put to death, in the like manner as he was, and that they should be scattered abroad and slain, even as a sheep having no shepherd is driven and slain by wild beasts; and now behold, these words were verified, for they were driven by the Lamanites, and they were hunted, and they were smitten.

¹⁰ 10 Mos 13.10

CHAPTER 25

1–3: It may be that the unconverted Lamanites felt like they had been tricked by the Nephite missionaries into killing their fellow Lamanites. For an account of the wickedness of Ammonihah, see 8.6–15.2; for another report of their destruction, see 16.1–11. The narrator places the destruction of Ammonihah in two different storylines, with two different sequences of causation. **1:** According to 16.1, this attack happened on the fifth day of the second month of the eleventh year of the reign of the judges (–81 years). **4:** The story of Amulon and the priests was recounted in Mos 23–24; those events had happened about 40 years earlier. **5–9:** The surviving descendants of Noah’s priests subject new Lamanite converts to the same fiery punishment that their fathers meted out to Abinadi. This, however, proves too much for the Lamanites. Even though Aaron and other missionaries had had only limited success at the time, their words became seeds for later conversions. **9:** *At this day*, presumably at the time of Alma, the original writer of this book; see the note to the heading at chs. 17–27. This is the last we hear of the Amulonites, but see 43.13n. **12:** See Mos 17.15–18, which also included a prophecy of being “hunted,” as in vv. 8–9 above. In addition, *driven and slain* (also in v. 3) may be a fulfillment of Abinadi’s words at Mos 12.2. Abinadi did not speak of *sheep having no shepherd*, but the image can be found at Num 27.17; 1 Kings 22.17; Mt 9.36; Alma 5.37.

More Lamanite Conversions

¹³ And it came to pass that when the Lamanites saw that they could not overpower the Nephites they returned again to their own land; and many of them came over to dwell in the land of Ishmael and the land of Nephi, and did join themselves to the people of God, who were the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi. ¹⁴ And they did also bury their weapons of war, according as their brethren had, and they began to be a righteous people; and they did walk in the ways of the Lord, and did observe to keep his commandments and his statutes.

¹⁵ Yea, and they did keep the law of Moses; for it was expedient that they should keep the law of Moses as yet, for it was not all fulfilled. But notwithstanding the law of Moses, they did look forward to the coming of Christ, considering that the law of Moses was a type of his coming, and believing that they must keep those outward performances until the time that he should be revealed unto them. ¹⁶ Now they did not suppose that salvation came by the law of Moses; but the law of Moses did serve to strengthen their faith in Christ; and thus they did retain a hope through faith, unto eternal salvation, relying upon the spirit of prophecy, which spake of those things to come.

13: *Returned again to their own land*, the story of these Lamanites is taken up again at 27.1. The *land of Ishmael* and the *land of Nephi* were strongholds of the Anti-Nephi-Lehi movement; see 23.8–12. **14:** *As their brethren had*, see 24.17. *Walk in the ways of the Lord* and *observe to keep his commandments and his statutes*, a return to the covenant language of Deut 5.31–33, alluded to at 24.23 above; cf. Deut 28.9 (where God establishes Israel as “a holy people”) and 30.16 (where the Israelites, like the Anti-Nephi-Lehies at this moment, will soon receive a land for their inheritance; see Alma 27.20–22). **15:** *Type of his coming*, referring to how animal sacrifices prefigured Christ’s atoning sacrifice, but perhaps also indicating how Jesus’s coming would bring a new law, just as Moses had received the old law at Sinai; see 2 Ne 25.24–25, 30; Mos 3.14–15n. *Performances*, a non-biblical term that occurs six times in the BoM, usually paired with “ordinances” to indicate the requirements of the law of Moses. *Outward performances* is unique here in scripture but common in the 18th–19th c. The implication is that such rituals are secondary to the fuller, inner meaning of the law. **16:** *They did not suppose that salvation came by the law of Moses*, unlike the priests of Noah at Mos 12.31–32; cf. Mos 13.27–31. **17:** God’s word to them was recorded at 17.11.

CHAPTER 26

Ammon’s words in this chapter are punctuated with three variations of “how great reason have we to rejoice” at the beginning, the middle, and the end (vv. 1, 13, 35). **1:** *My brothers and my brethren*, the first term refers to his biological brothers, the second to their friends; cf. 22.35. **3:** *Darkest abyss*, the same situation as Alma at Mos 27.29 (these are the only two instances of the phrase). The image of going from darkness to God’s *marvelous light* can be seen at 1 Pet 2.9; Mos 27.29; Alma 19.6 (Lamoni); cf. 36.20. **4:** *Brought into the fold of God* recalls the baptismal covenant of Mos 18.8, as well as Ammon’s recovery of King Lamoni’s flocks in ch. 19.

Ammon₂ Rejoices in Missionary Success

¹⁷ And now behold, Ammon, and Aaron, and Omner, and Himni, and their brethren did rejoice exceedingly, for the success which they had had among the Lamanites, seeing that the Lord had granted unto them according to their prayers, and that he had also verified his word unto them in every particular.

26 ¹ And now, these are the words of Ammon to his brethren, which say thus, “My brothers and my brethren, behold I say unto you, how great reason have we to rejoice; for could we have supposed when we started from the land of Zarahemla that God would have granted unto us such great blessings? ² And now, I ask, what great blessings has he bestowed upon us? Can ye tell? ³ Behold, I answer for you; for our brethren, the Lamanites, were in darkness, yea, even in the darkest abyss, but behold, how many of them are brought to behold the marvelous light of God! And this is the blessing which hath been bestowed upon us, that we have been made instruments in the hands of God to bring about this great work. ⁴ Behold, thousands of them do rejoice, and have been brought into the fold of God.

⁵ “Behold, the field was ripe, and blessed are ye, for ye did thrust in the sickle, and did reap with your might, yea, all the day long did ye labor; and behold the number of your sheaves! And they shall be gathered into the garners, that they are not wasted.” ⁶ Yea, they shall not be beaten down by the storm at the last day; yea, neither shall they be harrowed up by the whirlwinds; but when the storm cometh they shall be gathered together in their place, that the storm cannot penetrate to them; yea, neither shall they be driven with fierce winds whithersoever the enemy listeth to carry them. ⁷ But behold, they are in the hands of the Lord of the harvest, and they are his; and he will raise them up at the last day.

⁸ “Blessed be the name of our God; let us sing to his praise, yea, let us give thanks to his holy name, for he doth work righteousness forever.” ⁹ For if we had not come up out of the land of Zarahemla, these our dearly beloved brethren, who have so dearly beloved us, would still have been racked with hatred against us, yea, and they would also have been strangers to God.”

Ammon₂ Boasts of God

¹⁰ And it came to pass that when Ammon had said these words, his brother Aaron rebuked him, saying, “Ammon, I fear that thy joy doth carry thee away unto boasting.”

¹¹ But Ammon said unto him:

“I do not boast in my own strength,
nor in my own wisdom;
but behold, my joy is full,
yea, my heart is brim with joy,
and I will rejoice in my God.

¹² Yea, I know that I am nothing;
as to my strength I am weak;
therefore I will not boast of myself,
but I will boast of my God,
for in his strength I can do all
things.

Yea, behold, many mighty miracles we
have wrought in this land,
for which we will praise his name
forever.

¹³ “Behold, how many thousands of our brethren has he loosed from the pains of hell; and they are brought to sing redeeming love, and this because of the power of his word which is in us, therefore have we not great reason to rejoice?” ¹⁴ Yea, we have reason to praise him forever, for he is the Most High God, and has loosed our brethren from the chains of hell.

¹⁵ “Yea, they were encircled about with everlasting darkness and destruction; but behold, he has brought them into his everlasting light, yea, into everlasting salvation; and they are encircled about with the matchless bounty

5: This agricultural metaphor for proselytizing is similar to the work of angels described in Rev 14.14–16. *Garner*, WB: “a granary.” *Wasted*, “ruined or destroyed” rather than “squandered.” **6:** The agricultural metaphor is continued: the grain is safely gathered in before bad weather comes. *List*, WB: “to desire or choose.” **6–7:** The contrast between *beaten down by the storm at the last day* and *raise them up at the last day* is a nice transition from an agricultural metaphor to a theologically significant term; see 3 Ne 15.1n. **7:** *The Lord of the harvest*, Mt 9.38; Lk 10.2. **8:** *Sing to his praise*, only here and Mos 18.30. *Give thanks to his holy name*, see 2 Ne 9.52n. **11:** Elsewhere in the BoM, *boasting in one’s own strength* usually refers to military prowess, and always leads to disaster; see Mos 11.19; Hel 4.13; Morm 3.9; 4.8. In addition, Alma later warns two of his sons about boasting in their strength and wisdom; see 38.11; 39.2. **12:** *In his strength I can do all things*, Ammon is echoing Lamoni’s faithful assertion at 20.4; the wording here is closer to Phil 4.13. *Praise his name*, see 2 Ne 9.49n. **13:** *Sing redeeming love*, see 5.9n; the preaching of Alma and the sons of Mosiah seem to be on parallel tracks. *Power of his word which is in us*, a distinctive BoM notion; see 2 Ne 1.26; 4 Ne 1.30.

of his love; yea, and we have been instruments in his hands of doing this great and marvelous work.

¹⁶ Therefore, let us glory,
yea, we will glory in the Lord;
yea, we will rejoice,
for our joy is full;
yea, we will praise our God forever.

“Behold, who can glory too much in the Lord? Yea, who can say too much of his great power, and of his mercy, and of his long-suffering towards the children of men? Behold, I say unto you, I cannot say the smallest part which I feel.”

Ammon₂ Recounts the Missionaries’ Conversion and Labors

¹⁷ “Who could have supposed that our God would have been so merciful as to have snatched us from our awful, sinful, and polluted state? ¹⁸ Behold, we went forth even in wrath, with mighty threatenings to destroy his church. ¹⁹ Oh then, why did he not consign us to an awful destruction, yea, why did he not let the sword of his justice fall upon us, and doom us to eternal despair? ²⁰ Oh, my soul, almost as it were, fleeth at the thought. Behold, he did not exercise his justice upon us, but in his great mercy hath brought us over that everlasting gulf of death and misery, even to the salvation of our souls.

²¹ “And now behold, my brethren, what natural man is there that knoweth these things? I say unto you, there is none that knoweth these things, save it be the penitent. ²² Yea, he that repenteth and exerciseth faith, and bringeth forth good works, and prayeth continually without ceasing—unto such it is given to know the mysteries of God; yea, unto such it shall be given to reveal things which never have been revealed; yea, and it shall be given unto such to bring thousands of souls to repentance, even as it has been given unto us to bring these our brethren to repentance.

²³ “Now do ye remember, my brethren, that we said unto our brethren in the land of Zarahemla, ‘We go up to the land of Nephi, to preach unto our brethren, the Lamanites,’ and they laughed us to scorn? ²⁴ For they said unto us, ‘Do ye suppose that ye can bring the Lamanites to the knowledge of the truth? Do ye suppose that ye can convince the Lamanites of the incorrectness of the traditions of their fathers, as stiffnecked a people as they are; whose hearts delight in the shedding of blood; whose days have been spent in the grossest iniquity; whose ways have been the ways of a transgressor from the beginning?’ Now my brethren, ye remember that this was their language. ²⁵ And moreover they did say, ‘Let us take up arms against them, that we destroy them and their iniquity out of the land, lest they overrun us and destroy us.’

16: Alma too had once expressed his gratitude for God’s “matchless power, and his mercy, and his long-suffering”; see 9.11. *We will glory in the Lord*, cf. 1 Cor 1.31; 2 Cor 10.17 (both quoting Jer 9.24). **17–20:** For fuller accounts of the miraculous intervention that Ammon alludes to here, see Mos 27.8–37 and Alma 36.6–23. **17:** Ammon combines a key term from his and Alma’s conversion experience, *snatch* (Mos 27.28–29), with an allusion to an assessment of the Lamanites’ earlier spiritual woes: *sinful and polluted state* (Mos 25.11). His implicit message to his brothers seems to be “we were once in the same spiritual state as the Lamanites.” **19:** *Sword of his justice*, see 1 Ne 12.18n. **22:** Ammon identifies four spiritual practices that can result in extraordinary knowledge, personal revelation, and missionary success. **23–25:** Apparently the initial desires of the sons of Mosiah to undertake missionary work and thereby help the Lamanites had almost had the opposite effect: starting a war; cf. Mos 28.1–7. **23:** The three occurrences of *brethren* each refer to different groups of people. **25:** *Lest they overrun us*, the more rapid population growth of the Lamanites was a constant worry for the Nephites.

²⁶ “But behold, my beloved brethren, we came into the wilderness not with the intent to destroy our brethren, but with the intent that perhaps we might save some few of their souls.²⁷ Now when our hearts were depressed, and we were about to turn back, behold, the Lord comforted us, and said, ‘Go amongst thy brethren, the Lamanites, and bear with patience thine afflictions, and I will give unto you success.’²⁸

²⁸ “And now behold, we have come, and been forth amongst them; and we have been patient in our sufferings, and we have suffered every privation; yea, we have traveled from house to house, relying upon the mercies of the world—not upon the mercies of the world alone but upon the mercies of God.²⁹ And we have entered into their houses and taught them, and we have taught them in their streets; yea, and we have taught them upon their hills; and we have also entered into their temples and their synagogues and taught them; and we have been cast out, and mocked, and spit upon, and smote upon our cheeks; and we have been stoned, and taken and bound with strong cords, and cast into prison; and through the power and wisdom of God we have been delivered again.³⁰ And we have suffered all manner of afflictions, and all this, that perhaps we might be the means of saving some soul; and we supposed that our joy would be full if perhaps we could be the means of saving some.

³¹ “Now behold, we can look forth and see the fruits of our labors; and are they few?

I say unto you, Nay, they are many; yea, and we can witness of their sincerity, because of their love towards their brethren and also towards us.³² For behold, they had rather sacrifice their lives than even to take the life of their enemy; and they have buried their weapons of war deep in the earth, because of their love towards their brethren.³³ And now behold I say unto you, has there been so great love in all the land? Behold, I say unto you, Nay, there has not, even among the Nephites.³⁴ For behold, they would take up arms against their brethren; they would not suffer themselves to be slain. But behold how many of these have laid down their lives; and we know that they have gone to their God, because of their love and of their hatred to sin.

³⁵ “Now have we not reason to rejoice? Yea, I say unto you, there never were men that had so great reason to rejoice as we, since the world began; yea, and my joy is carried away, even unto boasting in my God; for he has all power, all wisdom, and all understanding; he comprehendeth all things, and he is a merciful Being, even unto salvation, to those who will repent and believe on his name.³⁶ Now if this is boasting, even so will I boast; for this is my life and my light, my joy and my salvation, and my redemption from everlasting wo.

^a 27 Alma 17.11

28–29: In contrast to 23.2, *houses* here probably refers to private homes. **32–34:** Ammon here attributes the pacifism of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies to *their love towards their brethren* and their *hatred to sin*, while King Anti-Nephi-Lehi himself explained the covenant as a grateful response to God’s forgiveness of their sins; see 24.10–15. **32:** See 24.17–22; 25.14. **33:** Ammon observes that the Nephites would have been incapable of the pacifism demonstrated by the Anti-Nephi-Lehi Lamanites, as seen in v. 25. The general form of the contrast echoes Mt 8.10; Lk 7.9; cf. Alma 19.10. **34:** *Laid down their lives* is a Johannine phrase; see Jn 10.15, 17; 13.37–38; 15.13; 1 Jn 3.16. **35:** *My joy is carried away, even unto boasting*, Ammon concedes Aaron’s accusation from v. 10 above, with the crucial caveat *in my God*. **36:** *Tree of Israel*, unique here, though the image of Israel as a tree with branches has several precedents. *Wanderers in a strange land*, only here and 13.23; cf. Ex 2.22.

Yea, blessed is the name of my God,
 who has been mindful of this people,
 who are a branch of the tree of
 Israel,
 and has been lost from its body in a
 strange land;
 yea, I say, blessed be the name of my
 God,
 who has been mindful of us,
 wanderers in a strange land.

³⁷ “Now my brethren, we see that God is mindful of every people, whatsoever land they may be in; yea, he numbereth his people, and his bowels of mercy are over all the earth. Now this is my joy, and my great thanksgiving; yea, and I will give thanks unto my God forever. Amen.”

The Anti-Nephi-Lehies Flee to the Nephites

[XV] 27 ¹ Now it came to pass that when those Lamanites who had gone to war against the Nephites had found, after their many struggles to destroy them, that it was in vain to seek their destruction, they returned again to the land of Nephi. ² And it came to pass that the Amalekites,^a because of their loss, were exceeding angry. And when they saw that they could not seek revenge from the Nephites, they began to stir up the people in anger against their brethren,

the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi; therefore they began again to destroy them. ³ Now this people again refused to take their arms, and they suffered themselves to be slain according to the desires of their enemies.

⁴ Now when Ammon and his brethren saw this work of destruction among those whom they so dearly beloved, and among those who had so dearly beloved them—for they were treated as though they were angels sent from God to save them from everlasting destruction—therefore, when Ammon and his brethren saw this great work of destruction, they were moved with compassion, and they said unto the king, ⁵ “Let us gather together this people of the Lord, and let us go down to the land of Zarahemla to our brethren the Nephites, and flee out of the hands of our enemies, that we be not destroyed.”

⁶ But the king said unto them, “Behold, the Nephites will destroy us, because of the many murders and sins we have committed against them.”

⁷ And Ammon said, “I will go and inquire of the Lord, and if he say unto us, go down unto our brethren, will ye go?”

⁸ And the king said unto him, “Yea, if the Lord saith unto us ‘Go,’ we will go down unto our brethren, and we will be their slaves until we repair unto them the many murders and sins which we have committed against them.”

^a ² Or *Amlicites*; see Alma 21.2–4n

³⁷: While at first this sounds like a universalizing perspective, *numbereth his people* suggests that it refers to scattered Israel, which better fits the context celebrating the return of Lamanites to the fold (v. 4).

CHAPTER 27

1: The narrative resumes from 25.13. **3**: Because the Amalekites are more hardened in their hearts, these killings do not lead to the sort of remorseful conversions that occurred at 24.23–30. **4–5**: *That we be not destroyed*, Ammon here identifies with the pacifist Anti-Nephi-Lehies. It may have been difficult for him—the accomplished swordsman of ch. 17—to not just witness their slaughter, but to propose flight as their best option. **6–7**: Ammon does not dispute the implication that the Nephites are more motivated by revenge than by compassion, so he suggests taking the question to the Lord. **8–9**: King Anti-Nephi-Lehi proposes a form of moral debt slavery, which Ammon rejects as illegal. *Law [against slavery] . . . established by my father*, see Mos 29.32, 40; cf. Mos 2.13; 7.15. **8**: Like Alma and the sons of Mosiah after their conversion, the Anti-Nephi-Lehies want to *repair* the wrongs they have done; see Mos 27.35.

⁹ But Ammon said unto him, “It is against the law of our brethren, which was established by my father, that there should be any slaves among them; therefore let us go down and rely upon the mercies of our brethren.”

¹⁰ But the king said unto him, “Inquire of the Lord, and if he saith unto us ‘Go,’ we will go; otherwise we will perish in the land.”

¹¹ And it came to pass that Ammon went and inquired of the Lord, and the Lord said unto him, ¹² “Get this people out of this land, that they perish not; for Satan has great hold on the hearts of the Amalekites, who do stir up the Lamanites to anger against their brethren to slay them; therefore get thee out of this land; and blessed are this people in this generation, for I will preserve them.”

¹³ And now it came to pass that Ammon went and told the king all the words which the Lord had said unto him. ¹⁴ And they gathered together all their people, yea, all the people of the Lord, and did gather together all their flocks and herds, and departed out of the land, and came into the wilderness which divided the land of Nephi from the land of Zarahemla, and came over near the borders of the land. ¹⁵ And it came to pass that Ammon said unto them, “Behold, I and my brethren will go forth into the land of Zarahemla, and ye shall remain here until we return; and we will try the hearts of our brethren, whether they will that ye shall come into their land.”

A Second Account of Alma₂ Meeting the Sons of Mosiah₂

¹⁶ And it came to pass that as Ammon was going forth into the land, that he and his brethren met Alma, over in the place of which has been spoken; and behold, this was a joyful meeting. ¹⁷ Now the joy of Ammon was so great even that he was full; yea, he was swallowed up in the joy of his God, even to the exhausting of his strength; and he fell again to the earth. ¹⁸ (Now was not this exceeding joy? Behold, this is joy which none receiveth save it be the truly penitent and humble seeker of happiness.) ¹⁹ Now the joy of Alma in meeting his brethren was truly great, and also the joy of Aaron, of Omner, and Himni; but behold their joy was not that to exceed their strength.

The Anti-Nephi-Lehies Are Given the Land of Jershon

²⁰ And now it came to pass that Alma conducted his brethren back to the land of Zarahemla; even to his own house. And they went and told the chief judge all the things that had happened unto them in the land of Nephi, among their brethren, the Lamanites. ²¹ And it came to pass that the chief judge sent a proclamation throughout all the land, desiring the voice of the people concerning the admitting their brethren, who were the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi.

12: The combination of *get . . . this people out of this land* and *therefore get thee out of this land* matches the Lord's command to Alma, in the land of Helam at Mos 24.23, suggesting that the Anti-Nephi-Lehies, like Alma's people, will be welcomed by the Nephites. *Satan hath great hold on the hearts*, a phrase used earlier to describe the people of Ammonihah; see 8.9; 10.25. **15:** Despite the Lord's reassurances, Ammon and his brethren are still uncertain as to how the Nephites will react to the arrival of thousands of Lamanite convert refugees (for the numbers, see 23.5; 26.4; 37.9). **16–19:** The tenor of this reunion is unmistakable: *joyful* is followed by seven repetitions of *joy* (seven being the number of completeness or perfection). Ammon and Alma similarly refer to “joy” seven times in their parallel speeches at chs. 26 and 29. **16:** As the long flashback concludes, the narrative picks up from Alma 17.1–4. *Going forth into the land* [of Zarahemla], as reported earlier at 17.1. **17:** *Fell again*, the first time Ammon fell to the earth with joy was at 19.14. **18:** *Seeker of happiness*, unique here. **20:** *Even to his own house*, as he had done with Amulek five years earlier; see 15.18. *The chief judge*, Nephiah, who was appointed at 4.17 and will be replaced after his death at 50.39. **21:** The mechanism by which the *voice of the people* is obtained is not clear, but the process must have been fairly quick with the Anti-Nephi-Lehies waiting in tents on the border (v. 25).

²² And it came to pass that the voice of the people came, saying, “Behold, we will give up the land of Jershon, which is on the east by the sea, which joins the land Bountiful, which is on the south of the land Bountiful; and this land Jershon is the land which we will give unto our brethren for an inheritance.”²³ And behold, we will set our armies between the land Jershon and the land Nephi, that we may protect our brethren in the land Jershon; and this we do for our brethren, on account of their fear to take up arms against their brethren lest they should commit sin; and this their great fear came because of their sore repentance which they had, on account of their many murders and their awful wickedness.²⁴ And now behold, this will we do unto our brethren, that they may inherit the land Jershon; and we will guard them from their enemies with our armies, on condition that they will give us a portion of their substance to assist us that we may maintain our armies.”

²⁵ Now, it came to pass that when Ammon had heard this, he returned to the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi, and also Alma with him, into the wilderness, where they had pitched their tents, and made known unto them all these things. And Alma also related unto them his conversion, with Ammon and Aaron, and his brethren.²⁶ And it came to pass that it did cause great joy among them.

And they went down into the land of Jershon, and took possession of the land of Jershon; and they were called by the Nephites the people of Ammon; therefore they were distinguished by that name ever after.²⁷ And they were among^a the people of Nephi, and also numbered among the people who were of the church of God. And they were also distinguished for their zeal towards God, and also towards men; for they were perfectly honest and upright in all things; and they were firm in the faith of Christ, even unto the end.

²⁸ And they did look upon shedding the blood of their brethren with the greatest abhorrence; and they never could be prevailed upon to take up arms against their brethren; and they never did look upon death with any degree of terror, for their hope and views of Christ and the resurrection; therefore, death was swallowed up to them by the victory of Christ over it.²⁹ Therefore, they would suffer death in the most aggravating and distressing manner which could be inflicted by their brethren, before they would take the sword or cimeter^b to smite them.³⁰ And thus they were a zealous and beloved people, a highly favored people of the Lord.

^a 27 *O were numbered among*

^b 29 *Or scimitar*

22: The name Jershon can be interpreted as the Hebrew stem *yrs*, “to inherit,” combined with the suffix *-ôn* that denotes place names, with the meaning “place of inheritance.” **24:** *A portion of their substance*, see 43.13n. **25:** *Alma also related unto them his conversion*, see Mos 27.8–37. One imagines that Ammon and his brothers had recounted this story before to the Anti-Nephi-Lehies; now Alma himself will verify their account. **26:** From this point on, the Anti-Nephi-Lehies are always referred to as *the people of Ammon*. The consistency of the pattern is striking. **27:** *Firm in the faith of Christ*, only here and 48.13; it is interesting that the same description can be applied to both the pacifist Anti-Nephi-Lehies and the militarist Captain Moroni. *People of Nephi* and *people who were of the church of God* are not synonymous, there were many Nephites who did not belong to Alma’s church; see 2.11n. **28:** *Views*, perhaps “visions,” as at 2 Ne 1.24 and Mos 5.3. *Death was swallowed up... by the victory*, see Mos 16.7–8n. **30:** The phrase *highly favored people of the Lord* has hitherto been applied only to Nephites (Mos 1.13; Alma 9.20).

A Tremendous Battle

28¹ And now it came to pass that after the people of Ammon were established in the land of Jershon, and a church also established in the land of Jershon, and the armies of the Nephites were set round about the land of Jershon, yea, in all the borders round about the land of Zarahemla; behold the armies of the Lamanites had followed their brethren into the wilderness.² And thus there was a tremendous battle; yea, even such an one as never had been known among all the people in the land from the time Lehi left Jerusalem; yea, and tens of thousands of the Lamanites were slain and scattered abroad.³ Yea, and also there was a tremendous slaughter among the people of Nephi; nevertheless, the Lamanites were driven and scattered, and the people of Nephi returned again to their land.

⁴ And now this was a time that there was a great mourning and lamentation heard throughout all the land, among all the people of Nephi—⁵ yea, the cry of widows mourning for their husbands, and also of fathers mourning for their sons, and the daughter for the brother, yea, the brother for the father; and thus the cry of mourning was heard among all of them, mourning for their kindred who had been slain.⁶ And now

surely this was a sorrowful day; yea, a time of solemnity, and a time of much fasting and prayer.⁷ And thus endeth the fifteenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi.⁴

Alma₂'s Fifteenth-Year Summary

⁸ And this is the account of Ammon and his brethren, their journeyings in the land of Nephi, their sufferings in the land, their sorrows, and their afflictions, and their incomprehensible joy, and the reception and safety of the brethren in the land of Jershon. And now may the Lord, the Redeemer of all men, bless their souls forever.

⁹ And this is the account of the wars and contentions among the Nephites, and also the wars between the Nephites and the Lamanites; and the fifteenth year of the reign of the judges is ended.

¹⁰ And from the first year to the fifteenth has brought to pass the destruction of many thousand lives; yea, it has brought to pass an awful scene of bloodshed.¹¹ And the bodies of many thousands are laid low in the earth, while the bodies of many thousands are moldering in heaps upon the face of the earth;

⁴ 7 -77 years

CHAPTER 28

1: *Followed their brethren into the wilderness*, that is, the Lamanite armies had followed the Anti-Nephi-Lehies, though with some time lag. **2:** The only other *tremendous battle* in the BoM is the Nephites' last stand at Cumorah, at Morm 8.2. **4–5:** The Nephites pay a high price for taking in the people of Ammon. *Great mourning and lamentation*, only here and at Mos 21.9; both verses go on to specify the anguish of widows, children, and siblings. Other relationships are left unspecified, such as mothers mourning for sons, and daughters for fathers, but the universal grief is unmistakable. **8–14:** References to both *sorrow* and *joy* in vv. 8 and 14 frame this section with an inclusio. The present tense indicates that the author of this editorial summary is Alma; see the note to the heading at chs. 17–27. A similar summary occurs at 16.13–21, when the account of Alma's preaching journeys comes to an end. In this case, 28.8–29.17 (the ending of original ch. XXV) functions as a single literary unit that brings to a conclusion the narrative that began at ch. 17. **8:** *May the Lord... bless their souls forever*, a prayer from the narrator. **11–12:** Some families are worried less about their present losses and vulnerabilities than about the eternal welfare of their deceased loved ones, while relatives of the righteous dead are consoled by the thought of their postmortal happiness; both groups of mourners, however, are attuned to *the promises of the Lord*. *Molder*, WB: "to turn to dust by natural decay." *Exult*, WB: "to rejoice in triumph; to be glad above measure." *And even know*, a provocative qualifier that values knowledge over hope.

yea, and many thousands are mourning for the loss of their kindred, because they have reason to fear, according to the promises of the Lord, that they are consigned to a state of endless wo. ¹² While many thousands of others truly mourn for the loss of their kindred, yet they rejoice and exult in the hope, and even know, according to the promises of the Lord, that they are raised to dwell at the right hand of God, in a state of never-ending happiness.

¹³ And thus we see how great the inequality of man is because of sin and transgression, and the power of the devil, which comes by the cunning plans which he hath devised to ensnare the hearts of men. ¹⁴ And thus we see the great call of diligence of men to labor in the vineyards of the Lord; and thus we see the great reason of sorrow, and also of rejoicing—

sorrow because of death and destruction among men,
and joy because of the light of Christ
unto life.

Alma Rejoices in Missionary Success

29 ¹ O that I were an angel, and could have the wish of mine heart,

that I might go forth and speak
with the trump of God,
with a voice to shake the earth,
and cry repentance unto every
people!

² Yea, I would declare unto every soul,
as with the voice of thunder,
repentance and the plan of
redemption,
that they should repent and come unto
our God,
that there might not be more sorrow
upon all the face of the earth.

³ But behold, I am a man, and do sin in my wish; for I ought to be content with the things which the Lord hath allotted unto me. ⁴ I ought not to harrow up in my desires the firm decree of a just God, for I know that he granteth unto men according to their desire, whether it be

13: This *inequality*, referring to the two different fates of the slain, comes as a consequence of moral choices, especially those that originated with the devil. **14:** *The great call*, that is, the great need. The term “labor in the vineyard” is elsewhere exclusively associated with Jacob 5, but see 13.23. *Light of Christ*, only here and Moro 7.18–19; cf. Mos 16.9.

CHAPTER 29

1–17: Despite the lack of an identifying heading or introduction within the scriptural text, the present tense of v. 10, the refrain of “remember[ing] the captivity of my fathers” in v. 11, and the reference to “the success of my brethren, who have been up to the land of Nephi” in v. 14 all point to Alma, rather than Mormon, as the author of this passage. In many ways this speech of Alma’s is a response to that of Ammon in ch. 26. Note, for example, that both missionaries focus on “joy” (see 27.16–19n), with the phrase *this is my joy* occurring only at 26.37 and 29.9. In addition, both passages speak of joy being full (26.11, 16; 29.13–14), praising God forever (26.14, 16; 29.17), and the fruits of their labors (26.5, 31; 29.15–17). Though separated by geography for many years, Alma and the sons of Mosiah have been living parallel lives since their conversions. **1–5:** Alma wishes that he could preach in a manner that would be as overwhelming as the angel’s message was to him at Mos 27, that he could communicate spiritual truths so forcefully that they could not be denied, but then realizes that God speaks in his own ways and times, and humans will be held accountable for how they respond. In other words, Alma’s desire to compel belief is contrary to the agency that God has granted to humankind. **1–2:** For Alma’s personal experience with an angel whose *voice of thunder* could *shake the earth*, see Mos 27.11, 15, 18; cf. Alma 36.7. **4:** God’s *firm decree* to confirm destruction for those who follow unrighteous desires was seen earlier at Ammonihah; see 9.24.

unto death or unto life; yea, I know that he allotteth unto men according^a to their wills, whether they be unto salvation or unto destruction. ⁵ Yea, and I know that good and evil have come before all men; he that knoweth not good from evil is blameless; but he that knoweth good and evil, to him it is given according to his desires, whether he desireth good or evil, life or death, joy or remorse of conscience.

⁶ Now, seeing that I know these things, why should I desire more than to perform the work to which I have been called? ⁷ Why should I desire that I were an angel, that I could speak unto all the ends of the earth? ⁸ For behold, the Lord doth grant unto all nations, of their own nation and tongue, to teach his word, yea, in wisdom, all that he seeth fit that they should have; therefore we see that the Lord doth counsel in wisdom, according to that which is just and true.

⁹ I know that which the Lord hath commanded me, and I glory in it. I do not glory of myself, but I glory in that which the Lord hath commanded me; yea, and this is my glory, that perhaps I may be an instrument in the hands of God to bring some soul to repentance; and this is my joy. ¹⁰ And behold, when I see many of my brethren truly penitent, and coming to the Lord their God, then is my soul filled with joy; then do I remember what the Lord has done for me, yea, even that he hath heard my prayer; yea, then do

I remember his merciful arm which he extended towards me.

¹¹ Yea, and I also remember the captivity of my fathers; for I surely do know that the Lord did deliver them out of bondage, and by this did establish his church; yea, the Lord God, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, did deliver them out of bondage. ¹² Yea, I have always remembered the captivity of my fathers; and that same God who delivered them out of the hands of the Egyptians did deliver them out of bondage. ¹³ Yea, and that same God did establish his church among them; yea, and that same God hath called me by a holy calling, to preach the word unto this people, and hath given me much success, in the which my joy is full.

¹⁴ But I do not joy in my own success alone, but my joy is more full because of the success of my brethren, who have been up to the land of Nephi. ¹⁵ Behold, they have labored exceedingly, and have brought forth much fruit; and how great shall be their reward! ¹⁶ Now, when I think of the success of these my brethren my soul is carried away, even to the separation of it from the body, as it were, so great is my joy.

^a 4 O, 1981 unto men, *yea, decreeth unto them decrees which are unalterable*, according

6: Alma, like the angels, has a particular role to play in God's design for preaching the word, and though his position may be limited, he should nevertheless be content. **8:** This verse opens the possibility that philosophers and religious thinkers of various nations and languages throughout history—people such as the Buddha, Confucius, and Muhammad—have taught some portion of God's word; see the notes at 2 Ne 25.9; Mos 4.30; Ether 3.10. *Counsel*, WB: "to exhort, warn, admonish, or instruct." **9:** Where Ammon gloried in the Lord (26.16), Alma now glories in the assignment he has been given by the Lord, and in so doing echoes the words of his father at Mos 23.10–11. Indeed, by this point Alma has virtually become his father, even with respect to turning back from an early life of sin and error. **10:** *He hath heard my prayer*, Alma may be referring to his prayer at 2.30 (in battle), or his earlier prayer referred to at 36.18 (after seeing the angel). **11:** *Establish his church and deliver them out of bondage*, see Mos 23–25. **12:** *I have always remembered the captivity of my fathers*, see 5.6; 36.2, 29; this, of course, was part of the angel's command to him at Mos 27.16. **13–16:** Alma regards his preaching *success* as parallel to that of the sons of Mosiah, and he takes joy in both. **13:** *Called me with a holy calling*, Mos 29.42; Alma 5.3; cf. Alma 13.1–9; 2 Tim 1.9. **16:** *As it were*, Alma does not claim the out-of-body experience that Ammon apparently had at 27.17 (or at 19.14), but he shares the same emotional response.

¹⁷ And now may God grant unto these, my brethren, that they may sit down in the kingdom of God; yea, and also all those who are the fruit of their labors that they may go no more out, but that they may praise him forever. And may God grant that it may be done according to my words, even as I have spoken. Amen.

Peace in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Years

[XVI] **30** ¹ Behold, now it came to pass that after the people of Ammon were established in the land of Jershon, yea, and also after the Lamanites were driven out of the land, and their dead were buried by the people of the land—² now their dead were not numbered because of the greatness of their numbers; neither were the dead of the Nephites numbered—but it came to pass after they had buried their dead, and also after the days of fasting, and mourning, and prayer, (and it was in the sixteenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi)^a there began to be continual peace throughout all the land.³ Yea, and the people did observe to keep the commandments of the Lord; and they were strict in observing the ordinances of God, according to the law of Moses; for they were taught to keep the law of Moses until it should be fulfilled.⁴ And thus the people did have no disturbance in all the sixteenth year of

the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi.⁵ And it came to pass that in the seventeenth year of the reign of the judges, there was continual peace.^b

Korihor, an Anti-Christ (in Zarahemla and Jershon)

⁶ But it came to pass in the latter end of the seventeenth year, there came a man into the land of Zarahemla, and he was Anti-Christ, for he began to preach unto the people against the prophecies which had been spoken by the prophets, concerning the coming of Christ.

⁷ Now there was no law against a man's belief; for it was strictly contrary to the commands of God that there should be a law which should bring men on to unequal grounds.⁸ For thus saith the scripture, "Choose ye this day, whom ye will serve."^c

⁹ Now if a man desired to serve God, it was his privilege; or rather, if he believed in God it was his privilege to serve him; but if he did not believe in him there was no law to punish him.¹⁰ But if he murdered he was punished unto death; and if he robbed he was also punished; and if he stole he was also punished; and if he committed adultery he was also punished; yea, for all this wickedness they were punished.¹¹ For there was a law

^a 2 -76 years

^b 5 -75 years

^c 8 Josh 24.15

17: *That they may praise him forever*, as Ammon has already begun to do at 26.12, 14, 16.

CHAPTER 30

1: The narrative resumes from 28.1–3. **3:** *Ordinances*, WB: "rules; rites or ceremonies." The idea that the law of Moses would someday be *fulfilled*, or come to its fruition, in Christ also appears at 2 Ne 25.24; Alma 25.15; 34.13; 3 Ne 9.17; Ether 12.11. **6:** *There came a man*, in the BoM only here and Jacob 7.1 (introducing Sherem); the narrators are reluctant to provide origin stories for the two most prominent opponents of Nephite Christianity. The title *Anti-Christ* (here and v. 12) occurs five times in the NT, all in 1–2 Jn. In the NT, the term may refer to "false Christs" (mentioned at Mt 24.24; Mk 13.22), but Korihor is simply someone who opposes the worship of Christ. **7:** *There was no law against a man's belief*, cf. 1.17. **7:** *Unequal grounds* suggests a prohibition against legal discrimination based on religious beliefs (also v. 11). **10–11:** The crimes listed are committed against humans; there is no mention of crimes against God such as Sabbath-breaking or idolatry or blasphemy—which were all part of the law of Moses (see v. 3).

that men should be judged according to their crimes. Nevertheless, there was no law against a man's belief; therefore, a man was punished only for the crimes which he had done; therefore all men were on equal grounds.

¹² And this Anti-Christ, whose name was Korihor, (and the law could have no hold upon him) began to preach unto the people that there should be no Christ. And after this manner did he preach, saying, ¹³ "O ye that are bound down under a foolish and a vain hope, why do ye yoke yourselves with such foolish things? Why do ye look for a Christ? For no man can know of anything which is to come." ¹⁴ Behold, these things which ye call prophecies, which ye say are handed down by holy prophets, behold, they are foolish traditions of your fathers. ¹⁵ How do ye know of their surety? Behold, ye cannot know of things which ye do not see; therefore ye cannot know that there shall be a Christ. ¹⁶ Ye look forward and say that ye see a remission of your sins. But behold, it is the effect of a frenzied mind; and this derangement of your minds comes because of the traditions of your fathers, which lead you away into a belief of things which are not so."

¹⁷ And many more such things did he say unto them, telling them that there could be no atonement made for the sins of men, but every man fared in this life according to the management of the creature; therefore every man prospered according to his genius, and that every man conquered according to his strength; and whatsoever a man did was no crime. ¹⁸ And thus he did preach unto them, leading away the hearts of many, causing them to lift up their heads in their wickedness, yea, leading away many women, and also men, to commit whoredoms—telling them that when a man was dead, that was the end thereof.

¹⁹ Now this man went over to the land of Jershon also, to preach these things among the people of Ammon, who were once the people of the Lamanites. ²⁰ But behold they were more wise than many of the Nephites; for they took him, and bound him, and carried him before Ammon, who was a high priest over that people. ²¹ And it came to pass that he caused that he should be carried out of the land.

Korihor and Giddonah₂ (in Gideon)

And he came over into the land of Gideon, and began to preach unto them also; and here

12–18: Korihor makes several claims: (1) predictive prophecy is impossible, (2) true knowledge comes only through direct sensory experience, (3) one's mental state and expectations, which can be influenced by tradition, affect judgment, (4) there are no supernatural forces that reward, punish, or ameliorate human behavior, (5) those who are intelligent and strong generally succeed, (6) individuals are justified in acting according to their own self-interest and advantage, and (7) there is no life after death or postmortal accountability for mortal deeds. **14:** *Foolish traditions*, the same accusation was made by Nephite dissenters at both Ammonihah (8.11) and the Lamanite city of Jerusalem (21.8). **16:** *Ye look forward and say that ye see a remission of your sins*, an apparent allusion to Alma's words at Gideon and Ammonihah (7.6; 13.16); cf. Mos 15.11. Both *frenzied* and *derangement* are unique here in scripture; both refer to madness or insanity. **17:** *Management*, WB: "cunning practice." *Genius*, WB: "natural talent or aptitude of mind." **18:** *Whoredoms*, a consequence of Korihor's this-worldly, self-interested philosophy is an increase in illicit sex. The narrator notes that both women and men are led astray, especially once they are assured that they will never face eternal judgment. **20:** Even after his return to the Nephites, Ammon has elected to remain among the Anti-Nephi-Lehies; see 21.18n. **21–29:** The people at Gideon were the most righteous of the three cities for which we have records of Alma's preaching (ch. 7). They respond to Korihor in much the same way as the Anti-Nephi-Lehies in Jershon.

he did not have much success, for he was taken and bound and carried before the high priest, and also the chief judge over the land.²² And it came to pass that the high priest said unto him, “Why do ye go about perverting the ways of the Lord? Why do ye teach this people that there shall be no Christ, to interrupt their rejoicings? Why do ye speak against all the prophecies of the holy prophets?”²³ (Now the high priest’s name was Giddonah.)

And Korihor said unto him, “Because I do not teach the foolish traditions of your fathers, and because I do not teach this people to bind themselves down under the foolish ordinances and performances which are laid down by ancient priests, to usurp power and authority over them, to keep them in ignorance, that they may not lift up their heads, but be brought down according to thy words.²⁴ Ye say that this people is a free people. Behold, I say they are in bondage. Ye say that those ancient prophecies are true. Behold, I say that ye do not know that they are true.²⁵ Ye say that this people is a guilty and a fallen people, because of the transgression of a parent. Behold, I say that a child is not guilty because of its parents.²⁶ And ye also say that Christ shall come. But behold, I say that ye do not know that there shall be a Christ. And ye say

also that he shall be slain for the sins of the world—

²⁷ “And thus ye lead away this people after the foolish traditions of your fathers, and according to your own desires; and ye keep them down, even as it were in bondage, that ye may glut yourselves with the labors of their hands, that they durst not look up with boldness, and that they durst not enjoy their rights and privileges.²⁸ Yea, they durst not make use of that which is their own lest they should offend their priests, who do yoke them according to their desires, and have brought them to believe, by their traditions and their dreams and their whims and their visions and their pretended mysteries, that they should, if they did not do according to their words, offend some unknown being, who they say is God—a being who never has been seen or known, who never was nor ever will be.”

²⁹ Now when the high priest and the chief judge saw the hardness of his heart, yea, when they saw that he would revile even against God, they would not make any reply to his words; but they caused that he should be bound; and they delivered him up into the hands of the officers, and sent him to the land of Zarahemla, that he might be brought before Alma, and the chief judge who was governor over all the land.

23: Korihor rejects not only the worship of Jesus, but also the *ordinances and performances* of the law of Moses, which he regards as a ploy to repress the people. Here Korihor has perverted the customary meaning of *lift up their heads* so that it refers to arrogant self-assertion (see also v. 18); everywhere else in the BoM the phrase is an expression of rejoicing in or being comforted by God. **24–28:** Korihor argues that Christianity is a form of spiritual bondage based on false traditions and unverifiable prophecies—a fraud perpetrated on the faithful by church leaders for their own material benefit. In addition, priests make deceptive spiritual claims in order to control and manipulate their congregations. These are powerful critiques that many today employ against religious rivals, or against organized religion in general. **24:** *Ye say that this is a free people*, perhaps because they are no longer subject to a king; see Mos 29.38–39. **25:** *The transgression of a parent*, Adam’s transgression in the garden of Eden; see 12.22 for another reference to Adam’s role in humankind becoming “a fallen people,” with additional information at 22.12–14. *A child is not guilty...parents*, in contrast to Korihor’s other assertions, this objection is aligned with Nephite teachings about the plan of salvation and individual judgment at the bar of God; see Mos 3.11–12n; 11.22n. **27:** *Glut*, WB: “to swallow greedily; to gorge.” **28:** Later we will see that Korihor is not a complete atheist who rejects all supernatural entities; see v. 53. *Revile against God*, see 1 Ne 17.30n.

Korihor and Alma₂ (in Zarahemla)

³⁰ And it came to pass that when he was brought before Alma and the chief judge, he did go on in the same manner as he did in the land of Gideon; yea, he went on to blaspheme.

³¹ And he did rise up in great swelling words before Alma, and did revile against the priests and teachers, accusing them of leading away the people after the silly traditions of their fathers, for the sake of glutting on the labors of the people.

³² Now Alma said unto him, “Thou knowest that we do not glut ourselves upon the labors of this people; for behold I have labored even from the commencement of the reign of the judges until now, with mine own hands for my support, notwithstanding my many travels round about the land to declare the word of God unto my people.” ³³ And notwithstanding the many labors which I have performed in the church, I have never received so much as even one senine for my labor; neither has any of my brethren, save it were in the judgment-seat; and then we have received only according to law for our time. ³⁴ And now, if we do not receive anything for our labors in the church, what doth it profit us to labor in the church save it were to declare the truth, that we may have rejoicings in the joy of our brethren? ³⁵ Then why sayest thou that we preach unto this people to get gain, when thou, of

thyself, knowest that we receive no gain? And now, believest thou that we deceive this people, that causes such joy in their hearts?”

³⁶ And Korihor answered him, “Yea.”

³⁷ And then Alma said unto him, “Believest thou that there is a God?”

³⁸ And he answered, “Nay.”

³⁹ Now Alma said unto him, “Will ye deny again that there is a God, and also deny the Christ? For behold, I say unto you, I know there is a God, and also that Christ shall come.” ⁴⁰ And now what evidence have ye that there is no God, or that Christ cometh not? I say unto you that ye have none, save it be your word only. ⁴¹ But, behold, I have all things as a testimony that these things are true; and ye also have all things as a testimony unto you that they are true; and will ye deny them? Believest thou that these things are true? ⁴² Behold, I know that thou believest, but thou art possessed with a lying spirit, and ye have put off the Spirit of God that it may have no place in you; but the devil has power over you, and he doth carry you about, working devices that he may destroy the children of God.”

Korihor Asks for a Sign

⁴³ And now Korihor said unto Alma, “If thou wilt show me a sign, that I may be convinced that there is a God, yea, show unto me that he

30: *The chief judge*, Nephiah; see 4.20. **31:** *Great swelling words*, a phrase used to describe the speech of false teachers at 2 Pet 2.18 (NRSV: “bombastic nonsense”); cf. Jude 1.16. Contrast the word of God that “swells” in people’s hearts at 32.28, 30, 33–34, and especially 33.23. **32–35:** Alma flatly denies that he has received any remuneration for his church work. After his resignation as chief judge, his profession is unknown (*labored... with my own hands*). **33:** *One senine*, see 11.5. The payment for judges was specified at 11.3. **37:** Trying to find common ground, Alma adopts a strategy used by Ammon and Aaron (18.24; 22.7), but it does not work here, much to his frustration (v. 42). **39–42:** It is surprising that Alma does not attribute his sure knowledge of God to his experiences with angels (see Mos 27.11–18; Alma 8.14–17; 9.25–29), but perhaps he realizes that Korihor could counter with a similar experience (see v. 53). **39:** At this point Alma takes over the dialogue; even though he continues to ask questions, he is now answering for Korihor. **41:** *I have all things as a testimony*, Alma apparently has in mind the regular workings of nature, as at v. 44 below (cf. Hel 8.24). **42:** Alma asserts that Korihor’s problem is not disbelief, but rather dishonesty and a rejection of the Spirit. *Lying spirit*, 1 Kings 22.22–23; the allusion suggests that Korihor is a false prophet. *Device*, WB: “scheme; stratagem.” **43:** *If thou wilt show me a sign*, this approach did not work well for Sherem, who also preached against Christ; see Jacob 7.13–15. A *sign*, that is, some form of visible evidence, in accordance with v. 15. A concern for God’s *power* is pervasive throughout the BoM; e.g., 14.10n.

hath power, and then will I be convinced of the truth of thy words.”

⁴⁴ But Alma said unto him, “Thou hast had signs enough; will ye tempt your God? Will ye say, ‘Show unto me a sign,’ when ye have the testimony of all these thy brethren, and also all the holy prophets? The scriptures are laid before thee, yea, and all things denote there is a God; yea, even the earth, and all things that are upon the face of it, yea, and its motion, yea, and also all the planets which move in their regular form do witness that there is a Supreme Creator.” ⁴⁵ And yet do ye go about, leading away the hearts of this people, testifying unto them there is no God? And yet will ye deny against all these witnesses?”

And he said, “Yea, I will deny, except ye shall show me a sign.”

⁴⁶ And now it came to pass that Alma said unto him, “Behold, I am grieved because of the hardness of your heart, yea, that ye will still resist the spirit of the truth, that thy soul may be destroyed.” ⁴⁷ But behold, it is better that thy soul should be lost than that thou shouldst be the means of bringing many souls down to destruction, by thy lying and by thy flattering words; therefore if thou shalt deny again, behold God shall smite thee, that thou shalt become dumb, that thou shalt never open thy mouth any more, that thou shalt not deceive this people any more.”

⁴⁸ Now Korihor said unto him, “I do not deny the existence of a God, but I do not believe that there is a God; and I say also, that ye do not know that there is a God; and except ye show me a sign, I will not believe.”

⁴⁹ Now Alma said unto him, “This will I give unto thee for a sign, that thou shalt be struck dumb, according to my words; and I say, that in the name of God, ye shall be struck dumb, that ye shall no more have utterance.”

⁵⁰ Now when Alma had said these words, Korihor was struck dumb, that he could not have utterance, according to the words of Alma.

⁵¹ And now when the chief judge saw this, he put forth his hand and wrote unto Korihor, saying, “Art thou convinced of the power of God? In whom did ye desire that Alma should show forth his sign? Would ye that he should afflict others, to show unto thee a sign? Behold, he has showed unto you a sign; and now will ye dispute more?”

⁵² And Korihor put forth his hand and wrote, saying, “I know that I am dumb, for I cannot speak; and I know that nothing save it were the power of God could bring this upon me; yea, and I also^a knew that there was a God.” ⁵³ But behold, the devil hath deceived me; for he appeared unto me in the form of an angel, and said unto me, ‘Go and reclaim this

^a 52 O, 1981 *always*

44: Alma’s references to the earth, nature, and the regular motions of the planets as evidence of God’s existence are a version of the venerable teleological argument, or “argument from design,” though his understanding that the earth itself moves would have been anachronistic in an ancient context; cf. Hel 12.13–15. **48:** Korihor turns a question about the existence of God into a question about his personal beliefs. In modern terms, he avows agnosticism rather than atheism, and he claims to remain open to further evidence. **49–50:** Alma himself was temporarily struck dumb for his disbelief at Mos 27.19, as Zacharias will be at Lk 1.18–20. **51:** Korihor was apparently rendered deaf as well as dumb, hence the need for written communication. **52:** *I always knew that there was a God*, Korihor concedes Alma’s charge of dishonesty at v. 42. **53:** Rather than being a secularist argument, Korihor’s objections to belief in Christ had their origins in a supernatural experience. *The devil... appeared unto me in the form of an angel*, the same phenomenon is mentioned at 2 Cor 11.14. Korihor believed that he had received a commission to preach against Christ as a false god. *Unknown God*, only here and Acts 17.23. *There is no God*, that is to say, the god of the Nephite church is imaginary; the issue seems a contest between competing gods rather than between some form of theism and strict atheism. *Carnal mind*, Rom 8.5 (NRSV: “mind that is set on the flesh”); Alma 36.4. *I verily believed that they were true*, Korihor pleads self-deception rather than outright dishonesty.

people, for they have all gone astray after an unknown God.’ And he said unto me, ‘There is no God’; yea, and he taught me that which I should say. And I have taught his words; and I taught them because they were pleasing unto the carnal mind; and I taught them, even until I had much success, insomuch that I verily believed that they were true; and for this cause I withstood the truth, even until I have brought this great curse upon me.”

⁵⁴ Now when he had said this, he besought that Alma should pray unto God, that the curse might be taken from him. ⁵⁵ But Alma said unto him, “If this curse should be taken from thee thou wouldst again lead away the hearts of this people; therefore, it shall be unto thee even as the Lord will.”

The End of Korihor

⁵⁶ And it came to pass that the curse was not taken off of Korihor; but he was cast out, and went about from house to house begging for his food. ⁵⁷ Now the knowledge of what had happened unto Korihor was immediately published throughout all the land; yea, the proclamation was sent forth by the chief judge to all the people in the land, declaring unto those who had believed in the words of Korihor that they must speedily repent, lest the same judgments would come unto them. ⁵⁸ And it

came to pass that they were all convinced of the wickedness of Korihor; therefore they were all converted again unto the Lord; and this put an end to the iniquity after the manner of Korihor.

And Korihor did go about from house to house, begging food for his support. ⁵⁹ And it came to pass that as he went forth among the people, yea, among a people who had separated themselves from the Nephites and called themselves Zoramites, being led by a man whose name was Zoram—and as he went forth amongst them, behold, he was run upon and trodden down, even until he was dead. ⁶⁰ And thus we see the end of him who perverteth the ways of the Lord; and thus we see that the devil will not support his children at the last day, but doth speedily drag them down to hell.

Alma₂ in Antionum (among the Zoramites₂): Alma 31–35

A Mission to the Zoramites₂

31 ¹ Now it came to pass that after the end of Korihor, Alma having received tidings that the Zoramites were perverting the ways of the Lord, and that Zoram, who was their leader, was leading the hearts of the people to bow down to dumb idols, his heart

54–55: Alma knows from personal experience what true repentance looks like; in this case, he sees in Korihor a man who can rationalize anything that might turn to his advantage. Nevertheless, Alma leaves the final determination to God. **57:** Such a proclamation, urging people to repent or face divine judgment, might seem more appropriate coming from the high priest rather than the chief judge, but religious and civil functions are often blurred in the BoM. **58:** Just as Korihor’s words led many people astray, so also his silence (in being struck dumb) leads them back. The universal reconversion of heretics seems miraculous, or it may be hyperbole. **59–60:** Perhaps Korihor thought he would find a sympathetic reception among the Zoramites who, as will be seen in the next chapter, are also religious dissenters. **60:** The devil’s children are also mentioned at 1 Jn 3.10 and 1 Ne 14.3; cf. Alma 5.25.

CHAPTER 31

The stories of Korihor and the mission to the Zoramites (current chs. 30–35) were originally in the same chapter, XVI, suggesting that the narrator intended readers to compare Alma’s two attempts at defending faith. **1:** The relationship between this Zoram and Laban’s servant who joined Lehi’s family at 1 Ne 4.30–38 is unclear; a slightly later Nephite dissenter, Ammoron, will claim to be a descendant of the first Zoram at 54.23. *Perverting the ways of the Lord* begins an inclusio that ends with v. 11.

again began to sicken because of the iniquity of the people.² For it was the cause of great sorrow to Alma to know of iniquity among his people; therefore his heart was exceeding sorrowful because of the separation of the Zoramites from the Nephites.

³ Now the Zoramites had gathered themselves together in a land which they called Antionum, which was east of the land of Zarahemla, which lay nearly bordering upon the seashore, which was south of the land of Jerushon, which also bordered upon the wilderness south, which wilderness was full of the Lamanites.⁴ Now the Nephites greatly feared that the Zoramites would enter into a correspondence with the Lamanites, and that it would be the means of great loss on the part of the Nephites.

⁵ And now, as the preaching of the word had a great tendency to lead the people to do that which was just—yea, it had had more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword, or anything else, which had happened unto them—therefore Alma thought it was expedient that they should try the virtue of the word of God.⁶ Therefore he took Ammon, and Aaron, and Omner; and Himni he did leave in the church in Zarahemla; but the former three he took with him, and also Amulek and Zeezrom, who were at Melek; and he also took two of his sons.⁷ Now the eldest of his sons he took not with him, and his name was Helaman; but the names of those whom he took with him were Shiblon and

Corianton; and these are the names of those who went with him among the Zoramites, to preach unto them the word.

⁸ Now the Zoramites were dissenters from the Nephites; therefore they had had the word of God preached unto them.⁹ But they had fallen into great errors, for they would not observe to keep the commandments of God, and his statutes, according to the law of Moses.¹⁰ Neither would they observe the performances of the church, to continue in prayer and supplication to God daily, that they might not enter into temptation.¹¹ Yea, in fine, they did pervert the ways of the Lord in very many instances; therefore, for this cause, Alma and his brethren went into the land to preach the word unto them.

The Zoramite Manner of Worship

¹² Now, when they had come into the land, behold, to their astonishment they found that the Zoramites had built synagogues, and that they did gather themselves together on one day of the week, which day they did call the day of the Lord; and they did worship after a manner which Alma and his brethren had never beheld;¹³ for they had a place built up in the center of their synagogue, a place for standing, which was high above the head; and the top thereof would only admit one person.¹⁴ Therefore, whosoever desired to worship must go forth and stand upon the top thereof, and stretch forth his hands towards heaven, and cry with a loud voice, saying:

2: The physical separation of the Zoramites has led to religious schism as well. **4:** *Correspondence*, that is, an alliance. This fear materializes at 35.10–11. **5:** Alma seems to have in mind the recent successes of the sons of Mosiah among the Lamanites. *Virtue*, WB: “efficacy; power.” **6:** This constitutes an all-star team of missionaries, from both the Lamanite mission and Alma’s own preaching journeys. **9–10:** Like Korihor, the Zoramites have rejected both the law of Moses and the Nephite church; see 30.23. **10:** *Observe*, WB: “to keep religiously; to obey; to practice.” *Daily*, they have, in fact, moved to weekly prayer; see vv. 12 and 23 below. **12–23:** Curiously, there is no mention in this account of the worship of idols referred to in v. 1. **12:** *The day of the Lord*, apparently a day of worship apart from the Sabbath. Early Christians referred to Sunday as “the Lord’s day” (Rev 1.10), but such a usage here, in an anti-Christian context, is strange. **14:** *Stretch forth his hands towards heaven*, a standard posture of prayer in ancient Israel and early Christianity; e.g., 1 Kings 8.22; Ps 134.2; 1 Tim 2.8.

¹⁵ Holy, holy God; we believe that thou art God, and we believe that thou art holy, and that thou wast a spirit, and that thou art a spirit, and that thou wilt be a spirit forever.

¹⁶ Holy God, we believe that thou hast separated us from our brethren; and we do not believe in the tradition of our brethren, which was handed down to them by the childishness of their fathers; but we believe that thou hast elected us to be thy holy children; and also thou hast made it known unto us that there shall be no Christ. ¹⁷ But thou art the same yesterday, today, and forever; and thou hast elected us that we shall be saved, whilst all around us are elected to be cast by thy wrath down to hell; for the which holiness, O God, we thank thee; and we also thank thee that thou hast elected us, that we may not be led away after the foolish traditions of our brethren, which doth bind them down to a belief of Christ, which doth lead their hearts to wander far from thee, our God.

¹⁸ And again we thank thee, O God, that we are a chosen and a holy people. Amen.

¹⁹ Now it came to pass that after Alma and his brethren and his sons had heard these prayers, they were astonished beyond all measure. ²⁰ For behold, every man did go forth and offer up the same prayers. ²¹ Now the place was called by them Rameumptom, which, being interpreted, is “the holy stand.” ²² Now, from this stand they did offer up, every man, the self-same prayer unto God, thanking their God that they were chosen of him, and that he did not lead them away after the tradition of their brethren, and that their hearts were not stolen away to believe in things to come, which they knew nothing about. ²³ Now, after the people had all offered up thanks after this manner, they returned to their homes, never speaking of their God again until they had assembled themselves together again to the holy stand, to offer up thanks after their manner.

Alma₂'s Prayer concerning the Zoramites₂

²⁴ Now when Alma saw this his heart was grieved; for he saw that they were a wicked and a perverse people; yea, he saw that their hearts were set upon gold, and upon silver, and upon all manner of fine goods. ²⁵ Yea, and he also saw that their hearts were lifted up unto great boasting, in their pride.

²⁶ And he lifted up his voice to heaven, and cried, saying:

15–18: *Holy* is a key word in their prayer, appearing seven times; cf. “holy stand” in v. 21. **15:** *Thou wilt be a spirit forever*, in contrast to the teachings of Nephite prophets that God would be incarnated in Christ. **16:** *Childishness of their fathers* is an oxymoron. **17:** *Thou hast elected us that we shall be saved*, the phrase calls to mind the Calvinist doctrine of unconditional election. In fact, an 1835 LDS reference guide to the BoM summarized this passage as “The Zoramites preach election”; see 1.4n. *Led away after the foolish traditions . . . bind down*, the Zoramite beliefs expressed here and in v. 22 are similar to Korihor’s message at 30.26–27. **18:** *A chosen and a holy people*, see Deut 7.6; 14.2. **23:** *Offered up thanks*, strikingly, the Zoramite prayer consists entirely of thanks, with no requests to God. Perhaps this is because they believed that the work of salvation had already been accomplished, in an immutable fashion. **24–25:** Alma views the Zoramites’ theological innovations as a counterpart to their materialism and pride. **26–38:** Alma’s prayer stands in sharp contrast to that of the Zoramites, being extemporaneous, personal, humble, and full of requests. That being said, it is nevertheless a tightly organized composition. This prayer features two repeated refrains: pleas for God to “behold” the sinful actions of the Zoramites in the first stanza, and then requests for blessings upon the missionaries in the second stanza that begin “O Lord, wilt thou . . .” Verses 26b and 30a form an inclusio, as do vv. 30b and 33. The conclusion in vv. 34–35 combines the “O Lord, wilt thou” of the second stanza with the “behold” of the first, though both elements now focus on the worth of the Zoramites rather than on their sins. In addition, the precious ornaments of v. 28 are counterbalanced by the precious souls of v. 35.

“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?

²⁷ 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.

²⁸ 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.’

²⁹ Yea, and they say that thou hast
made it known unto them
that there shall be no Christ.

³⁰ O Lord God, how long wilt thou
suffer
that such wickedness and iniquity^a
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.

³¹ O Lord, my heart is exceeding
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.

³² 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.

³³ 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.

³⁴ O Lord, wilt thou grant unto us
that we may have success
in bringing them again unto thee in
Christ.

³⁵ 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.”

³⁶ Now it came to pass that when Alma
had said these words, that he clapped his

^a 30 O, 1981 *infidelity*

²⁸: *Ringlet*, WB: “a small ring.” ³⁶: *Clapped his hands upon all them* sounds like a ritualized practice, but this is the only occurrence in the BoM.

ALMA 31.37–38: MODES OF INTERTEXTUALITY

Three types of intertextuality are found within these two verses, where the narrator employs distinctive wording occurring elsewhere in scripture, with the verbal parallels being matched by comparable contexts. The first instance connects disparate passages in the Book of Mormon, the second links the Book of Mormon to the Bible, and the third provides structure and coherence to a single episode.

- #1 The phrases “separated themselves one from another” and “swallowed up in the joy of his God” marked the beginning and the end of the Lamanite mission of the sons of Mosiah (Alma 17.17; 27.17). Both are repeated here, in an allusion to the events of chapters 17–27, as Alma seeks to replicate among the Zoramites the success of that earlier proselytizing endeavor.
- #2 An allusion to Jesus’s injunction to “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” (Mt 6.25) is quickly followed by a reiteration of Isaiah’s prophecy “they shall not hunger nor thirst” (Isa 49.10). Isaiah was speaking of the return of scattered Israel, while 3 Ne 13.25 will reinterpret Jesus’s words from Mt 6.25 as applying to full-time ministers of the gospel—both contexts having relevance to the Zoramite mission.
- #3 The narrator’s observation that the Lord “gave them strength, that they should suffer no manner of afflictions” echoes Alma’s pleas in verses 31 and 33 for strength to endure afflictions. In this case, the connection is explicit since Mormon notes that “this was according to the prayer of Alma.” Looking forward, the report that God protected the missionaries from physical hunger and thirst is matched by Alma’s promise at 32.42 that those who plant and nourish the word like a seed will “hunger not, neither . . . thirst,” in a spiritual sense.

hands upon all them who were with him. And behold, as he clapped his hands upon them, they were filled with the Holy Spirit. ³⁷ And after that they did separate themselves one from another, taking no thought for themselves what they should eat, or what they should drink, or what they should put on. ³⁸ 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.

Alma₂’s Discourse to the Poor among the Zoramites₂: Alma 32–33

Some Success among the Poor

32 ¹ And it came to pass that they did go forth, and began to preach the word of God unto the people, entering into their synagogues, and into their houses; yea, and even they did preach the word in their streets. ² And it came to pass that after much labor among them, they began to have success among the poor class of people; for behold, they were cast out of the synagogues because of

³⁷: *Separate themselves one from another*, following the pattern set by the sons of Mosiah at 17.17. *Taking no thought . . . what they should put on*, an adaptation of Mt 6.25 (3 Ne 13.25); cf. Lk 12.22. ³⁸: *Swallowed up in the joy of [God]*, only here and 27.17. The last word of this chapter, *faith*, introduces the theme of the next chapter.

the coarseness of their apparel—³ therefore they were not permitted to enter into their synagogues to worship God, being esteemed as filthiness; therefore they were poor; yea, they were esteemed by their brethren as dross; therefore they were poor as to things of the world; and also they were poor in heart.

⁴ Now, as Alma was teaching and speaking unto the people upon the hill Onidah, there came a great multitude unto him, who were those of whom we have been speaking, of whom were poor in heart, because of their poverty as to the things of the world.⁵ And they came unto Alma; and the one who was the foremost among them said unto him, “Behold, what shall these my brethren do, for they are despised of all men because of their poverty, yea, and more especially by our priests; for they have cast us out of our synagogues which we have labored abundantly to build with our own hands; and they have cast us out because of our exceeding poverty; and we have no place to worship our God; and behold, what shall we do?”

⁶ And now when Alma heard this, he turned him about, his face immediately towards him, and he beheld with great joy; for he beheld that their afflictions had truly humbled them, and that they were in a preparation to hear the word.

Alma₂ Speaks of Humility and Belief

⁷ Therefore he did say no more to the other multitude; but he stretched forth his hand, and cried unto those whom he beheld, who were

truly penitent, and said unto them,⁸ “I behold that ye are lowly in heart; and if so, blessed are ye.⁹ Behold thy brother hath said, ‘What shall we do?—for we are cast out of our synagogues, that we cannot worship our God.’¹⁰ Behold I say unto you, do ye suppose that ye cannot worship God save it be in your synagogues only?¹¹ And moreover, I would ask, do ye suppose that ye must not worship God only once in a week?

¹² “I say unto you, it is well that ye are cast out of your synagogues, that ye may be humble, and that ye may learn wisdom; for it is necessary that ye should learn wisdom; for it is because that ye are cast out, that ye are despised of your brethren because of your exceeding poverty, that ye are brought to a lowliness of heart; for ye are necessarily brought to be humble.¹³ And now, because ye are compelled to be humble blessed are ye; for a man sometimes, if he is compelled to be humble, seeketh repentance; and now surely, whosoever repenteth shall find mercy; and he that findeth mercy and endureth to the end the same shall be saved.

¹⁴ “And now, as I said unto you, that because ye were compelled to be humble ye were blessed, do ye not suppose that they are more blessed who truly humble themselves because of the word?¹⁵ Yea, he that truly humbleth himself, and repenteth of his sins, and endureth to the end, the same shall be blessed—yea, much more blessed than they who are compelled to be humble because of

CHAPTER 32

3: Worship at Zoramite synagogues, including praying at the Rameumpton, is reserved for the middle and upper classes, as determined by their clothing. *Dross*, WB: “any worthless matter separated from the better part.” Two distinct types of poverty are mentioned. **4–5:** It is the poor themselves who take the initiative here, in a collective action. Their exclusion from the synagogues is particularly problematic because they believe they can only pray and worship in such places. *Onidah*, probably different from the hill at 47.5. **6:** Alma turns away from his affluent, more resistant listeners to give his attention to the receptive poor. **7–20:** Alma’s new audience is seeking access to Rameumpton-style worship, but he will show them a better way. Nevertheless, he is careful not to mention the name of Christ, since the denunciation of Nephite Christianity was fundamental to Zoramite religious practices (31.16–17). His task is to keep his listeners engaged, even though his primary message is one that they have already emphatically rejected. **14–15:** Alma appears to be devaluing the constrained humility of his listeners, but at v. 25 he acknowledges that individual situations may be more complex.

their exceeding poverty.¹⁶ Therefore, blessed are they who humble themselves without being compelled to be humble; or rather, in other words, blessed is he that believeth in the word of God, and is baptized without stubbornness of heart, yea, without being brought to know the word, or even compelled to know, before they will believe.

¹⁷ “Yea, there are many who do say, ‘If thou wilt show unto us a sign from heaven, then we shall know of a surety; then we shall believe.’

¹⁸ Now I ask, is this faith? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; for if a man knoweth a thing he hath no cause to believe, for he knoweth it.¹⁹ And now, how much more cursed is he that knoweth the will of God and doeth it not, than he that only believeth, or only hath cause to believe, and falleth into transgression?²⁰ Now of this thing ye must judge. Behold, I say unto you, that it is on the one hand even as it is on the other; and it shall be unto every man according to his work.”

Alma₂ Describes an Experiment in Faith

²¹ “And now as I said concerning faith—faith is not to have a perfect knowledge of things; therefore if ye have faith ye hope for things which are not seen, which are true.²² And now, behold, I say unto you, and I would that ye should remember, that God is merciful

unto all who believe on his name; therefore he desireth, in the first place, that ye should believe, yea, even on his word.²³ And now, he imparteth his word by angels unto men, yea, not only men but women also. Now this is not all; little children do have words given unto them many times, which confound the wise and the learned.

²⁴ “And now, my beloved brethren, as ye have desired to know of me what ye shall do because ye are afflicted and cast out—now I do not desire that ye should suppose that I mean to judge you, only according to that which is true—²⁵ for I do not mean that ye all of you have been compelled to humble yourselves; for I verily believe that there are some among you who would humble themselves, let them be in whatsoever circumstances they might.

²⁶ “Now, as I said concerning faith—that it was not a perfect knowledge—even so it is with my words. Ye cannot know of their surety at first, unto perfection, any more than faith is a perfect knowledge.²⁷ But behold, if ye will awake and arouse your faculties, even to an experiment upon my words, and exercise a particle of faith, yea, even if ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you, even until ye believe in a manner that ye can give place for a portion of my words.

17–18: *There are many who do say*, Alma seems to be thinking of his recent experience with Korihor (see 30.43). Alma draws a distinction between knowledge and faith, and like Korihor, he assumes that the former is derived from direct sensory experiences; cf. 30.15. A miraculous sign from heaven, which could be seen with one’s eyes, would provide that sort of sure knowledge. Note that this type of knowledge is closer to Alma’s own conversion experience. 18–19: While knowledge is desirable, it comes with responsibility, and God will extend greater mercy to those who as yet only believe. 21–42: This passage functions as a rebuttal to Korihor’s assertion at 30.15 that “ye cannot know of things which ye do not see.” Alma here explains a process by which faith in unseen things can lead to knowledge. His larger argument seems to be that while some people may be given “perfect knowledge” as to spiritual things (as with his own encounter with an angel or Korihor’s being struck dumb), it is not necessarily an advantage over those who hear the word and then exercise faith, since (1) the former group will be held more accountable (vv. 17–20), and (2) faith can become its own empirical experience for those who allow it to operate within themselves. 21: *Faith . . . hope . . . things which are not seen*, cf. Heb 11.1. According to Alma, genuine faith requires that the objects of such faith be true. 24: *Only*, except. 26: The verse begins with resumptive repetition from v. 21. Alma has shifted the focus of faith from God’s word (vv. 22–23) to his own words, thus putting himself into the role of an angel-like messenger. In v. 28 he will talk about “the word,” which modern readers may associate with Jn 1.1. 27: Belief can begin with the deliberate opening of one’s heart, or even a *desire to believe*.

²⁸ “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.’²⁹ Now behold, would not this increase your faith? I say unto you, Yea; nevertheless it hath not grown up to a perfect knowledge.

³⁰ “But behold, as the seed swelleth, and sprouteth, and beginneth to grow, then you must needs say that the seed is good; for behold it swelleth, and sprouteth, and beginneth to grow.³¹ And now, behold,^a are ye sure that this is a good seed? I say unto you, Yea; for every seed bringeth forth unto its own likeness.³² Therefore, if a seed groweth it is good, but if it groweth not, behold it is not good, therefore it is cast away.

³³ “And now, behold, because ye have tried the experiment, and planted the seed, and it

swelleth and sprouteth, and beginneth to grow, ye must needs know that the seed is good.³⁴ And now, behold, is your knowledge perfect? Yea, your knowledge is perfect in that thing, and your faith is dormant; and this because you know, for ye know that the word hath swelled your souls, and ye also know that it hath sprouted up, that your understanding doth begin to be enlightened, and your mind doth begin to expand.³⁵ O then, is not this real? I say unto you, Yea, because it is light; and whatsoever is light, is good, because it is discernible, therefore ye must know that it is good; and now behold, after ye have tasted this light is your knowledge perfect?³⁶ Behold I say unto you, Nay; neither must ye lay aside your faith, for ye have only exercised your faith to plant the seed that ye might try the experiment to know if the seed was good.

³⁷ “And behold, as the tree beginneth to grow, ye will say, ‘Let us nourish it with great care, that it may get root, that it may grow up,

^a ³¹ O, P, 1981 [³⁰] beginneth to grow. *And now, behold, will not this strengthen your faith? Yea, it will strengthen your faith: for ye will say, ‘I know that this is a good seed; for behold it sprouteth and beginneth to grow.’*³¹ And now, behold,

28: Alma begins an extended analogy in which *the word*, in the hearts of his listeners, is compared to a seed planted in the ground. The “word” that Alma invites them to experiment upon is later defined by Amulek as being “in Christ unto salvation” (Alma 34.3–6), though here Alma defers that identification, presumably to forestall the negative response that mentioning Christ’s name would evoke from the Zoramites. *Good seed*, for the experiment to work, the seed itself must be viable, in accordance with the assumption in v. 21. Growth is the indicator of viability, though *swelling motions* and enlarging souls are more reminiscent of animal gestation than plant development. *Delicious*, because it would be difficult to taste something internal to one’s heart, an alternate meaning from WB is preferable here: “most pleasing to the mind”; nevertheless, the standard definition will apply to the feasting in v. 42. **29:** Note that faith itself is not the seed; the word is the seed and faith increases as the word develops. **30:** The swelling and sprouting of seeds can happen slowly, almost imperceptibly from hour to hour, yet over days and weeks such growth is undeniable. **34–36:** Knowledge can come in stages, so that faith remains operative even after one has a sure knowledge of the goodness of the seed. **34:** *In that thing*, that is, that the seed is good. *Dormant*, in a striking reversal, the germination of once-dormant seeds results in faith becoming dormant, at least with respect to having sure knowledge of the viability of the seed. **35:** *Light* mixes in yet another metaphor. Perhaps it is related to the “enlightenment” of the previous verse, though a light that can be *tasted* suggests poetic license. **37–40:** Just as the growth of a seedling can be hindered by lack of nutrients, so also emergent faith requires *nourishment* and *great care*. **37:** Only here does it become evident that the seed is from a fruit tree; at v. 40 we learn it is from the tree of life. The plural pronouns suggest that nourishing the word in faith can be done as a community, and not just as an individual endeavor.

and bring forth fruit unto us.’ And now behold, if ye nourish it with much care it will get root, and grow up, and bring forth fruit.³⁸ But if ye neglect the tree, and take no thought for its nourishment, behold it will not get any root; and when the heat of the sun cometh and scorseth it, because it hath no root it withers away, and ye pluck it up and cast it out.³⁹ Now, this is not because the seed was not good, neither is it because the fruit thereof would not be desirable; but it is because your ground is barren, and ye will not nourish the tree, therefore ye cannot have the fruit thereof.⁴⁰ And thus, if ye will not nourish the word, looking forward with an eye of faith to the fruit thereof, ye can never pluck of the fruit of the tree of life.

⁴¹ “But if ye will nourish the word, yea, nourish the tree as it beginneth to grow, by your faith with great diligence, and with patience, looking forward to the fruit thereof, it shall take root; and behold it shall be a tree springing up unto everlasting life.⁴² And because of your diligence and your faith and your patience with the word in nourishing it, that it may take root in you, behold, by and by

ye shall pluck the fruit thereof, which is most precious, which is sweet above all that is sweet, and which is white above all that is white, yea, and pure above all that is pure; and ye shall feast upon this fruit even until ye are filled, that ye hunger not, neither shall ye thirst.⁴³ Then, my brethren, ye shall reap the rewards of your faith, and your diligence, and patience, and long-suffering, waiting for the tree to bring forth fruit unto you.”

Alma₂ Quotes the Prophet Zenos on Prayer

33 ¹ Now after Alma had spoken these words, they sent forth unto him desiring to know whether they should believe in one God, that they might obtain this fruit of which he had spoken, or how they should plant the seed, or the word of which he had spoken, which he said must be planted in their hearts; or in what manner they should begin to exercise their faith.

² And Alma said unto them, “Behold, ye have said that ye could not worship your God

38: *Sum... scorseth... because it hath no root it withers away*, phrases paralleled in the parable of the sower at Mt 13.6; Mk 4.6. **39:** Just because a seedling withers does not mean that the seed itself was defective; so also it is with the word. **40:** Faith is defined here as imagining or expecting positive results from opening one’s heart to the word. *Eye of faith*, see 5.15n. **41–43:** The combination of *diligence* and *patience*, in conjunction with faith, occurs three times in three verses. **42:** *That it may take root in you*, Alma had spoken earlier of the importance of internalizing the divine word at 12.13 (cf. Ammon at 26.13); for NT examples, see Jn 8.37; Col 3.16; 1 Jn 1.10; 2.14. Fruit that is *precious, sweet, and white* echoes Lehi’s dream of the tree of life at 1 Ne 8.11; 15.36. *By and by*, WB: “in a short time after; presently; soon.”

CHAPTERS 33–34

Alma and Amulek’s subsequent preaching to the Zoramites exhibits a chiasm structure:

- a) poem on prayer (33.4–11)
- b) Brass Plates testimonies of the Son of God (33.12–20)
- c) Alma’s personal witness of Christ (33.21–22)
- c’) Amulek’s personal witness of Christ (34.8)
- b’) Nephite testimonies of the atonement of the Son of God (34.9–16)
- a’) poem on prayer (34.18–25)

CHAPTER 33

The crowd sends forward three questions about how to implement Alma’s teachings. He and Amulek will answer them in reverse order, with instructions about prayer (vv. 2–11; “in what manner they should begin to exercise their faith”); about the Son of God (vv. 12–23; “how they should plant the seed, or the word”); and about how Christ can be both the Eternal God and the Son of God (34.1–16; “whether they should believe in one God”).

1: It appears that Alma has successfully prepared their minds or hearts to receive the word, as the Spirit was said to have done at 16.16; cf. 34.3. *One God*, see the Zoramite confession of faith at 31.17. **2:** *Ye have said*, see 32.5.

because ye are cast out of your synagogues. But behold, I say unto you, if ye suppose that ye cannot worship God, ye do greatly err, and ye ought to search the scriptures; if ye suppose that they have taught you this, ye do not understand them.³ Do ye remember to have read what Zenos, the prophet of old, has said concerning prayer or worship?

⁴ “For he said:

‘Thou art merciful, O God,
for thou hast heard my prayer,
even when I was in the wilderness;
yea, thou wast merciful
when I prayed concerning those
who were mine enemies,
and thou didst turn them to me.

⁵ Yea, O God, and thou wast merciful
unto me
when I did cry unto thee in my
field;
when I did cry unto thee in my prayer,
and thou didst hear me.

⁶ And again, O God, when I did turn
to my house
thou didst hear me in my prayer.

⁷ And when I did turn unto my closet,
O Lord,
and prayed unto thee,
thou didst hear me.

⁸ Yea, thou art merciful unto thy
children
when they cry unto thee,

to be heard of thee and not of men,
and thou wilt hear them.

⁹ Yea, O God, thou hast been merciful
unto me,
and heard my cries in the midst of
thy congregations.

¹⁰ Yea, and thou hast also heard me
when I have been cast out and have
been despised by mine enemies;
yea, thou didst hear my cries,
and wast angry with mine enemies,
and thou didst visit them in thine
anger with speedy destruction.

¹¹ And thou didst hear me
because of mine afflictions and my
sincerity.

And it is because of thy Son
that thou hast been thus merciful
unto me,
therefore I will cry unto thee in all
mine afflictions,
for in thee is my joy;
for thou hast turned thy judgments
away from me,
because of thy Son.’”

Alma₂ Quotes Brass Plates Prophets Who Have Spoken of the Son of God

¹² And now Alma said unto them, “Do ye believe those scriptures which have been written by them of old? ¹³ Behold, if ye do, ye must believe what Zenos said; for, behold he said,

3: The words of Zenos were on the Brass Plates, but are not in the OT. Even though the Zoramites rejected Nephite Christianity, they still accepted the authority of Old World scripture. **4–11:** A thanksgiving psalm in which God’s mercy is made manifest in his hearing of prayers. God hears prayers spoken in the wilderness, in fields, in houses, and in private rooms; not just those offered up in synagogues; cf. 32.5. **4:** Unusually for psalmic literature, God here makes Zenos’s enemies his friends (contrast v. 10). This, of course, is also Alma’s goal at Antionum. **7: Closet,** WB: “a small room,” as at Mt 6.6. **8:** *To be heard of thee and not of men*, see Mt 6.5–6, where Jesus condemns hypocrites who “love to pray standing in the synagogues”; cf. 31.13–14. **9:** *In the midst of thy congregations*, Ps 74.4, “within your holy place” (NRSV); cf. Ps 22.22. **10:** *Speedy destruction*, as suggested by this quotation from the Brass Plates, the Zoramites will be destroyed within a year (see chs. 43–44). **11:** Kings in ancient Israel were sometimes thought of as adopted sons of God (2 Sam 7.14; Ps 2.7; 89.26–27); here, however, the implications appear christological since *turned thy judgments away from me, because of thy Son* suggests some sort of mediation or vicarious atonement. **12–13:** Alma pivots from prayer practices to the *Son of God*, grounding both arguments in the *scriptures*.

‘Thou hast turned away thy judgments because of thy Son.’^a ¹⁴ Now behold, my brethren, I would ask if ye have read the scriptures? If ye have, how can ye disbelieve on the Son of God?

¹⁵ “For it is not written that Zenos alone spake of these things, but Zenock also spake of these things— ¹⁶ For behold, he said, ‘Thou art angry, O Lord, with this people, because they will not understand thy mercies which thou hast bestowed upon them because of thy Son.’ ¹⁷ And now, my brethren, ye see that a second prophet of old has testified of the Son of God, and because the people would not understand his words they stoned him to death.

¹⁸ “But behold, this is not all; these are not the only ones who have spoken concerning the Son of God. ¹⁹ Behold, he was spoken of by Moses; yea, and behold a type was raised up in the wilderness, that whosoever would look upon it might live. And many did look and live. ²⁰ But few understood the meaning of those things, and this because of the hardness of their hearts. But there were many who were so hardened that they would not look, therefore they perished. Now the reason they would not look is because they did not believe that it would heal them.

²¹ “O my brethren, if ye could be healed by merely casting about your eyes that ye might be healed,^b would ye not behold quickly, or would ye rather harden your hearts in unbelief, and be slothful, that ye would not cast about your eyes, that ye might perish? ²² If so, wo shall come upon you; but if not so, then cast about your eyes and begin to believe in the Son of God, that he will come to redeem his people, and that he shall suffer and die to atone for their sins; and that he shall rise again from the dead, which shall bring to pass the resurrection, that all men shall stand before him, to be judged at the last and judgment day, according to their works.

²³ “And now, my brethren, I desire that ye shall plant this word in your hearts, and as it beginneth to swell even so nourish it by your faith. And behold, it will become a tree, springing up in you unto everlasting life. And then may God grant unto you that your burdens may be light, through the joy of his Son. And even all this can ye do if ye will. Amen.”

^a ¹³ See v. 11 above.

^b ²¹ O that ye might behold

15: *Zenock*, see 1 Ne 19.10. **16–17:** *Will not*, that is, “refuse to” or “do not wish”; the same meaning is found at *would not* in the next verse. **19a:** *Spoken of by Moses*, Deut 18.15, 18–19; 1 Ne 22.20; 3 Ne 20.23 (Acts 3.22–23). **19b–20:** Alma asserts that the bronze serpent in the wilderness was a type of Christ, referring to events narrated at Num 21.4–9; cf. Jn 3.14–15. The description here, and at 1 Ne 17.41, includes the extra-biblical detail that many Israelites refused to even look at the image because of their unbelief, and consequently died. **21:** Alma suggests that believing in Christ’s coming is an easy option, much like casting a glance in a certain direction. **22:** This is Alma’s catechism of Nephite beliefs about Christ, and appears to be what he referred to as “the word” in ch. 32. **23:** Alma concludes by returning to his metaphor of the word planted like a seed and nourished by faith, but this time connecting it to the Son of God. In fact, his summary combines *plant... in your hearts... swell* from the first verse of the seed analogy (32.28) with *a tree springing up... unto everlasting life* from its conclusion (32.41). The quoted phrases frame the passage as a discrete literary unit; the same rhetorical device can be seen at 2 Ne 4.25; Alma 31.37–38; and 3 Ne 18.32. *Your burdens may be light*, an image that only occurs in connection with Alma’s people, at Mos 18.8 and 24.15 (though with echoes of Mt 11.28–30). Alma does not promise his listeners that their burdens, including poverty and social stigma, will be removed.

Amulek's Discourse to the Poor among the Zoramites₂: Alma 34

Amulek Explains the Plan of Redemption through Christ

34¹ And now it came to pass that after Alma had spoken these words unto them he sat down upon the ground, and Amulek arose and began to teach them, saying,² “My brethren, I think that it is impossible that ye should be ignorant of the things which have been spoken concerning the coming of Christ, who is taught by us to be the Son of God; yea, I know that these things were taught unto you bountifully before your dissension from among us.³ And as ye have desired of my beloved brother that he should make known unto you what ye should do, because of your afflictions; and he hath spoken somewhat unto you to prepare your minds; yea, and he hath exhorted you unto faith and to patience—⁴ yea, even that ye would have so much faith as even to plant the word in your hearts, that ye may try the experiment of its goodness.

⁵ “And we have beheld that the great question which is in your minds is whether the word be in the Son of God, or whether there shall be no Christ.⁶ And ye also beheld that my brother has proved unto you, in many

instances, that the word is in Christ unto salvation.⁷ My brother has called upon the words of Zenos, that redemption cometh through the Son of God, and also upon the words of Zenock; and also he has appealed unto Moses, to prove that these things are true.

⁸ “And now, behold, I will testify unto you of myself that these things are true. Behold, I say unto you, that I do know that Christ shall come among the children of men, to take upon him the transgressions of his people, and that he shall atone for the sins of the world; for the Lord God hath spoken it.⁹ For it is expedient that an atonement should be made; for according to the great plan of the Eternal God there must be an atonement made, or else all mankind must unavoidably perish; yea, all are hardened; yea, all are fallen and are lost, and must perish except it be through the atonement which it is expedient should be made.¹⁰ For it is expedient that there should be a great and last sacrifice; yea, not a sacrifice of man, neither of beast, neither of any manner of fowl; for it shall not be a human sacrifice; but it must be an infinite and eternal sacrifice.

¹¹ “Now there is not any man that can sacrifice his own blood which will atone for the sins of another. Now, if a man murdereth, behold will our law, which is just, take the life of his brother? I say unto you, Nay.¹² But the

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1–16: As in Ammonihah, Alma's initial sermon is followed by confirming testimony from Amulek; see chs. 9–11. In fact, Amulek's comments here draw heavily on his and Alma's prior teachings at Ammonihah. **2:** For the first time, the missionaries use the name of Christ, whose rejection was a prominent feature of the Rameumpton prayer; see 31.16–17. Amulek identifies Christ as the *Son of God*, spoken of by Alma at 33.14–23. *Your dissension from among us*, see 30.59; 31.1–2. **5–6:** The initial concern of the poor in Antionum was that they were excluded from Zoramite synagogue worship; Alma and Amulek have now turned the discussion toward a condemnation of the content of Zoramite beliefs, hoping to lead their hearers to a superior form of worship. *Zenos... Zenock... Moses*; see 33.12–19. **8–16:** *For the Lord God hath spoken it*, reference uncertain, but several of the phrases in this and the following verses occurred earlier in the BoM in the teachings of Lehi, Nephi, Jacob, King Benjamin, and Abinadi, including “come among the children of men,” “transgression of his people,” “sins of the world,” “the Eternal God,” “unavoidably perish,” “infinite atonement,” “bowels of mercy,” and “demands of justice.” Amulek alludes to the words of Nephite prophets as a counterpart to the teachings of Brass Plates prophets cited by Alma at 33.12–19. His comment at v. 30 indicates that he thinks he has been citing scripture. **8:** Amulek corroborates Alma's testimony at 33.22 as a second witness. **10:** The phrase *great and last sacrifice* appears only in this chapter (four times); it may be original to the BoM. Animal sacrifices were integral to the law of Moses; human sacrifice, of course, was not. **11–12:** The understanding of atonement here appears to draw on satisfaction and substitutionary theories, which argued that committing sin breaks a moral law and incurs a debt to God (or to “justice” as in v. 16), and that Christ suffered in the place of sinners to pay that debt.

law requireth the life of him who hath murdered; therefore there can be nothing which is short of an infinite atonement which will suffice for the sins of the world.¹³ Therefore, it is expedient that there should be a great and last sacrifice, and then shall there be, or it is expedient there should be, a stop to the shedding of blood; then shall the law of Moses be fulfilled; yea, it shall be all fulfilled, every jot and tittle, and none shall have passed away.¹⁴ And behold, this is the whole meaning of the law, every whit pointing to that great and last sacrifice; and that great and last sacrifice will be the Son of God, yea, infinite and eternal.

¹⁵ “And thus he shall bring salvation to all those who shall believe on his name; this being the intent of this last sacrifice, to bring about the bowels of mercy, which overpowereth justice, and bringeth about means unto men that they may have faith unto repentance.¹⁶ And thus mercy can satisfy the demands of justice, and encircles them in the arms of safety, while he that exercises no faith unto repentance is exposed to the whole law of the demands of justice; therefore only unto him that has faith unto repentance is brought about the great and eternal plan of redemption.”

Amulek Urges the Zoramites₂ to Pray

¹⁷ “Therefore may God grant unto you, my brethren, that ye may begin to exercise your

faith unto repentance, that ye begin to call upon his holy name, that he would have mercy upon you.

¹⁸ Yea, cry unto him for mercy;
for he is mighty to save.

¹⁹ Yea, humble yourselves,
and continue in prayer unto him.

²⁰ Cry unto him when ye are in your
fields,
yea, over all your flocks.

²¹ Cry unto him in your houses,
yea, over all your household,
both morning, mid-day, and evening.

²² Yea, cry unto him against the power
of your enemies.

²³ Yea, cry unto him against the devil,
who is an enemy to all righteousness.

²⁴ Cry unto him over the crops of your
fields,
that ye may prosper in them.

²⁵ Cry over the flocks of your fields,
that they may increase.

²⁶ “But this is not all; ye must pour out your souls in your closets, and your secret places, and in your wilderness.²⁷ Yea, and when you do not cry unto the Lord, let your hearts be full, drawn out in prayer unto him continually for your welfare, and also for the welfare of those who are around you.

13: *All fulfilled, every jot and tittle* draws on phrasing from Mt 5.18. *Jot* (*yodb*, the smallest letter in Hebrew) and *tittle* (the least line or stroke that differentiates one Hebrew letter from another) refer to the smallest differences that can nevertheless matter. **14:** Christ’s sacrifice would be *infinite*, in that its scope was unlimited, and *eternal* in the sense that its efficacy would be everlasting. Such a sacrifice would both fulfill the law of Moses and remove the need for any further animal sacrifices. **15–17:** The quadruple repetition of *faith unto repentance* (a phrase unique to these four verses) suggests that faith alone, or simply planting the seed, is not enough; it must be followed by a change of heart to be efficacious. **17–29:** This section is Amulek’s response to Zenos’s teachings about prayer, quoted by Alma at 33.4–11. Amulek offers instructions concerning where and when to pray, and what to pray for—all of which stands in sharp contrast with the Rameumpton prayer of the wealthy Zoramites; see 31.12–23. The anaphora (six lines beginning with “cry unto him”) in vv. 18–24 is noteworthy. **22:** Given the pattern in the surrounding verses, this verse appears to be missing a second half. **27–29:** It is not enough to ask God to help others; personal acts of sacrifice and generosity are required as well. This again is a condemnation of the pious Zoramites, and Amulek’s audience have felt the effects of such neglect firsthand. His listeners had originally wanted to enjoy the same religious privileges as their richer brethren; now Amulek is warning them that the sort of prayer life they longed for is meaningless.

²⁸ “And now behold, my beloved brethren, I say unto you, do not suppose that this is all; for after ye have done all these things, if ye turn away the needy, and the naked, and visit not the sick and afflicted, and impart of your substance, if ye have, to those who stand in need—I say unto you, if ye do not any of these things, behold, your prayer is vain, and availeth you nothing, and ye are as hypocrites who do deny the faith.” ²⁹ Therefore, if ye do not remember to be charitable, ye are as dross, which the refiners do cast out, (it being of no worth) and is trodden under foot of men.”

Amulek Urges the Zoramites₂ to Repent

³⁰ “And now, my brethren, I would that, after ye have received so many witnesses, seeing that the holy scriptures testify of these things, ye come forth and bring fruit unto repentance. ³¹ Yea, I would that ye would come forth and harden not your hearts any longer; for behold, now is the time and the day of your salvation; and therefore, if ye will repent and harden not your hearts, immediately shall the great plan of redemption be brought about unto you. ³² For behold, this life is the time for men to

prepare to meet God; yea, behold the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors.

³³ “And now, as I said unto you before, as ye have had so many witnesses, therefore, I beseech of you that ye do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end; for after this day of life, which is given us to prepare for eternity, behold, if we do not improve our time while in this life, then cometh the night of darkness wherein there can be no labor performed. ³⁴ Ye cannot say, when ye are brought to that awful crisis, that ‘I will repent,’ that ‘I will return to my God.’^a Nay, ye cannot say this; for that same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world. ³⁵ For behold, if ye have procrastinated the day of your repentance even until death, behold, ye have become subjected to the spirit of the devil, and he doth seal you his; therefore, the Spirit of the Lord hath withdrawn from you,

^a ³⁴ Or ‘I will repent [so] that I will return to my God.’

28: Similar lists can be found at Mos 4.26; Alma 4.12–13. *Deny the faith*, at 1 Tim 5.8 this is the spiritual condition of those who refuse to provide for their relatives; here the requirement of faithfulness is expanded to providing for all who are needy or afflicted. **29:** The Zoramite poor once suffered because they were treated like “dross” (32.3); Amulek’s point here is that they are not worthless because they are poor, but they may indeed become *as dross* if they are uncharitable. *Cast out... trodden under foot of men*, Mt 5.13; both phrases were used in describing Korihor’s tragic end (see 30.56, 59), which had happened among the Zoramites. **30:** The *fruit unto repentance* in this verse may be a mistake for “faith unto repentance,” as in 34.15, 16, 17. While there are both biblical and BoM precedents for bringing forth “fruit(s) meet for repentance” (Mt 3.8; Lk 3.8; Alma 12.15; 13.13), the fruit mentioned eleven times in chs. 32–33 is that of the tree of life, a very different metaphor. Nevertheless, the *fruit unto repentance* may refer to the charitable acts of vv. 28–29. **31–32:** *Now is the time... the day of your salvation* and the *time for men to prepare to meet God* were both significant phrases in Alma’s preaching at Ammonihah (13.21; 12.24), an occasion at which Amulek was present. **33–35:** The idea here that repentance can only happen in mortality, and that one’s eternal fate is sealed at death, was revised in later LDS theology. **33:** *Beseech*, WB: “to entreat; to implore; to ask or pray with urgency.” *Do not procrastinate the day of your repentance*, only here, v. 35, and 13.27, where Alma similarly warned the people of Ammonihah, with tragic consequences. *Improve*, WB: “to use or employ to good purpose.” *Then cometh the night... no labor performed*, cf. Jn 9.4; 3 Ne 27.33. **34:** A similar belief about one’s attitude at the moment of death was presumed by Ammon at 20.17; cf. Moro 8.14. *That same spirit which doth possess your bodies*, either the spirit of the devil or the spirit of the Lord. **35:** *Seal you his*, only here and at Mos 5.15, where this is done by Christ. *The Spirit... hath no place in you, and the devil hath all power over you*, phrases from Alma’s condemnation of Korihor at 30.42; cf. 2 Ne 33.2; Mos 2.36–37; 16.5.

and hath no place in you, and the devil hath all power over you; and this is the final state of the wicked.

³⁶ “And this I know, because the Lord hath said he dwelleth not in unholy temples, but in the hearts of the righteous doth he dwell; yea, and he has also said that the righteous shall sit down in his kingdom, to go no more out; but their garments should be made white through the blood of the Lamb.

³⁷ “And now, my beloved brethren, I desire that ye should remember these things, and that ye should work out your salvation with fear before God, and that ye should no more deny the coming of Christ; ³⁸ that ye contend no more against the Holy Ghost, but that ye receive it, and take upon you the name of Christ; that ye humble yourselves even to the dust, and worship God, in whatsoever place ye may be in, in spirit and in truth; and that ye live in thanksgiving daily, for the many mercies and blessings which he doth bestow upon you.

³⁹ “Yea, and I also exhort you, my brethren, that ye be watchful unto prayer continually, that ye may not be led away by the temptation of the devil, that he may not overpower you, that ye may not become his subjects at the last day; for behold, he rewardeth you no good thing.

⁴⁰ “And now my beloved brethren, I would exhort you to have patience, and that ye bear

with all manner of afflictions; that ye do not revile against those who do cast you out because of your exceeding poverty, lest ye become sinners like unto them; ⁴¹ but that ye have patience, and bear with those afflictions, with a firm hope that ye shall one day rest from all your afflictions.”

Repentant Zoramites₂ Are Cast Out

35 ¹ Now it came to pass that after Amulek had made an end of these words, they withdrew themselves from the multitude and came over into the land of Jershon. ² Yea, and the rest of the brethren, after they had preached the word unto the Zoramites, also came over into the land of Jershon.

³ And it came to pass that after the more popular part of the Zoramites had consulted together concerning the words which had been preached unto them, they were angry because of the word, for it did destroy their craft; therefore they would not hearken unto the words. ⁴ And they sent and gathered together throughout all the land all the people, and consulted with them concerning the words which had been spoken. ⁵ Now their rulers and their priests and their teachers did not let the people know concerning their desires; therefore they found out privily the minds of

36: In this life, the Lord will dwell in the hearts of the righteous; after they die, they will dwell forever with him in his kingdom. *The Lord hath said... unholy temples*, see Mos 2:37; Alma 7:21. *Sit down... go no more out*, see 7:25n. *Garments... white through the blood of the Lamb*, Rev 7:14 and six times in the BoM, including Alma 13:11 at Ammonihah. **37–39:** In contrast to Rameumpton-style worship, the Zoramite poor are enjoined to accept Christ, show humility, worship in any location, give thanks daily, and pray continually. **37:** *Work out your salvation with fear*, cf. Phil 2:12. **38:** *Worship God... in spirit and in truth*, Jn 4:23–24; Alma 43:10. **39:** *Become* [the devil’s] *subjects* (also v. 35), perhaps an allusion to Korihor’s fate at 30:60; but see 2 Ne 9:8; Mos 16:3, 11; Alma 5:20; Moro 7:17. **40:** Amulek counsels patience and warns against retaliatory sins.

CHAPTER 35

Jershon was north of Antionum, the land of the Zoramites; see 31:3. **2:** *The word*, see 33:22n. **3:** *Popular*, held in high esteem, or supported by the people; cf. 1:3. *Craft*, priestcraft; see 2 Ne 26:29n. **4:** *Privily*, WB: “privately; secretly.”

all the people.⁶ And it came to pass that after they had found out the minds of all the people, those who were in favor of the words which had been spoken by Alma and his brethren were cast out of the land; and they were many; and they came over also into the land of Jershon.⁷ And it came to pass that Alma and his brethren did minister unto them.

⁸ Now the people of the Zoramites were angry with the people of Ammon who were in Jershon, and the chief ruler of the Zoramites, being a very wicked man, sent over unto the people of Ammon desiring them that they should cast out of their land all those who came over from them into their land.⁹ And he breathed out many threatenings against them. And now the people of Ammon did not fear their words; therefore they did not cast them out, but they did receive all the poor of the Zoramites that came over unto them; and they did nourish them, and did clothe them, and did give unto them lands for their inheritance; and they did administer unto them according to their wants.

The Zoramites₂ Ally Themselves with the Lamanites

¹⁰ Now this did stir up the Zoramites to anger against the people of Ammon, and they began to mix with the Lamanites and to stir them up also to anger against them.¹¹ And thus the Zoramites and the Lamanites began to make preparations for war against

the people of Ammon, and also against the Nephites.¹² And thus ended the seventeenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi.¹³

¹³ And the people of Ammon departed out of the land of Jershon, and came over into the land of Melek, and gave place in the land of Jershon for the armies of the Nephites, that they might contend with the armies of the Lamanites and the armies of the Zoramites; and thus commenced a war betwixt the Lamanites and the Nephites, in the eighteenth year of the reign of the judges;¹⁴ and an account shall be given of their wars hereafter.

¹⁴ And Alma, and Ammon, and their brethren, and also the two sons of Alma returned to the land of Zarahemla, after having been instruments in the hands of God of bringing many of the Zoramites to repentance; and as many as were brought to repentance were driven out of their land; but they have lands for their inheritance in the land of Jershon, and they have taken up arms to defend themselves, and their wives, and children, and their lands.

Introduction to Alma₂'s Testimony to His Sons

¹⁵ Now Alma, being grieved for the iniquity of his people, yea for the wars, and the bloodsheds, and the contentions which were among

^a 12 -75 years; see Alma 30.5

^b 13 -74 years

8: *The people of Ammon*, the Anti-Nephi-Lehies; see 27.26. **9:** *Give unto them lands for their inheritance*, the people of Ammon are responding to the Zoramite poor in the same way they themselves were treated by the Nephites; see 27.22. They also model the faith enjoined by Amulek at 34.28. *According to their wants*, the converted Lamanites are here following the examples of the people of Benjamin and the people of Alma; see Mos 4.26; 18.29. *Wants*, WB: "deficiencies; needs." **10-13:** This was the very outcome that Alma's mission to the Zoramites was intended to prevent (see 31.3-5); instead, his preaching and the resulting conversions became a major cause of the impending war. The narrator will deflect readers from making this connection too readily by delaying his account of the war until ch. 43. **12:** The events of chs. 30-35 have played out quickly in the latter end of the seventeenth year; see 30.6; 31.1. **13:** The pacifist people of Ammon are moved out of the land of Jershon after being settled there less than three years earlier; see ch. 27. *Melek*, the current hometown of two of the missionaries: Amulek and Zeezrom (31.6). *An account shall be given... hereafter*, in chs. 43-44. **14:** *The two sons of Alma*, Shiblon and Corianton; see 31.7. *Taken up arms to defend... their lands*, it is likely that the Zoramite refugees had never owned land when they lived in Antionum, hence their willingness to fight now.

ALMA 36: EXTENDED CHIASMUS

- a) My son, give ear to my **words** (v. 1)
- b) **Keep the commandments** and ye shall **prosper in the land** (1)
- c) Do **as** I have done (2)
- d) **Remember the captivity** of our fathers (2)
- e) They were in **bondage** (2)
- f) He surely did **deliver** them (2)
- g) **Put their trust** in God (3)
- h) Supported in **trials, troubles, and afflictions** (3)
- i) Lifted up at the **last day** (3)
- j) **I know** this not of myself but **of God** (4)
- k) If I had not been **born of God** (5)
- l) I sought to destroy the church (6–9)
- m) My **limbs** were paralyzed (10)
- n) Fear of being in the presence of God (14–15)
- o) **Pains** of a damned soul (16)
- p) **Harrowed up by the memory of my many sins** (17)
- q) I remembered **Jesus Christ, a son of God** (17)
- q') I cried, **Jesus, son of God** (18)
- p') **Harrowed up by the memory of my sins** no more (19)
- o') Joy as exceeding as was my **pain** (20)
- n') Longing to be in the presence of God (22)
- m') My **limbs** received strength again (23)
- l') I labored to bring souls unto repentance (24)
- k') Many have been **born of God** (26)
- j') **My knowledge** is **of God** (26)
- h') Supported under **trials, troubles, and afflictions** (27)
- g') **Put my trust** in him (27)
- f') He will **deliver** me (27)
- i') and **raise me up at the last day** (28)
- e') God brought our fathers out of **bondage** and captivity (28–29)
- d') Retain in **remembrance their captivity** (28–29)
- c') Know **as I** do know (30)
- b') **Keep the commandments** and ye shall **prosper in the land** (30)
- a') This according to his **word** (30)

Adapted from John W. Welch, in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, ed. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1991), 117.

them; and having been to declare the word, or sent to declare the word, among all the people in every city; and seeing that the hearts of the people began to wax hard, and that they began to be offended because of the strictness of the word, his heart was exceeding sorrowful. ¹⁶ Therefore, he caused that his sons should be gathered together, that he might give unto them every one his charge, separately, concerning the things pertaining unto righteousness. And we have an account of his commandments, which he gave unto them according to his own record.

Alma₂'s Testimony to His Sons: Alma 36–42

Alma₂'s Words to Helaman₂: Alma 36–37
[Mormon's heading] The commandments of Alma to his son Helaman.

16: *According to his own record*, since Alma 36–42 is written in the first-person narrative voice, it appears that Mormon has copied Alma's own account directly into the text.

CHAPTERS 36–42

The narrator's account of the eighteenth year, which began at 35.13, will be resumed at 43.3. The three sermons that Alma delivers to his sons Helaman, Shiblon, and Corianton constitute a lengthy digression that separates the immediate cause of the Zoramite war from the war itself. While these chapters take the form of deathbed blessings (cf. 2 Ne 1–4), they are in fact words of counsel given before Alma sends his sons out to preach at 43.1–2. His actual last words, given a year later, are reported in ch. 45. The three exhortations that follow parallel the three sermons that Alma gave at the cities of Zarahemla, Gideon, and Ammonihah in length, themes, and tone (see chs. 5; 7; 9–13).

CHAPTERS 36–37

Alma's counsel to Helaman centers on entrusting the treasures of Nephite heritage to his oldest son. In ch. 36, Alma passes on his spiritual patrimony, while ch. 37 focuses on physical artifacts. Alma 36, a polished account of his conversion experience (see Mos 27), is organized into a chiasmic structure, in which key elements are set forth and then reiterated in reverse order, with the pivot at the doubling of "Jesus...Son of God" in vv. 17 and 18. Because Alma 36–37 was originally a single chapter, Alma XVII, there are additional rhetorical and thematic connections between the two current chapters. For example, three principles referenced early in the chiasmus at ch. 36 ("keep the commandments...prosper" [v. 1; expanded in v. 30]; "remember the captivity of our fathers...[God] did deliver them" [v. 2; expanded in vv. 28–29]); "trust in God...supported in trials...lifted up at the last day" [v. 3; expanded in vv. 27–28]) are reiterated with specific applications at 37.13–16, 44–46, 35–37, respectively. The expansions and reiterations suggest that repentance, as typified in Alma's chiasmus, is not simply a return to one's initial state of innocence ("born of God"), but a path to move forward into a better, wiser life.

CHAPTER 36

1: An allusion to God's covenant with Lehi at 2 Ne 1.20. **2:** *As I have done, in remembering the captivity of our fathers*, see Mos 27.16n; cf. Alma 5.3–6; 29.11–12. Alma seems to be referring to the people of Limhi and the people of Alma₁; see Mos 23.22; 25.16. **4–5:** Alma attributes his knowledge of God not to human reasoning or desire, but to a spiritual transformation brought about by an angel—a visitation that he did not deserve.

Remembering and Knowing

[XVII] 36 ¹ "My son, give ear to my words; for I swear unto you, that inasmuch as ye shall keep the commandments of God ye shall prosper in the land. ² I would that ye should do as I have done, in remembering the captivity of our fathers; for they were in bondage, and none could deliver them except it was the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; and he surely did deliver them in their afflictions.

³ "And now, O my son Helaman, behold, thou art in thy youth, and therefore, I beseech of thee that thou wilt hear my words and learn of me; for I do know that whosoever shall put their trust in God shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their afflictions, and shall be lifted up at the last day. ⁴ And I would not that ye think that I know of myself—not of the temporal but of the spiritual,

not of the carnal mind but of God.⁵ Now, behold, I say unto you, if I had not been born of God I should not have known these things; but God has, by the mouth of his holy angel, made these things known unto me, not of any worthiness of myself.

Alma₂ Recounts His Conversion

⁶ “For I went about with the sons of Mosiah, seeking to destroy the church of God; but behold, God sent his holy angel to stop us by the way.⁷ And behold, he spake unto us, as it were the voice of thunder, and the whole earth did tremble beneath our feet; and we all fell to the earth, for the fear of the Lord came upon us.⁸ But behold, the voice said unto me, ‘Arise.’ And I arose and stood up, and beheld the angel.⁹ And he said unto me, ‘If thou wilt of thyself be destroyed, seek no more to destroy the church of God.’

¹⁰ “And it came to pass that I fell to the earth; and it was for the space of three days and three nights that I could not open my mouth, neither had I the use of my limbs.¹¹ And the angel spake more things unto me, which were heard by my brethren, but I did not hear them; for when I heard the words ‘If thou wilt be destroyed of thyself, seek no more to destroy the church of God; I was struck with

such great fear and amazement lest perhaps I should be destroyed, that I fell to the earth and I did hear no more.¹² But I was racked with eternal torment, for my soul was harrowed up to the greatest degree and racked with all my sins.

¹³ “Yea, I did remember all my sins and iniquities, for which I was tormented with the pains of hell; yea, I saw that I had rebelled against my God, and that I had not kept his holy commandments.¹⁴ Yea, and I had murdered many of his children, or rather led them away unto destruction; yea, and in fine so great had been my iniquities, that the very thought of coming into the presence of my God did rack my soul with inexpressible horror.¹⁵ ‘Oh,’ thought I, ‘that I could be banished and become extinct both soul and body, that I might not be brought to stand in the presence of my God, to be judged of my deeds.’¹⁶ And now, for three days and for three nights was I racked, even with the pains of a damned soul.

¹⁷ “And it came to pass that as I was thus racked with torment, while I was harrowed up by the memory of my many sins, behold, I remembered also to have heard my father prophesy unto the people concerning the coming of one Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to

6–23: Other accounts of this experience can be found at Mos 27.8–37; Alma 26.17–20; 38.6–8. This version abbreviates the words of the angel and virtually ignores the roles played by his father and the sons of Mosiah, instead focusing on Alma’s subjective experience while he was paralyzed. **6:** *By the way*, on the road. **9:** *If thou wilt of thyself be destroyed*, the meaning would be clearer with an “even” at the beginning (as at Mos 27.16), along the lines of “even if you are determined to destroy yourself.” **10:** This sounds more like paralysis than the death-like state experienced by King Lamoni at 18.42–43. *Three days and three nights* is a time span with significant parallels in the Bible, as at Jon 1.17; Mt 12.40. **12–22:** Alma’s account here of his subjective experience shares several phrases with his words to the crowd at Mos 27.29, including “racked with eternal torment,” “the gall of bitterness,” “remember my pains no more,” and “what marvelous light I did behold.” **12:** Perhaps *racked with* [the prospect of] *eternal torment*, since his anguish turns out to be temporary. **14:** *Murdered*, in the sense of depriving them of eternal life. This is a remarkably harsh metaphor, to which Alma will return at 39.6. *Rack*, WB: “to torment; to affect with extreme pain or anguish.” **15:** Alma feels that nonexistence would be preferable to his feelings of guilt, particularly when he thinks of returning to God. It is perhaps ironic that Alma actually wants to be cut off from the presence of the Lord, which is the penalty for not keeping the commandments according to God’s covenant with Lehi (2 Ne 1.20; alluded to at vv. 1 and 30). **16:** Three days and three nights represents the total time he was incapacitated; Mos 27.22–23 reports that priests fasted for two days and two nights on his behalf. **17:** *A Son of God*, Christian usage more typically emphasizes Christ’s uniqueness with the definite article: “the Son of God.”

atone for the sins of the world.¹⁸ Now, as my mind caught hold upon this thought, I cried within my heart, ‘O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me, who am in the gall of bitterness, and am encircled about by the everlasting chains of death.’

¹⁹ “And now, behold, when I thought this, I could remember my pains no more; yea, I was harrowed up by the memory of my sins no more.²⁰ And oh, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain!²¹ Yea, I say unto you, my son, that there could be nothing so exquisite and so bitter as were my pains. Yea, and again I say unto you, my son, that on the other hand, there can be nothing so exquisite and sweet as was my joy.²² Yea, methought I saw, even as our father Lehi saw, God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels, in the attitude of singing and praising their God; yea, and my soul did long to be there.²³ But behold, my limbs did receive their strength again, and I stood upon my feet, and did manifest unto the people that I had been born of God.

Alma₂ Reports His Post-Conversion Faithfulness

²⁴ “Yea, and from that time even until now, I have labored without ceasing, that I might bring souls unto repentance; that I might bring them to taste of the exceeding joy of which I did taste; that they might also be born

of God, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.²⁵ Yea, and now behold, O my son, the Lord doth give me exceeding great joy in the fruit of my labors;²⁶ for because of the word which he has imparted unto me, behold, many have been born of God, and have tasted as I have tasted, and have seen eye to eye as I have seen; therefore they do know of these things of which I have spoken, as I do know; and the knowledge which I have is of God.

²⁷ And I have been supported under trials and troubles of every kind, yea, and in all manner of afflictions; yea, God has delivered me from prison, and from bonds, and from death; yea, and I do put my trust in him, and he will still deliver me.

²⁸ And I know that he will raise me up at the last day, to dwell with him in glory; yea, and I will praise him forever, for he has brought our fathers out of Egypt, and he has swallowed up the Egyptians in the Red Sea, and he led them by his power into the promised land; yea, and he has delivered them out of bondage and captivity from time to time.

²⁹ Yea, and he has also brought our fathers

18: Alma’s petition is similar to the Eastern Orthodox Jesus Prayer, “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner,” though this was not well-known in 19th c. America; cf. Lk 18.13. **20:** *Exquisite*, unique in this verse; WB: “in the highest degree; extreme; very sensibly felt.” **22:** Twenty-one words in this verse (*saw God... praising their God*) are quoted exactly from 1 Ne 1.8. **23:** Rather than being utterly annihilated, as he had previously wished, Alma now finds himself reborn. *Did manifest unto the people*, his words on that occasion were recorded at Mos 27.23–31. There his message had more application to humanity in general; here he focuses on his individual experience of redemption. *Born of God*, see Mos 27.25n. **24:** The metaphor of tasting joy is unique here, but the combination of tasting God’s goodness and putting one’s trust in him (as in v. 27 below) can be found at Ps 34.8. **26:** *Tasted... seen*, Ps 34.8; note that Ps 34 and 35 (alluded to at 37.15) are the only two psalms that speak of being delivered by an angel—a topic that would have interested Alma. *Seen eye to eye*, Isa 52.8 and several BoM quotations of that verse; cf. Mos 16.1. **27:** *Delivered me from prison*, see 14.26–27. **28–29:** In an expansion of v. 2, Alma now recalls divine deliverances that predate the peoples of Limhi and Alma, *Swallowed up the Egyptians*, see Ex 14.26–28. *Retained in remembrance their captivity*, see 5.6, which specifically includes both physical and spiritual bondage.

out of the land of Jerusalem;
and he has also, by his everlasting power,
delivered them out of bondage and
captivity
from time to time, even down to
the present day.

And I have always retained in remembrance
their captivity; yea, and ye also ought to retain
in remembrance, as I have done, their captivi-
ty.³⁰ But behold, my son, this is not all; for ye
ought to know as I do know that

inasmuch as ye shall keep the com-
mandments of God
ye shall prosper in the land.

And ye ought to know also that

inasmuch as ye will not keep the
commandments of God
ye shall be cut off from his presence.

Now this is according to his word.”

Alma₂ Commands Helaman₂ to Keep and Preserve the Sacred Records

37¹ “And now, my son Helaman, I
command you that ye take the

records which have been entrusted with me;
² and I also command you that ye keep a record
of this people, according as I have done, upon
the plates of Nephi, and keep all these things
sacred which I have kept, even as I have kept
them (for it is for a wise purpose that they are
kept),³ and these plates of brass, which con-
tain these engravings, which have the records
of the holy scriptures upon them, which have
the genealogy of our forefathers, even from the
beginning.

⁴ “Behold, it has been prophesied by our
fathers, that they should be kept and handed
down from one generation to another, and be
kept and preserved by the hand of the Lord
until they should go forth unto every nation,
kindred, tongue, and people, that they shall
know of the mysteries contained thereon.⁵ And
now behold, if they are kept they must retain
their brightness; yea, and they will retain their
brightness; yea, and also shall all the plates
which do contain that which is holy writ.

⁶ “Now ye may suppose that this is foolish-
ness in me; but behold I say unto you, that by
small and simple things are great things brought
to pass; and small means in many instances
doth confound the wise.⁷ And the Lord God
doth work by means to bring about his great
and eternal purposes; and by very small means
the Lord doth confound the wise and bringeth
about the salvation of many souls.

30: This second allusion to 2 Ne 1.20 (see v. 1) is expanded to include the negative portion of God’s covenant with Lehi.

CHAPTER 37

Alma will describe in turn each of the objects he will be entrusting to Helaman: the Brass Plates and Nephite records, the Jaredite plates, the Jaredite interpreters, and the Liahona (the compass-like device from 1 Ne 16.10). These artifacts will not actually be transferred to Helaman for another year, at 45.1; see 50.38n. Various forms of the verb *keep* occur eighteen times in this chapter, referring to records, plates, sacred artifacts, and commandments. Several of the definitions from WB apply, including “to protect; to guard or sustain”; “to tend; to have the care of”; “to do or perform; to obey.” **1:** *Records which have been entrusted with me*, see Mos 28.20. **2:** *Keep a record of this people*, reiterates the charge Alma himself had been given by King Mosiah at Mos 28.20. Alma had originally intended to pass the records on to the chief judge Nephiah (see 50.37–38), as would have been appropriate for the politically oriented Large Plates, but his decision to entrust them to Helaman will make them more of a lineage history like the Small Plates—preserved and continued by religious leaders. *The plates of Nephi*, the Large Plates. *Wise purpose*, see 1 Ne 9.5; WōM 1.7. **4:** See 1 Ne 5.17–19, and also 2 Ne 25.21–22 with regard to sacred records other than the Brass Plates. **5:** *Also shall all the plates which do contain... holy writ*, referring to Nephite records that have also gained scriptural status; see Alma 18.38n. *Writ*, unique here; WB: “that which is written; in this sense, *writ* is particularly applied to the Scriptures.”

⁸ “And now, it has hitherto been wisdom in God that these things should be preserved; for behold, they have enlarged the memory of this people, yea, and convinced many of the error of their ways, and brought them to the knowledge of their God unto the salvation of their souls. ⁹ Yea, I say unto you, were it not for these things that these records do contain, which are on these plates, Ammon and his brethren could not have convinced so many thousands of the Lamanites of the incorrect tradition of their fathers; yea, these records and their words brought them unto repentance; that is, they brought them to the knowledge of the Lord their God, and to rejoice in Jesus Christ their Redeemer. ¹⁰ And who knoweth but what they will be the means of bringing many thousands of them, yea, and also many thousands of our stiffnecked brethren, the Nephites, who are now hardening their hearts in sin and iniquities, to the knowledge of their Redeemer?

¹¹ “Now these mysteries are not yet fully made known unto me; therefore I shall forbear. ¹² And it may suffice if I only say they are preserved for a wise purpose, which purpose is known unto God; for he doth counsel in wisdom over all his works, and his paths are straight, and his course is one eternal round.

¹³ “O remember, remember, my son Helaman, how strict are the commandments of God. And he said,

‘If ye will keep my commandments
ye shall prosper in the land.’
But if ye keep not his commandments
ye shall be cut off from his
presence.^a

¹⁴ “And now remember, my son, that God has entrusted you with these things, which are sacred, which he has kept sacred, and also which he will keep and preserve for a wise purpose in him, that he may show forth his power unto future generations.

¹⁵ “And now behold, I tell you by the spirit of prophecy, that if ye transgress the commandments of God, behold, these things which are sacred shall be taken away from you by the power of God, and ye shall be delivered up unto Satan, that he may sift you as chaff before the wind. ¹⁶ But if ye keep the commandments of God, and do with these things which are sacred according to that which the Lord doth command you, (for you must appeal unto the Lord for all things whatsoever ye must do with them) behold, no power of

^a 13 2 Ne 1.20

8: *Wisdom in God*, 1 Ne 3.19; Ether 5.1; 8.23; always with regard to sacred records. *Enlarge the memory*, a reminder that much can be lost in oral traditions, as opposed to written records; cf. Omni 1.17; Mos 1.3–5. **9:** Ammon and Aaron taught the Lamanites from records on the Brass Plates and the Plates of Nephi (18.36–39; 22.12–14), perhaps including the Small Plates (see Jarom 1.2n; Alma 23.5n). *Brought them to the knowledge of the Lord* was used previously to describe the Lamanite mission at Mos 28.2 and Alma 23.5. **10:** Alma takes hope from their success among the Lamanites that the Nephites themselves might repent if they were to give more attention to scripture. *Bringing many... to the knowledge of their Redeemer* was used to describe the sons of Mosiah preaching to the Nephites at Mos 27.36, before their Lamanite mission. **12:** *His course is one eternal round*, see 1 Ne 10.19n. **14:** Alma will transfer the sacred records, but the charge to keep them actually comes from God, who will himself preserve them for his own purposes. *That he may show forth his power unto future generations* (also v. 18) is more clearly defined at 3 Ne 21.6 as the effect the BoM will have on the Gentiles. **15:** This warning is reminiscent of JS’s own experience with the lost 116 pages and the gold plates; see DC 3. *Sifting* requires a sieve (see Isa 30.28; Am 9.9); the combination of *chaff* and *wind* here suggests something more like winnowing. *As chaff before the wind*, Ps 35.5; Morm 5.16, 18. **16:** *Powerful to the fulfilling of all his words*, 1 Ne 9.6 (also about sacred records).

earth or hell can take them from you, for God is powerful to the fulfilling of all his words.

¹⁷ “For he will fulfil all his promises which he shall make unto you, for he has fulfilled his promises which he has made unto our fathers.

¹⁸ For he promised unto them that he would reserve^a these things for a wise purpose in him, that he might show forth his power unto future generations. ¹⁹ And now behold, one purpose hath he fulfilled, even to the restoration of many thousands of the Lamanites to the knowledge of the truth; and he hath shown forth his power in them, and he will also still show forth his power in them unto future generations; therefore they shall be preserved.

²⁰ Therefore I command you, my son Helaman, that ye be diligent in fulfilling all my words, and that ye be diligent in keeping the commandments of God as they are written.”

Alma₂ Instructs Helaman₂ concerning the Jaredite Plates and Interpreters

²¹ “And now, I will speak unto you concerning those twenty-four plates, that ye keep them, that the mysteries and the works of darkness, and their secret works, or the secret works of those people who have been destroyed, may be made manifest unto this people; yea, all their murders, and robberings, and their plunderings, and all their wickedness and abominations,

may be made manifest unto this people; yea, and that ye preserve these interpreters.^b ²² For behold, the Lord saw that his people began to work in darkness, yea, work secret murders and abominations; therefore the Lord said, if they did not repent they should be destroyed from off the face of the earth.

²³ “And the Lord said, ‘I will prepare unto my servant Gazelem, a stone, which shall shine forth in darkness unto light, that I may discover unto my people who serve me, that I may discover unto them the works of their brethren, yea, their secret works, their works of darkness, and their wickedness and abominations.’ ²⁴ And now, my son, these interpreters^c were prepared that the word of God might be fulfilled, which he spake, saying, ²⁵ ‘I will bring forth out of darkness unto light all their secret works and their abominations; and except they repent I will destroy them from off the face of the earth; and I will bring to light all their secrets and abominations, unto every nation that shall hereafter possess the land.’^d ²⁶ And now, my son, we see that

^a 18 O, 1981 *preserve*

^b 21 P *directors*; 1920 interpreters (see Mos 8.13; 28.20)

^c 24 O, P *directors*; 1920 interpreters

^d 25 Reference uncertain, but see Mos 12.8.

17: An explicit reference to argument from fulfilled prophecy; cf. Deut 18.21–22; Jer 28.9; 2 Ne 12–24n; WoM 1.4n; Hel 9.2n. **18:** *He promised unto them... for a wise purpose*, see 1 Ne 9.5; cf. WoM 1.7. **19:** One of the wise purposes in God’s preserving the Brass Plates and Nephite records has already been achieved: the conversion of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies. *Therefore they shall be preserved*, it is unclear whether *they* refers to the plates or the Lamanites. **20:** *As they are written*, a concrete example of the importance of scripture in enlarging one’s memory (see v. 8). **21:** *Twenty-four plates*, the plates, containing a history of the Jaredites, that were discovered by the people of Limhi; see Mos 8.9; 28.11–19; Ether 1.1–2. **21b–23:** *These interpreters*, apparently these were seer stones of some sort; cf. Mos 28.13–14n; DC 17.1. The reading from P strengthens parallels to Alma’s description of the Liahona at v. 38 below: both are called “director(s)”, both were prepared by the Lord, and both have proper names, if Gazelem is the name of the instrument (rather than the servant). **22:** *The Lord said, if they did not repent... off the face of the earth*, see Ether 11.12. **23:** *Discover*, WB: “to reveal; to make known.” **25:** The people of King Noah received a similar warning at Mos 12.8. **26:** *Made known unto us*, King Mosiah (or perhaps Benjamin) had translated the Jaredite record about twenty years earlier, with the assistance of seer stones he previously had in his possession (Mos 8.13–14; 28.11–19). These seem to have been the translation instruments passed on from Mosiah to Alma at Mos 28.20, and from Alma to Helaman (v. 21 above). There was apparently a different seer stone that the Jaredite prophet Ether had sealed up with the twenty-four plates (Ether 3.28); see Mos 28.13–14n.

they did not repent; therefore they have been destroyed, and thus far the word of God has been fulfilled; yea, their secret abominations have been brought out of darkness and made known unto us.

²⁷ “And now, my son, I command you that ye retain all their oaths, and their covenants, and their agreements in their secret abominations; yea, and all their signs and their wonders ye shall keep from this people, that they know them not, lest peradventure they should fall into darkness also and be destroyed. ²⁸ For behold, there is a curse upon all this land, that destruction shall come upon all those workers of darkness, according to the power of God, when they are fully ripe; therefore I desire that this people might not be destroyed. ²⁹ Therefore ye shall keep these secret plans of their oaths and their covenants from this people, and only their wickedness and their murders and their abominations shall ye make known unto them; and ye shall teach them to abhor such wickedness and abominations and murders.

“And ye shall also teach them that these people were destroyed on account of their wickedness and abominations and their murders. ³⁰ For behold, they murdered all the prophets of the Lord who came among them to declare unto them concerning their iniquities; and the blood of those whom they murdered did cry unto the Lord their God for vengeance upon those who were their murderers; and thus the judgments of God did come upon these workers of darkness and secret

combinations. ³¹ Yea, and cursed be the land forever and ever unto those workers of darkness and secret combinations, even unto destruction, except they repent before they are fully ripe.”

Alma₂ Counsels Helaman₂

³² “And now, my son, remember the words which I have spoken unto you; trust not those secret plans unto this people, but teach them an everlasting hatred against sin and iniquity.

³³ Preach unto them repentance,
and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ;
teach them to humble themselves
and to be meek and lowly in heart;
teach them to withstand every
temptation of the devil,
with their faith on the Lord Jesus
Christ.

³⁴ Teach them to never be weary of
good works,
but to be meek and lowly in heart;
for such shall find rest to their souls.

³⁵ O, remember, my son, and learn
wisdom in thy youth;
yea, learn in thy youth to keep the
commandments of God.

³⁶ Yea, and cry unto God for all thy
support;
yea, let all thy doings be unto the
Lord,
and whithersoever thou goest let it
be in the Lord;

27–29: King Mosiah had evidently communicated a general summary of Jaredite history to his people rather than making public his complete translations, which included details of how secret societies were organized and perpetuated. The combinations of *oaths* and *covenants* are non-biblical but appears six times in the BoM (all in this chapter and Hel 6, and always with regard to secret societies). *Peradventure*, WB: “by chance; perhaps.” **28:** *Workers of darkness*, a non-biblical expression that occurs three times in the BoM, all within vv. 28–31. **29–34:** These verses include six repetitions of *teach them*, with the first three mentioning negative examples and the latter three enjoining positive actions. In between is the variation *preach unto them* (v. 33), with the object *repentance and faith on the Lord*—the same message delivered by Helaman’s grandfather Alma, (Mos 18.7, 20; 25.15). Alma₂ is urging his son to continue the family’s heritage of ministry. **30:** *They murdered all the prophets*, see Ether 9.29; 11.5. *Blood... cry unto the Lord for vengeance*, see 1.12–13n; 20.18n. **35:** The equating of *wisdom* and *keeping the commandments* makes for a memorable aphorism.

yea, let thy^a thoughts be directed unto
the Lord;
yea, let the affections of thy heart be
placed upon the Lord forever.

³⁷ Counsel with the Lord in all thy
doings,
and he will direct thee for good;
yea, when thou liest down at night lie
down unto the Lord,
that he may watch over you in your
sleep;
and when thou risest in the morning
let thy heart be full of thanks unto
God.

And if ye do these things,^b
ye shall be lifted up at the last day.”

Alma₂ Describes the Liahona as a Type

³⁸ “And now, my son, I have somewhat to say concerning the thing which our fathers call a ball, or director—or our fathers called it Liahona, which is, being interpreted, “a compass”; and the Lord prepared it. ³⁹ And behold, there cannot any man work after the manner of so curious a workmanship. And behold, it was prepared to show unto our fathers the course which they should travel in the wilderness. ⁴⁰ And it did work for them according to their faith in God; there-

fore, if they had faith to believe that God could cause that those spindles should point the way they should go, behold, it was done; therefore they had this miracle, and also many other miracles wrought by the power of God, day by day.

⁴¹ “Nevertheless, because those miracles were worked by small means it did show unto them marvelous works. They were slothful, and forgot to exercise their faith and diligence and then those marvelous works ceased, and they did not progress in their journey; ⁴² therefore, they tarried in the wilderness, or did not travel a direct course, and were afflicted with hunger and thirst, because of their transgressions.

⁴³ “And now, my son, I would that ye should understand that these things are not without a shadow; for as our fathers were slothful to give heed to this compass (now these things were temporal) they did not prosper; even so it is with things which are spiritual. ⁴⁴ For behold, it is as easy to give heed to the word of Christ, which will point to you a straight course to eternal bliss, as it was for our fathers to give heed to this compass, which would point unto them a straight course to the promised land. ⁴⁵ And now I say, is there not a type in this thing? For just as surely as this director did

^a 36 O, 1981 let *all* thy

^b 37 O, P if *ye always do these things*

³⁷: *Counsel with*, that is, take counsel from. *When thou liest down* and *when thou risest* are distinctive phrases from Deut 6.7 and 11.19—two of the most famous scriptural injunctions to teach one’s children, and thus apt allusions for this chapter. ^{38–40}: For the origins and operation of the Liahona, see 1 Ne 16.10, 16, 26–30; 18.12, 21. *Did work according to their faith in God*, by contrast, 1 Ne 16.28 reported that the device worked according to the faith and heed given to the pointers, or spindles; cf. Mos 1.16. ³⁸: Like the Nehushtan (the bronze serpent of Num 21.4–9), the *Liahona* is finally given a name in the text, long after its first appearance; see 2 Kings 18.4. ⁴¹: The story of the Liahona is a paradigmatic example of Alma’s point about the disproportionate effects of *small means* at vv. 6–7 above. Nephi, speaking of the Liahona at 1 Ne 16.29, made a similar observation about “small means” and “great things.” ⁴²: According to 1 Ne 17.4, Lehi’s family spent eight years in the wilderness. ^{43–45}: Alma compares the role of the Liahona in the wilderness journey of Lehi’s family to the role of Christ’s words in our individual spiritual journeys through life. The key comparisons are the importance of diligent attention, the easiness of the process, and a direct path to the destination. ⁴³: *Shadow*, an allegorical meaning. ⁴⁴: *The word of Christ*, as found in either the scriptures or in more recent revelations. ⁴⁵: *Vale of sorrow*, unique here in scripture; with several occurrences in the early 19th c. *Vale*, valley. *Far better land of promise* is a striking metaphor for eternal reunion with God.

bring our fathers, by following its course, to the promised land, shall the words of Christ, if we follow their course, carry us beyond this vale of sorrow into a far better land of promise.

⁴⁶ “O my son, do not let us be slothful because of the easiness of the way; for so was it with our fathers; for so was it prepared for them, that if they would look they might live; even so it is with us. The way is prepared, and if we will look we may live forever.⁴⁷ And now, my son, see that ye take care of these sacred things, yea, see that ye look to God and live. Go unto this people and declare the word, and be sober. My son, farewell.”

Alma₂'s Words to Shiblon₂:

Alma 38

[*Mormon₃'s heading*] The commandments of Alma to his son Shiblon.

Alma₂'s Counsel to Shiblon₂

[**XVIII**] **38** ¹ “My son, give ear to my words, for I say unto you, even as I said unto Helaman, that

inasmuch as ye shall keep the commandments of God
ye shall prosper in the land;
and inasmuch as ye will not keep the commandments of God
ye shall be cast off from his presence.

² “And now, my son, I trust that I shall have great joy in you, because of your steadiness

and your faithfulness unto God; for as you have commenced in your youth to look to the Lord your God, even so I hope that you will continue in keeping his commandments; for blessed is he that endureth to the end.³ 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.⁴ For I know that thou wast in bonds; yea, and I also know that thou wast stoned for the word's sake; and thou didst bear all these things with patience because the Lord was with thee; and now thou knowest that the Lord did deliver thee.

⁵ “And now my son, Shiblon, I would that ye should remember, that as much as ye shall put your trust in God even so much ye shall be delivered out of your trials, and your troubles, and your afflictions, and ye shall be lifted up at the last day.

⁶ “Now, my son, I would not that ye should think that I know these things of myself, but it is the Spirit of God which is in me which maketh these things known unto me; for if I had not been born of God I should not have known these things.⁷ But behold, the Lord in his great mercy sent his angel to declare unto me that I must stop the work of destruction among his people; yea, and I have seen an angel face to face, and he spake with me, and his voice was as thunder, and it shook the whole earth.⁸ And it came to pass that I was three days and three nights in the most bitter pain and anguish of soul; and never, until

⁴⁶: *That if they would look they might live*, like 33.19, an allusion to the bronze serpent. The addition of *forever* adds an additional Christian element to the story. ⁴⁷: *Sober*, WB: “calm; not under the influence of passion; serious.” The command to “be sober” appears four times in the NT. *Be sober. My son, farewell*, Alma's counsel to his second son, Shiblon, will conclude with the same words; see 38.15. As in v. 37 above, Alma may be responding to scriptural injunctions about teaching one's children; King Benjamin had commanded his people to “teach them to walk in the ways of truth and soberness” (Mos 4.15).

CHAPTER 38

1: *Even as I said unto Helaman*, 36.1, 30; 37.13; cf. 2 Ne 1.20. **3–4**: Shiblon's participation in the Zoramite mission was noted at 31.7; 35.14; but nothing further is known of his imprisonment or stoning at that time. **5**: Alma gave the same admonition to Helaman at 36.3. **6**: Most of this verse is repeated from 36.4–5. **7–8**: For fuller accounts of this event, see Mos 27.8–37; Alma 36.6–23.

I did cry out unto the Lord Jesus Christ for mercy, did I receive a remission of my sins. But behold, I did cry unto him and I did find peace to my soul.

⁹ “And now, my son, I have told you this that ye may learn wisdom, that ye may learn of me that 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.

¹⁰ “And now, as ye have begun to teach the word even so I would that ye should continue to teach; and I would that ye would be diligent and temperate in all things. ¹¹ 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. ¹² 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.

¹³ “Do not pray as the Zoramites do, for ye have seen that they pray to be heard of men, and to be praised for their wisdom. ¹⁴ Do not say, ‘O God, I thank thee that we are better than our brethren’; but rather say, ‘O Lord, forgive my unworthiness, and remember my brethren in mercy’—yea, acknowledge your unworthiness before God at all times. ¹⁵ And may the Lord bless your soul, and receive you at the last day into his kingdom, to sit down in peace. Now go, my son, and teach the word unto this people. Be sober. My son, farewell.”

Alma₂'s Words to Corianton: Alma 39–42

[*Mormon₂'s heading*] The commandments of Alma to his son Corianton.

Corianton's Sins

[XIX] **39** ¹ “And now, my son, I have somewhat more to say unto thee than what I said unto thy brother; for behold, have ye not observed the

9: *He is the life and light of the world*, Mos 16.9; 3 Ne 9.18; 11.11; cf. Ether 4.12; Jn 8.12. **10:** *Temperate*, WB: “moderate; calm; free from ardent passion.” **12:** There is a suggestion here that love can be a product of disciplining one’s strong emotions. **13–14:** *Do not pray as the Zoramites do*, see 31.12–23. *Pray to be heard of men*, see 33.8; cf. Mt 6.5 where hypocrites pray to be “seen of men.” **14:** Alma urges a shift from an unwarranted first-person-plural perspective (*we are better*), reflective of the Zoramite prayer, to a first-person-singular acceptance of individual responsibility (*forgive my unworthiness*). The two contrasting prayers are reminiscent of those of the Pharisee and the publican at Lk 18.11, 13, though here the sinner’s prayer is augmented by a plea on behalf of others.

CHAPTERS 39–42

In this lengthy sermon, which was originally a single chapter (Alma XIX), Alma addresses Corianton’s sin in abandoning the mission to the Zoramites, and then answers his questions and concerns about the coming of Christ (39.15–17), the timing and nature of the Resurrection (40.1), the effects of the Resurrection (41.1), and the justice of God in punishing sinners (42.1). The modern chapter divisions follow the last three topics, and their first verses contain the only examples in scripture of someone’s mind being “worried.” These are the same issues that had troubled Alma and the sons of Mosiah many years earlier (Mos 26.1–4; 27.8). It is also noteworthy that even though Corianton is more like Alma’s younger, rebellious self than either Helaman or Shiblon were, Alma does not retell the story of his conversion in this sermon, as he did with both of his older sons in chs. 36 and 38 (though there are pointed allusions at 41.11).

CHAPTER 39

1: *Thy brother*, Shiblon. *Steadiness . . . faithful . . . keeping the commandments*, all terms used to describe Shiblon at 38.2. Curiously, Alma does not mention any example set by the oldest brother, Helaman.

steadiness of thy brother, his faithfulness, and his diligence in keeping the commandments of God? Behold, has he not set a good example for thee? ² For thou didst not give so much heed unto my words as did thy brother, among the people of the Zoramites. Now this is what I have against thee; thou didst go on unto boasting in thy strength and thy wisdom. ³ And this is not all, my son. Thou didst do that which was grievous unto me; for thou didst forsake the ministry, and did go over into the land of Siron among the borders of the Lamanites, after the harlot Isabel. ⁴ Yea, she did steal away the hearts of many; but this was no excuse for thee, my son. Thou shouldst have tended to the ministry wherewith thou wast entrusted.

⁵ “Know ye not, my son, that these things are an abomination in the sight of the Lord; yea, most abominable above all sins save it be the shedding of innocent blood or denying the Holy Ghost? ⁶ For behold, if ye deny the Holy Ghost when it once has had place in you, and ye know that ye deny it, behold, this is a sin which is unpardonable; yea, and whosoever murdereth against the light and knowledge of God, it is not easy for him to obtain forgiveness;

yea, I say unto you, my son, that it is not easy for him to obtain a forgiveness.

⁷ “And now, my son, I would to God that ye had not been guilty of so great a crime. I would not dwell upon your crimes, to harrow up your soul, if it were not for your good. ⁸ But behold, ye cannot hide your crimes from God; and except ye repent they will stand as a testimony against you at the last day. ⁹ Now my son, I would that ye should repent and forsake your sins, and go no more after the lusts of your eyes, but cross yourself in all these things; for except ye do this ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God. Oh, remember, and take it upon you, and cross yourself in these things.

¹⁰ “And I command you to take it upon you to counsel with your elder brothers in your undertakings; for behold, thou art in thy youth, and ye stand in need to be nourished by your brothers. And give heed to their counsel. ¹¹ Suffer not yourself to be led away by any vain or foolish thing; suffer not the devil to lead away your heart again after those wicked harlots. Behold, O my son, how great iniquity ye brought upon the Zoramites; for when they saw your conduct they would not believe in my words.

2: Shiblon and Corianton (though not Helaman) were part of the missionary effort to the Zoramites; see 31.7; 35.14. **3:** *Harlot*, it is difficult to know whether this term refers to a prostitute, a promiscuous young woman, or, as in one definition from WB, “In Scripture, one who forsakes the true God and worships idols”; see 31.12–23n. *Isabel* is one of three named non-biblical women in the BoM, along with Sariah and Abish. *Steal away . . . hearts*, the same sin that Alma himself had committed at Mos 27.9; cf. Alma 31.22. **5–6:** *These things are an abomination*, in the broader context of vv. 2–11, Alma seems to have in mind abandoning the ministry rather than sexual transgression (which is implied rather than directly stated). It is the former that is more closely connected with denying the Holy Ghost and murder, especially since Alma had described his own earlier leading of others astray as akin to murder; see 36.14. *A sin which is unpardonable*, only here and Jacob 7.19, where Sherem feared that he had committed “the unpardonable sin” when he lied to God and denied Christ. Both instances may be related to Jesus’s declaration at Mt 12.31–32 that “blasphemy against the Holy Ghost” will not be forgiven in either this world or the world to come. **7:** *Harrow up your soul*, the same expression is used at 2 Ne 9.47 and in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* 1.5.16; cf. Alma 14.6; 36.12; Morm 5.8. **9:** *The lusts of your eyes*, 1 Jn 2.16, things that attract the senses. *Cross yourself*, WB: “to obstruct; to hinder; to stop,” or perhaps the expression is related to Jesus’s injunction at 3 Ne 12.30 to “deny yourselves of these things, wherein ye will take up your cross”; cf. Mt 16.24; Mk 8.34; Lk 9.23. *Except ye do this [repent] ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God*, something that Alma learned during his conversion experience at Mos 27.24, 26. **11:** The plural *harlots* suggests there is more to the story than an infatuation with Isabel. The warning about *any vain . . . thing* (also the “vain things of this world” at v. 14) hints at Corianton’s fascination with the opulence of the moneyed class of Zoramites; see 31.26–28.

¹² “And now the Spirit of the Lord doth say unto me, ‘Command thy children to do good, lest they lead away the hearts of many people to destruction.’ Therefore I command you, my son, in the fear of God, that ye refrain from your iniquities; ¹³ that ye turn to the Lord with all your mind, might, and strength; that ye lead away the hearts of no more to do wickedly; but rather return unto them, and acknowledge your faults and that wrong^a which ye have done. ¹⁴ Seek not after riches nor the vain things of this world; for behold, you cannot carry them with you.”

Alma₂ Speaks of the Coming of Christ

¹⁵ “And now, my son, I would say somewhat unto you concerning the coming of Christ. Behold, I say unto you, that it is he that surely shall come to take away the sins of the world; yea, he cometh to declare glad tidings of salvation unto his people. ¹⁶ And now, my son, this was the ministry unto which ye were called, to declare these glad tidings unto this people, to prepare their minds; or rather that salvation might come unto them, that they may prepare the minds of their children to hear the word at the time of his coming.

¹⁷ “And now I will ease your mind somewhat on this subject. Behold, you marvel why these things should be known so long beforehand. Behold, I say unto you, is not a soul at

this time as precious unto God as a soul will be at the time of his coming? ¹⁸ Is it not as necessary that the plan of redemption should be made known unto this people as well as unto their children? ¹⁹ Is it not as easy at this time for the Lord to send his angel to declare these glad tidings unto us as unto our children, or as after the time of his coming?”

The State of the Soul between Death and the Resurrection

40 ¹ “Now my son, here is somewhat more I would say unto thee; for I perceive that thy mind is worried concerning the resurrection of the dead. ² Behold, I say unto you, that there is no resurrection—or, I would say, in other words, that this mortal does not put on immortality, this corruption does not put on incorruption—until after the coming of Christ. ³ Behold, he bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead. But behold, my son, the resurrection is not yet. Now, I unfold unto you a mystery; nevertheless, there are many mysteries which are kept, that no one knoweth them save God himself. But I show unto you one thing which I have

^a 13 O and repair that wrong

12–13: The priests Eli and Samuel both had sons whose bad behavior negatively affected the people; see 1 Sam 2.12–36; 8.1–3. Alma hopes for a different outcome. **13:** Corianton’s repentance requires direct engagement with those he has wronged, as Alma and the sons of Mosiah had done after their own repentance; see Mos 27.35. **14:** *Ye cannot carry them with you*, presumably into the next life. **15:** Christ will come to both save the world and to inform his people of that salvation. At Lk 8.1, Jesus traveled about spreading *glad tidings* about the kingdom of God. *Glad tidings of salvation* is reminiscent of “bringeth good tidings . . . that publisheth salvation” of Isa 52.7, which was cited by Abinadi at Mos 15.14, 18. **16:** The mission to the Zoramites was intended to have a multigenerational effect. There are also hints in vv. 16–19 that Christ will be born during the life span of the next generation. *To prepare their minds . . . to hear the word at the time of his coming* was a crucial task for Alma’s generation; see 13.24; 16.16. **17–19:** Like the Nehorites and Korihor, Corianton has doubts about the possibility of predictive prophecy; see 21.8; 30.13. Alma’s response is that God cares for his children equally, regardless of the era in which they may live, echoing King Anti-Nephi-Lehi’s speech at 24.14.

CHAPTER 40

2: *Mortal/corruption does not put on immortality/incorruption*, similar phrasing, derived from 1 Cor 15.53–54, was used by Abinadi at Mos 16.10 and Alma himself at 5.15; cf. Alma 41.4; Morm 6.21.

inquired diligently of God that I might know—that is concerning the resurrection.

⁴ “Behold, there is a time appointed that all shall come forth from the dead. Now when this time cometh no one knows; but God knoweth the time which is appointed.” ⁵ Now, whether there shall be one time, or a second time, or a third time, that men shall come forth from the dead, it mattereth not; for God knoweth all these things; and it sufficeth me to know that this is the case—that there is a time appointed that all shall rise from the dead.

⁶ “Now there must needs be a space betwixt the time of death and the time of the resurrection.” ⁷ And now I would inquire what becometh of the souls of men from this time of death to the time appointed for the resurrection? ⁸ Now whether there is more than one time appointed for men to rise it mattereth not; for all do not die at once, and this mattereth not; all is as one day with God, and time only is measured unto men. ⁹ Therefore, there is a time appointed unto men that they shall rise from the dead; and there is a space between the time of death and the resurrection. And now, concerning this space of time, what becometh of the souls of men is the thing which I have inquired diligently of the Lord to know; and this is the thing of which I do know. ¹⁰ And when the time cometh when all shall rise, then shall

they know that God knoweth all the times which are appointed unto man.

¹¹ “Now, concerning the state of the soul between death and the resurrection—behold, it has been made known unto me by an angel, that the spirits of all men, as soon as they are departed from this mortal body, yea, the spirits of all men, whether they be good or evil, are taken home to that God who gave them life. ¹² And then shall it come to pass, that the spirits of those who are righteous are received into a state of happiness, which is called paradise, a state of rest, a state of peace, where they shall rest from all their troubles and from all care, and sorrow.

¹³ “And then shall it come to pass, that the spirits of the wicked, yea, who are evil—for behold, they have no part nor portion of the Spirit of the Lord; for behold, they chose evil works rather than good; therefore the spirit of the devil did enter into them, and take possession of their house—and these shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, and this because of their own iniquity, being led captive by the will of the devil. ¹⁴ Now this is the state of the souls of the wicked, yea, in darkness, and a state of awful, fearful looking for the fiery indignation of the wrath of God upon them; thus they remain in this state, as

4: Alma is unsure of the number of resurrection events, even though Abinadi and Alma’s father had spoken of a “first resurrection” (Mos 15.21–26; 18.9; cf. Rev. 20.5–6). 8: *All is as one day with God*, cf. 2 Pet 3.8, where a thousand years is “as one day” with the Lord. 9: *The thing which I have inquired diligently of the Lord to know*, resumptive repetition from v. 3; his newly acquired knowledge begins at v. 11. 11–14: After death, human spirits return to God where they are claimed either by him or by the devil, based on their mortal deeds, and consequently await the Resurrection in paradise or in outer darkness. Alma’s understanding contrasts with the idea of Christian mortalism, in which the soul either dies and is resurrected along with the body, or is in a state of unconscious sleep between bodily death and resurrection, a position taken by William Tyndale, Martin Luther, John Milton, and many others. Alma uses the words *soul* and *spirit* interchangeably; cf. v. 15 below where he equates them. 13: The Spirit of the Lord, which dwells in the righteous, has its opposite counterpart in the spirit of the devil, which takes possession of the bodies of the wicked. The metaphor of the body as a *house* in which unclean spirits live is also found at Mt 12.43–45; Lk 11.24–26. *Cast out into outer darkness... weeping and gnashing of teeth*, Mt 8.12; 22.13; 25.30 (these are the only four instances of “outer darkness”). *Outer darkness* here is a temporary state that lasts only until the Resurrection. 14: *Fearful looking for... fiery indignation*, Heb 10.27, describing the state of those who persist in sin after hearing the truth.

well as the righteous in paradise, until the time of their resurrection.”

Alma₂ Teaches Corianton about the Resurrection

¹⁵ “Now, there are some that have understood that this state of happiness and this state of misery of the soul, before the resurrection, was a first resurrection. Yea, I admit it may be termed a resurrection, the raising of the spirit or the soul and their consignation to happiness or misery, according to the words which have been spoken. ¹⁶ And behold, again it hath been spoken, that there is a first resurrection, a resurrection of all those who have been, or who are, or who shall be, down to the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

¹⁷ “Now, we do not suppose that this first resurrection, which is spoken of in this manner, can be the resurrection of the souls and their consignation to happiness or misery. Ye cannot suppose that this is what it meaneth.

¹⁸ Behold, I say unto you, Nay; but it meaneth the reuniting of the soul with the body, of those from the days of Adam down to the resurrection of Christ. ¹⁹ Now, whether the souls and the bodies of those of whom has been spoken shall all be reunited at once, the wicked as well as the righteous, I do not say; let it suffice, that I say that they all come forth; or in other words, their resurrection cometh to pass before the resurrection of those who die after the resurrection of Christ.

²⁰ “Now, my son, I do not say that their resurrection cometh at the resurrection of

Christ; but behold, I give it as my opinion, that the souls and the bodies are reunited, of the righteous, at the resurrection of Christ, and his ascension into heaven. ²¹ But whether it be at his resurrection or after, I do not say; but this much I say, that there is a space between death and the resurrection of the body, and a state of the soul in happiness or in misery until the time which is appointed of God that the dead shall come forth, and be reunited, both soul and body, and be brought to stand before God, and be judged according to their works.

²² “Yea, this bringeth about the restoration of those things of which has been spoken by the mouths of the prophets. ²³ The soul shall be restored to the body, and the body to the soul; yea, and every limb and joint shall be restored to its body; yea, even a hair of the head shall not be lost; but all things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame.

²⁴ “And now, my son, this is the restoration of which has been spoken by the mouths of the prophets— ²⁵ and then shall the righteous shine forth in the kingdom of God. ²⁶ But behold, an awful death cometh upon the wicked; for they die as to things pertaining to things of righteousness; for they are unclean, and no unclean thing can inherit the kingdom of God; but they are cast out, and consigned to partake of the fruits of their labors or their works, which have been evil; and they drink the dregs of a bitter cup.”

15–20: Alma is aware of a theology in which the body and soul die together, and then the soul is immediately resurrected in a first resurrection, while its eventual reunion with the body constitutes a second resurrection, but he insists that this is an erroneous understanding. His preferred definition of *first resurrection* is the reuniting of soul and body, though he is unsure of the exact timing of this event. **16:** *First resurrection*, see v. 4n. **20:** Alma is careful to distinguish information that came from an angel (v. 11) from his own opinions. The opinion he ventures here is at least partially confirmed at Hel 14.25 and 3 Ne 23.6–13. **22–24:** Amulek spoke of resurrection as a *restoration* in very similar terms at 11.43–44; cf. 2 Ne 9.12–13; Mos 15.24. This passage is framed by an inclusio. **25:** *Then shall the righteous shine forth in the kingdom of God*, Mt 13.43 (which adds “as the sun”). **26:** *Die as to things pertaining to things of righteousness*, 12.16, where this state is described as “a second death” and “a spiritual death.” *Drink the dregs*, in the Bible this image is used only with reference to the cup of God’s wrath; see Ps 75.8; Isa 51.17.

Alma₂ Explains the Plan of Restoration

41 ¹ “And now, my son, I have somewhat to say concerning the restoration of which has been spoken; for behold, some have wrested the scriptures, and have gone far astray because of this thing. And I perceive that thy mind has been worried also concerning this thing. But behold, I will explain it unto thee. ² I say unto thee, my son, that the plan of restoration is requisite with the justice of God; for it is requisite that all things should be restored to their proper order.

“Behold, it is requisite and just, according to the power and resurrection of Christ, that the soul of man should be restored to its body, and that every part of the body should be restored to itself. ³ And it is requisite with the justice of God that men should be judged according to their works; and if their works were good in this life, and the desires of their hearts were good, that they should also, at the last day, be restored unto that which is good. ⁴ And if their works are evil they shall be restored unto them for evil. Therefore, all things shall be

restored to their proper order, every thing to its natural frame—mortality raised to immortality, corruption to incorruption—raised to endless happiness to inherit the kingdom of God, or to endless misery to inherit the kingdom of the devil, the one on one hand, the other on the other—

⁵ “The one raised^a to happiness according to his desires of happiness, or good according to his desires of good; and the other to evil according to his desires of evil; for as he has desired to do evil all the day long even so shall he have his reward of evil when the night cometh. ⁶ And so it is on the other hand. If he hath repented of his sins, and desired righteousness until the end of his days, even so he shall be rewarded unto righteousness. ⁷ These are they that are redeemed of the Lord; yea, these are they that are taken out, that are delivered from that endless night of darkness; and thus they stand or fall; for behold, they are their own judges, whether to do good or do evil. ⁸ Now, the decrees of God are unalter-

^a ⁵ O restored

CHAPTER 41

1: The nature of Corianton’s worries seem to stem from competing interpretations he has heard regarding the nature of postmortal “restoration” and the justice of God. Nehor taught that the Resurrection would erase the effects of sin for everyone (see 1.4), and Korihor preached that there would be no life after death (see 30.17–18). Either of these “points of doctrine” (v. 9) could have been part of Corianton’s rationalization for sin. Note also that in the early 19th c., some Universalists called themselves “Restorationists,” a usage reflected in a definition of “restoration” from WB: “in theology, universal restoration, the final recovery of all men from sin and alienation from God, to a state of happiness; universal salvation.” *Wrested the scriptures*, see 13.20n. **2–6:** The *plan of restoration* (a term unique to this verse) has two components: (1) every soul will be reunited with his or her body in the Resurrection, and (2) every reembodyed soul will be reunited with the consequences of its mortal actions and desires, either good or evil. Note the careful balancing of polarized alternatives throughout this passage. **2:** *Requisite with*, necessary to. **3:** There may be times when circumstances do not allow righteous desires to be put into action, or when righteous actions are done for unworthy motives; cf. v. 5 below. **4:** *The kingdom of the devil*, non-biblical, but five times in the BoM. In 1–2 Nephi this is an earthly kingdom (1 Ne 22.22–23; 2 Ne 28.18–19); here and at 5.25 it is a post-mortal, eternal realm. **5:** *When the night cometh*, comparing mortal life to a single day, followed by death as nightfall, after which all labors cease; cf. Jn 9.4; Alma 34.32–33; 3 Ne 27.33. Alma may also be alluding to how the souls of the wicked will dwell in darkness between their death and resurrection; see 40.13–14. **7:** *Taken out*, that is, rescued from captivity. *They are their own judges*, God’s judgment is not punishment for violating divine law, but rather allowing people to become forever what they had chosen during mortality. It is self-judgment by natural consequences. A similar sort of judgment can be seen at Morm 9.2–5. **8:** *The decrees of God are unalterable*, Alma made the same point at 29.4–5, also in the context of human agency and God’s judgment. *Whoever will*, whoever desires (cf. 42.27).

ALMA 41.13–15: CHIASMUS WITH AN EXTRA TURN

- a) My son . . . the meaning of **the word restoration** is to bring back again
- b) evil for evil, or carnal for carnal, or devilish for devilish—
- c) **good** for that which is good,
- d) **righteous** for that which is righteous,
- e) **just** for that which is just,
- f) **merciful** for that which is merciful. Therefore, my son,
- f') see that you are **merciful** unto your brethren;
- e') deal **justly**,
- d') judge **righteously**,
- c') and do **good** continually. And if ye do all these things then shall ye receive your reward; yea,
- f'') ye shall have **mercy** restored unto you again;
- e'') ye shall have **justice** restored unto you again;
- d'') ye shall have a **righteous** judgment restored unto you again;
- c'') and ye shall have **good** rewarded unto you again.
- b') For that which ye do send out shall return unto you again, and be restored;
- a') therefore, **the word restoration** more fully condemneth the sinner, and justifieth him not at all.

able; therefore, the way is prepared that who-soever will may walk therein and be saved.

⁹ “And now behold, my son, do not risk one more offense against your God upon those points of doctrine, which ye have hitherto risked to commit sin. ¹⁰ Do not suppose, because it has been spoken concerning restoration, that ye shall be restored from sin to happiness. Behold, I say unto you, wickedness never was happiness.

¹¹ “And now, my son, all men that are in a state of nature, or I would say, in a carnal state, are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity; they are without God in the world, and they have gone contrary to the nature of God; therefore, they are in a state contrary to

the nature of happiness. ¹² And now behold, is the meaning of the word ‘restoration’ to take a thing of a natural state and place it in an unnatural state, or to place it in a state opposite to its nature?

¹³ “O, my son, this is not the case; but the meaning of the word ‘restoration’ is to bring back again evil for evil, or carnal for carnal, or devilish for devilish—good for that which is good; righteous for that which is righteous; just for that which is just; merciful for that which is merciful. ¹⁴ Therefore, my son, see that you are merciful unto your brethren; deal justly, judge righteously, and do good continually; and if ye do all these things then shall ye receive your reward; yea, ye shall

10–11: Corianton seems to believe that humans are destined for happiness. Alma counters that the natural condition of humankind is sin and bitterness; repentance and trust in God require extra effort. **10:** *Wickedness never was happiness*, some people obviously take pleasure in sin; in context the aphorism seems to mean “wickedness will never result in permanent happiness.” **11:** *In the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity*, Acts 8.23; Mos 27.29 (an allusion to his conversion experience; cf. Alma 36.18). *Without God in the world*, Eph 2.12; Mos 27.31 (another allusion to Alma’s conversion).

have mercy restored unto you again; ye shall have justice restored unto you again; ye shall have a righteous judgment restored unto you again; and ye shall have good rewarded unto you again. ¹⁵ For that which ye do send out shall return unto you again, and be restored; therefore, the word ‘restoration’ more fully condemneth the sinner, and justifieth him not at all.”

Alma₂ Quotes Genesis 3.22–24, Explaining the Justice of God

(with significant changes and additions to the King James Bible in bold)

42 ¹ “And now, my son, I perceive there is somewhat more which doth worry your mind, which ye cannot understand—which is concerning the justice of God in the punishment of the sinner; for ye do try to suppose that it is injustice that the sinner should be consigned to a state of misery.

² “Now behold, my son, I will explain this thing unto thee.

For behold, after the Lord God sent our first parents^a forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground, from whence they were

taken—**yea, he drew^b out the man, and he placed at the east end of the garden of Eden, cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the tree of life^c—** ³ **Now, we see that^d the man had become as God,^e knowing good and evil; and lest he should put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat and live forever, the Lord God placed cherubim and the flaming sword, that he should not partake of the fruit.**

⁴ “And thus we see, that there was a time granted unto man to repent, yea, a probationary time, a time to repent and serve God ⁵ For behold, if Adam had put forth his hand immediately, and partaken of the tree of life, he would have lived forever, according to the word of God, having no space for repentance; yea, and also the word of God would have been void, and the great plan of salvation would have

^a 2 Gen 3.23 reads “him” (referring to Adam)

^b 2 O *drove* Gen 3.24

^c 2 Gen 3.24 reads “keep the way of the tree of life”

^d 3 Gen 3.22 reads “and the Lord God said, Behold”

^e 3 Gen 3.22 reads “as one of us”

15: Alma’s doubly chiasmic construction in vv. 13–14 is reflected in his summary here: “that which ye do send out shall return unto you again, and be restored.”

CHAPTER 42

1: Corianton wonders how a just God could condemn some people to eternal misery as punishment for sins committed over the course of the relatively few years of a mortal life span (see 41.4). Alma’s response centers on the competing claims of justice and mercy. **2–3:** The order of quoted verses is Gen 3.23–24, 22, and then a repeated phrase from v. 24. **3:** The substitution of *as God*, for “as one of us” (the serpent had earlier spoken of being “as gods, knowing good and evil”) echoes the monotheistic revision at 2 Ne 2.18. **4–13:** These verses echo numerous phrases used by Alma in his answer to Antionah’s question about the same Genesis passage at 12.20–32, including “probationary state,” “the word of God would have been void,” “the plan of redemption would have been frustrated,” “it was appointed unto men that they must die,” “lost and fallen,” “our first parents,” “temporal death,” “preparatory state,” and “miserable.” **4–6:** By God’s grace, mortality is a time of testing and an opportunity for change before the Final Judgment; see 2 Ne 2.19–21 for similar teachings from Lehi. *The word of God would have been void*, cf. Isa 55.11; Alma 12.26. It is unclear from the present context which of God’s words Alma is referring to, but his earlier explanation at 12.23 shows that he has in mind the divine warning that “if thou eat, thou shalt surely die.”

been frustrated.⁶ But behold, it was appointed unto man to die—therefore, as they were cut off from the tree of life they should be cut off from the face of the earth—and man became lost forever, yea, they became fallen man.

⁷ “And now, ye see by this that our first parents were cut off both temporally and spiritually from the presence of the Lord; and thus we see they became subjects to follow after their own will.⁸ Now behold, it was not expedient that man should be reclaimed from this temporal death, for that would destroy the great plan of happiness.⁹ Therefore, as the soul could never die, and the fall had brought upon all mankind a spiritual death as well as a temporal—that is, they were cut off from the presence of the Lord—it was expedient that mankind should be reclaimed from this spiritual death.¹⁰ Therefore, as they had become carnal, sensual, and devilish, by nature, this probationary state became a state for them to prepare; it became a preparatory state.”

Justice and Mercy

¹¹ “And now remember, my son, if it were not for the plan of redemption, (laying it

aside) as soon as they were dead their souls were miserable, being cut off from the presence of the Lord.¹² And now, there was no means to reclaim men from this fallen state, which man had brought upon himself because of his own disobedience;¹³ therefore, according to justice, the plan of redemption could not be brought about, only on conditions of repentance of men in this probationary state, yea, this preparatory state; for except it were for these conditions, mercy could not take effect except it should destroy the work of justice. Now the work of justice could not be destroyed; if so, God would cease to be God.

¹⁴ “And thus we see that all mankind were fallen, and they were in the grasp of justice; yea, the justice of God, which consigned them forever to be cut off from his presence.¹⁵ And now, the plan of mercy could not be brought about except an atonement should be made; therefore God himself atoneth for the sins of the world, to bring about the plan of mercy, to appease the demands of justice, that God might be a perfect, just God, and a merciful God also.

6: The first *cut off* means “separated from”; the second is part of an idiom for “die.” **7:** Separation from God is necessary for free will (along with having divergent options, as was noted at 2 Ne 2.15–16). **8:** *Reclaimed from this temporal death*, that is, immediately granted eternal life. *Plan of happiness*, only here and v. 16, where it serves as a culmination of the BoM discourse most concerned with happiness (mentioned 11 times in chs. 40–41). **9:** *This spiritual death* refers to the universal, temporary separation from God during mortality (also at Hel 14.16); elsewhere in the BoM there are two additional “spiritual deaths,” one of which takes place immediately after bodily death, lasting until the Resurrection (perhaps a continuation of the first spiritual death; see 2 Ne 9.12), and another, affecting only some individuals, that occurs after the Final Judgment and lasts forever (i.e., “second death”; see Jacob 3.11; Alma 12.16, 32; 13.30; Hel 14.18–19). *Cut off from the presence of the Lord*, in the BoM this phrase is usually encountered in the second half of God’s covenant with Lehi (e.g., 2 Ne 1.20), where it describes the fate of his descendants who do not keep the commandments. In this chapter, however, it applies to all humankind since the Fall (see 2 Ne 9.6 and Hel 14.16 for similar usages). **10:** *Probationary state*, that is, a time to repent, as in v. 4. **11–28:** Alma explains the conditional and unconditional aspects of the plan of redemption by appealing to the divine attributes of justice and mercy. **13:** Justice is such an integral part of the divine nature that without it God would *cease to be God*, a phrase that occurs three times in this chapter. *Only*, except. **15:** Note that God can be both just and merciful because the two qualities are not mutually exclusive. The opposite of justice is not mercy but injustice, and the opposite of mercy is cruelty, though justice and mercy can be in tension with each other (as was the case in Alma’s own conversion; see also the attributes of God listed at Ex 34.6–7).

¹⁶ “Now, repentance could not come unto men except there were a punishment, which also was eternal^a as the life of the soul, should be affixed opposite to the plan of happiness, which was as eternal also as the life of the soul. ¹⁷ Now, how could a man repent except he should sin? How could he sin if there was no law? How could there be a law save there was a punishment? ¹⁸ Now, there was a punishment affixed, and a just law given, which brought remorse of conscience unto man. ¹⁹ Now, if there was no law given—if a man murdered he should die—would he be afraid he would die if he should murder? ²⁰ And also, if there was no law given against sin men would not be afraid to sin. ²¹ And if there was no law given, if men sinned what could justice do, or mercy either, for they would have no claim upon the creature?

²² “But there is a law given, and a punishment affixed, and a repentance granted; which repentance, mercy claimeth; otherwise, justice claimeth the creature and executeth the law, and the law inflicteth the punishment; if not so, the works of justice would be destroyed, and God would cease to be God. ²³ But God ceaseth not to be God, and mercy claimeth the penitent, and mercy cometh because of the atonement; and the atonement bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead; and the resurrection of the dead bringeth back men into the presence of God; and thus they are restored

into his presence, to be judged according to their works, according to the law and justice. ²⁴ For behold, justice exerciseth all his demands, and also mercy claimeth all which is her own; and thus, none but the truly penitent are saved.

²⁵ “What do ye suppose? That mercy can rob justice? I say unto you, Nay; not one whit. If so, God would cease to be God. ²⁶ And thus God bringeth about his great and eternal purposes, which were prepared from the foundation of the world. And thus cometh about the salvation and the redemption of men, and also their destruction and misery. ²⁷ Therefore, O my son, whosoever will come may come and partake of the waters of life freely; and whosoever will not come the same is not compelled to come; but in the last day it shall be restored unto him according to his deeds. ²⁸ If he has desired to do evil, and has not repented in his days, behold, evil shall be done unto him, according to the restoration of God.”

Alma₂'s Counsel to Corianton

²⁹ “And now, my son, I desire that ye should let these things trouble you no more, and only let your sins trouble you, with that trouble which shall bring you down unto repentance. ³⁰ O my son, I desire that ye should deny the justice of

^a 16 O, P was as eternal

16–21: Alma here appears to be clarifying theological ambiguities and reconciling potential contradictions between Lehi's statement at 2 Ne 2.13, Jacob's revision of it at 2 Ne 9.25–26, and Nephi's discussion at 2 Ne 11.4–7. Law and punishment are necessarily intertwined with sin and repentance, just as remorse and deterrence both depend on established rules and stipulated penalties. **22–24:** Justice, which is essential to God's being, cannot allow deserved punishment to be revoked, but mercy allows it to be deflected onto someone else in the case of repentant sinners. This is a substitutionary theory of atonement. Alma argues that Christ's atonement overcomes spiritual death for every human being, when they are resurrected and brought back into God's presence for judgment, but from that point on *none but the truly penitent are saved*. **24:** *His demands* and *her own*, justice and mercy are personified as male and female entities with competing claims. **25:** *Whit*, WB: “the smallest part or particle imaginable.” **27:** *Whosoever will. . . partake of the waters of life freely*, Rev 22.17 (with “come” prominent in the verse); cf. Alma 5.33–36. While the atonement might seem to unfairly allow different outcomes for the same sins, Alma places the responsibility squarely on human agency. **29–30:** Corianton has apparently rationalized his sins by supposing that they were not enough to merit eternal punishment, if God were truly just. **29:** *These things*, these doctrinal questions. *That trouble*, the “remorse of conscience” mentioned in v. 18. **30:** Corianton's heart should be filled with fear of God's justice, hope for his mercy, and trust in his long-suffering. *Sway*, WB: “influence; weight or authority that inclines to one side.” *Bring you down to the dust in humility*, like the repentant Zoramites at 34.38; cf. Mos 21.13.

God no more. Do not endeavor to excuse yourself in the least point because of your sins, by denying the justice of God; but do you let the justice of God, and his mercy, and his long-suffering have full sway in your heart; and let it bring you down to the dust in humility.

³¹ “And now, O my son, ye are called of God to preach the word unto this people. And now, my son, go thy way, declare the word with truth and soberness, that thou mayest bring souls unto repentance, that the great plan of mercy may have claim upon them. And may God grant unto you even according to my words. Amen.”

The Zoramite War: Alma 43–44

Preparations for War

[XX] **43** ¹ And now it came to pass that the sons of Alma did go forth among the people, to declare the word unto them. And Alma, also, himself, could not rest, and he also went forth. ² Now we shall say no more concerning their preaching, except that they preached the word, and the truth, according to the spirit of prophecy and revelation; and they preached after the holy order of God by which they were called.

³ And now I return to an account of the wars between the Nephites and the Lamanites,

in the eighteenth year of the reign of the judges.

⁴ For behold, it came to pass that the Zoramites became Lamanites; therefore, in the commencement of the eighteenth year^a the people of the Nephites saw that the Lamanites were coming upon them; therefore they made preparations for war; yea, they gathered together their armies in the land of Jershon.

⁵ And it came to pass that the Lamanites came with their thousands; and they came into the land of Antionum, which is the land of the Zoramites; and a man by the name of Zerahemnah was their leader. ⁶ And now, as the Amalekites^b were of a more wicked and murderous disposition than the Lamanites were, in and of themselves, therefore, Zerahemnah appointed chief captains over the Lamanites, and they were all Amalekites and Zoramites. ⁷ Now this he did that he might preserve their hatred towards the Nephites, that he might bring them into subjection to the accomplishment of his designs. ⁸ For behold, his designs were to stir up the Lamanites to anger against the Nephites; this he did that he might usurp great power over them, and also that he might gain power over the Nephites by bringing them into bondage.

^a 4 –74 years

^b 6 Or *Amlicites*

31: *Bring souls unto repentance*, a formula applied exclusively to the efforts of Alma and the sons of Mosiah; see 26.22; 29.9; 36.24. Here it is not mercy itself that lays claim to the souls of the penitent, but rather the *plan of mercy*, that is, God’s long-standing plan of redemption through Christ. This sermon appears to have had the desired result; subsequent references to Corianton show him deeply engaged in the work of the ministry (see 43.1n).

CHAPTER 43

1: *The sons of Alma*, Helaman will be a major participant (and the primary record keeper) in the events of chs. 45–62. Shiblon and Corianton will reappear at 48.18–19; 49.30; 63.1–2, 10–13; they may also be obliquely referred to at 45.22; 53.14; 62.45. It appears that Alma intended to send his sons out and remain at home himself, but then could not abide retirement. **3:** The narrative resumes from 35.13. **4:** The land of Jershon, which had been given to the Anti-Nephi-Lehies (now known as the people of Ammon), was in the east on the border between the Nephite land of Bountiful and the Lamanite-held wilderness and land of Nephi (27.22–26). Those pacifist former Lamanites had been moved to make room for Nephite armies and the more militaristic former Zoramites (35.13–14). **5:** The land of Antionum was south of Jershon (31.3). **6:** *Amalekites*, note that with the spelling correction (see 21.2–4n), Alma’s record begins and ends with his struggles against the same dissident group. **8:** Zerahemnah intends to use the anger of the Lamanites to increase his power over them, as well as over the Nephites they are attacking.

⁹ And now the design of the Nephites was to support their lands, and their houses, and their wives, and their children, that they might preserve them from the hands of their enemies; and also that they might preserve their rights and their privileges, yea, and also their liberty, that they might worship God according to their desires. ¹⁰ For they knew that if they should fall into the hands of the Lamanites, that whosoever should worship God in spirit and in truth, the true and the living God, the Lamanites would destroy. ¹¹ Yea, and they also knew the extreme hatred of the Lamanites towards their brethren, who were the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi, who were called the people of Ammon—and they would not take up arms, yea, they had entered into a covenant and they would not break it—therefore, if they should fall into the hands of the Lamanites they would be destroyed. ¹² And the Nephites would not suffer that they should be destroyed; therefore they gave them lands for their inheritance. ¹³ And the people of Ammon did give unto the Nephites a large portion of their substance to support their armies.

And thus the Nephites were compelled, alone, to withstand against the Lamanites, who

were a compound of Laman and Lemuel, and the sons of Ishmael, and all those who had dissented from the Nephites, who were Amalekites and Zoramites, and the descendants of the priests of Noah. ¹⁴ Now those descendants^a were as numerous, nearly, as were the Nephites; and thus the Nephites were obliged to contend with their brethren, even unto bloodshed. ¹⁵ And it came to pass as the armies of the Lamanites had gathered together in the land of Antionum, behold, the armies of the Nephites were prepared to meet them in the land of Jershon.

Moroni, Outprepares the Lamanites

¹⁶ Now, the leader of the Nephites, or the man who had been appointed to be the chief captain over the Nephites—now the chief captain took the command of all the armies of the Nephites—and his name was Moroni; ¹⁷ and Moroni took all the command, and the government of their wars. And he was only twenty and five years old when he was appointed chief captain^b over the armies of the Nephites.

^a ¹⁴ O dissenters

^b ¹⁷ O commander

9: This is the first of six overlapping lists of things the Nephites are fighting for in this chapter (see vv. 26, 30, 45, 47, 48); the repetitions may indicate a certain uneasiness on the part of the narrator. *Support*, defend. In the BoM, the Nephites are usually portrayed as engaging in defensive warfare. *Worship God according to their desires*, a privilege granted by King Lamoni's father at 21.22. **10:** *Worship God in spirit and in truth*, as Amulek had admonished the Zoramites at 34.38; cf. Jn 4.23–24. **11:** The people of Ammon were moved to safety at 35.13. *Had entered into a covenant*, see 24.17–18. **12:** *Gave them lands for their inheritance*, see 27.20–26. **13:** The agreement regarding military support was established at 27.24, but the original “portion of their substance” has now become a *large portion*. *Descendants of the priests of Noah*, apparently some of them had survived after the events of 25.7–9. **15:** If there were as many dissenters as Nephites (following the reading in O), the latter must have constituted a small minority among the various peoples of the region. **16:** This is our first introduction to Moroni, who will be the dominant figure in the rest of the book of Alma, receiving extraordinary praise from the narrator Mormon at 48.11–18. Mormon, who was himself a military man at the end of Nephite civilization, apparently admired Moroni so much that he named his own son after him; see WoM 1.1; Morm 6.6. In LDS writings, the man introduced in this verse is often referred to as “Captain Moroni,” to distinguish him from the Moroni who would be the last Nephite record keeper. **17:** Twenty-five is a young age for such a responsible position; one wonders if he had come from a prominent military family (note that he is succeeded by his son at 62.43). The same could be said of Mormon, who received his command at the age of fifteen; see Morm 2.1–2. *Government*, management.

¹⁸ And it came to pass that he met the Lamanites in the borders of Jershon, and his people were armed with swords, and with cimeters,⁴ and all manner of weapons of war. ¹⁹ And when the armies of the Lamanites saw that the people of Nephi, or that Moroni, had prepared his people with breastplates and with arm-shields, yea, and also shields to defend their heads, and also they were dressed with thick clothing— ²⁰ Now the army of Zerahemnah was not prepared with any such thing; they had only their swords and their cimeters, their bows and their arrows, their stones and their slings; and they were naked, save it were a skin which was girded about their loins; yea, all were naked, save it were the Zoramites and the Amalekites; ²¹ but they were not armed with breastplates, nor shields— therefore, they were exceedingly afraid of the armies of the Nephites because of their armor, notwithstanding their number being so much greater than the Nephites.

An Ambush Is Set

²² Behold, now it came to pass that they durst not come against the Nephites in the borders of Jershon; therefore they departed out of the land of Antionum into the wilderness, and took their journey round about in the wilderness, away by the head of the river Sidon, that they might come into the land of Manti and take possession of the land; for they did not suppose that the armies of Moroni would know whither they had gone.

²³ But it came to pass, as soon as they had departed into the wilderness Moroni sent spies into the wilderness to watch their camp; and Moroni, also, knowing of the prophecies of Alma, sent certain men unto him, desiring him that he should inquire of the Lord whither the armies of the Nephites should go to defend themselves against the Lamanites. ²⁴ And it came to pass that the word of the Lord came unto Alma, and Alma informed the messengers of Moroni, that the armies of the Lamanites were marching round about in the wilderness, that they might come over into the land of Manti, that they might commence an attack upon the weaker part of the people. And those messengers went and delivered the message unto Moroni.

²⁵ Now Moroni, leaving a part of his army in the land of Jershon, lest by any means a part of the Lamanites should come into that land and take possession of the city, took the remaining part of his army and marched over into the land of Manti. ²⁶ And he caused that all the people in that quarter of the land should gather themselves together to battle against the Lamanites, to defend their lands and their country, their rights and their liberties; therefore they were prepared against the time of the coming of the Lamanites. ²⁷ And it came to pass that Moroni caused that his army should be secreted in the valley which was near the bank of the river Sidon, which was on the west

⁴ 18 Or *scimitars*

19: *Breastplates*, the term in the OT primarily refers to priestly attire (23 times in Ex), though Isa 59.17 introduces a metaphorical meaning that is picked up five times in the NT. The first literal use of the word in the BoM was when the people of Limhi discovered “perfectly sound” Jaredite breastplates some 45 years earlier (Mos 8.10); these artifacts may have served as models for Moroni’s military innovation. *Shields to defend their heads*, helmets. **22:** The land of Manti was the southernmost Nephite region in the center of their territory. Since it contained the headwaters of the Sidon River, it would have been in the mountains. **23:** *The prophecies of Alma*, Alma had earlier sought and obtained a revelation about enemy troop movements at the request of military leaders, see 16.4–8. It is striking that even though Moroni is always portrayed in the BoM as a righteous, God-fearing leader, he asks Alma to inquire of the Lord on his behalf, rather than seeking revelation himself; cf. 3 Ne 3.19. **26:** Moroni conscripts civilians in Manti to fight along with his troops. **27:** *Secreted*, WB: “concealed.”

of the river Sidon in the wilderness.²⁸ And Moroni placed spies round about, that he might know when the camp of the Lamanites should come.

²⁹ And now, as Moroni knew the intention of the Lamanites, that it was their intention to destroy their brethren, or to subject them and bring them into bondage that they might establish a kingdom unto themselves over all the land;³⁰ and he also knowing that it was the only desire of the Nephites to preserve their lands, and their liberty, and their church, therefore he thought it no sin that he should defend them by stratagem; therefore, he found by his spies which course the Lamanites were to take.

³¹ Therefore, he divided his army and brought a part over into the valley, and concealed them on the east, and on the south of the hill Riplah;³² and the remainder he concealed in the west valley, on the west of the river Sidon, and so down into the borders of the land Manti.³³ And thus having placed his army according to his desire, he was prepared to meet them.

The Battle at the River Sidon

³⁴ And it came to pass that the Lamanites came up on the north of the hill, where a part of the army of Moroni was concealed.³⁵ And as the Lamanites had passed the hill Riplah, and came into the valley, and began to cross the river Sidon, the army which was concealed on the south of the hill, which was led by a man whose name was Lehi, and he led his army forth and encircled the Lamanites about

on the east in their rear.³⁶ And it came to pass that the Lamanites, when they saw the Nephites coming upon them in their rear, turned them about and began to contend with the army of Lehi.

³⁷ And the work of death commenced on both sides, but it was more dreadful on the part of the Lamanites, for their nakedness was exposed to the heavy blows of the Nephites with their swords and their cimeters, which brought death almost at every stroke.³⁸ While on the other hand, there was now and then a man fell among the Nephites, by their swords^a and the loss of blood, they being shielded from the more vital parts of the body, or the more vital parts of the body being shielded from the strokes of the Lamanites, by their breastplates, and their armshields, and their head-plates; and thus the Nephites did carry on the work of death among the Lamanites.

³⁹ And it came to pass that the Lamanites became frightened, because of the great destruction among them, even until they began to flee towards the river Sidon.⁴⁰ And they were pursued by Lehi and his men; and they were driven by Lehi into the waters of Sidon, and they crossed the waters of Sidon. And Lehi retained his armies upon the bank of the river Sidon that they should not cross.

⁴¹ And it came to pass that Moroni and his army met the Lamanites in the valley, on the other side of the river Sidon, and began to fall upon them and to slay them.⁴² And the Lamanites did flee again before them, towards

^a 38 O wounds

28–30: It is unclear why Moroni felt that posting spies might be morally questionable, or how doing so might have constituted a stratagem, that is, a deceitful tactic. Perhaps they were luring and interrogating enemy soldiers. Or the stratagem referred to may be the ambush that he is planning. Elsewhere in the BoM, the use of spies is considered an ordinary part of warfare; see 2.21; 56.22, 35; 57.30; 58.14, 20. 30: This is the third list in this chapter identifying the things the Nephites wanted to preserve, but the first one that includes *their church*. 34: The Lamanites approach from the north because they are coming out of the wilderness that is northeast of the land of Manti. 37: *The work of death*, a non-biblical phrase, common in the early 19th c., that appears five times in the BoM. 42: Moroni had divided his forces into three parts in vv. 31–32. The Lamanites have now engaged with all three: Lehi's troops on the east of the river (vv. 34–38), his own soldiers on the west (v. 41), and the self-defense militia in Manti (v. 42).

the land of Manti; and they were met again by the armies of Moroni.⁴³ Now in this case the Lamanites did fight exceedingly; yea, never had the Lamanites been known to fight with such exceeding great strength and courage, no, not even from the beginning.⁴⁴ And they were inspired by the Zoramites and the Amalekites, who were their chief captains and leaders, and by Zerahemnah, who was their chief captain, or their chief leader and commander; yea, they did fight like dragons, and many of the Nephites were slain by their hands, yea, for they did smite in two many of their head-plates, and they did pierce many of their breastplates, and they did smite off many of their arms; and thus the Lamanites did smite in their fierce anger.

⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the Nephites were inspired by a better cause, for they were not fighting for monarchy nor power but they were fighting for their homes and their liberties, their wives and their children, and their all, yea, for their rites^a of worship and their church.⁴⁶ And they were doing that which they felt was the duty which they owed to their God; for the Lord had said unto them, and also unto their fathers, that “Inasmuch as ye are not guilty of the first offense, neither the second, ye shall not suffer yourselves to be slain by the hands of your enemies.”^b ⁴⁷ And again, the Lord has said that “Ye shall defend your families even unto bloodshed.”^c Therefore for this cause were the Nephites contending with the Lamanites, to defend themselves, and their families, and

their lands, their country, and their rights, and their religion.

⁴⁸ And it came to pass that when the men of Moroni saw the fierceness and the anger of the Lamanites, they were about to shrink and flee from them. And Moroni, perceiving their intent, sent forth and inspired their hearts with these thoughts—yea, the thoughts of their lands, their liberty, yea, their freedom from bondage.⁴⁹ And it came to pass that they turned upon the Lamanites, and they cried with one voice unto the Lord their God, for their liberty and their freedom from bondage.⁵⁰ And they began to stand against the Lamanites with power; and in that selfsame hour that they cried unto the Lord for their freedom, the Lamanites began to flee before them; and they fled even to the waters of Sidon.

⁵¹ Now, the Lamanites were more numerous, yea, by more than double the number of the Nephites; nevertheless, they were driven insomuch that they were gathered together in one body in the valley, upon the bank by the river Sidon.⁵² Therefore the armies of Moroni encircled them about, yea, even on both sides of the river, for behold, on the east were the men of Lehi.⁵³ Therefore when Zerahemnah saw the men of Lehi on the east of the river Sidon, and the armies of Moroni on the west

^a 45 Or *rights*

^b 46 Reference uncertain

^c 47 Reference uncertain

43–44: The extraordinary strength and courage of the Lamanites was not enough to outweigh the Nephite advantage of armor, even though some of that armor failed (as might be expected in the first trial of a new technology). *Chief leader*, a Lamanite title that appears only here and at 47.17. *They did fight like dragons*, the same simile was used to describe Limhi’s soldiers at Mos 20.11. 47: *Religion*, the first appearance of the word in the BoM, although it is used five times in the NT. In the BoM, it occurs ten times, but only in Alma 43–54. 48: This verse seems to follow from v. 44; the narrator has inserted a defense of the Nephites in between, in order to diminish the impression of Lamanite martial prowess, or to emphasize the religiosity of the Nephites. Moroni’s leadership skills include accurately perceiving a situation and then saying the right things in response. It is unclear how he conveyed his message to soldiers in the heat of battle. The next verse suggests some sort of rallying cry, which takes the form of a prayer. 53: The implied subject is “Zerahemnah and his army” rather than just *Zerahemnah*, as indicated by the plural pronoun in *they were struck with terror*.

of the river Sidon, that they were encircled about by the Nephites, they were struck with terror.⁵⁴ Now Moroni, when he saw their terror, commanded his men that they should stop shedding their blood.

An Offer of Peace

44¹ And it came to pass that they did stop and withdrew a pace from them. And Moroni said unto Zerahemnah, “Behold, Zerahemnah, that we do not desire to be men of blood. Ye know that ye are in our hands, yet we do not desire to slay you.² Behold, we have not come out to battle against you that we might shed your blood for power; neither do we desire to bring any one to the yoke of bondage. But this is the very cause for which ye have come against us; yea, and ye are angry with us because of our religion.

³ “But now, ye behold that the Lord is with us; and ye behold that he has delivered you into our hands. And now I would that ye should understand that this is done unto us because of our religion and our faith in Christ. And now ye see that ye cannot destroy this our faith.⁴ Now ye see that this is the true faith of God; yea, ye see that God will support, and keep, and preserve us, so long as we are faithful unto him, and unto our faith, and our religion; and never will the Lord suffer that we shall be destroyed except we should fall into transgression and deny our faith.

⁵ “And now, Zerahemnah, I command you, in the name of that all-powerful God, who has strengthened our arms that we have gained power over you, by our faith, by our religion, and by our rites^a of worship, and by our church, and by the sacred support which we owe to our wives and our children, by that liberty which binds us to our lands and our country; yea, and also by the maintenance of the sacred word of God, to which we owe all our happiness; and by all that is most dear unto us—⁶ yea, and this is not all; I command you by all the desires which ye have for life, that ye deliver up your weapons of war unto us, and we will seek not your blood, but we will spare your lives, if ye will go your way and come not again to war against us.

⁷ “And now, if ye do not this, behold, ye are in our hands, and I will command my men that they shall fall upon you, and inflict the wounds of death in your bodies, that ye may become extinct; and then we will see who shall have power over this people; yea, we will see who shall be brought into bondage.”

The Offer Rejected and Then Accepted

⁸ And now it came to pass that when Zerahemnah had heard these sayings he came forth and delivered up his sword and his cimeter, and his bow into the hands of Moroni, and said unto him, “Behold, here are our weapons of

^a 5 Or *rights*

CHAPTER 44

1–7: This speech is the first time we hear Moroni’s own voice, which helps solidify readers’ perceptions of his character, including his reluctance to use force, his devotion and trust in God, his decisiveness, and his magnanimity; see 1 Ne 3.7n. **2:** *Power . . . bondage*, the ironic force of Moroni’s taunt depends on the narrator’s description of Zerahemnah’s intentions at 43:8; the two terms also form an inclusio with v. 7 below. **3–4:** Moroni offers a religious explanation for Nephite military success; Zerahemnah will counter with a secular explanation at v. 9. **5:** *Liberty which binds us* is something of an oxymoron, though the idea seems to be that their lands and country are necessary to preserve their liberty. Attributing all their happiness to God’s word is a strong claim. **6:** *By all the desire which ye have for life*, Moroni’s final appeal is to Zerahemnah’s most immediate self-interest. **7:** *Extinct*, WB: “extinguished; having no survivor.” **8:** Zerahemnah hands over his personal weapons as a gesture of peace; at this point the rest of his soldiers still have their weapons. *To take an oath*, Moroni’s speech, as reported in this account, did not mention an oath, but such a demand is implied here and in v. 11. The Lamanite respect for oaths was also manifest in the story of Limhi’s people; see Mos 21.3.

war; we will deliver them up unto you, but we will not suffer ourselves to take an oath unto you, which we know that we shall break, and also our children; but take our weapons of war, and suffer that we may depart into the wilderness; otherwise we will retain our swords, and we will perish or conquer. ⁹ Behold, we are not of your faith; we do not believe that it is God that has delivered us into your hands; but we believe that it is your cunning that has preserved you from our swords. Behold, it is your breastplates and your shields that have preserved you.”

¹⁰ And now when Zerahemnah had made an end of speaking these words, Moroni returned the sword and the weapons of war, which he had received, unto Zerahemnah, saying, “Behold, we will end the conflict. ¹¹ Now I cannot recall the words which I have spoken, therefore as the Lord liveth, ye shall not depart except ye depart with an oath that ye will not return again against us to war. Now as ye are in our hands we will spill your blood upon the ground, or ye shall submit to the conditions which I have proposed.”

¹² And now when Moroni had said these words, Zerahemnah retained his sword, and he was angry with Moroni, and he rushed forward that he might slay Moroni; but as he raised his sword, behold, one of Moroni’s soldiers smote it even to the earth, and it broke by the hilt; and he also smote Zerahemnah that he took off his scalp and it fell to the earth. And Zerahemnah withdrew from before them into the midst of his soldiers.

¹³ And it came to pass that the soldier who stood by, who smote off the scalp of Zerahemnah, took up the scalp from off the ground by the hair, and laid it upon the point of his sword, and stretched it forth unto them, saying unto them with a loud voice, ¹⁴ “Even as this scalp has fallen to the earth, which is the scalp of your chief, so shall ye fall to the earth except ye will deliver up your weapons of war and depart with a covenant of peace.”

¹⁵ Now there were many, when they heard these words and saw the scalp which was upon the sword, that were struck with fear; and many came forth and threw down their weapons of war at the feet of Moroni, and entered into a covenant of peace. And as many as entered into a covenant they suffered to depart into the wilderness.

¹⁶ Now it came to pass that Zerahemnah was exceeding wroth, and he did stir up the remainder of his soldiers to anger, to contend more powerfully against the Nephites. ¹⁷ And now Moroni was angry, because of the stubbornness of the Lamanites; therefore he commanded his people that they should fall upon them and slay them. And it came to pass that they began to slay them; yea, and the Lamanites did contend with their swords and their might. ¹⁸ But behold, their naked skins and their bare heads were exposed to the sharp swords of the Nephites; yea, behold they were pierced and smitten, yea, and did fall exceedingly fast before the swords of the Nephites; and they began to be swept down, even as the soldier of Moroni had prophesied.

11: *Recall*, take back. **12–15:** This incident may have reminded early BoM readers of the stereotype of Native Americans taking scalps. The soldier responsible transforms his action into the sort of performed prophecy, or sign-act, associated with Jeremiah and Ezekiel (e.g., Jer 13.1–11 [linen loincloth]; 19.1–13 [clay jug]; 27.2 [yoke]; Ezek 4–5 [various actions]; 12.1–16 [packing bags]). A difference is that the symbolic acts performed by the Hebrew prophets were commanded by the Lord, while the Nephite soldier came up with his own interpretation after the fact (similar to how Samuel interprets his torn robe at 1 Sam 15.27–28). For other vows or curses with physically illustrated penalties, see 46.21–22 and 3 Ne 4.29. **18:** *Had prophesied*, in v. 14.

¹⁹ Now Zerahemnah, when he saw that they were all about to be destroyed, cried mightily unto Moroni, promising that he would covenant—and also his people—with them, if they would spare the remainder of their lives, that they never would come to war again against them.²⁰ And it came to pass that Moroni caused that the work of death should cease again among the people. And he took the weapons of war from the Lamanites; and after they had entered into a covenant with him of peace they were suffered to depart into the wilderness.

²¹ Now the number of their dead was not numbered because of the greatness of the number; yea, the number of their dead was exceeding great, both on the Nephites and on the Lamanites.²² And it came to pass that they did cast their dead into the waters of Sidon, and they have gone forth and are buried in the depths of the sea.²³ And the armies of the Nephites, or of Moroni, returned and came to their houses and their lands.²⁴ And thus ended the eighteenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi.^a And thus ended the record of Alma, which was written upon the plates of Nephi.

Mormon₂'s Abridgment of the Record of Helaman₂: Alma 45–62

[*Mormon₂'s heading*] The account of the people of Nephi, and their wars and dissensions, in the days of Helaman, according to the record of Helaman, which he kept in his days.

Alma₂ Prophecies of the Destruction of the Nephites

[XXI] **45** ¹ Behold, now it came to pass that the people of Nephi were exceedingly rejoiced, because the Lord had again delivered them out of the hands of their enemies; therefore they gave thanks unto the Lord their God; yea, and they did fast much and pray much, and they did worship God with exceeding great joy.

² And it came to pass in the nineteenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi,^b that Alma came unto his son Helaman and said unto him, “Believest thou the words which I spake unto thee concerning those records which have been kept?”

³ And Helaman said unto him, “Yea, I believe.”

⁴ And Alma said again, “Believest thou in Jesus Christ, who shall come?”

⁵ And he said, “Yea, I believe all the words which thou hast spoken.”

⁶ And Alma said unto him again, “Will ye keep my commandments?”

⁷ And he said, “Yea, I will keep thy commandments with all my heart.”

⁸ Then Alma said unto him, “Blessed art thou; and the Lord shall prosper thee in this land.⁹ But behold, I have somewhat to prophesy unto thee; but what I prophesy unto thee ye shall not make known; yea, what I prophesy unto thee shall not be made known, even

^a 2.4 –74 years; see Alma 35.13; 43.4

^b 2 –73 years

19–20: This is the last we hear of Zerahemnah; apparently he kept his oath. **21–22:** The description of unnumbered dead cast into the river Sidon closes an inclusio that began at 3.1–3.

CHAPTER 45

Heading: Compare the heading to ch. 1 and 63.1, which also mark transitions of record keepers; it is not clear why the following chapters were not made into a separate book called 1 Helaman. **1:** *They did worship God*, that is, they were exercising the right that they had defended at such great cost; see 43.9, 45; 44.5. **2:** *The words which I spake concerning those records*, see 37.1–31; a year has passed since that earlier counsel was given. **9:** Even though the prophecy will not be made public for some time, Alma wants there to be a written record.

until the prophecy is fulfilled; therefore write the words which I shall say.

¹⁰ “And these are the words: Behold, I perceive that this very people, the Nephites, according to the spirit of revelation which is in me, in four hundred years from the time that Jesus Christ shall manifest himself unto them, shall dwindle in unbelief. ¹¹ Yea, and then shall they see wars and pestilences, yea, famines and bloodshed, even until the people of Nephi shall become extinct— ¹² yea, and this because they shall dwindle in unbelief and fall into the works of darkness, and lasciviousness, and all manner of iniquities; yea, I say unto you, that because they shall sin against so great light and knowledge, yea, I say unto you, that from that day, even the fourth generation shall not all pass away before this great iniquity shall come.

¹³ “And when that great day cometh, behold, the time very soon cometh that those who are now, or the seed of those who are now numbered among the people of Nephi, shall no more be numbered among the people of Nephi. ¹⁴ But whosoever remaineth, and is not destroyed in that great and dreadful day, shall be numbered among the Lamanites, and shall become like unto them, all save it be a few who shall be called the disciples of the

Lord; and them shall the Lamanites pursue even until they shall become extinct. And now, because of iniquity, this prophecy shall be fulfilled.”

Alma₂'s Last Words and Departure

¹⁵ And now it came to pass that after Alma had said these things to Helaman, he blessed him, and also his other sons; and he also blessed the earth for the righteous' sake. ¹⁶ And he said, “Thus saith the Lord God: ‘Cursed shall be the land, yea, this land, unto every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, unto destruction, which do wickedly, when they are fully ripe.’ And as I have said so shall it be; for this is the cursing and the blessing of God upon the land, for the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance.”

¹⁷ And now, when Alma had said these words he blessed the church, yea, all those who should stand fast in the faith from that time henceforth. ¹⁸ And when Alma had done this he departed out of the land of Zarahemla, as if to go into the land of Melek. And it came to pass that he was never heard of more; as to his death or burial we know not of.

¹⁹ Behold, this we know, that he was a righteous man; and the saying went abroad in the church that he was taken up by the Spirit,

10–12: Alma prophesies of the complete destruction of the Nephites almost 500 years in the future. Presumably he wants Helaman to keep this secret so as not to give rise to despair; a great number of righteous Nephites will flourish in the intervening centuries. *Sin against so great light and knowledge*, Alma had delivered a similar prophecy to the people of Ammonihah (9.18–24; with two references to “light and knowledge”); now he is extending the prophecy to the entire Nephite nation and adding a specific timeline. *The fourth generation*, Alma assumes that a generation lasts for about a century; cf. Gen 15.13, 16; Hel 13.9–10; 4 Ne 1.18, 22. **14:** Moroni, the final record keeper, will be one of the pursued disciples, see Morm 8.1–3; Moro 1.2–3. *This prophecy shall be fulfilled*, see the books of 4 Nephi and Mormon. **15–16:** Like Moses at Deut 27–30, Alma pronounces blessings and curses in his final days (though here they are applied to the land as well as to people). An explicit connection with Moses will be made in v. 19. **15:** A possible meaning is that he blessed the land that it would remain productive and life-sustaining, despite the wickedness of the people, for the sake of the minority of the population who were still righteous; cf. 46.10 where the land is blessed with liberty “for the righteous’ sake.” **16:** Lehi, Jacob, and Enos had earlier noted that the land would be cursed if the people became wicked (2 Ne 1.7; Jacob 2.29; 3.3; Enos 1.10), as did Alma himself at 37.28, 31 (where he speaks of them becoming “fully ripe”); see 1 Ne 17.35n. This prophecy is fulfilled at Hel 13.30, 36, and Morm 1.17–18. **19:** Distinctive phrases in this verse connect Alma’s disappearance to the extraordinary passing of several holy men, but ends with a reference to the most traumatic event of his life, when he stood by at the massacre of ordinary, helpless believers. *The saying went abroad in the church*, echoing rumors of John’s non-death at Jn 21.23. *He was taken up by the Spirit*, reminiscent of Elijah’s final departure at

or buried by the hand of the Lord, even as Moses. But behold, the scriptures saith the Lord took Moses unto himself; and we suppose that he has also received Alma in the spirit, unto himself; therefore, for this cause we know nothing concerning his death and burial.

An Unsuccessful Attempt at Reform

²⁰ And now it came to pass in the commencement of the nineteenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi,^a that Helaman went forth among the people to declare the word unto them. ²¹ For behold, because of their wars with the Lamanites and the many little dissensions and disturbances which had been among the people, it became expedient that the word of God should be declared among them, yea, and that a regulation should be made throughout the church. ²² Therefore, Helaman and his brethren went forth to establish the church again in all the land, yea, in every city throughout all the land which was possessed by the people of Nephi. And it came to pass that they did appoint priests and teachers throughout all the land, over all the churches.

2 Kings 2.16. *Buried by the hand of the Lord, even as Moses*, see Deut 34.5–6, where the phrase “he buried him [Moses]” does not identify the subject of the sentence. Later Jewish tradition assumed that the Lord himself had buried Moses. *Received . . . unto himself* seems to be an allusion to the martyrs at Ammonihah, whose deaths Alma had witnessed; see 14.11. **21:** *A regulation should be made*, the following account of the Amalickiahite wars is framed by two instances of preaching the word of God and regulating the church: one here that immediately precedes the conflict, and another that comes at the end of the fighting at 62.44. Like 3.1–3 and 44.21–22, this is another inclusio that highlights the narrative structure of the book of Alma. **22:** In the original manuscript, twenty-eight words in this verse (*yea, in every . . . priests and teachers*) are written in JS’s handwriting. For some reason, he had momentarily taken over for his regular scribe, OC, mid-sentence. This is the only such occurrence in the surviving portion of the manuscript. **23–24:** The dissension that will lead to the Amalickiahite wars began within the church; cf. 48.24.

CHAPTERS 46–62

The first Amalickiahite war (chs. 46–49) lasted two years, from –73 to –72. The second Amalickiahite war (chs. 51–62), coinciding with the king-men revolt (ch. 51), was much longer and more destructive, lasting seven years, from –67 to –61. The second conflict featured warfare on two fronts, with Moroni leading Nephite armies in the east and Helaman commanding troops in the west. In the intervening five years of preparation and prosperity, Moroni puts down a revolt of Nephite dissenters and Pahoran succeeds his father, Nephiah, as chief judge (ch. 50).

CHAPTER 46

2: *Insomuch that they were determined to slay them*, this seems like an extreme reaction to the disagreements over pride, wealth, and religious observance described at 45.24. There may have been more to the story than what the narrator has recorded.

²³ And now it came to pass that after Helaman and his brethren had appointed priests and teachers over the churches that there arose a dissension among them, and they would not give heed to the words of Helaman and his brethren; ²⁴ but they grew proud, being lifted up in their hearts, because of their exceeding great riches; therefore they grew rich in their own eyes, and would not give heed to their words, to walk uprightly before God.

The Amalickiahite Wars: Alma 46–62

The First Amalickiahite War: Alma 46–49

Amalickiah

46 ¹ And it came to pass that as many as would not hearken to the words of Helaman and his brethren were gathered together against their brethren. ² And now behold, they were exceeding wrath, insomuch that they were determined to slay them.

^a 20 –73 years; see v. 2 above

³ Now the leader of those who were wroth against their brethren was a large and a strong man; and his name was Amalickiah. ⁴ And Amalickiah was desirous to be a king; and those people who were wroth were also desirous that he should be their king; and they were the greater part of them the lower judges of the land, and they were seeking for power. ⁵ And they had been led by the flatteries of Amalickiah, that if they would support him and establish him to be their king that he would make them rulers over the people.

⁶ Thus they were led away by Amalickiah to dissensions, notwithstanding the preaching of Helaman and his brethren, yea, notwithstanding their exceeding great care over the church, for they were high priests over the church. ⁷ And there were many in the church who believed in the flattering words of Amalickiah, therefore they dissented even from the church; and thus were the affairs of the people of Nephi exceedingly precarious and dangerous, notwithstanding their great victory which they had had over the Lamanites, and their great rejoicings which they had had because of their deliverance by the hand of the Lord.

⁸ Thus we see how quick the children of men do forget the Lord their God, yea, how quick to do iniquity, and to be led away by the evil one. ⁹ Yea, and we also see the great

wickedness one very wicked man can cause to take place among the children of men. ¹⁰ Yea, we see that Amalickiah, because he was a man of cunning device and a man of many flattering words, that he led away the hearts of many people to do wickedly; yea, and to seek to destroy the church of God, and to destroy the foundation of liberty which God had granted unto them, or which blessing God had sent upon the face of the land for the righteous' sake.

The Title of Liberty

¹¹ And now it came to pass that when Moroni, who was the chief commander of the armies of the Nephites, had heard of these dissensions, he was angry with Amalickiah. ¹² And it came to pass that he rent his coat; and he took a piece thereof, and wrote upon it: "In memory of our God, our religion, and freedom, and our peace, our wives, and our children." And he fastened it upon the end of a pole.

¹³ And he fastened on his head-plate, and his breastplate, and his shields, and girded on his armor about his loins; and he took the pole, which had on the end thereof his rent coat, (and he called it the title of liberty) and he bowed himself to the earth, and he prayed mightily unto his God for the blessings of liberty to rest upon his brethren, so long as there

3–4: If the underlying issue was actually a bid to return to the rule of kings, it may have pitted the Mulekite majority—whose leaders had been heirs of the Davidic monarchy—against the Nephites. 4: *Amalickiah was desirous to be a king*, eventually he will get his wish, but as king of the Lamanites rather than the Nephites. 6: Mormon is careful to absolve Helaman and his brothers from any blame. Up to this point, there has only been a single "high priest over the church" (mentioned six times); a change in ecclesiastical structure is implied here; see Mos 29.42n. 8–10: An editorial comment by the narrator. Some of the phrases used to describe Amalickiah were also applied to Alma before his conversion, including "very wicked... man," "flattering... words," "seek... destroy the church of God" (Mos 27.8–10). 8: Mormon will make a similar observation at Hel 12.4–5. *Forget the Lord their God*, echoes Deut 6.12; 8.11–20. 9: *The great wickedness one very wicked man can cause*, the same point was made about King Noah at Mos 29.17–18. 10: *Cunning device* may suggest a connection to the lawyers of Ammonihah at 10.13, the only other occurrence of the term. *Led away the hearts of many people to do wickedly*, echoing descriptions of both Korihor (30.18) and Corianton (39.13). *Destroy the foundation of liberty*, rather than destroying liberty itself (as at 8.17; Hel 1.8); the emphasis here is on its *foundation*, which seems to be righteousness, or perhaps the church. *Blessing... the land for the righteous' sake*, see 2 Ne 1.7; Alma 45.15. 12: *Rent*, tore. *Title*, WB: "inscription." 13: *The blessings of liberty*, Moroni assumes that a return to monarchy would impinge on the liberty the people currently enjoy under the reign of judges, particularly with regard to their freedom of worship. 13–15: This explanation of the origin of the term "Christians" among the Nephites is reminiscent of Acts 11.26.

should a band of Christians remain to possess the land—¹⁴ for thus were all the true believers of Christ, who belonged to the church of God, called by those who did not belong to the church.¹⁵ And those who did belong to the church were faithful; yea, all those who were true believers in Christ took upon them, gladly, the name of Christ, or Christians as they were called, because of their belief in Christ who should come.

¹⁶ And therefore, at this time, Moroni prayed that the cause of the Christians, and the freedom of the land might be favored.¹⁷ And it came to pass that when he had poured out his soul to God, he named all the land which was south of the land Desolation, yea, and in fine, all the land, both on the north and on the south a chosen land and the land of liberty.¹⁸ And he said, “Surely God shall not suffer that we, who are despised because we take upon us the name of Christ, shall be trodden down and destroyed, until we bring it upon us by our own transgressions.”

¹⁹ And when Moroni had said these words, he went forth among the people, waving the rent part of his garment in the air, that all might see the writing which he had written upon the rent part, and crying with a loud

voice, saying,²⁰ “Behold, whosoever will maintain this title upon the land, let them come forth in the strength of the Lord, and enter into a covenant that they will maintain their rights, and their religion, that the Lord God may bless them.”

²¹ And it came to pass that when Moroni had proclaimed these words, behold, the people came running together with their armor girded about their loins, rending their garments in token, or as a covenant, that they would not forsake the Lord their God; or, in other words, if they should transgress the commandments of God, or fall into transgression, and be ashamed to take upon them the name of Christ, the Lord should rend them even as they had rent their garments.

²² Now this was the covenant which they made, and they cast their garments at the feet of Moroni, saying, “We covenant with our God, that we shall be destroyed, even as our brethren in the land northward, if we shall fall into transgression; yea, he may cast us at the feet of our enemies, even as we have cast our garments at thy feet to be trodden under foot, if we shall fall into transgression.”

²³ Moroni said unto them, “Behold, we are a remnant of the seed of Jacob; yea, we are a

17: *Land of liberty* alludes to the promises made to Lehi's family at 2 Ne 1.7 and 10.11, and also the proclamation of the last king, Mosiah, at 29.32 (these are the only four occurrences of the phrase in scripture). **18:** *Despised because we take upon us the name of Christ*, although BoM record keepers write from the perspective of Christian believers, who monopolized both the monarchy and the subsequent position of chief judge, Moroni here suggests that they were actually a persecuted minority among the combined Nephite/Mulekite population. **19–21:** Moroni is raising a Christian militia, bound by covenant and outside the organization of the regular Nephite military. **19:** Moroni, dressed in full armor as he *went forth among the people*, would have been a visual reminder of both their recent victory over the Lamanites, and also of Moroni's key role in that victory. **21:** The people metaphorically act out the consequences of breaking their covenant; see 44.12–15n. The covenant itself is religious, promising obedience and loyalty to Christ, despite the militaristic aspect of donning armor. **22:** The people add a second metaphorical action to affirm their covenant: they will be trodden underfoot by their enemies, as well as being torn like clothing, if they break God's commandments. *Our brethren in the land northward*, the Jaredites. It is unexpected that Moroni uses the phrase “our brethren” to refer to a non-Israelite people perceived as wicked and still dangerous even after their extinction; see 37.21–31. **23:** *Joseph, whose coat was rent*, see Gen 37.31–33, though that narrative says nothing about his coat being torn. The scriptural precedent is somewhat awkwardly employed: Moroni is telling his people that if they do not keep God's commandments, they will suffer the same fate as their ancestor Joseph, who did keep the commandments and was nonetheless *cast into prison and sold*; see Gen 37.27–28; 39.1, 20.

remnant of the seed of Joseph, whose coat was rent by his brethren into many pieces; yea, and now behold, let us remember to keep the commandments of God, or our garments shall be rent by our brethren, and we be cast into prison, or be sold, or be slain.

²⁴ “Yea, let us preserve our liberty as a remnant of Joseph; yea, let us remember the words of Jacob, before his death, for behold, he saw that a part of the remnant of the coat of Joseph was preserved and had not decayed. And he said, ‘Even as this remnant of garment of my son hath been preserved, so shall a remnant of the seed of my son be preserved by the hand of God, and be taken unto himself, while the remainder of the seed of Joseph shall perish, even as the remnant of his garment.’²⁵ Now behold, this giveth my soul sorrow; nevertheless, my soul hath joy in my son, because of that part of his seed which shall be taken unto God.’^a²⁶ Now behold, this was the language of Jacob.²⁷ And now who knoweth but what the remnant of the seed of Joseph, which shall perish as his garment, are those who have dissented from us? Yea, and even it shall be ourselves if we do not stand fast in the faith of Christ.”

Mass Dissensions Averted

²⁸ And now it came to pass that when Moroni had said these words he went forth, and also sent forth in all the parts of the land where there were dissensions, and gathered together all the people who were desirous to maintain

their liberty, to stand against Amalickiah and those who had dissented, who were called Amalickiahites.²⁹ And it came to pass that when Amalickiah saw that the people of Moroni were more numerous than the Amalickiahites—and he also saw that his people were doubtful concerning the justice of the cause in which they had undertaken—therefore, fearing that he should not gain the point, he took those of his people who would and departed into the land of Nephi.

³⁰ Now Moroni thought it was not expedient that the Lamanites should have any more strength; therefore he thought to cut off the people of Amalickiah, or to take them and bring them back, and put Amalickiah to death; yea, for he knew that he would stir up the Lamanites to anger against them, and cause them to come to battle^b against them; and this he knew that Amalickiah would do that he might obtain his purposes.³¹ Therefore Moroni thought it was expedient that he should take his armies, who had gathered themselves together, and armed themselves, and entered into a covenant to keep the peace—and it came to pass that he took his army and marched out into^c the wilderness, to cut off the course of Amalickiah in the wilderness.³² And it came to pass that he did according to his desires,

^a ²⁵ Reference uncertain

^b ³⁰ O *come down to battle*

^c ³¹ O, 1981 out *with his tents* into

24–26: This story is not in the Bible. At 2 Ne 3.5, Lehi identified all of his descendants as a “branch of Joseph” that had been preserved by the Lord, in contrast to the tribe of Joseph in the Old World. Here Moroni sees Nephite Christians as a much smaller “remnant of the seed of Joseph” that had been preserved, in contrast to the Nephite dissenters who are like that portion of Joseph’s coat that had disintegrated. **29–30:** Both Amalickiah and Moroni had a talent for sensing the disposition and intentions of others. *Gain the point*, WB (entry for *point*): “aim; purpose; as, to gain one’s point.” **30:** Earlier dissenters to the Lamanites, such as the Amlicites, the Amulonites, and the Zoramites, had also *stirred up the Lamanites to anger*; see 24.1; 27.12; 35.10. The reading in O, “come down to battle,” is consistent with geographical references elsewhere in the BoM, including WoM 1.13; Alma 49.11; 51.13; Hel 1.15; 4.5. **31:** *His armies*, the explanation that follows indicates that these were Moroni’s recently founded militia forces, although v. 33 suggests that Moroni had a great deal of leeway in organizing military campaigns, and the distinction between conventional forces and new volunteers may have been blurred. Note that the 1981 reading restores a synecdoche (where tents represent troops and their gear) from O. **32:** *Headed*, headed off; got in front of; blocked.

and marched forth into the wilderness, and headed the armies of Amalickiah.

³³ And it came to pass that Amalickiah fled with a small number of his men, and the remainder were delivered up into the hands of Moroni and were taken back into the land of Zarahemla. ³⁴ Now, Moroni being a man who was appointed by the chief judges and the voice of the people, therefore he had power according to his will^a with the armies of the Nephites, to establish and to exercise authority over them. ³⁵ And it came to pass that whomsoever of the Amalickiahites that would not enter into a covenant to support the cause of freedom, that they might maintain a free government, he caused to be put to death; and there were but few who denied the covenant of freedom.

³⁶ And it came to pass also, that he caused the title of liberty to be hoisted upon every tower which was in all the land, which was possessed by the Nephites; and thus Moroni planted the standard of liberty among the Nephites. ³⁷ And they began to have peace again in the land; and thus they did maintain peace in the land until nearly the end of the nineteenth year of the reign of the judges.^b

³⁸ And Helaman and the high priests did also maintain order in the church; yea, even for the space of four years did they have much peace and rejoicing in the church. ³⁹ And it came to pass that there were many who died, firmly believing that their souls were redeemed by the Lord Jesus Christ; thus they went out

of the world rejoicing.⁴⁰ And there were some who died with fevers, which at some seasons of the year were very frequent in the land—but not so much so with fevers, because of the excellent qualities of the many plants and roots which God had prepared to remove the cause of diseases, to which men were subject by the nature of the climate—⁴¹ but there were many who died with old age; and those who died in the faith of Christ are happy in him, as we must needs suppose.

Amalickiah Becomes Chief Commander of the Lamanite Army

47 ¹ Now we will return in our record to Amalickiah and those who had fled with him into the wilderness; for, behold, he had taken those who went with him, and went up in the land of Nephi among the Lamanites, and did stir up the Lamanites to anger against the people of Nephi, insomuch that the king of the Lamanites sent a proclamation throughout all his land, among all his people, that they should gather themselves together again to go to battle against the Nephites. ² And it came to pass that when the proclamation had gone forth among them they were exceedingly afraid; yea, they feared to displease the king,

^a ³⁴ O power to do according to his will

^b ³⁷ -73 years; see Alma 45.2, 20; 48.2

33: *Amalickiah fled with a small number*, their story will be taken up again at 47.1. **35:** Moroni's authority during wartime included summary executions. A coerced covenant to support freedom seems ironic; the note that there were "but few" who rejected the offers appears sardonic. **36:** *Every tower* refers to fortifications; six years later the title of liberty will be hoisted, by force, upon the towers of rebels (51.20). *Standard*, WB: "an ensign of war; a staff with a flag." **38:** That is, until the revolt of Morianton in -68; see 48.20; 50.25-36. **40:** An unusual cultural note. *The nature of the climate*, there is a suggestion here of a tropical environment. **41:** *Happy in him*, happy in his presence.

CHAPTER 47

1: The narrative resumes from 46.33. *Up in the land of Nephi*, the Lamanite-held land of Nephi is consistently depicted as higher in elevation than the Nephite land of Zarahemla to the north; see 46.30n. **2:** *They feared to go to battle*, remembering their massive defeat in the Zoramite war just a year earlier; see chs. 43-44.

and they also feared to go to battle against the Nephites lest they should lose their lives. And it came to pass that they would not, or the more part of them would not, obey the commandments of the king.

³ And now it came to pass that the king was wroth because of their disobedience; therefore he gave Amalickiah the command of that part of his army which was obedient unto his commands, and commanded him that he should go forth and compel them to arms. ⁴ Now behold, this was the desire of Amalickiah; for he being a very subtle man to do evil therefore he laid the plan in his heart to dethrone the king of the Lamanites.

⁵ And now he had got the command of those parts of the Lamanites who were in favor of the king; and he sought to gain favor of those who were not obedient; therefore he went forward to the place which was called Onidah, for thither had all the Lamanites fled; for they discovered the army coming, and, supposing that they were coming to destroy them, therefore they fled to Onidah, to the place of arms. ⁶ And they had appointed a man to be a king and a leader over them, being fixed in their minds with a determined resolution that they would not be subjected to go against the Nephites. ⁷ And it came to pass that they had gathered themselves together upon the top of the mount which was called Antipas, in preparation to battle.

⁸ Now it was not Amalickiah's intention to give them battle according to the commandments of the king; but behold, it was his intention to gain favor with the armies of the Lamanites, that he might place himself at their

head and dethrone the king and take possession of the kingdom. ⁹ And behold, it came to pass that he caused his army to pitch their tents in the valley which was near the mount Antipas.

¹⁰ And it came to pass that when it was night he sent a secret embassy into the mount Antipas, desiring that the leader of those who were upon the mount, whose name was Lehonti, that he should come down to the foot of the mount, for he desired to speak with him. ¹¹ And it came to pass that when Lehonti received the message he durst not go down to the foot of the mount. And it came to pass that Amalickiah sent again the second time, desiring him to come down. And it came to pass that Lehonti would not; and he sent again the third time. ¹² And it came to pass that when Amalickiah found that he could not get Lehonti to come down off from the mount, he went up into the mount, nearly to Lehonti's camp; and he sent again the fourth time his message unto Lehonti, desiring that he would come down, and that he would bring his guards with him.

¹³ And it came to pass that when Lehonti had come down with his guards to Amalickiah, that Amalickiah desired him to come down with his army in the night-time, and surround those men in their camps over whom the king had given him command, and that he would deliver them up into Lehonti's hands, if he would make him (Amalickiah) a second leader over the whole army.

¹⁴ And it came to pass that Lehonti came down with his men and surrounded the men of Amalickiah, so that before they awoke at the dawn of day they were surrounded by the armies of Lehonti. ¹⁵ And it came to pass that

3: In the previous chapter we learned that Amalickiah was large, strong, cunning, and adept with flattering words; nevertheless it is still somewhat surprising that the Lamanite king has immediately employed him as his military enforcer (but see 43.6 for another example of Nephite dissenters being given significant positions by the Lamanites). **4:** *A very subtle man*, only here and 2 Sam 13.3, where the term is used to describe Jonadab, King David's nephew who crafted a plan to help Amnon rape his sister Tamar. **5:** *Onidah... the place of arms*, perhaps an armory. **6:** The Lamanite king's declaration of war met with enough opposition to fuel a rebellion that rallied around an alternative king. **10:** *Embassy*, an authorized messenger, or the message itself. **13:** Amalickiah's plan seems to give the advantage to Lehonti, but there is more to his designs than appears in this verse.

when they saw that they were surrounded, they plead with Amalickiah that he would suffer them to fall in with their brethren, that they might not be destroyed. Now this was the very thing which Amalickiah desired.¹⁶ And it came to pass that he delivered his men, contrary to the commands of the king. Now this was the thing that Amalickiah desired, that he might accomplish his designs in dethroning the king.

¹⁷ Now it was the custom among the Lamanites, if their chief leader was killed, to appoint the second leader to be their chief leader.¹⁸ And it came to pass that Amalickiah caused that one of his servants should administer poison by degrees to Lehonti, that he died.¹⁹ Now, when Lehonti was dead, the Lamanites appointed Amalickiah to be their leader and their chief commander.

Amalickiah Becomes King of the Lamanites

²⁰ And it came to pass that Amalickiah marched with his armies (for he had gained his desires) to the land of Nephi, to the city of Nephi, which was the chief city.²¹ And the king came out to meet him with his guards, for he supposed that Amalickiah had fulfilled his commands, and that Amalickiah had gathered together so great an army to go against the Nephites to battle.²² But behold, as the king came out to meet him Amalickiah caused that his servants should go forth to meet the king,

And they went and bowed themselves before the king, as if to reverence him because of his greatness.²³ And it came to pass that the king put forth his hand to raise them, as was the custom with the Lamanites, as a token of peace, which custom they had taken from the Nephites.²⁴ And it came to pass that when he had raised the first from the ground, behold he stabbed the king to the heart; and he fell to the earth.

²⁵ Now the servants of the king fled; and the servants of Amalickiah raised a cry, saying,²⁶ "Behold, the servants of the king have stabbed him to the heart, and he has fallen and they have fled; behold, come and see."²⁷ And it came to pass that Amalickiah commanded that his armies should march forth and see what had happened to the king; and when they had come to the spot, and found the king lying in his gore, Amalickiah pretended to be wroth, and said, "Whosoever loved the king, let him go forth, and pursue his servants that they may be slain."²⁸ And it came to pass that all they who loved the king, when they heard these words, came forth and pursued after the servants of the king.

²⁹ Now when the servants of the king saw an army pursuing after them, they were frightened again, and fled into the wilderness, and came over into the land of Zarahemla and joined the people of Ammon.³⁰ And the army which pursued after them returned, having pursued after them in vain; and thus Amalickiah,

18: *By degrees*, the time frame for this part of the plan is unclear, but it seems to have happened fairly quickly. There are no accounts of poisonings in the Bible. **19:** *Chief commander* is the same title that Moroni has among the Nephites; see 43.17 (in O); 46.11. **20:** *The city of Nephi*, where King Noah's court had been located about eighty years earlier. **23:** *Which custom they had taken from the Nephites*, a curious detail. *Stabbed... to the heart*, so as to kill him instantly. Kishkumen will be assassinated in the same manner at Hel 2.9. **25:** *The servants of the king fled*, these were the guards of v. 21. **27:** *Gore*, WB: "thick or clotted blood." **29:** This conveniently puts these eyewitnesses out of communication with their Lamanite brethren. One of these servants will reappear at 55.5. The people of Ammon, having been moved from Jershon to Melek at 35.13, seem to have been moved again, this time to the land of Zarahemla, but see 53.10n. **30:** *Gained the hearts of the people*, Amalickiah not only has political control, but through his ruse he has convinced the populace of his loyalty to the former king, thereby winning them over.

by his fraud, gained the hearts of the people.
³¹ And it came to pass on the morrow he entered the city Nephi with his armies, and took possession of the city.

³² And now it came to pass that the queen, when she had heard that the king was slain—for Amalickiah had sent an embassy to the queen informing her that the king had been slain by his servants, that he had pursued them with his army, but it was in vain, and they had made their escape—³³ therefore, when the queen had received this message she sent unto Amalickiah, desiring him that he would spare the people of the city; and she also desired him that he should come in unto her; and she also desired him that he should bring witnesses with him to testify concerning the death of the king.

³⁴ And it came to pass that Amalickiah took the same servant that slew the king, and all them who were with him, and went in unto the queen, unto the place where she sat; and they all testified unto her that the king was slain by his own servants; and they said also, “They have fled; does not this testify against them?” And thus they satisfied the queen concerning the death of the king.

³⁵ And it came to pass that Amalickiah sought the favor of the queen, and took her unto him to wife; and thus by his fraud, and by the assistance of his cunning servants, he obtained the kingdom; yea, he was acknowledged king throughout all the land, among all the people of the Lamanites, who were

composed of the Lamanites and the Lemuelites and the Ishmaelites, and all the dissenters of the Nephites, from the reign of Nephi down to the present time.³⁶ Now these dissenters, having the same instruction and the same information of the Nephites, yea, having been instructed in the same knowledge of the Lord, nevertheless, it is strange to relate, not long after their dissensions they became more hardened and impenitent, and more wild, wicked and ferocious than the Lamanites—drinking in with the traditions of the Lamanites; giving way to indolence, and all manner of lasciviousness; yea, entirely forgetting the Lord their God.

Amalickiah Incites the Lamanites to War

48 ¹ And now it came to pass that, as soon as Amalickiah had obtained the kingdom he began to inspire the hearts of the Lamanites against the people of Nephi; yea, he did appoint men to speak unto the Lamanites from their towers, against the Nephites.² And thus he did inspire their hearts against the Nephites, insomuch that in the latter end of the nineteenth year of the reign of the judges,^a he having accomplished his designs thus far, yea, having been made king over the Lamanites, he sought also to reign over all the

^a 2 –73 years; see Alma 45.2, 20; 46.37

33: *That he would spare the people of the city*, from reprisal attacks against those who might be accused of plotting with the (actually innocent) servants. **34:** *The same servant that slew the king*, a detail that makes the story all the more reprehensible. **35:** Like Shakespeare’s Richard III, Amalickiah woos the wife of the man he has just killed. The degree of her knowledge, volition, or vulnerability is difficult to gauge. *Down to the present time*, from the perspective of the original author, Helaman. **36:** Similar observations about the Amalekites and Amulonites, who were also Nephite dissenters, occurred at 21.3; 24.28–30; 43.6.

CHAPTER 48

1–2: The only other instance of inspiring hearts in scripture is at 43.48, where Moroni encourages his soldiers in battle with a reminder of the justness of their cause. *Appoint men to speak . . . from their towers*, a premodern version of mass media.

land, yea, and all the people who were in the land, the Nephites as well as the Lamanites.

³ Therefore he had accomplished his design, for he had hardened the hearts of the Lamanites and blinded their minds, and stirred them up to anger, insomuch that he had gathered together a numerous host to go to battle against the Nephites. ⁴ For he was determined, because of the greatness of the number of his people, to overpower the Nephites and to bring them into bondage. ⁵ And thus he did appoint chief captains of the Zoramites, they being the most acquainted with the strength of the Nephites, and their places of resort, and the weakest parts of their cities; therefore he appointed them to be chief captains over his armies. ⁶ And it came to pass that they took their camp, and moved forth toward the land of Zarahemla in the wilderness.

Preparations of the Nephites

⁷ Now it came to pass that while Amalickiah had thus been obtaining power by fraud and deceit, Moroni, on the other hand, had been preparing the minds of the people to be faithful unto the Lord their God. ⁸ Yea, he had been strengthening the armies of the Nephites, and erecting small forts, or places of resort;

throwing up banks of earth round about to enclose his armies, and also building walls of stone to encircle them about, round about their cities and the borders of their lands; yea, all round about the land. ⁹ And in their weakest fortifications he did place the greater number of men; and thus he did fortify and strengthen the land which was possessed by the Nephites. ¹⁰ And thus he was preparing to support their liberty, their lands, their wives, and their children, and their peace, and that they might live unto the Lord their God, and that they might maintain that which was called by their enemies the cause of Christians.

Mormon₂'s Encomium to Moroni,

¹¹ And Moroni was a strong and a mighty man; he was a man of a perfect understanding; yea, a man that did not delight in bloodshed; a man whose soul did joy in the liberty and the freedom of his country and his brethren from bondage and slavery; ¹² yea, a man whose heart did swell with thanksgiving to his God, for the many privileges and blessings which he bestowed upon his people; a man who did labor exceedingly for the welfare and safety of his people. ¹³ Yea, and he was a man who was firm in the faith of Christ, and he had

3: *Host, army.* **5:** Zoramites had also served as *chief captains* for the Lamanites during the Zoramite war at 43.6, 44. Their fervent anti-Nephite attitudes, as well as their insider knowledge, qualified them for leadership positions. Another Zoramite captain, Jacob, appears at 52.20. *Resort*, see v. 8 below and 52.6, where “places of resort” refers to forts; cf. Mos 11.13. **6:** The account of this Lamanite invasion is continued at 49.1. **7–10:** Previously, *preparing the minds of the people* had been done by preaching rather than by building fortifications; see 34.3; 39.16. **7:** The stark contrast here is not only between the character of the two leaders but also between temporal and spiritual objectives. Another startling contrast appears in the aftermath of the battle, at 49.27–28. **10:** This list echoes the title of liberty (46.12), with the addition of *their lands*. *The cause of the Christians* was apparently not a pejorative term used solely by their enemies; Moroni himself used it at 46.16. **11–20:** An “encomium” is a formal expression of high praise. Although the term is borrowed from classical rhetoric, it is nevertheless an apt description for this passage. The narrator takes a moment to establish Moroni’s character and achievements before going on to recount the two Amalickiahite wars. In other words, Mormon wants to shape his readers’ interpretations ahead of time, before they encounter details from the conflicts that might otherwise seem morally ambiguous. The effect would be different had he inserted this editorial comment at the end of Moroni’s life, as a eulogy. **11:** *Did not delight in bloodshed*, said again of Moroni at 55.19. In the BoM, only the Lamanites “delight” in shedding blood, with the exception of the people of King Noah at Mos 11.19 and the last generation of Nephites at Morm 4.11. **13:** *Firm in the faith of Christ*, a phrase used earlier at 27.27 to describe the Anti-Nephi-Lehies; its appearance here suggests that it is possible for both pacifists and military men to have a core value in common. *Sworn with an oath*, see 46.20.

sworn with an oath to defend his people, his rights, and his country, and his religion, even to the loss of his blood.

¹⁴ Now the Nephites were taught to defend themselves against their enemies, even to the shedding of blood if it were necessary; yea, and they were also taught never to give an offense, yea, and never to raise the sword except it were against an enemy, except it were to preserve their lives. ¹⁵ And this was their faith, that by so doing God would prosper them in the land, or in other words, if they were faithful in keeping the commandments of God that he would prosper them in the land; yea, warn them to flee, or to prepare for war, according to their danger; ¹⁶ and also, that God would make it known unto them whither they should go to defend themselves against their enemies, and by so doing, the Lord would deliver them; and this was the faith of Moroni, and his heart did glory in it; not in the shedding of blood but in doing good, in preserving his people, yea, in keeping the commandments of God, yea, and resisting iniquity.

¹⁷ Yea, verily, verily I say unto you, if all men had been, and were, and ever would be, like unto Moroni, behold, the very powers of hell would have been shaken forever; yea, the devil would never have power over the hearts of the children of men. ¹⁸ Behold, he was a man like unto Ammon, the son of Mosiah, yea, and even the other sons of Mosiah, yea,

and also Alma and his sons, for they were all men of God.

¹⁹ Now behold, Helaman and his brethren were no less serviceable unto the people than was Moroni; for they did preach the word of God, and they did baptize unto repentance all men whosoever would hearken unto their words. ²⁰ And thus they went forth, and the people did humble themselves because of their words, insomuch that they were highly favored of the Lord, and thus they were free from wars and contentions among themselves, yea, even for the space of four years.

Nephite Attitudes toward War

²¹ But, as I have said, in the latter end of the nineteenth year,^a yea, notwithstanding their peace amongst themselves, they were compelled reluctantly to contend with their brethren, the Lamanites. ²² Yea, and in fine, their wars never did cease for the space of many years with the Lamanites, notwithstanding their much reluctance. ²³ Now, they were sorry to take up arms against the Lamanites, because they did not delight in the shedding of blood; yea, and this was not all—they were sorry to be the means of sending so many of their brethren out of this world into an eternal world, unprepared to meet their God.

^a 21 –73 years

14: *The Nephites were taught*, see 43.46–47. *Offense*, WB: “attack; assault.” **15:** *If they were faithful... prosper them in the land*, see 2 Ne 1.20 and v. 25 below. Divine warnings given to Nephites to flee include Nephi himself at 2 Ne 5.1–10 and Mosiah at Omni 1.12–13. **16:** Revelations about where to fight include Alma 16.4–8 and 43.23–24. **17:** *Verily, verily* is an extremely strong expression; elsewhere in the BoM it is used only by Jesus. (In the Bible, it appears 25 times, all in Jn and always spoken by Jesus.) Rather than being a dominant autonomous entity, the devil, according to the BoM, has no power unless it is given to him through human sin; cf. 1 Ne 22.15, 26; Alma 10.25; Ether 15.19. **20:** *Even for the space of four years*, that is, until the revolt of Morianton in –68; see 46.38; 50.25–36. There is an unexpected transition in the next verse to the preparations for the war that will commence in year –73. Mormon’s editorial comment passes over the first Amalickiahite war in order to direct readers’ attention to the four years of peace that follow. **21–25:** As with vv. 11–20, Mormon here inserts another editorial comment, this time defending the actions and attitudes of the Nephites, before he begins to recount the war itself in the next chapter. **21:** *As I have said*, see 48.1–6.

²⁴ Nevertheless, they could not suffer to lay down their lives, that their wives and their children should be massacred by the barbarous cruelty of those who were once their brethren, yea, and had dissented from their church, and had left them and had gone to destroy them by joining the Lamanites. ²⁵ Yea, they could not bear that their brethren should rejoice over the blood of the Nephites, so long as there were any who should keep the commandments of God, for the promise of the Lord was, if they should keep his commandments they should prosper in the land.

The Lamanites Are Surprised by Nephite Fortifications

49 ¹ And now it came to pass in the eleventh month of the nineteenth year,⁴ on the tenth day of the month, the armies of the Lamanites were seen approaching towards the land of Ammonihah. ² And behold, the city had been rebuilt, and Moroni had stationed an army by the borders of the city, and they had cast up dirt round about to shield them from the arrows and the stones of the Lamanites; for behold, they fought with stones and with arrows. ³ Behold, I said that the city of Ammonihah had been rebuilt. I say unto

you, yea, that it was in part rebuilt; and because the Lamanites had destroyed it once because of the iniquity of the people, they supposed that it would again become an easy prey for them.

⁴ But behold, how great was their disappointment; for behold, the Nephites had dug up a ridge of earth round about them, which was so high that the Lamanites could not cast their stones and their arrows at them that they might take effect, neither could they come upon them save it was by their place of entrance.

⁵ Now at this time the chief captains of the Lamanites were astonished exceedingly, because of the wisdom of the Nephites in preparing their places of security. ⁶ Now the leaders of the Lamanites had supposed, because of the greatness of their numbers, yea, they supposed that they should be privileged to come upon them as they had hitherto done; yea, and they had also prepared themselves with shields, and with breastplates; and they had also prepared themselves with garments of skins, yea, very thick garments to cover their nakedness. ⁷ And being thus prepared they supposed that they should easily overpower and subject their brethren to the yoke of bondage, or slay and massacre them according to their pleasure. ⁸ But

⁴ 1 -73 years; see Alma 45.2, 20; 46.37; 48.2

24–25: The Nephites were not capable of the sort of sacrifice the Anti-Nephi-Lehies had made (see 24.20–30). But where at least some good had come from that episode, it was clear that the Amalekites and the Amulonites, both Nephite dissenters, would not have stopped the slaughter as the Lamanites did. Here, the real concern of Moroni and his people is the dissenters rather than the Lamanites, and it appears that most of those who still identify as Nephites are members of the church. 24: *Suffer to lay down their lives*, allow themselves to be killed. 25: *The promise of the Lord*, see 2 Ne 1.20.

CHAPTER 49

This chapter features a repeated interplay between what the Lamanites had supposed (vv. 3, 6, 7) and their subsequent astonishment (vv. 5, 8, 9, 14). 1: The narrative resumes from 48.6. 3: *I say unto you*, the narrator again directly addresses his readers. *The Lamanites had destroyed it once*, see 16.1–11; 25.1–2. 4: The phrase *cast . . . their arrows*, here meaning “shoot their arrows,” is an archaic usage; cf. v. 19. *Place of entrance*, a heavily fortified gate. 5: *Place(s) of security*, forts or strongholds; the phrase is non-biblical, but appears five times in the BoM (and was fairly common in the 17th–19th c.). 6–9: The new Lamanite armor was based on the protective gear that Moroni had introduced a year earlier at 43.19. In the meantime, however, Moroni has again gained a technological advantage with his innovative fortifications. Because of the Lamanite superiority in numbers, the Nephite armies continually needed to come up with novel strategies in order to be competitive in warfare.

behold, to their uttermost astonishment, they were prepared for them, in a manner which never had been known among the children of Lehi. Now they were prepared for the Lamanites, to battle after the manner of the instructions of Moroni.⁹ And it came to pass that the Lamanites, or the Amalickiahites, were exceedingly astonished at their manner of preparation for war.

¹⁰ Now, if king Amalickiah had come down out of the land of Nephi, at the head of his army, perhaps he would have caused the Lamanites to have attacked the Nephites at the city of Ammonihah; for behold, he did care not for the blood of his people.¹¹ But behold, Amalickiah did not come down himself to battle. And behold, his chief captains durst not attack the Nephites at the city of Ammonihah, for Moroni had altered the management of affairs among the Nephites, insomuch that the Lamanites were disappointed in their places of retreat and they could not come upon them.

¹² Therefore they retreated into the wilderness, and took their camp and marched towards the land of Noah, supposing that to be the next best place for them to come against the Nephites.¹³ For they knew not that Moroni had fortified, or had built forts of security, for every city in all the land round about; therefore, they marched forward to the land of Noah with a firm determination; yea, their chief captains came forward and took an oath that they would destroy the people of that city.¹⁴ But behold, to their astonishment, the city of Noah, which had hitherto been a weak place, had now, by the means of Moroni, become strong, yea, even to exceed the strength

of the city Ammonihah.¹⁵ And now, behold, this was wisdom in Moroni; for he had supposed that they would be frightened at the city Ammonihah; and as the city of Noah had hitherto been the weakest part of the land, therefore they would march thither to battle; and thus it was according to his desires.

¹⁶ And behold, Moroni had appointed Lehi to be chief captain over the men of that city; and it was that same Lehi who fought with the Lamanites in the valley on the east of the river Sidon.¹⁷ And now behold it came to pass, that when the Lamanites had found that Lehi commanded the city they were again disappointed, for they feared Lehi exceedingly; nevertheless their chief captains had sworn with an oath to attack the city; therefore, they brought up their armies.

¹⁸ Now behold, the Lamanites could not get into their forts of security by any other way save by the entrance, because of the highness of the bank which had been thrown up, and the depth of the ditch which had been dug round about, save it were by the entrance.¹⁹ And thus were the Nephites prepared to destroy all such as should attempt to climb up to enter the fort by any other way, by casting over stones and arrows at them.²⁰ Thus they were prepared, yea, a body of their strongest men, with their swords and their slings, to smite down all who should attempt to come into their place of security by the place of entrance; and thus were they prepared to defend themselves against the Lamanites.

The Battle of the City of Noah

²¹ And it came to pass that the captains of the Lamanites brought up their armies before the

9: The term “Amalickiahites” is more accurate because the Lamanites had been joined by numerous dissenters from the Nephites. **10:** The narrator inserts a counterfactual scenario to further impugn Amalickiah’s character. **12:** According to 16.3, the *land of Noah* was in the vicinity of Ammonihah. **13:** On the inviolability of the Lamanite oaths, see 44.8n. **15:** One of the characteristics of a successful general is the ability to predict the reactions and movements of enemy troops. It is particularly impressive that Moroni is able to imagine the responses of the Lamanites to innovations they had never seen before. **16:** For Lehi’s role in the Zoramite war the previous year, see 43.34–40, 52–53.

place of entrance, and began to contend with the Nephites, to get into their place of security; but behold, they were driven back from time to time, insomuch that they were slain with an immense slaughter.²² Now when they found that they could not obtain power over the Nephites by the pass, they began to dig down their banks of earth that they might obtain a pass to their armies, that they might have an equal chance to fight; but behold, in these attempts they were swept off by the stones and arrows which were thrown at them; and instead of filling up their ditches by pulling down the banks of earth, they were filled up in a measure with their dead and wounded bodies.

²³ Thus the Nephites had all power over their enemies; and thus the Lamanites did attempt to destroy the Nephites until their chief captains were all slain; yea, and more than a thousand of the Lamanites were slain; while, on the other hand, there was not a single soul of the Nephites which was slain.²⁴ There were about fifty who were wounded, who had been exposed to the arrows of the Lamanites through the pass, but they were shielded by their shields, and their breast-plates, and their head-plates, insomuch that their wounds were upon their legs, many of which were very severe.

²⁵ And it came to pass, that when the Lamanites saw that their chief captains were all slain they fled into the wilderness. And it came to pass that they returned to the land of Nephi, to inform their king, Amalickiah, who

was a Nephite by birth, concerning their great loss.²⁶ And it came to pass that he was exceedingly angry with his people, because he had not obtained his desire over the Nephites; he had not subjected them to the yoke of bondage.²⁷ Yea, he was exceedingly wroth, and he did curse God, and also Moroni, swearing with an oath that he would drink his blood; and this because Moroni had kept the commandments of God in preparing for the safety of his people.

²⁸ And it came to pass, that on the other hand, the people of Nephi did thank the Lord their God, because of his matchless power in delivering them from the hands of their enemies.²⁹ And thus ended the nineteenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi.^a ³⁰ Yea, and there was continual peace among them, and exceeding great prosperity in the church because of their heed and diligence which they gave unto the word of God, which was declared unto them by Helaman, and Shiblon, and Corianton, and Ammon and his brethren, yea, and by all those who had been ordained by the holy order of God, being baptized unto repentance, and sent forth to preach among the people.

More Nephite Preparations

[XXII] **50** ¹ And now it came to pass that Moroni did not stop making preparations for war, or to defend his people against the Lamanites; for he

^a 29 -73 years; see Alma 45.2

22: *The pass*, the entrance. *In a measure*, to some degree. **23:** *All power over their enemies*, Moroni's preferred fighting position is to be, through superior defensive technology, as close to invulnerable as possible (cf. 43.37-38). This is a heady but precarious moral stance for people who profess an aversion to pride and bloodlust. The emphasis on tactics and equipment is also in tension with assertions that Nephite victories came from God, as in verse 28; cf. 44.5; 48.15-16. **26:** This desire of Amalickiah's was noted earlier at 48.4. **29:** *Nineteenth year of the reign of the judges*, this is the most cited year in Mormon's abridgment of Nephite history, being referenced some seven times (45.2, 20; 46.37; 48.2, 21; 49.1, 29). **30:** Mormon ends the chapter with a nod toward spiritual conditions.

CHAPTER 50

1-16: Moroni extends Nephite control into the east wilderness, which had previously been inhabited by Lamanites. Lamanites in the land of Nephi may have viewed this as a provocative action.

caused that his armies should commence in the commencement of the twentieth year of the reign of the judges,⁴ that they should commence in digging up heaps of earth round about all the cities, throughout all the land which was possessed by the Nephites.² And upon the top of these ridges of earth he caused that there should be timbers, yea, works of timbers built up to the height of a man, round about the cities.³ And he caused that upon those works of timbers there should be a frame of pickets built upon the timbers round about; and they were strong and high.

⁴ And he caused towers to be erected that overlooked those works of pickets, and he caused places of security to be built upon those towers, that the stones and the arrows of the Lamanites could not hurt them.⁵ And they were prepared that they could cast stones from the top thereof, according to their pleasure and their strength, and slay him who should attempt to approach near the walls of the city.⁶ Thus Moroni did prepare strongholds against the coming of their enemies, round about every city in all the land.

⁷ And it came to pass that Moroni caused that his armies should go forth into the east wilderness; yea, and they went forth and drove all the Lamanites who were in the east wilderness into their own lands, which were south of the land of Zarahemla.⁸ And the land of Nephi did run in a straight course from the east sea to the west.

⁹ And it came to pass that when Moroni had driven all the Lamanites out of the east

wilderness, which was north of the lands of their own possessions, he caused that the inhabitants who were in the land of Zarahemla and in the land round about should go forth into the east wilderness, even to the borders by the seashore, and possess the land.¹⁰ And he also placed armies on the south, in the borders of their possessions, and caused them to erect fortifications that they might secure their armies and their people from the hands of their enemies.

¹¹ And thus he cut off all the strongholds of the Lamanites in the east wilderness, yea, and also on the west, fortifying the line between the Nephites and the Lamanites, between the land of Zarahemla and the land of Nephi, from the west sea, running by the head of the river Sidon—the Nephites possessing all the land northward, yea, even all the land which was northward of the land Bountiful, according to their pleasure.¹² Thus Moroni, with his armies, which did increase daily because of the assurance of protection which his works did bring forth unto them, did seek to cut off the strength and the power of the Lamanites from off the lands of their possessions, that they should have no power upon the lands of their possession.

¹³ And it came to pass that the Nephites began the foundation of a city, and they called

⁴ 1 -72 years

2–4: The timberwork, pickets, and towers are additions to the earthen and stone walls mentioned at 48.8; 49.2–4, 18. *Picket*, WB: “a stake sharpened or pointed; used in fortification and encampments.” 5: *According to their pleasure*, in a reversal of Lamanite expectations at 49.7. 7: The forcible expulsion of a civilian population can be a brutal, aggressive military operation (contrast 48.14). The narrator provides no details as to how this objective was accomplished. 9–10: The removal of Lamanites from the east wilderness is followed by resettlement by Nephites and a militarization of the new border, in order to maintain territorial control. Similar strategies would be used by European settlers against Native Americans in the 18th–19th c. 12: *Increase daily*, the more that Moroni’s defensive measures seem to promise invulnerability, the more Nephites are willing to join his cause. *The lands of their possessions*, that is, the lands now under Nephite control. 13: The next phase of Moroni’s military innovations is to construct fortified cities in the recently annexed east wilderness, which are named after himself, the chief judge (Nephihah), and one of Moroni’s senior officers (Lehi). No further details are known about what made the city of Lehi particularly distinctive. When the Lamanites gain control of these cities at 51.22–27 and 59.5–13, their fortified design will make them very difficult for the Nephites to retake; see 51.26–27.

the name of the city Moroni; and it was by the east sea; and it was on the south by the line of the possessions of the Lamanites. ¹⁴ And they also began a foundation for a city between the city of Moroni and the city of Aaron, joining the borders of Aaron and Moroni; and they called the name of the city, or the land, Nephihah. ¹⁵ And they also began in that same year to build many cities on the north, one in a particular manner which they called Lehi, which was in the north by the borders of the sea-shore. ¹⁶ And thus ended the twentieth year.^a

The Nephites Prosper

¹⁷ And in these prosperous circumstances were the people of Nephi in the commencement of the twenty and first year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi.^b ¹⁸ And they did prosper exceedingly, and they became exceeding rich; yea, and they did multiply and wax strong in the land.

¹⁹ And thus we see how merciful and just are all the dealings of the Lord, to the fulfilling of all his words unto the children of men; yea, we can behold that his words are verified, even at this time, which he spake unto Lehi, saying,

²⁰ “Blessed art thou and thy children;
and they shall be blessed:
inasmuch as they shall keep my
commandments
they shall prosper in the land;
but remember, inasmuch as they will
not keep my commandments
they shall be cut off from the
presence of the Lord.”

²¹ And we see that these promises have been verified to the people of Nephi; for it has been their quarrelings and their contentions, yea, their murderings, and their plunderings, their idolatry, their whoredoms, and their abominations, which were among themselves, which brought upon them their wars and their destructions. ²² And those who were faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord were delivered at all times, whilst thousands of their wicked brethren have been consigned to bondage, or to perish by the sword, or to dwindle in unbelief, and mingle with the Lamanites.

²³ But behold there never was a happier time among the people of Nephi, since the days of Nephi, than in the days of Moroni, yea, even at this time, in the twenty and first year of the reign of the judges.^c ²⁴ And it came to pass that the twenty and second year of the reign of the judges^d also ended in peace; yea, and also the twenty and third year.^e

The Revolt of Morianton₂

²⁵ And it came to pass that in the commencement of the twenty and fourth year of the reign of the judges,^f there would also have been peace among the people of Nephi had it not been for a contention which took place among them concerning the land of Lehi, and

^a 16 -72 years; see v. 1 above

^b 17 -71 years

^c 23 -71 years; see v. 17 above

^d 24 -70 years

^e 24 -69 years

^f 25 -68 years

19–22: Mormon regards Moroni’s success in driving out and displacing the Lamanites as being due to the Nephites’ obedience to God’s commandments. 20: This may be the original articulation (perhaps from the Large Plates) of the oft-repeated covenant with Lehi from 2 Ne 1.20; traces of this longer version, with references to being “blessed,” can be seen at Mos 25.24; Alma 45.8; 3 Ne 5.22. 23: *There never was a happier time*, Mormon quickly clarifies that he means from Nephi’s day to this point (*even at this time*); the first generations after Christ’s visit to the Nephites will be even happier (see 4 Ne 1.16), particularly since the Nephites at this moment would have been aware of escalating tensions with the Lamanites. Mormon, as the narrator, seems eager to make a moral point before plunging readers into the chapters of warfare that follow. 25: This incident was alluded to at 46.38 and 48.20.

the land of Morianton, which joined upon the borders of Lehi; both of which were on the borders by the seashore.²⁶ For behold, the people who possessed the land of Morianton did claim a part of the land of Lehi; therefore there began to be a warm contention between them, insomuch that the people of Morianton took up arms against their brethren, and they were determined by the sword to slay them.²⁷ But behold, the people who possessed the land of Lehi fled to the camp of Moroni, and appealed unto him for assistance; for behold they were not in the wrong.

²⁸ And it came to pass that when the people of Morianton, who were led by a man whose name was Morianton, found that the people of Lehi had fled to the camp of Moroni, they were exceedingly fearful lest the army of Moroni should come upon them and destroy them.²⁹ Therefore, Morianton put it into their hearts that they should flee to the land which was northward, which was covered with large bodies of water, and take possession of the land which was northward.³⁰ And behold, they would have carried this plan into effect, (which would have been a cause to have been lamented) but behold, Morianton being a man of much passion, therefore he was angry with one of his maid servants, and he fell upon her and beat her much.³¹ And it came to pass that she fled, and came over to the camp of Moroni, and told Moroni all things concerning the matter, and also concerning their intentions to flee into the land northward.

³² Now behold, the people who were in the land Bountiful, or rather Moroni, feared that they would hearken to the words of Morianton and unite with his people, and thus he would obtain possession of those parts of the land, which would lay a foundation for serious consequences among the people of Nephi, yea, which consequences would lead to the overthrow of their liberty.³³ Therefore Moroni sent an army, with their camp, to head the people of Morianton, to stop their flight into the land northward.

³⁴ And it came to pass that they did not head them until they had come to the borders of the land Desolation; and there they did head them, by the narrow pass which led by the sea into the land northward, yea, by the sea, on the west and on the east.³⁵ And it came to pass that the army which was sent by Moroni, which was led by a man whose name was Teancum, did meet the people of Morianton; and so stubborn were the people of Morianton, (being inspired by his wickedness and his flattering words) that a battle commenced between them, in the which Teancum did slay Morianton and defeat his army, and took them prisoners, and returned to the camp of Moroni.

And thus ended the twenty and fourth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi.^a³⁶ And thus were the people of Morianton brought back. And upon their

^a 35 –68 years; see v. 25 above

26: The city of Lehi, and its associated land, had been newly established (v. 15) and apparently impinged on territory that was claimed by Nephites in the land of Morianton—which may also have been settled recently, since the land seems to have been named for their current leader; cf. 8.7. **27:** *They were not in the wrong*, the narrator adds a quick judgment, to maintain moral clarity. Readers may question, however, why the people from Lehi appealed to Moroni's army for redress rather than to the chief judge Nephiah. **29:** *The land which was northward*, the sparsely inhabited land north of the narrow neck ("land Desolation") that had once been Jaredite territory; see 22.30–32. **30–31:** A cautionary tale about the consequences of domestic violence. **32:** That is, Moroni feared that the people who were in the land Bountiful would hearken to the words of Morianton and unite with Morianton's people. **36:** It is typical for Moroni to allow his defeated enemies to return home if they swear an oath or make a covenant to keep the peace; see 44.5–8, 11, 15; 46.35; 62.14–17.

covenanting to keep the peace they were restored to the land of Morianton, and a union took place between them and the people of Lehi; and they were also restored to their lands.

Pahoran, Becomes Chief Judge

³⁷ And it came to pass that in the same year that the people of Nephi had peace restored unto them, that Nephiah, the second chief judge, died, having filled the judgment-seat with perfect uprightness before God. ³⁸ Nevertheless, he had refused Alma to take possession of those records and those things which were esteemed by Alma and his fathers to be most sacred; therefore Alma had conferred them upon his son, Helaman.

³⁹ Behold, it came to pass that the son of Nephiah was appointed to fill the judgment-seat, in the stead of his father; yea, he was appointed chief judge and governor over the people, with an oath and sacred ordinance to judge righteously, and to keep the peace and the freedom of the people, and to grant unto them their sacred privileges to worship the Lord their God, yea, to support and maintain the cause of God all his days, and to bring the wicked to justice according to their crime.

⁴⁰ Now behold, his name was Pahoran. And Pahoran did fill the seat of his father, and did commence his reign in the end of the twenty and fourth year, over the people of Nephi.^a

The Second Amalickiahite War: Alma 51–62

The King-Men and the Freeman

[XXIII] **51** ¹ And now it came to pass in the commencement of the twenty and fifth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi,^b they having established peace between the people of Lehi and the people of Morianton concerning their lands, and having commenced the twenty and fifth year in peace; ² nevertheless, they did not long maintain an entire peace in the land, for there began to be a contention among the people concerning the chief judge Pahoran; for behold, there were a part of the people who desired that a few particular points of the law should be altered. ³ But behold, Pahoran would not alter nor suffer the law to be altered; therefore,

^a 40 –68 years; see vv. 25 and 35 above

^b 1 –67 years

37–40: There is a slight wrinkle in the chronology here so that Mormon can insert another event that also happened at the end of the 24th year; cf. vv. 35 and 40. **37:** Nephiah had been appointed chief judge fifteen years earlier at 4.15–18. **38:** See 37.1–2, 14–16, 47; the actual transfer of records occurred between chs. 44 and 45. It is not clear whether Alma had originally passed over his son Helaman for personal reasons, or whether Nephiah—concerned that the judgment-seat might come into Mulekite hands—felt that the Nephite records would be safer with Alma’s descendants. **39–40:** Note that the chief judgeship is being passed from father to son, similar to a monarchy. Pahoran’s son will inherit the office in turn at Hel 1.1–5. In contrast to 4.16; Hel 1.5; 2.2, “the voice of the people” is not mentioned in this transfer of power (but see 51.7 for a later confirmation). **39:** This verse may paraphrase something like an oath of office; cf. 61.14. *Chief judge and governor*, different Nephite lands had local chief judges, but the man who holds both these positions has jurisdiction over all the Nephites; see 2.16; 30.29; 60.1; Hel 1.5, 13; 3 Ne 1.1. *Ordinance*, probably “charge” or “commission,” but it may also refer to a ceremony of some sort. *Maintain the cause of God*, while the office of chief judge was a secular position, separate from that of high priest, it nevertheless entailed religious responsibilities. **40:** The twenty-fourth year ends twice—in v. 35 and again here. The earlier chronological marker occurred within in a summary of military affairs, while the intervening material recounts domestic political developments.

CHAPTER 51

2: *A few particular points of the law*, perhaps having to do with succession or the monopolization of the office of chief judge by Nephites.

he did not hearken to those who had sent in their voices with their petitions concerning the altering of the law.⁴ Therefore, those who were desirous that the law should be altered were angry with him, and desired that he should no longer be chief judge over the land; therefore there arose a warm dispute concerning the matter, but not unto bloodshed.

⁵ And it came to pass that those who were desirous that Pahoran should be dethroned from the judgment-seat were called king-men, for they were desirous that the law should be altered in a manner to overthrow the free government and to establish a king over the land.⁶ And those who were desirous that Pahoran should remain chief judge over the land took upon them the name of freemen; and thus was the division among them, for the freemen had sworn or covenanted to maintain their rights and the privileges of their religion by a free government.

⁷ And it came to pass that this matter of their contention was settled by the voice of the people. And it came to pass that the voice of the people came in favor of the freemen, and Pahoran retained the judgment-seat, which caused much rejoicing among the brethren of Pahoran and also many of the people of liberty, who also put the king-men to silence, that they durst not oppose but were obliged to maintain the cause of freedom.⁸ Now those who were in favor of kings were those of high birth, and they sought to be kings; and they were supported by those who sought power and authority over the people.

The Lamanites Prepare to Attack Again

⁹ But behold, this was a critical time for such contentions to be among the people of Nephi; for behold, Amalickiah had again stirred up the hearts of the people of the Lamanites against the people of the Nephites, and he was gathering together soldiers from all parts of his land, and arming them, and preparing for war with all diligence; for he had sworn to drink the blood of Moroni.¹⁰ But behold, we shall see that his promise which he made was rash; nevertheless, he did prepare himself and his armies to come to battle against the Nephites.

¹¹ Now his armies were not so great as they had hitherto been, because of the many thousands who had been slain by the hand of the Nephites; but notwithstanding their great loss, Amalickiah had gathered together a wonderfully great army, insomuch that he feared not to come down to the land of Zarahemla.¹² Yea, even Amalickiah did himself come down, at the head of the Lamanites. And it was in the twenty and fifth year of the reign of the judges;^a and it was at the same time that they had begun to settle the affairs of their contentions concerning the chief judge, Pahoran.

The King-Men Are Compelled to Fight

¹³ And it came to pass that when the men who were called king-men had heard that the Lamanites were coming down to battle against

^a 12 -67 years

5: The verb *dethrone* suggests that the chief judgeship was functioning as a monarchy; see 50.39–40n. The king-men want to restore an actual monarchy, likely one based on Mulekite claims to Davidic kingship (note the references to “high birth” and “the blood of nobility” in vv. 8 and 21; cf. Hel 6.10; 8.21). 6: *Freemen*, the term has a long history (see 1 Cor 7.22), but JS would have known of the *Palmyra Freeman*, an anti-Masonic newspaper published in 1828–29. 7: *Settled by the voice of the people*, the supporters of Amalickiah had similarly sought to restore the monarchy but found themselves in the minority; see 46.4–6, 28–29. 9: *Again stirred up the hearts*, the first time was at 48.1–3. *Sworn to drink the blood of Moroni*, see 49.27. 10: Mormon, as narrator, is less interested in building suspense than in making moral points. 11: It has been six years since the Lamanite defeat at the city of Noah; see 49.21–27. 12: *Amalickiah did himself come down*, in contrast to the first Amalickiahite war; see the narrator’s comments at 49.10–11. 13: Like the Anti-Nephi-Lehies, the king-men *refused to take up arms* (27.3), but they did so out of anger and thwarted ambition rather than penitence. Their passive noncompliance will turn into violent resistance in v. 18.

them, they were glad in their hearts; and they refused to take up arms, for they were so wroth with the chief judge, and also with the people of liberty, that they would not take up arms to defend their country.

¹⁴ And it came to pass that when Moroni saw this, and also saw that the Lamanites were coming into the borders of the land, he was exceeding wroth because of the stubbornness of those people whom he had labored with so much diligence to preserve; yea, he was exceeding wroth; his soul was filled with anger against them. ¹⁵ And it came to pass that he sent a petition, with the voice of the people, unto the governor of the land, desiring that he should read^a it, and give him (Moroni) power to compel those dissenters to defend their country or to put them to death. ¹⁶ For it was his first care to put an end to such contentions and dissensions among the people; for behold, this had been hitherto a cause of all their destruction. And it came to pass that it was granted according to the voice of the people.

¹⁷ And it came to pass that Moroni commanded that his army should go against those king-men, to pull down their pride and their nobility and level them with the earth, or they should take up arms and support the cause of liberty. ¹⁸ And it came to pass that the armies did march forth against them; and they did

pull down their pride and their nobility, inso-much that as they did lift their weapons of war to fight against the men of Moroni they were hewn down and leveled to the earth.

¹⁹ And it came to pass that there were four thousand of those dissenters who were hewn down by the sword; and those of their leaders who were not slain in battle were taken and cast into prison, for there was no time for their trials at this period. ²⁰ And the remainder of those dissenters, rather than be smitten down to the earth by the sword, yielded to the standard of liberty, and were compelled to hoist the title of liberty upon their towers, and in their cities, and to take up arms in defence of their country. ²¹ And thus Moroni put an end to those king-men, that there were not any known by the appellation of king-men; and thus he put an end to the stubbornness and the pride of those people who professed the blood of nobility; but they were brought down to humble themselves like unto their brethren, and to fight valiantly for their freedom from bondage.

A Series of Stunning Nephite Defeats

²² Behold, it came to pass that while Moroni was thus breaking down the wars and contentions among his own people, and subjecting

^a 15 O, P heed

14: Moroni seems more angry with his fellow Nephites than with the Lamanites. **15–16:** As with the Amalickiahites at 46.33–35, Moroni compels the king-men to fight on behalf of the Nephites or face execution, though this time he has specific authorization from the governor and the voice of the people. He regards Nephite unity, in both political and religious matters, as the key to avoiding destruction. *Dissensions*, previous dissenters included the Amlicites (Alma 2–3), the Zoramites (Alma 31.8), the Amalickiahites (46.11, 28), and unnamed others (47.35–36). **17–18:** *Pull down their pride and their nobility* seems to indicate resentment of social elites, while *level them with the earth* refers to actual deaths. *Pull down their pride*, note that Moroni is attempting to do with military force what Alma did with “the word of God”; see 4.19. *Nobility*, non-biblical but three times in the BoM, all within the next five verses. *Or*, unless. **19:** Those leaders will finally get their trials five years later; see 62.9. *The title of liberty*, see 46.11–13. *Upon their towers and in their cities* suggests a regional component to support for monarchy, since the king-men had been in control of particular fortifications and cities. **21:** The reformation of the king-men may be idealized here; soldiers who are conscripted on pain of death do not always end up fighting valiantly. **22–27:** In short order, the Nephites lose six cities on the east coast, including the new, heavily fortified cities of Moroni and Lehi that had been built at 50.13–15 to defend lands that the Nephites had recently taken from the Lamanites. One downside of constructing nearly impenetrable cities is that if they are lost, they are very difficult to recapture. Within a year, the Nephites will lose four more major cities in the west (56.13–14). **22:** *Subjecting them to peace and civilization* is a curiously aggressive turn of phrase, perhaps reminiscent of Virgil’s vision of Rome’s destiny “to impose the ways of peace, to show mercy to the conquered, and to subdue the proud” (Aeneid VI.852–53).

them to peace and civilization, and making regulations to prepare for war against the Lamanites, behold, the Lamanites had come into the land of Moroni, which was in the borders by the seashore.²³ And it came to pass that the Nephites were not sufficiently strong in the city of Moroni; therefore Amalickiah did drive them, slaying many. And it came to pass that Amalickiah took possession of the city, yea, possession of all their fortifications.

²⁴ And those who fled out of the city of Moroni came to the city of Nephihah; and also the people of the city of Lehi gathered themselves together, and made preparations and were ready to receive the Lamanites to battle.²⁵ But it came to pass that Amalickiah would not suffer the Lamanites to go against the city of Nephihah to battle, but kept them down by the seashore, leaving men in every city to maintain and defend it.²⁶ And thus he went on, taking possession of many cities, the city of Nephihah, and the city of Lehi, and the city of Morianton, and the city of Omner, and the city of Gid, and the city of Mulek, all of which were on the east borders by the seashore.²⁷ And thus had the Lamanites obtained, by the cunning of Amalickiah, so many cities, by their numberless hosts, all of which were strongly fortified after the manner of the fortifications of Moroni; all of which afforded strongholds for the Lamanites.

Teancum Kills Amalickiah

²⁸ And it came to pass that they marched to the borders of the land Bountiful, driving the Nephites before them and slaying many.²⁹ But it came to pass that they were met by Teancum, who had slain Morianton and had headed his people in his flight.³⁰ And it came to pass that he headed Amalickiah also, as he was marching forth with his numerous army that he might take possession of the land Bountiful, and also the land northward.³¹ But behold he met with a disappointment by being repulsed by Teancum and his men, for they were great warriors; for every man of Teancum did exceed the Lamanites in their strength and in their skill of war, insomuch that they did gain advantage over the Lamanites.³² And it came to pass that they did harass them, insomuch that they did slay them even until it was dark. And it came to pass that Teancum and his men did pitch their tents in the borders of the land Bountiful; and Amalickiah did pitch his tents in the borders on the beach by the seashore, and after this manner were they driven.

³³ And it came to pass that when the night had come, Teancum and his servant stole forth and went out by night, and went into the camp of Amalickiah; and behold, sleep had overpowered them because of their much fatigue, which was caused by the labors and heat of the day.³⁴ And it came to pass that

26: *Taking possession of... the city of Nephihah*, besides contradicting v. 25, this verse contains a geographical error (since the city of Nephihah was somewhat inland from the seashore city of Moroni; see 50.14) as well as a chronological problem, because the city of Nephihah was not actually captured by the Lamanites until several years later (Alma 59.5–12). From an LDS perspective this geographical mistake, which appears in O, could have been due to Mormon's writing, JS's dictation, or OC's transcription. In any event, it is one of only two such errors in the entire text; see 53.6n. ATV suggests "the city of Moroni" as an emendation. **28:** The Lamanites are advancing north along the eastern seashore. **29:** The heading off of Morianton's people was recounted at 50.33–35. **32:** *Harass*, OED: "to trouble or vex by repeated attacks." **34:** *Privily*, WB: "secretly." *Javelin*, a spear; this weapon appears only twice in the BoM, both times connected with assassination attempts by Teancum; cf. 62.36.

Teancum stole privily into the tent of the king, and put a javelin to his heart; and he did cause the death of the king immediately that he did not awake his servants.³⁵ And he returned again privily to his own camp, and behold, his men were asleep, and he awoke them and told them all the things that he had done.³⁶ And he caused that his armies should stand in readiness, lest the Lamanites had awakened and should come upon them.³⁷ And thus endeth the twenty and fifth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi;^a and thus endeth the days of Amalickiah.

The Lamanites under King Ammoron Begin a Two-Front War

[XXIV] 52¹ And now, it came to pass in the twenty and sixth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi,^b behold, when the Lamanites awoke on the first morning of the first month, behold, they found Amalickiah was dead in his own tent; and they also saw that Teancum was ready to give them battle on that day.² And now, when the Lamanites saw this they were affrighted; and they abandoned their design in marching into the land northward, and retreated with all their army into the city of Mulek, and sought protection in their fortifications.

³ And it came to pass that the brother of Amalickiah was appointed king over the people; and his name was Ammoron; thus king Ammoron, the brother of king Amalickiah,

was appointed to reign in his stead.⁴ And it came to pass that he did command that his people should maintain those cities, which they had taken by the shedding of blood; for they had not taken any cities save they had lost much blood.

⁵ And now, Teancum saw that the Lamanites were determined to maintain those cities which they had taken, and those parts of the land which they had obtained possession of; and also seeing the enormity of their number, Teancum thought it was not expedient that he should attempt to attack them in their forts.⁶ But he kept his men round about, as if making preparations for war; yea, and truly he was preparing to defend himself against them, by casting up walls round about and preparing places of resort.⁷ And it came to pass that he kept thus preparing for war until Moroni had sent a large number of men to strengthen his army.

⁸ And Moroni also sent orders unto him that he should retain all the prisoners who fell into his hands; for as the Lamanites had taken many prisoners, that he should retain all the prisoners of the Lamanites as a ransom for those whom the Lamanites had taken.⁹ And he also sent orders unto him that he should fortify the land Bountiful, and secure the narrow pass which led into the land northward, lest the Lamanites should obtain that point and should have power to harass them on every side.

^a 37 –67 years; see Alma 51.1

^b 1 –66 years

37: *Thus endeth the days of Amalickiah*, he was first introduced at 46.3.

CHAPTER 52

1: The Nephites apparently used a calendar (or lived in a location) in which the new year occurred when days were warm (see 51.33). 2: *Marching into the land northward*, see 51.30. *The city of Mulek* was the last city captured by the Lamanites in the previous year, see 51.26. 3: As a brother of Amalickiah, Ammoron would also have been a Nephite (though technically a descendant of Zoram, see 54.23); at 54.24 he declares that he now considers himself a Lamanite. 4: *Those cities, which they had taken*, see 51.23, 26. 6: *And truly he was preparing*, the narrator adds a clarification to defend Teancum from charges of using deceptive tactics.

¹⁰ And Moroni also sent unto him, desiring him that he would be faithful in maintaining that quarter of the land, and that he would seek every opportunity to scourge the Lamanites in that quarter, as much as was in his power, that perhaps he might take again by stratagem or some other way those cities which had been taken out of their hands; and that he also would fortify and strengthen the cities round about, which had not fallen into the hands of the Lamanites. ¹¹ And he also said unto him, “I would come unto you, but behold, the Lamanites are upon us in the borders of the land by the west sea; and behold, I go against them, therefore I cannot come unto you.”

¹² Now, the king (Ammoron) had departed out of the land of Zarahemla, and had made known unto the queen concerning the death of his brother, and had gathered together a large number of men, and had marched forth against the Nephites on the borders by the west sea. ¹³ And thus he was endeavoring to harass the Nephites, and to draw away a part of their forces to that part of the land, while he had commanded those whom he had left to possess the cities which he had taken, that they should also harass the Nephites on the borders by the east sea, and should take possession of their lands as much as it was in their power, according to the power of their armies.

¹⁴ And thus were the Nephites in those dangerous circumstances in the ending of the twenty and sixth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi.^a

The City of Mulek Retaken (East)

¹⁵ But behold, it came to pass in the twenty and seventh year of the reign of the judges,^b that Teancum, by the command of Moroni—who had established armies to protect the south and the west borders of the land, and had begun his march towards the land Bountiful, that he might assist Teancum with his men in retaking the cities which they had lost—¹⁶ and it came to pass that Teancum had received orders to make an attack upon the city of Mulek, and retake it if it were possible.

¹⁷ And it came to pass that Teancum made preparations to make an attack upon the city of Mulek, and march forth with his army against the Lamanites; but he saw that it was impossible that he could overpower them while they were in their fortifications; therefore he abandoned his designs and returned again to the city Bountiful, to wait for the coming of Moroni, that he might receive strength to his army. ¹⁸ And it came to pass that Moroni did arrive with his army at the land of Bountiful, in the latter end of the twenty and seventh year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi.^c

¹⁹ And in the commencement of the twenty and eighth year,^d Moroni and Teancum and many of the chief captains held a council of war—what they should do to cause the

^a 14 –66 years; see v. 1 above

^b 15 –65 years

^c 18 –65 years; see v. 15 above

^d 19 –64 years

10: *Scourge*, WB: “to afflict greatly; to harass.” *As much as was in their power* occurs again at v. 13, as Moroni and Ammoron give very similar instructions to their subordinates. **11:** Apparently Moroni’s efforts were unsuccessful; by the end of the 26th year, the Lamanites had gained possession of the western cities of Manti, Zeezrom, Cumeni, and Antiparah, as reported by Helaman at 56.13–14, 20. **12–14:** Because of the impenetrability of the fortified cities now in Lamanite hands, Ammoron is confident in the ability of his armies to strain Nephite resources by both opening up a second front in the west and also continuing to put pressure on eastern cities still under Nephite control. Hereafter, most of the remaining section headings in the book of Alma are labeled “East” or “West” to indicate which of the two fronts they concern. **12:** This unnamed Lamanite queen has had two husbands assassinated within six years; see 47.20–35. **19:** *Flatter*, WB: “coax.”

Lamanites to come out against them to battle; or that they might by some means flatter them out of their strongholds, that they might gain advantage over them and take again the city of Mulek.²⁰ And it came to pass they sent embassies to the army of the Lamanites, which protected the city of Mulek, to their leader, whose name was Jacob, desiring him that he would come out with his armies to meet them upon the plains between the two cities. But behold, Jacob, who was a Zoramite, would not come out with his army to meet them upon the plains.

²¹ And it came to pass that Moroni, having no hopes of meeting them upon fair grounds, therefore, he resolved upon a plan that he might decoy the Lamanites out of their strongholds.²² Therefore he caused that Teancum should take a small number of men and march down near the seashore; and Moroni and his army, by night, marched in the wilderness, on the west of the city Mulek; and thus, on the morrow, when the guards of the Lamanites had discovered Teancum, they ran and told it unto Jacob, their leader.²³ And it came to pass that the armies of the Lamanites did march forth against Teancum, supposing by their numbers to overpower Teancum because of the smallness of his numbers. And as Teancum saw the armies of the Lamanites coming out against him he began to retreat down by the seashore, northward.²⁴ And it came to pass that when the Lamanites saw that he began to flee, they took courage and pursued them with vigor.

And while Teancum was thus leading away the Lamanites who were pursuing them in vain, behold, Moroni commanded that a part of his army who were with him should march forth into the city, and take possession of it.

²⁵ And thus they did, and slew all those who had been left to protect the city, yea, all those who would not yield up their weapons of war.

²⁶ And thus Moroni had obtained possession of the city Mulek with a part of his army, while he marched with the remainder to meet the Lamanites when they should return from the pursuit of Teancum.

***The Lamanite Leader Jacob, Is Slain;
Many Lamanites Taken Prisoner (East)***

²⁷ And it came to pass that the Lamanites did pursue Teancum until they came near the city Bountiful, and then they were met by Lehi and a small army, which had been left to protect the city Bountiful.²⁸ And now behold, when the chief captains of the Lamanites had beheld Lehi with his army coming against them, they fled in much confusion, lest perhaps they should not obtain the city Mulek before Lehi should overtake them; for they were wearied because of their march, and the men of Lehi were fresh.²⁹ Now the Lamanites did not know that Moroni had been in their rear with his army; and all they feared was Lehi and his men.³⁰ Now Lehi was not desirous to overtake them till they should meet Moroni and his army.

³¹ And it came to pass that before the Lamanites had retreated far they were surrounded by the Nephites, by the men of Moroni on one hand, and the men of Lehi on the other, all of whom were fresh and full of strength; but the Lamanites were wearied because of their long march.³² And Moroni commanded his men that they should fall upon them until they had given up their weapons of war.

³³ And it came to pass that Jacob, being their leader, being also a Zoramite, and having

21: *Fair, equal. Decoy the Lamanites out of their strongholds,* Helaman had used a similar tactic the year before to lure the Lamanite army out of the city of Antiparah, though that story is not told until Alma 56.30–37. The stratagem of a small contingent of soldiers luring a city’s defenders out by feigning retreat, followed by hidden troops taking the city, is also seen in the conquests of Ai (Josh 8), Gibeah (Judg 20), and Manti (Alma 58).

25: The implication is that some of the Lamanites surrendered and were taken prisoner. These men, along with those mentioned in vv. 37–40, will be important in the next chapter; see also v. 8 above. **27:** Lehi has been transferred from the city of Noah to Bountiful; see 49.14–16. **33:** *Unconquerable spirit* is probably not a compliment; its only other occurrence is at 3 Ne 3.4 in a description of the brutal Gadianton robbers.

an unconquerable spirit, he led the Lamanites forth to battle with exceeding fury against Moroni.³⁴ Moroni being in their course of march, therefore Jacob was determined to slay them and cut his way through to the city of Mulek. But behold, Moroni and his men were more powerful; therefore they did not give way before the Lamanites.³⁵ And it came to pass that they fought on both hands with exceeding fury; and there were many slain on both sides; yea, and Moroni was wounded and Jacob was killed.³⁶ And Lehi pressed upon their rear with such fury with his strong men, that the Lamanites in the rear delivered up their weapons of war; and the remainder of them, being much confused, knew not whither to go or to strike.

³⁷ Now Moroni seeing their confusion, he said unto them, "If ye will bring forth your weapons of war and deliver them up, behold we will forbear shedding your blood."³⁸ And it came to pass that when the Lamanites had heard these words, their chief captains, all those who were not slain, came forth and threw down their weapons of war at the feet of Moroni, and also commanded their men that they should do the same.³⁹ But behold, there were many that would not; and those who would not deliver up their swords were taken and bound, and their weapons of war were taken from them, and they were compelled to march with their brethren forth into the land Bountiful.⁴⁰ And now the number of prisoners who were taken exceeded more than the number of those who had been slain, yea, more than those who had been slain on both sides.

Prisoners and Fortifications (East)

53 ¹ And it came to pass that they did set guards over the prisoners of the Lamanites, and did compel them to go forth and bury their dead, yea, and also the dead of the Nephites who were slain; and Moroni placed men over them to guard them while they should perform their labors.² And Moroni went to the city of Mulek with Lehi, and took command of the city and gave it unto Lehi. Now behold, this Lehi was a man who had been with Moroni in the more part of all his battles; and he was a man like unto Moroni, and they rejoiced in each other's safety; yea, they were beloved by each other, and also beloved by all the people of Nephi.

³ And it came to pass that after the Lamanites had finished burying their dead and also the dead of the Nephites, they were marched back into the land Bountiful; and Teancum, by the orders of Moroni, caused that they should commence laboring in digging a ditch round about the land, or the city, Bountiful.⁴ And he caused that they should build a breastwork of timbers upon the inner bank of the ditch; and they cast up dirt out of the ditch against the breastwork of timbers; and thus they did cause the Lamanites to labor until they had encircled the city of Bountiful round about with a strong wall of timbers and earth, to an exceeding height.⁵ And this city became an exceeding stronghold ever after; and in this city they did guard the prisoners of the Lamanites; yea, even within a wall which they had caused them to build with their own hands. Now Moroni was compelled to cause

37–40: In this case, Moroni does not offer defeated soldiers the opportunity to return home if they swear an oath of peace; see 50.36n. 39: Lamanite holdouts were forcibly disarmed rather than killed.

CHAPTER 53

2: More very strong praise from the narrator. *Lehi... in the more part of all his battles*, see 43.35; 49.16–17.

3–5: Utilizing the labor of war prisoners not only produced additional fortifications, it also made the captives easier to control, though readers may wonder whether tools for construction could also be used in a prisoner uprising. *Or the city*, the correction reflects the fact that it is much easier to put a wall around a city than an entire land.

the Lamanites to labor, because it was easy to guard them while at their labor; and he desired all his forces when he should make an attack upon the Lamanites.

⁶ And it came to pass that Moroni had thus gained a victory over one of the greatest of the armies of the Lamanites, and had obtained possession of the city of Mulek, which was one of the strongest holds of the Lamanites in the land of Nephi; and thus he had also built a stronghold to retain his prisoners. ⁷ And it came to pass that he did no more attempt a battle with the Lamanites in that year, but he did employ his men in preparing for war, yea, and in making fortifications to guard against the Lamanites, yea, and also delivering their women and their children from famine and affliction, and providing food for their armies.

⁸ And now it came to pass that the armies of the Lamanites, on the west sea, south, while in the absence of Moroni on account of some intrigue amongst the Nephites, which caused dissensions amongst them, had gained some ground over the Nephites, yea, insomuch that they had obtained possession of a number of their cities in that part of the land. ⁹ And thus

because of iniquity amongst themselves, yea, because of dissensions and intrigue among themselves they were placed in the most dangerous circumstances.

A Digression on Helaman₂'s Two Thousand Stripling Soldiers (West)

¹⁰ And now behold, I have somewhat to say concerning the people of Ammon, who, in the beginning, were Lamanites; but by Ammon and his brethren, or rather by the power and word of God, they had been converted unto the Lord; and they had been brought down into the land of Zarahemla, and had ever since been protected by the Nephites. ¹¹ And because of their oath they had been kept from taking up arms against their brethren; for they had taken an oath that they never would shed blood more; and according to their oath they would have perished; yea, they would have suffered themselves to have fallen into the hands of their brethren, had it not been for the pity and the exceeding love which Ammon and his brethren had had for them. ¹² And for this cause they were brought down into the

6: *In the land of Nephi*, the city of Mulek was on the northeast coast rather than in the southern, ancestral land of Nephi, making this the second of only two geographical errors in the BoM; see Alma 51.26n. ATV suggests “in the land of the Nephites” as an emendation. **7:** After nine years of conflict, Moroni is no longer “preparing for war” as he was at 48.7; instead he is explicitly *preparing for war*. **8–9:** Nothing more is known of these intrigues and dissensions, though they would have served to confirm Moroni’s assessment at 51.16. *They had obtained possession of a number of their cities in that part of the land*, according to 56.13–14, these western cities had been captured by the Lamanites two years earlier, in year –66, when Moroni himself had gone there (see 52.11–15). This comment by the narrator will lead into the historical digression of the next section. **9:** *Dangerous circumstances*, only here, v. 15, and 52.14; despite the convoluted chronology, the same phrase is applied to the same event, namely the Lamanite conquering of Nephite cities in both the west and the east simultaneously. **10–23:** These verses provide background information as they recount events that happened in the west two years earlier, in –66 (see 56.6–9). **10–12:** This passage begins and ends with *brought down into the land of Zarahemla... protected by the Nephites*, thus framing with an inclusio the description of their oath of non-violence. **10:** The correction gives credit to God rather than the missionaries. *They had been converted unto the Lord*, see 23.4–18; 27.26–27. *Brought down into the land of Zarahemla*, initially the people of Ammon were settled at Jershon (Alma 27.22, 26) and then moved to Melek (35.13). Either they have been moved yet again (see 47.29), or the land of Melek was regarded as part of the greater land of Zarahemla (the only other mention of the “land of Melek” is at 8.3–4). **11:** *Taken an oath*, see 24.17–18. In the BoM, an oath is a serious matter, but a covenant carries even more weight, since covenants are generally made with God rather than with other people. In Mormon’s explanation of the people of Ammon, he tends to use “oath” (four times in vv. 11 and 14), while Helaman, who is more sympathetic to their plight, favors “covenant” (his perspective is recounted in vv. 15–16, with his own words recorded at 56.6–8). *More*, WB: “again.”

land of Zarahemla; and they ever had been protected by the Nephites.

¹³ But it came to pass that when they saw the danger, and the many afflictions and tribulations which the Nephites bore for them, they were moved with compassion and were desirous to take up arms in the defence of their country. ¹⁴ But behold, as they were about to take their weapons of war, they were overpowered by the persuasions of Helaman and his brethren, for they were about to break the oath which they had made. ¹⁵ And Helaman feared lest by so doing they should lose their souls; therefore all those who had entered into this covenant were compelled to behold their brethren wade through their afflictions, in their dangerous circumstances at this time.

¹⁶ But behold, it came to pass they had many sons, who had not entered into a covenant that they would not take their weapons of war to defend themselves against their enemies; therefore they did assemble themselves together at this time, as many as were able to take up arms, and they called themselves Nephites. ¹⁷ And they entered into a covenant to fight for the liberty of the Nephites, yea, to protect the land unto the laying down of their lives; yea, even they covenanted that they never would give up their

liberty, but they would fight in all cases to protect the Nephites and themselves from bondage. ¹⁸ Now behold, there were two thousand of those young men, who entered into this covenant and took their weapons of war to defend their country.

¹⁹ And now behold, as they never had hitherto been a disadvantage to the Nephites, they became now at this period of time also a great support; for they took their weapons of war, and they would that Helaman should be their leader. ²⁰ And they were all young men, and they were exceedingly valiant for courage, and also for strength and activity; but behold, this was not all—they were men who were true at all times in whatsoever thing they were entrusted. ²¹ Yea, they were men of truth and soberness, for they had been taught to keep the commandments of God and to walk uprightly before him. ²² And now it came to pass that Helaman did march at the head of his two thousand stripling soldiers, to the support of the people in the borders of the land on the south by the west sea.

²³ And thus ended the twenty and eighth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi.^a

^a 23 P *Nephi*, and so forth [P reads “&c.”]; –64 years; see Alma 52.19

13–15: Pacifism is not a major theme of the BoM, which is characterized more by militarism, but the people of Ammon are a special case. Helaman believes that the spiritual consequences of their covenant-breaking outweigh the military disadvantage of their abstaining from taking up arms. **13:** The people of Ammon are concerned to demonstrate their loyalty to the Nephites, hence the reference to defending *their country*, and in v. 16 their sons “called themselves Nephites.” **16–18:** The pacifism of the people of Ammon is not an absolute ideology since they are willing to have their sons go to war. The main issue seems to be the inviolability of covenants, and here the young men make a covenant that is in striking contrast to that of their fathers. **16:** Since the people of Ammon had renounced violence just before the destruction of Ammonihah in –81, some fifteen years earlier, their sons who were too young to join in the covenant or were born shortly thereafter would now be teenagers. **19:** It is not clear why they would have chosen Helaman to be their leader, since he does not appear to have a military background or martial skills. **20–21:** This is high praise for very young men. *Men of truth and soberness, for they had been taught*, in accordance with King Benjamin’s instructions to parents at Mos 4.15. **22:** *Stripling*, WB: “a youth in the state of adolescence, or just passing from boyhood to manhood.” **23:** This reference to the year –64 is connected to the main narrative rather than the digression of vv. 10–22, which reported events from –66. The fact that the broader passage includes information from more than just the twenty-eighth year of the judges explains the early reading “&c.”

Moroni's Letter on Exchanging Prisoners (East)

[XXV] **54** ¹ And now it came to pass in the twenty and ninth year of the judges,^a that Ammoron sent unto Moroni desiring that he would exchange prisoners. ² And it came to pass that Moroni felt to rejoice exceedingly at this request, for he desired the provisions which were imparted for the support of the Lamanite prisoners for the support of his own people; and he also desired his own people for the strengthening of his army.

³ Now the Lamanites had taken many women and children, and there was not a woman nor a child among all the prisoners of Moroni, or the prisoners whom Moroni had taken; therefore Moroni resolved upon a stratagem to obtain as many prisoners of the Nephites from the Lamanites as it were possible. ⁴ Therefore he wrote an epistle, and sent it by the servant of Ammoron, the same who had brought an epistle to Moroni. Now these are the words which he wrote unto Ammoron, saying:

⁵ Behold, Ammoron, I have written unto you somewhat concerning this war which ye have waged against my people, or rather which thy brother hath waged against them, and which ye are still determined to carry on after his death. ⁶ Behold, I

would tell you somewhat concerning the justice of God, and the sword of his almighty wrath, which doth hang over you except ye repent and withdraw your armies into your own lands, or the land of your possessions, which is the land of Nephi.

⁷ Yea, I would tell you these things if ye were capable of hearkening unto them; yea, I would tell you concerning that awful hell that awaits to receive such murderers as thou and thy brother have been, except ye repent and withdraw your murderous purposes, and return with your armies to your own lands.

⁸ But as ye have rejected^b these things, and have fought against the people of the Lord, even so I may expect you will do it again.

⁹ And now behold, we are prepared to receive you; yea, and except you withdraw your purposes, behold, ye will pull down the wrath of that God whom you have rejected upon you, even to your utter destruction. ¹⁰ But, as the Lord liveth, our armies shall come upon you except ye withdraw, and ye shall soon be visited with death,

^a 1 –63 years

^b 8 O, 1981 have *once* rejected

CHAPTER 54

1: Ammoron had refused a proposed prisoner exchange with Helaman a year earlier; see 57.2–3, 5. **3:** The unbalanced ratio is to be expected, since a Lamanite army had invaded Nephite territory inhabited by civilians. **4:** *The same who had brought an epistle to Moroni*, the text of Ammoron's original letter is not reproduced in the BoM; one wonders whether its tone would have been more conciliatory than Moroni's reply. **5–14:** This is the first of six letters that Mormon incorporates into his abridgment verbatim. The others are at 54.16–24; 56.2–58.41; 60.1–36; 61.2–21; 3 Ne 3.2–10. Curiously, all but one of these occur within the span of eight chapters. His son Moroni will insert two additional letters at Moro 8 and 9. **5:** *Thy brother*, Amalickiah. **6–8:** *Except ye repent*, Moroni couches his military concerns in religious language, adopting a prophetic demeanor. He proceeds to disparage Ammoron's capacities and character. **6:** Somewhat confusingly, the Lamanites have long had control of the original *land of Nephi*; see v. 13n. **8:** *As ye have once rejected these things*, Moroni is referencing Ammoron's history as a Nephite dissenter.

for we will retain our cities and our lands; yea, and we will maintain our religion and the cause of our God.

¹¹ But behold, it supposeth me that I talk to you concerning these things in vain; or it supposeth me that thou art a child of hell; therefore I will close my epistle by telling you that I will not exchange prisoners, save it be on conditions that ye will deliver up a man and his wife and his children, for one prisoner; if this be the case that ye will do it, I will exchange. ¹² And behold, if ye do not this, I will come against you with my armies; yea, even I will arm my women and my children, and I will come against you, and I will follow you even into your own land, which is the land of our first inheritance; yea, and it shall be blood for blood, yea, life for life; and I will give you battle even until you are destroyed from off the face of the earth.

¹³ Behold, I am in my anger, and also my people; ye have sought to murder us, and we have only sought to defend ourselves. But behold, if ye seek to destroy us more we will seek to destroy you; yea, and we will seek our land, the land of our first inheritance. ¹⁴ Now I close my

epistle. I am Moroni; I am a leader of the people of the Nephites.

Ammoron's Reply (East)

¹⁵ Now it came to pass that Ammoron, when he had received this epistle, was angry; and he wrote another epistle unto Moroni, and these are the words which he wrote, saying:

¹⁶ I am Ammoron, the king of the Lamanites; I am the brother of Amalickiah whom ye have murdered. Behold, I will avenge his blood upon you, yea, and I will come upon you with my armies for I fear not your threatenings. ¹⁷ For behold, your fathers did wrong their brethren, insomuch that they did rob them of their right to the government when it rightly belonged unto them. ¹⁸ And now behold, if ye will lay down your arms, and subject yourselves to be governed by those to whom the government doth rightly belong, then will I cause that my people shall lay down their weapons and shall be at war no more.

¹⁹ Behold, ye have breathed out many threatenings against me and my people; but behold, we fear not your threatenings. ²⁰ Nevertheless, I will grant to exchange prisoners according to your request, gladly,

11: Calling one's opponent a *child of hell* is generally not an effective negotiating tactic. *Child of hell*, Mt 23.15; Alma 11.23. *A man and his wife and his children*, apparently a number of Nephites were captured as families. **12:** Moroni's stated intentions here seem at odds with the divinely mandated Nephite emphasis on defensive warfare at 43.45–46, and even with Mormon's glowing praise of Moroni at 48.14–16. The threat to turn women and children into armed combatants is not a strong argument for the release of their captive peers; interestingly, Moroni does exactly this at 55.17. *Life for life*, Ex 21.23, in a passage on retributive justice. Generally in scripture the threat to *destroy someone from off the face of the earth* comes from the Lord or a prophet; e.g., Gen 7.4; Deut 6.15; Amos 9.8; Mos 12.8; Alma 9.12; 37.22. **13:** *Land of our first inheritance*, that is, the land of Nephi, which has been in Lamanite hands since Mosiah, fled with his followers to the land of Zarahemla at Omni 1.12–13, about 150 years earlier. Moroni is thus threatening an offensive invasion into Lamanite territory. **16:** *Whom ye have murdered*, see 51.33–34. *Avenge his blood*, echoing Moroni's "blood for blood" at v. 12. **17:** Ammoron blames his own aggression on perceived ancestral wrongs, presumably between Nephi and Laman; cf. the Lamanite resentments recounted at Mos 10.12–17. *Your fathers* is indicative of Ammoron distancing himself from his own Nephite heritage.

that I may preserve my food for my men of war; and we will wage a war which shall be eternal, either to the subjecting the Nephites to our authority or to their eternal extinction.

²¹ And as concerning that God whom ye say we have rejected, behold, we know not such a being; neither do ye; but if it so be that there is such a being, we know not but that he hath made us as well as you. ²² And if it so be that there is a devil and a hell, behold will he not send you there to dwell with my brother whom ye have murdered, whom ye have hinted that he hath gone to such a place? But behold these things matter not.

²³ I am Ammoron, and a descendant of Zoram, whom your fathers pressed and brought out of Jerusalem. ²⁴ And behold, now I am a bold Lamanite;^a behold, this war hath been waged to avenge their wrongs, and to maintain and to obtain their rights to the government; and I close my epistle to Moroni.

The City of Gid Is Retaken, along with Nephite Prisoners (East)

55 ¹ Now it came to pass that when Moroni had received this epistle he was more angry, because he knew that Ammoron had a perfect knowledge of his fraud; yea, he knew that Ammoron knew that it was not a just cause that had caused him to wage a war against the people of Nephi. ² And he said, “Behold, I will not exchange prisoners with Ammoron save he will withdraw his purpose, as I have stated in my epistle; for I will not grant unto him that he shall have any more power than what he hath got. ³ Behold, I know the place where the Lamanites do guard my people whom they have taken prisoners; and as Ammoron would not grant unto me mine epistle, behold, I will give unto him according to my words; yea, I will seek death among them until they shall sue for peace.”

⁴ And now it came to pass that when Moroni had said these words, he caused that a search should be made among his men, that perhaps he might find a man who was a descendant of Laman among them. ⁵ And it came to pass that they found one, whose name was Laman; and

^a 24 O and behold I am now a bold Lamanite

21–22: Ammoron expresses skepticism about distinctive Nephite beliefs concerning God (probably Christ in particular), the devil, and hell. As a Nephite dissenter himself, he would have been familiar with such teachings. *We know not such a being; neither do ye*, echoing the doubts of the Nehorites, the Lamanites in the New World city of Jerusalem, and Korihor, see 21.7–9; 30.13–14. *Ye have hinted*, see v. 7 above. **23:** This interpretation of Zoram joining Lehi’s family differs from that of 1 Ne 4.30–37; cf. 2 Ne 1.30–32. *Press, WB:* “to force into service.” **24:** *Now I am a bold Lamanite*, the reading from O makes it even clearer that this is a new identity for Ammoron; compare the young Anti-Nephi-Lehies who call themselves “Nephites” at 53.16.

CHAPTER 55

1: *He was more angry*, this is the seventh time that Moroni’s anger, or wrath, has been mentioned (44.17; 46.11; 51.14; 54.13); there will be another instance at 59.13. **2:** *As I have stated in my epistle*, see 54.7, 9. **3:** *As Ammoron would not grant unto me mine epistle*, this is not exactly accurate. Ammoron had agreed to Moroni’s conditions for a prisoner exchange at 54.20, but Moroni is angry enough that he rescinds his offer, now insisting that nothing less than a full Lamanite withdrawal is acceptable. **4–8:** Moroni needs an ethnic Lamanite to lead the mission in order to gain the trust of the enemy, perhaps because of a spoken dialect or because of physical appearance (after sunset, the fact that Laman’s companions were Nephites may have been less noticeable). **5:** *One of the servants...* *Amalickiah*, see 47.29.

he was one of the servants of the king who was murdered by Amalickiah.⁶ Now Moroni caused that Laman and a small number of his men should go forth unto the guards who were over the Nephites.⁷ Now the Nephites were guarded in the city of Gid; therefore Moroni appointed Laman and caused that a small number of men should go with him.

⁸ And when it was evening Laman went to the guards who were over the Nephites, and behold, they saw him coming and they hailed him; but he saith unto them, “Fear not; behold, I am a Lamanite. Behold, we have escaped from the Nephites, and they sleep; and behold we have taken of their wine and brought with us.”

⁹ Now when the Lamanites heard these words they received him with joy; and they said unto him, “Give us of your wine, that we may drink; we are glad that ye have thus taken wine with you for we are weary.”

¹⁰ But Laman said unto them, “Let us keep of our wine till we go against the Nephites to battle.”

But this saying only made them more desirous to drink of the wine;¹¹ for, said they, “We are weary, therefore let us take of the wine, and by and by we shall receive wine for our rations, which will strengthen us to go against the Nephites.”

¹² And Laman said unto them, “You may do according to your desires.”

¹³ And it came to pass that they did take of the wine freely; and it was pleasant to their taste, therefore they took of it more freely; and it was strong, having been prepared in its strength.¹⁴ And it came to pass they did drink

and were merry, and by and by they were all drunken.¹⁵ And now when Laman and his men saw that they were all drunken, and were in a deep sleep, they returned to Moroni and told him all the things that had happened.

¹⁶ And now this was according to the design of Moroni. And Moroni had prepared his men with weapons of war; and he sent^a to the city Gid, while the Lamanites were in a deep sleep and drunken, and cast in weapons of war unto the prisoners, insomuch that they were all armed;¹⁷ yea, even to their women, and all those of their children, as many as were able to use a weapon of war, when Moroni had armed all those prisoners; and all those things were done in a profound silence.

¹⁸ But had they awakened the Lamanites, behold they were drunken and the Nephites could have slain them.¹⁹ But behold, this was not the desire of Moroni; he did not delight in murder or bloodshed, but he delighted in the saving of his people from destruction; and for this cause he might not bring upon him injustice, he would not fall upon the Lamanites and destroy them in their drunkenness.²⁰ But he had obtained his desires; for he had armed those prisoners of the Nephites who were within the wall of the city, and had given them power to gain possession of those parts which were within the walls.²¹ And then he caused the men who were with him to withdraw a pace from them, and surround the armies of the Lamanites.

²² Now behold this was done in the nighttime, so that when the Lamanites awoke in the

^a 16 O, P, 1981 *went*

7: The city of Gid, on the eastern coast, had been lost to the Lamanites four years earlier (51.26). 8: *Hailed*, WB: “to call to a person at a distance.” 9–12: The practice of imbibing alcohol before battle is well known throughout history. Laman’s refusal only makes the Lamanites’ desire all the more ardent. *By and by*, WB: “in a short time after; presently; soon.” 13–14: A similar tactic of presenting wine to guards in order to facilitate an escape was employed by the people of Limhi at Mos 22.10–11. 16: *Cast in weapons*, by throwing them over a wall; see v. 20. 17: As Moroni had threatened at 54.12. 18–19: Another example of Moroni’s magnanimity. Even in a setting of war, he is concerned about not acting dishonorably. 21: We saw the same maneuver at 44.1 (the only other occurrence of *pace* in scripture). 22: *Without*, outside the city walls.

morning they beheld that they were surrounded by the Nephites without, and that their prisoners were armed within.²³ And thus they saw that the Nephites had power over them; and in these circumstances they found that it was not expedient that they should fight with the Nephites; therefore their chief captains demanded their weapons of war, and they brought them forth and cast them at the feet of the Nephites, pleading for mercy.

²⁴ Now behold, this was the desire of Moroni. He took them prisoners of war, and took possession of the city, and caused that all the prisoners should be liberated, who were Nephites; and they did join the army of Moroni, and were a great strength to his army.²⁵ And it came to pass that he did cause the Lamanites, whom he had taken prisoners, that they should commence a labor in strengthening the fortifications round about the city Gid.²⁶ And it came to pass that when he had fortified the city Gid, according to his desires, he caused that his prisoners should be taken to the city Bountiful; and he also guarded that city with an exceeding strong force.²⁷ And it came to pass that they did, notwithstanding all the intrigues of the Lamanites, keep and protect all the prisoners whom they had taken, and also maintain all the ground and the advantage which they had retaken.

More Nephite Precautions and Preparations (East)

²⁸ And it came to pass that the Nephites began again to be victorious, and to reclaim

their rights and their privileges.²⁹ Many times did the Lamanites attempt to encircle them about by night, but in these attempts they did lose many prisoners.³⁰ And many times did they attempt to administer of their wine to the Nephites, that they might destroy them with poison or with drunkenness.³¹ But behold, the Nephites were not slow to remember the Lord their God in this their time of affliction. They could not be taken in their snares; yea, they would not partake of their wine, save they had first given to some of the Lamanite prisoners.³² And they were thus cautious that no poison should be administered among them; for if their wine would poison a Lamanite it would also poison a Nephite; and thus they did try all their liquors.

³³ And now it came to pass that it was expedient for Moroni to make preparations to attack the city Morianton; for behold, the Lamanites had, by their labors, fortified the city Morianton until it had become an exceeding stronghold.³⁴ And they were continually bringing new forces into that city, and also new supplies of provisions.³⁵ And thus ended the twenty and ninth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi.^a

^a 35 –63 years; see Alma 54.1

24: It is not clear what happened to the women and children prisoners after they were freed. **25:** Moroni had earlier utilized the labor of prisoners of war for similar purposes at 53.3–5. **28:** *Rights and privileges* is surprising; readers might have expected the Nephites to reclaim their lands and possessions. **29–31:** Apparently these were attempts to free Lamanite prisoners in a manner similar to what Moroni had done. **31:** In a passage about Nephite shrewdness, the narrator adds a reference to their devotion, so as not to give them sole credit for their success. **32:** *Liquors* in a New World context would have referred to various fermented drinks, since distilled alcohol was unknown in the ancient Americas. **33:** The city of Morianton, on the eastern coast, had been lost to the Lamanites four years earlier (Alma 51.26). This narrative is continued at 59.5, when a Lamanite attack on Nephiah prevents Moroni from carrying out his plan to recapture the city of Morianton.

Helaman₂'s Letter to Moroni: Alma 56–58

Helaman₂ and His Two Thousand Join
Antipus (West)

[XXVI] **56** ¹ And now it came to pass in the commencement of the thirtieth year of the reign of the judges,^a on the second day in the first month, Moroni received an epistle from Helaman, stating the affairs of the people in that quarter of the land. ² And these are the words which he wrote, saying:

My dearly beloved brother, Moroni, as well in the Lord as in the tribulations of our warfare; behold, my beloved brother, I have somewhat to tell you concerning our warfare in this part of the land. ³ Behold, two thousand of the sons of those men whom Ammon brought down out of the land of Nephi—now ye have known that these were descendants of Laman, who was the eldest son of our father Lehi; ⁴ now I need not rehearse unto you concerning their traditions or their unbelief, for thou knowest concerning all these things—⁵ therefore it sufficeth me that I tell you that two thousand of these young men have taken their

weapons of war, and would that I should be their leader; and we have come forth to defend our country.

⁶ And now ye also know concerning the covenant which their fathers made, that they would not take up their weapons of war against their brethren to shed blood. ⁷ But in the twenty and sixth year,^b when they saw our afflictions and our tribulations for them, they were about to break the covenant which they had made and take up their weapons of war in our defence. ⁸ But I would not suffer them that they should break this covenant which they had made, supposing that God would strengthen us, insomuch that we should not suffer more because of the fulfilling the oath which they had taken.

⁹ But behold, here is one thing in which we may have great joy. For behold, in the twenty and sixth year, I, Helaman, did march at the head of these two thousand young men to the city of Judea, to assist Antipus, whom ye had appointed a leader over the people of that part

^a 1 –62 years

^b 7 –66 years; see Alma 53.10–23

CHAPTER 56

1: Helaman's letter to Moroni recounts events of the previous four years, so incidents in the next three chapters are dated from –66 to –62 years. **2:** *Brother... in the Lord*, since the only other occurrence in the BoM of this usage is at 17.2, it appears that Helaman and Moroni are recapitulating in the next generation the relationship enjoyed by Alma and the sons of Mosiah. **3:** *Whom Ammon brought down out of the land of Nephi*, see 27.25–26. Helaman gives more credit to Ammon than was seen in the narrator's passive construction at 53.10, 12. *Rehearse*, WB: "to narrate or recount events." **5:** *Taken their weapons of war, and would that I should be their leader*, the parallel phrasing at 53.19, as well as the repetition of "march at the head of these two thousand" at v. 9 below and 53.22, suggests the Mormon used this letter as a source for his earlier narrative. **6:** *The covenant which their fathers made*, see 24.17–18. **7:** On events from the 26th year, see 53.10–23. Without this background information, the transition in vv. 8–9, from keeping a covenant of pacifism to marching to war with 2,000 young soldiers, would be unintelligible. *When they saw our afflictions and our tribulations for them*, very similar phrasing was used in an earlier account of this event at 53.13.

of the land.¹⁰ And I did join my two thousand sons, (for they are worthy to be called sons) to the army of Antipus, in which strength Antipus did rejoice exceedingly; for behold, his army had been reduced by the Lamanites because their forces had slain a vast number of our men, for which cause we have to mourn.¹¹ Nevertheless, we may console ourselves in this point, that they have died in the cause of their country and of their God, yea, and they are happy.

¹² And the Lamanites had also retained many prisoners, all of whom are chief captains, for none other have they spared alive. And we suppose that they are now at this time in the land of Nephi; it is so if they are not slain.

¹³ And now these are the cities of which the Lamanites have obtained possession by the shedding of the blood of so many of our valiant men:¹⁴ the land of Manti, or the city of Manti, and the city of Zeezrom, and the city of Cumeni, and the city of Antiparah.¹⁵ And these are the cities which they possessed when I arrived at the city of Judea; and I found Antipus and his men toiling with their might to fortify the city.¹⁶ Yea, and they were depressed in body as well as in spirit, for they had fought valiantly by day and toiled by night to maintain their cities; and thus they had suffered great afflictions of every kind.¹⁷ And now they were

determined to conquer in this place or die; therefore you may well suppose that this little force which I brought with me, yea, those sons of mine, gave them great hopes and much joy.

¹⁸ And now it came to pass that when the Lamanites saw that Antipus had received a greater strength to his army, they were compelled by the orders of Ammoron to not come against the city of Judea, or against us, to battle.

¹⁹ And thus were we favored of the Lord; for had they come upon us in this our weakness they might have perhaps destroyed our little army; but thus were we preserved.²⁰ They were commanded by Ammoron to maintain those cities which they had taken. And thus ended the twenty and sixth year.^a

The Lamanites Hold Back While the Nephite Army Strengthens (West)

And in the commencement of the twenty and seventh year^b we had prepared our city and ourselves for defence.²¹ Now we were desirous that the Lamanites should come upon us; for we were not desirous to make an attack upon them in their strongholds.

²² And it came to pass that we kept spies out round about, to watch the movements of the Lamanites, that they might not pass

^a 20 –66 years; see v. 7 above

^b 20 –65 years

10: Helaman's paternal regard for the sons of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies will be repeatedly manifest through this chapter, a sentiment that will be reciprocated at v. 46 when they call him "Father." **14:** These four western cities, all first mentioned here, may be new, fortified cities similar to those in the east listed at 51.26–27. **18–20:** Ammoron's orders accord with his defensive strategy mentioned at 52.4 (also dated to the "twenty and sixth year").

us by night nor by day to make an attack upon our other cities which were on the northward.²³ For we knew in those cities they were not sufficiently strong to meet them; therefore we were desirous, if they should pass by us, to fall upon them in their rear, and thus bring them up in the rear at the same time they were met in the front. We supposed that we could overpower them; but behold, we were disappointed in this our desire.

²⁴ They durst not pass by us with their whole army, neither durst they with a part, lest they should not be sufficiently strong and they should fall.²⁵ Neither durst they march down against the city of Zarahemla; neither durst they cross the head of Sidon, over to the city of Nephihah.²⁶ And thus, with their forces, they were determined to maintain those cities which they had taken.

²⁷ And now it came to pass in the second month of this year, there was brought unto us many provisions from the fathers of those my two thousand sons.²⁸ And also there were sent two thousand men unto us from the land of Zarahemla. And thus we were prepared with ten thousand men, and provisions for them, and also for their wives and their children.²⁹ And the Lamanites, thus seeing our forces increase daily, and provisions arrive for our support, they began to be fearful, and began to sally forth, if it were possible to

put an end to our receiving provisions and strength.

Helaman₂ Describes a Battle with Lamanites from the City of Antiparah (West)

³⁰ Now when we saw that the Lamanites began to grow uneasy on this wise, we were desirous to bring a stratagem into effect upon them; therefore Antipus ordered that I should march forth with my little sons to a neighboring city, as if we were carrying provisions to a neighboring city.³¹ And we were to march near the city of Antiparah, as if we were going to the city beyond, in the borders by the seashore.

³² And it came to pass that we did march forth, as if with our provisions, to go to that city.³³ And it came to pass that Antipus did march forth with a part of his army, leaving the remainder to maintain the city. But he did not march forth until I had gone forth with my little army, and came near the city Antiparah.

³⁴ And now, in the city Antiparah were stationed the strongest army of the Lamanites; yea, the most numerous.³⁵ And it came to pass that when they had been informed by their spies, they came forth with their army and marched against us.³⁶ And it came to pass that we did flee before them, northward. And thus we did lead away the most powerful army of the Lamanites;³⁷ yea, even to a

27: In accordance with the agreement the people of Ammon had entered into at 27.24; cf. 43.13. 28: It appears that the new soldiers have come with their families 29: *Sally*, WB: "to issue or rush out, as a body of troops from a fortified place to attack besiegers." In the BoM, those who are sallying forth are always coming out of their strongholds and fortifications; cf. 58.6; 3 Ne 4.1. 30: *On this wise*, in this way.

considerable distance, insomuch that when they saw the army of Antipus pursuing them, with their might, they did not turn to the right nor to the left, but pursued their march in a straight course after us; and, as we suppose, it was their intent to slay us before Antipus should overtake them, and this that they might not be surrounded by our people.

³⁸ And now Antipus, beholding our danger, did speed the march of his army. But behold, it was night; therefore they did not overtake us, neither did Antipus overtake them; therefore we did camp for the night. ³⁹ And it came to pass that before the dawn of the morning, behold, the Lamanites were pursuing us. Now we were not sufficiently strong to contend with them; yea, I would not suffer that my little sons should fall into their hands; therefore we did continue our march, and we took our march into the wilderness. ⁴⁰ Now they durst not turn to the right nor to the left lest they should be surrounded; neither would I turn to the right nor to the left lest they should overtake me, and we could not stand against them, but be slain, and they would make their escape; and thus we did flee all that day into the wilderness, even until it was dark. ⁴¹ And it came to pass that again, when the light of the morning came we saw the Lamanites upon us, and we did flee before them. ⁴² But it

came to pass that they did not pursue us far before they halted; and it was in the morning of the third day of the seventh month. ⁴³ And now, whether they were overtaken by Antipus we knew not, but I said unto my men, “Behold, we know not but they have halted for the purpose that we should come against them, that they might catch us in their snare; ⁴⁴ therefore what say ye, my sons, will ye go against them to battle?”

⁴⁵ And now I say unto you, my beloved brother Moroni, that never had I seen so great courage, nay, not amongst all the Nephites. ⁴⁶ For as I had ever called them my sons (for they were all of them very young) even so they said unto me, “Father, behold our God is with us, and he will not suffer that we should fall; then let us go forth; we would not slay our brethren if they would let us alone; therefore let us go, lest they should overpower the army of Antipus.”

⁴⁷ Now they never had fought, yet they did not fear death; and they did think more upon the liberty of their fathers than they did upon their lives; yea, they had been taught by their mothers, that if they did not doubt, God would deliver them. ⁴⁸ And they rehearsed unto me the words of their mothers, saying, “We do not doubt; our mothers knew it.”^a

^a 48 O, P *our mothers knew* [with no *it*]

43–44: The ruse began with Helaman’s young, inexperienced troops acting as a decoy to lure Lamanites out of their stronghold; now, however, as they transition to combatants, Helaman refers to them as *my men*, rather than “my little sons,” as in v. 39. Note that Helaman consults with his troops rather than simply commanding them. 48: *Rehearse*, in this case, WB: “to repeat the words of another.” The semicolon, added to the current standard punctuation, indicates that the point here is not that their mothers believed, but rather the sons believe because of their mothers. Characteristically, the most influential women in the BoM are Lamanites, as is the case with these mothers.

⁴⁹ And it came to pass that I did return with my two thousand against these Lamanites who had pursued us. And now behold, the armies of Antipus had overtaken them, and a terrible battle had commenced. ⁵⁰ The army of Antipus being weary, because of their long march in so short a space of time, were about to fall into the hands of the Lamanites; and had I not returned with my two thousand they would have obtained their purpose. ⁵¹ For Antipus had fallen by the sword, and many of his leaders, because of their weariness, which was occasioned by the speed of their march—therefore the men of Antipus, being confused because of the fall of their leaders, began to give way before the Lamanites.

⁵² And it came to pass that the Lamanites took courage, and began to pursue them; and thus were the Lamanites pursuing them with great vigor when Helaman came upon their rear with his two thousand, and began to slay them exceedingly, insomuch that the whole army of the Lamanites halted and turned upon Helaman. ⁵³ Now when the people of Antipus saw that the Lamanites had turned them about, they gathered together their men and came again upon the rear of the Lamanites.

⁵⁴ And now it came to pass that we, the people of Nephi, the people of

Antipus, and I with my two thousand, did surround the Lamanites, and did slay them; yea, insomuch that they were compelled to deliver up their weapons of war and also themselves as prisoners of war.

⁵⁵ And now it came to pass that when they had surrendered themselves up unto us, behold, I numbered those young men who had fought with me, fearing lest there were many of them slain.

⁵⁶ But behold, to my great joy, there had not one soul of them fallen to the earth; yea, and they had fought as if with the strength of God; yea, never were men known to have fought with such miraculous strength; and with such mighty power did they fall upon the Lamanites, that they did frighten them; and for this cause did the Lamanites deliver themselves up as prisoners of war.

⁵⁷ And as we had no place for our prisoners, that we could guard them to keep them from the armies of the Lamanites, therefore we sent them to the land of Zarahemla, and a part of those men who were not slain of Antipus, with them; and the remainder I took and joined them to my stripling Ammonites, and took our march back to the city of Judea.

52–53: Since Helaman is referred to in the third person, it appears that this paragraph is Mormon's paraphrase of a portion of the letter (though the paraphrase may have begun in v. 51). 52: *Came upon their rear*, because the Lamanites had turned around to fight Antipus's army. 57: With Antipus dead, Helaman now takes command of his troops. *Ammonites*, only here and 57.6 in the BoM, which greatly prefers "people of Ammon" (19 times). Perhaps some Nephite writers were attuned to possible negative associations with the Ammonites of the OT, who were implacably hostile to the ancient Israelites.

Helaman₂ Retakes the City of Antiparah (West)

57¹ And now it came to pass that I received an epistle from Ammoron, the king, stating that if I would deliver up those prisoners of war whom we had taken that he would deliver up the city of Antiparah unto us.² But I sent an epistle unto the king, that we were sure our forces were sufficient to take the city of Antiparah by our force; and by delivering up the prisoners for that city we should suppose ourselves unwise, and that we would only deliver up our prisoners on exchange.³ And Ammoron refused mine epistle, for he would not exchange prisoners; therefore we began to make preparations to go against the city of Antiparah.

⁴ But the people of Antiparah did leave the city, and fled to their other cities, which they had possession of, to fortify them; and thus the city of Antiparah fell into our hands.⁵ And thus ended the twenty and eighth year of the reign of the judges.^a

Helaman₂ Retakes the City of Cumeni but Loses Prisoners (West)

⁶ And it came to pass that in the commencement of the twenty and ninth year,^b we received a supply of provisions, and also an addition to our army, from the land of Zarahemla, and from the land round about, to the number of six thousand men, besides sixty of the

sons of the Ammonites who had come to join their brethren, my little band of two thousand. And now behold, we were strong, yea, and we had also a plenty of provisions brought unto us.

⁷ And it came to pass that it was our desire to wage a battle with the army which was placed to protect the city Cumeni.⁸ And now behold, I will show unto you that we soon accomplished our desire; yea, with our strong force, or with a part of our strong force, we did surround, by night, the city Cumeni, a little before they were to receive a supply of provisions.⁹ And it came to pass that we did camp round about the city for many nights; but we did sleep upon our swords, and keep guards, that the Lamanites could not come upon us by night and slay us, which they attempted many times; but as many times as they attempted this their blood was spilt.¹⁰ At length their provisions did arrive, and they were about to enter the city by night. And we, instead of being Lamanites, were Nephites; therefore, we did take them and their provisions.

¹¹ And notwithstanding the Lamanites being cut off from their support after this manner, they were

^a 5 –64 years

^b 6 –63 years

CHAPTER 57

The Nephites will retake the cities held by the Lamanites in the opposite order in which they were lost, according to 56.13–14: Antiparah (v. 4), then Cumeni (v. 12), presumably Zeezrom (not mentioned again), and finally Manti (58.21); see 62.36n. **1–5:** Ammoron cunningly offers up a city that he cannot hold, and Helaman, correctly assessing Antiparah's weakness, rejects the proposed exchange. **10:** *Instead of being Lamanites, were Nephites*, although fighting for the Nephites, they were ethnically Lamanites, which may have been advantageous in this stratagem. **11:** *Send... our prisoners to the land of Zarahemla*, the plan is to repeat the course of action at 56.57.

still determined to maintain the city; therefore it became expedient that we should take those provisions and send them to Judea, and our prisoners to the land of Zarahemla.¹² And it came to pass that not many days had passed away before the Lamanites began to lose all hopes of succor; therefore they yielded up the city unto our hands; and thus we had accomplished our designs in obtaining the city Cumeni.

¹³ But it came to pass that our prisoners were so numerous that, notwithstanding the enormity of our numbers, we were obliged to employ all our force to keep them, or to put them to death.¹⁴ For behold, they would break out in great numbers, and would fight with stones, and with clubs, or whatsoever thing they could get into their hands, insomuch that we did slay upwards of two thousand of them after they had surrendered themselves prisoners of war.

¹⁵ Therefore it became expedient for us, that we should put an end to their lives, or guard them, sword in hand, down to the land of Zarahemla; and also our provisions were not any more than sufficient for our own people, notwithstanding that which we had taken from the Lamanites.

¹⁶ And now, in those critical circumstances, it became a very

serious matter to determine concerning these prisoners of war; nevertheless, we did resolve to send them down to the land of Zarahemla; therefore we selected a part of our men, and gave them charge over our prisoners to go down to the land of Zarahemla.

¹⁷ But it came to pass that on the morrow they did return. And now behold, we did not inquire of them concerning the prisoners; for behold, the Lamanites were upon us, and they returned in season to save us from falling into their hands. For behold, Ammoron had sent to their support a new supply of provisions and also a numerous army of men.¹⁸ And it came to pass that those men whom we sent with the prisoners did arrive in season to check them, as they were about to overpower us.

¹⁹ But behold, my little band of two thousand and sixty fought most desperately; yea, they were firm before the Lamanites, and did administer death unto all those who opposed them.²⁰ And as the remainder of our army were about to give way before the Lamanites, behold, those two thousand and sixty were firm and undaunted.

²¹ Yea, and they did obey and observe to perform every word of command with exactness; yea, and even according to their faith it was done unto them; and I did

12: *Succor*, WB: “aid; assistance.” **13:** Because both Antiparah and Cumeni were retaken without bloodshed, the Nephites now have a great number of Lamanite prisoners to deal with. **16:** The alternative would have been to execute the prisoners, as noted in vv. 13–15. **17–18:** The failure of the prisoner escort turns out to be fortuitous for Helaman’s troops. *In season*, WB: “a fit or suitable time; the convenient time.” **18:** *Check*, WB: “to stop; to restrain; to hinder.” **19–20:** The emphasis on being *firm* (doubled in these verses) echoes Lehi’s words to Lemuel at 1 Ne 2.10; see Hel 6.1n. **20:** *Undaunted*, WB: “not subdued or depressed by fear.” **21:** *The words . . . that their mothers had taught them*, see 56.47 (also alluded to at v. 26).

remember the words which they said unto me that their mothers had taught them.

²² And now behold, it was these my sons, and those men who had been selected to convey the prisoners, to whom we owe this great victory; for it was they who did beat the Lamanites; therefore they were driven back to the city of Manti. ²³ And we retained our city Cumeni, and were not all destroyed by the sword; nevertheless, we had suffered great loss.

Helaman₂ Describes a Miraculous Preservation (West)

²⁴ And it came to pass that after the Lamanites had fled, I immediately gave orders that my men who had been wounded should be taken from among the dead, and caused that their wounds should be dressed. ²⁵ And it came to pass that there were two hundred, out of my two thousand and sixty, who had fainted because of the loss of blood; nevertheless, according to the goodness of God, and to our great astonishment, and also the foes^a of our whole army, there was not one soul of them who did perish; yea, and neither was there one soul among them who had not received many wounds.

²⁶ And now, their preservation was astonishing to our whole army, yea, that they should be spared while there was a thousand of our brethren who were slain. And we do justly ascribe it to the miraculous

power of God, because of their exceeding faith in that which they had been taught to believe—that there was a just God, and whosoever did not doubt, that they should be preserved by his marvelous power. ²⁷ Now this was the faith of these of whom I have spoken; they are young, and their minds are firm, and they do put their trust in God continually.

Gid's Report of the Lost Prisoners (West)

²⁸ And now it came to pass that after we had thus taken care of our wounded men, and had buried our dead and also the dead of the Lamanites, who were many, behold, we did inquire of Gid concerning the prisoners whom they had started to go down to the land of Zarahemla with. ²⁹ Now Gid was the chief captain over the band who was appointed to guard them down to the land.

³⁰ And now, these are the words which Gid said unto me: "Behold, we did start to go down to the land of Zarahemla with our prisoners. And it came to pass that we did meet the spies of our armies, who had been sent out to watch the camp of the Lamanites. ³¹ And they cried unto us, saying, 'Behold, the armies of the Lamanites are marching towards the city of Cumeni; and behold, they will fall upon them, yea, and will destroy our people.'

^a 25 O, P, 1981 joy

25: *Neither was there one soul among them*, that is, among the 200 who had fallen. As with many stories of miraculous preservation, this interpretation tends to cast doubt on the faith of those who did die. Moroni subsequently defends the righteousness of slain Nephite soldiers at 60.12–13. **28:** In contrast to Moroni at 53.1, Helaman's troops bury the enemy dead themselves.

³² “And it came to pass that our prisoners did hear their cries, which caused them to take courage; and they did rise up in rebellion against us.³³ And it came to pass because of their rebellion we did cause that our swords should come upon them. And it came to pass that they did in a body run upon our swords, in the which, the greater number of them were slain; and the remainder of them broke through and fled from us.

³⁴ “And behold, when they had fled and we could not overtake them, we took our march with speed towards the city Cumeni; and behold, we did arrive in time that we might assist our brethren in preserving the city.³⁵ And behold, we are again delivered out of the hands of our enemies. And blessed is the name of our God; for behold, it is he that has delivered us; yea, that has done this great thing for us.”

³⁶ Now it came to pass that when I, Helaman, had heard these words of Gid, I was filled with exceeding joy because of the goodness of God in preserving us, that we might not all perish; yea, and I trust that the souls of them who have been slain have entered into the rest of their God.

Helaman₂ Receives Inadequate Support (West)

58 ¹ And behold, now it came to pass that our next object

was to obtain the city of Manti; but behold, there was no way that we could lead them out of the city by our small bands. For behold, they remembered that which we had hitherto done; therefore we could not decoy them away from their strongholds.² And they were so much more numerous than was our army that we durst not go forth and attack them in their strongholds.³ Yea, and it became expedient that we should employ our men to the maintaining those parts of the land which we had regained of our possessions; therefore it became expedient that we should wait, that we might receive more strength from the land of Zarahemla and also a new supply of provisions.

⁴ And it came to pass that I thus did send an embassy to the governor of our land, to acquaint him concerning the affairs of our people. And it came to pass that we did wait to receive provisions and strength from the land of Zarahemla.⁵ But behold, this did profit us but little; for the Lamanites were also receiving great strength from day to day, and also many provisions; and thus were our circumstances at this period of time.⁶ And the Lamanites were sallying forth against us from time to time, resolving by stratagem to destroy us; nevertheless we could not come to battle with them, because of their retreats and their strongholds.

35: Gid ends his report of their failure to complete their original mission on a positive note.

CHAPTER 58

1: *Object, objective. That which we had hitherto done, see 56.30–57.4. 4: The governor of our land, Pahoran.*

⁷ And it came to pass that we did wait in these difficult circumstances for the space of many months, even until we were about to perish for the want of food.

⁸ But it came to pass that we did receive food, which was guarded to us by an army of two thousand men to our assistance; and this is all the assistance which we did receive, to defend ourselves and our country from falling into the hands of our enemies, yea, to contend with an enemy which was innumerable.

⁹ And now the cause of these our embarrassments, or the cause why they did not send more strength unto us, we knew not; therefore we were grieved and also filled with fear, lest by any means the judgments of God should come upon our land, to our overthrow and utter destruction. ¹⁰ Therefore we did pour out our souls in prayer to God, that he would strengthen us and deliver us out of the hands of our enemies, yea, and also give us strength that we might retain our cities, and our lands, and our possessions, for the support of our people. ¹¹ Yea, and it came to pass that the Lord our God did visit us with assurances that he would deliver us; yea, insomuch that he did speak peace to our souls, and did grant unto us great faith,

and did cause us that we should hope for our deliverance in him.

¹² And we did take courage with our small force which we had received, and were fixed with a determination to conquer our enemies, and to maintain our lands, and our possessions, and our wives, and our children, and the cause of our liberty.

Helaman₂ Retakes the City of Manti (West)

¹³ And thus we did go forth with all our might against the Lamanites, who were in the city of Manti; and we did pitch our tents by the wilderness side, which was near to the city. ¹⁴ And it came to pass that on the morrow, that when the Lamanites saw that we were in the borders by the wilderness which was near the city, that they sent out their spies round about us that they might discover the number and the strength of our army. ¹⁵ And it came to pass that when they saw that we were not strong, according to our numbers, and fearing that we should cut them off from their support except they should come out to battle against us and kill us, and also supposing that they could easily destroy us with their numerous hosts, therefore they began to make preparations to come out against us to battle.

9: Apparently, the new reinforcements could not explain why they and the provisions had been so long in coming; see v. 34. *Embarrassments*, shortages, or perhaps difficulties. **10:** *Pour out our souls in prayer to God*, where Moroni's response to setbacks or difficulties was often anger, Helaman instead turns to God. And despite Mormon's high regard for Captain Moroni, he himself will follow Helaman's example here at Morm 3.12. **11:** A moving example of spiritual comfort when physical circumstances seem bleak. Faith, in this instance, comes as a gift from God. *Lord our God... did speak peace*, a possible allusion to Ps 85.8, which pleads for God to turn aside his anger against iniquity.

¹⁶ And when we saw that they were making preparations to come out against us, behold, I caused that Gid, with a small number of men, should secrete himself in the wilderness, and also that Teomner and a small number of men should secrete themselves also in the wilderness. ¹⁷ Now Gid and his men were on the right and the others on the left; and when they had thus secreted themselves, behold, I remained, with the remainder of my army, in that same place where we had first pitched our tents against the time that the Lamanites should come out to battle.

¹⁸ And it came to pass that the Lamanites did come out with their numerous army against us. And when they had come and were about to fall upon us with the sword, I caused that my men, those who were with me, should retreat into the wilderness. ¹⁹ And it came to pass that the Lamanites did follow after us with great speed, for they were exceedingly desirous to overtake us that they might slay us; therefore they did follow us into the wilderness; and we did pass by in the midst of Gid and Teomner, insomuch that they were not discovered by the Lamanites.

²⁰ And it came to pass that when the Lamanites had passed by, or when the army had passed by, Gid and Teomner did rise up from their secret places, and did cut off the spies of the Lamanites that they should not return to the city.

²¹ And it came to pass that when they had cut them off, they ran to the city and fell upon the guards who were left to guard the city, insomuch that they did destroy them and did take possession of the city. ²² Now this was done because the Lamanites did suffer their whole army, save a few guards only, to be led away into the wilderness. ²³ And it came to pass that Gid and Teomner by this means had obtained possession of their strongholds.

And it came to pass that we took our course, after having traveled much in the wilderness, towards the land of Zarahemla. ²⁴ And when the Lamanites saw that they were marching towards the land of Zarahemla, they were exceedingly afraid, lest there was a plan laid to lead them on to destruction; therefore they began to retreat into the wilderness again, yea, even back by the same way which they had come. ²⁵ And behold, it was night and they did pitch their tents, for the chief captains of the Lamanites had supposed that the Nephites were weary because of their march; and supposing that they had driven their whole army therefore they took no thought concerning the city of Manti.

²⁶ Now it came to pass that when it was night, I caused that my men should not sleep, but that they should march forward by another way towards the land of Manti.

²⁷ And because of this our march in

16–18: A similar type of three-pronged attack was recounted previously (though it occurred later) when Moroni's forces retook the city of Mulek in the 28th year at 52.21–26. **16:** Gid had been the leader of the prisoner escort at 57.28–36. *Secrete*, WB: "to hide; to conceal."

the night-time, behold, on the morrow we were beyond the Lamanites, insomuch that we did arrive before them at the city of Manti.²⁸ And thus it came to pass, that by this stratagem we did take possession of the city of Manti without the shedding of blood.²⁹ And it came to pass that when the armies of the Lamanites did arrive near the city, and saw that we were prepared to meet them, they were astonished exceedingly and struck with great fear, insomuch that they did flee into the wilderness.³⁰ Yea, and it came to pass that the armies of the Lamanites did flee out of all this quarter of the land. But behold, they have carried with them many women and children out of the land.³¹ And those cities which had been taken by the Lamanites, all of them are at this period of time in our possession; and our fathers and our women and our children are returning to their homes, all save it be those who have been taken prisoners and carried off by the Lamanites.³² But behold, our armies are small to maintain so great a number of cities and so great possessions.³³ But behold, we trust in our God who has given us victory over those lands, insomuch that we have obtained those cities and those lands, which were our own.

Helaman₂ Describes Their Precarious Situation (West)

³⁴ Now we do not know the cause that the government does not grant us more strength; neither do those men who came up unto us know why we have not received greater strength.³⁵ Behold, we do not know but what ye are unsuccessful, and ye have drawn away the forces into that quarter of the land; if so, we do not desire to murmur.³⁶ And if it is not so, behold, we fear that there is some faction in the government, that they do not send more men to our assistance; for we know that they are more numerous than that which they have sent.³⁷ But, behold, it mattereth not—we trust God will deliver us, notwithstanding the weakness of our armies, yea, and deliver us out of the hands of our enemies.³⁸ Behold, this is the twenty and ninth year,^a in the latter end, and we are in the possession of our lands; and the Lamanites have fled to the land of Nephi.³⁹ And those sons of the people of Ammon, of whom I have so highly spoken, are with me in the city of Manti; and the Lord has supported them, yea, and kept them from falling by the sword, insomuch that even one soul has not

^a 38 –63 years; see Alma 57.6

28: *Without the shedding of blood*, aside from the Lamanite guards that were killed in v. 21. **29:** *They did flee into the wilderness*, these Lamanites flee the western front to join their comrades in the east. We will see them again at 59.6. **31:** According to 56.13–14, the cities in Lamanite hands were Manti (retaken at 58.13–28), Zeezrom, Cumeni (retaken at 57.6–12), and Antiparah (retaken at 57.1–4); there is no account of retaking Zeezrom. **33:** Despite deploying several clever strategies, Helaman gives credit to God for the Nephite victories; cf. 57.36. **35:** *Unsuccessful*, and hence have greater needs than Helaman. **36:** Helaman's premonition is correct, see ch. 61. **37:** *We trust God will deliver us*, Helaman has apparently been inspired by the faith of his stripling soldiers; cf. 56.47. **38:** The chronology of the letter has nearly caught up with that of the main narrative. Alma 59.1 will pick up at the 30th year, and resume the story from 56.1. **39:** Helaman seems to hope that Moroni, in the course of his communications, will pass along this message to their families.

been slain.⁴⁰ But behold, they have received many wounds; nevertheless they stand fast in that liberty wherewith God has made them free; and they are strict to remember the Lord their God from day to day; yea, they do observe to keep his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments continually; and their faith is strong in the prophecies concerning that which is to come.

⁴¹ And now, my beloved brother, Moroni, may the Lord our God, who has redeemed us and made us free, keep you continually in his presence; yea, and may he favor this people, even that ye may have success in obtaining the possession of all that which the Lamanites have taken from us, which was for our support. And now, behold, I close mine epistle. I am Helaman, the son of Alma.

Moroni's Reaction to Helaman's Letter (East)

[XXVII] **59** ¹ Now it came to pass in the thirtieth

year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi,⁴ after Moroni had received and had read Helaman's epistle, he was exceedingly rejoiced because of the welfare, yea, the exceeding success which Helaman had had, in obtaining those lands which were lost.² Yea, and he did make it known unto all his people, in all the land round about in that part where he was, that they might rejoice also.

³ And it came to pass that he immediately sent an epistle to Pahoran, desiring that he should cause men to be gathered together to strengthen Helaman, or the armies of Helaman, insomuch that he might with ease maintain that part of the land which he had been so miraculously prospered in regaining.

⁴ And it came to pass when Moroni had sent this epistle to the land of Zarahemla, he began again to lay a plan that he might obtain the remainder of those possessions and cities which the Lamanites had taken from them.

The Nephites Lose the City of Nephihah (East)

⁵ And it came to pass that while Moroni was thus making preparations to go against the

^a 1 –62 years

40: *Stand fast in that liberty wherewith God has made them free*, Gal 5.1; cf. Mos 23.13 (where the same phrase was used by Alma, Helaman's grandfather). The combination of *statutes* and *judgments* and *commandments* is a characteristic Deuteronomistic usage that occurs seven times in the BoM. *The prophecies concerning that which is to come* refers to distinctive Christian beliefs regarding the coming of Christ and the post-resurrection judgment.

41: *Keep you continually in his presence*, the opposite of the fate of those who do not keep God's commandments, according to the covenant of Lehi at 2 Ne 1.20. *That ye may have success... taken from us*, Helaman has just reported retaking all the cities in the west that had been lost to the Lamanites, and he is hoping that Moroni will be able to do the same in the east. Unfortunately, the next thing that happens on that front is yet another Nephite loss, this time of Nephihah, perhaps the most important fortified city in the region.

CHAPTER 59

1: The main narrative picks up here from 56.1. **3:** *Pahoran*, the chief judge and governor; see 50.39–40. *Cities which the Lamanites had taken*, see 51.23–27. At this point, of the six fortified cities captured by the Lamanites in the east five years earlier (51.23, 26), only Mulek and Gid have been retaken by Moroni's army (52.26; 55.24). **5–13:** Even as Helaman reports extraordinary success in retaking Lamanite-held cities in the west, Moroni's forces will lose yet another city. **5:** *Making preparations to go against the Lamanites*, according to 55.33, Moroni was planning to attack the Lamanite-held city of Morianton; this is where the primary narrative was interrupted by the insertion of Helaman's letter (chs. 56–58). The gathering of defeated Nephites to Nephihah was reported at 51.24.

Lamanites to battle, behold, the people of Nephihah, who were gathered together from the city of Moroni and the city of Lehi and the city of Morianton, were attacked by the Lamanites.⁶ Yea, even those who had been compelled to flee from the land of Manti, and from the land round about, had come over and joined the Lamanites in this part of the land.⁷ And thus being exceeding numerous, yea, and receiving strength from day to day, by the command of Ammoron they came forth against the people of Nephihah, and they did begin to slay them with an exceeding great slaughter.⁸ And their armies were so numerous that the remainder of the people of Nephihah were obliged to flee before them; and they came even and joined the army of Moroni.

⁹ And now as Moroni had supposed that there should be men sent to the city of Nephihah, to the assistance of the people to maintain that city, and knowing that it was easier to keep the city from falling into the hands of the Lamanites than to retake it from them, he supposed^a that they would easily maintain that city.¹⁰ Therefore he retained all his force to maintain those places which he had recovered.

¹¹ And now, when Moroni saw that the city of Nephihah was lost he was exceeding sorrowful, and began to doubt, because of the wickedness of the people, whether they should not fall into the hands of their brethren.

¹² Now this was the case with all his chief captains. They doubted and marveled also because of the wickedness of the people, and this because of the success of the Lamanites over them.¹³ And it came to pass that Moroni was angry with the government, because of their indifference concerning the freedom of their country.

Moroni's Letter to Pahoran; **Alma 60**

Governmental Negligence

60 ¹ And it came to pass that he wrote again to the governor of the land, who was Pahoran, and these are the words which he wrote, saying:

Behold, I direct mine epistle to Pahoran, in the city of Zarahemla, who is the chief judge and the governor over the land, and also to all those who have been chosen by this people to govern and manage the affairs of this war.² For behold, I have somewhat to say unto them by the way of condemnation; for behold, ye yourselves know that ye

^a 9 O, P *into the hands of the Lamanites he supposed*; 1830 into the hands of the Lamanites than to retake it from them, he supposed

6: On the Lamanite soldiers who had fled from Manti, see 58.28–29. Helaman's victory in the west has exacerbated the challenges faced by Moroni in the east by increasing the size of the Lamanite army attacking Nephihah. **9:** In order to complete the thought, we might have expected something like "knowing that it was easier to keep the city from falling into the hands of the Lamanites [by sending men to the city], he supposed that they would easily maintain the city." Perhaps this was implied, but OC's emendation (adding "than to retake it from them") goes further, adding the idea of recapturing what was lost; see the discussion in ATV. **13:** Moroni thought that Pahoran should have sent additional men to defend Nephihah.

CHAPTER 60

This letter, written in Moroni's anger (59.13), was intended to persuade the chief judge Pahoran and his government in Zarahemla to send additional men and provisions to Helaman's army in the west and to Moroni's own army in the east. Moroni's rhetorical tactics proceed from shaming (vv. 1–13), to accusations of treachery (vv. 18–23), to threats (vv. 23–31), to a claimed revelation (vv. 32–35). **1:** *Wrote again*, following the earlier letter at 59.3.

have been appointed to gather together men, and arm them with swords, and with cimeters,⁴ and all manner of weapons of war of every kind, and send forth against the Lamanites, in whatsoever parts they should come into our land.

³ And now behold, I say unto you that myself, and also my men, and also Helaman and his men, have suffered exceeding great sufferings; yea, even hunger, thirst, and fatigue, and all manner of afflictions of every kind.⁴ But behold, were this all we had suffered we would not murmur nor complain.⁵ But behold, great has been the slaughter among our people; yea, thousands have fallen by the sword, while it might have otherwise been if ye had rendered unto our armies sufficient strength and succor for them. Yea, great has been your neglect towards us.

⁶ And now behold, we desire to know the cause of this exceeding great neglect; yea, we desire to know the cause of your thoughtless state.⁷ Can you think to sit upon your thrones in a state of thoughtless stupor, while your enemies are spreading the work of death around you? Yea, while they are murdering thousands of your brethren—⁸ yea, even they who have looked up to you for protection, yea, have placed you in a situation that ye might

have succored them, yea, ye might have sent armies unto them, to have strengthened them, and have saved thousands of them from falling by the sword.⁹ But behold, this is not all—ye have withheld your provisions from them, insomuch that many have fought and bled out their lives because of their great desires which they had for the welfare of this people; yea, and this they have done when they were about to perish with hunger, because of your exceeding great neglect towards them.

¹⁰ And now, my beloved brethren—for ye ought to be beloved; yea, and ye ought to have stirred yourselves more diligently for the welfare and the freedom of this people; but behold, ye have neglected them insomuch that the blood of thousands shall come upon your heads for vengeance; yea, for known unto God were all their cries, and all their sufferings—

¹¹ Behold, could ye suppose that ye could sit upon your thrones, and because of the exceeding goodness of God ye could do nothing and he would deliver you? Behold, if ye have supposed this ye have supposed in vain.¹² Do ye suppose that because so many of your brethren have been killed, it is because of

⁴ 2. Or *scimitars*

6–9: In accusations framed by two occurrences of *exceedingly great neglect* (which reappears in v. 14), Moroni blames thousands of war deaths on the mismanagement of the central government, which he contrasts with the self-sacrificing patriotism of the troops. **7:** *Thrones*, the word is used three times in this chapter, which is the only place it is associated with a chief judge rather than a king (but see 51.5n). Moroni is accusing Pahoran of having become a corrupt monarch. **11–12:** Moroni imagines two false ideologies that might explain the government's inaction: (1) a belief that God will always save the Nephites, regardless of their actions; or (2) a belief that those who were killed were being punished for their sins (an extreme version of the Deuteronomistic connection between blessings and righteousness).

their wickedness? I say unto you, if ye have supposed this ye have supposed in vain; for I say unto you, there are many who have fallen by the sword; and behold it is to your condemnation; ¹³ for the Lord suffereth the righteous to be slain that his justice and judgment may come upon the wicked; therefore ye need not suppose that the righteous are lost because they are slain; but behold, they do enter into the rest of the Lord their God.

Possible Causes of Negligence

¹⁴ And now behold, I say unto you, I fear exceedingly that the judgments of God will come upon this people, because of their exceeding slothfulness, yea, even the slothfulness of our government, and their exceeding great neglect towards their brethren, yea, towards those who have been slain. ¹⁵ For were it not for the wickedness which first commenced at our head, we could have withstood our enemies that they could have gained no power over us. ¹⁶ Yea, had it not been for the war which broke out among ourselves; yea, were it not for these king-men, who caused so much bloodshed among ourselves; yea, at the time we were contending among ourselves, if we had united

our strength as we hitherto have done; yea, had it not been for the desire of power and authority which those king-men had over us; had they been true to the cause of our freedom, and united with us, and gone forth against our enemies, instead of taking up their swords against us, which was the cause of so much bloodshed among ourselves; yea, if we had gone forth against them in the strength of the Lord, we should have dispersed our enemies, for it would have been done, according to the fulfilling of his word.

¹⁷ But behold, now the Lamanites are coming upon us, taking possession of our lands, and they are murdering our people with the sword, yea, our women and our children, and also carrying them away captive, causing them that they should suffer all manner of afflictions, and this because of the great wickedness of those who are seeking for power and authority, yea, even those king-men.

¹⁸ But why should I say much concerning this matter? For we know not but what ye yourselves are seeking for authority. We know not but what ye are also traitors to your country. ¹⁹ Or is it that ye have neglected us because ye are in the

13: *The Lord suffereth the righteous . . . upon the wicked*, the same justification that Alma offered in response to the massacre at Ammonihah; see 14.11. *They do enter into the rest of the Lord their God*, Moroni repeats the consolation that he had read in Helaman's letter at 57.36. **14:** He also repeats Helaman's fear from 58.9; cf. Mos 29.27. **15–17:** Moroni blames the Nephites' current predicament on the internal conflicts instigated by the king-men (for an account of their civil war, see 51.1–21). **15:** *At our head*, at the highest levels of our society, that is, with the upper class, either by wealth or birth. **16–17:** The king-men's desire for *power and authority* was noted at 51.8. **16:** *According to the fulfilling of his word*, reference uncertain. **17:** Even though the king-men and their supporters had been dealt a decisive blow five years earlier (51.13–21), the present tense of *those who are seeking for power* indicates that Moroni believes they are still active. His suspicion will be proven correct in the next chapter. **18–21:** Moroni raises the possibilities that Pahoran and his allies are power hungry like the king-men, or in collusion with them, or self-centered, or indolent.

heart of our country and ye are surrounded by security, that ye do not cause food to be sent unto us, and also men to strengthen our armies?

²⁰ Have ye forgotten the commandments of the Lord your God? Yea, have ye forgotten the captivity of our fathers? Have ye forgotten the many times we have been delivered out of the hands of our enemies? ²¹ Or do ye suppose that the Lord will still deliver us, while we sit upon our thrones and do not make use of the means which the Lord has provided for us?

²² Yea, will ye sit in idleness while ye are surrounded with thousands of those, yea, and tens of thousands, who do also sit in idleness, while there are thousands round about in the borders of the land who are falling by the sword, yea, wounded and bleeding? ²³ Do ye suppose that God will look upon you as guiltless while ye sit still and behold these things? Behold I say unto you, Nay.

Repent or Face Consequences

Now I would that ye should remember that God has said that the inward vessel shall be cleansed first, and then shall the outer vessel be cleansed also. ²⁴ And now, except ye

do repent of that which ye have done, and begin to be up and doing, and send forth food and men unto us, and also unto Helaman, that he may support those parts of our country which he has regained, and that we may also recover the remainder of our possessions in these parts, behold it will be expedient that we contend no more with the Lamanites until we have first cleansed our inward vessel, yea, even the great head of our government.

²⁵ And except ye grant mine epistle, and come out and show unto me a true spirit of freedom, and strive to strengthen and fortify our armies, and grant unto them food for their support, behold I will leave a part of my freemen to maintain this part of our land, and I will leave the strength and the blessings of God upon them, that none other power can operate against them— ²⁶ and this because of their exceeding faith, and their patience in their tribulations— ²⁷ and I will come unto you, and if there be any among you that has a desire for freedom, yea, if there be even a spark of freedom remaining, behold I will stir up insurrections among you, even until those who have desires to usurp power and authority shall become extinct.

20: The rhetorical questions here are reminiscent of Alma at Ammonihah: “how soon ye have forgotten the commandments of God” (9.8); “have ye forgotten so soon how many times he delivered our fathers out of the hands of their enemies” (9.10). The allusions are ominous. **21:** *While we sit on our thrones*, Moroni repeats his question from v. 11, but here his use of the first-person plural softens the tone a bit. *Do not make use of the means*, God’s deliverances may at times rely on some level of human contribution or effort. **22:** Moroni expands the blame from the government to the tens of thousands of people in the capital region. **23:** Just as with the king-men rebellion, Moroni believes the Nephites must resolve their internal problems before they can successfully deal with external threats. *God has said*, reference uncertain, but see Mt 23.25–26. *Inward vessel*, that is, the inside of a container. **24:** *Up and doing*, OED: “busy and active.” **25:** There seems to be little difference between Moroni’s freemen and his armies. **27:** Moroni is threatening a coup against Pahoran, as a *spark of freedom* might be fanned into a full-scale insurrection. His thrice-repeated phrase *I... come unto you* (see vv. 30, 35) takes on a menacing tone.

²⁸ Yea, behold I do not fear your power nor your authority, but it is my God whom I fear; and it is according to his commandments that I do take my sword to defend the cause of my country, and it is because of your iniquity that we have suffered so much loss. ²⁹ Behold it is time, yea, the time is now at hand, that except ye do bestir yourselves in the defence of your country and your little ones, the sword of justice doth hang over you; yea, and it shall fall upon you and visit you even to your utter destruction.

³⁰ Behold, I wait for assistance from you; and, except ye do administer unto our relief, behold, I come unto you, even in the land of Zarahemla, and smite you with the sword, insomuch that ye can have no more power to impede the progress of this people in the cause of our freedom. ³¹ For behold, the Lord will not suffer that ye shall live and wax strong in your iniquities to destroy his righteous people.

³² Behold, can you suppose that the Lord will spare you and come out in judgment against the Lamanites, when it is the tradition

of their fathers that has caused their hatred, yea, and it has been redoubled by those who have dissented from us, while your iniquity is for the cause of your love of glory and the vain things of the world? ³³ Ye know that ye do transgress the laws of God, and ye do know that ye do trample them under your feet. Behold, the Lord saith unto me, "If those whom ye have appointed your governors do not repent of their sins and iniquities, ye shall go up to battle against them."

³⁴ And now behold, I, Moroni, am constrained, according to the covenant which I have made, to keep the commandments of my God; therefore I would that ye should adhere to the word of God, and send speedily unto me of your provisions and of your men, and also to Helaman. ³⁵ And behold, if ye will not do this I come unto you speedily; for behold, God will not suffer that we should perish with hunger; therefore he will give unto us of your food, even if it must be by the sword. Now see that ye fulfil the word of God.

28: *It is according to his commandments*, see 43.47; 48.14–15. *It is because of your iniquity that we have suffered so much loss*, earlier Moroni had hypothesized that this might be the case; now he accuses Pahoran directly. **29:** *Bestir*, WB: "to put into brisk or vigorous action." *The sword of justice doth hang over you*, Moroni has used this metaphor before to gain the moral high ground (54.6), but that was with an enemy commander rather than his own chief judge. **32:** *The traditions of their fathers*, see Mos 10.12–17; Alma 20.13; 54.17. The Lord will extend a degree of mercy to the Lamanites who are honoring their fathers, even if their traditions are erroneous. *Redoubled*, WB: "increased by repeated or continued additions." **33:** Moroni accuses Pahoran of sinning willfully, and he refers to a revelation in which God authorizes military actions against the government unless they repent. This revelation will turn out to be inaccurate, at least with regard to Pahoran. *Ye do trample [God's laws] under your feet*, the very definition of a wicked king, according to Mos 29.21–22. **34–35:** *Constrained*, compelled to take action. *The covenant which I have made*, perhaps 46.20–22. The two occurrences of *speedily* indicate that Moroni is looking for a quick resolution to his predicament, one way or another.

³⁶ Behold, I am Moroni, your chief captain. I seek not for power, but to pull it down. I seek not for honor of the world, but for the glory of my God, and the freedom and welfare of my country. And thus I close mine epistle.

Pahoran,¹'s Reply to Moroni; Alma 61

Pahoran,¹ Reports a Coup

[XXVIII] **61** ¹ Behold, now it came to pass that soon after Moroni had sent his epistle unto the chief governor, he received an epistle from Pahoran, the chief governor. And these are the words which he received:

² I, Pahoran, who am the chief governor of this land, do send these words unto Moroni, the chief captain over the army. Behold, I say unto you, Moroni, that I do not joy in your great afflictions, yea, it grieves my soul. ³ But behold, there are those who do joy in your afflictions, yea, insomuch that they have risen up in rebellion against me, and also those of my people

who are freemen, yea, and those who have risen up are exceeding numerous.

⁴ And it is those who have sought to take away the judgment-seat from me that have been the cause of this great iniquity; for they have used great flattery, and they have led away the hearts of many people, which will be the cause of sore affliction among us; they have withheld our provisions, and have daunted our freemen that they have not come unto you. ⁵ And behold, they have driven me out before them, and I have fled to the land of Gideon, with as many men as it were possible that I could get.

⁶ And behold, I have sent a proclamation throughout this part of the land; and behold, they are flocking to us daily, to their arms, in the defence of their country and their freedom, and to avenge our wrongs. ⁷ And they have come unto us, insomuch that those who have risen up in rebellion against us are set at defiance, yea, insomuch that they do fear us and durst not come out against us to battle. ⁸ They have got possession of the land, or the

36: Even as Moroni asserts his willingness to use force, he insists that his objectives are not selfish. He draws a contrast with his rivals, whom he had accused earlier in his letter of seeking *power* (vv. 16–17, 27), things *of the world* (v. 32) and *glory* (v. 32), to the neglect of “the welfare and freedom of this people” (v. 10).

CHAPTER 61

Pahoran's reply is a model for de-escalating interpersonal conflict, along the lines of Prov 15.1: “A soft answer turneth away wrath.” **1–5:** A large number of Nephites in Zarahemla, who do not support the war effort, have taken control of the government and forced Pahoran and his allies to retreat to the land of Gideon. **4:** *Our provisions and our freemen*, Pahoran uses the first-person plural to emphasize that he and Moroni are on the same side; see 60.25 for Moroni's relationship to the freemen. *Daunted*, WB: “checked by fear; intimidated.” **6–8:** Pahoran's successful summoning of armed supporters has led to a standoff with the rebels. *Set at defiance* also occurs at 5.18 and 3 Ne 6.30, where it means “to defy” or “declare hostility to.” The meaning here seems to be that the rebels have been forced into a defensive posture. *They have appointed a king*, identified at 62.6 as Pachus. **8:** The Nephite monarchists have finally come to power and have negotiated with the king of the Lamanites (himself a former Nephite monarchist) to facilitate the Lamanite war effort in return for their leader being appointed as a subordinate regional king.

city, of Zarahemla; they have appointed a king over them, and he hath written unto the king of the Lamanites, in the which he hath joined an alliance with him; in the which alliance he hath agreed to maintain the city of Zarahemla, which maintenance he supposeth will enable the Lamanites to conquer the remainder of the land, and he shall be placed king over this people when they shall be conquered under the Lamanites.

A Request for Military Assistance

⁹ And now, in your epistle you have censured me, but it mattereth not; I am not angry, but do rejoice in the greatness of your heart. I, Pahoran, do not seek for power, save only to retain my judgment-seat that I may preserve the rights and the liberty of my people. My soul standeth fast in that liberty in the which God hath made us free. ¹⁰ And now, behold, we will resist wickedness even unto bloodshed. We would not shed the blood of the Lamanites if they would stay in their own land. ¹¹ We would not shed the blood of our brethren if they would not rise up in rebellion and take the sword against us.

¹² We would subject ourselves to the yoke of bondage if it were

requisite with the justice of God, or if he should command us so to do.

¹³ But behold he doth not command us that we shall subject ourselves to our enemies, but that we should put our trust in him, and he will deliver us. ¹⁴ Therefore, my beloved brother, Moroni, let us resist evil, and whatsoever evil we cannot resist with our words, yea, such as rebellions and dissensions, let us resist them with our swords, that we may retain our freedom, that we may rejoice in the great privilege of our church, and in the cause of our Redeemer and our God.

¹⁵ Therefore, come unto me speedily with a few of your men, and leave the remainder in the charge of Lehi and Teancum; give unto them power to conduct the war in that part of the land, according to the Spirit of God, which is also the spirit of freedom which is in them. ¹⁶ Behold I have sent a few provisions unto them, that they may not perish until ye can come unto me. ¹⁷ Gather together whatsoever force ye can upon your march hither, and we will go speedily against those dissenters, in the strength of our God according to the faith which is in us. ¹⁸ And we will take possession of the city of Zarahemla, that we

9: *I do not seek for power*, Pahoran is responding to Moroni's insinuation at 60.18, and making common cause with him (60.36). *Standeth fast in that liberty in the which God hath made us free* (also v. 21), Gal 5.1; Mos 23.13; Alma 58.40. **12:** The Anti-Nephi-Lehies had likewise been willing to submit to slavery as part of repentance at 27.8. **14:** Pahoran recognizes that *words* should come before *swords*. The references to *freedom*, the *privilege of the church*, and the *cause of... God*, in that order, may allude to the oath of office that Pahoran took at 50.39. **15–18:** Pahoran seeks to redirect Moroni's anger away from himself and toward the insurrectionists in Zarahemla. **15:** *Come unto me speedily*, Pahoran responds to Moroni's threats (see 60.27n) as if they had been an offer of support. He also assures Moroni that he sides with *the spirit of freedom* (60.25, its only other occurrence). **17–18:** In suggesting a military alliance, Pahoran twice employs a phrase near to Moroni's heart: *in the strength of the Lord* (46.20; 60.16).

may obtain more food to send forth unto Lehi and Teancum; yea, we will go forth against them in the strength of the Lord, and we will put an end to this great iniquity.

¹⁹ And now, Moroni, I do joy in receiving your epistle, for I was somewhat worried concerning what we should do, whether it should be just in us to go against our brethren.

²⁰ But ye have said, except they repent the Lord hath commanded you that ye should go against them.

²¹ See that ye strengthen Lehi and Teancum in the Lord; tell them to fear not, for God will deliver them, yea, and also all those who stand fast in that liberty wherewith God hath made them free. And now I close mine epistle to my beloved brother, Moroni.

Moroni, and Pahoran, Defeat Pachus and His Followers

[XXIX] **62** ¹ And now it came to pass that when Moroni had received this epistle his heart did take courage, and was filled with exceeding great joy because of the faithfulness of Pahoran, that he was not also a traitor to the freedom and cause of his country. ² But he did also mourn

exceedingly because of the iniquity of those who had driven Pahoran from the judgment-seat, yea, in fine because of those who had rebelled against their country and also their God.

³ And it came to pass that Moroni took a small number of men, according to the desire of Pahoran, and gave Lehi and Teancum command over the remainder of his army, and took his march towards the land of Gideon. ⁴ And he did raise the standard of liberty in whatsoever place he did enter, and gained whatsoever force he could in all his march towards the land of Gideon. ⁵ And it came to pass that thousands did flock unto his standard, and did take up their swords in the defence of their freedom, that they might not come into bondage. ⁶ And thus, when Moroni had gathered together whatsoever men he could in all his march, he came to the land of Gideon; and uniting his forces with those of Pahoran they became exceeding strong, even stronger than the men of Pachus, who was the king of those dissenters who had driven the freemen out of the land of Zarahemla and had taken possession of the land.

⁷ And it came to pass that Moroni and Pahoran went down with their armies into the land of Zarahemla, and went forth against the city, and did meet the men of Pachus, inasmuch that they did come to battle. ⁸ And behold, Pachus was slain and his men were taken prisoners, and Pahoran was restored to his judgment-seat. ⁹ And the men of Pachus

19: Pahoran's hesitancy may stem from the fact that the new king seems to have considerable popular support (vv. 3–4), or from concerns about seeking power (v. 9), or the traditional Nephite aversion to offensive warfare (v. 11), or the possibility that their subjection may be God's will (v. 12). **20:** This is not exactly what Moroni had said. At 60.33 he reported that the Lord had commanded him to attack "those whom ye have appointed to be your governors" unless they repented—a clear reference to Pahoran rather than the usurping king. Pahoran reinterprets the revelation as applying to those currently in control of Zarahemla, as opposed to rejecting Moroni's appeal to God's word as entirely mistaken. **21:** *My beloved brother*, Pahoran has not taken Moroni's false accusations personally (see v. 9), nor has he allowed the misunderstanding to undermine what appears to be a warm, long-standing relationship.

CHAPTER 62

3: Moroni acts in accordance with Pahoran's need and request, see 61.5, 15. **4:** *He did raise the standard of liberty*, see 46.11–26, 36; Moroni is renewing the covenant he had established eleven years earlier. **7:** *The men of Pachus*, these were the rebels mentioned in 61.3–8. **9:** The king-men have been in prison for five years; see 51.19. Note that Mormon treats the men of Pachus and the king-men as two distinct groups, though both are opposed to the freemen (see 51.6–7; 61.3–4).

received their trial, according to the law, and also those king-men who had been taken and cast into prison; and they were executed according to the law; yea, those men of Pachus and those king-men, whosoever would not take up arms in the defence of their country, but would fight against it, were put to death.¹⁰ And thus it became expedient that this law should be strictly observed for the safety of their country; yea, and whosoever was found denying their freedom was speedily executed according to the law.

¹¹ And thus ended the thirtieth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi;^a Moroni and Pahoran having restored peace to the land of Zarahemla, among their own people, having inflicted death upon all those who were not true to the cause of freedom.

Moroni, and Pahoran, Retake the City of Nephihah (East)

¹² And it came to pass in the commencement of the thirty and first year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi,^b Moroni immediately caused that provisions should be sent, and also an army of six thousand men should be sent unto Helaman, to assist him in preserving that part of the land.¹³ And he also caused that an army of six thousand men, with a sufficient quantity of food, should be sent to the armies of Lehi and Teancum. And it came to pass that this was done to fortify the land against the Lamanites.

¹⁴ And it came to pass that Moroni and Pahoran, leaving a large body of men in the

land of Zarahemla, took their march with a large body of men towards the land of Nephihah, being determined to overthrow the Lamanites in that city.¹⁵ And it came to pass that as they were marching towards the land, they took a large body of men of the Lamanites, and slew many of them, and took their provisions and their weapons of war.¹⁶ And it came to pass after they had taken them, they caused them to enter into a covenant that they would no more take up their weapons of war against the Nephites.¹⁷ And when they had entered into this covenant they sent them to dwell with the people of Ammon, and they were in number about four thousand who had not been slain.

¹⁸ And it came to pass that when they had sent them away they pursued their march towards the land of Nephihah. And it came to pass that when they had come to the city of Nephihah, they did pitch their tents in the plains of Nephihah, which is near the city of Nephihah.¹⁹ Now Moroni was desirous that the Lamanites should come out to battle against them, upon the plains; but the Lamanites, knowing of their exceeding great courage, and beholding the greatness of their numbers, therefore they durst not come out against them; therefore they did not come to battle in that day.

²⁰ And when the night came, Moroni went forth in the darkness of the night, and

^a 11 –62 years; see Alma 56.1; 59.1

^b 12 –61 years

12–13: Helaman is in the west; Lehi and Teancum are in the east. Moroni and Pahoran will take their army to the eastern front in the next verse. 14: The city of Nephihah had been taken by the Lamanites the previous year; see 59.5–8. 15: *Took a large body of men*, perhaps “met” or “overtook” or “captured.” 16–17: While there is precedent for Moroni releasing combatants when they take an oath of peace, the situation here is unclear. Did the Lamanite soldiers voluntarily choose to live with the people of Ammon rather than return to their families and their native land (which may say something about life under King Ammoran), or were they forced to join the Ammonites? In either case, the sudden infusion of 4,000 recently demobilized enemy troops would have posed a significant risk to the pacifist people of Ammon. Moroni will send them even more surrendered Lamanite soldiers in vv. 27–29. Perhaps he believes that they could not be assimilated into regular Nephite society, or he has a lingering resentment of the Ammonites’ refusal to take up arms.

came upon the top of the wall to spy out in what part of the city the Lamanites did camp with their army.²¹ And it came to pass that they were on the east, by the entrance; and they were all asleep. And now Moroni returned to his army, and caused that they should prepare in haste strong cords and ladders, to be let down from the top of the wall into the inner part of the wall.²² And it came to pass that Moroni caused that his men should march forth and come upon the top of the wall, and let themselves down into that part of the city, yea, even on the west, where the Lamanites did not camp with their armies.²³ And it came to pass that they were all let down into the city by night, by the means of their strong cords and their ladders; thus when the morning came they were all within the walls of the city.

²⁴ And now, when the Lamanites awoke and saw that the armies of Moroni were within the walls, they were affrighted exceedingly, insomuch that they did flee out by the pass.²⁵ And now when Moroni saw that they were fleeing before him, he did cause that his men should march forth against them, and slew many, and surrounded many others, and took them prisoners; and the remainder of them fled into the land of Moroni, which was in the borders by the seashore.

²⁶ Thus had Moroni and Pahoran obtained the possession of the city of Nephihah without the loss of one soul; and there were many of the Lamanites who were slain.²⁷ Now it came to pass that many of the Lamanites that were prisoners were desirous to join the people of Ammon and become a free people.²⁸ And it came to pass that as many as were desirous, unto them it was granted according to their desires.²⁹ Therefore,

all the prisoners of the Lamanites did join the people of Ammon, and did begin to labor exceedingly, tilling the ground, raising all manner of grain, and flocks and herds of every kind; and thus were the Nephites relieved from a great burden; yea, insomuch that they were relieved from all the prisoners of the Lamanites.

Moroni, Retakes the Land of Lehi

³⁰ Now it came to pass that Moroni, after he had obtained possession of the city of Nephihah, having taken many prisoners, which did reduce the armies of the Lamanites exceedingly, and having regained many of the Nephites who had been taken prisoners, which did strengthen the army of Moroni exceedingly; therefore Moroni went forth from the land of Nephihah to the land of Lehi.

³¹ And it came to pass that when the Lamanites saw that Moroni was coming against them, they were again frightened and fled before the army of Moroni.

³² And it came to pass that Moroni and his army did pursue them from city to city, until they were met by Lehi and Teancum; and the Lamanites fled from Lehi and Teancum, even down upon the borders by the seashore, until they came to the land of Moroni.³³ And the armies of the Lamanites were all gathered together, insomuch that they were all in one body in the land of Moroni. Now Ammoron, the king of the Lamanites, was also with them.

Teancum Kills Ammoron and Is Slain; the Lamanites Driven Out (East)

³⁴ And it came to pass that Moroni and Lehi and Teancum did encamp with their armies round about in the borders of the land of

²⁴: *The pass*, apparently the east entrance mentioned in v. 21. ²⁷: *And become a free people*, the prisoners' motivations are political rather than religious, in contrast to the people of Ammon. This may cause problems later on; see Hel 3.12n. ^{30–32}: The cities of Lehi and Moroni, with their surrounding lands, had been captured by the Lamanites six years earlier, at 51.22–23, 26.

Moroni, insomuch that the Lamanites were encircled about in the borders by the wilder-ness on the south, and in the borders by the wilderness on the east.³⁵ And thus they did encamp for the night. For behold, the Nephites and the Lamanites also were weary because of the greatness of the march; there-fore they did not resolve upon any stratagem in the night-time, save it were Teancum; for he was exceedingly angry with Ammoron, inso-much that he considered that Ammoron, and Amalickiah his brother, had been the cause of this great and lasting war between them and the Lamanites, which had been the cause of so much war and bloodshed, yea, and so much famine.

³⁶ And it came to pass that Teancum in his anger did go forth into the camp of the Lamanites, and did let himself down over the walls of the city. And he went forth with a cord, from place to place, insomuch that he did find the king; and he did cast a javelin at him, which did pierce him near the heart. But behold, the king did awake his servant before he died, inso-much that they did pursue Teancum, and slew him.³⁷ Now it came to pass that when Lehi and Moroni knew that Teancum was dead they were exceeding sorrowful; for behold, he had been a man who had fought valiantly for his country, yea, a true friend to liberty; and he had suffered very many exceedingly sore afflictions. But behold, he was dead, and had gone the way of all the earth.

³⁸ Now it came to pass that Moroni marched forth on the morrow, and came upon the Lamanites, insomuch that they did slay them with a great slaughter; and they did drive them out of the land; and they did flee, even that they did not return at that time against the Nephites.

Thirty-First-Year Summary

³⁹ And thus ended the thirty and first year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi;^a and thus they had had wars, and bloodsheds, and famine, and affliction, for the space of many years.⁴⁰ And there had been murders, and contentions, and dissensions, and all manner of iniquity among the people of Nephi; nevertheless for the righteous' sake, yea, because of the prayers of the righteous, they were spared.⁴¹ But behold, because of the exceeding great length of the war between the Nephites and the Lamanites many had become hardened, because of the exceeding great length of the war; and many were soft-ened because of their afflictions, insomuch that they did humble themselves before God, even in the depth of humility.

Postwar Recovery

⁴² And it came to pass that after Moroni had fortified those parts of the land which were most exposed to the Lamanites, until they

^a 39 -61 years; see v. 12 above

35: Teancum blames the long and bloody war on the two Lamanite kings, Amalickiah and Ammoron; by con-trast, Moroni at 60.16 had identified the king-men as the primary cause of Nephite losses. In either case, both men fix their animus on Nephite dissenters. *Famine*, warfare often results in food shortages because of death, destruction, plunder, and the disruption of trade and transport. **36:** Perhaps *anger* has clouded Teancum's judgment, but this is the same tactic he had used successfully against Ammoron's brother Amalickiah six years earlier; see 51.33-36. It is not clear that he had received prior approval for his plan. *The walls of the city*, this would be the city of Moroni. In general, the cities in the east are recaptured in the reverse order of their being lost (51.23, 26): Mulek was recovered in ch. 52; Gid in ch. 55; Omner is unmentioned; preparations to retake Morianton were at 55.33; Lehi is regained in vv. 30-31 above; and Moroni here; see ch. 57n for the same pattern in the west. *With a cord*, prob-ably as an aid to scaling walls or houses, as in vv. 21, 23. **39:** *For the space of many years*, from -73 to -61, about twelve years. This is the first protracted period of warfare since the reign of King Benjamin. **40:** *Because of the prayers of the righteous, they were spared*, see 10.22-23; see 60.20n for additional allusions to Ammonihah. **41:** Mormon describes the moral toll taken by a long war, which can affect different people in nearly opposite ways.

were sufficiently strong, he returned to the city of Zarahemla; and also Helaman returned to the place of his inheritance; and there was once more peace established among the people of Nephi.⁴³ And Moroni yielded up the command of his armies into the hands of his son, whose name was Moronihah; and he retired to his own house that he might spend the remainder of his days in peace.

⁴⁴ And Pahoran did return to his judgment-seat; and Helaman did take upon him again to preach unto the people the word of God; for because of so many wars and contentions it had become expedient that a regulation should be made again in the church.⁴⁵ Therefore, Helaman and his brethren went forth, and did declare the word of God with much power unto the convincing of many people of their wickedness, which did cause them to repent of their sins and to be baptized unto the Lord their God.⁴⁶ And it came to pass that they did establish again the church of God, throughout all the land.⁴⁷ Yea, and regulations were made concerning the law. And their judges, and their chief judges were chosen.

⁴⁸ And the people of Nephi began to prosper again in the land, and began to multiply and to wax exceeding strong again in the land. And they began to grow exceeding rich.⁴⁹ But notwithstanding their riches, or their strength, or their prosperity, they were not lifted up in

the pride of their eyes; neither were they slow to remember the Lord their God; but they did humble themselves exceedingly before him.⁵⁰ Yea, they did remember how great things the Lord had done for them, that he had delivered them from death, and from bonds, and from prisons, and from all manner of afflictions, and he had delivered them out of the hands of their enemies.⁵¹ And they did pray unto the Lord their God continually, insomuch that the Lord did bless them, according to his word, so that they did wax strong and prosper in the land.

⁵² And it came to pass that all these things were done. And Helaman died, in the thirty and fifth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi.⁴

Mormon₂'s Abridgment of the Record of Shiblon₂: Alma 63

The Passing of a Generation

[XXX] **63** ¹ And it came to pass in the commencement of the thirty and sixth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi,^b that Shiblon took possession of those sacred things which had been delivered unto Helaman by

^a 52 –57 years

^b 1 –56 years

43: Moroni would have been about thirty-eight years old; see 43.17. **44:** The phrases *preach... the word of God* and *regulation... in the church* signal the end of an inclusio that began at 45.21. Both suffering and inflicting violence, even when justified by the rules of war, can leave lasting spiritual wounds, hence the need for a regulation in the church. **45:** *His brethren*, probably Shiblon and Corianton; cf. 45.22–23. **47:** Presumably these reforms were intended to prevent a resurgence of monarchism, which had earlier been associated with lower-level judges; see 46.4. **48–49:** *Prosper... strong... rich*, the three elements are repeated chiasmatically; cf. v. 51. **51:** *According to his word*, see 2 Ne 1.20; Alma 50.20.

CHAPTER 63

1: Compare the headings that precede 1.1 and 45.1, which also mark transitions of record keepers. *Took possession*, the implication is that Helaman₂ had died before making arrangements for a formal transfer of the records. Rather than being passed from father to son, in this case the records go from older brother (Helaman₂) to younger brother (Shiblon) to nephew (Helaman₃, see v. 11); see Omni 1.8n. *Sacred things which had been delivered unto Helaman by Alma*, see 37.1–2, 14–16, 47.

Alma. ² And 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; and also did his brother. ³ And it came to pass that Moroni died also. And thus ended the thirty and sixth year of the reign of the judges.

Nephite Expansion into the Land Northward

⁴ And it came to pass that in the thirty and seventh year of the reign of the judges,^a there was a large company of men, even to the amount of five thousand and four hundred men, with their wives and their children, departed out of the land of Zarahemla into the land which was northward.

⁵ And it came to pass that Hagoth, he being an exceedingly curious man, therefore he went forth and built him an exceedingly large ship, on the borders of the land Bountiful, by the land Desolation, and launched it forth into the west sea, by the narrow neck which led into the land northward. ⁶ And behold, there were many of the Nephites who did enter therein and did sail forth with much provisions, and also many women and children; and they took their course northward. And thus ended the thirty and seventh year.

⁷ And in the thirty and eighth year,^b this man built other ships. And the first ship did also return, and many more people did enter into it; and they also took much provisions, and set out again to the land northward.

⁸ And it came to pass that they were never

heard of more. And we suppose that they were drowned in the depths of the sea. And it came to pass that one other ship also did sail forth; and whither she did go we know not. ⁹ And it came to pass that in this year there were many people who went forth into the land northward. And thus ended the thirty and eighth year.

The Records Are Passed On

¹⁰ And it came to pass in the thirty and ninth year of the reign of the judges,^c Shiblon died also, and Corianton had gone forth to the land northward in a ship, to carry forth provisions unto the people who had gone forth into that land. ¹¹ Therefore it became expedient for Shiblon to confer those sacred things, before his death, upon the son of Helaman, who was called Helaman, being called after the name of his father.

¹² Now behold, all those engravings which were in the possession of Helaman were written and sent forth among the children of men throughout all the land, save it were those parts which had been commanded by Alma should not go forth. ¹³ Nevertheless, these things were to be kept sacred, and handed down from one generation to another; therefore, in this year, they had been conferred upon Helaman, before the death of Shiblon.

^a 4 –55 years

^b 7 –54 years

^c 10 –53 years

2: *Also did his brother*, that is, Corianton. 4: The Nephites had previously kept people out of the land northward, the homeland of the Jaredites or “land Desolation” (see 22.33; 50.29–33); now, however, it is the destination of large migrations, which will be added to at Hel 3.3; 6.6. 5: *Curious*, probably OED: “ingenious; clever,” as opposed to “inquisitive.” Here and Hel 6.11 are the only instances in the BoM of the adjective being applied to people. 8: While most of this chapter could be Mormon’s paraphrase, the two occurrences of *we* in this verse suggest that Shiblon is writing about contemporary events. In addition, O used the present tense “are drowned.” 12: This appears to be the first time that copies of the Nephite records have been widely distributed, presumably in a vernacular translation of the reformed Egyptian. The cause is not specified, though possibilities include increased literacy among the population, or as a concession to the Mulekites. *Those parts which . . . should not go forth*, see 37.27–32; 45.9–14.

Another Battle

¹⁴ And it came to pass also in this year that there were some dissenters who had gone forth unto the Lamanites; and they were stirred up again to anger against the Nephites.

¹⁵ And also in this same year they came down with a numerous army to war against the people of Moronihah, or against the army of Moronihah, in the which they were beaten

and driven back again to their own lands, suffering great loss. ¹⁶ And thus ended the thirty and ninth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi.^a ¹⁷ And thus ended the account of Alma, and Helaman his son, and also Shiblon, who was his son.

^a 16 –53 years; see v. 10 above

14–17: Ominously, the record of Alma and his sons concludes with more deadly conflict with the Lamanites, eight years after the Amalickiahite wars have ended. As usual, Nephite dissenters were the proximate cause, though no further details are provided. *Thus ended the account*, note that despite its length, the book of Alma covers only thirty-nine years; by contrast, the book of Helaman will cover fifty years in sixteen chapters.

HELANAN

The Helaman in the title of this book is not Alma's oldest son, Helaman₂, whose record became Alma 45–62, but rather his grandson, Helaman₃. There is a shift in record keepers at the end of chapter 3, when Helaman₃ dies and his son Nephi₂ takes over, perhaps assisted by his younger brother Lehi₄ (see Hel preface; 16.25; 3 Ne 1.2). In contrast to the literary shaping seen in Mosiah and Alma, the writing in the book of Helaman is somewhat episodic and disjointed, with only one developed story (Nephi₂ and the murdered chief judge in chs. 7–10) and two major sermons (those of Nephi₂ in chs. 7–8 and Samuel the Lamanite in chs. 13–15). Nevertheless, chapter 5 briefly mentions one of the most momentous events in Nephite history, when a majority of Lamanites are converted to the gospel and subsequently return to the Nephites all the lands they had captured in war. This means that the Lamanites who witnessed a divine manifestation in the prison where Nephi₂ and Lehi₄ were held, and then went on to convert their brethren, were more successful than either Alma or the sons of Mosiah in proselytizing, and the political results of those conversions were more significant than the military campaigns of Captain Moroni. Curiously, these astounding developments are covered in just three verses (5.50–52). Even if Mormon, as the editor, is not particularly interested in these events and thus passes over them quickly, Jesus later emphasizes the importance of what happened in Helaman 5 (see 3 Ne 9.20).

Political alignments become more complicated in Helaman as geographical and ethnic boundaries blur. In the early chapters, the Lamanites are joined by numerous Nephite dissenters. Yet after the Nephites retreat northward in the aftermath of major military defeats, Nephi₂ and Lehi₄ are nonetheless able to preach in Lamanite lands. Somewhat later, mass Lamanite conversions will allow Nephites and Lamanites to travel freely in each other's territories for trade (6.7–8). Mulekite/Nephite tensions appear to diminish after chapter 1, but the Gadianton robbers emerge as a third political entity that grows in strength and attracts both Nephites and Lamanites—though notably more of the former. Toward the end of the book, Nephite and Lamanite armies are both arrayed against the robbers. This is a period when the Lamanites are more righteous than the Nephites, and indeed they send missionaries (6.4–5) and a prophet, Samuel, to preach to their backsliding brethren, in a reversal of centuries of precedents.

All of this, however, is portrayed in broad strokes. The narrator regularly mentions “contentions” and “dissensions,” but the specific issues are rarely identified and there is little sense of causation apart from the people's general wickedness. Government institutions begin to break down, with the chief judge Nephi₂ apparently forced out of office, and four other chief judges assassinated, again with few details provided. And finally, notices of passing years start to occur in rapid succession (see chs. 3–4 and 11), in a manner not seen before in Mormon's abridgment. This flattens the narrative and creates the impression that Nephite history is hurtling toward a climax.

CONTENTS

Chapter 1: A thwarted rebellion leads to the assassination of the chief judge by a secret society. A Lamanite army, led by a Mulekite, captures Zarahemla and kills the new chief judge, but is forced to retreat.

Chapter 2: After a failed attempt by the same secret combination to assassinate yet another chief judge, they flee into the wilderness and become the Gadianton robbers.

Chapter 3: Nephite migrations to the north are reported, while the Nephites at Zarahemla enjoy a measure of prosperity under the judgeship of Helaman_s.

Chapter 4: Nephite dissenters encourage the Lamanites to invade again and the Nephites lose almost all their lands. Mormon, in an editorial aside, attributes their defeat to pride and greed. When the Nephites repent, they are able to recapture about half their lands.

Chapter 5: Nephi₂ gives up his position as chief judge and joins his brother Lehi₄ in preaching to both Nephites and Lamanites. When they are imprisoned by Lamanites in the land of Nephi, a pillar of fire and then angels come down from heaven. Those present are converted, and go on to convert a majority of the Lamanites, who subsequently return occupied territories to the Nephites.

Chapter 6: The Lamanites become more righteous than the Nephites, especially as the latter collude with the Gadianton robbers in undermining the government.

Chapters 7–10: Nephi₂, discouraged by the political situation, preaches from a private tower. Through revelation, he announces that the chief judge has just been murdered. Gadianton judges then accuse him of being part of the plot. Nephi, again through revelation, identifies the actual murderer and is vindicated by physical evidence. God grants him power to smite the earth and the people, if necessary. Nephi₂ then renews his preaching efforts, but to little avail.

Chapter 11: Again disheartened, Nephi₂ prays for the Lord to send a famine to motivate the people to repent. After three years, they change their ways and rains return, but the robbers become numerous enough to openly challenge both Nephite and Lamanite armies.

Chapter 12: Mormon adds an extended editorial comment contrasting the falsity and unsteadiness of human hearts with the mercy, goodness, and power of God.

Chapters 13–16: Samuel, a Lamanite, preaches to the Nephites in Zarahemla, prophesying about their final destruction and the natural wonders and disasters that would signal Jesus's birth and death in the Old World. His message is largely rejected, though he escapes with his life.

The book of Helaman covers events from ca. 50–1 BCE.

INTERPRETATION

Throughout the Book of Mormon, the righteous prosper and the wicked suffer in accordance with Deuteronomistic principles and the Lord's covenant with Lehi at 2 Ne 1.20. In the book of Helaman, however, the historiography takes a noticeable turn as the narrator begins to characterize Nephite successes and failures in a regular, repeated pattern. From Helaman 3 to 3 Nephi 10, there are five iterations of what Latter-day Saints often refer to as the "pride cycle": righteousness and prosperity, followed by pride and wickedness, then destruction and suffering, then humility and repentance, leading once again to righteousness and prosperity. This pattern is reminiscent of the six repetitions of a similar cycle in the book of Judges, though the Book of Mormon version gives more prominence to communal repentance, as opposed to merely crying out to the Lord in desperation. It seems that the Nephite proclivity toward apostasy and sin results in history repeating itself, until the cycle is finally broken when Jesus appears at

the temple in Bountiful and establishes his kingdom in 3 Nephi 11. Two centuries later, however, in 4 Nephi, religious divisions and iniquity will reappear, and from that point Nephite history will unfold in a linear fashion through increasing degradation and destruction.

By the time readers come to the end of Helaman, they have a good idea of what lies ahead, thanks to Samuel's preaching. Like Abinadi, Samuel is an outsider declaring God's word, more along the lines of the classic Hebrew prophets of the Old Testament than Nephite prophets such as Nephi, Jacob, Alma, and Nephi₂, who were part of the governing elite. Samuel's identity as a Lamanite, which is noted through-out chapters 13–16, marks him as someone speaking from a marginalized social position, and though his preaching challenges assumptions about the relative spirituality of Nephites and Lamanites, it appears that Nephite racism contributes to their rejection of his message. Samuel's prophecies set the stage for the remainder of Nephite history. He predicts the imminent signs of Jesus's birth, to be followed sometime later by cataclysmic events that would signal his death, and then the total destruction of the Nephite people some four hundred years thence. One wonders what such a long-term warning would have meant to Samuel's contemporaries, but Mormon, living at the time when those prophecies were being fulfilled, would have taken particular notice.

Perhaps surprisingly, Samuel does not tell the Nephites about Christ's resurrection or his appearance among them in about forty years (an evocative time span in Israelite historiography); he only prophesies of Jesus's birth and death in Judea, as well as the signs of those events that would be visible in the New World. Selective prophetic disclosure was also seen earlier, when Alma told his son Helaman₂ about the final destruction of the Nephites that would take place some four hundred years after Christ's visit, but then urged him to keep the record of this prophecy secret from the people until it had actually been fulfilled (Alma 45.9). Helaman₂ seems to have done this, but by the time of Samuel, God's covenant relationship with the Nephites has changed, such that warnings of utter destruction are openly and urgently declared. Samuel reports the source of his bleak news as "the words of the Lord which he doth put into my heart" (13.5) rather than a perusal of prophecies recorded in Nephite records. Throughout the book of Helaman, including in Mormon's commentary in chapter 12, there are underlying questions regarding the relative value of scripture in contrast to new revelation, unconditional versus conditional prophecies, and divine sovereignty and foreknowledge as opposed to human agency. The Book of Mormon does not fully resolve these.

GUIDE TO READING

The two major figures of the book of Helaman—Nephi₂ and Samuel—may bring to mind biblical precedents. Nephi is similar in some ways to the prophet Elijah. The two men are wonder-workers (10.16; 16.4; 1 Kings 17.19–23; 18.36–38) with a flair for the dramatic who travel widely (5.14–16; 6.6; 1 Kings 18.10–12; 19.3, 8, 15) and call on God to humble the people through three years of drought and famine (11.3–18; 1 Kings 17.1). They both suffer discouragement (7.1–9; 1 Kings 19.1–18), denounce covert murders that they learn about through revelation (8.27–28; 1 Kings 21.17–24), are prominently referred to by the title "man of God" (11.8, 18; 1 Kings 17.24; 2 Kings 1.9–13), and pass from this life somewhat mysteriously (3 Ne 1.3; 2.9; 2 Kings 2.11–12). On the other hand, Samuel is reminiscent of John the Baptist, since the two were the last major prophets before Christ in the Book of Mormon and in the New Testament, respectively. Both Samuel and John proclaim that the time has come to "repent and prepare the way of the Lord" (14.9; Mt 3.2–3), warn the people about being "hewn down and cast into the fire" (14.18; Mt 3.10), and are themselves accused of "having a devil" (16.6; Mt 11.18). In addition, the prophetic authority of both men is specifically and pointedly validated by Jesus (3 Ne 23.6–13; Mt 11.7–11).

INTRODUCTION TO HELAMAN

Just as it is useful to keep the Bible in mind when reading the Mormon scripture, so too the Book of Mormon can be measured against itself. By the time readers get to the book of Helaman, antecedents from previous episodes of Nephite history have started to accumulate, some of which are explicitly referenced. For instance, the Nephites under the judgship of Nephi₂ recall the prophecies of Alma and Mosiah (4.21), and Helaman cites the words of Benjamin and Amulek (5.9–10). The narrator notes that Nephi₂ and Lehi₄ were thrown into the same prison that had once held Ammon (5.21), which may spur readers to remember other prison stories, such as the miraculous rescue of Alma and Amulek at Alma 14 (the nonconsuming fire that envelops Nephi 2 and Lehi 4 reflects the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in Daniel 3 as well). The book of Helaman also provides important counterexamples to Nephi 1's racial prejudices in 2 Nephi 5. And while some of the elements of the book of Helaman look backward, others foreshadow what is to come—not only through the prophecies of Samuel listed above but also in how the text gradually broadens readers' perceptions of Mormon's character and agenda through his editorial comments at 3.13–17; 4.11–17; and 12.1–26.

THE BOOK OF HELAMAN

An account of the Nephites. Their wars and contentions, and their dissensions. And also the prophecies of many holy prophets, before the coming of Christ, according to the records of Helaman, who was the son of Helaman, and also according to the records of his sons, even down to the coming of Christ. And also many of the Lamanites are converted. An account of their conversion. An account of the righteousness of the Lamanites, and the wickedness and abominations of the Nephites, according to the record of Helaman and his sons, even down to the coming of Christ, which is called the book of Helaman, and so forth.

Mormon₂'s Abridgment of the Record of Helaman₃: Helaman 1–3

Conflict over the Judgment-Seat

[1] **1** ¹ And now behold, it came to pass in the commencement of the fortieth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi,⁴ there began to be a serious difficulty among the people of the Nephites. ² For behold, Pahoran had died, and gone the way of all the earth; therefore there began to be a serious contention concerning who should have the judgment-seat among the brethren, who were the sons of Pahoran. ³ Now these are their names who did contend for the judgment-seat, who did also cause the people to contend: Pahoran, Paanchi, and Pacumeni. ⁴ Now these are not all the sons of Pahoran (for he had many), but these are they who did contend for the judgment-seat; therefore, they did cause three divisions among the people.

⁵ Nevertheless, it came to pass that Pahoran was appointed by the voice of the people to be chief judge and a governor over the people of

Nephi. ⁶ And it came to pass that Pacumeni, when he saw that he could not obtain the judgment-seat, he did unite with the voice of the people. ⁷ But behold, Paanchi, and that part of the people that were desirous that he should be their governor, was exceeding wroth; therefore, he was about to flatter away those people to rise up in rebellion against their brethren. ⁸ And it came to pass as he was about to do this, behold, he was taken, and was tried according to the voice of the people, and condemned unto death; for he had raised up in rebellion and sought to destroy the liberty of the people.

Pahoran₂ Is Assassinated; Pacumeni Appointed

⁹ Now when those people who were desirous that he should be their governor saw that he was condemned unto death, therefore they were angry, and behold, they sent forth one Kishkumen, even to the judgment-seat of Pahoran, and murdered Pahoran as he sat

⁴ 1 –52 years

Preface: *Helaman*, that is, Helaman₃, *His sons*, Nephi₂ and Lehi₄; see 3.21. Helaman himself will die at 3.37. According to the record of *Helaman and his sons*, the book will conclude with the same attribution, see 16.25. One might have expected some mention of Samuel the Lamanite in this preface.

CHAPTER 1

2: Pahoran₁ had been chief judge for sixteen years; see Alma 50.39–40. **5:** Given the ordering of names in v. 3, Pahoran₂ was probably the eldest of the sons. **8:** It is not clear how far Paanchi had actually gotten in his plan before he was preemptively arrested and executed. At the beginning of the verse he was *about to do this*, but by the end he had already *raised up in rebellion*.

upon the judgment-seat.¹⁰ And he was pursued by the servants of Pahoran; but behold, so speedy was the flight of Kishkumen that no man could overtake him.

¹¹ And he went unto those that sent him, and they all entered into a covenant, yea, swearing by their everlasting Maker, that they would tell no man that Kishkumen had murdered Pahoran.¹² Therefore, Kishkumen was not known among the people of Nephi, for he was in disguise at the time that he murdered Pahoran. And Kishkumen and his band, who had covenanted with him, did mingle themselves among the people, in a manner that they all could not be found; but as many as were found were condemned unto death.

¹³ And now behold, Pacumeni was appointed, according to the voice of the people, to be a chief judge and a governor over the people, to reign in the stead of his brother Pahoran; and it was according to his right. And all this was done in the fortieth year of the reign of the judges; and it had an end.^a

The Lamanites Capture Zarahemla

¹⁴ And it came to pass in the forty and first year of the reign of the judges,^b that the Lamanites had gathered together an innumerable army of men, and armed them with swords, and with cimeters^c and with bows, and with arrows, and with head-plates, and with breastplates, and with all manner of shields of every kind.¹⁵ And they came down again that they might pitch battle against the Nephites.

And they were led by a man whose name was Coriantumr; and he was a descendant of

Zarahemla; and he was a dissenter from among the Nephites; and he was a large and a mighty man.¹⁶ Therefore, the king of the Lamanites, whose name was Tubaloth, who was the son of Ammoron, supposing that Coriantumr, being a mighty man, could stand against the Nephites, with his strength and also with his great wisdom, insomuch that by sending him forth he should gain power over the Nephites—¹⁷ therefore he did stir them up to anger, and he did gather together his armies, and he did appoint Coriantumr to be their leader, and did cause that they should march down to the land of Zarahemla to battle against the Nephites.

¹⁸ And it came to pass that because of so much contention and so much difficulty in the government, that they had not kept sufficient guards in the land of Zarahemla; for they had supposed that the Lamanites durst not come into the heart of their lands to attack that great city Zarahemla.¹⁹ But it came to pass that Coriantumr did march forth at the head of his numerous host, and came upon the inhabitants of the city, and their march was with such exceedingly great speed that there was no time for the Nephites to gather together their armies.²⁰ Therefore Coriantumr did cut down the watch by the entrance of the city, and did march forth with his whole army into the city, and they did slay every one who did oppose them, insomuch that they did take possession of the whole city.

^a 13 –52 years; see v. 1 above

^b 14 –51 years

^c 14 Or *scimitars*

13: The wording here closely parallels v. 5. *It was according to his right*, another indication of the quasi-monarchical nature of the Nephite chief judgeship. **14:** *Pitch battle*, WB: “to set in array; to marshal or arrange in order [for battle].” **15:** *He was a descendant of Zarahemla*, that is to say, he was a Mulekite. There is an assumption in the BoM narrative that the Lamanites would have largely kept to themselves had it not been for the influence of Nephite dissenters stirring up their anger and leading them into battle. **16:** The hostility of the Amalickiahite line of Lamanite kings toward the Nephites continues into the next generation. **18:** Once again, internal conflict among the Nephites provides an opportunity for a Lamanite invasion; for earlier examples, see Alma 51.22–27; 61.2–4. **20:** *The watch*, watchmen or guards. This is the first time the Nephite capital has been taken by the Lamanites. Coriantumr’s confidence and ambition, in the aftermath of his initial military success, will eventually lead to his downfall.

²¹ And it came to pass that Pacumeni, who was the chief judge, did flee before Coriantumr, even to the walls of the city. And it came to pass that Coriantumr did smite him against the wall, insomuch that he died. And thus ended the days of Pacumeni.

The Lamanites Are Defeated

²² And now when Coriantumr saw that he was in possession of the city of Zarahemla, and saw that the Nephites had fled before them, and were slain, and were taken, and were cast into prison, and that he had obtained the possession of the strongest hold in all the land, his heart took courage insomuch that he was about to go forth against all the land. ²³ And now he did not tarry in the land of Zarahemla, but he did march forth with a large army, even towards the city of Bountiful; for it was his determination to go forth and cut his way through with the sword, that he might obtain the north parts of the land. ²⁴ And, supposing that their greatest strength was in the center of the land, therefore he did march forth, giving them no time to assemble themselves together save it were in small bodies; and in this manner they did fall upon them and cut them down to the earth.

²⁵ But behold, this march of Coriantumr through the center of the land gave Moronihah great advantage over them, notwithstanding the greatness of the number of the Nephites who were slain. ²⁶ For behold, Moronihah had supposed that the Lamanites durst not come into the center of the land, but that they would attack the cities round about in the borders as they had hitherto done; therefore Moronihah had caused that their strong armies

should maintain those parts round about by the borders. ²⁷ But behold, the Lamanites were not frightened according to his desire, but they had come into the center of the land, and had taken the capital city which was the city of Zarahemla, and were marching through the most capital parts of the land, slaying the people with a great slaughter, both men, women, and children, taking possession of many cities and of many strongholds.

²⁸ But when Moronihah had discovered this, he immediately sent forth Lehi with an army round about to head them before they should come to the land Bountiful. ²⁹ And thus he did; and he did head them before they came to the land Bountiful, and gave unto them battle, insomuch that they began to retreat back towards the land of Zarahemla. ³⁰ And it came to pass that Moronihah did head them in their retreat, and did give unto them battle, insomuch that it became an exceedingly bloody battle; yea, many were slain, and among the number who were slain Coriantumr was also found.

³¹ And now, behold, the Lamanites could not retreat either way, neither on the north, nor on the south, nor on the east, nor on the west, for they were surrounded on every hand by the Nephites. ³² And thus had Coriantumr plunged the Lamanites into the midst of the Nephites, insomuch that they were in the power of the Nephites, and he himself was slain, and the Lamanites did yield themselves into the hands of the Nephites. ³³ And it came to pass that Moronihah took possession of the city of Zarahemla again, and caused that the Lamanites who had been taken prisoners should depart out of the land in peace. ³⁴ And

25–33: Ironically, Moronihah’s miscalculation is what ultimately enables the Nephites to turn back the Lamanite invasion. 25: Moronihah, a son of Captain Moroni, took command of the Nephite armies at Alma 62.43. 27: *Capital*, WB: “chief, principal” (for the first instance) and “great, important” (for the second). 28: Lehi and his army had been stationed in a border area to the north of Zarahemla, probably on the eastern coast. 33: *The Lamanites... should depart out of the land in peace*, presumably with an oath of peace, as in the days of Captain Moroni (e.g., Alma 44.19–20). This seems remarkably lenient, but perhaps the Nephites felt that the Lamanites would be less of a threat after their Nephite dissenter commanders had been slain.

thus ended the forty and first year of the reign of the judges.^a

Helaman₃ Appointed Chief Judge; Origins of the Gadianton Robbers

2¹ And it came to pass in the forty and second year of the reign of the judges,^b after Moronihah had established again peace between the Nephites and the Lamanites, behold there was no one to fill the judgment-seat; therefore there began to be a contention again among the people concerning who should fill the judgment-seat.² And it came to pass that Helaman, who was the son of Helaman, was appointed to fill the judgment-seat, by the voice of the people.

³ But behold, Kishkumen, who had murdered Pahoran, did lay wait to destroy Helaman also; and he was upheld by his band, who had entered into a covenant that no one should know his wickedness.⁴ For there was one Gadianton, who was exceeding expert in many words, and also in his craft, to carry on the secret work of murder and of robbery; therefore he became the leader of the band of Kishkumen.⁵ Therefore he did flatter them, and also Kishkumen, that if they would place him in the judgment-seat he would grant unto those who belonged to his band that they should be placed in power and authority among the people; therefore Kishkumen sought to destroy Helaman.

⁶ And it came to pass as he went forth towards the judgment-seat to destroy Helaman,

behold one of the servants of Helaman, having been out by night, and having obtained, through disguise, a knowledge of those plans which had been laid by this band to destroy Helaman—⁷ and it came to pass that he met Kishkumen, and he gave unto him a sign; therefore Kishkumen made known unto him the object of his desire, desiring that he would conduct him to the judgment-seat that he might murder Helaman.

⁸ And when the servant of Helaman had known all the heart of Kishkumen, and how that it was his object to murder, and also that it was the object of all those who belonged to his band to murder, and to rob, and to gain power, (and this was their secret plan, and their combination) the servant of Helaman said unto Kishkumen, “Let us go forth unto the judgment-seat.”⁹ Now this did please Kishkumen exceedingly, for he did suppose that he should accomplish his design; but behold, the servant of Helaman, as they were going forth unto the judgment-seat, did stab Kishkumen even to the heart, that he fell dead without a groan. And he ran and told Helaman all the things which he had seen, and heard, and done.

¹⁰ And it came to pass that Helaman did send forth to take this band of robbers and secret murderers, that they might be executed according to the law.¹¹ But behold, when Gadianton had found that Kishkumen did not return he feared lest that he should be

^a 34 –51 years; see v. 14 above

^b 1 –50 years

CHAPTER 2

2: Helaman is the third chief judge in two years. The office of chief judge was transferred from Alma to Nephihah and his descendants at Alma 4.20; here it reverts to the lineage of Alma. Helaman₃'s son Nephi₂ will yield the judgeship to yet another family at 5.1. **4:** *Craft*, WB: “cunning, art or skill, in a bad sense, or applied to bad purposes.” The word was historically associated with Freemasonry, and when combined with the secrecy, oaths, extralegal protections afforded to others in the brotherhood, infiltration of government offices, and identifying signs all seen in this chapter, many early readers of the BoM assumed that the text had an anti-masonic message. **8–9:** The incident may be problematic from a legal perspective since the furtive nature of their encounter and Kishkumen's immediate demise leave no additional witnesses to his confession.

HELAMAN 3: PRIDE CYCLE

Years	Righteousness and Prosperity	Pride and Wickedness	Destruction and Suffering	Humility and Repentance
-43 to -31	Hel 3.24–25, 32	Hel 3.33–34, 36	Hel 4.5	Hel 4.15
-29 to -16	Hel 6.7–13	Hel 6.16–17	Hel 11.1–6	Hel 11.7–8
-16 to +1	Hel 11.20–21	Hel 11.36–37; 16.10–12, 23	preempted by the sign at 3 Ne 1.15	3 Ne 1.16–18
+1 to +21	3 Ne 1.23	3 Ne 2.1–3	3 Ne 2.10–11, 19	3 Ne 3.15–16, 25
+26 to +34	3 Ne 6.4–9	3 Ne 6.10–18; 7.5–7	3 Ne 8.5–16	3 Ne 10.8–10

Mormon comments on this cycle at Hel 4.11–16; 12.1–5; 3 Ne 6.5; 7.8; and he regularly intersperses different phases with expressions such as “in the space of not many years” (Hel 4.26; 6.32; 7.6; 11.26) and “Satan did stir up/lead away their hearts” (Hel 6.21; 16.22–23; 3 Ne 2.2–3; 6.16). Compare the cyclical structure of the book of Judges, with its six iterations of the pattern of sin, punishment, crying out, rescue, and peace: Judg 3:7–11 (Othniel); 3.12–30 (Ehud); chapters 4–5 (Deborah); chapters 6–8 (Gideon); 10.6–12.7 (Jephthah); chapters 13–16 (Samson).

destroyed; therefore he caused that his band should follow him. And they took their flight out of the land, by a secret way, into the wilderness; and thus when Helaman sent forth to take them they could nowhere be found.¹² And more of this Gadianton shall be spoken hereafter. And thus ended the forty and second year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi.^a

¹³ And behold, in the end of this book ye shall see that this Gadianton did prove the overthrow, yea, almost the entire destruction of the people of Nephi. ¹⁴ Behold I do not mean the end of the book of Helaman, but I mean the end of the book of Nephi, from which I have taken all the account which I have written.

Nephite Migrations

[II] **3** ¹ And now it came to pass in the forty and third year of the reign of the judges,^b there was no contention among the people of Nephi save it were a little pride which was in the church, which did cause some little dissensions among the people, which affairs were settled in the ending of the forty and third year.² And there was no contention among the people in the forty and fourth year;^c neither was there much contention in the forty and fifth year.^d

^a 12 –50 years; see v. 1 above

^b 1 –49 years

^c 2 –48 years

^d 2 –47 years

12: *More . . . shall be spoken hereafter*, see 6.18–30. **13–14:** A proleptic (anticipatory) comment from the narrator. The reference intended by Mormon is uncertain, but see 4 Ne 1.42, 46; Morm 1.18; 2.27–28; cf. Ether 8.19–21.

CHAPTER 3

Note that chs. 3–4 cover twenty years, the same time span covered in Alma 45–63. Mormon has taken a very different historiographical approach for the book of Helaman.

³ And it came to pass in the forty and sixth,^a yea, there was much contention and many dissensions; in the which there were an exceeding great many who departed out of the land of Zarahemla, and went forth unto the land northward to inherit the land. ⁴ And they did travel to an exceeding great distance, insomuch that they came to large bodies of water and many rivers. ⁵ Yea, and even they did spread forth into all parts of the land, into whatever parts it had not been rendered desolate and without timber, because of the many inhabitants who had before inherited the land.

⁶ And now no part of the land was desolate, save it were for timber; but because of the greatness of the destruction of the people who had before inhabited the land it was called desolate. ⁷ And there being but little timber upon the face of the land, nevertheless the people who went forth became exceeding expert in the working of cement; therefore they did build houses of cement, in the which they did dwell. ⁸ And it came to pass that they did multiply and spread, and did go forth from the land southward to the land northward, and did spread insomuch that they began to cover the face of the whole earth, from the sea south to the sea north, from the sea west to the sea east.

⁹ And the people who were in the land northward did dwell in tents, and in houses of cement, and they did suffer whatsoever tree should spring up upon the face of the land that it should grow up, that in time they might have timber to build their houses, yea, their

cities, and their temples, and their synagogues, and their sanctuaries, and all manner of their buildings. ¹⁰ And it came to pass as timber was exceeding scarce in the land northward, they did send forth much by the way of shipping. ¹¹ And thus they did enable the people in the land northward that they might build many cities, both of wood and of cement. ¹² And it came to pass that there were many of the people of Ammon, who were Lamanites by birth, did also go forth into this land.

Mormon₂ Comments on Nephite Records

¹³ And now there are many records kept of the proceedings of this people, by many of this people, which are particular and very large, concerning them. ¹⁴ But behold, a hundredth part of the proceedings of this people, yea, the account of the Lamanites and of the Nephites, and their wars, and contentions, and dissensions, and their preaching, and their prophecies, and their shipping and their building of ships, and their building of temples, and of synagogues and their sanctuaries, and their righteousness, and their wickedness, and their murders, and their robbings, and their plundering, and all manner of abominations and whoredoms, cannot be contained in this work.

¹⁵ But behold, there are many books and many records of every kind, and they have

^a 3 -46 years

3: Internal conflict leads to out-migration. The new pioneers are following the example of those at Alma 63.4–9; cf. 50.29. **4–6:** The land northward is described as well watered, but deforested and sparsely inhabited due to environmental degradation caused by the Jaredites, more than a century earlier. The earliest reference to their land being called “Desolation” was at Alma 22.30–32. **5:** *Inherited*, that is, possessed. **7:** The use of cement is attested in Mesoamerica as early as the first century BCE. **12:** The population of the people of Ammon had been greatly increased by the addition of resettled Lamanite soldiers fifteen years earlier (Alma 62.14–17, 27–29). This verse may hint at tensions between the newcomers and the original, more religiously oriented people of Ammon (Anti-Nephi-Lehies). **13–17:** These words are written from Mormon’s perspective in the late fourth century CE, at the time of the final destruction of the Nephites, as is especially evident in vv. 16–17. **13:** *Particular*, detailed. **15:** The observation *they have been kept chiefly by the Nephites* suggests that Mormon had access to at least a few Lamanite or Mulekite records.

been kept chiefly by the Nephites.¹⁶ And they have been handed down from one generation to another by the Nephites, even until they have fallen into transgression and have been murdered, plundered, and hunted, and driven forth, and slain, and scattered upon the face of the earth, and mixed with the Lamanites until they are no more called the Nephites, becoming wicked, and wild, and ferocious, yea, even becoming Lamanites.

¹⁷ And now I return again to mine account. Therefore, what I have spoken had passed after there had been great contentions, and disturbances, and wars, and dissensions, among the people of Nephi.

The Judgeship of Helaman₃

¹⁸ The forty and sixth year of the reign of the judges ended;^a ¹⁹ and it came to pass that there was still great contention in the land, yea, even in the forty and seventh year,^b and also in the forty and eighth year.^c ²⁰ Nevertheless Helaman did fill the judgment-seat with justice and equity; yea, he did observe to keep the statutes, and the judgments, and the commandments of God; and he did do that which was right in the sight of God continually; and he did walk after the ways of his father, inasmuch that he did prosper in the land.²¹ And it came to pass that he had two sons. He gave unto the eldest the name of Nephi, and unto the youngest, the name of Lehi. And they began to grow up unto the Lord.

²² And it came to pass that the wars and contentions began to cease, in a small degree, among the people of the Nephites, in the latter end of the forty and eighth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi.²³ And it came to pass in the forty and ninth year of the reign of the judges,^d there was continual peace established in the land, all save it were the secret combinations which Gadianton the robber had established in the more settled parts of the land, which at that time were not known unto those who were at the head of government; therefore they were not destroyed out of the land.

²⁴ And it came to pass that in this same year there was exceeding great prosperity in the church, insomuch that there were thousands who did join themselves unto the church and were baptized unto repentance.²⁵ And so great was the prosperity of the church, and so many the blessings which were poured out upon the people, that even the high priests and the teachers were themselves astonished beyond measure.²⁶ And it came to pass that the work of the Lord did prosper unto the baptizing and uniting to the church of God, many souls, yea, even tens of thousands.

²⁷ Thus we may see that the Lord is merciful unto all who will, in the sincerity of their hearts, call upon his holy name.²⁸ Yea, thus we

^a 18 –46 years; see v. 3 above

^b 19 –45 years

^c 19 –44 years

^d 23 –43 years

18: As is typical in Hel, the narrator provides few details about the causes of this *great contention*, which lasted for three years. **20:** *Equity*, impartiality. The combination of *statutes* and *judgments*, and *commandments* is a characteristic expression of Deut, where it appears seven times; it also occurs seven times in the BoM. The pairing of *statutes* and *commandments* is even more common in Deut and the Deuteronomistic History, as is the phrase *do that which was right in the sight of God/the Lord. Walk after the ways of his father* is a trope describing hereditary rulers in Kings and Chr; it is unexpected here since Helaman's father was not a chief judge. **21:** The intention behind these auspicious names is revealed at 5.6–7. **23:** The followers of Gadianton, after having fled into the wilderness at 2.11, have begun to infiltrate Nephite cities. They will not be found out until 6.15–19, in the aftermath of the assassinations of two chief judges. **24–26:** This era of righteousness and prosperity was short-lived, to be replaced a decade later by wickedness and warfare; see 4.11–13. **27–30:** The narrator comments on the universality of God's mercy, drawing on distinctive biblical phrasing. The three "thus we see" observations are evocative, even if they do not exactly fit the narrative. **28:** *Gate of heaven*, only here and Gen 28.17.

see that the gate of heaven is open unto all, even to those who will believe on the name of Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God.²⁹ Yea, we see that whosoever will may lay hold upon the word of God, which is quick and powerful, which shall divide asunder all the cunning and the snares and the wiles of the devil, and lead the man of Christ in a straight and narrow course across that everlasting gulf of misery which is prepared to engulf the wicked—³⁰ and land their souls, yea, their immortal souls, at the right hand of God in the kingdom of heaven, to sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and with Jacob, and with all our holy fathers, to go no more out.

³¹ And in this year there was continual rejoicing in the land of Zarahemla, and in all the regions round about, even in all the land which was possessed by the Nephites.³² And it came to pass that there was peace and exceeding great joy in the remainder of the forty and ninth year;^a yea, and also there was continual peace and great joy in the fiftieth year of the reign of the judges.^b

Problems with Pride; Nephi₂ Becomes Chief Judge

³³ And in the fifty and first year of the reign of the judges^c there was peace also, save it were

the pride which began to enter into the church—not into the church of God, but into the hearts of the people who professed to belong to the church of God—³⁴ and they were lifted up in pride, even to the persecution of many of their brethren.

Now this was a great evil, which did cause the more humble part of the people to suffer great persecutions, and to wade through much affliction.³⁵ Nevertheless they did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and the sanctification of their hearts, which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God.

³⁶ And it came to pass that the fifty and second year^d ended in peace also, save it were the exceeding great pride which had gotten into the hearts of the people; and it was because of their exceeding great riches and their prosperity in the land; and it did grow upon them from day to day.

^a 32 —43 years; see v. 23 above

^b 32 —42 years

^c 33 —41 years

^d 36 —40 years

29: The image of *lay(ing) hold upon the word of God* to follow a *straight and narrow* path echoes Lehi's vision, along with Nephi's interpretation; see 1 Ne 8.19–22; 11.24–25. *The word of God, which is quick and powerful, which shall divide asunder*, Heb 4.12, where the image of a sword is explicit. In that verse, God's word could be lethal, separating spirits from bodies; here it cuts through the devil's ploys and allows Christians to make their way to heaven. There is thus a double image here: from the perspective of Heb 4.12, *lay hold* suggests wielding the word of God like a weapon against the devil; from the perspective of 1 Ne 8, one may *lay hold* of the word as if it were a handrail leading one to God's kingdom. *Quick and powerful*, "living and active" (NRSV). *Wiles of the devil*, only Eph 6.11 and here, where it is conflated with "snare of the devil" from 1 Tim 3.7. *The man of Christ*, unique here. **30:** *In the kingdom of heaven, to sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and with Jacob*, Mt 8.11; Alma 5.24; 7.25. The two BoM parallels include all "the holy prophets" in that gathering, which is here changed to *all our holy fathers* (unique here), perhaps referring to the luminaries of Nephite history. **33–37:** As is so often the case in the BoM, pride is one of the first signs of trouble. **33–34:** The narrator draws a distinction between true and false Christians, both of whom may belong to the church. *Great persecutions*, apparently from other church members rather than from outsiders. **35:** *Sanctification*, or becoming holy, was a theologically significant term in early 19th-c. America; this is its only appearance in the BoM. In Christian theology it was often paired with "justification," which is absent from the BoM. Preachers in the 18th–19th c. often spoke of sanctifying one's heart, though the expression is not biblical.

³⁷ And it came to pass in the fifty and third year of the reign of the judges,^a Helaman died, and his eldest son Nephi began to reign in his stead. And it came to pass that he did fill the judgment-seat with justice and equity; yea, he did keep the commandments of God, and did walk in the ways of his father.

Lamanites and Nephite Dissenters Capture the Land Southward

4 ¹ And it came to pass in the fifty and fourth year^b there were many dissensions in the church, and there was also a contention among the people, insomuch that there was much bloodshed.

² And the rebellious part were slain and driven out of the land, and they did go unto the king of the Lamanites. ³ And it came to pass that they did endeavor to stir up the Lamanites to war against the Nephites; but behold, the Lamanites were exceedingly afraid, insomuch that they would not hearken to the words of those dissenters.

⁴ But it came to pass in the fifty and sixth year of the reign of the judges,^c there were dissenters who went up from the Nephites unto the Lamanites; and they succeeded with those others in stirring them up to anger against the Nephites; and they were all that year preparing

for war. ⁵ And in the fifty and seventh year^d they did come down against the Nephites to battle, and they did commence the work of death; yea, insomuch that in the fifty and eighth year of the reign of the judges^e they succeeded in obtaining possession of the land of Zarahemla; yea, and also all the lands, even unto the land which was near the land Bountiful.

⁶ And the Nephites and the armies of Moronihah were driven even into the land of Bountiful; ⁷ and there they did fortify against the Lamanites, from the west sea, even unto the east; it being a day's journey for a Nephite, on the line which they had fortified and stationed their armies to defend their north country. ⁸ And thus those dissenters of the Nephites, with the help of a numerous army of the Lamanites, had obtained all the possession of the Nephites which was in the land southward. And all this was done in the fifty and eighth and ninth years of the reign of the judges.^f

⁹ And it came to pass in the sixtieth year of the reign of the judges,^g Moronihah did succeed with his armies in obtaining many parts of the

^a 37 –39 years

^b 1 –38 years

^c 4 –36 years

^d 5 –35 years

^e 5 –34 years

^f 8 –34 and –33 years

^g 9 –32 years

37: Although the text does not mention a transfer of records, the rest of the book of Helaman must have been written by Helaman's sons; see the preface to the book, as well as 16.25 and 3 Ne 1.2. The formulaic description of Nephi in the judgment seat matches that of his father; see v. 20.

CHAPTER 4

1–2: In contrast to the book of Alma, serious political disturbances in the book of Helaman are often treated in a cursory manner, with few details provided. 3: The Lamanites were remembering their last disastrous invasion, which had taken place thirteen years earlier; see ch. 1. 5–10: These military losses were more serious than any in the Amalickiahite wars, and Moronihah will retake territories much more quickly than Captain Moroni, yet these events receive comparatively little attention from the narrator. Perhaps Mormon saw fewer moral lessons in the specific details, or he was simply less interested in Moronihah than in his father, Captain Moroni. 5–8: Following a similar strategy as in their last campaign, the Lamanites are much more successful this time as the Nephites lose their capital region and are forced to retreat north to Bountiful. 6–7: The fortified line of defense is shorter than the “small neck of land” mentioned at Alma 22.32, which was described as “a day and a half’s journey.” Both verses are an indication that the distances involved were quite limited. 9–10: Once again we see, in the space of two verses, major historical developments that would have been covered over the course of many chapters in the book of Alma.

land; yea, they regained many cities which had fallen into the hands of the Lamanites.¹⁰ And it came to pass in the sixty and first year of the reign of the judges^a they succeeded in regaining even the half of all their possessions.

Mormon's Spiritual Interpretation of Nephite Losses and Victories

¹¹ Now this great loss of the Nephites, and the great slaughter which was among them, would not have happened had it not been for their wickedness and their abomination which was among them; yea, and it was among those also who professed to belong to the church of God.¹² And it was because of the pride of their hearts, because of their exceeding riches, yea, it was because of their oppression to the poor, withholding their food from the hungry, withholding their clothing from the naked, and smiting their humble brethren upon the cheek, making a mock of that which was sacred, denying the spirit of prophecy and of revelation, murdering, plundering, lying, stealing, committing adultery, rising up in great contentions, and deserting away into the land of Nephi, among the Lamanites—¹³ And because of this their great wickedness, and their boastings in their own strength, they were left in their own strength; therefore they did not prosper, but were afflicted and smitten, and driven before the Lamanites, until they had lost possession of almost all their lands.

¹⁴ But behold, Moronihah did preach many things unto the people because of their

iniquity, and also Nephi and Lehi, who were the sons of Helaman, did preach many things unto the people, yea, and did prophesy many things unto them concerning their iniquities, and what should come unto them if they did not repent of their sins.¹⁵ And it came to pass that they did repent, and inasmuch as they did repent they did begin to prosper.¹⁶ For when Moronihah saw that they did repent he did venture to lead them forth from place to place, and from city to city, even until they had regained the one-half of their property and the one-half of all their lands.¹⁷ And thus ended the sixty and first year of the reign of the judges.^b

The Nephites Recognize the Cause of Their Weakness

¹⁸ And it came to pass in the sixty and second year of the reign of the judges,^c that Moronihah could obtain no more possessions over the Lamanites.¹⁹ Therefore they did abandon their design to obtain the remainder of their lands, for so numerous were the Lamanites that it became impossible for the Nephites to obtain more power over them; therefore Moronihah did employ all his armies in maintaining those parts which he had taken.

²⁰ And it came to pass, because of the greatness of the number of the Lamanites the

^a 10 –31 years

^b 17 –31 years; see v. 10 above

^c 18 –30 years

10: *Regaining half their possessions* in a single year is remarkable. **11–17:** This section offers another perspective on the events of vv. 4–10. Note that vv. 10 and 17 both end in the sixty-first year; cf. Alma 50.35–40; Hel 11.32–35. In this passage Mormon introduces the idea of the pride cycle, as it comes to the conclusion of its first iteration. There will be four more repetitions of the cycle. **11:** *Who professed to belong to the church of God*, the same people who were mentioned at 3.33. **12:** This list offers a comprehensive overview of BoM ethical standards, which cover social justice, religious adherence, and criminal law. The condemnation of those who enjoy their wealth while neglecting the poor and the needy is characteristic of BoM morality. **13:** *Boastings in their own strength* never end well for the Nephites; see Mos 11.19; Morm 3.9; 4.8. *They were left in their own strength*, by God, in response to their boasting that they already had what they needed. **14:** In addition to military leadership, Moronihah also provided moral and spiritual guidance; cf. 3 Ne 3.19. **19–20:** The Lamanites have always outnumbered the Nephites, but now the population imbalance seems particularly dire. Perhaps the dissenters of vv. 2 and 4 made up a substantial percentage of the Nephites.

Nephites were in great fear, lest they should be overpowered, and trodden down, and slain, and destroyed.²¹ Yea, they began to remember the prophecies of Alma, and also the words of Mosiah; and they saw that they had been a stiffnecked people, and that they had set at naught the commandments of God;²² and that they had altered and trampled under their feet the laws of Mosiah, or that which the Lord commanded him to give unto the people; and they saw that their laws had become corrupted, and that they had become a wicked people, insomuch that they were wicked even like unto the Lamanites.

²³ And because of their iniquity the church had begun to dwindle; and they began to disbelieve in the spirit of prophecy and in the spirit of revelation; and the judgments of God did stare them in the face.²⁴ And they saw that they had become weak, like unto their brethren, the Lamanites, and that the Spirit of the Lord did no more preserve them; yea, it had withdrawn from them because the Spirit of the Lord doth not dwell in unholy temples—²⁵ Therefore the Lord did cease to preserve them by his miraculous and matchless power, for they had fallen into a state of unbelief and awful wickedness; and they saw that the Lamanites were exceedingly more numerous than they, and except they should cleave unto

the Lord their God they must unavoidably perish.²⁶ For behold, they saw that the strength of the Lamanites was as great as their strength, even man for man. And thus had they fallen into this great transgression; yea, thus had they become weak, because of their transgression, in the space of not many years.

Nephi₂ Yields Up the Judgment-Seat

5¹ And it came to pass that in this same year, behold, Nephi delivered up the judgment-seat to a man whose name was Cezoram.² For as their laws and their governments were established by the voice of the people, and they who chose evil were more numerous than they who chose good, therefore they were ripening for destruction, for the laws had become corrupted.³ Yea, and this was not all; they were a stiffnecked people, insomuch that they could not be governed by the law nor justice, save it were to their destruction.⁴ And it came to pass that Nephi had become weary because of their iniquity; and he yielded up the judgment-seat, and took it upon him to preach the word of God all the remainder of his days, and his brother Lehi also, all the remainder of his days.

21: *The prophecies of Alma*, perhaps Alma 9.18–19. *The words of Mosiah*, this likely refers to his writings at Mos 29. Note that King Benjamin's words will also be invoked in vv. 24–26. **22:** *The laws of Mosiah*, when he abolished the monarchy and established the reign of judges in Mos 29. **23:** *Dwindle*, WB: “to diminish; to shrink.” This is the only instance in which “the church” is said to *dwindle*, a verb that everywhere else in the BoM is modified by “in unbelief.” **24–26:** A fulfillment of King Benjamin's prophecy at Mos 1.13. **24:** *They had become weak*, see v. 13 above. *Spirit of the Lord... withdrawn... doth not dwell in unholy temples*, Mos 2.36–37. **26:** *In the space of not many years*, note that “great prosperity in the church” had been reported as recently as 3.24–25, just thirteen years earlier.

CHAPTER 5

1–4: The allusion to Mos 29.26–27 in these verses suggests that rather than voluntarily resigning as chief judge, as Alma did at Alma 4.11–20, Nephi has been forced out by the voice of the people. There is no evidence that Nephi handpicked Cezoram as his successor, as happened with Nephiah, though Nephi does follow Alma's example in devoting the rest of his life to preaching. **2:** *Ripening for destruction* will become a refrain in Hel, tracking the downward spiritual spiral of the Nephites; see 6.40; 8.26; 11.37; 13.14. The only previous use of the phrase was at Alma 10.19, referring to a prophecy of King Mosiah. This is also the last mention of the *voice of the people* in the BoM.

Remembering the Words of Helaman³

⁵ For they remembered the words which their father Helaman spake unto them. And these are the words which he spake:

⁶ Behold, my sons, I desire that ye should remember to keep the commandments of God; and I would that ye should declare unto the people these words. Behold, I have given unto you the names of our first parents who came out of the land of Jerusalem; and this I have done that when you remember your names ye may remember them; and when ye remember them ye may remember their works; and when ye remember their works ye may know how that it is said, and also written, that they were good. ⁷ Therefore, my sons, I would that ye should do that which is good, that it may be said of you, and also written, even as it has been said and written of them.

⁸ And now my sons, behold I have somewhat more to desire of you, which desire is, that ye may not do these things that ye may boast, but that ye may do these things to lay up for yourselves a treasure in heaven, yea, which is eternal, and which

fadeth not away; yea, that ye may have that precious gift of eternal life, which we have reason to suppose hath been given to our fathers.

⁹ O remember, remember, my sons, the words which king Benjamin spake unto his people; yea, remember that there is no other way nor means whereby man can be saved, only through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, who shall come; yea, remember that he cometh to redeem the world.

¹⁰ And remember also the words which Amulek spake unto Zeezrom, in the city of Ammonihah; for he said unto him that the Lord surely should come to redeem his people, but that he should not come to redeem them in their sins, but to redeem them from their sins. ¹¹ And he hath power given unto him from the Father to redeem them from their sins because of repentance; therefore he hath sent his angels to declare the tidings of the conditions of repentance, which bringeth unto the power of the Redeemer, unto the salvation of their souls.

¹² And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock

6–13: The editor, for literary effect, has chosen to present these words as a reminiscence rather than incorporating them into the account of Helaman's life, perhaps at 3.21. The retrospective viewpoint fits a discourse that includes thirteen admonitions to *remember*—a word that also frames this short sermon at the beginning and the end (vv. 5 and 14). In the OT, “remember” is often a verb that results in action rather than simply being a mental process, and there seems to be a similar connotation here. Other BoM chapters that feature multiple commands to “remember” include 2 Ne 9 (8x), Alma 37 (5x), and Moro 10 (4x). God speaks of his own remembering six times in 2 Ne 29. **8:** *Lay up for yourselves a treasure in heaven*, Mt 6.20 (3 Ne 13.20); Hel 8.25. *Which fadeth not away*, 1 Pet 1.4; 5.4. **9:** *The words which king Benjamin spake unto his people*, see Mos 3.17–18. **10:** *The words which Amulek spake unto Zeezrom*, see Alma 11.34, 36–37. **11:** Helaman's teachings about angels will become relevant to current circumstances in v. 39. *The conditions of repentance*, the terms of repentance; cf. 14.11, 18. *Bringeth unto the power*, that is, bringeth (them) unto the power. **12:** The analogy here is closely related to Mt 7.24–27 and Lk 6.48–49, but the image has been intensified: “winds” become *mighty winds* and a *whirlwind*; the winds that “beat upon that house” become *hail* and a *mighty storm*; the devil is the direct cause of the furious weather; and the listeners themselves are the houses that are built upon a *sure foundation*. (In the Gospel versions, a person who puts Jesus's words into practice is compared to a wise man who built a house on a rock.) *Shaft*, OED: “a streak of lightning.” *Sure foundation*, Isa 28.16; Jacob 4.16–17.

of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall.

¹³ And it came to pass that these were the words which Helaman taught to his sons; yea, he did teach them many things which are not written, and also many things which are written.

Nephi₂ and Lehi₄ Preach to the Nephites and Lamanites

¹⁴ And they did remember his words; and therefore they went forth, keeping the commandments of God, to teach the word of God among all the people of Nephi, beginning at the city Bountiful; ¹⁵ and from thenceforth to the city of Gid; and from the city of Gid to the city of Mulek; ¹⁶ and even from one city to another, until they had gone forth among all the people of Nephi who were in the land southward; and from thence into the land of Zarahemla, among the Lamanites.

¹⁷ And it came to pass that they did preach with great power, insomuch that they did confound many of those dissenters who had gone over from the Nephites, insomuch that they came forth and did confess their sins and were baptized unto repentance, and immediately returned to the Nephites to endeavor to repair unto them the wrongs which they had done.

¹⁸ And it came to pass that Nephi and Lehi did preach unto the Lamanites with such great power and authority, for they had power and authority given unto them that they might speak, and they also had what they should speak given unto them— ¹⁹ therefore they did speak unto the great astonishment of the Lamanites, to the convincing them, insomuch that there were eight thousand of the Lamanites who were in the land of Zarahemla and round about baptized unto repentance, and were convinced of the wickedness of the traditions of their fathers.

Nephi₂ and Lehi₄ in a Lamanite Prison: Miraculous Fire

²⁰ And it came to pass that Nephi and Lehi did proceed from thence to go to the land of Nephi. ²¹ And it came to pass that they were taken by an army of the Lamanites and cast into prison; yea, even in that same prison in which Ammon and his brethren were cast by the servants of Limhi. ²² And after they had been cast into prison many days without food,

13: The narrator is aware of both literary and oral traditions. **16:** *Into the land of Zarahemla, among the Lamanites*, the old Nephite capital of Zarahemla had been captured four years earlier (4.4–8) and was still in the hands of the Lamanites. **17:** Baptism being linked to confession of sins was the pattern set by John the Baptist at Mt 3.6 and Mk 1.5; the same combination recurs in the BoM at Hel 16.1, 5. *Repair... the wrongs which they had done*, Alma 39.13 (the reading from O); cf. Mos 27.35; Alma 27.8n. **18:** Both the authorization to speak and the words themselves were given to Nephi and Lehi by God; the same will hold true for Samuel at 13.3–4; cf. Mt 10.19. **19:** Eight thousand converts is an astonishing accomplishment by any measure, but even greater success will come at the end of the chapter. **20–34:** Several elements of this incident—including an earthquake, unnatural darkness, and a quiet yet piercing voice from heaven repeating a message three times—prefigure the coming of Jesus to the combined Nephites and Lamanites at 3 Ne 8 and 11. **20:** The *land of Nephi* has been in Lamanite hands for nearly 200 years. **21:** *That same prison*, see Mos 7.7; 21.23; this detail appears to have been included as an intriguing historical coincidence.

behold, they went forth into the prison to take them that they might slay them.

²³ And it came to pass that Nephi and Lehi were encircled about as if by fire, even inso-much that they durst not lay their hands upon them for fear lest they should be burned. Nevertheless, Nephi and Lehi were not burned; and they were as standing in the midst of fire and were not burned. ²⁴ And when they saw that they were encircled about with a pillar of fire, and that it burned them not, their hearts did take courage. ²⁵ For they saw that the Lamanites durst not lay their hands upon them; neither durst they come near unto them, but stood as if they were struck dumb with amazement.

²⁶ And it came to pass that Nephi and Lehi did stand forth and began to speak unto them, saying, "Fear not, for behold, it is God that has shown unto you this marvelous thing, in the which is shown unto you that ye cannot lay your hands on us to slay us." ²⁷ And behold, when they had said these words, the earth shook exceedingly, and the walls of the prison did shake as if they were about to tumble to the earth; but behold, they did not fall. And behold, they that were in the prison were Lamanites and Nephites who were dissenters. ²⁸ And it came to pass that they were overshadowed with a cloud of darkness, and an awful solemn fear came upon them.

²⁹ And it came to pass that there came a voice as if it were above the cloud of darkness, saying, "Repent ye, repent ye, and seek no more

to destroy my servants whom I have sent unto you to declare good tidings." ³⁰ And it came to pass when they heard this voice, and beheld that it was not a voice of thunder, neither was it a voice of a great tumultuous noise, but behold, it was a still voice of perfect mildness, as if it had been a whisper, and it did pierce even to the very soul— ³¹ and notwithstanding the mildness of the voice, behold the earth shook exceedingly, and the walls of the prison trembled again, as if it were about to tumble to the earth; and behold the cloud of darkness, which had overshadowed them, did not disperse—

³² And behold the voice came again, saying, "Repent ye, repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand; and seek no more to destroy my servants." And it came to pass that the earth shook again, and the walls trembled.

³³ And also again the third time the voice came, and did speak unto them marvelous words which cannot be uttered by man; and the walls did tremble again, and the earth shook as if it were about to divide asunder. ³⁴ And it came to pass that the Lamanites could not flee because of the cloud of darkness which did overshadow them; yea, and also they were immovable because of the fear which did come upon them.

Nephi₂ and Lehi₄ in a Lamanite Prison: Baptism with Fire

³⁵ Now there was one among them who was a Nephite by birth, who had once belonged to the church of God but had dissented from

23: The scene is reminiscent of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace (Dan 3.19–30). From this verse to the end of the chapter there are twelve instances of *as if*; the narrator seems to feel that direct descriptions are inadequate in recounting these marvelous events. **24:** The term *pillar of fire* is associated with the Exodus, and also occurred in Lehi's first vision (1 Ne 1.6). The flames are protective rather than destructive. **26:** *Stand forth*, come forward. **27–34:** Four earthquake tremors are accompanied by three instances of divine speech. **28:** *Overshadowed with a cloud* echoes the Transfiguration (Mt 17.5; Mk 9.7; Lk 9.34); it is not surprising that a voice from heaven follows. **30:** *A still voice* speaking the word of God following an earthquake is reminiscent of 1 Kings 19.11–12. **32:** *Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*, Mt 3.2; 4.17; Alma 5.50; 10.20. **33:** *Marvelous words...cannot be uttered by man*, a description that will be applied to Jesus's prayer at 3 Ne 19.34. **35–49:** The resurrected Jesus refers to this event as being "baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost" at 3 Ne 9.20, and Moroni reiterates this interpretation at Ether 12.14. **35–41:** Unexpectedly, someone who had left the church plays a key, positive role in this episode.

them.³⁶ And it came to pass that he turned him about, and behold, he saw through the cloud of darkness the faces of Nephi and Lehi; and behold, they did shine exceedingly, even as the faces of angels. And he beheld that they did lift their eyes to heaven; and they were in the attitude as if talking or lifting their voices to some being whom they beheld.

³⁷ And it came to pass that this man did cry unto the multitude, that they might turn and look. And behold, there was power given unto them that they did turn and look; and they did behold the faces of Nephi and Lehi.³⁸ And they said unto the man, “Behold, what do all these things mean, and who is it with whom these men do converse?”

³⁹ Now the man’s name was Aminadab. And Aminadab said unto them, “They do converse with the angels of God.”

⁴⁰ And it came to pass that the Lamanites said unto him, “What shall we do, that this cloud of darkness may be removed from overshadowing us?”

⁴¹ And Aminadab said unto them, “You must repent, and cry unto the voice, even until ye shall have faith in Christ, who was taught unto you by Alma, and Amulek, and Zeezrom; and when ye shall do this, the cloud of darkness shall be removed from overshadowing you.”

⁴² And it came to pass that they all did begin to cry unto the voice of him who had shaken the earth; yea, they did cry even until

the cloud of darkness was dispersed.⁴³ And it came to pass that when they cast their eyes about, and saw that the cloud of darkness was dispersed from overshadowing them, behold, they saw that they were encircled about, yea every soul, by a pillar of fire.⁴⁴ And Nephi and Lehi were in the midst of them; yea, they were encircled about; yea, they were as if in the midst of a flaming fire, yet it did harm them not, neither did it take hold upon the walls of the prison; and they were filled with that joy which is unspeakable and full of glory.

⁴⁵ And behold, the Holy Spirit of God did come down from heaven, and did enter into their hearts, and they were filled as if with fire, and they could speak forth marvelous words.⁴⁶ And it came to pass that there came a voice unto them, yea, a pleasant voice, as if it were a whisper, saying,⁴⁷ “Peace, peace be unto you, because of your faith in my Well Beloved, who was from the foundation of the world.”

⁴⁸ And now, when they heard this they cast up their eyes as if to behold from whence the voice came; and behold, they saw the heavens open; and angels came down out of heaven and ministered unto them.⁴⁹ And there were about three hundred souls who saw and heard these things; and they were bidden to go forth and marvel not, neither should they doubt.

36: *Turned him about*, apparently in an attempt to flee, he was facing the exit, as were the people in v. 37. *Faces... shine exceedingly*, a detail reminiscent of Moses at Ex 34.29–35, and Abinadi at Mos 13.5. **39:** *They do converse with the angels*, an example of the phenomenon described by Alma at Alma 12.29; cf. v. 11 above. **41:** Given the fact that they had been taught by Alma, Amulek, and Zeezrom, the Nephite dissenters in the prison (v. 27) must have been Zoramites, since that mission was the only time the three preached together, some 45 years prior; see Alma 31.6–7. Echoes of that episode can be found in the question *what shall we do* (see Alma 32.5, 9) and the advice to *cry unto* the voice (repeated six times in Alma 34.18–25). **43:** The earlier fire that had enveloped Nephi and Lehi has now returned and expanded to encircle everyone. **44:** *Joy which is unspeakable and full of glory*, 1 Pet 1.8. **46:** The voice is again described as whisper-like (v. 30), but this time it is *pleasant*. *Peace be unto you*, Lk 24.36; Jn 20.19, 21, 26 (always spoken by the resurrected Jesus). **48:** Seeing the heavens open and angels descending had precedents at 1 Ne 1.8–10 (Lehi₁) and 11.14, 30 (Nephi₁), and prefigures the experience of the Nephites and Lamanites at Bountiful at 3 Ne 17.24. **49:** *Bidden*, commanded.

Lamanite Missionaries Convert Their Brethren; the Lamanites Return Nephite Lands

⁵⁰ And it came to pass that they did go forth, and did minister unto the people, declaring throughout all the regions round about all the things which they had heard and seen, inasmuch that the more part of the Lamanites were convinced of them, because of the greatness of the evidences which they had received.

⁵¹ And as many as were convinced did lay down their weapons of war, and also their hatred and the tradition of their fathers. ⁵² And it came to pass that they did yield up unto the Nephites the lands of their possession.

The Righteousness of the Lamanites and the Joy of the Church

6 ¹ And it came to pass that when the sixty and second year of the reign of the judges had ended,^a all these things had happened and the Lamanites had become, the more part of them, a righteous people, inasmuch that their righteousness did exceed that

of the Nephites, because of their firmness and their steadiness in the faith. ² For behold, there were many of the Nephites who had become hardened and impenitent and grossly wicked, insomuch that they did reject the word of God and all the preaching and prophesying which did come among them. ³ Nevertheless, the people of the church did have great joy because of the conversion of the Lamanites, yea, because of the church of God, which had been established among them. And they did fellowship one with another, and did rejoice one with another, and did have great joy.

⁴ And it came to pass that many of the Lamanites did come down into the land of Zarahemla, and did declare unto the people of the Nephites the manner of their conversion, and did exhort them to faith and repentance.

⁵ Yea, and many did preach with exceedingly great power and authority, unto the bringing down many of them into the depths of humility, to be the humble followers of God and the Lamb. ⁶ And it came to pass that many of the Lamanites did go into the land northward;

^a 1 –30 years; see Hel 4.18

50a: The converted Lamanites now minister to others, as they themselves were ministered to by angels in v. 48.

50b–52: The narrator gives these events scant attention, but they are remarkable in the context of the rest of the BoM. A majority of the Lamanites are converted to Christianity, they become a peace-loving people, and they voluntarily return captured lands to the Nephites. This is far greater religious and political success than was achieved by Alma, the sons of Mosiah, or Captain Moroni, and a crucial element seems to be Lamanites preaching to other Lamanites about their encounter with angels—something that had been reported in earlier generations at Alma 19.34–35 and 24.14.

CHAPTER 6

1–6: The majority of Lamanites have now become more righteous than the Nephites. **1:** *Become . . . a righteous people*, similar phrasing is consistently used to describe Lamanite conversions; see Alma 19.35; 23.7; 25.14. *Because of their firmness and their steadiness in the faith*, it was difficult to convert the Lamanites, but once they had turned to God their faithfulness was legendary, as with the Anti-Nephi-Lehies; see Alma 23.6; 24.19; 3 Ne 6.14. This theme will be taken up at length by Samuel in ch. 15. Note that variants of the phrase “firm and steadfast,” which was part of Lehi’s hope for Lemuel at 1 Ne 2.10, are applied to faithful Lamanites here and also at Hel 15.8, 10; 3 Ne 6.14. **2:** *Hardened and impenitent*, see Alma 47.36; the Nephites as a whole have now become like the earlier dissenters, and both groups are worse than the Lamanites (the phrase may reflect Rom 2.5). **3:** Lamanite belief in Christ was quickly followed by the organization of church congregations among them. **4:** In a reversal of roles, Lamanite missionaries now attempt to bring Nephites to the truth. Zarahemla had recently been given back to the Nephites (5.52). **5:** *Many did preach with exceedingly great power and authority*, as Nephi and Lehi had at 5.18. **6:** Nephi will return six years later; his story continues at 7.1. There is no record of Lehi’s return, though he seems to be back in Zarahemla at 11.19, 23. The people in the land northward are those described at 3.3–12; cf. Alma 63.4–6.

and also Nephi and Lehi went into the land northward, to preach unto the people. And thus ended the sixty and third year.^a

The Nephites and Lamanites Mingle and Prosper

⁷ And behold, there was peace in all the land, insomuch that the Nephites did go into whatsoever part of the land they would, whether among the Nephites or the Lamanites. ⁸ And it came to pass that the Lamanites did also go whithersoever they would, whether it were among the Lamanites or among the Nephites; and thus they did have free intercourse one with another, to buy and to sell, and to get gain, according to their desire.

⁹ And it came to pass that they became exceeding rich, both the Lamanites and the Nephites; and they did have an exceeding plenty of gold, and of silver, and of all manner of precious metals, both in the land south and in the land north. ¹⁰ (Now the land south was called Lehi, and the land north was called Mulek, which was after the son of Zedekiah; for the Lord did bring Mulek into the land north, and Lehi into the land south.) ¹¹ And behold, there was all manner of gold in both these lands, and of silver, and of precious ore of every kind; and there were also curious workmen, who did work all kinds of ore and did refine it; and thus they did become rich.

¹² They did raise grain in abundance, both in the north and in the south; and they did

flourish exceedingly, both in the north and in the south. And they did multiply and wax exceedingly strong in the land. And they did raise many flocks and herds, yea, many fatlings. ¹³ Behold their women did toil and spin, and did make all manner of cloth, of fine-twined linen and cloth of every kind, to clothe their nakedness. And thus the sixty and fourth year did pass away in peace.^b ¹⁴ And in the sixty and fifth year^c they did also have great joy and peace, yea, much preaching and many prophecies concerning that which was to come. And thus passed away the sixty and fifth year.

The Gadianton Robbers Reappear

¹⁵ And it came to pass that in the sixty and sixth year of the reign of the judges,^d behold, Cezoram was murdered by an unknown hand as he sat upon the judgment-seat. And it came to pass that in the same year, that his son, who had been appointed by the people in his stead, was also murdered. And thus ended the sixty and sixth year.

¹⁶ And in the commencement of the sixty and seventh year^e the people began to grow exceedingly wicked again. ¹⁷ For behold, the

^a 6 –29 years

^b 13 –28 years

^c 14 –27 years

^d 15 –26 years

^e 16 –25 years

8: *Intercourse*, WB: “communication; commerce; connection by reciprocal dealings between persons or nations.” **9–11:** These verses exhibit a chiasmic structure. **10:** Under this binary geographical scheme, which encompasses the entirety of Nephite and Lamanite territory, Zarahemla and Bountiful would be included in *the land north*; elsewhere “the land northward,” that is, the Jaredite homeland, is regarded as being north of those two population centers. *The land south* is also referred to as “the land of Lehi-Nephi” or “the land of Nephi.” *Mulek... the son of Zedekiah*, the identification of Mulek as an heir to the Davidic royal line, at this late point in the narrative, is a stunning revelation to readers. *The Lord did bring Mulek into the land north*, see Omni 1.15–16; Mos 25.2. **11:** *Curious workmen*, see Alma 63.5n. **13:** The wording here is similar to Mos 10.5; as was common in the ancient world, spinning and weaving were considered women’s work. **15:** Cezoram had been appointed chief judge four years earlier, at 5.1. The assassination of two chief judges in a single year is surprising in light of vv. 7–14. There seems to be an underlying current of social dislocation, resentment, or resistance that the narrator has passed over in his account of economic progress and social harmony. **16–17:** Apparently, gaining wealth had distracted the people from warfare, though their pursuit of riches has led to pride and crime. **17:** The phrase *secret murder(s)* has hitherto occurred only at Alma 37.22, in a discussion of secret combinations among the Jaredites; its reappearance here is ominous.

Lord had blessed them so long with the riches of the world that they had not been stirred up to anger, to wars, nor to bloodshed; therefore they began to set their hearts upon their riches; yea, they began to seek to get gain that they might be lifted up one above another; therefore they began to commit secret murders, and to rob and to plunder, that they might get gain.

¹⁸ And now behold, those murderers and plunderers were a band who had been formed by Kishkumen and Gadianton. And now it had come to pass that there were many, even among the Nephites, of Gadianton's band. But behold, they were more numerous among the more wicked part of the Lamanites. And they were called Gadianton's robbers and murderers. ¹⁹ And it was they who did murder the chief judge Cezoram, and his son, while in the judgment-seat; and behold, they were not found.

²⁰ And now it came to pass that when the Lamanites found that there were robbers among them they were exceeding sorrowful; and they did use every means in their power to destroy them off the face of the earth. ²¹ But behold, Satan did stir up the hearts of the more part of the Nephites, insomuch that they did unite with those bands of robbers, and did enter into their covenants and their oaths, that they would protect and preserve one another in whatsoever difficult circumstances they should be placed, that they should not

suffer for their murders, and their plunderings, and their stealings.

²² And it came to pass that they did have their signs, yea, their secret signs, and their secret words; and this that they might distinguish a brother who had entered into the covenant, that whatsoever wickedness his brother should do he should not be injured by his brother, nor by those who did belong to his band, who had taken this covenant. ²³ And thus they might murder, and plunder, and steal, and commit whoredoms and all manner of wickedness, contrary to the laws of their country and also the laws of their God. ²⁴ And whosoever of those who belonged to their band should reveal unto the world of their wickedness and their abominations, should be tried, not according to the laws of their country, but according to the laws of their wickedness, which had been given by Gadianton and Kishkumen.

Secret Oaths and Covenants from the Author of All Sin

²⁵ Now behold, it is these secret oaths and covenants which Alma commanded his son should not go forth unto the world, lest they should be a means of bringing down the people unto destruction. ²⁶ Now behold, those secret oaths and covenants did not come forth unto Gadianton from the records which were delivered unto Helaman; but behold, they were put into the heart of Gadianton by that

18: See 2.1–11 for the story of the Gadianton band's origins. At the end of that passage, dated to a period some twenty-five years previous, the robbers fled into the wilderness; nothing has been reported of them since, until this verse. It is unclear why the robbers were named after Gadianton rather than Kishkumen, their first founder, though in v. 26 it appears that their oaths and rituals had been created by Gadianton; cf. 11.26. **21:** As an organization bound together by covenants of loyalty and mutual assistance, the Gadianton robbers can be viewed as a clandestine, negative counterpart to the church of God (note that the robbers swear their oaths "by their everlasting Maker" at 1.11). **22:** *Secret signs*, probably secret gestures, as at 2.7. **24:** The robbers enforced secrecy with their own tribunals, according to rules laid down by their founders. **25–30:** Mormon, noting the similarities between Jaredite secret combinations and the Gadianton robbers, is eager to absolve Helaman from any suspicion that he might have disclosed specifics from records in his safekeeping; cf. Alma 63.12. Rather, the similarities are attributed to the influence of Satan in creating such organizations; indeed, at 8.28, Satan is identified as a cofounder of the Gadianton robbers. **25:** See Alma 37.27–32. **26:** *That same being who did entice our first parents*, see Gen 3.1–5. The phrase *that same being* occurs five times in vv. 26–29, and nowhere else in scripture.

same being who did entice our first parents to partake of the forbidden fruit—²⁷ yea, that same being who did plot with Cain, that if he would murder his brother Abel it should not be known unto the world. And he did plot with Cain and his followers from that time forth.

²⁸ And also it is that same being who put it into the hearts of the people to build a tower sufficiently high that they might get to heaven. And it was that same being who led on the people who came from that tower into this land; who spread the works of darkness and abominations over all the face of the land, until he dragged the people down to an entire destruction, and to an everlasting hell.

²⁹ Yea, it is that same being who put it into the heart of Gadianton to still carry on the work of darkness, and of secret murder; and he has brought it forth from the beginning of man even down to this time.³⁰ And behold, it is he who is the author of all sin. And behold, he doth carry on his works of darkness and secret murder, and doth hand down their plots, and their oaths, and their covenants, and their plans of awful wickedness, from generation to generation according as he can get hold upon the hearts of the children of men.

Nephites and Lamanites Respond Differently to the Gadianton Robbers

³¹ And now behold, he had got great hold upon the hearts of the Nephites; yea, insomuch that they had become exceedingly wicked; yea, the more part of them had turned out of the way of righteousness, and did trample under their feet the commandments of God, and did turn unto their own ways, and did build up unto themselves idols of their gold and their silver.³² And it came to pass that all these iniquities did come unto them in the space of not many years, insomuch that a more part of it had come unto them in the sixty and seventh year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi.^a³³ And they did grow in their iniquities in the sixty and eighth year also,^b to the great sorrow and lamentation of the righteous.

³⁴ And thus we see that the Nephites did begin to dwindle in unbelief, and grow in wickedness and abominations, while the Lamanites began to grow exceedingly in the knowledge of their God; yea, they did begin to keep his statutes and commandments, and to walk in truth and uprightness before him.

^a ³² –25 years; see v. 16 above

^b ³³ –24 years

27: On Cain's murder of Abel, see Gen 4.1–16. The biblical account says nothing about Satan or a plot to keep the killing secret, though the idea appears in more detail in the LDS Book of Moses at 5.28–31, 47–52. **28:** *A tower sufficiently high*, see Gen 11.4; again Satan plays no role in the biblical version of the story. Also, the Genesis account does not explicitly regard the tower as a portal to heaven. *Led on*, misled. The phrase is grammatically separate from *into this land* (which further identifies the people who came from the tower) since the Jaredites were led to the promised land by God rather than by Satan (cf. Ether 6.5–11; 7.27). The destruction of the Jaredites is attributed to their *works of darkness and abominations* (as at Alma 37.21–23), which originated with Satan. **29:** See 2.4–5, 11. **30:** *Author*, WB: “one who produces, creates, or brings into being.” **31:** In contrast to the OT, references to worshipping idols are relatively uncommon in the BoM. The combination *turned out of the way... [against] the commandments of God... build up unto themselves idols of their gold* is an allusion to the incident of the golden calf at Ex 32.8; cf. Deut 9.12 (both verses include “turned aside quickly out of the way”; the BoM adds “out of the way of righteousness”). *Turn unto their own ways*, Isa 53.6. **32:** *In the space of not many years*, great joy in the church, along with humility and repentance among the Nephites, had been mentioned in vv. 3–5 above, just four years earlier. **34–36:** In this series of three “thus we see” comments, the second and third expand on elements in the first. There was a similar series at 3.27–29, toward the beginning of original ch. II (which ends here). **34:** *Statutes and commandments*, see 3.20n. The narrator has used Deuteronomistic phrasing before to describe the righteousness of converted Lamanites; see Alma 25.14. *Walk in truth and uprightness before him* echoes a description of King David at 1 Kings 3.6.

³⁵ And thus we see that the Spirit of the Lord began to withdraw from the Nephites, because of the wickedness and the hardness of their hearts.

³⁶ And thus we see that the Lord began to pour out his Spirit upon the Lamanites, because of their easiness and willingness to believe in his words.

³⁷ And it came to pass that the Lamanites did hunt the band of robbers of Gadianton; and they did preach the word of God among the more wicked part of them, insomuch that this band of robbers was utterly destroyed from among the Lamanites.

³⁸ And it came to pass on the other hand, that the Nephites did build them up and support them, beginning at the more wicked part of them, until they had overspread all the land of the Nephites, and had seduced the more part of the righteous until they had come down to believe in their works and partake of their spoils, and to join with them in their secret murders and combinations. ³⁹ And thus they did obtain the sole management of the government, insomuch that they did trample under their feet and smite and rend and turn their backs upon the poor and the meek, and the humble followers of God. ⁴⁰ And thus we see that they were in an awful state, and ripening for an everlasting destruction. ⁴¹ And it came to pass that thus ended the sixty and eighth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi.^a

The Ministries of Nephi₂ and Samuel₂: Helaman 7–16

[*Mormon's heading*] The Prophecy of Nephi, the Son of Helaman—God threatens the

people of Nephi that he will visit them in his anger, to their utter destruction except they repent of their wickedness. God smiteth the people of Nephi with pestilence; they repent and turn unto him. Samuel, a Lamanite, prophesies unto the Nephites.

Nephi₂'s Lament; the Gadianton Robbers in Control of the Government

[III] **7** ¹ Behold, now it came to pass in the sixty and ninth year of the reign of the judges over the people of the Nephites,^b that Nephi, the son of Helaman, returned to the land of Zarahemla from the land northward. ² For he had been forth among the people who were in the land northward, and did preach the word of God unto them, and did prophesy many things unto them; ³ and they did reject all his words, insomuch that he could not stay among them, but returned again unto the land of his nativity.

⁴ And seeing the people in a state of such awful wickedness, and those Gadianton robbers filling the judgment-seats—having usurped the power and authority of the land; laying aside the commandments of God, and not in the least aright before him; doing no justice unto the children of men; ⁵ condemning the righteous because of their righteousness; letting the guilty and the wicked go unpunished because of their money; and moreover to be held in office at the head of government, to rule and do according to their wills, that they might get gain and glory of the world, and, moreover, that they might the more easily

^a 41 –24 years; see v. 33 above

^b 1 –23 years

³⁵: This was also the narrator's assessment at 4.24. ³⁶: *Easiness*, WB: "readiness to comply; prompt compliance." ³⁸: The "down" in *come down to believe* is unexpected; perhaps it rhetorically balances the *build them up* earlier in the verse. ³⁹: *Sole*, unshared, exclusive. The verse combines several metaphors for ill treatment of the poor, though some of the actions may have been literal as well.

CHAPTER 7

Heading: *Pestilence* here refers to the famine of chs. 10–11 rather than to contagious disease. **1:** Nephi had left for the land northward six years earlier; see 6.6. **4:** *Aright*, WB: "rightly; without mistake or crime."

commit adultery, and steal, and kill, and do according to their own wills—

⁶ Now this great iniquity had come upon the Nephites, in the space of not many years; and when Nephi saw it, his heart was swollen with sorrow within his breast; and he did exclaim in the agony of his soul, ⁷ “Oh, that I could have had my days in the days when my father Nephi first came out of the land of Jerusalem, that I could have joyed with him in the promised land; then were his people easy to be entreated, firm to keep the commandments of God, and slow to be led to do iniquity; and they were quick to hearken unto the words of the Lord— ⁸ Yea, if my days could have been in those days, then would my soul have had joy in the righteousness of my brethren. ⁹ But behold, I am consigned that these are my days, and that my soul shall be filled with sorrow because of this the wickedness of my brethren.”

Nephi₂ Preaches from a Tower

¹⁰ And behold, now it came to pass that it was upon a tower, which was in the garden of Nephi, which was by the highway which led to the chief market, which was in the city of Zarahemla; therefore, Nephi had bowed himself upon the tower which was in his garden, which tower was also near unto the garden

gate by which led the highway. ¹¹ And it came to pass that there were certain men passing by and saw Nephi as he was pouring out his soul unto God upon the tower; and they ran and told the people what they had seen, and the people came together in multitudes that they might know the cause of so great mourning for the wickedness of the people.

¹² And now, when Nephi arose he beheld the multitudes of people who had gathered together. ¹³ And it came to pass that he opened his mouth and said unto them:

“Behold, why have ye gathered yourselves together? That I may tell you of your iniquities? ¹⁴ Yea, because I have got upon my tower that I might pour out my soul unto my God, because of the exceeding sorrow of my heart, which is because of your iniquities! ¹⁵ And because of my mourning and lamentation ye have gathered yourselves together, and do marvel; yea, and ye have great need to marvel; yea, ye ought to marvel because ye are given away that the devil has got so great hold upon your hearts. ¹⁶ Yea, how could you have given way to the enticing of him who is seeking to hurl away your souls down to everlasting misery and endless wo?”

¹⁷ “O repent ye, repent ye! Why will ye die? Turn ye, turn ye unto the Lord your God.

6: Iniquities that come *in the space of not many years* is a regular lament in the book of Helaman; see 4.26; 6.32; 11.26 (these are the only occurrences of the phrase in the BoM). 7–8: Nephi seems to view the first generation of Nephites through the lens of nostalgia; the Small Plates do not exactly relate the story of a people eagerly pursuing righteousness. **9:** *I am consigned*, apparently meaning “I am resigned” or “I reluctantly accept.” **10:** The description of location here is unusually specific and also includes the only reference to a *market* in the BoM. **11:** It is not clear whether this private tower was designed specifically for prayer, but Nephi’s actions—perhaps dramatic gesticulating or weeping—were unusual enough to draw a crowd. The narrator emphasizes the visual aspects, though the next verse demonstrates that Nephi could be heard from the tower as well, if he had been praying aloud (note that the people realize he is praying about their wickedness). **13–21:** Nephi asks a series of three questions that he answers himself: Why have you gathered? Why has God forsaken you? How could you have forgotten God? Interspersed are two rhetorical questions that go unanswered: How could you have given way to the devil? Why will you die? **15:** *Given away*, with the implication that the people have given themselves over to the devil. *The devil has got so great hold upon your hearts*, as at Ammonihah; see Alma 8.9; 10.25; cf. Hel 6.30–31; 16.23. **16:** *Hurl*, WB: “to throw with violence,” though also possible is OED: “to drag or pull with violence.” *Misery and endless wo*, cf. Alma 9.11 and Hel 5.12, where the phrase describes the situation into which the devil seeks to drag humankind. **17:** This is the sixth instance of a doubled *repent ye* in the BoM (there are none in the Bible), but the first time the words are uttered by a human being. The only other double *turn ye* in scripture is at Ezek 33.11: “turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?” The BoM thus adapts the biblical verse by substituting *unto the Lord your God* for “from your evil ways.”

Why has he forsaken you? ¹⁸ It is because you have hardened your hearts; yea, ye will not hearken unto the voice of the good shepherd; yea, ye have provoked him to anger against you. ¹⁹ And behold, instead of gathering you, except ye will repent, behold, he shall scatter you forth that ye shall become meat for dogs and wild beasts.

²⁰ “O, how could you have forgotten your God in the very day that he has delivered you? ²¹ But behold, it is to get gain, to be praised of men, yea, and that ye might get gold and silver. And ye have set your hearts upon the riches and the vain things of this world, for the which ye do murder, and plunder, and steal, and bear false witness against your neighbor, and do all manner of iniquity. ²² And for this cause wo shall come unto you except ye shall repent. For if ye will not repent, behold, this great city, and also all those great cities which are round about, which are in the land of our possession, shall be taken away that ye shall have no place in them; for behold, the Lord will not grant unto you strength, as he has hitherto done, to withstand against your enemies.

²³ “For behold, thus saith the Lord, ‘I will not show unto the wicked of my strength, to one more than the other, save it be unto those who repent of their sins, and hearken unto my words.’

“Now therefore, I would that ye should behold, my brethren, that it shall be better for the Lamanites than for you except ye shall repent. ²⁴ For behold, they are more righteous than you, for they have not sinned against that great knowledge which ye have received; therefore the Lord will be merciful unto them; yea, he will lengthen out their days and increase their seed, even when thou shalt be utterly destroyed except thou shalt repent.

²⁵ “Yea, wo be unto you because of that great abomination which has come among you; and ye have united yourselves unto it, yea, to that secret band which was established by Gadianton!

²⁶ “Yea, wo shall come unto you because of that pride which ye have suffered to enter your hearts, which has lifted you up beyond that which is good because of your exceeding great riches!

²⁷ “Yea, wo be unto you because of your wickedness and abominations! ²⁸ And except ye repent ye shall perish; yea, even your lands shall be taken from you, and ye shall be destroyed from off the face of the earth.

²⁹ “Behold now, I do not say that these things shall be, of myself, because it is not of myself that I know these things; but behold, I know that these things are true because the Lord God has made them known unto me, therefore I testify that they shall be.”

18: The phrase *good shepherd* occurs at Jn 10.11, 14, but the idea of hearkening to his voice can be found in Alma 5, where it appeared four times; cf. Mos 26.21. **19:** This verse plays on expectations of what a shepherd should do. **20:** *In the very day*, implying that God’s deliverance of his people is recent, or ongoing, or imminent. **21:** Nephi’s words here were foreshadowed by Mormon’s description at 6.17, which included the phrases “set their hearts upon their riches” and “get gain,” with references to murder, plunder, and theft. *Bear false witness against your neighbor*, Ex 20.16. **22:** The fulfillment of this prophecy is averted when the Nephites repent in ch. 11. **23a:** In times of political or military crisis, God will not intervene one way or the other if both sides are wicked. **23b–24:** Because of the revelations the Nephites have received over generations, God will hold them to a higher standard. Consequently, if the Lamanites sin, they will nevertheless persist, while unrepentant Nephites will be utterly destroyed. Alma made a similar point at Alma 9.18–24 and 45.11–14 (which also mentioned sinning against great knowledge); cf. Samuel’s subsequent prophecy at Hel 15.14–15; see 2 Ne 4.5–9n. **27:** This warning will become a refrain in Samuel’s preaching at 13.14–16. **29:** Nephi concludes with an assertion that his words are revelation rather than opinion. *Not of myself that I know these things*, Nephi is echoing his great-grandfather’s words at Alma 5.45–46; 36.4; 38.6.

The Reaction of Gadianton Judges and Others

8 ¹ And now it came to pass that when Nephi had said these words, behold, there were men who were judges, who also belonged to the secret band of Gadianton, and they were angry, and they cried out against him, saying unto the people, “Why do ye not seize upon this man and bring him forth, that he may be condemned according to the crime which he has done?” ² Why seest thou this man, and hearest him revile against this people and against our law?” ³ (For behold, Nephi had spoken unto them concerning the corruptness of their law; yea, many things did Nephi speak which cannot be written; and nothing did he speak which was contrary to the commandments of God.)

⁴ And those judges were angry with him because he spake plainly unto them concerning their secret works of darkness; nevertheless, they durst not lay their own hands upon him, for they feared the people lest they should cry out against them. ⁵ Therefore they did cry unto the people, saying, “Why do you suffer this man to revile against us? For behold he doth condemn all this people, even unto destruction; yea, and also that these our great

cities shall be taken from us, that we shall have no place in them.” ⁶ And now we know that this is impossible, for behold, we are powerful, and our cities great, therefore our enemies can have no power over us.”

⁷ And it came to pass that thus they did stir up the people to anger against Nephi, and raised contentions among them; for there were some who did cry out, “Let this man alone, for he is a good man, and those things which he saith will surely come to pass except we repent;” ⁸ yea, behold, all the judgments will come upon us which he has testified unto us; for we know that he has testified aright unto us concerning our iniquities. And behold they are many, and he knoweth as well all things which shall befall us as he knoweth of our iniquities; ⁹ yea, and behold, if he had not been a prophet he could not have testified concerning those things.”

Nephi₂ Cites the Example of Moses

¹⁰ And it came to pass that those people who sought to destroy Nephi were compelled because of their fear, that they did not lay their hands on him; therefore he began again to speak unto them, seeing that he had gained favor in the eyes of some, insomuch that the

CHAPTER 8

1–8: A similar scenario can be found at Jer 26, where some people want to kill a prophet because of his denunciations, while others believe that he is a true messenger from God. **1–2:** *The crime which he has done*, the charge of reviling against the laws was also made by lawyers in the city of Ammonihah; see Alma 10.24, 28–29; 14.2, 5. **3:** Apparently Nephi did indeed criticize Nephite law (as a former chief judge), though the narrator is quick to add that his accusations were in accord with God’s commandments. **4–5:** Because the civil authorities are unsure of how the public will react to official acts of repression, they hope to instigate mob violence. *Great cities... no place in them*, see 7.22. **6:** There are ominous echoes here of the destruction of Ammonihah; see Alma 9.4–5; 16.9. **7–9:** Although the narrator notes that Nephi had both detractors and defenders in the crowd, he only gives voice to the latter. **8–9:** The implied argument is that if Nephi is able to reveal secret things in the present, his predictions about the future should be heeded. The first part of the argument will be dramatically validated in ch. 9 (see in particular 9.2, 5). **10–23:** In contrast to 5.6–12, where Helaman taught his sons by reminding them of their Nephite heritage, in this section and the next Nephi instructs the inhabitants of Zarahemla—presumably still mostly comprising Mulekites (Mos 25.2)—by citing traditions from the Brass Plates. **10:** *Compelled*, restrained.

remainder of them did fear.¹¹ Therefore he was constrained to speak more unto them saying:

“Behold, my brethren, have ye not read that God gave power unto one man, even Moses, to smite upon the waters of the Red Sea, and they parted hither and thither, insomuch that the Israelites, who were our fathers, came through upon dry ground, and the waters closed upon the armies of the Egyptians and swallowed them up?¹² And now behold, if God gave unto this man such power, then why should ye dispute among yourselves, and say that he hath given unto me no power whereby I may know concerning the judgments that shall come upon you except ye repent?

¹³“But, behold, ye not only deny my words, but ye also deny all the words which have been spoken by our fathers, and also the words which were spoken by this man, Moses, who had such great power given unto him, yea, the words which he hath spoken concerning the coming of the Messiah.¹⁴ Yea, did he not bear record that the Son of God should come? And as he lifted up the brazen serpent in the wilderness, even so shall he be lifted up who should come.¹⁵ And as many as should look upon that serpent should live, even so as many

as should look upon the Son of God with faith, having a contrite spirit, might live, even unto that life which is eternal.”

Nephi; Refers to Other Ancient Prophecies of Christ

¹⁶“And now behold, Moses did not only testify of these things, but also all the holy prophets, from his days even to the days of Abraham.¹⁷ Yea, and behold, Abraham saw of his coming, and was filled with gladness and did rejoice.¹⁸ Yea, and behold I say unto you, that Abraham not only knew of these things, but there were many before the days of Abraham who were called by the order of God; yea, even after the order of his Son; and this that it should be shown unto the people, a great many thousand years before his coming, that even redemption should come unto them.

¹⁹“And now I would that ye should know, that even since the days of Abraham there have been many prophets that have testified these things; yea, behold, the prophet Zenos did testify boldly; for the which he was slain.

²⁰ And behold, also Zenock, and also Ezias,^a

^a 20 P *Ezaias*

11–12: Nephi here seems to be responding to his detractors whose specific objections were left out of v. 7. Their complaints were presumably along the lines of Alma 9.6 (again from Ammonihah): “Who is God, that sendeth no more authority than one man among this people?” **11:** See Ex 14.21–29. At 1 Ne 4.2 and 17.26–27 Moses was said to have parted the sea by his word; here he performs the miracle by striking the waters, much as he did at Ex 17.6 and Num 20.11 when water came from a rock. In the original Exodus version, Moses simply “stretched out his hand over the sea.” *Have ye not read*, Nephi’s question assumes some degree of literacy among his listeners, and access to scripture; see Alma 63.12. **13:** Nephi regards his prophecies as being in continuity with his Nephite forefathers, as well as with Moses. **14–15:** *Did he not bear record*, the standard BoM examples of Moses’s witness of the Messiah are Deut 18.15, 18 (see 1 Ne 10.4; 22.20–21; Mos 13.33; 3 Ne 20.23) and the episode of *brazen serpent* at Num 21.4–9. This is the fifth time the story has been retold in the BoM, and in each instance a Nephite prophet has added something new to the original narrative; see the notes at 1 Ne 17.41; 2 Ne 25.20; Alma 33.19b–20; 37.46. Here Nephi continues Alma’s correlation of the bronze serpent and Christ, suggesting that Moses at the time *bore record that the Son of God should come*, and noting that in contrast to the incident in Num, where merely glancing was enough to preserve life, those who look to Christ must do so *with faith, having a contrite spirit*, and thereby may gain *eternal life*. **16:** *Even to the days of Abraham*, that is, “even back to the days of Abraham”; Nephi is working backward chronologically; cf. Mos 28.17. **18:** *The order of God*, this pre-Mosaic, non-hereditary, Christian priesthood order was the subject of Alma 13 (at Ammonihah). **19–20:** Zenos and Zenock were non-canonical Hebrew prophets; for more information see 1 Ne 19.10–16; Jacob 5; Alma 33.3–13 (on Zenos); and 1 Ne 19.10; Alma 33.15–17 (on Zenock). **20:** *Ezias*, nothing more is known of this prophet, though the reading in P is similar to “Esaiaas,” the Greek form of the name Isaiah that occurs 21 times in the NT. Perhaps Nephi is referring to a second prophet named Isaiah who lived in OT times. *We know that Jerusalem was*

and also Isaiah, and Jeremiah, (Jeremiah being that same prophet who testified of the destruction of Jerusalem) and now we know that Jerusalem was destroyed according to the words of Jeremiah. O then why not the Son of God come, according to his prophecy?

²¹ “And now will you dispute that Jerusalem was destroyed? Will ye say that the sons of Zedekiah were not slain, all except it were Mulek? Yea, and do ye not behold that the seed of Zedekiah are with us, and they were driven out of the land of Jerusalem? But behold, this is not all—²² our father Lehi was driven out of Jerusalem because he testified of these things. Nephi also testified of these things, and also almost all of our fathers, even down to this time; yea, they have testified of the coming of Christ, and have looked forward, and have rejoiced in his day which is to come. ²³ And behold, he is God, and he is with them, and he did manifest himself unto them, that they were redeemed by him; and they gave unto him glory, because of that which is to come.”

Nephi₂ Reveals an Assassination

²⁴ “And now, seeing ye know these things and cannot deny them except ye shall lie, therefore in this ye have sinned, for ye have rejected all these things, notwithstanding so many evidences which ye have received; yea, even ye have received all things, both things in heaven, and all things which are in the earth, as a witness that they are true. ²⁵ But behold, ye have rejected the truth, and rebelled against your holy God; and even at this time, instead of laying up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where nothing doth corrupt, and where nothing can come which is unclean, ye are heaping up for yourselves wrath against the day of judgment. ²⁶ Yea, even at this time ye are ripening, because of your murders and your fornication and wickedness, for everlasting destruction; yea, and except ye repent it will come unto you soon.

²⁷ “Yea, behold it is now even at your doors; yea, go ye in unto the judgment-seat, and search; and behold, your judge is murdered,

destroyed, in 586 BCE. The Nephites knew of this event from revelation (see 2 Ne 1.4) and from the testimony of the Mulekites, who had come to the New World after Jerusalem fell (see Omni 1.15). *According to the words of Jeremiah*, most of the chapters in the book of Jeremiah include prophetic warnings for Jerusalem; cf. 1 Ne 5.13; 7.14. The argument is that if Jeremiah was right about this crucial prediction, other prophecies that have yet to be fulfilled must also be credible. *According to his prophecy*, it is unclear which of Jeremiah’s words Nephi might have considered to be prophecies of Christ’s coming. In the NT, Jer 31.15 is cited as being fulfilled in Jesus (see Mt 2.17–18), and Jer 31.31–34 (on the new covenant) is quoted at Heb 8.8–12; 10.16–17. Lehi is aware of a Messianic interpretation of “righteous branch” (Jer 23.5; 33.15) at 2 Ne 3.5. **21:** On the slaying of the sons of Zedekiah, see 2 Kings 25.7; Jer 39.6; 52.10. *The seed of Zedekiah are with us*, that is, the Mulekites; see Omni 1.15–16; Mos 25.2; Hel 6.10. **22–23:** Of all the Nephite prophets, he cites only Lehi₁ and Nephi₁, by name, perhaps because their prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem had been verified by the Mulekites, or because he and his brother were their namesakes (5.6–7), or because they had both specifically been *redeemed by [God]* (2 Ne 1.15; 33.6). **22:** *Lehi was driven out of Jerusalem because he testified*, see 1 Ne 1.18–20. *Nephi also testified*, see 1 Ne 11.13–33; 19.8–9; 2 Ne 25.12–13, 19. *And also almost all of our fathers*, it is not clear who would be excluded from a list. **23:** An almost catechistic list of five affirmations. *He is with them*, perhaps a pun on the Isaianic title Immanuel (Isa 7.14), which was interpreted at Mt 1.23 as “God with us”; or Nephi may be implying that the prophets are currently in heaven with God. **24:** *Cannot deny them except ye shall lie*, the BoM is wary of the notion of sincere disbelief; cf. Jacob 7.17–19; Alma 30.52–53. *All things... witness that they are true*, a similar claim was made by Nephi’s great-grandfather Alma to Korihor at Alma 30.43–44. The implied argument is that since God created all things in heaven and earth (as at Col 1.16–17; Mos 4.2, 9; Alma 18.28; 22.10), those things bear witness of their creator. **25:** *Laying up for yourself treasures in heaven, where nothing doth corrupt*, Mt 6.20; cf. Hel 5.8. The idea that “no unclean thing” can enter heaven is found at 1 Ne 10.21; Alma 11.37; 40.26; 3 Ne 27.19. *Heaping up for yourselves wrath against the day of judgment* conflates Job 36.13–14 and Rom 2.5. **27:** *Your judge, Seezoram*, who must have been appointed after the murders of Cezoram and his son three years earlier (6.15); his name is given at 9.23.

and he lieth in his blood; and he hath been murdered by his brother, who seeketh to sit in the judgment-seat.²⁸ And behold, they both belong to your secret band, whose author is Gadianton and the evil one who seeketh to destroy the souls of men.”

Five Men Are Sent to Confirm Nephi₂'s Revelation

9¹ Behold, now it came to pass that when Nephi had spoken these words, certain men who were among them ran to the judgment-seat; yea, even there were five who went, and they said among themselves, as they went,² “Behold, now we will know of a surety whether this man be a prophet and God hath commanded him to prophesy such marvelous things unto us. Behold, we do not believe that he hath; yea, we do not believe that he is a prophet; nevertheless, if this thing which he has said concerning the chief judge be true, that he be dead, then will we believe that the other words which he has spoken are true.”

³ And it came to pass that they ran in their might, and came in unto the judgment-seat; and behold, the chief judge had fallen to the earth, and did lie in his blood.⁴ And now behold, when they saw this they were astonished exceedingly, insomuch that they fell to the earth; for they had not believed the words which Nephi had spoken concerning the chief judge.⁵ But now, when they saw they believed, and fear came upon them lest all the judg-

ments which Nephi had spoken should come upon the people; therefore they did quake, and had fallen to the earth.

⁶ Now, immediately when the judge had been murdered—he being stabbed by his brother by a garb of secrecy, and he fled, and the servants ran and told the people, raising the cry of murder among them;⁷ and behold the people did gather themselves together unto the place of the judgment-seat—and behold, to their astonishment they saw those five men who had fallen to the earth.⁸ And now behold, the people knew nothing concerning the multitude who had gathered together at the garden of Nephi; therefore they said among themselves, “These men are they who have murdered the judge, and God has smitten them that they could not flee from us.”

⁹ And it came to pass that they laid hold on them, and bound them and cast them into prison. And there was a proclamation sent abroad that the judge was slain, and that the murderers had been taken and were cast into prison.

Nephi₂ Is Falsely Accused of Murder

¹⁰ And it came to pass that on the morrow the people did assemble themselves together to mourn and to fast, at the burial of the great chief judge who had been slain.¹¹ And thus also those judges who were at the garden of Nephi, and heard his words, were also gathered together at the burial.¹² And it came to pass that they

²⁸: *They both belong to your secret band*, there is a suggestion here that allies in wickedness will eventually turn on each other.

CHAPTER 9

1–2: Conversing while sprinting is unexpected, but the narrator provides a quotation to demonstrate that the five witnesses were originally skeptics. Later, in vv. 12 and 15, we learn that these five were actually sent by the judges who were disputing with Nephi. **2**: A clear example of an argument from fulfilled prophecy; see Alma 37.17n. **5**: *All the judgments which Nephi had spoken*, for instance, at 7.19, 22, 28. **6**: *By a garb of secrecy*, surreptitiously, an early 19th-c. idiom. *Cry of murder*, non-biblical but common in the 18th–19th c. **7**: Given the close timing of events, Nephi must have announced the murder just about the time it was happening. **8**: The crowd apparently did not listen or give credence to the explanation the five men would have given. **10**: This is the third chief judge to be murdered in three years; see 6.15n.

inquired among the people, saying, “Where are the five who were sent to inquire concerning the chief judge whether he was dead?”

And they answered and said, “Concerning this five whom ye say ye have sent, we know not; but there are five who are the murderers, whom we have cast into prison.”

¹³ And it came to pass that the judges desired that they should be brought; and they were brought, and behold they were the five who were sent; and behold the judges inquired of them to know concerning the matter, and they told them all that they had done, saying, ¹⁴ “We ran and came to the place of the judgment-seat, and when we saw all things even as Nephi had testified, we were astonished inasmuch that we fell to the earth; and when we were recovered from our astonishment, behold they cast us into prison. ¹⁵ Now, as for the murder of this man, we know not who has done it; and only this much we know, we ran and came according as ye desired, and behold he was dead, according to the words of Nephi.”

¹⁶ And now it came to pass that the judges did expound the matter unto the people, and did cry out against Nephi, saying, “Behold, we know that this Nephi must have agreed with some one to slay the judge, and then he might declare it unto us, that he might convert us unto his faith, that he might raise himself to be a great man, chosen of God, and a prophet. ¹⁷ And now behold, we will detect this man, and he shall confess his fault and make known unto us the true murderer of this judge.”

¹⁸ And it came to pass that the five were liberated on the day of the burial. Nevertheless, they did rebuke the judges in the words which

they had spoken against Nephi, and did contend with them one by one, insomuch that they did confound them.

Nephi₂ Reveals the Murderer

¹⁹ Nevertheless, they caused that Nephi should be taken and bound and brought before the multitude, and they began to question him in divers ways that they might cross him, that they might accuse him to death—²⁰ saying unto him, “Thou art confederate; who is this man that hath done this murder? Now tell us, and acknowledge thy fault”; saying, “Behold here is money; and also we will grant unto thee thy life if thou wilt tell us, and acknowledge the agreement which thou hast made with him.”

²¹ But Nephi said unto them, “O ye fools, ye uncircumcised of heart, ye blind, and ye stiffnecked people, do ye know how long the Lord your God will suffer you that ye shall go on in this your way of sin? ²² O ye ought to begin to howl and mourn, because of the great destruction which at this time doth await you, except ye shall repent.

²³ “Behold ye say that I have agreed with a man that he should murder Seezoram, our chief judge. But behold, I say unto you, that this is because I have testified unto you that ye might know concerning this thing; yea, even for a witness unto you, that I did know of the wickedness and abominations which are among you. ²⁴ And because I have done this, ye say that I have agreed with a man that he should do this thing; yea, because I showed unto you this sign ye are angry with me, and seek to destroy my life.

15: *According to the words of Nephi*, see 8.27. **16:** The judges fabricate a conspiracy theory; it is perhaps not coincidental that they themselves are part of a conspiracy; see 8.1. **17:** *Detect*, OED: “to expose (a person) . . . by making known his guilt or crime”; or WB: “to bring to light.” **19:** *Began to question him . . . that they might cross him*, the same strategy that was used at Mos 12.19 and Alma 10.16. **20:** *Confederate*, WB: “engaged in a confederacy,” which is in turn defined as “a combination of two or more persons to commit an unlawful act.” **21:** *Uncircumcised of/in heart*, unresponsive to God’s word; see Lev 26.41; Jer 9.26; Acts 7.51; 2 Ne 9.33. The OT references carry the connotation of minds that are blocked to God’s commandments. **22:** The people do repent at 11.7–9, but they will eventually backslide and *howl* and *mourn* after the destructions that precede Christ’s coming among them; see 3 Ne 8.23–25.

²⁵ “And now behold, I will show unto you another sign, and see if ye will in this thing seek to destroy me. ²⁶ Behold I say unto you: Go to the house of Seantum, who is the brother of Seezoram, and say unto him— ²⁷ ‘Has Nephi, the pretended prophet, who doth prophesy so much evil concerning this people, agreed with thee, in the which ye have murdered Seezoram, who is your brother?’ ²⁸ And behold, he shall say unto you, ‘Nay.’

²⁹ “And ye shall say unto him, ‘Have ye murdered your brother?’ ³⁰ And he shall stand with fear, and wist not what to say. And behold, he shall deny unto you; and he shall make as if he were astonished; nevertheless, he shall declare unto you that he is innocent.

³¹ “But behold, ye shall examine him, and ye shall find blood upon the skirts of his cloak. ³² And when ye have seen this, ye shall say, ‘From whence cometh this blood? Do we not know that it is the blood of your brother?’ ³³ And then shall he tremble, and shall look pale, even as if death had come upon him.

³⁴ “And then shall ye say, ‘Because of this fear and this paleness which has come upon your face, behold, we know that thou art guilty.’ ³⁵ And then shall greater fear come upon him; and then shall he confess unto you, and deny no more that he has done this murder. ³⁶ And then shall he say unto you, that I, Nephi, know nothing concerning the matter save it were given unto me by the power of God. And then shall ye know that I am an honest man, and that I am sent unto you from God.”

Nephi₂ Is Vindicated

³⁷ And it came to pass that they went and did, even according as Nephi had said unto them. And behold, the words which he had said were true; for according to the words he did deny; and also according to the words he did confess. ³⁸ And he was brought to prove that he himself was the very murderer, insomuch that the five were set at liberty, and also was Nephi.

³⁹ And there were some of the Nephites who believed on the words of Nephi; and there were some also, who believed because of the testimony of the five, for they had been converted while they were in prison. ⁴⁰ And now there were some among the people, who said that Nephi was a prophet. ⁴¹ And there were others who said, “Behold, he is a god, for except he was a god he could not know of all things. For behold, he has told us the thoughts of our hearts, and also has told us things; and even he has brought unto our knowledge the true murderer of our chief judge.”

10 ¹ And it came to pass that there arose a division among the people, insomuch that they divided hither and thither and went their ways, leaving Nephi alone, as he was standing in the midst of them.

The Lord Speaks to Nephi₂ and Gives Him Power

² And it came to pass that Nephi went his way towards his own house, pondering upon the things which the Lord had shown unto him. ³ And it came to pass as he was thus

30: *Wist*, know. *Wist not what to say*, Mk 9.6 (also because of fear). **31–35:** At Alma 5.22–23, “garments stained with blood” is a metaphor for sin (cf. 2 Ne 9.44); here actual blood-stained clothing is proof of sin. **31:** *Skirts*, the lower part, or edges; cf. Jer 2.34–35, where innocent blood is also found upon someone’s “skirts.” **38:** *The five were set at liberty*, this was reported earlier at v. 18. **39:** According to vv. 9–10, the five men would only have been in prison for two days. **41:** It is a BoM motif that only God can know unspoken thoughts; see Jacob 2.5n.

CHAPTER 10

1: At 8.11–12, Nephi cited the example of Moses, to whom God gave power over the Red Sea such that the Israelites could pass through waters “parted hither and thither”; here Nephi similarly finds himself in the midst of people who have *divided hither and thither*.

pondering—being much cast down because of the wickedness of the people of the Nephites, their secret works of darkness, and their murderings, and their plunderings, and all manner of iniquities—and it came to pass as he was thus pondering in his heart, behold, a voice came unto him saying:

⁴ “Blessed art thou, Nephi, for those things which thou hast done; for I have beheld how thou hast with unweariness declared the word, which I have given unto thee, unto this people. And thou hast not feared them, and hast not sought thine own life, but hast sought my will, and to keep my commandments.⁵ And now, because thou hast done this with such unweariness, behold, I will bless thee forever; and I will make thee mighty in word and in deed, in faith and in works; yea, even that all things shall be done unto thee according to thy word, for thou shalt not ask that which is contrary to my will.

⁶ “Behold, thou art Nephi, and I am God. Behold, I declare it unto thee in the presence of mine angels, that ye shall have power over this people, and shall smite the earth with famine, and with pestilence, and destruction, according to the wickedness of this people.

⁷ Behold, I give unto you power, that whatsoever ye shall seal on earth shall be sealed in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven; and thus shall ye have power among this people.

⁸ And thus, if ye shall say unto this temple, ‘It shall be rent in twain,’ it shall be done.

⁹ And if ye shall say unto this mountain, ‘Be thou cast down and become smooth,’ it shall be done.

¹⁰ And behold, if ye shall say that ‘God shall smite this people,’ it shall come to pass.

¹¹ “And now behold, I command you, that ye shall go and declare unto this people that ‘Thus saith the Lord God, who is the Almighty: Except ye repent ye shall be smitten, even unto destruction.’”

Nephi₂ Preaches Again to the People

¹² And behold, now it came to pass that when the Lord had spoken these words unto Nephi, he did stop and did not go unto his own

⁴: *Blessed art thou, Nephi*, these exact words were also spoken to the earlier Nephi, not once but twice (1 Ne 2.19; 11.6). Both men were unable to persuade their brethren to be obedient to revealed instruction, despite indisputable divine intervention and threats of dire consequences. *Sought thine own life*, that is, sought to preserve your own life. ⁵: God offers an extraordinary promise—that he will do whatever Nephi asks; cf. Jn 15.7. The only other occurrence of *bless thee forever* in the BoM is at the beginning of Lehi’s blessing to his son Joseph (2 Ne 3.3; cf. Ps 45.2), which concludes with a prophecy of “one mighty . . . in word and deed . . . with exceeding faith, to work mighty wonders” (2 Ne 3.24); Nephi may be one fulfillment of that prediction since he is here described as *mighty in word and in deed, in faith and in works*. Moses and Jesus are also described in the NT as being “mighty in words and in deeds” (Acts 7.22; Lk 24.19). ⁶: God adopts the conventions of formal covenant-making by naming the parties involved and the witnesses. *Thou art Nephi, and I am God*, the two are hardly on an equal plane, but God recognizes Nephi’s individual worth and dignity. *In the presence of my angels*, where they act as witnesses. The options of *famine, pestilence, and destruction* are reminiscent of the choice the prophet Gad offered to David at 2 Sam 24.11–13. *Smite the earth with famine*, as happens at 11.3. ⁷: *Whatsoever ye seal on earth shall be sealed in heaven . . . loosed in heaven* adapts the language of Mt 16.19 and 18.18 with the substitution of “sealed” for “bind.” The idea here is that Nephi’s earthly pronouncements will be matched by heavenly actions, perhaps with the suggestion of rain being sealed up in the heavens during a drought. ^{8–10}: Like 2 Ne 29.12, these verses feature both anaphora and epistrophe. ⁸: Compare Mt 27.51 and Mk 15.38, where it is the veil of the Temple that is *rent in twain*. ⁹: *If ye shall say unto this mountain . . . it shall be done*, cf. Mt 21.21; Ether 12.30. ¹²: *He did stop and did not go unto his own house*, this is the sort of unweariness that the Lord praised in vv. 4–5; cf. Alma’s obedience at Alma 8.15–18.

house, but did return unto the multitudes who were scattered about upon the face of the land, and began to declare unto them the word of the Lord which had been spoken unto him, concerning their destruction if they did not repent.¹³ Now behold, notwithstanding that great miracle which Nephi had done in telling them concerning the death of the chief judge, they did harden their hearts and did not hearken unto the words of the Lord.¹⁴ Therefore Nephi did declare unto them the word of the Lord, saying, “Except ye repent (thus saith the Lord), ye shall be smitten even unto destruction.”

¹⁵ And it came to pass that when Nephi had declared unto them the word, behold, they did still harden their hearts and would not hearken unto his words; therefore they did revile against him, and did seek to lay their hands upon him that they might cast him into prison.¹⁶ But behold, the power of God was with him, and they could not take him to cast him into prison, for he was taken by the Spirit and conveyed away out of the midst of them.

¹⁷ And it came to pass that thus he did go forth in the Spirit, from multitude to multitude, declaring the word of God, even until he had declared it unto them all, or sent it forth among all the people.¹⁸ And it came to pass that they would not hearken unto his words; and there began to be contentions, insomuch that they were divided against themselves and began to slay one another with the sword.

¹⁹ And thus ended the seventy and first year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi.^a

Nephi₂ Prays for the Lord to Send a Famine

[IV] **11** ¹ And now it came to pass in the seventy and second year of the reign of the judges^b that the contentions did increase, insomuch that there were wars throughout all the land among all the people of Nephi.² And it was this secret band of robbers who did carry on this work of destruction and wickedness. And this war did last all that year; and in the seventy and third year it did also last.^c

³ And it came to pass that in this year Nephi did cry unto the Lord, saying, ⁴ “O Lord, do not suffer that this people shall be destroyed by the sword; but O Lord, rather let there be a famine in the land, to stir them up in remembrance of the Lord their God, and perhaps they will repent and turn unto thee.”⁵ And so it was done, according to the words of Nephi.

And there was a great famine upon the land, among all the people of Nephi. And thus in the seventy and fourth year^d the famine did

^a 19 –21 years

^b 1 –20 years

^c 2 –19 years

^d 5 –18 years

14: Nephi repeats the Lord’s words from v. 11; cf. 7.27–29. **16:** There are precedents for being carried away in the Spirit in a visionary state (Ezek 11.24; 37.1; Rev 17.3; 21.10; 1 Ne 1.8; 11.1, 19), but literal transportation by the Spirit is rarer (e.g., 1 Kings 18.12, 46; Alma 45.19). **17:** Not only does Nephi’s widespread preaching not result in repentance, it does not even prevent deadly civil conflict. *Go forth in the Spirit*, in contrast to the previous verse, this is probably not spirit transportation, but rather refers to journeying accompanied by the Spirit or under the direction of the Spirit. **19:** Nephi preached for two years; the last chronological reference was to the sixty-ninth year of the judges, at 7.1.

CHAPTER II

1–2: Sporadic conflict gives way to civil war. **3:** The power to call forth famine was given to Nephi at 10.5–10, much as Elijah was able to stop the rains (1 Kings 17.1; 18.41–45). Because famine can be attributed to divine displeasure it is more likely to provoke repentance than human violence, which often gives rise to cycles of anger and vengeance. In addition, slow death by starvation gives people more time for reflection.

continue, and the work of destruction did cease by the sword but became sore by famine.⁶ And this work of destruction did also continue in the seventy and fifth year.^a For the earth was smitten that it was dry, and did not yield forth grain in the season of grain; and the whole earth was smitten, even among the Lamanites as well as among the Nephites, so that they were smitten that they did perish by thousands in the more wicked parts of the land.

⁷ And it came to pass that the people saw that they were about to perish by famine, and they began to remember the Lord their God; and they began to remember the words of Nephi.

⁸ And the people began to plead with their chief judges and their leaders, that they would say unto Nephi, “Behold, we know that thou art a man of God, and therefore cry unto the Lord our God that he turn away from us this famine, lest all the words which thou hast spoken concerning our destruction be fulfilled.”⁹ And it came to pass that the judges did say unto Nephi, according to the words which had been desired.

Nephi² Prays for the Famine to End

And it came to pass that when Nephi saw that the people had repented and did humble themselves in sackcloth, he cried again unto the Lord, saying,

¹⁰ “O Lord, behold this people repenteth; and they have swept away the band of Gadianton from

amongst them insomuch that they have become extinct, and they have concealed their secret plans in the earth.

¹¹ Now, O Lord, because of this their humility wilt thou turn away thine anger, and let thine anger be appeased in the destruction of those wicked men whom thou hast already destroyed.

¹² O Lord, wilt thou turn away thine anger, yea, thy fierce anger, and cause that this famine may cease in this land.

¹³ O Lord, wilt thou hearken unto me, and cause that it may be done according to my words, and send forth rain upon the face of the earth, that she may bring forth her fruit, and her grain in the season of grain.

¹⁴ O Lord, thou didst hearken unto my words when I said, ‘Let there be a famine, that the pestilence of the sword might cease’;^b and I know that thou wilt, even at this time, hearken unto my words, for thou saidst that ‘If this people repent I will spare them.’^c

^a 6 –17 years

^b 14 See v. 4 above.

^c 14 Reference uncertain

6: In this case, famine is caused by drought. It is not clear why things were worse *in the more wicked parts of the land*, unless perhaps the wicked were located in more populated areas, or the less wicked were sharing resources with one another. **8:** *Man of God* (also v. 18), a title particularly associated with the miracle-working prophets of the Deuteronomistic History, where it appears over sixty times; cf. Mos 7.26n. Nephi is viewed as an intermediary with God. *All the words which thou hast spoken concerning our destruction*, see 7.19–28; 8.5, 26; 9.22; 10.14. **9:** *Sackcloth*, coarse cloth worn in the Bible as a sign of mourning or distress. The practice is mentioned among the Nephites only here and at Mos 11.25. **10–16:** Here Nephi follows the example of OT prophets who not only delivered divine warnings but also interceded with God on behalf of their people (e.g., Ex 32.30–32; Num 14.13–19; Ezek 11.13; Amos 7.2, 5); cf. 3 Ne 1.11–12. While not poetry, Nephi’s prayer includes numerous invocations of “O Lord,” reminiscent of Ps 86; Alma 31.26–35; and Ether 3.2–5. **10:** *Concealed their secret plans in the earth*, for recovery later (v. 26). **11:** *Wilt thou turn away thine anger*, only in this chapter, where the phrase occurs three times, but see Ps 78.38; Hos 14.4; Alma 8.29. **14:** *Pestilence of the sword*, unique here; the word *pestilence* is used figuratively to mean “disaster” or “calamity”; cf. the heading at ch. 7.

¹⁵ Yea, O Lord, and thou seest that they have repented, because of the famine and the pestilence and destruction which has come unto them.

¹⁶ And now, O Lord, wilt thou turn away thine anger, and try again if they will serve thee?

And if so, O Lord, thou canst bless them according to thy words which thou hast said.”

¹⁷ And it came to pass that in the seventy and sixth year^a the Lord did turn away his anger from the people, and caused that rain should fall upon the earth, insomuch that it did bring forth her fruit in the season of her fruit. And it came to pass that it did bring forth her grain in the season of her grain.

¹⁸ And behold, the people did rejoice and glorify God, and the whole face of the land was filled with rejoicing; and they did no more seek to destroy Nephi, but they did esteem him as a great prophet, and a man of God, having great power and authority given unto him from God. ¹⁹ And behold, Lehi, his brother, was not a whit behind him as to things pertaining to righteousness.

The Nephites and Lamanites Prosper and Argue

²⁰ And thus it did come to pass that the people of Nephi began to prosper again in the land, and began to build up their waste places, and began to multiply and spread, even until they

did cover the whole face of the land, both on the northward and on the southward, from the sea west to the sea east. ²¹ And it came to pass that the seventy and sixth year did end in peace.^b And the seventy and seventh year began in peace;^c and the church did spread throughout the face of all the land; and the more part of the people, both the Nephites and the Lamanites, did belong to the church; and they did have exceeding great peace in the land; and thus ended the seventy and seventh year.

²² And also they had peace in the seventy and eighth year,^d save it were a few contentions concerning the points of doctrine which had been laid down by the prophets.

²³ And in the seventy and ninth year^e there began to be much strife. But it came to pass that Nephi and Lehi, and many of their brethren who knew concerning the true points of doctrine, having many revelations daily, therefore they did preach unto the people, insomuch that they did put an end to their strife in that same year.

A Resurgence of the Gadianton Robbers

²⁴ And it came to pass that in the eightieth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi,^f there were a certain number of the

^a 17 –16 years

^b 21 –16 years; see v. 17 above

^c 21 –15 years

^d 22 –14 years

^e 23 –13 years

^f 24 –12 years

16: *Try*, WB: “to prove by a test.” *According to thy words*, reference uncertain. **17:** The droughts brought on by Nephi and Elijah both lasted about three years; see 1 Kings 17.1; 18.1. **19:** This is the first we have heard of Lehi, since 6.6; cf. v. 23 below. *A whit*, WB: “in the least.” **20–37:** These verses cover an entire decade, and thus allow for only very truncated explanations of causation. **20:** *Waste places*, ruins. The phrase appears four times in Isa and seven times in the BoM, but this is the only instance that is not a quotation from Isaiah. **21:** The Nephites and Lamanites will remain closely allied for more than a century, until 4 Ne 1.20. **22–23:** *Points of doctrine*, Alma 41.9; the disputed issues are left unspecified. *Having many revelations daily* is a strong claim about divine guidance; cf. 3 Ne 7.18. **24–25:** As is typical in the BoM, Nephite dissenters stir up the Lamanites to violence, though in this case it is a small group of Lamanites who prey upon their own people as well as the Nephites. *Taken upon themselves the name of Lamanites*, by this point in the BoM, the division between Nephites and Lamanites has started to become more a matter of politics, culture, and religion than of genealogy; cf. 3 Ne 2.12–16.

dissenters from the people of Nephi, who had some years before gone over unto the Lamanites, and taken upon themselves the name of Lamanites, and also a certain number who were real descendants of the Lamanites, being stirred up to anger by them, or by those dissenters, therefore they commenced a war with their brethren.²⁵ And they did commit murder and plunder; and then they would retreat back into the mountains, and into the wilderness and secret places, hiding themselves that they could not be discovered, receiving daily an addition to their numbers, inasmuch as there were dissenters that went forth unto them.

²⁶ And thus in time, yea, even in the space of not many years, they became an exceeding great band of robbers; and they did search out all the secret plans of Gadianton; and thus they became robbers of Gadianton.²⁷ Now behold, these robbers did make great havoc, yea, even great destruction among the people of Nephi, and also among the people of the Lamanites.

²⁸ And it came to pass that it was expedient that there should be a stop put to this work of destruction; therefore they sent an army of strong men into the wilderness and upon the mountains to search out this band of robbers, and to destroy them.²⁹ But behold, it came to pass that in that same year they were driven back even into their own lands. And thus ended the eightieth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi.^a

³⁰ And it came to pass in the commencement of the eighty and first year^b they did go forth again against this band of robbers, and did destroy many; and they were also visited with much destruction.³¹ And they were again obliged to return out of the wilderness

and out of the mountains unto their own lands, because of the exceeding greatness of the numbers of those robbers who infested the mountains and the wilderness.³² And it came to pass that thus ended this year.^c

And the robbers did still increase and wax strong, insomuch that they did defy the whole armies of the Nephites, and also of the Lamanites; and they did cause great fear to come unto the people upon all the face of the land.³³ Yea, for they did visit many parts of the land, and did do great destruction unto them; yea, did kill many, and did carry away others captive into the wilderness, yea, and more especially their women and their children.³⁴ Now this great evil, which came unto the people because of their iniquity, did stir them up again in remembrance of the Lord their God.³⁵ And thus ended the eighty and first year of the reign of the judges.

³⁶ And in the eighty and second year^d they began again to forget the Lord their God. And in the eighty and third year^e they began to wax strong in iniquity. And in the eighty and fourth year^f they did not mend their ways.³⁷ And it came to pass in the eighty and fifth year^g they did wax stronger and stronger in their pride, and in their wickedness; and thus they were ripening again for destruction.³⁸ And thus ended the eighty and fifth year.

^a 29 -12 years; see v. 24 above

^b 30 -11 years

^c 32 -11 years; see v. 30 above

^d 36 -10 years

^e 36 -9 years

^f 36 -8 years

^g 37 -7 years

28: *They sent an army*, apparently a combined force of Nephites and Lamanites; this new alliance, mentioned again at 3 Ne 2.11–12, will continue through the Gadianton war of 3 Ne 1–5. **31:** *Infest*, non-biblical, but five times in the BoM; the word is used twice to describe wild beasts, and three times to describe the Gadianton robbers. **34:** *Great evil*, great disaster, see Mos 7.25n. **35:** This paragraph appears to be an editorial summary since the eighty-first year ends in both v. 32 and v. 35; cf. Alma 50.35–40; Hel 4.10–17. **36:** *Began again to forget the Lord their God*, after having remembered him just a year earlier (v. 34).

The Song of Mormon₂

12¹ And thus we can behold how false, and also the unsteadiness of the hearts of the children of men; yea, we can see that the Lord in his great infinite goodness doth bless and prosper those who put their trust in him.

² Yea, and we may see at the very time when he doth prosper his people, yea, in the increase of their fields, their flocks and their herds, and in gold, and in silver, and in all manner of precious things of every kind and art; sparing their lives, and delivering them out of the hands of their enemies; softening the hearts of their enemies that they should not declare wars against them; yea, and in fine, doing all things for the welfare and happiness of his people; yea, then is the time that they do harden their hearts,

and do forget the Lord their God, and do trample under their feet the Holy One—
yea, and this because of their ease, and their exceedingly great prosperity.
³ And thus we see that except the Lord doth chasten his people with many afflictions, yea, except he doth visit them with death and with terror, and with famine and with all manner of pestilence, they will not remember him.
⁴ O how foolish, and how vain, and how evil, and devilish, and how quick to do iniquity, and how slow to do good, are the children of men.
Yea, how quick to hearken unto the words of the evil one, and to set their hearts upon the vain things of the world!
⁵ Yea, how quick to be lifted up in pride;

CHAPTER 12

The Nephite/Lamanite decline from righteousness to wickedness in just five years (11.24–38) prompts Mormon to conclude original ch. IV with a lengthy lament about human nature. This is the clearest exposition of the worldview of the BoM's primary narrator, whose pessimistic tone seems to be colored not just by his reading of historical records, but by his own experience living through the destruction, degradation, and iniquity that characterized the end of Nephite civilization. Mormon will interweave into his lament allusions to the ministries of Nephi₂ and Samuel the Lamanite, related on either side of this editorial insertion. **1–26:** Hel 12 is reminiscent of the Song of Moses at Deut 32.1–43; both are later, editorial additions that follow the pattern of accusation (v. 1 [32.5–6]), recital of God's blessings upon his people (vv. 1–2 [32.7–14]), condemnation of their betrayal (vv. 2–6 [32.15–27]), assertion of divine power and autonomy (vv. 7–22 [32.28–42]), and reaffirmation of God's compassion and commitment to his people (vv. 22–24 [32.43]). **2–3:** The temporal, salvation history viewpoint in these verses will gradually give way to a plan of salvation perspective at the end of the chapter. **2:** The basic argument and key phrases (*increase . . . their flocks and their herds . . . in gold and in silver . . . harden their hearts . . . forget the Lord their God*) parallel Deut 8.13–14. Mormon's reference to *softening the hearts of their enemies* and the end of war alludes to the astonishing reconciliation of Nephites and Lamanites in chs. 5–6. *Trample under their feet the Holy One*, the same image appears at 1 Ne 19.7; Alma 5.53; 3 Ne 28.35; cf. Heb 10.29. *Their ease and their exceedingly great prosperity*, see 6.7–14 and 11.20–21, where both periods of peace and prosperity are followed by the rise of robbers. **3:** Mormon believes that only adversity will turn people's hearts to God. His mention of *famine and pestilence* alludes to 11.1–8, 14–15. **4–5:** In nicely balanced phrases, an initial *how quick* and *how slow* contrast is followed by two *quicks* and then two *slows*. **4:** *How quick to do iniquity, and how slow to do good*, cf. 1 Ne 17.45; Mos 13.29; the opposite combination occurred at 7.7. **5:** *Wisdom's paths*, only here and Mos 2.36; wisdom may be personified in this verse, as happens frequently in the book of Proverbs; see Mos 8.20n.

yea, how quick to boast,
and do all manner of that which is
iniquity;
and how slow are they to remember
the Lord their God,
and to give ear unto his counsels,
yea, how slow to walk in wisdom's
paths!

⁶ Behold, they do not desire that the
Lord their God,
who hath created them,
should rule and reign over them.
Notwithstanding his great
goodness
and his mercy towards them,
they do set at naught his counsels,
and they will not that he should be
their guide.

⁷ O how great is the nothingness of the
children of men;
yea, even they are less than the dust
of the earth.

⁸ For behold, the dust of the earth
moveth hither and thither,
to the dividing asunder,
at the command of our great and
everlasting God.

⁹ Yea, behold at his voice do the hills
and the mountains
tremble and quake.

¹⁰ And by the power of his voice they
are broken up,
and become smooth, yea, even like
unto a valley.

¹¹ Yea, by the power of his voice
doth the whole earth shake.

¹² Yea, by the power of his voice,
do the foundations rock,
even to the very center.

¹³ Yea, and if he say unto the earth,
“Move,”
it is moved.

¹⁴ Yea, if he say unto the earth,
“Thou shalt go back,” that it lengthen
out the day for many hours,
it is done.

¹⁵ (And thus, according to his word the earth
goeth back, and it appeareth unto man that
the sun standeth still; yea, and behold, this is
so; for surely it is the earth that moveth and
not the sun.)

¹⁶ And behold, also, if he say unto the
waters of the great deep,
“Be thou dried up,”
it is done.

¹⁷ Behold, if he say unto this mountain,
“Be thou raised up, and come over
and fall upon that city, that it be
buried up,”
behold it is done.

6: *Do not desire... should rule... over them*, cf. Mos 8.20 (referring to wisdom). *Set at naught his counsels*, cf. 1 Ne 19.7; Prov 1.25. **7:** *How great is the nothingness*, an oxymoron. *Less than the dust of the earth*, only here and Mos 4.2, though different explanations are given. In Mos, the people view their position as lowly because of their “*car-nal state*,” whereas in Hel the verses that follow implicitly contrast the obedience of the earth with the rebelliousness of human beings. **8–26:** Numerous examples testify to the power of divine speech, with expressions such as *command*, *at his voice*, *by the power of his voice* (three times), *according to his word*, and *if he say* (eight times, including variants; cf. 10.8–10). The culminating divine utterance is the pronouncement of judgment in v. 26. **8:** *Hither and thither... dividing*, cf. 2 Kings 2.8, 14; the phrases are applied to the parting of the Red Sea at 1 Ne 4.2; 17.26; Hel 8.11. **9–11:** As Mormon reflects on events seen thus far in the book of Helaman, he also anticipates Samuel’s coming prophecies that the *earth* will *shake*, *tremble*, and be *broken up* (14.21) and *mountains* will be laid low *like unto a valley* (14.23). **12:** *Foundations*, that is, the foundations of the earth. **13–21:** In the earliest extant manuscript, P, these verses include seven instances of the *if-and* construction (e.g., “if he saith unto the earth move and it is moved”) that is more characteristic of Hebrew than English, which prefers *if-then* or simply *if*. JS removed the Hebraistic *ands* for the 1837 edition (see the discussion in ATV). **14–15:** An allusion to the story of the sun standing still at Josh 10.12–14, with a Copernican correction.

18 And behold, if a man hide up a
treasure in the earth, and the
Lord shall say,
“Let it be accursed, because of the
iniquity of him who hath hid it up,”
behold, it shall be accursed.

19 And if the Lord shall say,
“Be thou accursed, that no man shall
find thee from this time
henceforth and forever,”
behold, no man getteth it hence-
forth and forever.

20 And behold, if the Lord shall say
unto a man,
“Because of thine iniquities, thou
shalt be accursed forever,”
it shall be done.

21 And if the Lord shall say,
“Because of thine iniquities thou shalt
be cut off from my presence,”
he will cause that it shall be so.

22 And wo unto him to whom he shall
say this,
for it shall be unto him that will do
iniquity,
and he cannot be saved.

Therefore, for this cause, that men
might be saved,

hath repentance been declared.

23 Therefore, blessed are they who will
repent
and hearken unto the voice of the
Lord their God;
for these are they that shall be saved.

24 And may God grant, in his great
fulness,
that men might be brought unto
repentance and good works,
that they might be restored unto
grace for grace, according to
their works.

25 And I would that all men might be saved.
But we read that in the great and last day there
are some who shall be cast out, yea, who shall
be cast off from the presence of the Lord;
26 yea, who shall be consigned to a state of end-
less misery, fulfilling the words which say:

They that have done good shall have
everlasting life;
and they that have done evil shall have
everlasting damnation.^a

And thus it is. Amen.

^a 26 Reference uncertain, but see Mos 16.11;
3 Ne 26.5; Jn 5.29.

18: The idea that buried treasures could be cursed to become “slippery,” or unrecoverable, was common in the treasure-hunting culture of JS’s day, which he participated in. Other examples in the BoM include Samuel’s prophecy at Hel 13.19–20, 35; and Morm 1.18. **19:** *If the Lord shall say*, that is, say to the treasure. **20–23:** Since v. 8, the Lord has been commanding inanimate objects; now human beings will be subject to his commands, as the cursing of treasures leads to the cursing of the wicked. Unlike dust, mountains, seas, buried treasures, and the whole earth, which are always obedient to God, humans can choose whether or not they will *hearken unto the voice of the Lord*, and be blessed or cursed accordingly; for a similar distinction, see 14.20–31n. **21:** *Cut off from my presence*, from the second half of the covenant God made with Lehi; see 2 Ne 1.20. **22:** *He cannot be saved*, because the pronouncements in the previous two verses will be made at the Final Judgment, after all opportunities for repentance have passed. *Hearken (un)to the voice of the Lord*, an expression characteristic of Deut, where it appears six times; in the BoM it occurs at Omni 1.12–13; Mos 16.2; and here. **24:** The words *restored* and *according to their works* suggest that this is a scenario set at the day of resurrection and judgment, as will be made explicit in the next two verses. *Grace for grace*, only here and Jn 1.16; in the present context, the phrase can be interpreted as referring to how we can be brought back into God’s grace after he judges our good works, which are made possible by his grace in providing for guidance, agency, and repentance. The allusion to Jn 1.16 is also evidence that the somewhat cryptic expression *great fulness* was intended. **25–26:** Like Alma 29, this chapter is a meditation on human agency and its relation to divine sovereignty, but where Alma ends in joy, Mormon ends in melancholy—no doubt as a reflection of their personal experiences. *We read that*, Mormon is alluding to a written scriptural text; *cast off from the presence of the Lord* is from 1 Ne 8.36, and *consigned to a state of endless misery* is from Alma 9.11. **26:** *And thus it is. Amen*, see 1 Ne 9.6n.

Samuel₂'s Prophecy: Helaman 13–15

[*Mormon₂'s heading*] The prophecy of Samuel, the Lamanite, to the Nephites.

Samuel₂, a Lamanite, Prophesies of the Destruction of the Nephites

[V] **13** ¹ And now it came to pass in the eighty and sixth year,^a the Nephites did still remain in wickedness, yea, in great wickedness, while the Lamanites did observe strictly to keep the commandments of God, according to the law of Moses. ² And it came to pass that in this year there was one Samuel, a Lamanite, came into the land of Zarahemla, and began to preach unto the people. And it came to pass that he did preach, many days, repentance unto the people, and they did cast him out, and he was about to return to his own land. ³ But behold, the voice of the Lord came unto him, that he should return again, and prophesy unto the

people whatsoever things should come into his heart.

⁴ And it came to pass that they would not suffer that he should enter into the city; therefore he went and got upon the wall thereof, and stretched forth his hand and cried with a loud voice, and prophesied unto the people whatsoever things the Lord put into his heart.

⁵ And he said unto them:

“Behold, I, Samuel, a Lamanite, do speak the words of the Lord which he doth put into my heart; and behold he hath put it into my heart to say unto this people that the sword of justice hangeth over this people; and four hundred years pass not away save the sword of justice falleth upon this people. ⁶ Yea, heavy destruction awaiteth this people, and it surely cometh unto this people, and nothing can save this people save it be repentance and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ, who surely shall come

^a 1 –6 years

CHAPTERS 13–15

The reversal of Nephite and Lamanite religious roles in the book of Helaman reaches its climax with an extended discourse from a Lamanite prophet calling the Nephites to repentance. In this last major sermon before Christ's long-anticipated arrival in 3 Nephi, there are frequent verbal parallels to the Old and New Testaments (in contrast to most of Hel), as well as numerous allusions to the cautionary tale of Ammonihah at Alma 9–16. Readers can trace the spiritual decline of the Nephites through the four recorded sermons given to the people of Zarahemla: King Benjamin about 121 BCE (Mos 2–5); Alma₂ in –83 (Alma 5); Nephi₂ in –23 (Hel 7–8); and Samuel in –6 (Hel 13–15).

CHAPTER 13

Heading: The name of the BoM prophet Samuel appears seventeen times in the text; in ten of those occurrences he is explicitly identified as a Lamanite. This apparently was a crucial characteristic in the eyes of the narrator. **1:** The situation of Lamanites being more righteous than Nephites (first mentioned at 6.1–2) will continue until 3 Ne 2.14–16, when, after seeing many in the rising generation falling into transgression, the faithful Lamanites will finally become assimilated into the minority of righteous Nephites. **2–3:** Like Alma at Ammonihah, and Nephi at Zarahemla, the Lord commands a prophet to return to a city where he has been rejected; see Alma 8.13–18 and Hel 10.2–12. **2:** Not only is Samuel a Lamanite but he is also from a different land, making him an outsider prophet like Amos, who left his native Judah to preach in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. **3–5:** Typically in the OT, the Lord puts words into the mouths of his prophets (e.g., Deut 18.18; Jer 1.9); here Samuel receives words in his heart. **5–6:** The sixfold repetition of *this people* sharpens the contrast when Samuel shifts to speaking about *his people*, meaning the people of the Lord; the two groups are not the same. **5:** A prophecy of events four centuries in the future may not have struck Samuel's listeners as particularly urgent, but it nevertheless had significant implications for salvation history. Indeed, Samuel is inspired to reveal a prediction of the ultimate destruction of the Nephites similar to the one Alma had instructed his son Helaman to keep secret at Alma 45.9–12. **6:** *Suffer many things and... be slain*, Lk 9.22.

into the world, and shall suffer many things and shall be slain for his people.⁷ And behold, an angel of the Lord hath declared it unto me, and he did bring glad tidings to my soul. And behold, I was sent unto you to declare it unto you also, that ye might have glad tidings; but behold ye would not receive me.

⁸ “Therefore, thus saith the Lord, ‘Because of the hardness of the hearts of the people of the Nephites, except they repent I will take away my word from them, and I will withdraw my Spirit from them, and I will suffer them no longer, and I will turn the hearts of their brethren against them.’⁹ And four hundred years shall not pass away before I will cause that they shall be smitten; yea, I will visit them with the sword and with famine and with pestilence.’¹⁰ ‘Yea, I will visit them in my fierce anger, and there shall be those of the fourth generation who shall live, of your enemies, to behold your utter destruction; and this shall surely come except ye repent,’ saith the Lord, ‘and those of the fourth generation shall visit your destruction.’¹¹ ‘But if ye will repent and return unto the Lord your God I will turn away mine anger,’ saith the Lord. Yea, thus saith the Lord, ‘Blessed are they who will repent and turn unto me, but wo unto him that repenteth not.’

¹² “‘Yea, wo unto this great city of Zarahemla; for behold, it is because of those who are righteous that it is saved; yea, wo unto this great city, for I perceive,’ saith the Lord, ‘that there are many, yea, even the more part of this great city, that will harden their hearts against me,’ saith the Lord.¹³ ‘But blessed are they who will repent, for them will I spare. But behold, if it were not for the righteous who are in this great city, behold, I would cause that fire should come down out of heaven and destroy it.’¹⁴ But behold, it is for the righteous’ sake that it is spared.’ ‘But behold, the time cometh,’ saith the Lord, ‘that when ye shall cast out the righteous from among you, then shall ye be ripe for destruction; yea, wo be unto this great city, because of the wickedness and abominations which are in her.’¹⁵ Yea, and wo be unto the city of Gideon, for the wickedness and abominations which are in her.’¹⁶ Yea, and wo be unto all the cities which are in the land round about, which are possessed by the Nephites, because of the wickedness and abominations which are in them.’”

Samuel₂ Quotes the Lord on Hidden Treasures

¹⁷ “‘And behold, a curse shall come upon the land,’ saith the Lord of Hosts, ‘because of the

7: Angels are also said to bring *glad tidings* at Lk 1.19; Mos 3.2–3; Alma 13.22; 39.19; Hel 16.14. *Glad tidings*, that is, the good news about the coming of Christ and his atonement. Because the people of Zarahemla rejected that earlier, hopeful message, Samuel has now returned with a message of doom. 9–10: The equating of four hundred years with four generations follows Gen 15.13–16; see Alma 45.10–12n. 11: *Turn away mine anger*, as the Lord did at 11.11–17. Unfortunately, the Nephites do not repent. The books of 4 Nephi and Mormon chronicle the destruction that Samuel foresaw, with the final annihilation coming about four hundred years after this prophecy. 11: Samuel pivots from the sins and tragedies of Nephites four centuries in the future, to the iniquities, curses, and impending destruction facing his hearers. 12–14: The idea that the Lord might spare a city because of a righteous minority was a hypothetical possibility with Sodom (Gen 18.22–33), and a reality with Ammonihah (Alma 10.22–23), as well as with Laman, Josh, Gad, and Kishkumen (3 Ne 9.10–11); cf. Alma 62.40. 13: *Fire should come down out of heaven*, as with Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19.24; Lk 17.29); cf. 3 Ne 9.11. 14: *Cast out the righteous from among you*, Alma 10.23. *Wo be unto this great city, because of the wickedness and abominations*, repeating Nephi’s warning from 7.27. Zarahemla will be destroyed at 3 Ne 8.8; cf. 3 Ne 9.3. 15: The city of Gideon has not been mentioned since Alma 7, when it was a model of righteousness (cf. Alma 30.21 and 61.5 for the uprightness in the “land of Gideon”). Despite their turn to wickedness, it appears that they repented since Gideon does not appear in the list of sixteen destroyed cities at 3 Ne 9.3–12. 17–23: The curses described in this section parallel those at 12.18–19; cf. v. 31 below and Morm 1.18. 17: Textual evidence indicates the 1830 edition was typeset from the original manuscript from Hel 13.17 to Morm 9.37. This means that for these chapters the 1830 edition has equal weight with the printer’s manuscript in determining the earliest readings.

people's sake who are upon the land, yea, because of their wickedness and their abominations.' ¹⁸ 'And it shall come to pass,' saith the Lord of Hosts, yea, our great and true God, 'that whoso shall hide up treasures in the earth shall find them again no more, because of the great curse of the land, save he be a righteous man and shall hide it up unto the Lord.' ¹⁹ 'For I will,' saith the Lord, 'that they shall hide up their treasures unto me; and cursed be they who hide not up their treasures unto me; for none hideth up their treasures unto me save it be the righteous; and he that hideth not up his treasures unto me, cursed is he, and also the treasure, and none shall redeem it because of the curse of the land.' ²⁰ 'And the day shall come that they shall hide up their treasures, because they have set their hearts upon riches; and because they have set their hearts upon their riches, I will hide up their treasures when they shall flee before their enemies; because they will not hide them up unto me, cursed be they and also their treasures; and in that day shall they be smitten,' saith the Lord.

²¹ "Behold ye, the people of this great city, and hearken unto my words; yea, hearken unto the words which the Lord saith; for behold, he saith that ye are cursed because of your riches, and also are your riches cursed because ye have set your hearts upon them, and have not hearkened unto the words of him who gave them unto you. ²² Ye do not remember the Lord your God in the things with which he hath blessed you, but ye do always remember your riches, not to thank the Lord your God for them; yea, your hearts are

not drawn out unto the Lord, but they do swell with great pride, unto boasting, and unto great swelling, envyings, strifes, malice, persecutions, and murders, and all manner of iniquities. ²³ For this cause hath the Lord God caused that a curse should come upon the land, and also upon your riches, and this because of your iniquities."

Samuel₂ Criticizes the Nephites' Acceptance of False Prophets

²⁴ "Yea, wo unto this people, because of this time which has arrived, that ye do cast out the prophets, and do mock them, and cast stones at them, and do slay them, and do all manner of iniquity unto them, even as they did of old time. ²⁵ And now when ye talk, ye say, 'If our days had been in the days of our fathers of old, we would not have slain the prophets; we would not have stoned them, and cast them out.' ²⁶ Behold ye are worse than they; for as the Lord liveth, if a prophet come among you and declareth unto you the word of the Lord, which testifieth of your sins and iniquities, ye are angry with him, and cast him out and seek all manner of ways to destroy him; yea, you will say that he is a false prophet, and that he is a sinner, and of the devil, because he testifieth that your deeds are evil.

²⁷ "But behold, if a man shall come among you and shall say, 'Do this, and there is no iniquity'; 'Do that and ye shall not suffer'; yea, he will say, 'Walk after the pride of your own hearts; yea, walk after the pride of your eyes, and do whatsoever your heart desireth'—and if a man shall come among you and say this, ye will receive

18–19: *Hide up* [something] *unto the Lord* is a non-biblical phrase that occurs another half a dozen times in the BoM, usually with regard to sacred records; see the BoM title page; Morm 5.12; 8.14. **20:** *When they shall flee before their enemies* provides the context for why a person might bury valuables, hoping to recover them later. **21–22:** Riches ultimately come from God, who should be the object of human attention and devotion. *Ye do not remember the Lord*, compare Mormon's comments at 12.2–3. *Hearts... drawn out unto the Lord*, perhaps in prayer, as at Alma 34.27. **24:** This is the first mention of multiple prophets contemporary with Nephi₂ and their mistreatment. **25:** *If our days... not have slain the prophets*, a similar sentiment is expressed by scribes and Pharisees at Mt 23.30. **27:** *If a man shall come among you*, in contrast to "if a prophet come among you" in the previous verse; this man is no prophet. *Pride of... hearts... eyes*, in the OT, heart and eyes are often paired, representing a person's inner and outer aspects.

him, and say that he is a prophet.²⁸ Yea, ye will lift him up, and ye will give unto him of your substance; ye will give unto him of your gold, and of your silver, and ye will clothe him with costly apparel; and because he speaketh flattering words unto you, and he saith that all is well, then ye will not find fault with him.

- 29 O ye wicked and ye perverse generation;
ye hardened and ye stiffnecked people,
how long will ye suppose that the Lord will suffer you?
Yea, how long will ye suffer yourselves to be led by foolish and blind guides?
Yea, how long will ye choose darkness rather than light?"

Regret Will Come Too Late

³⁰ "Yea, behold, the anger of the Lord is already kindled against you; behold, he hath cursed the land because of your iniquity.³¹ And behold, the time cometh that he curseth your riches, that they become slippery, that ye cannot hold them; and in the days of your poverty ye cannot retain them.³² And in the days of your poverty ye shall

cry unto the Lord; and in vain shall ye cry, for your desolation is already come upon you, and your destruction is made sure. 'And then shall ye weep and howl in that day,' saith the Lord of Hosts. And then shall ye lament, and say,³³ 'O that I had repented, and had not killed the prophets, and stoned them, and cast them out.'

"Yea, in that day ye shall say, 'O that we had remembered the Lord our God in the day that he gave us our riches, and then they would not have become slippery that we should lose them; for behold, our riches are gone from us.'³⁴ Behold, we lay a tool here and on the morrow it is gone; and behold, our swords are taken from us in the day we have sought them for battle.³⁵ Yea, we have hid up our treasures and they have slipped away from us, because of the curse of the land.³⁶ O that we had repented in the day that the word of the Lord came unto us; for behold the land is cursed, and all things are become slippery, and we cannot hold them.³⁷ Behold, we are surrounded by demons, yea, we are encircled about by the angels of him who hath sought to destroy our souls. Behold, our iniquities are great. O Lord, canst thou not turn away thine anger from us?' And this shall be your language in those days.

³⁸ "But behold, your days of probation are past; ye have procrastinated the day of your

28: *All is well* is a message of false prophets at 2 Kings 5.22 and 2 Ne 28.21, 25. **29:** *O ye wicked and ye perverse generation*, only at Alma 9.8; 10.17, 25; the ominous implication is that Zarahemla has become Ammonihah; cf. vv. 12–14n above. *Ye hardened and ye stiffnecked people*, a phrase that occurs only here and Alma 20.30, where, ironically, it described the Lamanites. *Perverse generation* followed by *how long...suffer you* occurs at Mt 17.17; Lk 9.41; cf. Mk 9.19. For the first instance of *suffer* in this verse, WB: "to endure; to support" seems appropriate; for the second occurrence, WB: "to allow; to permit." *Blind guides*, Mt 23.16, 24. *Choose darkness rather than light*, 2 Ne 26.10, where Nephi, prophesies of the fate of the Nephites. **30:** *The anger of the Lord is already kindled against you*, similar phrasing occurs nearly two dozen times in the OT and four times in the BoM; the only reference that also includes negative consequences for the land is Deut 29.27. **31:** This prophecy will be fulfilled at Morm 1.18; cf. Hel 12.18–19; Ether 14.1–2. *In the days of your poverty*, when one would want to recover treasures hidden away during more prosperous times. **32–33:** The Nephites will *weep* and *howl* at 3 Ne 8.23 and 10.8. They will lament their treatment of the prophets, in very similar words, at 3 Ne 8.25. **32:** *Your destruction is made sure*, only here and v. 38. **34–35:** The curse of v. 30 extends to tools and weapons as well as treasures. **38:** Despite the invitations to repent in vv. 11, 13, and 39, Samuel here seems to accept the Nephite destruction as certain and inevitable. Both the phrases *days of...probation* and *day of...salvation* refer to the span of mortal life in which repentance is possible, as at 2 Cor 6.2: "now is the day of salvation"; cf. Alma 34.31. *Procrastinated the day of your salvation*, here *salvation* is substituted for "repentance" in the phrase that occurs at Alma 13.27; 34.33, 35. Alma had similarly observed the impossibility of finding happiness in iniquity, because it was "contrary to the nature of God" (Alma 41.10–11). *Head:* WB: "a leader; a commander; one who has the first rank or place, and to whom others are subordinate."

salvation until it is everlastingly too late, and your destruction is made sure; yea, for ye have sought all the days of your lives for that which ye could not obtain; and ye have sought for happiness in doing iniquity, which thing is contrary to the nature of that righteousness which is in our great and Eternal Head.³⁹ O ye people of the land, that ye would hear my words! And I pray that the anger of the Lord be turned away from you, and that ye would repent and be saved.”

Samuel² Gives Signs of Jesus’s Birth

14¹ And now it came to pass that Samuel, the Lamanite, did prophesy a great many more things which cannot be written.² And behold, he said unto them:

“Behold, I give unto you a sign; for five years more cometh, and behold, then cometh the Son of God to redeem all those who shall believe on his name.³ And behold, this will I give unto you for a sign at the time of his coming; for behold, there shall be great lights in heaven, insomuch that in the night before he cometh there shall be no darkness, insomuch that it shall appear unto man as if it was day.⁴ Therefore, there shall be one day and a night and a day, as if it were one day and there were no night; and this shall be unto you for a sign; for ye shall know of the rising of the

sun and also of its setting; therefore they shall know of a surety that there shall be two days and a night; nevertheless the night shall not be darkened; and it shall be the night before he is born.

⁵ “And behold, there shall a new star arise, such an one as ye never have beheld; and this also shall be a sign unto you.⁶ And behold this is not all, there shall be many signs and wonders in heaven.⁷ And it shall come to pass that ye shall all be amazed, and wonder, insomuch that ye shall fall to the earth.⁸ And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall believe on the Son of God, the same shall have everlasting life.

⁹ “And behold, thus hath the Lord commanded me, by his angel, that I should come and tell this thing unto you; yea, he hath commanded that I should prophesy these things unto you; yea, he hath said unto me, ‘Cry unto this people: Repent and prepare the way of the Lord.’

¹⁰ “And now, because I am a Lamanite, and have spoken unto you the words which the Lord hath commanded me, and because it was hard against you, ye are angry with me and do seek to destroy me, and have cast me out from among you.¹¹ And ye shall hear my words, for, for this intent have I come up upon the walls of this city, that ye might hear and know of the judgments of God which do await you because of your iniquities, and also that ye might know

CHAPTER 14

1–13: These prophecies will be fulfilled at 3 Ne 1.15–21. **2:** A precisely timed prophecy is risky, though it is not clear whether the sign would be given exactly in five years, or sometime after the end of the fifth year; see 16.9n. *Redeem all those who shall believe on his name*, Alma 19.13; this was the testimony of another Lamanite, King Lamoni. **3:** *Great lights*, only Gen 1.16 and Ps 136.7–9 (both referring to heavenly bodies); the language hints at a renewal of creation. **5:** *A new star*, see Mt 2.2, 7–10. **6:** *Signs and wonders*, a combination that is unusually prominent in the ministries of Samuel and Nephi, appearing six times in chs. 14–16. In the OT, particularly in Deut, it generally refers to demonstrations of God’s power in the Exodus; in the NT the expression describes actions of Jesus and the apostles; cf. 3 Ne 1.22; 2.1–3. **9:** *Prepare the way of the Lord*, Isa 40.3 (quoted at Mt 3.3; Mk 1.3; Lk 3.4), and six times in the BoM. Samuel is a John the Baptist–like figure who proclaims the imminent coming of the Lord among the Nephites. **10:** *Because I am a Lamanite*, Samuel acknowledges continuing prejudices held by the Nephites. *Have cast me out*, see 13.2. **11–12:** Samuel lists five reasons for his message from atop the wall—the first four beginning with *that ye might know*, and culminating with *that ye might believe on his name*.

the conditions of repentance;¹² and also that ye might know of the coming of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and of earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning; and that ye might know of the signs of his coming, to the intent that ye might believe on his name.¹³ And if ye believe on his name ye will repent of all your sins, that thereby ye may have a remission of them through his merits.”

Samuel₂ Gives Signs of Jesus’s Death

¹⁴“And behold, again, another sign I give unto you, yea, a sign of his death.¹⁵ For behold, he surely must die that salvation may come; yea, it behooveth him and becometh expedient that he dieth, to bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, that thereby men may be brought into the presence of the Lord.¹⁶ Yea, behold, this death bringeth to pass the resurrection, and redeemeth all mankind from the first death—that spiritual death; for all mankind, by the fall of Adam being cut off from the presence of the Lord, are considered as dead, both as to things temporal and to things

spiritual.¹⁷ But behold, the resurrection of Christ redeemeth mankind, yea, even all mankind, and bringeth them back into the presence of the Lord.¹⁸ Yea, and it bringeth to pass the condition of repentance, that whosoever repenteth the same is not hewn down and cast into the fire; but whosoever repenteth not is hewn down and cast into the fire; and there cometh upon them again a spiritual death, yea, a second death, for they are cut off again as to things pertaining to righteousness.¹⁹ Therefore repent ye, repent ye, lest by knowing these things and not doing them ye shall suffer yourselves to come under condemnation, and ye are brought down unto this second death.

²⁰“But behold, as I said unto you concerning another sign, a sign of his death, behold, in that day that he shall suffer death the sun shall be darkened and refuse to give his light unto you; and also the moon and the stars; and there shall be no light upon the face of this land, even from the time that he shall suffer death, for the space of three days, to the time that he shall rise again from the dead.

12: Twenty-one words (*Jesus Christ . . . from the beginning*) are quoted exactly from Mos 3.8 in the earliest version (P). **13:** The *merits* of Christ are mentioned five times in the BoM (2 Ne 2.8; 31.19; Alma 24.10; here; Moro 6.4), but never in the NT. The idea of *merit*, denoting “character and conduct worthy of reward” became a significant subject of debate between Catholic and Protestant theologians in the 16th c., particularly with regard to the relationship between human deeds and the merits of Christ. **14:** *Another sign*, where the first sign (of Jesus’s birth) was an act of mercy, giving people time to repent, the second sign (of Jesus’s death) will come as divine judgment, destroying those who procrastinated their repentance. After a brief digression, the description of the second sign will begin at v. 20. **15–17:** One aspect of redemption in the BoM is that through Christ’s death and resurrection all human beings will be resurrected and brought back into God’s presence to be judged; cf. 2 Ne 9.22; Alma 12.8; 33.22; Morm 9.13. This universal gift overcomes both spiritual and temporal death. **18–19:** A second aspect of redemption allows those who repent in this life to remain in God’s presence, while the unrepentant, after being judged, are *cast into the fire* in what is termed a *second death*; cf. 12.25–26. *Spiritual death, yea, a second death*, the two synonymous terms are defined as dying “as to things pertaining unto righteousness” at Alma 12.16. *Hewn down and cast into the fire*, words from John the Baptist (Mt 3.10; 7.19; Lk 3.9), and thirteen times in the BoM (starting with Zenos’s parable of the olive tree in Jacob 5). *By knowing these things and not doing them*, moral culpability comes from willful rather than ignorant disobedience; cf. Mos 15.26. Consequently, those who know the truth are held to a higher standard; e.g., 2 Ne 25.22; Alma 9.19–23; Hel 7.23–24. **20–31:** These prophecies will be fulfilled at 3 Ne 8.3–23. Prophecies that concern the natural world are unconditional (vv. 20–27), in contrast to the conditional warnings directed at the people (vv. 29–31). **20:** The darkening of the sun, moon, and stars is mentioned at Isa 13.10; Ezek 32.7; Joel 2.10; 3.15; Mt 24.29; Mk 13.24–25. The NT references are explicitly signs of the end times. A shorter, less complete darkness at Jesus’s death is reported at Mt 27.45; Mk 15.33; Lk 23.44.

²¹ “Yea, at the time that he shall yield up the ghost there shall be thunderings and lightnings for the space of many hours, and the earth shall shake and tremble; and the rocks which are upon the face of this earth, which are both above the earth and beneath, which ye know at this time are solid, or the more part of it is one solid mass, shall be broken up; ²² yea, they shall be rent in twain, and shall ever after be found in seams and in cracks, and in broken fragments upon the face of the whole earth, yea, both above the earth and beneath. ²³ And behold, there shall be great tempests, and there shall be many mountains laid low, like unto a valley, and there shall be many places which are now called valleys which shall become mountains, whose height is great. ²⁴ And many highways shall be broken up, and many cities shall become desolate. ²⁵ And many graves shall be opened, and shall yield up many of their dead; and many saints shall appear unto many. ²⁶ “And behold, thus hath the angel spoken unto me; for he said unto me that there should be thunderings and lightnings for the space of many hours. ²⁷ And he said unto me that while the thunder and the lightning lasted, and the tempest, that these things should be, and that darkness should cover the face of the whole earth for the space of three days.

²⁸ And the angel said unto me—
 that many shall see greater things
 than these,
 to the intent that they might
 believe;
 that these signs and these wonders
 should come to pass upon all
 the face of this land,
 to the intent that there should
 be no cause for unbelief
 among the children
 of men;
²⁹ and this to the intent that
 whosoever will believe,
 might be saved,
 and that whosoever will not
 believe,
 a righteous judgment might come
 upon them;
 and also if they are condemned,
 they bring upon themselves their
 own condemnation.

³⁰ And now remember, remember, my
 brethren—
 that whosoever perisheth,
 perisheth unto himself;
 and whosoever doeth iniquity,
 doeth it unto himself.
 For behold, ye are free;

21–22: *Yield up the ghost*, see Mt 27.50 (referring to Christ on the cross). *Thunderings* and *lightnings* along with earthquakes and *rocks* that are *broken up* and *rent* all appear at 1 Ne 12.4, which is another prophecy of the same event; most of the phenomena are also mentioned in Zenos’s prophecy at 1 Ne 19.11–12, from the Brass Plates. An earthquake at Jesus’s death is reported at Mt 27.51–54; this detail is unique to Mt. **22:** *Rent in twain* is used in the passion narratives to refer to the veil of the Temple; Mt 27.51; Mk 15.38. The words *seams* and *cracks*, and the phrase *broken fragments* all appear only here and at 3 Ne 8.18. **24:** *Desolate*, WB: “uninhabited.” Broken up highways and desolated cities will be seen at 3 Ne 8.13–14; 9.3–12. **25:** This part of Samuel’s prophecy may have been added in response to the Lord’s command at 3 Ne 23.6–13. It would fit better chronologically if it had been inserted at the end of v. 27, so that the revived saints appear after Jesus’s resurrection, but the sequence here follows Matthew’s account at Mt 27.51–53. **27:** *The face of the whole earth*, actually, just this land, as in vv. 20, 28. The phenomenon that will be described in 3 Ne 8 is a localized event. Three days of darkness were foretold at 1 Ne 19.10. **28:** *Shall see greater things than these*, Jn 1.50. **29–31:** Samuel concludes this section by quoting the Nephites’ own scriptures back to them: *a righteous judgment might come upon them* (Mos 3.10); *bring upon themselves their own condemnation* (Alma 3.19); *ye are free . . . to act for yourselves and choose life or death* (2 Ne 2.26–27; 10.23; cf. Deut 30.19); *restored unto that which is good* (Alma 41.3, with evil being restored for evil at v. 4).

ye are permitted to act for yourselves.
 For behold, God hath given unto you a knowledge,
 and he hath made you free.
³¹ He hath given unto you that ye might know good from evil,
 and he hath given unto you that ye might choose life or death;
 and ye can do good,
 and be restored unto that which is good,
 or have that which is good restored unto you;
 or ye can do evil,
 and have that which is evil restored unto you.”

Samuel₂ Contrasts the Nephites and the Lamanites

15 ¹ “And now, my beloved brethren, behold, I declare unto you that except ye shall repent your houses shall be left unto you desolate. ² Yea, except ye repent, your women shall have great cause to mourn in the day that they shall give suck; for ye shall attempt to flee and there shall be no place for refuge; yea, and wo unto them which are with child, for they shall be heavy

and cannot flee; therefore, they shall be trodden down and shall be left to perish. ³ Yea, wo unto this people who are called the people of Nephi except they shall repent, when they shall see all these signs and wonders which shall be showed unto them; for behold, they have been a chosen people of the Lord; yea, the people of Nephi hath he loved, and also hath he chastened them; yea, in the days of their iniquities hath he chastened them because he loveth them.

⁴ “But behold, my brethren the Lamanites hath he hated because their deeds have been evil continually, and this because of the iniquity of the tradition of their fathers. But behold, salvation hath come unto them through the preaching of the Nephites; and for this intent hath the Lord prolonged their days. ⁵ And I would that ye should behold that the more part of them are in the path of their duty, and they do walk circumspectly before God, and they do observe to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments according to the law of Moses. ⁶ Yea, I say unto you, that the more part of them are doing this, and they are striving with unwearied diligence that they may bring the remainder of their brethren to the knowledge of the truth; therefore there are many who do add to their numbers daily.

CHAPTER 15

1: *Your houses shall be left unto you desolate*, Mt 23.38 and Lk 13.35, with a change in focus from the Temple at Jerusalem to individual family dwellings. **2:** In prophesying of imminent destruction coming to the Nephites, Samuel expands on the description of the plight of pregnant and nursing women in the end times given in the Synoptic Gospels at Mt 24.19; Mk 13.17; Lk 21.23. **3–4:** The harsh-sounding judgment *the people of Nephi hath he loved. . . the Lamanites hath he hated* is reminiscent of Mal 1.2–3 (quoted at Rom 9.13), though both halves of the statement are tempered by further explanations. The connection between the Lord’s love and chastening is explained at Heb 12.5–11; cf. Prov 3.11–12; 13.24; Rev 3.19. **4:** Earlier Nephites had also blamed the Lamanites’ iniquities on *the tradition of their fathers*, see Alma 9.8n; 60.32n. *For this intent hath the Lord prolonged their days*, the Lamanites being preserved, despite their wickedness, so that they might have time to repent, makes them a typological example for all humankind, according to 2 Ne 2.21; cf. vv. 10–11 below. **5–6:** At this point, the Lamanites are still more righteous than the Nephites, and the church is growing among them. **5:** *Circumspectly*, WB: “cautiously; with watchfulness every way”; see Mos 26.37n. *Keep his commandments . . . statutes . . . judgments* is Deuteronomistic language (see 3.20n); such phrases are regularly applied to converted Lamanites, as at Alma 25.14; 58.40; Hel 6.34.

⁷ “And behold, ye do know of yourselves, for ye have witnessed it, that as many of them as are brought to the knowledge of the truth, and to know of the wicked and abominable traditions of their fathers, and are led to believe the holy scriptures, yea, the prophecies of the holy prophets, which are written, which leadeth them to faith on the Lord, and unto repentance, which faith and repentance bringeth a change of heart unto them—⁸ therefore, as many as have come to this, ye know of yourselves are firm and steadfast in the faith, and in the thing wherewith they have been made free.⁹ And ye know also that they have buried their weapons of war, and they fear to take them up lest by any means they should sin; yea, ye can see that they fear to sin—for behold they will suffer themselves that they be trodden down and slain by their enemies, and will not lift their swords against them, and this because of their faith in Christ.

¹⁰ “And now, because of their steadfastness when they do believe in that thing which they do believe, for because of their firmness when they are once enlightened, behold, the Lord shall bless them and prolong their days, notwithstanding their iniquity—¹¹ yea, even if they should dwindle in unbelief the Lord shall prolong their days, until the time shall come which hath been spoken of by our fathers, and

also by the prophet Zenos, and many other prophets, concerning the restoration of our brethren, the Lamanites, again to the knowledge of the truth—

¹² “Yea, I say unto you, that in the latter times the promises of the Lord have been extended to our brethren, the Lamanites; and notwithstanding the many afflictions which they shall have, and notwithstanding they shall be driven to and fro upon the face of the earth, and be hunted, and shall be smitten and scattered abroad, having no place for refuge, the Lord shall be merciful unto them.¹³ And this is according to the prophecy, that they shall be brought^a to the true knowledge, which is the knowledge of their Redeemer, and their great and true shepherd, and be numbered among his sheep.

¹⁴ “Therefore I say unto you, it shall be better for them than for you except ye repent.¹⁵ For behold, had the mighty works been shown unto them which have been shown unto you, yea, unto them who have dwindled in unbelief because of the traditions of their fathers, ye can see of yourselves that they never would again have dwindled in unbelief.¹⁶ “Therefore,” saith the Lord, “I will not

^a 13 O, P, 1830, 1981 shall *again* be brought

7: Samuel characterizes the scriptures as primarily consisting of prophecies, at least with respect to Christian faith. *A change of heart*, see Mos 5.2; Alma 5.12–14, 26. **8:** *Firm and steadfast*, echoing Lehi’s wish for his son Lemuel at 1 Ne 2.10; cf. 3 Ne 6.14, which also describes the faith of converted Lamanites, and Hel 6.1n. *The thing wherewith they have been made free*, an allusion to the “liberty wherewith ye have been made free” at Mos 23.13; cf. Gal 5.1; Alma 58.40; 61.21. **9:** The actions of burying weapons and passively being slain were part of the conversion story of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies some seventy-five years earlier (Alma 24.5–27); Samuel here seems to be referring to more recent Lamanite converts who have done similar deeds (see Hel 5.51). **10–11:** Because of the Lamanites’ tenacity of belief, their descendants will be preserved even if they sin, so that they too may have a chance to repent when the gospel is once again taught among them; cf. Alma 9.16–17. **10:** *Once enlightened*, Heb 6.4; Alma 24.30 (both of which refer to the responsibility that comes with knowing the truth). **11:** *By the prophet Zenos*, see 1 Ne 19.16; Jacob 5. *The restoration [of Lamanites] to the knowledge of the truth* is a common theme in the BoM; it is unclear which specific prophecies Samuel may have had in mind. **12–13:** On promises extended to the Lamanites, see Alma 9.16, 24. *Driven to and fro* and *the Lord shall be merciful unto them and the knowledge of their Redeemer*, 2 Ne 6.11 (prophesying about the Jews). *True knowledge... of their Redeemer*, 2 Ne 10.2. **14:** The same point was made twice by Alma in his sermon to Ammonihah at Alma 9.15–16, 23–24; and by Nephi₂ at Hel 7.23. **15:** *Had the mighty works been shown unto them which have been shown unto you*, a similar idea of comparative judgment, hinging on the phrase “mighty works,” appears at Mt 11.20–24 and Lk 10.13–14. **16:** *In the day of my wisdom*, apparently meaning “in the day that I, in my wisdom, shall appoint.”

utterly destroy them, but I will cause that in the day of my wisdom they shall return again unto me,' saith the Lord.

¹⁷ “‘And now behold,’ saith the Lord, concerning the people of the Nephites, ‘If they will not repent, and observe to do my will, I will utterly destroy them,’ saith the Lord, ‘because of their unbelief notwithstanding the many mighty works which I have done among them.’ ‘And as surely as the Lord liveth shall these things be,’ saith the Lord.”

Samuel₂ Converts Some Nephites and Escapes Unharm

16 ¹ And now, it came to pass that there were many who heard the words of Samuel, the Lamanite, which he spake upon the walls of the city. And as many as believed on his word went forth and sought for Nephi; and when they had come forth and found him they confessed unto him their sins and denied not, desiring that they might be baptized unto the Lord. ² But as many as there were who did not believe in the words of Samuel were angry with him; and they cast stones at him upon the wall, and also many shot arrows at him as he stood upon the wall; but the Spirit of the Lord was with him, insomuch that they could not hit him with their stones neither with their arrows.

³ Now when they saw this that they could not hit him, there were many more who did

believe on his words, insomuch that they went away unto Nephi to be baptized. ⁴ For behold, Nephi was baptizing, and prophesying, and preaching, crying repentance unto the people, showing signs and wonders, working miracles among the people, that they might know that the Christ must shortly come— ⁵ telling them of things which must shortly come, that they might know and remember at the time of their coming that they had been made known unto them beforehand, to the intent that they might believe; therefore as many as believed on the words of Samuel went forth unto him to be baptized, for they came repenting and confessing their sins.

⁶ But the more part of them did not believe in the words of Samuel; therefore when they saw that they could not hit him with their stones and their arrows, they cried unto their captains, saying, “Take this fellow and bind him, for behold he hath a devil; and because of the power of the devil which is in him we cannot hit him with our stones and our arrows; therefore take him and bind him, and away with him.”

⁷ And as they went forth to lay their hands on him, behold, he did cast himself down from the wall, and did flee out of their lands, yea, even unto his own country, and began to preach and to prophesy among his own people. ⁸ And behold, he was never heard of more among the Nephites; and thus were the affairs of the people. ⁹ And thus ended the eighty and

17: On the parallel blessings and curses of the Nephites and Lamanites, see 2 Ne 4.5–9n. *As the Lord liveth* is common in the Deuteronomistic history and the BoM, but it is unusual for the Lord to swear by himself in the third person; God’s regular oath in the OT is “as I live.”

CHAPTER 16

1–2: Two opposite responses to Samuel’s preaching are described. They may have been happening simultaneously, but the first (finding Nephi and confessing sins) would have taken longer than the second (throwing stones and shooting arrows). 4–5: Nephi’s preaching of *things which must shortly come* makes him a second witness to Samuel’s message. 6: The response of nonbelievers to Samuel’s extraordinary invulnerability illustrates a problem with miracles: they can be attributed to the supernatural *power of the devil*; cf. v. 21. *He hath a devil* was also an accusation against John the Baptist as reported at Mt 11.18; Lk 7.33 (for other connections between Samuel and John, see 14.9n and 14.18–19n). 9: *The eighty and sixth year*, this would be the year –6. At 14.2, Samuel said that Jesus’s birth would come after five more years. This apparent discrepancy will lead to problems at 3 Ne 1.4–9.

sixth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi.^a

The People Reject Signs and Wonders

¹⁰ And thus ended also the eighty and seventh year of the reign of the judges,^b the more part of the people remaining in their pride and wickedness, and the lesser part walking more circumspectly before God. ¹¹ And these were the conditions also, in the eighty and eighth year of the reign of the judges.^c ¹² And there was but little alteration in the affairs of the people, save it were the people began to be more hardened in iniquity, and do more and more of that which was contrary to the commandments of God, in the eighty and ninth year of the reign of the judges.^d

¹³ But it came to pass in the ninetieth year of the reign of the judges,^e there were great signs given unto the people, and wonders; and the words of the prophets began to be fulfilled. ¹⁴ And angels did appear unto men, wise men, and did declare unto them glad tidings of great joy; thus in this year the scriptures began to be fulfilled. ¹⁵ Nevertheless, the people began to harden their hearts, all save it were the most believing part of them, both of the Nephites and also of the Lamanites, and began to depend upon their own strength and upon their own wisdom, saying, ¹⁶ “Some things they may have guessed right, among so many; but behold, we know that all these

great and marvelous works cannot come to pass, of which has been spoken.”

¹⁷ And they began to reason and to contend among themselves, saying ¹⁸ that “It is not reasonable that such a being as a Christ shall come; if so, and he be the Son of God, the Father of heaven and of earth, as it has been spoken, why will he not show himself unto us as well as unto them who shall be at Jerusalem? ¹⁹ Yea, why will he not show himself in this land as well as in the land of Jerusalem? ²⁰ But behold, we know that this is a wicked tradition, which has been handed down unto us by our fathers, to cause us that we should believe in some great and marvelous thing which should come to pass, but not among us, but in a land which is far distant, a land which we know not; therefore they can keep us in ignorance, for we cannot witness with our own eyes that they are true. ²¹ And they will, by the cunning and the mysterious arts of the evil one, work some great mystery which we cannot understand, which will keep us down to be servants to their words, and also servants unto them, for we depend upon them to teach us the word; and thus will they keep

^a 9 –6 years; see Hel 13.1

^b 10 –5 years

^c 11 –4 years

^d 12 –3 years

^e 13 –2 years

13: *The words of the prophets began to be fulfilled*, reference uncertain. **14:** The phrases *wise men* and *tidings of great joy* are associated with Jesus's nativity in the Bible (Mt 2.1; Lk 2.10). *The scriptures began to be fulfilled*, see Alma 13.25–26. **16:** Skeptics suggest that a few accurate predictions may be ascribed to coincidence or shrewdness, while the bulk of prophecies remain wildly implausible. **18–19:** Readers familiar with the basic narrative of the BoM will recognize the irony in these words, since Christ will appear to the Nephites during the lifetime of the children of those making these statements. Although Nephi₁ and Alma had prophesied that Christ would show himself to the Nephites after his resurrection (1 Ne 12.1–12; 2 Ne 26.1–9; Alma 16.20), Samuel did not mention this event, at least not in the prophecies recorded in the book of Helaman. Note also that at 3 Ne 11.8 the people seem surprised when the Lord appears. *As it has been spoken*, see 14.12; cf. Mos 3.8. **20–21:** The suspicion that Christian leaders were using religion to take advantage of the faithful was also articulated by Korihor at Alma 30.12–13, 23–27, 31 (30.23 has the only other occurrence of “keep [someone] in ignorance”). **20:** These non-believers recognize the convenience of a prophecy whose fulfillment cannot be verified. *Cannot witness with our own eyes*, once again, seeing is equated with believing; see Mos 1.6n and Korihor's words at Alma 30.15. **21:** *Cunning... arts*, 1 Ne 16.38, in a similar accusation made against Nephi₁.

us in ignorance if we will yield ourselves unto them, all the days of our lives.”

²² And many more things did the people imagine up in their hearts, which were foolish and vain; and they were much disturbed, for Satan did stir them up to do iniquity continually; yea, he did go about spreading rumors and contentions upon all the face of the land, that he might harden the hearts of the people against that which was good and against that which should come. ²³ And notwithstanding the signs and the wonders

which were wrought among the people of the Lord, and the many miracles which they did, Satan did get great hold upon the hearts of the people upon all the face of the land. ²⁴ And thus ended the ninetieth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi.⁴ ²⁵ And thus ended the book of Helaman, according to the record of Helaman and his sons.

⁴ 24 -2 years; see v. 13 above

22–25: The book of Helaman ends on a note of disheartened suspense. Despite the best efforts of Nephi and Samuel, the majority of Nephites remain unrepentant and skeptical of the coming of Christ. **22:** One assumes that Satan stirred people up and spread rumors through surrogates rather than directly, but see Alma 30.53.

INTRODUCTION TO 3 NEPHI

The culminating event of the Book of Mormon, the coming of Christ to the Americas, vindicates centuries of Nephite prophecies and the church of anticipation that was established by Alma, about 150 BCE. Christ's appearance at the temple in Bountiful occurs in the aftermath of tremendous death and destruction, resulting not only from the warfare and social chaos of the preceding decades but also from catastrophic natural disasters identified as divine judgment. The book of 3 Nephi is characterized by extremes of justice and mercy, as well as sorrow and joy. The book begins with the Nephites observing the signs of Jesus's birth and repenting, but over the next thirty years of increasing wickedness and military conflict, both the Nephite government and the Nephite church collapse, making space for Christ to inaugurate his kingdom in the New World when he appears sometime after the cataclysmic signs of his death. Jesus preaches to the Nephites over the course of three days, with the first day devoted to the Law and the second focusing on the Prophets.

There are several unexpected aspects of Christ's visitation. The first is that the Nephites seem astonished, even confused, when he first arrives:

They saw a man descending out of heaven; and he was clothed in a white robe; and he came down and stood in the midst of them; and the eyes of the whole multitude were turned upon him, and they durst not open their mouths, even one to another, and wist not what it meant, for they thought it was an angel that had appeared unto them. (11.8)

Although Book of Mormon prophets regularly foretold Jesus's life in Judea, there were only a few references to his New World ministry (1 Ne 12.4–7; 2 Ne 26.1–9; 32.6; Alma 16.20; 45.10). In particular, Samuel the Lamanite apparently said nothing about it, even though he prophesied in detail about the signs the Nephites would see of Christ's birth and death (Hel 14; cf. 1 Ne 19.10–12). The Nephites in the city of Bountiful eventually remember prophecies that the Lord would appear to them, but this was not something they had been specifically looking for.

A second surprising element is that after descending from heaven and proclaiming, "I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth" (11.14), Jesus subsequently identifies himself in a much lesser role: "Behold, I am he of whom Moses spake, saying, 'A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me'" (20.23; quoting Acts 3.22, which in turn cites Deut 18.15). Rather than speaking on his own divine authority, the resurrected Jesus often quotes scripture to make his points. On the first day, he recites an almost verbatim version of the Sermon on the Mount. Biblical scholars believe these Christian guidelines were not collected into exactly this form until the late first century, when Matthew's Gospel was composed, but in 3 Nephi they provide a convenient synthesis of what Christ describes as "the things which I taught before I ascended to my Father" (15.1). Perhaps more important, the sermon complements his explanation of how "the law in me is fulfilled" (15.5). Jesus comes to the Nephites

as the God who gave the law to Moses, and who now gives his people a new law (as prophesied at 2 Ne 32.6). Indeed, his speaking as God Revealed, along with his frequent usage of the doubled “verily, verily,” gives the Nephite Sermon on the Mount a Johannine flavor.

On the second day, in his role as prophet, Jesus cites Micah, Isaiah, and Malachi as he alludes to the typological significance of his Nephite theophany and foretells events of the last days. He quotes Isaiah 52.8–10 and Malachi 3.1–6, about the future return of the Lord to his people, at a moment when he is actually with his people in Bountiful. Such prophecies, he declares, both “have been, and shall be” (23.3). He further explains, with lengthy quotations from Micah 4–5 and Isaiah 52 and 54, how his covenants with Israel have not expired, assuring the Nephites that prophecies that have not yet materialized, especially with regard to the gathering of Israel, will be fulfilled in the latter days. Remarkably, he says almost nothing about his atoning sacrifice, focusing instead on prophecies of things still to come. At Bountiful, the Lord gives voice again to the words that he himself had given to Hebrew prophets, while also echoing some of the words of Nephite prophets. (It is important to note that Jesus in the Book of Mormon speaks clearly against supersessionist interpretations of the New Testament. The Christian church does not replace Israel; rather, believing Gentiles will share in Israel’s blessings.)

A third unexpected aspect is that even though Mormon informs his readers that Jesus appeared to the people on three consecutive days (26.13), he only includes reports of the first two days, which leaves a tantalizing gap in the record. Mormon clearly has access to teachings and events that transpired on the third day, but his narration is cut short by Christ himself: “Behold, I was about to write them, all which were engraven upon the plates of Nephi, but the Lord forbade it, saying, ‘I will try the faith of my people’” (26.11). The space for the missing day’s teachings is filled by an account of a later appearance of Jesus to the twelve Nephite disciples, much as Nephi once substituted a psalm for his blessing from Lehi that he chose to leave out of his record (see 2 Ne 4).

CONTENTS

Chapter 1: The signs of Jesus’s birth—the new star and a night without darkness that were prophesied by Samuel—finally arrive after the predicted time seems to have passed. A slaughter of believers is thereby averted.

Chapters 2–4: The Nephites fight a ten-year war against the Gadianton robbers, whom they defeat by gathering their people together in a smaller, more defensible location. The robbers, attempting a long-term siege, run out of resources.

Chapter 5: The Nephite victory strengthens their faith and determination to serve God. Mormon introduces himself in an editorial comment.

Chapters 6–7: After two years of prosperity, growing inequality breaks up the church. Members of a secret combination murder the chief judge and bring down the government. The people divide into tribes. Nephi₃ performs miracles and preaches, but resulting conversions are few.

Chapters 8–10: Great storms, whirlwinds, fires, earthquakes, floods, and three days of thick darkness herald Jesus’s death in Jerusalem, as was prophesied by Samuel. These disasters are described as divine judgment on the wicked. The survivors hear Jesus’s voice speaking in the darkness.

Chapters 11–18 (Day 1): Jesus descends from heaven at the temple in Bountiful. He calls twelve disciples and instructs them on baptism, preaches a version of the Sermon on the Mount, explains how he has fulfilled the law of Moses, heals the sick, blesses the children (who are surrounded by angels and heavenly fire), and institutes the sacrament (that is, the Eucharist or Lord’s Supper). He then ascends to heaven with a promise to return the next day.

Chapters 19–26 (Day 2): Jesus appears to an even larger crowd at the temple. He prays for his followers, administers the sacrament again, and reveals events of the last days, citing prophecies of Isaiah, Micah, and Malachi.

Chapters 27–28: On some later, undated occasion, Jesus appears to his twelve disciples, names his church, and grants the disciples’ individual desires. Nine wish to enter into his kingdom after they die, while three want to continue their ministry in a liminal state between death and resurrection. Mormon provides a few more details about their unusual situation.

Chapters 29–30: Mormon addresses his latter-day readers directly and prophesies.

The book of 3 Nephi covers events from ca. 1 BCE–35 CE.

INTERPRETATION

The story in 3 Nephi of Christ’s visit to the Americas is clearly intended as a sequel to the four Gospels, and while many of his teachings and actions among the Nephites are similar, the differences are profound. In Judea, Jesus was perceived as an ordinary human by nearly everyone. His message was for the most part dismissed, and his life ended tragically in an execution, with his closest disciples heartbroken and confused. The Gospels conclude with post-resurrection appearances to a chosen few and a promise that the kingdom of God, which he had proclaimed, was still to come. He did not establish a church during his lifetime (the term only appears twice in the Gospels, at Mt 16.18 and 18.17), and the organized religion that takes form in Acts and the Pauline Epistles is not equivalent to the arrival of God’s promised kingdom, which is deferred indefinitely. In the Book of Mormon, however, Christ (re)organizes his church with newly called leaders, authorized doctrine, and clear instructions on ritual and worship (chs. 11; 18; 27). He also apparently founded a new government and economic order, since political and religious divisions disappear, along with any distinctions between rich and poor (4 Ne 1.1–3). It is telling that the petition “thy kingdom come” in the Lord’s Prayer is omitted from the 3 Nephi version of the Sermon on the Mount (13.9–13). For Lehites and Mulekites in the first century, their heavenly king had arrived and established his kingdom among them.

In contrast to John’s observation that “the world was made by him, and the world knew him not” (Jn 1.10), Jesus is recognized by the Nephites as the God of Israel (even as he bore the marks of crucifixion), and among them he experiences joy and welcome rather than suffering and rejection. Indeed, there are only a few references in the Gospels to Jesus’s joy or rejoicing (Lk 10.21; Jn 15.11; 17.13), while this is a recurrent theme in 3 Nephi: “He said unto them, ‘Blessed are ye because of your faith. And now, behold, my joy is full.’ And when he had said these words, he wept, and the multitude bare record of it” (17.20–21). Several chapters later, he exclaims, “Behold, my joy is great, even unto fulness, because of you, and also this generation; yea, and even the Father rejoiceth, and also all the holy angels, because of you and this generation” (27.30). Perhaps this marvelous reception represents how Jesus’s mortal labors were requited by the Father in sending him to minister to the Nephites, a people prepared to receive him at his coming, as opposed to “his own [who] received him not” in the Old World (Jn 1.11; 3 Ne 9.16; cf. 1.14). Or Jesus in Bountiful may be an exemplar for struggling Christians who can look forward to someday being recognized for who they truly are and finding eternal happiness, in spite of their current pains and sorrows.

Additional differences between the Gospels and 3 Nephi include the absence of exorcisms and parables in the latter (aside from the story of the wise and foolish builders in the Nephite version of the Sermon on the Mount). And in his preaching in the New World, Christ never refers to himself as “the Son of man,” as he does more than eighty times in the Gospels. In general, the Nephites experience heightened versions of many of the miracles reported in the Gospels: multitudes feel Christ’s wounds, not just Thomas; children are not only blessed, but they are ministered to by angels; the Twelve are transfigured, in addition to Jesus; and Jesus feeds more than five thousand, with bread and wine that he produces out of nothing.

The Book of Mormon account of Christ’s New World ministry is framed by two discussions of the essence of the gospel, both focusing on belief, repentance, baptism, and receiving the Holy Ghost (11.31–41

and 27:13–22, with the latter also mentioning the cross and the Final Judgment), yet Jesus’s two days of preaching emphasize salvation history more than the plan of salvation. That is to say, when Christ appears to the Nephites in Bountiful, he shows them the wounds in his hands and feet, but he does not follow up with explanations of the crucifixion or the atonement or Christian love. Instead, he responds to questions about the status of the law of Moses, and he quotes scriptures concerning the future fulfillment of God’s covenants with Israel and the fate of unbelieving Gentiles in the last days.

He interacts with the Nephites collectively, as a branch of Israel, at a moment when God and his people are reunited after centuries of exile, in a parallel fulfillment to Isaiah 52.7–10, which prophesied that the Lord would return to Zion and “all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God,” or Ezekiel 43.1–5, when the “glory of the Lord” would once again fill the temple in Jerusalem (cf. 1 Kings 8.10–11). The Nephites at the temple in Bountiful have separated from the wicked (who were destroyed in chs. 8–9), and have been gathered as sheep to his fold (ch. 15, drawing on Jn 10.16). Jesus repeatedly affirms the Father’s promise to give them the land as a perpetual inheritance (15.13; 16.16; 20.14; 21.22), in lieu of their return to Judea. In addition to repairing the breach of exile, the theophany at Bountiful also recalls the experience of the Israelites at Sinai, when God similarly gave the law accompanied by thunder, lightning, and smoke (Ex 19–24). In the Americas, however, the entire multitude sees and hears the Lord, not just Moses and the seventy elders. The somewhat cryptic report in Exodus that “they saw God, and did eat and drink” (24.11) is surpassed when Christ offers the Eucharist to several thousand Nephites in attendance: “he truly gave them bread to eat, and also wine to drink” (3 Ne 20.7).

Salvation history also characterizes the events that lead up to Christ’s appearance. At the time of his crucifixion, more than a dozen Nephite cities are destroyed by natural disasters, with a voice from heaven declaring that the deaths of their inhabitants was God’s response to their wickedness and abominations, particularly their murdering of prophets and saints, a sin that seems to incur communal guilt (chs. 8–9). Mormon is eager to assure his readers that “it was the more righteous part of the people who were saved” and that these catastrophes had long been foretold by prophets (10.11–17), but fires, earthquakes, landslides, and floods are blunt instruments of God’s wrath, which kill the wicked, the not-so-wicked, and children alike. The same is true, however, of war and invasion, commonly associated with the rise and fall of nations, and presumed at times to occur according to God’s will and purposes. (Such observations are reflected in the fact that several of the most important Jewish prayers—the Amidah, the Kaddish, and the Priestly Blessing—conclude with a supplication for peace.)

At the same time, the care for individuals that is implicit in the plan of salvation is amply demonstrated in Christ’s New World ministry. Upon his arrival, he invites each of those in the crowd to come forward “one by one” to “feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet” (11.13–15), a process that would have taken several hours given that the multitude included some twenty-five hundred men, women, and children (17.25). When Jesus has delivered his message of the first day and is about to leave, he sees the tears in the people’s eyes and changes his mind. He stays a little longer, healing those who were sick, lame, blind, maimed, deaf, or otherwise impaired (17.1–10). Then he commands the multitude to bring forth their children, and “he took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them” (17.21). It appears that Christ’s arrival in chapter 11 came several months after the devastation reported in chapters 8–10 (compare 8.5 and 10.18), presumably after bodies had been buried and rubble cleared. In his two days of sermons, Jesus does not mention the preceding deaths (at least not in the ostensibly truncated record of 3 Nephi), but readers might reasonably speculate that when he healed the afflicted, he was healing some who had been injured in the recent disasters. As elsewhere in the Book of Mormon, the events of 3 Nephi represent a merging of Old Testament salvation history and the New Testament plan of salvation. That is to say, God works on a large scale with nations and peoples over many

centuries, but apparent deficits of divine mercy or justice for particular individuals will someday be made right, if not in this life then in the next. The juxtaposition of the two modes of salvation is particularly clear in chapter 9.

GUIDE TO READING

Two literary features to look for in 3 Nephi are the increasingly rapid swings from righteousness to wickedness among the Nephites in the thirty years before Christ's coming (e.g., 2.3; 5.1–3; 6.14–17), and Mormon becoming a more explicit editorial presence, with four extended comment sections (5.7–26; 10.11–19; 26.6–14; 28.13–30.2). In the last two verses of 3 Nephi (30.1–2), which constitute an entire original chapter, Mormon transitions from being a historian to a prophet, delivering a message of warning and invitation as commanded by Christ. In addition, there is foreshadowing in Jesus's words during the three days of darkness, which were heard by everyone who had survived the destruction, and which function as something of a preview for the chapters that follow. These include an invitation to return to him, repent, and be healed; his self-identification as the Son of God; an explanation of how the law of Moses has been fulfilled; references to the Holy Ghost and a baptism with fire; and special blessings promised to those who come to him "as a little child" (9.13–22).

The book of 3 Nephi can also be read typologically. Just as Nephites who had almost given up hope for signs of Jesus's birth were suddenly vindicated (ch. 1), so too latter-day believers are assured that Christ's second coming is imminent, even if outsiders scoff. Similarly, a marvelous sign from God—a night with no darkness for the Nephites, and for modern Gentiles the coming forth of the Book of Mormon—will eventually give way to doubt rather than belief, to be followed by a grace period preceding the widespread destruction of the wicked that will herald the coming of the Lord in power and glory. In reading Jesus's sermons in chapters 12–28, it may be useful to keep in mind his double audience. What would his words have meant to the Nephites in his presence, and what might be their intended meaning for those who would read Mormon's account in the Book of Mormon in the last days? Both Jesus and Mormon are portrayed as being aware of future readers, to the extent that Jesus takes on the role of Mormon's general editor (see 26.6–11; 28.25; 30.1). In fact, Mormon concludes by noting that when the Book of Mormon is revealed to the Gentiles, "ye may know that the words of the Lord, which have been spoken by the holy prophets, shall all be fulfilled; and ye need not say that the Lord delays his coming" (29.2), which makes for a poignant inclusio: 3 Nephi both begins and ends with divine assurances to believers concerned about the timing of the Lord's arrival.

And finally, 3 Nephi offers particularly rich instances of both intertextuality, as it draws on biblical phrases and quotes large blocks of text from both the Old and New Testaments, and also intratextuality, in its extensive allusions to earlier passages from the Book of Mormon itself. The formatting and annotations in this edition can help readers identify these sorts of textual connections, and will also point out variations and modifications to the source texts. In trying to understand what the book's narrators and characters are communicating, it is useful to note places where Jesus's sermon at the temple differs from the Sermon on the Mount. And it may be meaningful to ask why Jesus rearranges the sequence of verses in Isaiah 52, or why he skips over Isaiah 53, which is often regarded by Christians as one of the most clearly Messianic of Old Testament prophecies. Similarly, it may be important to note the intricate relationship between earlier Nephite prophecies and the terrible judgments that precede Christ's appearance, or the numerous points of contact between Jesus's teachings in Bountiful and those of Nephite prophets who preceded him. The narrative of 3 Nephi interweaves biblical and Nephite voices to an extraordinary degree, with Mormon describing Jesus as having "expounded all the scriptures in one" (23.14).

THIRD NEPHI

THE BOOK OF NEPHI

The Son of Nephi, Who Was the Son of Helaman

And Helaman was the son of Helaman, who was the son of Alma, who was the son of Alma, being a descendant of Nephi who was the son of Lehi, who came out of Jerusalem in the first year of the reign of Zedekiah, the king of Judah.^a

Nephi₂ Transmits the Records to Nephi₃

[1] **1** ¹ Now it came to pass that the ninety and first year had passed away^b and it was six hundred years from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem; and it was in the year that Lachoneus was the chief judge and the governor over the land. ² And Nephi, the son of Helaman, had departed out of the land of Zarahemla, giving charge unto his son Nephi, who was his eldest son, concerning the plates of brass, and all the records which had been kept, and all those things which had been kept sacred from the departure of Lehi out of Jerusalem. ³ Then he departed out of the land, and whither he went, no man knoweth; and his son Nephi did keep the records in his stead, yea, the record of this people.

Samuel₂'s Prophecies Seem to Fail

⁴ And it came to pass that in the commencement of the ninety and second year,^c behold, the prophecies of the prophets began to be

fulfilled more fully; for there began to be greater signs and greater miracles wrought among the people. ⁵ But there were some who began to say that the time was past for the words to be fulfilled, which were spoken by Samuel, the Lamanite. ⁶ And they began to rejoice over their brethren, saying, "Behold the time is past, and the words of Samuel are not fulfilled; therefore, your joy and your faith concerning this thing hath been vain."

⁷ And it came to pass that they did make a great uproar throughout the land; and the people who believed began to be very sorrowful, lest by any means those things which had been spoken might not come to pass. ⁸ But behold, they did watch steadfastly for that day and that night and that day which should be as one day as if there were no night, that they might know that their faith had not been vain.

^a 597 BCE

^b 1 -1 year

^c 4 +1 year (that is, the year in which the signs were given); see the note at Mos 29.44

CHAPTER 1

1: The last chief judge mentioned in the narrative was Seezoram, who had been murdered by his brother some twenty years earlier, see Hel 9.23–27. Lachoneus's background is unknown. **3:** Nephi₂'s demise, like Alma₂'s, is somewhat mysterious; see Alma 45.17–19. The phrase *no man knoweth* may be an allusion to Moses's enigmatic death (Deut 34.6). On the other hand, there seems to have been some expectation that Nephi₂ might return from his unknown travels; see 2.9. **4–9:** This episode may function as a typological precedent for latter-day readers who might feel that the time for Jesus's second coming has passed (compare v. 6 with 29.2–3; the book of 3 Nephi is framed by concerns about unfulfilled prophecies of Christ's coming). Of course, Christians have been responding to skeptics of Christ's return since NT times; see 2 Pet 3.1–13. **5:** *Which were spoken by Samuel*, see Hel 14.2. The chronological ambiguity noted at Hel 16.9n has consequences here.

⁹ Now it came to pass that there was a day set apart by the unbelievers, that all those who believed in those traditions should be put to death except the sign should come to pass, which had been given by Samuel the prophet.

The Signs of Jesus's Birth Are Fulfilled

¹⁰ Now it came to pass that when Nephi, the son of Nephi, saw this wickedness of his people, his heart was exceedingly sorrowful.

¹¹ And it came to pass that he went out and bowed himself down upon the earth, and cried mightily to his God in behalf of his people, yea, those who were about to be destroyed because of their faith in the tradition of their fathers. ¹² And it came to pass that he cried mightily unto the Lord all the day.

And behold, the voice of the Lord came unto him, saying, ¹³ "Lift up your head and be of good cheer; for behold, the time is at hand, and on this night shall the sign be given, and on the morrow come I into the world, to show unto the world that I will fulfil all that which I have caused to be spoken by the mouth of my holy prophets. ¹⁴ Behold, I come unto my own, to fulfil all things which I have made known unto the children of men from the foundation of the world, and to do the will, both of the Father and of the Son—of the Father because of me, and of the Son because of my flesh. And behold, the time is at hand, and this night shall the sign be given."

¹⁵ And it came to pass that the words which came unto Nephi were fulfilled, according as they had been spoken; for behold, at the going down of the sun there was no darkness; and the people began to be astonished because there was no darkness when the night came.

¹⁶ And there were many, who had not believed the words of the prophets, who fell to the earth and became as if they were dead, for they knew that the great plan of destruction which they had laid for those who believed in the words of the prophets had been frustrated; for the signal^a which had been given was already at hand. ¹⁷ And they began to know that the Son of God must shortly appear; yea, in fine, all the people upon the face of the whole earth from the west to the east, both in the land north and in the land south, were so exceedingly astonished that they fell to the earth. ¹⁸ For they knew that the prophets had testified of these things for many years, and that the sign which had been given was already at hand; and they began to fear because of their iniquity and their unbelief.

¹⁹ And it came to pass that there was no darkness in all that night, but it was as light as though it was mid-day. And it came to pass that the sun did rise in the morning again, according to its proper order; and they knew

^a 16 P, 1830, 1981 *sign*

9: This plan suggests that Christians were a relatively powerless minority among the Nephites, much like the Jews at the time of Esther; cf. Esther 3.12–14. **13–14:** The Lord's words are framed by an inclusio: *behold, the time is at hand and on this night shall the sign be given*. **13:** Note that the premortal Christ is speaking on the day before he is born; he is not, as yet, fully embodied. *Lift up your head and be of good cheer, for behold, the time is at hand*, cf. Mos 7.18; 24.13, 16. *Be of good cheer*, see Alma 17.31n. **14:** *I come unto my own*, Jn 1.11; see 3 Ne 9.16n. *Of the Father because of me* suggests that the premortal Christ identifies with the Father, while Jesus in the flesh is the Son. In any case, their wills are aligned. This represents a slight revision of Mos 15.1–7, where the will of the Son was subject to the will of the Father; here they are acting in complete harmony. **15:** This was the sign foretold by Samuel at Hel 14.3–4. According to Samuel, the extraordinary illumination would be the effect of "great lights in heaven," though further details are not provided here. It is somewhat surprising that the BoM never cites Zech 14.7 as a prooftext for this event. Alternatively, Jer 33.19–22 could have been alluded to as an indication of the end of God's covenants with the house of David and the Levitical priests; see v. 24 below. **16:** *Frustrated*, WB: "rendered vain or null." **17:** As prophesied at Hel 14.7.

that it was the day that the Lord should be born, because of the sign which had been given.²⁰ And it had come to pass, yea, all things, every whit, according to the words of the prophets.²¹ And it came to pass also that a new star did appear, according to the word.

Reactions to the Signs

²² And it came to pass that from this time forth there began to be lyings sent forth among the people, by Satan, to harden their hearts, to the intent that they might not believe in those signs and wonders which they had seen; but notwithstanding these lyings and deceivings the more part of the people did believe, and were converted unto the Lord.²³ And it came to pass that Nephi went forth among the people, and also many others, baptizing unto repentance, in the which there was a great remission of sins. And thus the people began again to have peace in the land.

²⁴ And there were no contentions, save it were a few that began to preach, endeavoring to prove by the scriptures that it was no more expedient to observe the law of Moses. Now in this thing they did err, having not understood the scriptures.²⁵ But it came to pass that they soon became converted, and were convinced of the error which they were in, for it was made known unto them that the law was not yet fulfilled, and that it must be fulfilled in every whit; yea, the word came unto them that it must be fulfilled; yea, that one jot or tittle should not pass away till it should all be fulfilled; therefore in this same year were they brought

to a knowledge of their error and did confess their faults.²⁶ And thus the ninety and second year did pass away,^a bringing glad tidings unto the people because of the signs which did come to pass, according to the words of the prophecy of all the holy prophets.

The Gadianton War: 3 Nephi 1.27–5.6

Increasing Wickedness

²⁷ And it came to pass that the ninety and third year^b did also pass away in peace, save it were for the Gadianton robbers, who dwelt upon the mountains, who did infest the land; for so strong were their holds and their secret places that the people could not overpower them; therefore they did commit many murders, and did do much slaughter among the people.²⁸ And it came to pass that in the ninety and fourth year^c they began to increase in a great degree, because there were many dissenters of the Nephites who did flee unto them, which did cause much sorrow unto those Nephites who did remain in the land.

²⁹ And there was also a cause of much sorrow among the Lamanites; for behold, they had many children who did grow up and began to wax strong in years, that they became for themselves, and were led away by some who

^a 26 +1 year; see v. 4 above

^b 27 +2 years

^c 28 +3 years

20: *Whit*, WB: “the smallest part or particle imaginable.” 21: *According to the word*, that is, Samuel’s prophecy at Hel 14.5. 23: *Baptism* is connected to *remission of sins* at Mk 1.4; Lk 3.3; Acts 2.38; and seven times in the BoM. This verse is the first time the combination occurs in the BoM, aside from 2 Ne 31.17. 24–25: The end of animal sacrifices and other requirements of the Mosaic law would have to wait until after the death of Jesus; see 9.19–20; 4 Ne 1.12. 24: *Scriptures . . . no more expedient to observe the law of Moses*, see 2 Ne 25.24, 27, 30; Alma 25.15; 30.3. 25: The language here reflects Alma 34.13; cf. Mt 5.18 (3 Ne 12.18). 27: Gadianton robbers in the mountains is a problem that has been festering for at least a dozen years; they were last mentioned at Hel 11:26–34. 28–30: Both the Nephites and Lamanites are losing people who defect to the robbers. 29: *They became for themselves*, they became accountable for themselves, or they became independent adults. The Zoramites were Nephite dissenters; their story is told at Alma 31–35; 43.

were Zoramites—by their lyings and their flattering words—to join those Gadianton robbers.³⁰ And thus were the Lamanites afflicted also, and began to decrease as to their faith and righteousness, because of the wickedness of the rising generation.

2¹ And it came to pass that thus passed away the ninety and fifth year also,^a and the people began to forget those signs and wonders which they had heard, and began to be less and less astonished at a sign or a wonder from heaven, insomuch that they began to be hard in their hearts, and blind in their minds, and began to disbelieve all which they had heard and seen—² imagining up some vain thing in their hearts, that it was wrought by men and by the power of the devil, to lead away and deceive the hearts of the people; and thus did Satan get possession of the hearts of the people again, insomuch that he did blind their eyes and lead them away to believe that the doctrine of Christ was a foolish and a vain thing.

³ And it came to pass that the people began to wax strong in wickedness and abominations; and they did not believe that there should be any more signs or wonders given; and Satan did go about, leading away the hearts of the people, tempting them and causing them that they should do great wickedness in the land.

⁴ And thus did pass away the ninety and sixth year;^b and also the ninety and seventh year;^c and also the ninety and eighth year;^d and also the ninety and ninth year.^e

⁵ And also an hundred years had passed away since the days of Mosiah, who was king over the people of the Nephites.⁶ And six

hundred and nine years had passed away since Lehi left Jerusalem.⁷ And nine years had passed away from the time when the sign was given, which was spoken of by the prophets, that Christ should come into the world.⁸ Now the Nephites began to reckon their time from this period when the sign was given, or from the coming of Christ; therefore, nine years had passed away.^{f9} And Nephi, who was the father of Nephi, who had the charge of the records, did not return to the land of Zarahemla, and could nowhere be found in all the land.¹⁰ And it came to pass that the people did still remain in wickedness, notwithstanding the much preaching and prophesying which was sent among them; and thus passed away the tenth year also;^g and the eleventh year also passed away in iniquity.^h

The Nephites and Lamanites Combine against the Gadianton Robbers

¹¹ And it came to pass in the thirteenth yearⁱ there began to be wars and contentions throughout all the land; for the Gadianton robbers had become so numerous, and did slay so many of the people, and did lay waste so many cities, and did spread so much death and carnage throughout the land, that it

^a 1 +4 years

^b 4 +5 years

^c 4 +6 years

^d 4 +7 years

^e 4 +8 years

^f 8 +9 years

^g 10 +10 years

^h 10 +11 years

ⁱ 11 +13 years

CHAPTER 2

1: *Which they had heard*, that is, “which they had heard of” from Samuel; he had prophesied of unspecified “signs and wonders in heaven” at Hel 14.6. **2:** *Imagining up... in their hearts* and *foolish and vain thing* closely parallels Hel 16.22; cf. Alma 30.13. **6–8:** A shift in the calendrical system is a reflection of the Christocentric worldview of the Nephites at this time. **9:** The departure of Nephi₂ was recorded at 1.2–3. **11:** *Both the Nephites and the Lamanites*, see Hel 11.28n.

became expedient that all the people, both the Nephites and the Lamanites, should take up arms against them.¹² Therefore, all the Lamanites who had become converted unto the Lord did unite with their brethren, the Nephites, and were compelled, for the safety of their lives and their women and their children, to take up arms against those Gadianton robbers, yea, and also to maintain their rights, and the privileges of their church and of their worship, and their freedom and their liberty.

¹³ And it came to pass that before this thirteenth year had passed away the Nephites were threatened with utter destruction because of this war, which had become exceedingly sore.¹⁴ And it came to pass that those Lamanites who had united with the Nephites were numbered among the Nephites;¹⁵ and their curse was taken from them, and their skin became white like unto the Nephites;¹⁶ and their young men and their daughters became exceedingly fair, and they were numbered among the Nephites, and were called Nephites. And thus ended the thirteenth year.^a

¹⁷ And it came to pass in the commencement of the fourteenth year,^b the war between the robbers and the people of Nephi did continue and did become exceedingly sore; nevertheless, the people of Nephi did gain some advantage of the robbers, insomuch that they

did drive them back out of their lands into the mountains and into their secret places.¹⁸ And thus ended the fourteenth year. And in the fifteenth year^c they did come forth against the people of Nephi; and because of the wickedness of the people of Nephi, and their many contentions and dissensions, the Gadianton robbers did gain many advantages over them.¹⁹ And thus ended the fifteenth year, and thus were the people in a state of many afflictions; and the sword of destruction did hang over them, insomuch that they were about to be smitten down by it, and this because of their iniquity.

Giddianhi, the Leader of the Robbers, Sends a Letter to Lachoneus,

[[III]] 3 ¹ And now it came to pass that in the sixteenth year from the coming of Christ,^d Lachoneus, the governor of the land, received an epistle from the leader and the governor of this band of robbers; and these were the words which were written, saying:

^a 16 +13 years; see v. 11 above

^b 17 +14 years

^c 18 +15 years

^d 1 +16 years

12: *Compelled... to take up arms*, it is not clear whether the compulsion came from the dire circumstances or from the Nephites, but in either case this marks the end of the pacifism that characterized the Anti-Nephi-Lehite converts and their spiritual followers (Alma 24.5–27; Hel 5.51; 15.9). **14–16:** After taking up weapons (in contrast to Alma 53.14–15), these Lamanite converts will become indistinguishable from the Nephites. Once again, lighter skin color is associated with righteousness, or at least with the religious heritage of the Nephites—since the Nephites themselves have not always been righteous; cf. v. 18. The fact that the transformation seems more pronounced among their children suggests that intermarriage was a factor in ethnic assimilation. *Their curse*, see 2 Ne 5.21–23; Alma 3.6–10. **17:** The robbers are associated with both *mountains* and *secret places* at Hel 11.25; 3 Ne 1.27; 4.1. **18:** Captain Moroni had blamed the Nephites' troubles on "contentions and dissensions" at Alma 51.16.

CHAPTER 3

1: There appears to be some parity between the two men, since both have taken the title of *governor*.

² Lachoneus, most noble and chief governor of the land, behold, I write this epistle unto you, and do give unto you exceeding great praise because of your firmness, and also the firmness of your people, in maintaining that which ye suppose to be your right and liberty; yea, ye do stand well, as if ye were supported by the hand of a god, in the defence of your liberty, and your property, and your country, or that which ye do call so. ³ And it seemeth a pity unto me, most noble Lachoneus, that ye should be so foolish and vain as to suppose that ye can stand against so many brave men who are at my command, who do now at this time stand in their arms, and do await with great anxiety for the word, “Go down upon the Nephites and destroy them.”

⁴ And I, knowing of their unconquerable spirit, having proved them in the field of battle, and knowing of their everlasting hatred towards you because of the many wrongs which ye have done unto them, therefore if they should come down against you they would visit you with utter destruction. ⁵ Therefore I have written this epistle, sealing it with mine own hand, feeling for your welfare, because of your

firmness in that which ye believe to be right, and your noble spirit in the field of battle.

⁶ Therefore I write unto you, desiring that ye would yield up unto this my people, your cities, your lands, and your possessions, rather than that they should visit you with the sword and that destruction should come upon you. ⁷ Or in other words, yield yourselves up unto us, and unite with us and become acquainted with our secret works, and become our brethren that ye may be like unto us—not our slaves, but our brethren and partners of all our substance. ⁸ And behold, I swear unto you, if ye will do this, with an oath, ye shall not be destroyed; but if ye will not do this, I swear unto you with an oath, that on the morrow month I will command that my armies shall come down against you, and they shall not stay their hand and shall spare not, but shall slay you, and shall let fall the sword upon you even until ye shall become extinct.

⁹ And behold, I am Giddianhi; and I am the governor of this the secret society of Gadianton; which society and the works thereof I know to be good; and they are of ancient date and they have been handed down unto us. ¹⁰ And

2–3: Giddianhi begins with praise, though he casts doubt on Lachoneus’s beliefs with phrases like *that which ye suppose* and *as if ye were* and *that which ye do call so*. **3:** *In their arms*, with weapons ready. *Anxiety*, OED: “strong desire or concern for something to happen or to do something.” **4:** *Everlasting hatred* [of Lamanites for Nephites], see Mos 10.17, which also includes “murder . . . rob . . . plunder,” a combination that will appear again shortly at 3 Ne 4.5. **9:** *They are of ancient date*, perhaps Giddianhi is connecting them to Jaredite culture, which had similar secret societies; see Alma 37.27–29; Hel 6.22–30. **10:** *Recover their rights and government . . . avenge their wrongs*, the Lamanite king Ammoron had made a similar claim at Alma 54.24, which was also in the conclusion of a letter that alluded to unrequited wrongs (compare v. 4 above to Alma 54.17). Giddianhi, however, here claims to be speaking on behalf of Nephite dissenters rather than Lamanites. Perhaps some were Mulekites who resented the continuing Nephite dominance of the government.

I write this epistle unto you, Lachoneus, and I hope that ye will deliver up your lands and your possessions, without the shedding of blood, that this my people may recover their rights and government, who have dissented away from you because of your wickedness in retaining from them their rights of government, and except ye do this, I will avenge their wrongs. I am Giddianhi.

Lachoneus, Prepares His People for War

¹¹ And now it came to pass when Lachoneus received this epistle he was exceedingly astonished, because of the boldness of Giddianhi demanding the possession of the land of the Nephites, and also of threatening the people and avenging the wrongs of those that had received no wrong, save it were they had wronged themselves by dissenting away unto those wicked and abominable robbers. ¹² Now behold, this Lachoneus, the governor, was a just man, and could not be frightened by the demands and the threatenings of a robber; therefore he did not hearken to the epistle of Giddianhi, the governor of the robbers, but he did cause that his people should cry unto the Lord for strength against the time that the robbers should come down against them.

¹³ Yea, he sent a proclamation among all the people, that they should gather together their women, and their children, their flocks and their herds, and all their substance, save it were their land, unto one place. ¹⁴ And he caused that fortifications should be built round about them, and the strength thereof should be exceeding great. And he caused that armies—both of the Nephites and of the Lamanites, or of all them who were numbered among the

Nephites—should be placed as guards round about to watch them, and to guard them from the robbers day and night. ¹⁵ Yea, he said unto them, “As the Lord liveth, except ye repent of all your iniquities, and cry unto the Lord, ye will in nowise be delivered out of the hands of those Gadianton robbers.” ¹⁶ And so great and marvelous were the words and prophecies of Lachoneus that they did cause fear to come upon all the people; and they did exert themselves in their might to do according to the words of Lachoneus.

¹⁷ And it came to pass that Lachoneus did appoint chief captains over all the armies of the Nephites, to command them at the time that the robbers should come down out of the wilderness against them. ¹⁸ Now the chiefest among all the captains and the great commander of all the armies of the Nephites was appointed, and his name was Gidgiddoni. ¹⁹ Now it was the custom among all the Nephites to appoint for their chief captains, (save it were in their times of wickedness) some one that had the spirit of revelation and also prophecy; therefore, this Gidgiddoni was a great prophet among them, as also was the chief judge.

²⁰ Now the people said unto Gidgiddoni, “Pray unto the Lord, and let us go up upon the mountains and into the wilderness, that we may fall upon the robbers and destroy them in their own lands.”

²¹ But Gidgiddoni saith unto them, “The Lord forbid; for if we should go up against them the Lord would deliver us into their hands; therefore we will prepare ourselves in the center of our lands, and we will gather all our armies together, and we will not go against them, but we will wait till they shall come against us; therefore as the Lord liveth, if we do this he will deliver them into our hands.”

13–14: This would have to have been done quickly to meet Giddianhi’s deadline of one month (v. 8). Ironically, by gathering *unto one place*, the Nephites are acceding to Giddianhi’s demands to “yield up . . . your cities, your lands” (v. 6). **16:** The mention of Lachoneus’s prophecies is an indication that he was both a political and spiritual leader; cf. v. 19 below. **21:** Generally, only defensive warfare is approved by God; cf. Alma 43.46–47; 48.14–16.

The Nephites Gather Together

²² And it came to pass in the seventeenth year,^a in the latter end of the year, the proclamation of Lachoneus had gone forth throughout all the face of the land, and they had taken their horses, and their chariots, and their cattle, and all their flocks, and their herds, and their grain, and all their substance, and did march forth by thousands and by tens of thousands, until they had all gone forth to the place which had been appointed that they should gather themselves together, to defend themselves against their enemies.

²³ And the land which was appointed was the land of Zarahemla and^b the land Bountiful, yea, to the line which was between the land Bountiful and the land Desolation.²⁴ And there were a great many thousand people who were called Nephites, who did gather themselves together in this land. Now Lachoneus did cause that they should gather themselves together in the land southward, because of the great curse which was upon the land northward.

²⁵ And they did fortify themselves against their enemies; and they did dwell in one land, and in one body, and they did fear the words which had been spoken by Lachoneus, inasmuch that they did repent of all their sins; and they did put up their prayers unto the Lord their God, that he would deliver them in the time that their enemy should come down against them to battle.²⁶ And they were exceedingly sorrowful because of their enemy. And Gidgiddoni did cause that they should

make weapons of war of every kind, and they should be strong with armor, and with shields, and with bucklers, after the manner of his instruction.

The War with the Robbers Resumes

4 ¹ And it came to pass that in the latter end of the eighteenth year^c those armies of robbers had prepared for battle, and began to come down and to sally forth from the hills, and out of the mountains, and the wilderness, and their strongholds, and their secret places, and began to take possession of the lands, both which were in the land south and which were in the land north, and began to take possession of all the lands which had been deserted by the Nephites, and the cities which had been left desolate.

² But behold, there were no wild beasts nor game in those lands which had been deserted by the Nephites, and there was no game for the robbers save it were in the wilderness.³ And the robbers could not exist save it were in the wilderness, for the want of food; for the Nephites had left their lands desolate, and had gathered their flocks and their herds and all their substance, and they were in one body.

^a 22 +17 years

^b 23 P, 1830, 1981 Zarahemla, and the land which was between the land of Zarahemla and

^c 1 +18 years

22: The threat from the robbers must have been perceived as a dire crisis, since provisioning so many people, away from their homes, would have been a massive undertaking; cf. 4.4. The word *chariots* here probably refers to carts or wagons (an archaic English usage). 24: *People who were called Nephites*, according to v. 14, this included both Nephites and Lamanites. *The great curse which was upon the land northward*, see Alma 22.30–31; Hel 13.17–23, 30–36. 25: *Words which had been spoken by Lachoneus*, see vv. 15–16 above. Physical unity, as a response to imminent danger, leads to spiritual unity. 26: *Buckler*, a small round shield; this is the only appearance of the word in the BoM.

CHAPTER 4

1: *Sally forth*, see Alma 56.28n. 2–4: Without settled agriculture or domesticated animals, the robbers lead a hunter-gatherer existence that, given the terrain and their numbers, is unsustainable unless supplemented by plunder.

⁴ Therefore, there was no chance for the robbers to plunder and to obtain food, save it were to come up in open battle against the Nephites; and the Nephites being in one body, and having so great a number, and having reserved for themselves provisions, and horses and cattle, and flocks of every kind, that they might subsist for the space of seven years, in the which time they did hope to destroy the robbers from off the face of the land; and thus the eighteenth year did pass away.

⁵ And it came to pass that in the nineteenth year^a Giddianhi found that it was expedient that he should go up to battle against the Nephites, for there was no way that they could subsist save it were to plunder and rob and murder. ⁶ And they durst not spread themselves upon the face of the land insomuch that they could raise grain, lest the Nephites should come upon them and slay them; therefore Giddianhi gave commandment unto his armies that in this year they should go up to battle against the Nephites.

⁷ And it came to pass that they did come up to battle; and it was in the sixth month; and behold, great and terrible was the day that they did come up to battle; and they were girded about after the manner of robbers; and they had a lamb-skin about their loins, and they were dyed in blood, and their heads were shorn, and they had head-plates upon them; and great and terrible was the appearance of the armies of Giddianhi, because of their armor, and because of their being dyed in blood. ⁸ And it came to pass that the armies of the Nephites, when they saw the appearance of the army of Giddianhi, had all fallen to the earth, and did lift their cries to the Lord their God, that he

would spare them and deliver them out of the hands of their enemies.

⁹ And it came to pass that when the armies of Giddianhi saw this they began to shout with a loud voice, because of their joy, for they had supposed that the Nephites had fallen with fear because of the terror of their armies. ¹⁰ But in this thing they were disappointed, for the Nephites did not fear them; but they did fear their God and did supplicate him for protection; therefore, when the armies of Giddianhi did rush upon them they were prepared to meet them; yea, in the strength of the Lord they did receive them.

¹¹ And the battle commenced in this the sixth month; and great and terrible was the battle thereof, yea, great and terrible was the slaughter thereof, insomuch that there never was known so great a slaughter among all the people of Lehi since he left Jerusalem. ¹² And notwithstanding the threatenings and the oaths which Giddianhi had made, behold, the Nephites did beat them, insomuch that they did fall back from before them.

¹³ And it came to pass that Gidgiddoni commanded that his armies should pursue them as far as the borders of the wilderness, and that they should not spare any that should fall into their hands by the way; and thus they did pursue them and did slay them, to the borders of the wilderness, even until they had fulfilled the commandment of Gidgiddoni. ¹⁴ And it came to pass that Giddianhi, who had stood and fought with boldness, was pursued as he fled; and being weary because of his much

^a 5 +19 years

4: For the space of seven years, the robbers are defeated within four years (5.4–7), though the Nephites do not return to their personal lands for eight years, at which time they still have some provisions left; see 6.1–2. Seven years of provisions echoes the story of Joseph in Egypt; see Gen 41.35–36. **7:** *Skin about their loins* and *heads were shorn*, the appearance of the robbers echoes descriptions of Lamanite warriors at Enos 1.20; Alma 3.5. *Lamb-skin*, unique here; one wonders about the origins of these garments if the robbers did not have flocks or herds. **13:** The conflict with the robbers has become a war of extermination, with no prisoners taken, but see v. 27 below and 6.3. **14:** *Who had stood and fought with boldness*, the narrator grants Giddianhi a modicum of respect.

fighting he was overtaken and slain. And thus was the end of Giddianhi the robber.

The Nephites Win a War of Attrition

¹⁵ And it came to pass that the armies of the Nephites did return again to their place of security. And it came to pass that this nineteenth year did pass away,^a and the robbers did not come again to battle; neither did they come again in the twentieth year.^b ¹⁶ And in the twenty and first year^c they did not come up to battle, but they came up on all sides to lay siege round about the people of Nephi; for they did suppose that if they should cut off the people of Nephi from their lands, and should hem them in on every side, and if they should cut them off from all their outward privileges, that they could cause them to yield themselves up according to their wishes. ¹⁷ Now they had appointed unto themselves another leader, whose name was Zemnariyah; therefore it was Zemnariyah that did cause that this siege should take place.

¹⁸ But behold, this was an advantage to the Nephites; for it was impossible for the robbers to lay siege sufficiently long to have any effect upon the Nephites, because of their much provision which they had laid up in store. ¹⁹ Because of the scantiness of provisions among the robbers—for behold, they had nothing save it were meat for their subsistence, which meat they did obtain in the wilderness—²⁰ and it came to pass that the wild game became scarce in the wilderness insomuch that the robbers were about to perish with hunger. ²¹ And the Nephites were continually marching out by day and by night, and falling upon their armies, and cutting them off by thousands and by tens of thousands.

²² And thus it became the desire of the people of Zemnariyah to withdraw from their

design, because of the great destruction which came upon them by night and by day. ²³ And it came to pass that Zemnariyah did give command unto his people that they should withdraw themselves from the siege, and march into the furthestmost parts of the land northward.

²⁴ And now, Gidgiddoni being aware of their design, and knowing of their weakness because of the want of food, and the great slaughter which had been made among them, therefore he did send out his armies in the night-time, and did cut off the way of their retreat, and did place his armies in the way of their retreat. ²⁵ And this did they do in the night-time, and got on their march beyond the robbers, so that on the morrow, when the robbers began their march, they were met by the armies of the Nephites both in their front and in their rear. ²⁶ And the robbers who were on the south were also cut off in their places of retreat. And all these things were done by command of Gidgiddoni.

²⁷ And there were many thousands who did yield themselves up prisoners unto the Nephites, and the remainder of them were slain. ²⁸ And their leader, Zemnariyah, was taken and hanged upon a tree, yea, even upon the top thereof until he was dead. And when they had hanged him until he was dead they did fell the tree to the earth, and did cry with a loud voice, saying, ²⁹ “May the Lord preserve his people in righteousness and in holiness of heart, that they may cause to be felled to the earth all who shall seek to slay them because of power and secret combinations, even as this man hath

^a 15 +19 years; see v. 5 above

^b 15 +20 years

^c 16 +21 years

15–16: In a change of tactics, the robbers now conduct siege warfare against the Nephite *place of security*. *Outward privileges*, the ability to travel freely outside their fortifications. **21:** These are suspiciously large numbers; see Morm 6.10–15n. **24:** *Being aware of their design*, the source of Gidgiddoni’s information is unspecified; it could have come from scouts or spies or revelation; see 3.19. **28–29:** Cutting down the tree of hanging is made into a sign-act; see Alma 44.12–15n.

been felled to the earth.”³⁰ And they did rejoice and cry again with one voice, saying, “May the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, protect this people in righteousness, so long as they shall call on the name of their God for protection.”

The Nephites Give Thanks and Believe

³¹ And it came to pass that they did break forth, all as one, in singing, and praising their God for the great thing which he had done for them, in preserving them from falling into the hands of their enemies.³² Yea, they did cry, “Hosanna^a to the Most High God.” And they did cry, “Blessed be the name of the Lord God Almighty, the Most High God.”³³ And their hearts were swollen with joy, unto the gushing out of many tears, because of the great goodness of God in delivering them out of the hands of their enemies; and they knew it was because of their repentance and their humility that they had been delivered from an everlasting destruction.

5¹ And now behold, there was not a living soul among all the people of the Nephites who did doubt in the least the words of all the holy prophets who had spoken; for they knew that it must needs be that they must be fulfilled.² And they knew that it must

be expedient that Christ had come, because of the many signs which had been given, according to the words of the prophets; and because of the things which had come to pass already they knew that it must needs be that all things should come to pass according to that which had been spoken.³ Therefore they did forsake all their sins, and their abominations, and their whoredoms, and did serve God with all diligence day and night.

The End of the Robbers

⁴ And now it came to pass that when they had taken all the robbers prisoners, insomuch that none did escape who were not slain, they did cast their prisoners into prison, and did cause the word of God to be preached unto them; and as many as would repent of their sins and enter into a covenant that they would murder no more were set at liberty.⁵ But as many as there were who did not enter into a covenant, and who did still continue to have those secret murders in their hearts, yea, as many as were found breathing out threatenings against their brethren were condemned and punished

^a ³² Hebrew “Help!” or “Save us!”; this appeal for deliverance eventually became an expression of praise.

30: *The God of Abraham . . . Isaac . . . Jacob*, this divine title, revealed to Moses at Ex 3.6, is particularly associated with God’s role as deliverer in both the Bible (where it primarily appears in Ex) and in the BoM (e.g., Mos 7.19; 23.23; Alma 29.11; 36.2). **31:** *Break forth . . . in singing* occurs five times in Isaiah’s prophecies (three of which are quoted in the BoM); this is the only place where the phrase describes actual singing. **32–33:** Similar praise will be heard at 11.17, after Jesus’s arrival among the Nephites, but the context here suggests a closer connection to Gen 14.20, celebrating Abraham’s military victory. **33:** The image of hearts so full to overflowing that fluid escapes through the eyes is striking; see Alma 26.11 for a similar idea. *Everlasting destruction*, referring both to irreversible annihilation as a people and to eternal damnation as individuals.

CHAPTER 5

1–3: This is a very strong claim about the depth and universality of belief among the surviving Nephites. Physical deliverance has led to yet another reevaluation of the significance of signs, along with prophecies concerning destruction and salvation; cf. 2.1–3. **3:** *Serve God with all diligence*, at Mos 7.33 divine deliverance was promised as a reward for such service, but here the order is reversed; service to God is offered as a grateful response to deliverance.

4: This course of action follows precedents set by Captain Moroni (see Alma 44.19–20; 50.36; 62.16–17), with the addition of preaching, and repentance as a condition of release. The resettlement program for these former robbers is described at 6.3. **5:** *Secret murders* is a phrase closely associated with secret combinations such as the Gadianton robbers. *Punished according to the law*, probably executed, as at Alma 62.9–10.

according to the law.⁶ And thus they did put an end to all those wicked, and secret, and abominable combinations, in the which there was so much wickedness, and so many murders committed.

Mormon₂'s Editorial Comments

⁷ And thus had the twenty and second year passed away,^a and the twenty and third year also,^b and the twenty and fourth,^c and the twenty and fifth;^d and thus had twenty and five years passed away.⁸ And there had many things transpired which, in the eyes of some, would be great and marvelous; nevertheless, they cannot all be written in this book; yea, this book cannot contain even a hundredth part of what was done among so many people in the space of twenty and five years;⁹ but behold there are records which do contain all the proceedings of this people; and a shorter but true account was given by Nephi.¹⁰ Therefore I have made my record of these things according to the record of Nephi, which was engraven on the plates which were called the plates of Nephi.¹¹ And behold, I do make the record on plates which I have made with mine own hands.

¹² And behold, I am called Mormon, being called after the land of Mormon, the land in which Alma did establish the church among the people, yea, the first church which was

established among them after their transgression.¹³ Behold, I am a disciple of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I have been called of him to declare his word among his people, that they might have everlasting life.¹⁴ And it hath become expedient that I—according to the will of God, that the prayers of those who have gone hence, who were the holy ones, should be fulfilled according to their faith—should make a record of these things which have been done;¹⁵ yea, a small record of that which hath taken place from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem, even down until the present time.¹⁶ Therefore I do make my record from the accounts which have been given by those who were before me, until the commencement of my day;¹⁷ and then I do make a record of the things which I have seen with mine own eyes.¹⁸ And I know the record which I make to be a just and a true record; nevertheless there are many things which, according to our language, we are not able to write.

Mormon₂ Reiterates Prophecies

¹⁹ And now I make an end of my saying, which is of myself, and proceed to give my account of the

^a 7 +22 years

^b 7 +23 years

^c 7 +24 years

^d 7 +25 years

7–26: This editorial comment was written by Mormon in the 4th c. CE. He chooses an optimistic moment to interject his personal voice into his history of the Nephites; nevertheless, within five years the entire civilization will be on the brink of collapse. 8: *In this book*, that is, in Mormon's abridgment of the Large Plates of Nephi. 9: *A shorter but true account given by Nephi*, that is, the record written by Nephi, which was the basis for Mormon's book of 3 Nephi. 11: This is the first indication that Mormon possessed metallurgical skills, which he then apparently passed on to his son Moroni, who manufactured additional plates for his own book sometime after lamenting that he had run out of both plates and ore (Morm 8.5). Nephi, similarly reported constructing plates by hand; see 1 Ne 1.17. 12–18: Aside from the editorial interruption of WoM, this is readers' first introduction to Mormon, the narrator responsible for Mos through Morm. It is likely that there was an earlier comment in the lost 116 pages, in which Mormon introduced himself and explained his editorial agenda. 12: *The land of Mormon... establish the church*, see Mos 18.4–7, 30. *After their transgression*, that is, after their transgression of killing the prophet Abinadi; see Mos 7.25–26. 13: It is perhaps telling that Mormon introduces himself first as a *disciple of Jesus Christ*, rather than as a historian or a military leader. 14–15: The idea that the records of the Nephites will be preserved and disseminated as the result of the prayers and faith of their righteous forefathers was seen earlier at 2 Ne 3.19–21; 25.21–22; Enos 1.11–18; cf. 2 Ne 29.2. 18: Nephi, similarly affirmed the truth of his record at 1 Ne 1.3; cf. Mos 1.6; 3 Ne 8.1; 17.25. 19: *Make an end of my saying*, Mormon employs similar editorial transitions at 10.19 and 26.12; cf. 2 Ne 30.18.

things which have been before me.²⁰ I am Mormon, and a pure descendant of Lehi. I have reason to bless my God and my Savior Jesus Christ, that he brought our fathers out of the land of Jerusalem, (and no one knew it save it were himself and those whom he brought out of that land) and that he hath given me and my people so much knowledge unto the salvation of our souls.²¹ Surely he hath blessed the house of Jacob, and hath been merciful unto the seed of Joseph.²² And insomuch as the children of Lehi have kept his commandments he hath blessed them and prospered them according to his word.

²³ Yea, and surely shall he again bring a remnant of the seed of Joseph to the knowledge of the Lord their God.²⁴ And as surely as the Lord liveth, will he gather in from the four quarters of the earth all the remnant of the seed of Jacob, who are scattered abroad upon all the face of the earth.²⁵ And as he hath covenanted with all the house of Jacob, even so shall the covenant wherewith he hath covenanted with the house of Jacob be fulfilled in his own due time, unto the restoring all the house of Jacob unto the knowledge of the covenant that he hath covenanted with them.²⁶ And then shall they know their Redeemer, who is Jesus Christ, the Son of God; and then shall they be gathered in from the four quarters

of the earth unto their own lands, from whence they have been dispersed; yea, as the Lord liveth so shall it be. Amen.

The Nephites Rebuild and Prosper

[III] **6**¹ And now it came to pass that the people of the Nephites did all return to their own lands in the twenty and sixth year,^a every man with his family, his flocks and his herds, his horses and his cattle, and all things whatsoever did belong unto them.² And it came to pass that they had not eaten up all their provisions; therefore they did take with them all that they had not devoured, of all their grain of every kind, and their gold, and their silver, and all their precious things, and they did return to their own lands and their possessions, both on the north and on the south, both on the land northward and on the land southward.³ And they granted unto those robbers who had entered into a covenant to keep the peace of the land, who were desirous to remain Lamanites, lands, according to their numbers, that they might have,

^a 1 +26 years

20–21: *Pure descendant of Lehi* could include both Nephite and Lamanite ancestry, as opposed to a Mulekite heritage. At Morm 1.5 and 8.13, Mormon is described as “a descendant of Nephi.” The Lehiters considered themselves remnants of the *seed of Joseph*, see 1 Ne 5.14; 6.2; Jacob 2.25; Alma 10.3; 46.23–24; 3 Ne 10.17; 15.12. 21: Thus far in the BoM, the relatively rare expression *house of Jacob* has occurred only in Isaiah quotations. It will recur three more times in v. 25, after which it will always be in the phrase “remnant of the house of Jacob,” referring to Lehiters in the latter days (20.16; 21.2; 4 Ne 1.49; Morm 5.12); nevertheless, “house of Israel” will continue as the dominant expression. 22: *According to his word*, 2 Ne 1.20; for the addition of “blessed,” see Alma 50.20n. 23–26: Mormon summarizes key developments in the last days that Jesus will explain in more detail in chs. 20–21: latter-day Lamanites will be converted to the gospel (v. 23; presumably through the BoM); remnants of the house of Israel will be gathered together again (v. 24); covenants with Israel will be recognized and fulfilled as Jesus and other branches of Israel are converted to Christ (vv. 25–26); Israelites will be restored to their ancestral lands (v. 26). 24: *As surely as the Lord liveth . . . four quarters of the earth* begins a short, chiasmic inclusio that will end at v. 26. 26: *Gathered in from the four quarters of the earth*, as Zenos prophesied at 1 Ne 19.16.

CHAPTER 6

3: *Those robbers who had entered into a covenant*, see 5.4. It is not clear, given the ethnic mixing of the past few decades, why some robbers would choose to continue to identify as Lamanites.

with their labors, wherewith to subsist upon; and thus they did establish peace in all the band.^a ⁴ And they began again to prosper and to wax great.

And the twenty and sixth^b and seventh years passed away,^c and there was great order in the land; and they had formed their laws according to equity and justice. ⁵ And now there was nothing in all the land to hinder the people from prospering continually, except they should fall into transgression. ⁶ And now it was Gidgiddoni, and the judge, Lachoneus, and those who had been appointed leaders, who had established this great peace in the land.

⁷ And it came to pass that there were many cities built anew, and there were many old cities repaired. ⁸ And there were many highways cast up, and many roads made, which led from city to city, and from land to land, and from place to place. ⁹ And thus passed away the twenty and eighth year,^d and the people had continual peace.

Inequality Breaks Up the Church

¹⁰ But it came to pass in the twenty and ninth year^e there began to be some disputings among the people; and some were lifted up unto pride and boastings because of their exceeding great riches, yea, even unto great persecutions;

¹¹ for there were many merchants in the land, and also many lawyers, and many officers. ¹² And the people began to be distinguished by ranks, according to their riches and their chances for learning; yea, some were ignorant because of

their poverty, and others did receive great learning because of their riches. ¹³ Some were lifted up in pride, and others were exceedingly humble; some did return railing for railing, while others would receive railing and persecution and all manner of afflictions, and would not turn and revile again, but were humble and penitent before God.

¹⁴ And thus there became a great inequality in all the land, insomuch that the church began to be broken up; yea, insomuch that in the thirtieth year^f the church was broken up in all the land save it were among a few of the Lamanites who were converted unto the true faith; and they would not depart from it, for they were firm, and steadfast, and immovable, willing with all diligence to keep the commandments of the Lord.

¹⁵ Now the cause of this iniquity of the people was this—Satan had great power, unto the stirring up of the people to do all manner of iniquity, and to the puffing them up with pride, tempting them to seek for power, and authority, and riches, and the vain things of the world.

¹⁶ And thus Satan did lead away the hearts of the people to do all manner of iniquity; therefore they had enjoyed peace but a few years.

^a ₃ P, 1981 *land*

^b ₄ +26 years

^c ₄ +27 years

^d ₉ +28 years

^e ₁₀ +29 years

^f ₁₄ +30 years

6: It is surprising that Nephi, is not mentioned here—his ministering was last reported at 1.23—but his activities will be recounted at 7.15–26. **8:** These highways and roads are the constructions that will be “broken up” and “spoiled” at 8.13. WB explains the term “highway” as “either because it is a great or public road, or because the earth was raised to form a dry path.” **10–11:** This is the only mention of *merchants* in the BoM. Apparently, they, along with lawyers and government officials, were particularly prone to taking pride in their riches. **13: Railing,** WB: “reproachful or insolent language”; *railing for railing*, 1 Pet 3.9. **14:** The Nephite church has gone from overwhelming strength (implied at 5.1–3) to near dissolution in just eight years, with *inequality* as the primary cause. (The collapse of the government will quickly follow.) The faithfulness of converted Lamanites, perhaps including those mentioned in v. 3, is a motif in the BoM (see Alma 23.6n), which is regularly ascribed to their being *steadfast and immovable* (see Hel 6.1n). The combination *firm, steadfast, and immovable* occurs only here and 1 Ne 2.10, in Lehi’s wish for his son Lemuel. **15–16:** The turmoil is here attributed to Satan, though at 7.5 the narrator notes that his influence was due to the people “yield[ing] themselves” to his power.

Prophets Are Assassinated; a Secret Combination Forms to Protect the Murderers

¹⁷ And thus, in the commencement of the thirtieth year—the people having been delivered up for the space of a long time to be carried about by the temptations of the devil whithersoever he desired to carry them, and to do whatsoever iniquity he desired they should—and thus in the commencement of this, the thirtieth year, they were in a state of awful wickedness. ¹⁸ Now they did not sin ignorantly, for they knew the will of God concerning them, for it had been taught unto them; therefore they did wilfully rebel against God.

¹⁹ And now it was in the days of Lachoneus, the son of Lachoneus, for Lachoneus did fill the seat of his father and did govern the people that year. ²⁰ And there began to be men inspired from heaven and sent forth, standing among the people in all the land, preaching and testifying boldly of the sins and iniquities of the people, and testifying unto them concerning the redemption which the Lord would make for his people, or in other words, the resurrection of Christ; and they did testify boldly of his death and sufferings. ²¹ Now there were many of the people who were exceeding angry because of those who testified of these things; and those who were angry were chiefly the chief judges, and they who had been high priests and lawyers; yea, all those who were lawyers were angry with those who testified of these things.

²² Now there was no lawyer nor judge nor high priest that could have power to condemn any one to death save their condemnation was signed by the governor of the land. ²³ Now there were many of those who testified of the things pertaining to Christ who testified boldly, who were taken and put to death secretly by the judges, that the knowledge of their death came not unto the governor of the land until after their death. ²⁴ Now behold, this was contrary to the laws of the land, that any man should be put to death except they had power from the governor of the land—²⁵ therefore a complaint came up unto the land of Zarahemla, to the governor of the land, against these judges who had condemned the prophets of the Lord unto death, not according to the law.

²⁶ Now it came to pass that they were taken and brought up before the judge, to be judged of the crime which they had done, according to the law which had been given by the people. ²⁷ Now it came to pass that those judges had many friends and kindreds; and the remainder, yea, even almost all the lawyers and the high priests, did gather themselves together, and unite with the kindreds of those judges who were to be tried according to the law. ²⁸ And they did enter into a covenant one with another, yea, even into that covenant which was given by them of old, which covenant was given and administered by the devil, to combine against all righteousness. ²⁹ Therefore they did combine against the people of the Lord, and enter

17: This verse features a quick example of resumptive repetition. Being *carried about* by the devil was referred to at Alma 30.42, with regard to Korihor. **18:** The fate of those who “wilfully rebel against God” was a concern of both Abinadi and Mormon (Mos 15.26–27; Morm 1.16; cf. Heb 10.26), but the phrase *sin ignorantly* makes this verse an allusion to Benjamin’s warning at Mos 3.11–12. **20:** The *men inspired from heaven*, identified as prophets in v. 25, appear to come from outside established church hierarchy, particularly since they are opposed by high priests (vv. 21, 27). **22–25:** These illegal executions seem similar to the secret murders contemplated at 5.5; in other words, the Nephite elite have become equivalent to the robbers; cf. Hel 6.29–30. **25:** Zarahemla has been reestablished as the Nephite capital; see Hel 5.16n. **26:** *Before the judge*, that is, a higher judge. It is not clear in what sense the law had been *given by the people*, but the narrator is alluding to the governmental safeguards outlined at Mos 29.28. **28–29:** *Covenant . . . of old . . . against all righteousness*, see Hel 6.21–30; Ether 8.15–16. *Grasp of justice*, only here and Alma 42.14, perhaps with a suggestion that judges who subvert human justice will themselves be unable to escape divine justice.

into a covenant to destroy them, and to deliver those who were guilty of murder from the grasp of justice, which was about to be administered according to the law.

The Central Government Collapses

³⁰ And they did set at defiance the law and the rights of their country; and they did covenant one with another to destroy the governor, and to establish a king over the land, that the land should no more be at liberty but should be subject unto kings.

7 ¹ Now behold, I will show unto you that they did not establish a king over the land; but in this same year, yea, the thirtieth year;⁴ they did destroy upon the judgment-seat, yea, did murder the chief judge of the land.

² And the people were divided one against another; and they did separate one from another into tribes, every man according to his family and his kindred and friends; and thus they did destroy the government of the land.³ And every tribe did appoint a chief or a leader over them; and thus they became tribes and leaders of tribes.⁴ Now behold, there was no man among them save he had much family and many kindreds and friends; therefore their tribes became exceeding great.

⁵ Now all this was done, and there were no wars as yet among them; and all this iniquity had come upon the people because they did yield themselves unto the power of Satan.

⁶ And the regulations of the government were

destroyed, because of the secret combination of the friends and kindreds of those who murdered the prophets.⁷ And they did cause a great contention in the land, insomuch that the more righteous part of the people had nearly all become wicked; yea, there were but few righteous men among them.⁸ And thus six years had not passed away since the more part of the people had turned from their righteousness, like the dog to his vomit, or like the sow to her wallowing in the mire.

Jacob, Becomes the King of the Secret Combination; the Tribes Establish a Tenuous Peace

⁹ Now this secret combination, which had brought so great iniquity upon the people, did gather themselves together, and did place at their head a man whom they did call Jacob;¹⁰ and they did call him their king; therefore he became a king over this wicked band; and he was one of the chiefest who had given his voice against the prophets who testified of Jesus.¹¹ And it came to pass that they were not so strong in number as the tribes of the people, who were united together save it were their leaders did establish their laws, every one according to his tribe; nevertheless they were enemies; notwithstanding they were not a righteous people, yet they were united in the hatred of those who had entered into a covenant to destroy the government.

⁴ 1 +30 years

30: The desire of some for a restored monarchy has been threatening the Nephite system of judges for more than a century (see Alma 2.2). The incompatibility of kings and “a land of liberty” was articulated earlier at Mos 29.30–32.

CHAPTER 7

1: *I will show unto you*, a proleptic comment from the editor. *The chief judge*, Lachoneus; see 6.19. **2–3:** The dissolution of society into tribes is unexpected, and the clan or lineage basis for these new social groups is unknown. At least at the beginning, they included friends as well as relatives. **2:** *Thus they did destroy the government*, the *they* seems to refer to those in the secret combinations of 6.26–7.1 rather than to the tribes; this interpretation will be supported by the heavenly voice at 9.9. **8:** *Six years had not passed away*, that is, it had been less than six years since the Nephites had decisively defeated the robbers; see 6.1. *Like the dog to his vomit, or like the sow to her wallowing in the mire*, 2 Pet 2.22 (the first part is quoted from Prov 26.11). **9–10:** This was the plan of the original conspirators at 6.30; see 9.9 for the ultimate fate of this group.

¹² Therefore, Jacob seeing that their enemies were more numerous than they, he being the king of the band, therefore he commanded his people that they should take their flight into the northernmost part of the land, and there build up unto themselves a kingdom, until they were joined by dissenters, (for he flattered them that there would be many dissenters) and they become sufficiently strong to contend with the tribes of the people; and they did so. ¹³ And so speedy was their march that it could not be impeded until they had gone forth out of the reach of the people. And thus ended the thirtieth year;^a and thus were the affairs of the people of Nephi.

¹⁴ And it came to pass in the thirty and first year^b that they were divided into tribes, every man according to his family, kindred and friends; nevertheless they had come to an agreement that they would not go to war one with another; but they were not united as to their laws, and their manner of government, for they were established according to the minds of those who were their chiefs and their leaders. But they did establish very strict laws that one tribe should not trespass against another, inasmuch that in some degree they had peace in the land; nevertheless, their hearts were turned from the Lord their God, and they did stone the prophets and did cast them out from among them.

Nephi₃ Preaches Repentance and Performs Miracles

¹⁵ And it came to pass that Nephi—having been visited by angels and also the voice of the Lord, therefore having seen angels, and being eye-witness, and having had power given unto him that he might know concerning the ministry of Christ, and also being eye-witness to their quick return from righteousness unto their wickedness and abominations; ¹⁶ therefore, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts and the blindness of their minds—went forth among them in that same year, and began to testify, boldly, repentance and remission of sins through faith on the Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁷ And he did minister many things unto them; and all of them cannot be written, and a part of them would not suffice, therefore they are not written in this book. And Nephi did minister with power and with great authority.

¹⁸ And it came to pass that they were angry with him, even because he had greater power than they, for it were not possible that they could disbelieve his words, for so great was his faith on the Lord Jesus Christ that angels did minister unto him daily. ¹⁹ And in the name of Jesus did he cast out devils and unclean spirits; and even his brother did he raise from the dead, after he had been stoned and suffered

^a 13 +30 years; see 3 Ne 6.14, 17; 7:1

^b 14 +31 years

12: The strategy is similar to that of another would-be king, Amalickiah (Alma 46.4–5, 29), and the flight northward is reminiscent of Morianton and his people (Alma 50.29), as well as Zemnariyah and his robbers (4.22–23).

14: The new tribes are no more supportive of Christian prophets than were the corrupt judges who formed a secret combination in 6.20–30; cf. 7.6, 10. **16:** *Repentance and remission of sins through faith*, here remission of sins comes before baptism (see vv. 23–25; Hel 14.13); in other passages it comes afterward (3 Ne 30.2), especially in conjunction with baptism by fire and the Holy Ghost (2 Ne 31.17; 3 Ne 12.2), or fulfilling God's commandments (Moro 8.11, 25). **17:** *A part of them would not suffice*, it is perhaps disappointing that Mormon does not reveal more about Nephi₃'s ministry, since he is portrayed as an extraordinary miracle worker with daily access to angels. *With power and with great authority*, Nephi₃, along with the rest of the twelve disciples Jesus calls, will receive additional power and authority at 12.1. **19–22:** Nephi₃ is one of the most spirit-infused prophets in the BoM (cf. 8.1), and also one of the least successful (v. 21). The only references to exorcism among the Nephites in the entire BoM occur in vv. 19 and 22. **19:** *His brother*, Timothy; see 19.4.

death by the people.²⁰ And the people saw it, and did witness of it, and were angry with him because of his power; and he did also do many more miracles, in the sight of the people, in the name of Jesus.

²¹ And it came to pass that the thirty and first year did pass away,^a and there were but few who were converted unto the Lord; but as many as were converted did truly signify unto the people that they had been visited by the power and Spirit of God, which was in Jesus Christ, in whom they believed.²² And as many as had devils cast out from them, and were healed of their sicknesses and their infirmities, did truly manifest unto the people that they had been wrought upon by the Spirit of God, and had been healed; and they did show forth signs also and did do some miracles among the people.²³ Thus passed away the thirty and second year also.^b

And Nephi did cry unto the people in the commencement of the thirty and third year;^c and he did preach unto them repentance and remission of sins.²⁴ Now I would have you to remember also, that there were none who were brought unto repentance who were not

baptized with water.²⁵ Therefore, there were ordained of Nephi, men unto this ministry, that all such as should come unto them should be baptized with water, and this as a witness and a testimony before God, and unto the people, that they had repented and received a remission of their sins.²⁶ And there were many in the commencement of this year that were baptized unto repentance; and thus the more part of the year did pass away.

The Signs of Jesus's Death

[IV] **8**¹ And now it came to pass that according to our record, and we know our record to be true, for behold, it was a just man who did keep the record—for he truly did many miracles in the name of Jesus; and there was not any man who could do a miracle in the name of Jesus save he were cleansed every whit from his iniquity—² And now it came to pass, if there was no mistake

^a 21 +31 years; see v. 14 above

^b 23 +32 years

^c 23 +33 years

19–20: There is a shift here in BoM terminology with these first two instances of *in the name of Jesus*—a phrase that will recur seventeen more times before the end of the BoM (with one stray occurrence at Jacob 4.6). In the Bible, the phrase appears only in Acts (6x). The related expression “in the name of Christ” appears at 2 Ne 32.9; 33.12; and Enos 1.15, along with four more instances in Morm–Moro. **25:** Baptism was also described as *a witness and a testimony* at Mos 21.35 (as an indication that they were willing to serve God); cf. Mos 18.10, 13.

CHAPTERS 8–10

The theophany of ch. 11 is preceded, and counterbalanced, by terrible destruction. These are natural disasters rather than man-made calamities, and the Lord himself, in a voice from heaven, takes credit for the devastation. The disasters have a dual function in that they are signs of Jesus's death, as prophesied by Samuel the Lamanite (Hel 14.14–29), and they are also judgments on the wicked, again as prophesied by Samuel (Hel 13.12–16). The God of the BoM is less enigmatic than the God of the Bible, but his passion for justice against evil is matched by his compassion for the penitent—two aspects of his personality that will be manifest at his coming in the last days as well as at the time of his advent to the Nephites. Chapters 8–10 remind readers that God has not been entirely domesticated by the BoM narrators, and his wrath can be as stunning and awe-inspiring as his love.

CHAPTER 8

1–25: These signs were prophesied by Zenos at 1 Ne 19.10–12, by Nephi at 1 Ne 12.4–5 and 2 Ne 26.3–6, and by Samuel at Hel 14.20–27. Each of the prophecies includes multiple phrases that also appear in the account of their fulfillment here. **1:** *According to our record*, Mormon interjects in the first person. *A just man who did keep the record*, that is, Nephi₃. Examples of miracles performed by Nephi₃ *in the name of Jesus* can be seen at 7.19–20. **2:** There was no recorded prophecy that Jesus would live for thirty-three years, but the people seem to expect that three decades would have been enough time to fulfill his Old World ministry.

made by this man in the reckoning of our time, the thirty and third year had passed away;³ and the people began to look with great earnestness for the sign which had been given by the prophet Samuel, the Lamanite, yea, for the time that there should be darkness for the space of three days over the face of the land.⁴ And there began to be great doubtings and disputations among the people, notwithstanding so many signs had been given.

⁵ And it came to pass in the thirty and fourth year,^a in the first month, on the fourth day of the month, there arose a great storm, such an one as never had been known in all the land.⁶ And there was also a great and terrible tempest; and there was terrible thunder, insomuch that it did shake the whole earth as if it was about to divide asunder.⁷ And there were exceeding sharp lightnings, such as never had been known in all the land.⁸ And the city of Zarahemla did take fire.⁹ And the city of Moroni did sink into the depths of the sea, and the inhabitants thereof were drowned.¹⁰ And the earth was carried up upon the city of Moronihah, that in the place of the city there became a great mountain.¹¹ And there was a great and terrible destruction in the land southward.

¹² But behold, there was a more great and terrible destruction in the land northward; for behold, the whole face of the land was changed, because of the tempest and the whirlwinds, and the thunderings and the lightnings, and the exceeding great quaking of the whole

earth;¹³ and the highways were broken up, and the level roads were spoiled, and many smooth places became rough.¹⁴ And many great and notable cities were sunk, and many were burned, and many were shaken till the buildings thereof had fallen to the earth, and the inhabitants thereof were slain, and the places were left desolate.¹⁵ And there were some cities which remained; but the damage thereof was exceeding great, and there were many in them who were slain.¹⁶ And there were some who were carried away in the whirlwind; and whither they went no man knoweth, save they know that they were carried away.

¹⁷ And thus the face of the whole earth became deformed, because of the tempests, and the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the quaking of the earth.¹⁸ And behold, the rocks were rent in twain; they were broken up upon the face of the whole earth, insomuch that they were found in broken fragments, and in seams and in cracks, upon all the face of the land.

¹⁹ And it came to pass that when the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the storm, and the tempest, and the quakings of the earth did cease—for behold, they did last for about the space of three hours; and it was said by some that the time was greater; nevertheless, all these great and terrible things were done in about the space of three hours—and then behold, there was darkness upon the face of

^a 5 +34 years

3: *The sign... darkness for the space of three days*, see Hel 14.20, 27. **5:** This is the seventh and last event in the BoM to be dated precisely, by year, month, and day. The others were Amulek's encounter with an angel (Alma 10.6); Alma and Amulek's deliverance from prison (Alma 14.23); the destruction of Ammonihah (Alma 16.1); an invasion by the Lamanites (Alma 49.1); the death of Amalickiah (Alma 52.1); and Captain Moroni's receipt of a letter from Helaman (Alma 56.1). **13–14:** *Highways were broken up and places were left desolate*, see Hel 14.24. **16:** *Carried away in the whirlwind*, 2 Ne 26.5. **17:** The combination of *thunderings* and *lightnings* and *quaking* (also in vv. 12 and 19) is reminiscent of the theophany at Sinai in Ex 19.16–20. **18:** The description here closely follows Hel 14.22. **19:** The only other place in scripture where God is said to have done *great and terrible things* ("marvelous, awesome deeds" in the NJPS) is Deut 10.21, referring to the ten plagues, the parting of the Red Sea, and the theophany at Sinai; cf. 2 Sam 7.23.

the land.²⁰ And it came to pass that there was thick darkness upon all the face of the land, insomuch that the inhabitants thereof who had not fallen could feel the vapor of darkness;²¹ and there could be no light, because of the darkness, neither candles, neither torches; neither could there be fire kindled with their fine and exceedingly dry wood, so that there could not be any light at all;²² and there was not any light seen, neither fire, nor glimmer, neither the sun, nor the moon, nor the stars, for so great were the mists of darkness which were upon the face of the land.

²³ And it came to pass that it did last for the space of three days that there was no light seen; and there was great mourning and howling and weeping among all the people continually; yea, great were the groanings of the people, because of the darkness and the great destruction which had come upon

them.²⁴ And in one place they were heard to cry, saying, “O that we had repented before this great and terrible day, and then would our brethren have been spared, and they would not have been burned in that great city Zarahemla.”

²⁵ And in another place they were heard to cry and mourn, saying, “O that we had repented before this great and terrible day, and had not killed and stoned the prophets, and cast them out; then would our mothers and our fair daughters, and our children have been spared, and not have been buried up in that great city Moronihah.” And thus were the howlings of the people great and terrible.

A Voice Proclaims the Extent of the Destruction

9¹ And it came to pass that there was a voice heard among all the inhabitants of the earth, upon all the face of this land, crying,

20–23: Some LDS readers have explained this tangible, enveloping, combustion-inhibiting darkness as the effect of a volcanic ash cloud, which could align with the seismic activity reported in previous verses. A *thick darkness* that could be felt, which lasted for three days, is reminiscent of the ninth plague at Ex 10.21–23. *Vapor of darkness*, 1 Ne 12.5; 19.11. **21:** *Candles*, an anachronistic reference to lamps. **22:** *Mist(s) of darkness*, 1 Ne 12.4. **24–25:** *O that we had repented* echoes the lament that Samuel had prophesied at Hel 13.32–33. *Great and terrible day*, 2 Ne 26.3 (a prophecy of this event); cf. Joel 2.31; 3 Ne 4.7; Ether 15.17. *Stoned the prophets and cast them out*, also 2 Ne 26.3. Zarahemla and Moronihah were two of the three cities mentioned in vv. 8–10.

CHAPTERS 9–10

The voice in the darkness is heard shortly after the three hours of earthquakes and storms, on the first day of darkness; see 10.8–9. The message it conveys has three parts: a justification for the divine punishments that have been meted out collectively as a manifestation of salvation history (9.1–12); an invitation for individual survivors to repent and return to God, in accordance with the plan of salvation (9.13–22); and a repeated avian image illustrating the continuing nature of the Lord’s justice and mercy, across time and geography, in both the Old and New Worlds (10.4–7). The second and third sections are framed by a chiasmic inclusio at 9.13 (*return unto me and repent*) and 10.6 (*repent and return unto me*), with an additional instance at 9.22 marking the end of the second section. The emphasis on returning to the Lord is reminiscent of the promises in Deut 30.1–10 (where the Hebrew word *shuv*, “return” or “repent,” is used seven times), extended to Israel after they are scattered in exile. But rather than being gathered back to the promised land like the Jews, the Nephites, who are already in possession of their promised land of inheritance, will experience the end of their own exile when they are restored to God’s presence, beginning in ch. 11. Also applicable may be Malachi’s promise that returning to the Lord can result in the Lord’s returning to his people—quite literally in the chapters that follow (see Mal 3.7, quoted at 3 Ne 24.6).

CHAPTER 9

1–12: Of the cities listed, Jerusalem was in the land of Nephi; Zarahemla, the capital, was in the central region; Moronihah and perhaps Moroni were slightly to the north in the land Bountiful; and Jacobugath was a new city in the land northward (7.12–13). Most of the others, all unmentioned elsewhere in the BoM, were likely in the land northward as well; see 8.12.

² “Wo, wo, wo unto this people; wo unto the inhabitants of the whole earth except they shall repent; for the devil laugheth, and his angels rejoice, because of the slain of the fair sons and daughters of my people; and it is because of their iniquity and abominations that they are fallen!

³ Behold, that great city Zarahemla have I burned with fire, and the inhabitants thereof.

⁴ And behold, that great city Moroni have I caused to be sunk in the depths of the sea, and the inhabitants thereof to be drowned.

⁵ And behold, that great city Moronihah have I covered with earth, and the inhabitants thereof, to hide their iniquities and their abominations from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints shall not come any more unto me against them.

⁶ And behold, the city of Gilgal have I caused to be sunk, and the inhabitants thereof to be buried up in the depths of the earth;

⁷ yea, and the city of Onihah and the inhabitants thereof, and the city of Mocum and the inhabitants thereof, and the city of Jerusalem and the inhabitants thereof; and waters have I caused to come up in the stead thereof, to hide their wickedness and abominations

from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints shall not come up any more unto me against them.

⁸ And behold, the city of Gadiandi, and the city of Gadiomnah, and the city of Jacob, and the city of Gimgimno, all these have I caused to be sunk, and made hills and valleys in the places thereof;

and the inhabitants thereof have I buried up in the depths of the earth, to hide their wickedness and abominations from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints should not come up any more unto me against them.

⁹ And behold, that great city Jacobugath, which was inhabited by the people of king Jacob, have I caused to be burned with fire because of their sins and their wickedness, which was above all the wickedness of the whole earth, because of their secret murders and combinations; for it was they that did destroy the peace of my people and the government of the land; therefore I did cause them to be burned, to destroy them from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints should not come up unto me any more against them.

2: *Wo, wo, wo*, the only other occurrences of a triple-wo sequence are at Rev 8.13 and 2 Ne 28.15. *The devil laugheth and his angels rejoice*, a disturbing image of a being usually associated in the BoM with misery (e.g., 2 Ne 2.27; 9.9, 46). **3–5:** The three cities mentioned here are listed in the same order at 8.8–10; it appears that Mormon drew upon this speech when he wrote his narrative summary of the destruction. **3:** The burning of Zarahemla was prophesied at Hel 13.12–14. **5–11:** The OT regularly speaks of God hiding his face in response to human sin (e.g., Deut 31.17–18; Ps 13.1; Isa 54.8; Jer 33.5; Ezek 39.23–24); in these verses the trope is reversed with five instances of God hiding the wicked *from before my face*; cf. Moro 9.15. *The blood of the prophets and the saints*, Rev 18.24. **9:** The sins of Jacobugath, which are more specific than those of other cities, are not just “hid from before [God’s] face,” but its people are destroyed *from before my face*. *King Jacob*, see 7.9–13.

3 NEPHI 9: FORESHADOWING

Many of the phrases and topics mentioned by the heavenly voice will be elaborated upon, explained, and even enacted on the first day of Christ’s ministry (chs. 11–18).

Ref.	Phrase	Later Discussion or Application
9.13	that I may heal you	17.1–10 miraculous healings of the sick and afflicted
9.14	come unto me	11.13 a literal invitation to “come forth unto me” 12.3–24 “come unto me” is inserted six times into this section of the Sermon on the Mount
9.15	Behold, I am Jesus Christ	11.10 these are Jesus’s first words to the multitude
9.15	I am in the Father, and the Father in me	11.27–36 the unity of the Godhead with respect to baptism, doctrine, and mutual witnessing
9.17	in me is the law of Moses fulfilled	12.17–48 the revised law from the Sermon on the Mount 15.2–10 the fulfilled law and yet-to-be-fulfilled prophets
9.18	I am the light and the life of the world	11.11 an interpretation of this phrase 18.16, 24 two explanations of the metaphor of Jesus as light
9.20	baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost	12.1–2 the Twelve are given power to baptize, which will be followed by fire and the Holy Ghost*
9.21	whoso . . . cometh unto me as a little child, him will I receive	17.11–25 Jesus prays for the little children and blesses them one by one

* At 19.10–14, immediately preceding Christ’s return on the second day, the Twelve are baptized, receive the Holy Ghost, and are surrounded by heavenly fire.

¹⁰ And behold, the city of Laman,
and the city of Josh,
and the city of Gad,
and the city of Kishkumen,
have I caused to be burned with fire,
and the inhabitants thereof, because
of their wickedness in casting
out the prophets, and stoning
those whom I did send to
declare unto them concerning
their wickedness and their

abominations. ¹¹ And because
they did cast them all out, that
there were none righteous
among them, I did send down
fire and destroy them, that their
wickedness and abominations
might be hid from before my
face, that the blood of the
prophets and the saints whom
I sent among them might not

10: Accounts of recent incidents of casting out and stoning prophets include 6.20–23; 7.14, 19; cf. 8.25. **11:** *Send down fire*, as with Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19.24); the followers of Korah (Num 16.35); and two military cohorts (2 Kings 1.9–12); cf. Samuel’s prophecy at Hel 13.13.

cry unto me from the ground
against them.
12 And many great destructions have
I caused to come upon this land,
and upon this people, because of
their wickedness and their
abominations.”

The Voice of Jesus Christ Proclaims His Mission

13 “O all ye that are spared because ye were more righteous than they, will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you? 14 Yea, verily I say unto you, if ye will come unto me ye shall have eternal life. Behold, mine arm of mercy is extended towards you, and whosoever will come, him will I receive; and blessed are those who come unto me.

15 “Behold, I am Jesus Christ the Son of God. I created the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are. I was with the Father from the beginning. I am in the Father, and the Father in me; and in me hath the Father glorified his name. 16 I came unto my own, and my own received me not. And the scriptures concerning my coming are fulfilled. 17 And as many as have received me, to them have I given to become the sons of God; and even so will I to as many as shall believe on my name, for behold, by me redemption cometh, and in me is the law of Moses fulfilled. 18 I am the light and the life of the world. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.

19 “And ye shall offer up unto me no more the shedding of blood; yea, your sacrifices and your burnt offerings shall be done away, for I will accept none of your sacrifices and your

13–22: This dramatic self-proclamation of the Savior is replete with familiar phrases from the Gospels, now fulfilled. 13: *Because ye were more righteous than they*, this can only be true in a general way; natural disasters that destroy entire cities—including old and young, rich and poor, powerful and vulnerable—do not usually distinguish between the more or less wicked. In 3 Ne 9, Christ is the God of creation (nature) and of history (humanity), but justice for each individual requires him to also be the God of the afterlife, where all wrongs can be made right. *Return unto me* is a plea extended by the Lord at Isa 44.22; Jer 4.1; 24.7. *Be converted, that I may heal you*, Mt 13.15; Jn 12.40; Acts 28.27 (all are quotations of Isa 6.10, though the wording here is closer to the NT examples). Indeed, this BoM verse could be read as a fulfillment of Isa 6.9–11, with conversion and healing coming only after “cities [are] wasted without inhabitant.” A promise of physical healing may have been particularly welcome in the aftermath of widespread destruction and injuries; see 3 Ne 17.5–10. 14: *Come unto me*, an invitation that will be reiterated in vv. 20 and 22, and more than a dozen times in Jesus’s forthcoming ministry to the Nephites. 15–18: These verses include multiple phrases from the Gospel of John, changed into the first-person voice. 15: *I was with the Father from the beginning*, cf. Jn 1.1. *I am in the Father, and the Father in me*, Jn 14.10–11; 3 Ne 11.27. *In me hath the Father glorified his name*, Jn 12.28; 3 Ne 11.7; 23.9; cf. Ether 12.8. 16: *I came unto my own, and my own received me not*, Jn 1.11, referring to the Jews. At 3 Ne 1.14, speaking to Nephi, Jesus announced his impending birth with the words “Behold, I come unto my own.” 17–20: Some Nephites had assumed that Christ’s birth signaled the fulfillment of the law of Moses, but they were mistaken (1.24–25); with Christ’s death, that moment has now arrived. 17: *As many as have received me, to them have I given power to become the sons of God... as many as shall believe on my name*, Jn 1.12. *Become the sons of God*, the Johannine phrasing here is revised at Mos 27.25 and Ether 3.14 to include becoming “sons and daughters” of God; cf. Mos 5.7. 18: *I am the light... of the world*, Jn 8.12; 9.5. *I am the light and the life of the world*, Mos 16.9; Alma 38.9; 3 Ne 11.11; Ether 4.12. The reference to *light* and *life* would have had particular meaning to listeners enveloped in terrifying darkness and surrounded by death. *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end*, Rev 21.6; 22.13; cf. Alma 11.39. Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. 19: In contrast to early Christians in Judea who continued to participate in temple rituals until its destruction in 70 CE (e.g., Acts 2.46; 21.23–26), Jesus tells the Nephites to discontinue temple sacrifices and offerings immediately; see 15.4–5n. In the NT, only the book of Hebrews hints at the cessation of animal sacrifice for Christians; see Heb 7.18–28; 9.11–10.10.

burnt offerings.²⁰ And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost, even as the Lamanites, because of their faith in me at the time of their conversion, were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and they knew it not.

²¹ “Behold, I have come unto the world to bring redemption unto the world, to save the world from sin.²² Therefore, whoso repenteth and cometh unto me as a little child, him will I receive, for of such is the kingdom of God. Behold, for such I have laid down my life, and have taken it up again; therefore repent, and come unto me ye ends of the earth, and be saved.”

Jesus’s Voice Laments Unaccepted Mercies

10¹ And now behold, it came to pass that all the people of the land did hear these sayings, and did witness of it. And after these sayings there was silence in the land for the space of many hours;² for so great was

the astonishment of the people that they did cease lamenting and howling for the loss of their kindred which had been slain; therefore there was silence in all the land for the space of many hours.

³ And it came to pass that there came a voice again unto the people—and all the people did hear, and did witness of it—saying:

⁴ O ye people of these great cities which have fallen, who are descendants of Jacob, yea, who are of the house of Israel, how oft have I gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and have nourished you.

⁵ And again, how oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, yea, O ye people of the house of Israel, who have fallen.

Yea, O ye people of the house of Israel, ye that dwell at Jerusalem, as ye that have fallen; yea, how oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens, and ye would not.

20: Burnt offerings are replaced by *baptism with fire*. *Sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit*, Ps 51.16–17; even though this redefinition of sacrifice for Christians is derived from the OT, it does not appear in the NT; see 2 Ne 2.7n. *Baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost*, Mt 3.11; Lk 3.16; 2 Ne 31.13–14; 3 Ne 12.1–2; Morm 7.10; Ether 12.14. *Even as the Lamanites . . . and they knew it not*, Jesus is referring to the incident of Nephi₂ and Lehi₄ in the Lamanite prison; see Hel 5.42–49; cf. Ether 12.14. **22:** *Whoso . . . cometh unto me . . . him will I receive*, echoing v. 14 and Mos 26.21, where it concerned entrance into the Lord’s earthly community of the church; here the reference is to eternal life in God’s presence. As at Mk 10.14–15 and Lk 18.16–17, Jesus declares that he will receive those who come *as a little child*, because *of such is the kingdom of God*; cf. 3 Ne 11.38. *I have laid down my life, and have taken it up again*, Jn 10.17; 2 Ne 2.8; Ether 12.33. *Repent, and come unto me all ye ends of the earth, and be saved*, cf. Isa 45.22; Ether 4.18; Moro 7.34.

CHAPTER 10

4–7: These four questions beginning with *how oft*—which range from the past, to the hypothetical past, to the future—are all variations of Jesus’s lament for Jerusalem at Mt 23.37 and Lk 13.34. The first two questions are addressed to the deceased Nephites, the third to deceased Jerusalemites, and the fourth to those hearing his voice. In contrast with the NT parallels, the last question was still an open one, an invitation that could be either accepted or rejected. **4:** *As a hen gathereth her chickens*, somewhat unusually, God is represented by a maternal image. **5:** *Ye that dwell at Jerusalem*, as at Mt 23.37, Jesus is lamenting the coming destruction of the city and its temple in 70 CE.

⁶ O ye house of Israel whom I have spared, how oft will I gather you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, if ye will repent and return unto me with full purpose of heart.

⁷ But if not, O house of Israel, the places of your dwellings shall become desolate until the time of the fulfilling of the covenant to your fathers.

The Reaction of the People

⁸ And now it came to pass that after the people had heard these words, behold, they began to weep and howl again because of the loss of their kindred and friends. ⁹ And it came to pass that thus did the three days pass away. And it was in the morning, and the darkness dispersed from off the face of the land, and the earth did cease to tremble, and the rocks did cease to rend, and the dreadful groanings did cease, and all the tumultuous noises did pass away. ¹⁰ And the earth did cleave together again, that it stood; and the mourning, and the weeping, and the wailing of the people who were spared alive did cease; and their mourning was turned into joy, and their lamentations into the praise and thanksgiving unto the Lord Jesus Christ, their Redeemer.

Mormon₂ Comments on the Fulfillment of Prophecy

¹¹ And thus far were the scriptures fulfilled which had been spoken by the prophets. ¹² And it was the more righteous part of the people who were saved, and it was they who received the prophets and stoned them not; and it was they who had not shed the blood of the saints, who were spared—¹³ and they were spared and were not sunk and buried up in the earth; and they were not drowned in the depths of the sea; and they were not burned by fire, neither were they fallen upon and crushed to death; and they were not carried away in the whirlwind; neither were they overpowered by the vapor of smoke and of darkness.

¹⁴ And now, whoso readeth, let him understand; he that hath the scriptures, let him search them, and see and behold if all these deaths and destructions by fire, and by smoke, and by tempests, and by whirlwinds, and by the opening of the earth to receive them, and all these things are not unto the fulfilling of the prophecies of many of the holy prophets.

¹⁵ Behold, I say unto you, Yea, many have testified of these things at the coming of Christ, and were slain because they testified of these things. ¹⁶ Yea, the prophet Zenos did testify of these things, and also Zenock spake concerning these things, because they testified particularly concerning us, who are the remnant of

7: Allusions to the same biblical passages continue with a reference to desolate dwelling places (Mt 23.38; Lk 13.35: “your house is left unto you desolate”); cf. Hel 15.1. **8:** Their earlier weeping and howling was reported at 8.23, with an astonished cessation at v. 2 above. **9:** This seems to refer to continuing volcanic activity and seismic aftershocks over the course of three days. **10:** *Their mourning was turned into joy*, as the darkness lifted and they realized that they would survive. The wording is similar to Jer 31.13, which signals Israel’s return from exile; the entire transition in vv. 8–10 is reminiscent of Ps 30.5, which notes that the Lord’s anger is only for a moment, and that “joy cometh in the morning.” **11:** For prophecies that had been fulfilled, see 1 Ne 12.4–5; 19.10–12; 2 Ne 26.3–6; Hel 14.20–27. **13:** The first five types of death (buried, drowned, burned, crushed, blown away) were mentioned in chs. 8–9 above; this is the first we have heard that the vapor of darkness could also be lethal. The voice from heaven did not mention it because at that point no one had yet died from the vapor, which had just settled in. **14:** Mormon addresses his readers directly and assumes they have access to scriptures. *Whoso readeth, let him understand*, Mt 24.15; cf. Mk 13.14. **16:** Prophecies by Zenos and Zenock can be found at 1 Ne 19.10–12; Alma 33.15–17. *The remnant of their seed*, see 1 Ne 19.8–17n.

their seed.¹⁷ Behold, our father Jacob also testified concerning a remnant of the seed of Joseph. And behold, are not we a remnant of the seed of Joseph? And these things which testify of us, are they not written upon the plates of brass which our father Lehi brought out of Jerusalem?

¹⁸ And it came to pass that in the ending of the thirty and fourth year,^a behold, I will show unto you that the people of Nephi who were spared, and also those who had been called Lamanites, who had been spared, did have great favors shown unto them, and great blessings poured out upon their heads, insomuch that soon after the ascension of Christ into heaven he did truly manifest himself unto them—¹⁹ showing his body unto them, and ministering unto them; and an account of his ministry shall be given hereafter. Therefore for this time I make an end of my sayings.

Jesus's Ministry among the Nephites: 3 Nephi 11–28

[*Mormon's heading*] Jesus Christ did show himself unto the people of Nephi, as the multitude were gathered together in the land Bountiful, and did minister unto them; and on this wise did he show himself unto them.

Jesus Appears to the Nephites

[V] **11** ¹ And now it came to pass that there were a great multitude gathered together, of the people of Nephi, round about the temple which was in the land Bountiful; and they were marveling and wondering one with another, and were showing one to another the great and marvelous change which had taken place. ² And they were also

^a 18 +34 years; see 3 Ne 8.5

17: *Our father*, the biblical Jacob rather than Jacob the brother of Nephi; for his prophecy about a remnant of the seed of Joseph, see Alma 46.24–26; cf. 3 Ne 5.23. This prophecy is not in the Bible, but would have been on the Brass Plates, along with the prophecies recorded in 2 Ne 3 about the descendants of Joseph. **18–19:** According to these verses, Christ appeared to the Nephites in the ending of the thirty and fourth year. Since the destructions were dated to early in the first month of that same year (8.5), it appears that the two events were separated by several months—giving the survivors time to bury their dead, mourn, clear rubble, restore roads, reestablish food supplies, and rebuild homes. *Those who had been called Lamanites*, the two major groups of Lehiite descendants, or at least those who were spared, have merged and are jointly referred to as “the people of Nephi”; this seems to refer to a larger group than the former Lamanites mentioned at 2.14–16. *An account . . . given hereafter*, see chs. 11–18. *I make an end of my sayings*, see 5.19n.

CHAPTERS 11–28

According to 26.13, Christ visited the people of Nephi at Bountiful on three consecutive days. The book of 3 Nephi, however, records only the events of the first day (11.1–18.39) and the second day (19.15–26.14). Jesus's theme for the first day was the Law, and for the second day the Prophets—categories that were important for the formation of the Jewish canon but which also appear in the BoM (2 Ne 25.28; 3 Ne 12.17; 14.12; 15.10). Rather than giving an account of the third day's visit to the multitude (which begins at 26.16 before being abruptly cut off), 27.1–28.12 substitutes a report of a subsequent appearance of the resurrected Christ to the twelve disciples.

CHAPTER 11

Heading: *The people of Nephi* appears to be a generic term that includes both Nephites and converted Lamanites. Indeed, the word *Nephite* does not occur anywhere in the account of Christ's ministry that follows. *In the land Bountiful*, after the destruction of Zarahemla, the former capital (8.8; 9.3), the center of Nephite civilization seems to have shifted north to the land Bountiful, the ancillary capital when Zarahemla was under Lamanite control about 65 years earlier (see Hel 4.5–6; 5.14). The city of Zarahemla will be rebuilt twenty-five years later (4 Ne 1.8), but after that it will never be mentioned again in the BoM. **1:** There is no further information about what occasion might have brought the people together at the temple.

conversing about this Jesus Christ, of whom the sign had been given concerning his death.

³ And it came to pass that while they were thus conversing one with another, they heard a voice as if it came out of heaven; and they cast their eyes round about, for they understood not the voice which they heard; and it was not a harsh voice, neither was it a loud voice; nevertheless, and notwithstanding it being a small voice it did pierce them that did hear to the center, insomuch that there was no part of their frame that it did not cause to quake; yea, it did pierce them to the very soul, and did cause their hearts to burn.

⁴ And it came to pass that again they heard the voice, and they understood it not.

⁵ And again the third time they did hear the voice, and did open their ears to hear it; and their eyes were towards the sound thereof; and they did look steadfastly towards heaven, from whence the sound came. ⁶ And behold, the third time they did understand the voice

which they heard; and it said unto them, ⁷ “Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name—hear ye him.”

⁸ And it came to pass, as they understood they cast their eyes up again towards heaven; and behold, they saw a man descending out of heaven; and he was clothed in a white robe; and he came down and stood in the midst of them; and the eyes of the whole multitude were turned upon him, and they durst not open their mouths, even one to another, and wist not what it meant, for they thought it was an angel that had appeared unto them.

⁹ And it came to pass that he stretched forth his hand and spake unto the people, saying, ¹⁰ “Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world.

¹¹ And behold, I am the light and the life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the

3: The phenomenon of a soft but piercing voice from heaven recapitulates the experience of the Lamanites in the prison holding Nephi₂ and Lehi, at Hel 5.30, which is the only other instance of *voice . . . pierce . . . to the very soul. Did cause their hearts to burn*, cf. Lk 24.32. **5:** *Did open their ears to hear it*, the intelligibility of the voice depends on the receptiveness of the hearers. *They did look steadfastly towards heaven*, just as the disciples in Jerusalem did at the time of Jesus’s ascension (Acts 1.9–11), and Stephen at the time of his own martyrdom (Acts 7.55). **7:** *My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*, words from heaven that were also spoken at Jesus’s baptism (Mt 3.17; Mk 1.11; Lk 3.22) and transfiguration (Mt 17.5); all three Gospel accounts of the later event include the command “hear (ye) him.” The wording from 3 Ne combines Mt 17.5 with the idea that the Father’s name was glorified in his Son from Jn 12.28 (also in a voice from heaven; cf. 3 Ne 9.15). **8:** *A man descending out of heaven*, the Nephites did not immediately recognize this figure as the Savior, and indeed some assumed he was an angel. Their surprise may have been related to the prophecy of Zenos at 1 Ne 19.10–12, which foretold three days of darkness, along with tempests, fire, smoke, and earthquakes, but also noted that the Lord would visit some of the house of Israel only “with his voice.” In addition, Samuel the Lamanite apparently did not preach about a visitation of Christ among the Nephites; see Hel 16.17–19. On the other hand, Nephi, had seen a vision of the Savior coming down from heaven to minister to his descendants (1 Ne 12.6). In the 1920 edition, *man* was capitalized as “Man” to signal to readers the identity of this figure; cf. 1 Ne 1.9n. *Stood in the midst* is a phrase associated with Jesus’s post-resurrection appearances at Lk 24.36 and Jn 20.19, 26. In the BoM, it only occurs in 3 Ne, where five of the six instances refer to the resurrected Jesus. *Wist, knew*. The phrase *wist not what it meant* is reminiscent of the Israelites’ reaction to manna (Ex 16.15); at Jn 6.22–59, Jesus is the manna/bread “that came down from heaven.” *I am Jesus Christ*, that is, the same God who spoke to you in the darkness (9.15), now come in person. **11–14:** These verses include the only references to Jesus’s atonement during his visits to the Nephites. They are framed by affirmations of fulfilled prophecies in vv. 10 and 15. **11:** *I am the light and the life of the world*, see 9.18n. *Bitter cup*, only here and Alma 40.26. *Drunk . . . cup . . . Father hath given me*, Jn 18.11; perhaps an allusion to Jesus’s Gethsemane prayer at Mt 26.39, 42; Mk 14.36; Lk 22.42. *Taketh upon me the sins of the world*, Mos 26.23 (though there are multiple references to taking *away* the sin(s) of the world).

world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning.”

¹² And it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words the whole multitude fell to the earth; for they remembered that it had been prophesied among them that Christ should show himself unto them after his ascension into heaven.

¹³ And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto them saying, ¹⁴ “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.”

¹⁵ 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 was he, of whom it was written by the prophets, that should come.

¹⁶ And when they had all gone forth and had witnessed for themselves, they did cry out with one accord, saying, ¹⁷ “Hosanna! Blessed be the name of the Most High God!” And they did fall down at the feet of Jesus, and did worship him.

Jesus Calls Twelve Disciples and Instructs Them on Baptism

¹⁸ And it came to pass that he spake unto Nephi (for Nephi was among the multitude) and he commanded him that he should come forth. ¹⁹ And Nephi arose and went forth, and bowed himself before the Lord and did kiss his feet. ²⁰ And the Lord commanded him that he should arise. And he arose and stood before him. ²¹ And the Lord said unto him, “I give unto you power that ye shall baptize this people when I am again ascended into heaven.”

12: *It had been prophesied among them*, see 1 Ne 12.4–8; 2 Ne 26.1, 9; Alma 16.20. **14:** *Thrust your hands into my side . . . feel the prints of the nails*, the wording is from the apostle Thomas’s description of what it would take for him to believe that Jesus had been resurrected (Jn 20.25). Jesus assumes that the crowd at Bountiful will be similarly skeptical. Coming out of heaven, his divinity would not have been in doubt, but rather his identity as the postmortal, prophesied Savior. In both the Old World and the New, the persistence of the scars is evidence that the glorified being now seen is the same person who once suffered death on a cross. *Prints*, marks. The BoM adds a reference to marks in Jesus’s feet, which are alluded to in the NT only at Lk 24.39–40. For the origin of the wound in his side, see Jn 19.34. *God/Lord of the whole earth*, affirming that Israel’s God is everyone’s God. There are biblical precedents at Isa 54.5 and Mic 4.13 (both of which will be quoted by Jesus on the second day; see 3 Ne 20.19; 22.5), and at Ps 97.5, in a context with multiple parallels to 3 Ne 8–10 (a glorious theophany seen by the “isles,” accompanied by darkness, judgment, fire, lightnings, earthquakes, and a witness from heaven). **15:** A visual and aural experience is supplemented with tactile evidence, to increase the certainty of testimony. *One by one*, since there were about 2,500 people in the crowd (17.25), this would have taken some time. **16:** *Hosanna! Blessed be the name of the Most High God* reprises the exclamation of Nephite survivors at 4.32–33; cf. the crowd’s words at Jesus’s entry into Jerusalem at Mt 21.9; Mk 11.9; Jn 12.13. **18:** *Nephi*, that is, Nephi₃, who had taken over the record-keeping responsibilities at 1.1–3. **19:** The only person in the Bible who kisses someone’s feet is the unnamed woman at Lk 7.38, 45; cf. 3 Ne 17.10. **21–26:** Nephi₃, and many others, had been baptizing previous to this event (e.g., 1.23; 7.23–26), but typically this was referred to as being baptized “unto repentance” (fourteen times in the BoM, all from Mos 26.22 to 3 Ne 7.26, with the exception of Moro 8.11; cf. Mt 3.11). From this point forward, however, people are baptized in the name of the Lord (twenty-one times)—a concept that had previously been mentioned only at 2 Ne 9.23–24; 31.11–13; and Mos 18.10. In addition, this new style of baptism was regularly accompanied by “fire” and “the Holy Ghost,” as Jesus had promised at 9.20; cf. 2 Ne 31.13–14, 17. A similar transition is referred to by Paul at Acts 19.1–6, where he contrasts the “baptism of repentance” offered by John the Baptist to his own baptizing “in the name of the Lord Jesus,” which was followed by manifestations of the Holy Ghost. Nephi will begin to exercise his new authority to perform these Christ-centered, Spirit-infused baptisms the day after Jesus first ascends to heaven; see 19.10–14.

²² And again the Lord called others, and said unto them likewise; and he gave unto them power to baptize. And he said unto them, “On this wise shall ye baptize; and there shall be no disputations among you.” ²³ Verily I say unto you, that whoso repenteth of his sins through your words, and desireth to be baptized in my name, on this wise shall ye baptize them—Behold, ye shall go down and stand in the water, and in my name shall ye baptize them. ²⁴ And now behold, these are the words which ye shall say, calling them by name, saying, ²⁵ ‘Having authority given me of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.’ ²⁶ And then shall ye immerse them in the water, and come forth again out of the water. ²⁷ “And after this manner shall ye baptize in my name; for behold, verily I say unto you, that the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost are one; and I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one. ²⁸ And according as I have commanded you thus shall ye baptize. And there shall be no disputations among you, as there have hitherto been; neither shall there be disputations among you concerning the points of my doctrine, as there have hitherto been. ²⁹ For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of

contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another. ³⁰ Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another; but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away.”

The Doctrine of Christ

³¹ “Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, I will declare unto you my doctrine. ³² And this is my doctrine, and it is the doctrine which the Father hath given unto me; and I bear record of the Father, and the Father beareth record of me, and the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me; and I bear record that the Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent and believe in me. ³³ And whoso believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God. ³⁴ And whoso believeth not in me, and is not baptized, shall be damned.

³⁵ “Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and I bear record of it from the Father; and whoso believeth in me believeth in the Father also; and unto him will the Father bear record of me, for he will visit him with fire and with the Holy Ghost. ³⁶ And

22: *The Lord called others*, these are the twelve Nephite disciples (never referred to as “apostles”); see 12.1 and Nephi’s vision at 1 Ne 12.6–10. Their names are given at 19.4. **23–26:** The requirements for a valid baptism are proper authority; repentance; invoking the recipient’s name; reciting a brief, standard blessing; and immersion in water. **25:** The wording in this verse reflects the Great Commission of Mt 28.19. The current baptismal prayer used in LDS settings is slightly different: the phrase *having authority given me of Jesus Christ*, which was preserved in the 1833 Book of Commandments, was changed in the 1835 DC to “having been commissioned of Jesus Christ” (current DC 20.73); see Moro 5.2n. Alma₁ had employed quite different words at Mos 18.13. **27:** The invocation of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost does not contravene the oft-repeated requirement to baptize in Jesus’s name (Acts 2.38; 8.16; 19.5; and 23 times in the BoM) because of their unity in the Godhead—a unity that also forecloses doctrinal disputes arising from the strict monotheism of Israel’s scriptures. *I am in the Father, and the Father in me*, Jn 14.10–11; 3 Ne 9.15. *The Father and I are one*, Jn 10.30. **28:** Earlier doctrinal disputations were mentioned at Hel 11.22–23; 3 Ne 1.24–25; 8.4. **32–39:** Compare 2 Ne 31.1–21 and 3 Ne 27.13–21; each of these three passages begins and ends with some variation of “this is my doctrine/gospel.” The key elements here include faith, repentance, baptism, the witness of the Holy Ghost, and becoming as a child. **32:** The idea that members of the Godhead mutually bear record can be found at 1 Jn 5.7, though that verse was a late addition to the Greek manuscripts; cf. 3 Ne 28.11; Ether 5.4. **33–34:** *Whoso believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved*, followed by *whoso believeth not*, parallels Mk 16.16; Morm 9.23; and Ether 4.18; only here, however, is a warning given explicitly to those who are *not baptized*.

thus will the Father bear record of me, and the Holy Ghost will bear record unto him of the Father and me; for the Father, and I, and the Holy Ghost are one.

³⁷ “And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and become as a little child, and be baptized in my name, or ye can in nowise receive these things. ³⁸ And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and be baptized in my name, and become as a little child, or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God.

³⁹ “Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and whoso buildeth upon this buildeth upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them. ⁴⁰ And whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil, and is not built upon my rock; but he buildeth upon a sandy foundation, and the gates of hell stand open to receive such when

the floods come and the winds beat upon them. ⁴¹ Therefore, go forth unto this people, and declare the words which I have spoken, unto the ends of the earth.”

Jesus’s First Sermon to the Nephites (on the Law): 3 Nephi 12.1–18.39

Jesus Speaks to the Multitude

(with new beatitudes in bold)

12 ¹ And it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words unto Nephi, and to those who had been called, (now the number of them who had been called, and received power and authority to baptize, was twelve) and behold, he stretched forth his hand unto the multitude, and cried unto them, saying, “**Blessed are ye** if ye shall give heed unto

37–38: These verses are nearly identical, with a switch in the order of phrases and the clarification that *receive these things* means *inherit the kingdom of God*; cf. 9.22. **39–40:** The imagery here combines Mt 16.18 (“upon this rock I will build my church: and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”) with Mt 7.24–27 (“the wise man, which built his house upon a rock”; cf. 3 Ne 14.24–27). In v. 40, however, the rock is identified as *my doctrine* rather than the apostle Peter, as in Mt. A similar linking of a building-upon-rock metaphor with the phrase *more or less than this* is found at 18.12–13. Here the injunction is to declare doctrine precisely; in ch. 18 the commandment is to administer the Eucharist precisely, reflecting the development from hearing to doing present in Mt 7.24–27 (3 Ne 14.24–27). *Establish it for my doctrine*, that is, teach some other path to salvation in an authoritative manner. *Whoso shall declare more . . . than this . . . the same cometh of evil*, cf. Mt 5.37 (3 Ne 12.37).

CHAPTERS 12–14

Jesus delivers to the people of Nephi a slightly emended version of the Sermon on the Mount. Biblical scholars generally agree that the sermon in Mt was composed by the author of that Gospel from various sayings of Jesus that had circulated after his death, noting that many of the sayings appear in different contexts in Mk and Lk. Given that the book of Matthew is dated toward the end of the 1st c. CE, Christ’s sermon to the Nephites would have preceded the NT version by several decades. This could be taken as evidence that the sermon in 3 Ne originated with the Bible rather than with ancient Nephites; or that Jesus, knowing what Matthew would eventually write, taught a proto-version in Bountiful, signaling divine approval of Matthew’s later compilation; or that the translator inserted a familiar example of Christian teaching into the Nephite record to represent Jesus’s basic message. In any case, whereas in Mt the Sermon on the Mount is the first of five distinct sermons, suggesting that Jesus is like Moses delivering an updated Torah, in the BoM Jesus is speaking not as a new Moses, but as the God of Israel.

CHAPTER 12

1–2: In this section Jesus adds four new beatitudes to the standard list that follows. The emphasis given to eyewitness testimony, believing on the testimony of others, and baptism echoes the description of the “blessed” at Mos 26.15–18 (cf. Jn 17.20; 20.29). **1:** *Stretched forth his hand*, in contrast to Matthew’s account, the resurrected Christ does not sit down to preach (see Mt 5.1). The number of the New World disciples matches that of the Judean apostles, but the former will ultimately be under the authority of the latter; see 1 Ne 12.9; Morm 3.19. In the book of Matthew, the Twelve are not commissioned until after the Sermon on the Mount (see

the words of these twelve whom I have chosen from among you to minister unto you, and to be your servants; and unto them I have given power that they may baptize you with water; and after that ye are baptized with water, behold, I will baptize you with fire and with the Holy Ghost; therefore **blessed are ye** if ye shall believe in me and be baptized, after that ye have seen me and know that I am.

² “And again, more **blessed are they** who shall believe in your words because that ye shall testify that ye have seen me, and that ye know that I am. Yea, **blessed are they** who shall believe in your words, and come down into the depths of humility and be baptized, for they shall be visited with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and shall receive a remission of their sins.”

A Nephite Version of the Sermon on the Mount: 3 Nephi 12.3–14.27

(with significant changes and additions to the King James Bible in bold)

The Beatitudes (Matthew 5.3–12)

- ³ “**Yea**, blessed are the poor in spirit
who come unto me,
for theirs is the kingdom of
heaven.
- ⁴ **And again**, blessed are **all** they that
mourn,
for they shall be comforted.
- ⁵ **And** blessed are the meek,
for they shall inherit the
earth.
- ⁶ **And** blessed are **all** they who do
hunger and thirst after
righteousness,
for they shall be filled **with the
Holy Ghost**.
- ⁷ **And** blessed are the merciful,
for they shall obtain mercy.
- ⁸ **And** blessed are **all** the pure in
heart,
for they shall see God.
- ⁹ **And** blessed are **all** the peacemakers,
for they shall be called the children
of God.

Mt 10.1–15). *To be your servants*, Jesus assumes a model of servant-leadership, similar to Mt 20.24–28; 23.11–12; Mk 9.33–35; 10.42–44; Lk 22.24–27; cf. Mos 2.12–17. Note that while the Twelve may *baptize you with water*, Jesus himself will *baptize you with fire and with the Holy Ghost*, in accordance with John the Baptist’s declaration at Mt 3.11 and Lk 3.16; cf. 2 Ne 31.13–14. *Blessed... believe in me and be baptized*, following directly from the promise of salvation at 11.33. *Know that I am*, the first-person form of the verb “to be,” without a predicate, alludes to the Tetragrammaton and Jesus’s identity as the God of the OT; cf. Ex 3.14; Jn 8.58. **2:** *They who shall believe in your words*, cf. Jn 17.20; Mos 26.15–16. As at 2 Ne 31.17, *a remission of their sins* is connected to *fire* and *the Holy Ghost* rather than to water baptism. Note also that baptism with fire can come prior to baptism (as with the Lamanites in Hel 5, according to 3 Ne 9.20 and Ether 12.14), and may be spontaneous rather than part of a formal ritual such as confirmation into the church, as at 3 Ne 19.13. **3–12:** General adaptations from the biblical Beatitudes include theological clarifications in vv. 3 and 6, as well as five additions of the universalizing *all*. The promised rewards are all in the future, except for the “kingdom of heaven” mentioned at vv. 3 and 10—as is befitting on the day when Jesus has brought his kingdom to the Nephites (note that changes in tense in v. 12 make this pattern consistent). **3:** *The poor in spirit*, Matthew seems to have added “in spirit,” which is absent from the parallel verse at Lk 6.20 (even well-off people might be “poor in spirit”; Luke’s concern was those suffering in actual poverty). Here Jesus adds the further qualifier *who come unto me*, referring to those who have become Christians, even though the people in the multitude have just come to the Savior in a literal manner; see 11.13–16. The phrase *come unto me* does not appear in the original Sermon on the Mount, though it occurs six times in the BoM version, and fifteen times during Jesus’s ministry to the Nephites. **6:** *Filled with the Holy Ghost* clarifies an ambiguous expression at Mt 12.6. **8:** A pure heart was associated with temple worship at Ps 24.4; here the multitude is literally seeing and worshipping God at the temple.

¹⁰ **And** blessed are **all** they who are persecuted for **my name's** sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ “**And** blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake; ¹² **for ye shall have great joy** and be exceeding glad, for great **shall be** your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets who were before you.”

The Witness of Believers (Matthew 5.13–16)

¹³ “**Verily, verily, I say unto you, I give unto you to be** the salt of the earth; but if the salt **shall lose its** savor wherewith shall **the earth** be salted? **The salt shall be** thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men.

¹⁴ “**Verily, verily, I say unto you, I give unto you to be** the light of **this people.**”^a A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.

¹⁵ **Behold**, do men light a candle and put it under a bushel? **Nay**, but on a candlestick,

and it giveth light **to** all that are in the house; ¹⁶ **therefore** let your light so shine before **this people**, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

The Fulfillment of the Law (Matthew 5.17–48)

¹⁷ “Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy but to fulfil; ¹⁸ for verily I say unto you,^b one jot **nor** one tittle **hath not passed away** from the law, **but in me it hath all been fulfilled.**

¹⁹ **And behold, I have given you the law and the commandments of my Father, that ye shall believe in me, and that ye shall repent of your sins, and come unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Behold, ye have the commandments before you, and the law is fulfilled.** ²⁰ **Therefore come unto me and**

^a 14 Mt 5.14 reads “the light of the world”

^b 18 Jesus here omits “till heaven and earth pass” from Mt 5.18.

10–11: Instructions concerning persecution are somewhat out of context for the Nephites at Bountiful. Although they had faced persecution in the past, they will be able to worship without opposition for the next three generations. 10: “For righteousness’ sake” has been replaced by *for my name’s sake*, an expression that occurs six times in the OT and nine times in the NT. The revised beatitude may refer to prior Nephite prophets who were rejected for teaching an explicitly Christian message. 12: “Rejoice” has been replaced by *for ye shall have great joy*, transforming what was originally a command into a promise. 13–14: The additions at the beginning of these verses increase their parallelism, and transform simple indicative statements (“ye are”) into charges given to the multitude. They also introduce a Johannine coloring into Matthew’s account. *Verily, verily I say unto you* occurs twenty times in the NT, all in the Gospel of John and all spoken by Jesus. Jesus uses the phrase 22 times in 3 Ne, with the only other occurrence in the BoM at Alma 48.17. 13: Salt was used for preserving and seasoning, and was a necessary ingredient in temple sacrifices (Lev 2.12–13). *Shall lose its savor*, perhaps by dilution, or by leaching away and leaving a bland residue. 14–15: Matthew’s declarative statements have been made into a question and answer; see 18.24 for an interpretation of the metaphor. 14: “The light of the world” is replaced by *the light of this people*. A similar change is made in v. 16, also indicating that the influence of Nephite witnesses would be more limited than those in Judea. 15: *Candle* and *candlestick* were anachronistic even in the KJV, where Jesus was speaking of an oil lamp and a lampstand. *Bushel*, a basket or bowl. 17–18: There are two major changes here: the law has already been fulfilled, and it has been fulfilled in Christ. *Jot* refers to the smallest letter in the Greek or Hebrew alphabets and a *tittle* is a tiny part of a letter; Amulek used the same phrasing to describe how Christ’s atoning sacrifice fulfilled the animal sacrifices in the Mosaic law (Alma 34.13; cf. 3 Ne 1.25). 19–20: These insertions are substituted for a warning against the scribes and Pharisees, which would not have fit a New World context. 19: *I have given you the law*, Jesus identifies himself as the God of the OT, who gave the law to Moses on Mount Sinai; cf. 15.5; 1 Ne 19.10. *And the commandments of my Father, that ye . . . repent . . . come unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit*, given by Jesus as the voice in the darkness at 9.20, 22. 20: *Come unto me and be ye saved*, cf. 9.22.

be ye saved; for verily I say unto you, that except ye shall keep my commandments, which I have commanded you at this time,^a ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

²¹ “Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, and it is also written before you, that ‘Thou shalt not kill,’^b and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment of God;²² but I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother^c shall be in danger of his judgment. And whosoever shall say to his brother, ‘Raca,’^d shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say, ‘Thou fool,’ shall be in danger of hell fire.²³ Therefore, if ye shall come unto me, or shall desire to come unto me,^e and rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee—²⁴ go thy way unto thy brother, and first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come unto me with full purpose of heart, and I will receive you.

²⁵ “Agree with thine adversary quickly while thou art in the way with him, lest at any time he shall get thee,^f and thou shalt be cast into prison.²⁶ Verily, verily, I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence until thou hast paid the uttermost senine.^g And while ye are in prison can ye pay even one senine? Verily, verily, I say unto you, Nay.

²⁷ “Behold, it is written by them of old time, that ‘Thou shalt not commit adultery’;^h

²⁸ but I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman, to lust after her, hath committed adulteryⁱ already in his heart.²⁹ Behold, I give unto you a commandment, that ye suffer none of these things to enter into your heart;³⁰ for it is better that ye should deny yourselves of these things, wherein ye will take up your cross, than that ye should be cast into hell.^j

³¹ “It hath been written, that whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement.^k³² Verily, verily, I say

^a 20 Mt 5.20 reads “except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees”

^b 21 Ex 20.13; Deut 5.17

^c 22 Jesus here omits “without a cause” from Mt 5.22.

^d 22 Aramaic, an insult probably meaning “imbecile” or “blockhead”

^e 23 Mt 5.23 reads “if thou bring thy gift to the altar”

^f 25 Mt 5.25 reads “the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer”

^g 26 Mt 5.26 reads “uttermost farthing”

^h 27 Ex 20.14; Deut 5.18

ⁱ 28 Jesus here omits “with her” from Mt 5.28.

^j 30 Mt 5.29–30 speaks of plucking out one’s eye and cutting off one’s hand.

^k 31 Deut 24.1–4

21: Jesus has fulfilled the law (v. 17), but he is also providing updates to its requirements. *It is also written before you*, prioritizing written scripture over oral tradition is characteristic of the Nephite version of the sermon; see vv. 27, 31, 33, 38, 42. 22: The omitted phrase “without a cause” is also missing in some of the oldest and most reliable Greek manuscripts of the NT. *His judgment*, a substitution for “the judgment,” refers to the offended brother; with this change, the three examples of anger have escalating consequences. 23–24: Jesus omits several phrases having to do with gifts offered at the temple altar, which is here equated with coming to Christ. *Full purpose of heart*, Jesus adds a non-biblical phrase that appears six times in the BoM, always describing how one should come, or return, to Christ. Again, the most immediate precedent is from the voice in the darkness (10.6), though the phrase was in regular use in 18th–19th–c. religious writings. 25: Jesus omits details of Roman legal procedure in Judea. 26: The Nephite monetary unit *senine* (Alma 11.3–8) replaces the English “farthing,” which is a translation of the Greco-Roman *quadrans*. A difference, however, is that the Roman coin was of very small value, while the Nephite *senine* was equivalent to a day’s labor for a judge. The added explanation about resources available to prisoners makes clear what was only implied in Mt. 29–30: These verses interpret and substitute for difficult teachings. *Deny yourselves... take up your cross*, Mt 16.24; Mk 8.34; Lk 9.23. The NT instances occur in the context of physical danger and death; here the command refers to having pure thoughts. 31–32: A very strong condemnation of divorce; the versions at Mk 10.11 and Lk 16.18 are even stricter since they have no exception for infidelity.

unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery; and **whoso** shall marry her **who** is divorced committeth adultery.

³³ **“And again it is written**, thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths;^a ³⁴ but **verily, verily**, I say unto you, swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne;³⁵ nor by the earth, for it is his footstool;^b ³⁶ neither shalt thou swear by the head, because thou canst not make one hair **black or white**;³⁷ but let your communication be ‘Yea, yea’; ‘Nay, nay’; for whatsoever **cometh of more than these is evil.**^c

³⁸ **“And behold, it is written**, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth’;^d ³⁹ but I say unto you, that ye **shall not resist** evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also;⁴⁰ and if any man will sue thee at the law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also;⁴¹ and whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.⁴² Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn **thou not away.**

⁴³ **“And behold it is written** also, that ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor’^e and hate thine enemy;^f ⁴⁴ but **behold I** say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do

good to them that hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you;⁴⁵ that ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good.^g

⁴⁶ **“Therefore those things which were of old time, which were under the law, in me are all fulfilled.**⁴⁷ **Old things are done away, and all things have become new.**^b ⁴⁸ Therefore **I would that ye should** be perfect even as **I, or your Father** who is in heaven is perfect.”

Sincere Piety (Matthew 6.1–24)

13 ¹ **“Verily, verily, I say that I would that ye should do alms unto the poor; but take heed that ye do not your alms**

^a 33 Lev 19.12; Num 30.2

^b 35 Jesus here omits “neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King” from Mt 5.35.

^c 37 Mt 5.37 reads “whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil”

^d 38 Ex 21.23–24; Lev 24.19–20; Deut 19.21

^e 43 Lev 19.18

^f 43 This teaching does not occur in the Old Testament.

^g 45 Jesus here omits “and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” from Mt 5.45.

^b 47 Mt 5.46–47 speaks of the publicans; cf. 2 Cor 5.17.

33: *Forswear*, swear falsely, or break an oath. **34:** Jesus further adapts the sermon by omitting a reference to swearing by Jerusalem, a practice apparently unknown to the Nephites. **37:** The switching of verbs suggests that the results of sworn oaths are evil, rather than the intentions. **39:** *Evil*, that is, an evildoer. **40:** *Coat*, in a Judean context, this would have been a short tunic. **41:** *Twain*, two. **46–47:** These insertions are substituted for criticisms of publicans, that is, Jews who collected taxes for the Roman authorities. **46:** This inserted verse, reiterating Jesus’s assertion that the law of Moses is all fulfilled in him, makes v. 18 the beginning of an inclusio that concludes here and highlights the primary topic of the section. *Fulfilled*, in the sense that a higher law is now in effect; see v. 21n and 2 Ne 25.30–26.1; 32.6. *Old things are done away, and all things have become new*, 2 Cor 5.17; this startling declaration will be explained at 3 Ne 15.2–10. **48:** *Even as I, or your Father*, in contrast to the original sermon, Jesus here claims equality, or even identity, with the Father in his perfection—something that would not have been true of the mortal Jesus before his resurrection. The command to the multitude to be *perfect* may have had the sense of “whole, complete, mature” rather than “entirely sinless.”

CHAPTER 13

1–16: This section contrasts public and private piety by treating alms, prayer, and fasting in turn, with parallel phrasing. **1:** Jesus’s affirmation of generosity to the poor is repeatedly associated in the BoM with the Nephite Christian church. *Alms*, donations or acts of charity.

before men to be seen of them; otherwise ye have no reward of your Father who is in heaven. ² Therefore, when **ye shall do your** alms do not sound a trumpet before **you**, as **will** hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. ³ But when thou doest alms let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth; ⁴ that thine alms may be in secret; and thy Father who seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly.

⁵ “And when thou prayest thou shalt not **do** as the hypocrites, for they love to pray, standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. ⁶ But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret; and thy Father, who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. ⁷ But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen, for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. ⁸ Be not ye therefore like unto them, for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him.

⁹ “After this manner therefore pray ye:

Our Father **who** art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.^a

¹⁰ Thy will be done **on** earth
as it is in heaven.^b

¹¹ And forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors.

¹² And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

¹³ For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory, forever.
Amen.

¹⁴ “For, if ye forgive men their trespasses your heavenly Father will also forgive you; ¹⁵ but if ye forgive not men their trespasses neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

¹⁶ “Moreover, when ye fast be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance, for they disfigure their faces that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. ¹⁷ But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face; ¹⁸ that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father, who is in secret; and thy Father, who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

¹⁹ “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and thieves break through and steal; ²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

²² “The light of the body is the eye; if, therefore, thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. ²³ But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

^a ⁹ Jesus here omits “thy kingdom come” from Mt 6.10.

^b ¹⁰ Jesus here omits “give us this day our daily bread” from Mt 6.11.

2–6: People may receive recognition for their good works either from humans or from God, but not from both. 5: *Closet*, a room. 9: The plea “thy kingdom come” is unnecessary in this version of the Lord’s Prayer since Jesus’s arrival in Bountiful inaugurated the establishment of God’s kingdom among the Nephites, though it will only last for three generations. 10: It is unclear why the request for daily bread was omitted. Perhaps in the new kingdom people will provide for one another’s temporal needs rather than petitioning God; see 4 Ne 1.2–3. 13: Most scholars regard the corresponding verse in Mt as a late addition in the manuscript tradition. 22–23: The distinction between *single* and *evil* seems to refer to “healthy” as opposed to “diseased,” and eyes receive light accordingly (with *light* often having spiritual connotations). The context, given what precedes and follows these verses, suggests that wealth in particular must be evaluated through spiritually enlightened eyes.

²⁴ “No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.”^a

Jesus Instructs the Twelve to Rely on God for Sustenance (Matthew 6.25–34)

[VI] ²⁵ 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?”

²⁶ “Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?” ²⁷ Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit^b unto his stature?

²⁸ “And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; ²⁹ and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon, in all

his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰ Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, **even so will he clothe you, if ye are not of little faith.**^c

³¹ “Therefore take no thought, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘Wherewithal shall we be clothed?’^d ³² For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. ³³ But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. ³⁴ Take therefore no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient is the day unto the evil thereof.”

Teachings of Discipleship (Matthew 7.1–27)

14 ¹ And now it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words

^a 24 Aramaic, “money” or “riches”

^b 27 About 18 inches (46 centimeters)

^c 30 Mt 6.30 reads “O ye of little faith”

^d 31 Jesus here omits “(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek)” from Mt 6.32.

25–34: The impracticality of this section of the Sermon, with its discouragement of planning or preparation, has long troubled Christian readers. The BoM offers a solution by limiting its scope to those with particular callings to the ministry rather than to believers in general, as happened at Alma 31.37–38. **25:** As with the lengthy quotation of Isa 12–24 in 2 Ne, the original chapter breaks in the Nephite Sermon on the Mount do not match those in the Bible. *Meat*, food. **27:** *Add one cubit unto his stature*, an alternative biblical translation is “add a single hour to your span of life” (NRSV). **30:** *Cast into the oven*, as fuel for cooking. The BoM changes a rhetorical question into a promise, predicated on faith. Here *faith* refers not so much to belief as to trust in divine providence. **31:** The omitted observation has been punctuated as a parenthetical comment in the KJV since 1611. **34:** The BoM switches the positions of *is* and *unto* from the KJV. If an idiomatic translation of Mt is “Each day has enough trouble of its own” (New International Version), the meaning of the BoM might be “Each day can handle whatever troubles may come.”

CHAPTER 14

1: After particular instructions to his twelve disciples, Jesus returns to addressing the multitude. The resumption of the sermon adapts a phrase from the beginning of the sermon in Mt: “he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying” (Mt 5.2). Aside from this insertion, ch. 14 reproduces the remainder of the Sermon on the Mount almost exactly, in contrast to the substantial revisions in the preceding two chapters. *Judge not*, since several of the instructions that follow require making judgments, this does not seem to be a prohibition against all critical evaluations, but rather a warning against judgments made hypocritically, without either compassion or a sense of one’s own limitations; cf. Moro 7.18.

he turned again to the multitude, and did open his mouth unto them again, saying, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Judge not, that ye be not judged.² For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.³ And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?⁴ Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, ‘Let me pull the mote out of thine eye’—and behold, a beam is in thine own eye?⁵ Thou hypocrite, first cast the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast the mote out of thy brother’s eye.

⁶ “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

⁷ “Ask, and it shall be given **unto** you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.⁸ For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.⁹ Or what man is there of you, who, if his son ask bread, will give him a stone?¹⁰ Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?¹¹ If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

¹² “Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them, for this is the law and the prophets.

¹³ “Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, which leadeth to destruction, and many there be who go in thereat;¹⁴ because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

¹⁵ “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.¹⁶ Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?¹⁷ Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.¹⁸ A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.¹⁹ Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.²⁰ Wherefore, by their fruits ye shall know them.

²¹ “Not every one that saith unto me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven.²² Many will say to me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works?’²³ And then will I profess unto them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.’

2: *Mete*, measure out. **3:** For the multitude, this analogy would have followed closely after the discussion of light and the eye at 13.22–23. **4:** *Mote*, speck (of sawdust). *Beam*, a log or plank. **6:** Some spiritual experiences, rituals, or teachings are best kept within the community of believers. *Swine*, unknown in the ancient Americas (unless peccaries are meant), were considered impure in the law of Moses. **12:** *This is the law and the prophets* refers to the two major divisions of Jewish scripture in Jesus’s day; see chs. 11–28n. He is declaring that the Golden Rule is the basic message of the Hebrew Bible. The famous rabbi Hillel had said something quite similar a generation earlier: “What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor: this is the whole Torah.” But note that Jesus will provide an alternate interpretation of the phrase at 15.10. **13:** *Strait*, narrow. **15:** *False prophets* among the Nephites are mentioned at WoM 1.16 and 4 Ne 1.34. *Ravens*, voraciously devouring; cf. Alma 5.60. **16:** *Fruits*, actions, or the consequences of actions. **19:** Jesus here reiterates the message of John the Baptist at Mt 3.10 and Lk 3.9. The Nephites may have recognized these words from Zenos’s allegory (Jacob 5.42, 46, 66) or from Alma’s sermon at Zarahemla (Alma 5.52). **21–24:** There is more to being a Christian than simply invoking the name of Jesus. **22:** *In that day*, the day of judgment. **23:** See Mos 26.27.

²⁴ “Therefore, **whoso** heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, who built his house upon a rock—²⁵ and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock. ²⁶ And every one that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand—²⁷ and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”

More on the Fulfillment of the Law

[VII] 15 ¹ And now it came to pass that when Jesus had ended these sayings he cast his eyes round about on the multitude, and said unto them, “Behold, ye have heard the things which I taught before I ascended to my Father; therefore, whoso remembereth these sayings of mine and doeth them, him will I raise up at the last day.”

² And it came to pass that when Jesus had said these words he perceived that there were some among them who marveled, and wondered what he would concerning the law of Moses; for they understood not the saying that old things had passed away, and that all things had become new. ³ And he said unto them, “Marvel not that I said unto you that old things had passed away, and that all things had become new. ⁴ Behold, I say unto you that the law is fulfilled that was given unto Moses. ⁵ Behold, I am he that gave the law, and I am he who covenanted with my people Israel; therefore, the law in me is fulfilled, for I have come to fulfil the law; therefore it hath an end.

⁶ “Behold, I do not destroy the prophets, for as many as have not been fulfilled in me, verily I say unto you, shall all be fulfilled. ⁷ And because I said unto you that old things have passed away, I do not destroy that which hath been spoken concerning things which are to come. ⁸ For behold, the covenant which I have made with my people is not all fulfilled; but the law which was given unto Moses hath an end in me.

24–27: Allusions to this parable are found at 11.39–40 and 18.12–13; cf. 2 Ne 28.28; Hel 5.12.

CHAPTER 15

1: *And now it came to pass that when Jesus had ended these sayings*, the Sermon on the Mount concludes with these words as well (Mt 7.28). The same transition formula recurs at 27.33. *Whoso remembereth these sayings of mine and doeth them*, an allusion to the parable of the house on the rock that frames the Nephite version of the Sermon on the Mount at 11.39–41 and 14.24, but which here is followed by a promise rather than a parable. *Him will I raise up at the last day*, Jn 6.40, 44, 54; cf. Alma 26.7; 36.28. **2:** The people may have been confused because Amulek had taught that when the law of Moses is fulfilled, “none shall have passed away” (Alma 34.13); there had previously been disputations about the matter at 3 Ne 1.24–25. *Wondered what he would*, that is, wondered about his intentions. *Old things . . . become new*, see 12.47; here the wording *passed away* is even closer to 2 Cor 5.17. **4–5:** Nephite prophets had long taught that the law of Moses would eventually be fulfilled (2 Ne 25.24–30; Alma 25.15; 30.3; 34.13–14; 3 Ne 1.25), and the resurrected Jesus has already stated several times that the law has been fulfilled in him (3 Ne 9.17; 12.18, 46). Where several elements of the Mosaic law were updated or declared inappropriate for Christians at 12.17–48, Christ’s fulfillment of the law will allow for many of its requirements to be abrogated entirely, including animal sacrifice (9.19–20) and circumcision (Moro 8.8); cf. 4 Ne 1.12. *Therefore it hath an end*, a cessation rather than a goal or purpose (as at 2 Ne 11.4; 25.27). According to Rom 10.4, “Christ is the end of the law;” but there the meaning of “end” is ambiguous. **5:** *I am he that gave the law*, see 12.19. **6–8:** Even though *the law hath an end in me*, Jesus assures his listeners that God’s covenants with Israel are still in effect, as are prophecies that are as yet unfulfilled, or which may be fulfilled multiple times. Several such prophecies will be identified and elaborated upon in chs. 16 and 20–21.

⁹ “Behold, I am the law, and the light. Look unto me, and endure to the end, and ye shall live; for unto him that endureth to the end will I give eternal life. ¹⁰ Behold, I have given unto you the commandments; therefore keep my commandments. And this is the law and the prophets, for they truly testified of me.”

Jesus Explains John 10.16 to the Twelve

¹¹ And now it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words, he said unto those twelve whom he had chosen, ¹² “Ye are my disciples; and ye are a light unto this people, who are a remnant of the house of Joseph. ¹³ And behold, this is the land of your inheritance; and the Father hath given it unto you. ¹⁴ And not at any time hath the Father given me commandment that I should tell it unto your brethren at Jerusalem. ¹⁵ Neither at any time hath the Father given me commandment that I should tell unto them concerning the other tribes of the house of Israel, whom the Father hath led away out of the land.

¹⁶ “This much did the Father command me, that I should tell unto them, ¹⁷ that ‘other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.’^a

¹⁸ And now, because of stiffneckedness and

unbelief they understood not my word; therefore I was commanded to say no more of the Father concerning this thing unto them.

¹⁹ “But, verily, I say unto you that the Father hath commanded me, and I tell it unto you, that ye were separated from among them because of their iniquity; therefore it is because of their iniquity that they know not of you. ²⁰ And verily, I say unto you again that the other tribes hath the Father separated from them; and it is because of their iniquity that they know not of them. ²¹ And verily I say unto you, that ye are they of whom I said, ‘Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.’⁷

²² “And they understood me not, for they supposed it had been the Gentiles; for they understood not that the Gentiles should be converted through their preaching. ²³ And they understood me not that I said they shall hear my voice; and they understood me not that the Gentiles should not at any time hear my voice—that I should not manifest myself unto them save it were by the Holy Ghost. ²⁴ But

^a 17 Jn 10.16

9: *I am the law*, a striking statement that appears nowhere else in scripture. *I am . . . the light*, Jn 8.12; 9.5; 3 Ne 9.18; 11.11; 18.16, 24; Ether 4.12. *Look unto me . . . and ye shall live*, cf. Alma 33.19; 37.46–47 (both referring to the incident of the bronze serpent at Num 21.4–9). **10:** For another declaration that the scriptures (here identified as *the law and the prophets*) testified of me, see Jn 5.39. **12:** *Ye are a light unto this people*, reflecting the revision at 12.14. **15:** *The other tribes*, those Israelites deported and scattered after the Assyrian invasion of 722 BCE, that is, the “lost tribes” mentioned at 1 Ne 22.4; 2 Ne 29.13; 3 Ne 17.4; 21.26. **16–24:** This is an instance of an Old World prophecy being fulfilled among the Nephites, just as Nephite prophecies of Christ’s birth were fulfilled in Judea—something the people of Zarahemla complained about to Samuel the Lamanite at Hel 16.17–20. **17:** *There shall be one fold and one shepherd*, an example of a prophecy that is yet to be fulfilled, see v. 6; cf. 1 Ne 22.24–25. *One fold*, one flock. **18–19:** If the people in Judea had been more receptive, Jesus would have told them about other branches of Israel that had been led away by God to various locations around the globe. **22–24:** The house of Israel has a unique mission in the world, such that only Israelites would be personally ministered to by Jesus. They in turn will take his message to the Gentiles, who will experience Christ indirectly, through the Holy Ghost. The book of Acts is a record of the beginning of the mission to the Gentiles in the Greco-Roman world; the BoM, by contrast, will itself become the vehicle through which the ancient, Israelite-descended Nephites convey Christ’s word to the Gentiles of the latter days; see 23.4. **22:** *They supposed it had been the Gentiles*, this is indeed the standard interpretation of Jn 10.16. **24:** *Heard my voice . . . are my sheep*, cf. Mos 26.21, which spoke of people being gathered into the church. *Those whom the Father hath given me*, cf. Jn 17.6; 3 Ne 19.29.

behold, ye have both heard my voice, and seen me; and ye are my sheep, and ye are numbered among those whom the Father hath given me.”

16¹ “And verily, verily, I say unto you that I have other sheep, which are not of this land, neither of the land of Jerusalem, neither in any parts of that land round about whither I have been to minister.² For they of whom I speak are they who have not as yet heard my voice; neither have I at any time manifested myself unto them.³ But I have received a commandment of the Father that I shall go unto them, and that they shall hear my voice, and shall be numbered among my sheep, that there may be one fold and one shepherd; therefore I go to show myself unto them.”

Jesus Quotes the Father on the Gentiles and Scattered Israel, and Cites Isaiah 52:8–10

⁴ “And I command you that ye shall write these sayings after I am gone, that if it so be that my people at Jerusalem, they who have seen me and been with me in my ministry, do not ask the Father in my name, that they may receive a knowledge of you by the Holy Ghost, and also of the other tribes whom they know

not of, that these sayings which ye shall write shall be kept and shall be manifested unto the Gentiles, that through the fulness of the Gentiles, the remnant of their seed, who shall be scattered forth upon the face of the earth because of their unbelief, may be brought in, or may be brought to a knowledge of me, their Redeemer.⁵ And then will I gather them in from the four quarters of the earth; and then will I fulfil the covenant which the Father hath made unto all the people of the house of Israel.

⁶ “And blessed are the Gentiles, because of their belief in me, in and of the Holy Ghost, which witnesses unto them of me and of the Father.⁷ ‘Behold, because of their belief in me,’ saith the Father, ‘and because of the unbelief of you, O house of Israel, in the latter day shall the truth come unto the Gentiles, that the fulness of these things shall be made known unto them.’

⁸ “‘But wo,’ saith the Father, ‘unto the unbelieving of the Gentiles’—for notwithstanding they have come forth upon the face of this land, and have scattered my people who are of the house of Israel; and my people who are of the house of Israel have been cast out from among them, and have been trodden under feet by them;⁹ and because of the mercies of the Father unto the Gentiles, and

CHAPTER 16

1–3: Jesus is referring to other isolated remnants of Israel, the “other tribes” of 15.15; cf. 17.4. *Numbered among my sheep*, cf. Hel 15.13. **4–5:** The idea that the Gentiles, through their “fulness,” will gather scattered Israel and bring them to a knowledge of the Redeemer is also found at 1 Ne 10.14; 15.13–14. **4:** *Write these sayings*, as part of the BoM. Jesus still appears to be addressing the Twelve (see 15.11), but by vv. 16–20, he is again speaking to the multitude (see 20.11). *Kept*, that is, “kept and preserved,” a standard BoM expression. *The fulness of the Gentiles*, Rom 11.25, where it refers to “the full number of the Gentiles.” Perhaps the meaning here is something like “Gentiles who have received a fulness of the gospel”; see 1 Ne 15.12–13. *The remnant of their seed*, that is, descendants of *my people at Jerusalem*, or the Jews. **5:** *Gather them in from the four quarters of the earth*, Jesus is quoting Zenos (1 Ne 19.16). The phrase is similarly connected to “one fold and one shepherd” at 1 Ne 22.25, and is combined with being brought to the knowledge of the Lord and God fulfilling his covenants at 3 Ne 5.23–26. **6:** *In and of the Holy Ghost* seems to indicate that they believe in Christ solely by the power of the Holy Ghost; see 15.22–24n. **7–15:** The words of the Father are also quoted at 20.20–29; 21.14–29. **8–9:** The Gentiles referred to here are European settlers in the New World, who have mistreated native peoples. *Hated...biss and a byword*, as prophesied at 1 Ne 19.14.

also the judgments of the Father upon my people who are of the house of Israel, verily, verily, I say unto you, that after all this, and I have caused my people who are of the house of Israel to be smitten, and to be afflicted, and to be slain, and to be cast out from among them, and to become hated by them, and to become a hiss and a byword among them—

¹⁰ “And thus commandeth the Father that I should say unto you: At that day when the Gentiles shall sin against my gospel, and^d shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts above all nations, and above all the people of the whole earth, and shall be filled with all manner of lyings, and of deceits, and of mischiefs, and all manner of hypocrisy, and murders, and priestcrafts, and whoredoms, and of secret abominations; and if they shall do all those things, and shall reject the fulness of my gospel, ‘Behold,’ saith the Father, ‘I will bring the fulness of my gospel from among them.’¹¹ And then will I remember my covenant which I have made unto my people, O house of Israel, and I will bring my gospel unto them.¹² And I will show unto thee, O house of Israel, that the Gentiles shall not have power over you; but I will remem-

ber my covenant unto you, O house of Israel, and ye shall come unto the knowledge of the fulness of my gospel.’

¹³ “‘But if the Gentiles will repent and return unto me,’ saith the Father, ‘behold they shall be numbered among my people, O house of Israel.’¹⁴ ‘And I will not suffer my people, who are of the house of Israel, to go through among them, and tread them down,’ saith the Father.¹⁵ ‘But if they will not turn unto me, and hearken unto my voice, I will suffer them, yea, I will suffer my people, O house of Israel, that they shall go through among them, and shall tread them down, and they shall be as salt that hath lost its savor, which is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of my people, O house of Israel.’

¹⁶ “Verily, verily, I say unto you, thus hath the Father commanded me—that I should give unto this people this land for their inheritance.¹⁷ And then^b the words of the prophet Isaiah shall be fulfilled, which say:

^a 10 P, 1830, 1981 my gospel, and shall reject the fulness of my gospel, and

^b 17 P, 1830 when

10–12: When latter-day Gentiles reject the fulness of the gospel (as contained in the BoM), it will be taken to the scattered remnants of Israel (by means of the BoM). **10:** *The fulness of the/my gospel*, 1 Ne 10.14; 13.24; 15.13; 3 Ne 20.28, 30. *Lifted up in the pride of their hearts above all nations* and *above all the people* is bitterly ironic, given God’s multiple promises that he himself would set Israel “above all nations” (Deut 14.2; 26.19; 28.1) and “above all people” (Ex 19.5; Deut 7.6; 10.15). God lifts up Israel, while the Gentiles lift themselves up (but see 1 Ne 13.30 for a counterexample). **13–15:** For a similar “if/if not” argument, see 1 Ne 14.1–7n; cf. 3 Ne 10.6–7. **13:** Gentiles who accept the gospel in its fulness will be adopted into the house of Israel and will have a share in their covenants; cf. 1 Ne 14.1–2; 15.16; 2 Ne 10.18; 3 Ne 21.6, 22; 30.2. **14–15:** *Go through among them and tread them down*, Mic 5.8, which will be quoted at 20.16 and 21.12. *Salt that hath lost its savor . . . good for nothing . . . trodden under foot*, the metaphor describing unfaithful disciples at 12.13 (Mt 5.13) has been transformed into a prophecy against the Gentiles. The two allusions are linked by the verb “tread.” **16:** Jesus had told the Twelve of this promise at 15.13; now he shares it with the multitude (see v. 4n). **17:** *And then the words*, the earliest reading, “when,” makes what follows a sentence fragment (hence the change to *then* in 1920), but it is possible that Jesus abruptly stopped his explanation of Isa 52 when he saw how overwhelmed the people were (17.1–4). When he returns the next day and resumes his teaching, he says, “Ye remember that I spake unto you and said that *when* the words of Isaiah should be fulfilled . . .” (3 Ne 20.11, emphasis added; see the discussion in ATV). At 20.14–16, Jesus will return to the themes of the Father’s command concerning the land and the fate of unrepentant Gentiles, with a fuller explanation of “tread them down” (vv. 15–16 above).

- ¹⁸ Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice;
with the voice together shall they sing,
for they shall see eye to eye
when the Lord shall bring again Zion.
- ¹⁹ Break forth into joy,
sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem;
for the Lord hath comforted his people,
he hath redeemed Jerusalem.
- ²⁰ The Lord hath made bare his holy arm
in the eyes of all the nations;
and all the ends of the earth
shall see the salvation of God.”

Jesus Heals the Sick

[VIII] 17 ¹ Behold, now it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words he looked round about again on the multitude, and he said unto them, “Behold, my time is at hand. ² I perceive that ye are weak, that ye cannot understand all my words which I am commanded of the Father to speak unto you, at this time. ³ Therefore, go ye unto your homes, and ponder upon the things which I have said, and ask of the

Father, in my name, that ye may understand, and prepare your minds for the morrow, and I come unto you again. ⁴ But now I go unto the Father, and also to show myself unto the lost tribes of Israel, for they are not lost unto the Father, for he knoweth whither he hath taken them.”

⁵ And it came to pass that when Jesus had thus spoken, he cast his eyes round about again on the multitude, and beheld they were in tears, and did look steadfastly upon him as if they would ask him to tarry a little longer with them. ⁶ And he said unto them, “Behold, my bowels are filled with compassion towards you. ⁷ Have ye any that are sick among you? Bring them hither. Have ye any that are lame, or blind, or halt, or maimed, or leprous, or that are withered, or that are deaf, or that are afflicted in any manner? Bring them hither and I will heal them, for I have compassion upon you; my bowels are filled with mercy. ⁸ For I perceive that ye desire that I should show unto you what I have done unto your brethren at Jerusalem, for I see that your faith is sufficient that I should heal you.”

⁹ And it came to pass that when he had thus spoken, all the multitude, with one accord, did go forth with their sick and their afflicted, and their lame, and with their blind, and with their dumb, and with all them that were afflicted in any manner; and he did heal them every one as they were brought forth unto him. ¹⁰ And they

18–20: Isa 52.8–10 is also cited at Mos 12.22–24; 15.29–31; 3 Ne 20.32–35.

CHAPTER 17

3: *Ask the Father in my name*, in contrast to the people of Jerusalem at 16.4. **4–8:** Jesus changes his plans in response to the crowd’s unspoken desires. **4:** *I go (un)to the/my Father*, Jn 14.12, 28; 16.10, 16–17, 28; 3 Ne 18.27, 35; 27.28; here the expression parallels *go ye to your homes*. **5:** *Tarry*, WB: “to stay; to put off going.” **6:** *Bowels are filled with compassion*, cf. 1 Jn 3.17; Mos 15.9. The bowels, or intestines, were considered the source of emotion in the OT; WB: “the seat of pity or kindness.” **7:** One wonders whether some of the *lame* or *maimed* could have been injured in the violent destructions reported in ch. 8. **Halt**, crippled; unable to walk. The only other scriptural invitation to bring the *blind*, *halt*, and *maimed* is in the parable of the great banquet at Lk 14.21. *Leprous*, the only mention of the disease in the BoM. This disfiguring ailment (probably not modern leprosy, or Hansen’s disease) rendered a person impure in the Mosaic law. **8:** There are NT stories of Jesus healing people who suffered from each of the afflictions listed in v. 7. **10:** *For the multitude*, that is, given the size of the multitude. *Kiss his feet and bathe his feet with their tears*, much like the woman at Lk 7.38; cf. 3 Ne 11.19.

did all, both they who had been healed and they who were whole, bow down at his feet, and did worship him; and as many as could come for the multitude did kiss his feet, inso-much that they did bathe his feet with their tears.

Jesus Prays and Blesses the Children

¹¹ And it came to pass that he commanded that their little children should be brought.

¹² So they brought their little children and set them down upon the ground round about him, and Jesus stood in the midst; and the multitude gave way till they had all been brought unto him. ¹³ And it came to pass that when they had all been brought, and Jesus stood in the midst, he commanded the multitude that they should kneel down upon the ground.

¹⁴ 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." ¹⁵ And when he had said these words, he himself also knelt upon the earth; and behold he prayed unto the Father, and the things which he prayed cannot be written, and the multitude did bear record who heard him. ¹⁶ And after this manner do they bear record, "The eye hath never seen, neither hath the ear heard before, so great and marvelous

things as we saw and heard Jesus speak unto the Father; ¹⁷ and no tongue can speak, neither can there be written by any man, neither can the hearts of men conceive so great and marvelous things as we both saw and heard Jesus speak; and no one can conceive of the joy which filled our souls at the time we heard him pray for us unto the Father."

¹⁸ And it came to pass that when Jesus had made an end of praying unto the Father, he arose; but so great was the joy of the multitude that they were overcome. ¹⁹ And it came to pass that Jesus spake unto them, and bade them arise. ²⁰ And they arose from the earth, and he said unto them, "Blessed are ye because of your faith. And now behold, my joy is full."

²¹ And when he had said these words, he wept, and the multitude bare record of it, and he took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them. ²² And when he had done this he wept again; ²³ and he spake unto the multitude, and said unto them, "Behold your little ones."

²⁴ And as they looked to behold they cast their eyes towards heaven, and they saw the heavens open, and they saw angels descending out of heaven as it were in the midst of fire; and they came down and encircled those little ones about, and they were encircled about with fire; and the angels did minister unto them.

²⁵ And the multitude did see and hear and

11–25: In the NT, Jesus blesses children at Mt 19.13–15; Mk 10.13–16; Lk 18.15–17. **14:** It is unclear whether Jesus is troubled by the wickedness of the Leuites, or of the Jews in Jerusalem, or both. **15:** *The things which he prayed cannot be written*, the same thing will be reported at 19.31–34, again with the multitude bearing record. **16–17:** An adaptation of Isa 64.4 (quoted at 1 Cor 2.9). The context is closer to Isa 64, which describes God descending in power amid earthquakes and ruined cities, while the wording is closer to 1 Cor 2. **17:** *Pray for us*, although his concern was for the broader house of Israel, Jesus also prays on behalf of the people in the crowd. **20:** *Blessed are ye because of your faith*, similar approval was given to Nephi (1 Ne 2.19), Alma₁ (Mos 26.15), Alma's people (Mos 26.16), and a Lamanite queen (Alma 19.10). *Joy* that is *full* is a Johannine expression (Jn 15.11; 16.24; 1 Jn 1.4; 2 Jn 1.12; and nine times in the BoM). **21–22:** Jesus as God in his glory is still capable of tears; the mortal Jesus wept at Lk 19.41 and Jn 11.35. *One by one* is a striking example of God's care for individuals; cf. 11.15. **24–25:** Being encircled by fire and joined by angels is reminiscent of Nephi₂, Lehi₄, and the Lamanites in the prison at Hel 5.23–48 (both passages conclude by specifying the number of witnesses). **24:** *Heavens open, and they saw angels descending*, Jn 1.51; 1 Ne 11.30. **25:** In a very male-dominated society, it is noteworthy that women and children are counted among the number of competent witnesses. (The status of women as the first witnesses to Jesus's resurrection in the NT is similarly remarkable.)

bear record; and they know that their record is true for they all of them did see and hear, every man for himself; and they were in number about two thousand and five hundred souls; and they did consist of men, women, and children.

Jesus Institutes the Sacrament

18¹ And it came to pass that Jesus commanded his disciples that they should bring forth some bread and wine unto him.² And while they were gone for bread and wine, he commanded the multitude that they should sit themselves down upon the earth.³ And when the disciples had come with bread and wine, he took of the bread and brake and blessed it; and he gave unto the disciples and commanded that they should eat.⁴ And when they had eaten and were filled, he commanded that they should give unto the multitude.

⁵ And when the multitude had eaten and were filled, he said unto the disciples, “Behold there shall one be ordained among you, and to him will I give power that he shall break bread

and bless it and give it unto the people of my church, unto all those who shall believe and be baptized in my name.⁶ And this shall ye always observe to do, even as I have done, even as I have broken bread and blessed it and given it unto you.⁷ And this shall ye do in remembrance of my body, which I have shown unto you. And it shall be a testimony unto the Father that ye do always remember me. And if ye do always remember me ye shall have my Spirit to be with you.”

⁸ And it came to pass that when he said these words, he commanded his disciples that they should take of the wine of the cup and drink of it, and that they should also give unto the multitude that they might drink of it.⁹ And it came to pass that they did so, and did drink of it and were filled; and they gave unto the multitude, and they did drink, and they were filled.

Instructions to the Twelve on the Sacrament and Prayer

¹⁰ And when the disciples had done this, Jesus said unto them, “Blessed are ye for this thing which ye have done, for this is fulfilling my

CHAPTER 18

1–16: The word *sacrament*, which only occurs in the BoM at Morm 9.29, is the common LDS term for the Eucharist or Lord’s Supper. This act, as a witness (v. 11) and a testimony (v. 7), parallels the meaning of baptism as explained by Alma, at Mos 18.10, 13; cf. 3 Ne 7.25. **3:** *Brake/break* and *blessed* are combined six times in the NT (in connection with the feeding of the five thousand, the Last Supper, and the Emmaus incident), and five times in the BoM: here in vv. 3–6; 20.3; 26.13. The NT order is always blessed and then brake, while the BoM order is the opposite. **5:** The identity of the single person authorized to break and bless the bread is unclear. *Give it unto the people of my church... baptized in my name*, Jesus stipulates closed communion (v. 11) and open meetings (vv. 22–23, 30–32). **7:** Compare the prayer on the bread at Moro 4.3. In contrast to the NT phrasing “take, eat; this is my body” (Mt 26.26; Mk 14.22; 1 Cor 11.24)—which gave rise to the doctrines of transubstantiation and sacramental union—in the BoM the Eucharist is clearly an act of symbolic commemoration, similar to the memorialism associated with Huldrych Zwingli (but see vv. 28–29 and 20.8). *This shall ye do in remembrance of my body*, cf. Lk 22.19 and 1 Cor 11.24 (“this do in remembrance of me”); the next line, *which I have shown unto you*, is substituted for “which is given for you” (Lk 22.19) or “which is broken for you” (1 Cor 11.24). The substituted phrase reflects the Nephites’ encounter with the resurrected Christ, which they are to recall ever after as they take the sacrament. In other words, the Nephites are to commemorate Christ’s resurrection with the bread, and his atonement with the wine. **8–9:** There is no mention of blessing the wine, as there was for the bread (v. 3), and the same thing happens at 20.3–5, but given the parallel prayers at Moro 4–5, readers may assume that a second blessing was pronounced on these occasions. **9:** *Did drink of it and were filled* parallels the bread, though it is not a NT expression; cf. the promise at 12.6 (Mt 5.6) that those who “hunger and thirst after righteousness” would be “filled.” After the second administration of the sacrament at 20.9, the crowd is “filled with the Spirit,” again in accordance with 12.6.

commandments, and this doth witness unto the Father that ye are willing to do that which I have commanded you. ¹¹ And this shall ye always do to those who repent and are baptized in my name; and ye shall do it in remembrance of my blood, which I have shed for you, that ye may witness unto the Father that ye do always remember me. And if ye do always remember me ye shall have my Spirit to be with you.

¹² “And I give unto you a commandment that ye shall do these things. And if ye shall always do these things blessed are ye, for ye are built upon my rock. ¹³ But whoso among you shall do more or less than these are not built upon my rock, but are built upon a sandy foundation; and when the rain descends, and the floods come, and the winds blow, and beat upon them, they shall fall, and the gates of hell are ready open to receive them. ¹⁴ Therefore blessed are ye if ye shall keep my commandments, which the Father hath commanded me that I should give unto you. ¹⁵ Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye must watch and pray always, lest ye be tempted by the devil, and ye be led away captive by him. ¹⁶ And as I have prayed among you even so shall ye pray in my church, among my people who do repent and are baptized in my name. Behold I am the light; I have set an example for you.”

Instructions to the Multitude on Prayer and Fellowship

¹⁷ And it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words unto his disciples, he turned again unto the multitude and said unto them, ¹⁸ “Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, ye must watch and pray always lest ye enter into temptation; for Satan desireth to have you, that he may sift you as wheat. ¹⁹ Therefore ye must always pray unto the Father in my name; ²⁰ and whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is right, believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be given unto you. ²¹ Pray in your families unto the Father, always in my name, that^a your wives and your children may be blessed.

²² “And behold, ye shall meet together oft; and ye shall not forbid any man from coming unto you when ye shall meet together, but suffer them that they may come unto you and forbid them not; ²³ but ye shall pray for them, and shall not cast them out; and if it so be that they come unto you oft ye shall pray for them unto the Father, in my name.

²⁴ “Therefore, hold up your light that it may shine unto the world. Behold I am the

^a ²¹ Or *pray...unto the Father always, in my name, that*

11: Compare the prayer on the wine at Moro 5.2. *Do it in remembrance of my blood, which I have shed for you*, the emphasis on remembrance contrasts with the equating of wine and blood implied in “this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many” (Mt 26.28; Mk 14.24) and “this cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you” (Lk 22.20; 1 Cor 11.25), though 1 Cor continues “this do ye...in remembrance of me.” Because red wine from grapes was unknown in the ancient Americas, the symbolic connection between Christ’s blood and whatever beverage they may have used would have been more abstract. **12–14:** Alluding to 14.24–27 (Mt 7.24–27), Jesus makes proper eucharistic procedures an example of what it means to be *built upon my rock*; see 11.39–40n. **15:** *Watch and pray always, lest ye be tempted*, this instruction is given twice, here to the Twelve and again to the multitude at v. 18; see 16.16n. **18:** *Watch and pray...lest ye enter into temptation*, Mk 14.38; cf. Mt. 26.41; Alma 13.28. *Satan desireth to have you, that he may sift you as wheat* were also Jesus’s words to Peter at Lk 22.31 (where the “you” is plural); cf. Alma 37.15. **20:** *Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name...it shall be given unto you*, Jn 15.16; 16.23; but here (and at Moro 7.26) two additional requirements are added: appropriateness and faith; cf. 3 Ne 27.28; Morm 9.21. **22:** *Suffer...come unto you and forbid them not*, Mt 19.14; Mk 10.14; Lk 18.16 (spoken by Jesus about children). **24:** At 12.14 (Mt 5.14) Christ’s followers were “the light of the world”; at Jn 8.12; 9.5 this was Jesus himself. Here he combines the two interpretations; cf. v. 16 above.

light which ye shall hold up—that which ye have seen me do. Behold ye see that I have prayed unto the Father, and ye all have witnessed.²⁵ And ye see that I have commanded that none of you should go away, but rather have commanded that ye should come unto me, that ye might feel and see; even so shall ye do unto the world; and whosoever breaketh this commandment suffereth himself to be led into temptation.”

Instructions to the Twelve on Fellowship

²⁶ And now it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words, he turned his eyes again upon the disciples whom he had chosen, and said unto them,²⁷ “Behold verily, verily, I say unto you, I give unto you another commandment, and then I must go unto my Father that I may fulfil other commandments which he hath given me.²⁸ And now behold, this is the commandment which I give unto you, that ye shall not suffer any one knowingly to partake of my flesh and blood unworthily, when ye shall minister it;²⁹ for whoso eateth and drinketh my flesh and blood unworthily eateth and drinketh damnation to his soul; therefore if ye know that a man is unworthy to eat and drink of my flesh and blood ye shall forbid him.³⁰ Nevertheless, ye shall not cast him out from among you, but ye shall minister

unto him and shall pray for him unto the Father, in my name; and if it so be that he repenteth and is baptized in my name, then shall ye receive him, and shall minister unto him of my flesh and blood.

³¹ “But if he repent not he shall not be numbered among my people, that he may not destroy my people, for behold I know my sheep, and they are numbered.³² Nevertheless, ye shall not cast him out of your synagogues, or your places of worship, for unto such shall ye continue to minister; for ye know not but what they will return and repent, and come unto me with full purpose of heart, and I shall heal them; and ye shall be the means of bringing salvation unto them.³³ Therefore, keep these sayings which I have commanded you that ye come not under condemnation; for wo unto him whom the Father condemneth.

³⁴ “And I give you these commandments because of the disputations which have been among you. And blessed are ye if ye have no disputations among you.³⁵ And now I go unto the Father, because it is expedient that I should go unto the Father for your sakes.”

Jesus Ascends to Heaven

³⁶ And it came to pass that when Jesus had made an end of these sayings, he touched with his hand the disciples whom he had chosen,

25: *That ye might feel and see*, see 11.13–15. **26–33:** A final command to the Twelve concerning church practices. A similar warning against partaking of the Lord’s Supper unworthily is found at 1 Cor 11.27–30, with two differences: (1) in 1 Cor the participants are asked to “examine themselves,” whereas here the Twelve are appointed as judges of eucharistic worthiness; and (2), the ill consequences in 1 Cor are specified and physical—sickness and death. The prohibition is reiterated at Morm 9.29; cf. 4 Ne 1.27. *Partake of my flesh and blood*, the relationship between the bread and wine and Christ’s body is closer here than in vv. 6–11. *Eateth and drinketh damnation to his soul/himself*; 1 Cor 11.29; cf. Mos 2.33; 3.18. **31–32:** Although barred from participating in the Eucharist, former church members should not be excluded from worship services on the chance that they might have a change of heart. **32:** “Return . . . and repent . . . that I may heal you,” the first invitation of the voice in the darkness at 9.13 (after enumerating the destroyed cities), is here combined with “repent and return unto me with full purpose of heart” from the voice’s final invitation at 10.6. For similar examples, see 2 Ne 4.25n; Alma 31.37–38; 33.23n. **34:** Other disputations concerning church doctrine and practices in that generation are mentioned at 1.24–25 (the law of Moses); 8.4 (prophecies); 11.22, 28 (baptism); and 27.3 (the name of the church). **36–37:** With a touch, Jesus bestows authority over the gift of the Spirit. *I will show you hereafter*, their new powers are implied at 26.17, though the details of this authorizing moment are given not by Mormon, but by Moroni at Moro 2.1–3.

one by one, even until he had touched them all, and spake unto them as he touched them.³⁷ And the multitude heard not the words which he spake, therefore they did not bear record; but the disciples bare record that he gave them power to give the Holy Ghost. And I will show unto you hereafter that this record is true.

³⁸ And it came to pass that when Jesus had touched them all, there came a cloud and overshadowed the multitude that they could not see Jesus.³⁹ And while they were overshadowed he departed from them, and ascended into heaven. And the disciples saw and did bear record that he ascended again into heaven.

A Greater Multitude Gathers; Nephi₃ Baptizes the Twelve

[IX] **19**¹ And now it came to pass that when Jesus had ascended into heaven, the multitude did disperse, and every man did take his wife and his children and did return to his own home.² And it was noised abroad among the people immediately, before it was yet dark, that the multitude had seen Jesus, and that he had ministered unto them, and that he would also show himself on the morrow unto the multitude.³ Yea, and even all the night it was noised abroad concerning Jesus; and insomuch did they send forth unto the people that there were many, yea,

an exceeding great number, did labor exceedingly all that night, that they might be on the morrow in the place where Jesus should show himself unto the multitude.

⁴ And it came to pass that on the morrow, when the multitude was gathered together, behold, Nephi and his brother whom he had raised from the dead, whose name was Timothy, and also his son, whose name was Jonas, and also Mathoni, and Mathonihah, his brother, and Kumen, and Kumenonhi, and Jeremiah, and Shemnon, and Jonas, and Zedekiah, and Isaiah—now these were the names of the disciples whom Jesus had chosen—and it came to pass that they went forth and stood in the midst of the multitude.⁵ And behold, the multitude was so great that they did cause that they should be separated into twelve bodies.⁶ And the twelve did teach the multitude; and behold, they did cause that the multitude should kneel down upon the face of the earth, and should pray unto the Father in the name of Jesus.⁷ And the disciples did pray unto the Father also in the name of Jesus.

And it came to pass that they arose and ministered unto the people.⁸ And when they had ministered those same words which Jesus had spoken—nothing varying from the words which Jesus had spoken—behold, they knelt again and prayed to the Father in the name of Jesus.⁹ And they did pray for that which they most desired; and they desired that the Holy Ghost should be given unto them.

38: It is not clear why the ascension was an event that was made visible only to the Twelve, but being *overshadowed by a cloud* is part of the transfiguration narrative in all three Synoptic Gospels (Mt 17:5; Mk 9:7; Lk 9:34; cf. Hel 5:28).

CHAPTER 19

1–3: Believers working through the night create a human sign of a day, a night, and a day of uninterrupted activity, parallel to the cosmic sign of Jesus's birth at 1.15–18 (cf. Hel 14.1–4). **1:** *Return to his own home*, see Mos 6.3n. **2:** *Noised*, WB: “spread by report; much talked of.” *He would also show himself on the morrow*, as he promised at 17.3. **4:** *Whom he had raised from the dead*, see 7.19. *And also his son*, Jonas is probably Nephi's son rather than Timothy's. As with the Judean Twelve, there are two sets of brothers in the list, as well as two men with the same name (NT lists differ slightly from Gospel to Gospel, but there were two men named “Simon” and two named “Judas”). *Whom Jesus had chosen*, see 11.18–22. **6–7:** *Pray unto the Father in the name of Jesus*, as Jesus had instructed at 18.17–21; cf. 2 Ne 32.9; 33.12.

¹⁰ And when they had thus prayed they went down unto the water's edge, and the multitude followed them. ¹¹ And it came to pass that Nephi went down into the water and was baptized. ¹² And he came up out of the water and began to baptize. And he baptized all those whom Jesus had chosen. ¹³ And it came to pass when they were all baptized and had come up out of the water, the Holy Ghost did fall upon them, and they were filled with the Holy Ghost and with fire. ¹⁴ And behold, they were encircled about as if it were by fire; and it came down from heaven, and the multitude did witness it, and did bear record; and angels did come down out of heaven and did minister unto them.

Jesus's Second Sermon to the Nephites (on the Prophets): 3 Nephi 19.15–26.14

Jesus Returns and Prays concerning the Holy Ghost

¹⁵ And it came to pass that while the angels were ministering unto the disciples, behold, Jesus came and stood in the midst and ministered unto them. ¹⁶ And it came to pass that he spake unto the multitude, and commanded them that they should kneel down again upon the earth, and also that his disciples should kneel down upon the earth. ¹⁷ And it came to pass that when they had all knelt down upon the earth, he commanded his disciples that

they should pray. ¹⁸ And behold, they began to pray; and they did pray unto Jesus, calling him their Lord and their God.

¹⁹ And it came to pass that Jesus departed out of the midst of them, and went a little way off from them and bowed himself to the earth, and he said:

²⁰ “Father, I thank thee that thou hast given the Holy Ghost unto these whom I have chosen; and it is because of their belief in me that I have chosen them out of the world.

²¹ Father, I pray thee that thou wilt give the Holy Ghost unto all them that shall believe in their words.

²² Father, thou hast given them the Holy Ghost because they believe in me; and thou seest that they believe in me because thou hearest them, and they pray unto me; and they pray unto me because I am with them.

²³ And now Father, I pray unto thee for them, and also for all those who shall believe on their words, that they may believe in me, that I may be in them as thou, Father, art in me, that we may be one.”

11–12: These would have been rebaptisms, performed according to the new pattern given at 11.22–26. **13–14:** The arrival of the Holy Ghost fulfills Jesus's promise to the multitude at 12.1. **13:** *The Holy Ghost did fall upon them*, as Nephi, had foreseen at 1 Ne 12.7; similar language is used to describe Gentiles receiving the Holy Spirit at Acts 10.44; 11.15. **14:** Something like fire from heaven was also seen when the Judean Twelve first received the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, see Acts 2.3. **15:** On the second day of his New World ministry, Jesus will quote several lengthy passages from Israel's prophets, interspersed with allusions to Nephite prophets as well. *Jesus . . . stood in the midst*, the same expression is used to describe Christ's sudden post-resurrection appearances at Lk 24.36; Jn 20.19, 26; see 3 Ne 11.8n; 27.2. **18:** The standard practice was to pray to the Father in the name of Jesus; the fact that Jesus is present with them makes this a special circumstance in which the ordinary rules do not apply (see v. 22). **20–23:** Jesus's prayer for the Twelve (*those whom I have chosen*) is reminiscent of the intercessory prayer of Jn 17. **20:** *I have chosen them out of the world*, Jn 15.19. **23:** *I pray . . . for them and also for all those who shall believe on their words*, Jn 17.9, 20; cf. 3 Ne 12.2. *That I may be in them as thou, Father, art in me, that we may be one*, cf. Jn 17.21, 23.

The Twelve Are Transformed; Jesus Prays concerning Purification

²⁴ And it came to pass that when Jesus had thus prayed unto the Father, he came unto his disciples, and behold, they did still continue, without ceasing, to pray unto him; and they did not multiply many words, for it was given unto them what they should pray, and they were filled with desire. ²⁵ And it came to pass that Jesus blessed them as they did pray unto him; and his countenance did smile upon them, and the light of his countenance did shine upon them, and behold they were as white as the countenance and also the garments of Jesus; and behold the whiteness thereof did exceed all the whiteness, yea, even there could be nothing upon earth so white as the whiteness thereof. ²⁶ And Jesus said unto them, “Pray on”; nevertheless they did not cease to pray.

²⁷ And he turned from them again, and went a little way off and bowed himself to the earth; and he prayed again unto the Father, saying:

²⁸ “Father, I thank thee that thou hast purified
those whom I have chosen,
because of their faith,
and I pray for them,
and also for them who shall believe
on their words,
that they may be purified in me,
through faith on their words,
even as they are purified in me.

²⁹ Father, I pray not for the world,

but for those whom thou hast given
me out of the world,
because of their faith,
that they may be purified in me,
that I may be in them as thou,
Father, art in me,
that we may be one, that I may be
glorified in them.”

³⁰ And when Jesus had spoken these words he came again unto his disciples; and behold they did pray steadfastly, without ceasing, unto him; and he did smile upon them again; and behold they were white, even as Jesus.

³¹ And it came to pass that he went again a little way off and prayed unto the Father; ³² and tongue cannot speak the words which he prayed, neither can be written by man the words which he prayed. ³³ And the multitude did hear and do bear record; and their hearts were open and they did understand in their hearts the words which he prayed. ³⁴ Nevertheless, so great and marvelous were the words which he prayed that they cannot be written, neither can they be uttered by man.

³⁵ And it came to pass that when Jesus had made an end of praying he came again to the disciples, and said unto them, “So great faith have I never seen among all the Jews; wherefore I could not show unto them so great miracles, because of their unbelief. ³⁶ Verily I say unto you, there are none of them that have seen so great things as ye have seen; neither have they heard so great things as ye have heard.”

25: This verse may allude to the priestly blessing at Num 6.24–26, which also refers to the Lord blessing his people and his countenance shining upon them; see Alma 7.25–27n. The association of *whiteness* with purification (vv. 28–30) seems to put moral value on a color, though the emphasis appears to be on radiance rather than hue; cf. Dan 12.10; Alma 5.21. Jesus is also said to have taken on a shining whiteness at his transfiguration; see Mt 17.1–2; Mk 9.2–3. **26:** The word *nevertheless* suggests that even without Jesus’s encouragement, they would not have stopped praying. **28–29:** This prayer roughly parallels that of vv. 20–23 above, with additional echoes of Jn 17. **28:** *Whom I have chosen, because of their faith*, 1 Ne 1.20. *Even as they*, that is, even as the Twelve. **29:** *I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me out of the world*, Jn 17.6, 9. *That I may be glorified in them*, Jn 17.10. **31–34:** As on the first day, Jesus prays with words that are unrepeatable and untranscribable; see 17.15–17. **35:** *So great faith have I never seen among all the Jews* echoes Jesus’s assessment of the centurion at Mt 8.10; Lk 7.9; cf. Alma 19.10.

Jesus Administers the Sacrament Again

20¹ And it came to pass that he commanded the multitude that they should cease to pray, and also his disciples. And he commanded them that they should not cease to pray in their hearts.² And he commanded them that they should arise and stand up upon their feet. And they arose up and stood upon their feet.³ And it came to pass that he brake bread again and blessed it, and gave to the disciples to eat.⁴ And when they had eaten he commanded them that they should break bread, and give unto the multitude.⁵ And when they had given unto the multitude he also gave them wine to drink, and commanded them that they should give unto the multitude.

⁶ Now, there had been no bread, neither wine, brought by the disciples, neither by the multitude;⁷ but he truly gave unto them bread to eat, and also wine to drink.⁸ And he said unto them, “He that eateth this bread eateth of my body to his soul; and he that drinketh of this wine drinketh of my blood to his soul; and his soul shall never hunger nor thirst, but shall be filled.”⁹ Now, when the multitude had all eaten and drunk, behold, they were filled with the Spirit; and they did cry out with one

voice, and gave glory to Jesus, whom they both saw and heard.

Jesus Prophecies concerning the Gentiles and Lehi’s Descendants in the Latter Days, Quoting Micah 5.8–9 and 4.12–13

(with significant changes and additions to the King James Bible in bold)

¹⁰ And it came to pass that when they had all given glory unto Jesus, he said unto them, “Behold now I finish the commandment which the Father hath commanded me concerning this people, who are a remnant of the house of Israel.¹¹ Ye remember that I spake unto you, and said that when the words of Isaiah should be fulfilled—behold they are written, ye have them before you, therefore search them—¹² And verily, verily, I say unto you, that when they shall be fulfilled then is the fulfilling of the covenant which the Father hath made unto his people, O house of Israel.

¹³ And then shall the remnants, which shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the earth, be gathered in from the east and from the west, and from the south and from the north; and they shall be brought to the knowledge of the Lord their God, who hath redeemed them.

¹⁴ And the Father hath commanded me that

CHAPTER 20

3–5: Jesus had earlier administered the sacrament at 18.1–16. **6–7:** Rather than multiplying loaves, as with the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus here miraculously produces bread and wine from nothing. Readers may wonder whether this wine was of better quality than what the disciples were able to provide the previous day. **8:** *To his soul*, a phrase associated with the Eucharist in the BoM (see 18.29; Moro 4.3; 5.2) indicating that the transformation entailed in the sacramental bread and wine occurs within the souls of the recipients rather than in the physical elements of the Lord’s Supper. *Shall never hunger nor thirst*, cf. Jn 6.35. **9:** *Filled with the Spirit*, in accordance with 12.6. **11–35:** The rest of this chapter and the next will repeat and expand on Jesus’s teachings at 16.4–20. **11:** *I spake unto you, and said when the words of Isaiah should be fulfilled*, see 16.17n. **12–13:** The key points in these verses were addressed at 16.4–5, and were also anticipated in Mormon’s synopsis at 5.23–26 of the future of the “remnant” of “the house of Jacob” (see v. 16 below). **13:** Isaiah had spoken of gathering Israel from the four directions at Isa 43.5–6; see 1 Ne 21.13n; cf. Ps 107.2–3. **14:** Although the other remnants of Israel will be gathered to the land promised to Abraham (v. 29), the descendants of Lehi will remain in the New World. *The Father hath commanded me that I should give unto you this land, for your inheritance*, repeated from 16.16.

I should give unto you this land, for your inheritance.

¹⁵ “And I say unto you, that if the Gentiles do not repent after the blessing which they shall receive, after they have scattered my people—

¹⁶ **then shall ye, who are a remnant of the house of Jacob, go forth among them;**^a

and ye shall be in the midst of **them who shall be** many; **and ye shall be among them** as a lion among the beasts of the forest, **and** as a young lion among the flocks of sheep, who, if he goeth through both treadeth down and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver.

¹⁷ Thy hand shall be lifted up upon thine adversaries, and all thine enemies shall be cut off.^b

¹⁸ **And I will gather my people together** as a man gathereth his sheaves into the floor.

¹⁹ **For I will make my people with whom the Father hath covenanted,**^c

yea, I will make thy horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass; and thou shalt beat in pieces many people.

And I will consecrate their gain unto the Lord, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth.

And behold, I am he who doeth it.^d

²⁰ “‘And it shall come to pass,’ saith the Father, ‘that the sword of my justice shall hang over them at that day; and except they repent it shall fall upon them,’ saith the Father, ‘yea, even upon all the nations of the Gentiles.’”

Jesus Quotes Acts 3.22–26 and Explains the Covenant of the Father

(with significant changes and additions to the King James Bible in bold)

²¹ “And it shall come to pass that I will establish my people, O house of Israel. ²² And behold, this people will I establish in this land, unto the fulfilling of the covenant which

^a 16 Mic 5.8 reads “the Gentiles.”

^b 17 Verses 16–17 quote Mic 5.8–9.

^c 19 Mic 4.13 reads “arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion”

^d 19 Verses 18–19 quote Mic 4.12–13.

15–19: Micah, among the earliest of the Minor Prophets, was active from ca. 759–687 BCE, at the time of the fall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel to the Assyrians, though many scholars believe that chs. 4–5 are post-exilic additions. Jesus quotes Micah here to prophesy that relatively small numbers of latter-day Lamanites will cause havoc among unrepentant Gentiles. **15–16:** *If the Gentiles do not repent... go forth among them... treadeth down*, see 16.13–15. The blessing the Gentiles will receive presumably includes the BoM and the gift of the Holy Ghost (see 16.6–7 and v. 27 below). **16:** The additions here shift the declaration to the second person, to match v. 17. *The house of Jacob*, see 5.21n. **18:** The additions here shift the declaration to the first person, to match v. 19. In Mic, it is Israel’s enemies who are gathered *into the floor*, that is, the threshing floor. **19:** Israel is personified as a raging bull. *I am he who doeth it*, this added sentence, in which the Lord takes personal responsibility for the destruction of the wicked, is reminiscent of his repeated declarations at 9.3–12. **20:** *Sword of my justice shall hang over them*, see 1 Ne 12.18n. **21–29:** As with the Sermon on the Mount, the book of Luke–Acts was not written until several decades after the death and resurrection of Jesus. **22:** *Your father Jacob*, probably Nephi’s younger brother rather than the biblical patriarch; see 2 Ne 10.10, 19. The phrase *New Jerusalem* occurs twice in the Bible (Rev 3.12; 21.2); this is its first occurrence in the BoM. Strikingly, it is not a restored version of the old city (as envisioned in Ezek 40–48), or a glorious version of the city coming down from heaven (see Rev 21), but rather an entirely new city built in the New World; see 3 Ne 21.22–25; Ether 13.1–12. It is worth noting that New England Puritans of the 17th c. spoke regularly about establishing the New Jerusalem on the American continent. The descent of *the powers of heaven* is also associated with the New Jerusalem at 21.25 (in P); in the Gospels, the phrase refers to heavenly bodies.

I made with your father Jacob; and it shall be a New Jerusalem. And the powers of heaven shall be in the midst of this people; yea, even I will be in the midst of you.

²³ **Behold, I am he of whom Moses spake, saying,** ‘A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass that every soul who will not hear that prophet shall be **cut off**^a from among the people.’^b

²⁴ **Verily I say unto you,** yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have **testified of me.**^c

²⁵ **And behold,** ye are the children of the prophets; **and ye are of the house of Israel;** and ye are of the covenant which **the Father** made with **your** fathers, saying unto Abraham, ‘And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.’^d ²⁶ **The Father** having raised **me** up **unto you first,** and sent **me** to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities; **and this because ye are the children of the covenant—**

²⁷ “And after that ye were blessed then filleth the Father the covenant which he made with Abraham, saying, ‘In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed’—unto the pouring out of the Holy Ghost through me upon the Gentiles, which blessing upon the Gentiles shall make them mighty above all, unto the scattering of my people, O house of Israel. ²⁸ And they shall be a scourge unto the people of this land.

“Nevertheless, when they shall have received the fulness of my gospel, then if they shall harden their hearts against me, ‘I will return their iniquities upon their own heads,’ saith the Father. ²⁹ ‘And I will remember the covenant which I have made with my people; and I have covenanted with them that I would gather them together in mine own due time, that I would give unto them again the land of their fathers for their inheritance, which is the land of Jerusalem, which is the promised land unto them forever,’ saith the Father.”

^a 23 Acts 3.23 reads “destroyed”; see 3 Ne 21.11.

^b 23 Deut 18.15, 18–19; cf. 1 Ne 22.20 (which also uses “cut off”)

^c 24 Acts 3.24 reads “have likewise foretold of these days”

^d 25 Gen 22.18; cf. 1 Ne 15.18; 1 Ne 22.9

23: Somewhat surprisingly, Jesus here identifies himself as a prophet rather than the Messiah or the Redeemer. This, however, fits with the theme of his second day: prophecies yet to be fulfilled; see 15.6–8n; 19.15n. For the substitution of *cut off* for “destroyed,” see 21.11n. **24:** Since *Samuel* was the first of the OT prophets after Moses, the idea is that all the prophets have testified of Christ; cf. Mos 13.33. **26:** In Acts, the phrase *unto you first* is at the beginning of the verse. The difference in wording may suggest that the Nephites were the first of the scattered branches of Israel that Jesus visited after his resurrection; cf. 17.4. *Ye are the children of the covenant*, a rearrangement of words from the beginning of Acts 3.25. **27:** *Through me*, Jesus identifies himself as the descendant (*seed*) of Abraham through which all the earth will be blessed; elsewhere in the BoM, all Israel, including the descendants of Lehi, are identified as the “seed” in this promise (see 1 Ne 15.18; 22.8–9). **28–29:** The Gentiles will oppress the descendants of Lehi in the New World, after which they will receive the fullness of the gospel (through the BoM). If they reject that message, God will return their iniquities upon their own heads, as Nephi had also prophesied at 2 Ne 29.5. In other words, whatever the Gentiles have done to the remnants of Israel will be done in turn to themselves; see “trodden under feet” at 16.8, 15; and vv. 15–20 above. At the same time, God will gather the Jews back to Jerusalem in accordance with his covenant. The same eschatological narrative was presented at 16.6–12. *Fulness of my gospel*, continuing the discussion from 16.10–12.

Jesus Quotes Isaiah 52.8–10, 1–3, 6–7, 11–15: The Restoration of Zion; God’s Servant to Suffer and Be Exalted

(with significant changes and additions to the King James Bible in bold)

³⁰ “And it shall come to pass that the time cometh, when the fulness of my gospel shall be preached unto them; ³¹ and they shall believe in me, that I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and shall pray unto the Father in my name.

³² **Then shall their** watchmen lift up **their** voice;

and with the voice together shall they sing,
for they shall see eye to eye.

³³ **Then will the Father gather them together again, and give unto them Jerusalem for the land of their inheritance;**^a

³⁴ **then shall they** break forth into joy.
Sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem,
for the **Father** hath comforted his people,
he hath redeemed Jerusalem.

³⁵ The **Father** hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations;
and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of **the Father; and the Father and I are one.**^b

³⁶ **And then shall be brought to pass that which is written:**

Awake, awake **again, and** put on thy strength, O Zion;
put on thy beautiful garments,
O Jerusalem, the holy city.
For henceforth there shall no more come into thee
the uncircumcised and the unclean.

³⁷ Shake thyself from the dust; arise.
Sit down, O Jerusalem;
loose thyself from the bands of thy neck,
O captive daughter of Zion.

³⁸ For thus saith the Lord:
‘Ye have sold yourselves for naught, and ye shall be redeemed without money.’^c

³⁹ **Verily, verily, I say unto you, that my people shall know my name; **yea, in that day** they shall know that I am he that doth speak.**^d

^a 33 Isa 52.8 reads “when the Lord shall bring again Zion.”

^b 35 Verses 32–35 quote Isa 52.8–10.

^c 38 Verses 36–38 quote Isa 52.1–3.

^d 39 Isa 52.6 reads “they shall know in that day that I am he that doth speak: behold, it is I.”

30–40: Blocks of text from Isa 52 have been reorganized, with vv. 4–5 (about captivity in Egypt and Assyria) omitted. The new arrangement follows the order of fulfillment in the last days, with the addition of *then shall* at the beginning of the first four major blocks. Consequently, the sequence of latter-day events is the gathering of Jews back to the Holy Land (vv. 32–35), the rejuvenation of Jerusalem (personified as a woman; vv. 36–38), the sending forth of news about peace and salvation (v. 40), an invitation to come out of the world (vv. 41–42), and God’s long-underestimated servant being exalted among the nations (vv. 43–45). Verse 39 (Isa 52.6) occupies a position in the middle as an affirmation that all of this will be done at the word of the Lord. In other words, halfway through this process, people will begin to recognize the hand of God in it. **30:** *Shall be preached unto them*, that is, to the remnants of Israel in the last days. **32–35:** This is the second time that Jesus quotes this passage (see 16.18–20, where his quotation was cut short). Earlier the wording was very close to that of the KJV, but here there are interpretive variations; for instance, the original “Lord” or “our God” is replaced by *Father* throughout. **35:** *The Father and I are one*, 11.27; cf. 28.10; Jn 10.30. **36–37:** Isa 52.1–2 was quoted earlier at 2 Ne 8.24–25. *Arise, sit down*, that is, sit down on a throne. **39:** The BoM transposes the order of *in that day* and *they shall know*.

⁴⁰ **And then shall they say:**
 ‘How beautiful upon the mountains
 are the feet of him that bringeth
 good tidings **unto them;**
 that publisheth peace;
 that bringeth good tidings **unto**
them of good;
 that publisheth salvation;
 that saith unto Zion, “Thy God
 reigneth!”^a

⁴¹ **And then shall a cry go forth:**
 ‘Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from
 thence,
 touch **not that which is** unclean;
 go ye out of the midst of her;
 be ye clean that bear the vessels of
 the Lord.

⁴² For ye shall not go out with haste
 nor go by flight;
 for the Lord will go before you,
 and the God of Israel **shall** be your
 rearward.²

⁴³ Behold, my servant shall deal prudently;
 he shall be exalted and extolled and
 be very high.

⁴⁴ As many were **astonished** at thee—
 his visage was so marred, more than
 any man,

and his form more than the sons of men—
⁴⁵ so shall he sprinkle many nations;
 the kings shall shut their mouths at
 him,
 for that which had not been told them
 shall they see,
 and that which they had not heard
 shall they consider.^b

⁴⁶ “Verily, verily, I say unto you, all these things shall surely come, even as the Father hath commanded me. Then shall this covenant which the Father hath covenanted with his people be fulfilled; and then shall Jerusalem be inhabited again with my people, and it shall be the land of their inheritance.”

The Book of Mormon Will Be a Sign for the Gathering of Israel (an interpretation of Isaiah 52.13–15)

21 ¹ “And verily I say unto you, I give unto you a sign,
 that ye may know the time when these things shall be about to take place—

^a ⁴⁰ Verses 39–40 quote Isa 52.6–7.

^b ⁴⁵ Verses 41–45 quote Isa 52.11–15.

⁴⁰: Isa 52.7 was also quoted at Mos 12.21 and 15.14, 18. *The feet*, that is, the running feet of the bearer of good news. ⁴¹: *Depart ye, depart ye*, the twice-repeated command matches the urgency of the doubled “Awake, awake” in v. 36. *Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord*, in its original context, this referred to exiles in Babylon who would return to Jerusalem with utensils that had been plundered from the First Temple. ⁴²: The migration to Zion will be slow and deliberate, unlike the hasty flight from Egypt in the Exodus. Somewhat paradoxically, the Lord will both lead in the front and protect from behind. *Rearward*, rear guard. ^{43–45}: These verses begin the fourth servant song in the book of Isaiah (Isa 52.13–53.12; see Mos 14.1–12n). In his address to the Nephites, Jesus will omit Isa 53 and begin quoting again from Isa 54 (see 3 Ne 22n), presumably because those prophecies had already been fulfilled (most Christians have seen Jesus himself as the servant of Isa 53). The BoM treats the servant of Isa 52.13–15 (3 Ne 20.43–45) as a different figure, whose mission is still far in the future. At 21.9–11, that individual is identified as JS, in his capacity as the translator of the BoM (though the servant could be the BoM itself). ⁴⁴: *Astonished* (KJV “astonicd”), perhaps “appalled” rather than simply “amazed.” *Visage*, appearance. ⁴⁵: *Sprinkle*, perhaps “startle” or “astonish.” *At him*, because of him.

CHAPTER 21

1–7: This is the longest sentence in the BoM. Although it is not poetry, reformatting can help clarify its somewhat convoluted syntax. 1: *Gather in, from their long dispersion*, 2 Ne 10.8, again referencing the words of Jacob₂; see 20.22n. *My Zion*, Jerusalem.

that I shall gather in, from their long
dispersion, my people, O
house of Israel,
and shall establish again among
them my Zion;
² and behold, this is the thing which
I will give unto you for a sign,
for verily I say unto you that when
these things which I declare
unto you,
and which I shall declare unto
you hereafter of myself,
and by the power of the Holy
Ghost which shall be given
unto you of the Father,
shall be made known unto the
Gentiles
that they may know concerning this
people who are a remnant of
the house of Jacob,
and concerning this my people
who shall be scattered by
them;
³ verily, verily, I say unto you, when
these things shall be made
known unto them
of the Father,
and shall come forth of the Father,
from them unto you;
⁴ for it is wisdom in the Father
that they should be
established in this land,
and be set up as a free people by
the power of the Father,
that these things might come
forth from them unto a
remnant of your seed,
that the covenant of the Father
may be fulfilled

which he hath covenanted
with his people, O house
of Israel;
⁵ therefore, when these works and the
works which shall be
wrought among you
hereafter
shall come forth from the Gentiles
unto your seed,
which shall dwindle in unbelief
because of iniquity;
⁶ for thus it behooveth the Father that
it should come forth from
the Gentiles,
that he may show forth his power unto
the Gentiles, for this cause,
that the Gentiles, if they will not
harden their hearts,
that they may repent and come
unto me and be baptized in
my name
and know of the true points of
my doctrine,
that they may be numbered among
my people, O house of Israel;
⁷ and when these things come to pass
that thy seed shall begin to
know these things—
it shall be a sign unto them,
that they may know that the work
of the Father hath already
commenced
unto the fulfilling of the covenant
which he hath made
unto the people who are of the
house of Israel.
⁸ And when that day shall come, it shall
come to pass that:

2: *These things which I declare unto you*, that is, Jesus's words as recorded in the BoM. **3–4:** *These things*, again, the record of the Nephites in the BoM, which will go from the Gentiles to the latter-day descendants of Lehi; see 1 Ne 13.21–29n. **6:** *Numbered among my people*, see 16.13n. **7:** *The work of the Father hath already commenced . . . fulfilling of the covenant . . . unto the people who are of the house of Israel*, nearly identical language was used by Nephi at 1 Ne 14.17; see the note at vv. 26–28 below.

kings shall shut their mouths;
for that which had not been told
them shall they see;
and that which they had not heard
shall they consider.^a

⁹ “For in that day, for my sake shall the Father work a work, which shall be a great and a marvelous work among them; and there shall be among them those who will not believe it, although a man shall declare it unto them.
¹⁰ But behold, the life of my servant shall be in my hand; therefore they shall not hurt him, although he shall be ‘marred’ because of them.^b Yet I will heal him, for I will show unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil.

¹¹ “Therefore it shall come to pass that whosoever will not believe in my words—who am Jesus Christ—which the Father shall cause him to bring forth unto the Gentiles, and shall give unto him power that he shall bring them forth unto the Gentiles, it shall be done even as Moses said: ‘They shall be cut off from among my people who are of the covenant.’”^c

Jesus Quotes Micah 5.8–15: God Will Fight Alongside a Remnant of Jacob

(with significant changes and additions to the King James Bible in bold)

¹² And **my people who are a remnant** of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles, **yea**, in the midst of **them** as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep, who, if he go through both treadeth down and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver.
¹³ **Their** hand shall be lifted up upon **their** adversaries, and all **their** enemies shall be cut off.
¹⁴ **Yea, wo be unto the Gentiles except they repent.** ‘For it shall come to pass in that day,’ saith the **Father**, ‘that I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, and I will destroy thy chariots;
¹⁵ and I will cut off the cities of thy land,

^a 8 Isa 52.15; cf. 3 Ne 20.45 above

^b ¹⁰ Compare Isa 52.13–14; 3 Ne 20.43–44 above.

^c ¹¹ Deut 18.19; cf. Acts 3.23 (cited at 3 Ne 20.23)

9–10: *Work a work . . . not believe . . . declare it*, this verse combines Hab 1.5 (quoted at Acts 13.41) with the BoM expression *great and marvelous work(s)*, which occurs seven times in the text; cf. Rev 15.3. *A man*, JS (as becomes clear in v. 11). The incident referred to in v. 10 seems to be the loss of the 116 pages, the subject of DC 10.43: “I will show unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil.” The BoM itself could be thought of as having been “marred” by the loss of the 116 pages. **11–25:** The consequences of two alternatives for the latter-day Gentiles (mentioned at 16.13–15) are spelled out as they either reject (vv. 11–21) or accept (vv. 22–25) Christ’s words as related in the BoM. **11:** *Cause him to bring forth*, again referring to JS. *Even as Moses said*, the clause that follows is an allusion to Deut 18.19 (as quoted at Acts 3.23); cf. 1 Ne 22.20; 3 Ne 20.23. The key term “cut off,” used in both BoM citations and here, connects Deut 18.19/Acts 3.23 with the quotation of Mic 5.8–15 that follows, where “cut off” is repeated six times. The quotations in Acts and the BoM all refer to “the people,” though the added explanation *people who are of the covenant* occurs only in this verse. **12–21:** The major insertions in this Micah passage will reappear in summary form at 30.2. **12–13:** Mic 5.8–9 was also quoted at 3 Ne 20.16–17, with several differences in wording. **14–18:** A prophecy that God will remove from the Gentiles the false securities they rely on in the place of the Lord, including military equipment, fortifications, unreliable forecasting, and false gods.

- and throw down all thy strongholds;
- ¹⁶ and I will cut off witchcrafts out of thy **land**, and thou shalt have no more soothsayers.
- ¹⁷ Thy graven images **I will also** cut off, and thy standing images out of the midst of thee, and thou shalt no more worship the **works** of thy hands;
- ¹⁸ and I will pluck up thy groves out of the midst of thee; so will I destroy thy cities.’
- ¹⁹ **And it shall come to pass that all lyings, and deceivings, and envyings, and strifes, and priestcrafts, and whoredoms, shall be done away.**
- ²⁰ **‘For it shall come to pass,’ saith the Father, ‘that at that day whosoever will not repent and come unto my Beloved Son, them will I cut off from among my people, O house of Israel;**
- ²¹ and I will execute vengeance and fury^a **upon them, even as upon the heathen, such as they have not heard.’**”

Righteous Gentiles in the Latter Days

[X] ²²“But if they will repent and hearken unto my words, and harden not their hearts, I will establish my church among them, and they shall come in unto the covenant and be numbered among this the remnant of Jacob, unto whom I have given this land for their inheritance; ²³ and they shall assist my people, the remnant of Jacob, and also as many of the house of Israel as shall come, that they may build a city, which shall be called the New Jerusalem. ²⁴ And then shall they assist my people that they may be gathered in, who are scattered upon all the face of the land, in unto the New Jerusalem. ²⁵ And then shall the power^b of heaven come down among them; and I also will be in the midst.

²⁶ “And then shall the work of the Father commence at that day, even when this gospel shall be preached among the remnant of this people. Verily I say unto you, at that day shall the work of the Father commence among all the dispersed of my people, yea, even the tribes which have been lost, which the Father

^a ²¹ Mic 5.15 reads “execute vengeance in anger and fury.”

^b ²⁵ P *powers* (cf. 3 Ne 20.22)

¹⁷: *Standing images*, stone pillars representing pagan deities. ¹⁸: *Groves*, sacred poles dedicated to the Canaanite goddess Asherah. ¹⁹: Jesus adds moral failings to the list of false securities that will be eliminated. *Lyings, and deceivings, and envyings, and strifes*, Alma 16.18; see 3 Ne 16.10 and 30.2 for similar lists that also refer to the sins of the latter-day Gentiles. ²¹: *Such as they have not heard*, or “that did not obey” (NRSV). ^{22–25}: The BoM envisions the New Jerusalem being built in the Americas by Lehi’s descendants and Jews, with Gentile assistance; see 20.22n (the phrases *powers of heaven* and *I also will be in the midst* are repeated from that verse), as well as 22.11–14n. In Rev 21.2, the New Jerusalem is seen as arriving after the Millennium (described in Rev 20); in the BoM, by contrast, the building of the city will precede Christ’s coming. ^{26–28}: *Then shall the work of the Father commence*, variations of this expression from 1 Ne 14.17 occur four times in these verses; cf. v. 7 above, as well as 2 Ne 3.13; 30.8; Morm 3.17; Ether 4.17. This *work* comprises two parts: preparing the way for the latter-day remnants of Israel both to come to Christ and to be restored to their covenanted lands. ²⁶: *Tribes which have been lost*, the ten tribes led captive to Assyria after the fall of Israel in 722 BCE; see 15.15n.

hath led away out of Jerusalem. ²⁷ Yea, the work shall commence among all the dispersed of my people, with the Father to prepare the way whereby they may come unto me, that they may call on the Father in my name. ²⁸ Yea, and then shall the work commence, with the Father among all nations in preparing the way whereby his people may be gathered home to the land of their inheritance. ²⁹ And they shall 'go out'^a from all nations—

'And they shall not go out in haste,
nor go by flight,
for I will go before them,' saith the
Father,
'and I will be their rearward.'^b

Jesus Quotes Isaiah 54.1–17: Reassurances to Israel and a Promise of Restoration

(with significant changes and additions to
the King James Bible in bold)

22 ¹ "And then shall that which is written come to pass:
'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.

- ² 'Enlarge the place of thy tent,
and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations;
spare not, lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes;
³ for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left,
and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles
and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.
⁴ 'Fear not, for thou shalt not be ashamed;
neither be thou confounded,
for thou shalt not be put to shame;
for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth,
and shalt not remember the reproach of thy youth,^c
and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more.
⁵ For thy maker, thy husband, the Lord of Hosts is his name;

^a 29 Compare Isa 52.11; 3 Ne 20.41.

^b 29 Isa 52.12, with significant changes from the King James Bible in bold; cf. 3 Ne 20.42

^c 4 Neither P nor 1830 has this line, which appears to have been accidentally inserted by the typesetter of the 1837 edition by dittography.

29: Jesus here continues his interpretation of Isa 52 from vv. 1–11 above.

CHAPTER 22

Jesus skips from the end of Isa 52 (3 Ne 20.45) to the beginning of Isa 54, without commenting on Isa 53, which Abinadi had already quoted and interpreted at Mos 14–15. Isa 54 was originally addressed to Israel (or Jerusalem) during the Babylonian exile; here the chronological setting has been pushed ahead to Israel in diaspora in the latter days, when Israel will once again be reconciled to God, with power over the Gentiles (v. 3) and assurances of divine protection (vv. 15–17). In other words, it describes the reestablishment of Zion (21.1) that will follow the sign of the commencement of the Father's work outlined in ch. 21. **1–3:** A childless wife will end up with so many children that she will need a larger home. A similar analogy was used in Isa 49.14–21 (1 Ne 21.14–21). **2:** *Spare not*, do not hold back. **3:** *Thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles*, in BoM eschatology, this refers to Gentiles being taken in and numbered with the house of Israel; cf. 2 Ne 10.18. **4–8:** The image of a wife who thought she was abandoned turns out to be a metaphor for the relationship between Israel and God.

and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel—
 the God of the whole earth shall he be called.

⁶ For the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit,
 and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused,^a saith thy God.

⁷ ‘For a small moment have I forsaken thee,
 but with great mercies will I gather thee.

⁸ In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment,
 but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee,^b
 saith the Lord thy Redeemer.

⁹ ‘For this, the waters^a of Noah unto me—
 for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah
 should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn
 that I would not be wroth with thee.^b

¹⁰ For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed,
 but my kindness shall not depart from thee,
 neither shall the covenant of my people^c be removed,^c
 saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.

¹¹ ‘O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest,
 and not comforted!
 Behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colors,
 and lay thy foundations with sapphires.

¹² And I will make thy windows of agates,
 and thy gates of carbuncles,
 and all thy borders of pleasant stones.

¹³ And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord;
 and great shall be the peace of thy children.

¹⁴ In righteousness shalt thou be established;
 thou shalt be far from oppression for thou shalt not fear,
 and from terror for it shall not come near thee.

¹⁵ ‘Behold, they shall surely gather together **against thee**, not by me;
 whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake.

¹⁶ Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire,

^a 9 Isa 54.9 reads “for this is as the waters.”

^b 9 Jesus here omits “nor rebuke thee” from Isa 54.9.

^c 10 P, 1981 *peace* (= Isa 54.10)

6: *Refused*, rejected or cast off. **9–10:** God always keeps his promises, and his *kindness* (or “steadfast love”) will last forever. **10:** *Covenant of my peace*, or “covenant of friendship” (NJPS). **11–14:** Despite present worries, the woman’s future will be secure, with regard to both her dwelling place and her children. These verses are often interpreted as a description of a new, restored Jerusalem; see 20.22n. **12:** *Windows of agate*, battlements of rubies. *Carbuncles*, a type of gemstone, probably sapphires or garnets. *Borders*, walls. **13:** *All thy children shall be taught of the Lord*, or “all your children shall be disciples of the Lord” (NJPS), a promise with relevance to the Nephites at Bountiful, both in terms of the blessings to children given at 17.11–25 and of prophecies that the next three generations would live in righteousness and peace in Christ (1 Ne 12.11; 2 Ne 26.9; 3 Ne 27.30–32). **15:** The addition of *against thee* (substituting for the KJV italicized “but”) increases the parallelism and matches the three other instances of “against thee” in vv. 15 and 17. **16:** *Smith*, blacksmith. *Instrument*, weapon. *The waster*, a supernatural destroyer who will fight the enemies of Israel; it is the same being who killed the firstborn of the Egyptians at Ex 12.23.

and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work;
and I have created the waster to destroy.

¹⁷ No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper;
and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn.

“This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord,
and their righteousness is of me,”
saith the Lord.”

Jesus on the Words of Isaiah,

23 ¹ “And now, behold, I say unto you, that ye ought to search these things. Yea, a commandment I give unto you that ye search these things diligently; for great are the words of Isaiah. ² For surely he spake as touching all things concerning my people which are of the house of Israel; therefore it must needs be that he must speak also to the Gentiles. ³ And all things that he spake have been and shall be, even according to the words which he spake.

⁴ “Therefore give heed to my words; write the things which I have told you; and according to

the time and the will of the Father they shall go forth unto the Gentiles. ⁵ And whosoever will hearken unto my words and repenteth and is baptized, the same shall be saved. Search the prophets, for many there be that testify of these things.”

Jesus Corrects the Nephite Records

⁶ And now it came to pass that when Jesus had said these words he said unto them again, after he had expounded all the scriptures unto them which they had received, he said unto them, “Behold, other scriptures I would that ye should write, that ye have not.” ⁷ And it came to pass that he said unto Nephi, “Bring forth the record which ye have kept.”

⁸ And when Nephi had brought forth the records, and laid them before him, he cast his eyes upon them and said, ⁹ “Verily I say unto you, I commanded my servant Samuel, the Lamanite, that he should testify unto this people, that at the day that the Father should glorify his name in me that there were many saints who should arise from the dead, and should appear unto many, and should minister unto them.” And he said unto them, “Was it not so?”

¹⁰ And his disciples answered him and said, “Yea, Lord, Samuel did prophesy according to thy words, and they were all fulfilled.”

CHAPTER 23

1–5: Jesus, like Nephi in the New World and early Christians in Judea, shows a particular affinity for the writings of Isaiah (see 1 Ne 19.23–24; 2 Ne 11.2; in the NT, Isaiah is the second-most quoted and alluded to OT book, after Psalms). **2:** Isaiah’s comprehensive prophecies about Israel necessarily include their relations with the Gentiles. **3:** *Have been and shall be*, that is, have application both in the past and in the future, through multiple fulfillments; see 2 Ne 6.4n; 3 Ne 24–25n. **4:** *They shall go forth unto the Gentiles*, as part of the BoM. **5:** *Hearken unto my words . . . repenteth*, echoing a promise to the latter-day Gentiles at 21.22, is combined with the universal promise at 11.33 that everyone who *is baptized, the same shall be saved*. The many prophets who also *testified of these things* include Jacob (2 Ne 9.23–24), Nephi (2 Ne 31.14–21), and Alma (Alma 7.14–16). **6–13:** In accordance with the bookish orientation of the BoM, Jesus not only quotes and explicates prophecy, he also personally examines the Nephite records, pointing out what is missing. His request for just a single correction both validates the general accuracy of Nephite record keepers and also affirms the status of Samuel as a great prophet. **6:** *Expounded all the scriptures . . . which they had received* will be matched by “expounded all the scriptures . . . which they had written” in v. 14, and “expounded all things . . . [concerning] scriptures which ye had not with you” at 26.1–2, referring to the passages from Mal in chs. 24–25. **9–13:** It is not clear whether Samuel’s prophecy as well as its fulfillment had been omitted, or just the latter. The prophecy can be found at Hel 14.25, where it may have been inserted after Jesus’s command. The account of its fulfillment does not occur in the BoM, other than the notice here. **9:** *Many saints . . . arise from the dead, and should appear unto many*, a parallel phenomenon was recounted at Mt 27.52–53, describing the aftermath of the earthquake at Jesus’s crucifixion in Jerusalem.

¹¹ And Jesus said unto them, “How be it that ye have not written this thing, that many saints did arise and appear unto many and did minister unto them?” ¹² And it came to pass that Nephi remembered that this thing had not been written. ¹³ And it came to pass that Jesus commanded that it should be written; therefore it was written according as he commanded.

Jesus Quotes Malachi 3: The Messenger of the Covenant; Tithes and Offerings; God Will Spare His Own

(with significant changes and additions to the King James Bible in bold)

[XI] ¹⁴ And now it came to pass that when Jesus had expounded all the scriptures in one, which they had written, he commanded them that they should teach the things which he had expounded unto them.

24 ¹ And it came to pass that he commanded them that they should write the words which the Father had given unto Malachi, which he should tell unto them. And it came to pass that after they were written he expounded them. And these are the words which he did tell unto them, saying, “Thus said the Father unto Malachi:

‘Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in; behold, he shall come,’ saith the Lord of Hosts.

² But who may abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner’s fire, and like **fuller’s soap**.

³ And he shall sit as a refiner and

14: Scholars question whether *Malachi* is a name or a title (the Hebrew word means “my messenger”). The book of Malachi is generally dated to about the time of the rededication of the Jerusalem Temple in 515 BCE, making it contemporary with Ezra and Nehemiah, or perhaps somewhat later. Thus it would have been composed after Lehi had left Jerusalem (see 26.1–2). Nevertheless, there are seven references to Mal 4.1–2 that appear earlier in the BoM; see 26.2n. **14:** *Expounded all the scriptures in one*, in chs. 21–22, Jesus quoted and interpreted prophecies of Moses, Micah, and Isaiah, at the same time combining them with distinct phrases and eschatological predictions from Nephi, Jacob, and Alma, thus affirming their common source, vision, and authoritative status. His gathering together of scriptures from disparate branches of Israel to tell a single story parallels the future gathering of scattered peoples themselves; see 2 Ne 29.8–14, which explicitly correlates peoples with records and culminates in the promise “my word also shall be gathered in one.”

CHAPTERS 24–25

Jesus will connect the prophecies of Malachi to the last days, when he will “come in his glory” (26.3), but for the Nephites they have already been partially fulfilled: they have just witnessed the Lord “suddenly come to his temple” as the “messenger of the covenant” whom they had diligently sought (24.1); they themselves are “sons of Jacob” (descendants of Israel) who have not been “consumed” (24.6); they can identify as people “that feared [revered] the Lord” and have been “spared” (24.16–17); and they have observed a sharp distinction “between the righteous and the wicked” (24.18), with the cities of the latter being “burn(ed) . . . up” (25.1). Indeed, the question “who may abide the day of his coming?” (24.2) has been quite personal for them. In other words, Mal 3–4, like the prophecies of Isaiah, belongs to the category of things that both “have been and shall be” (23.3).

CHAPTER 24

1: In the context of 3 Ne, the *messenger* who will *prepare the way before me* could be interpreted as Samuel the Lamanite. *The Lord whom ye seek*, here in the OT *Lord* means “master,” as opposed to the divine name, though it still seems to refer to God. **2:** *Fuller’s soap*, a harsh cleansing agent used to process textiles. **3:** The attention given to the sacrifices of Levitical priests is anomalous in the context of Christ proclaiming the termination of such offerings (9.19–20), but the promise of some sort of continuing role would have been meaningful to any descendants of Levi, perhaps associated with the Mulekites, in the crowd.

purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.⁴ Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years.

⁵ And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger,^a and fear not me,' saith the Lord of Hosts.

⁶ For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.⁷ Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me and I will return unto you,' saith the Lord of Hosts.

But ye say, 'Wherein shall we return?'

⁸ 'Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me.'

But ye say, 'Wherein have we robbed thee?'

'In tithes and offerings.⁹ Ye are cursed with a curse, for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

¹⁰ Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house; and prove me now herewith,' saith the Lord of Hosts, 'if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it.'¹¹ 'And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the **fields,**' saith the Lord of Hosts.¹² 'And all nations shall call you blessed, for ye shall be a delightsome land,' saith the Lord of Hosts.

¹³ 'Your words have been stout against me,' saith the Lord.

Yet ye say, 'What have we spoken^b against thee?'

¹⁴ Ye have said, 'It is vain to serve God, and what **doth** it profit that we have kept his **ordinances** and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of Hosts?'¹⁵ And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.'

¹⁶ Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another,

^a 5 Jesus here omits "from his right" from Mal 3.5.

^b 13 Jesus here omits "so much" from Mal 3.13.

5: As elsewhere (e.g., Deut 24.14–18), the God of Israel is particularly attuned to the plight of the vulnerable—poor laborers, widows, orphans, and immigrants—and he condemns those who exploit them. *Hireling*, a hired worker. 7: This is the fourth time the Nephites have heard the words *return unto me* directly from Jesus; see 9.13; 10.6; 16.13; and also chs. 9–10n. 10: *Meat*, food. *Prove*, test. *The windows of heaven*, in ancient Hebrew cosmology, these were portals in the sky through which rain came. 11: *Devourer*, refers to crop-eating pests like flies, worms, or locusts. 13: *Stout*, harsh. 14–15: In other words, when we see the comfortable lifestyles of the wicked, it appears there is no advantage in serving the Lord. *Are set up*, prosper. *Are even delivered*, escape punishment. 16–17: God does not respond directly to the charges in the two preceding verses, but assures Lord-fearers that heavenly records are being kept, and that eventually the wicked and the righteous will be rewarded accordingly—a theme that is continued in the next chapter. *Book of remembrance*, the idea of a heavenly book of accounts also appears at Ex 32.32–33; Ps 56.8; Dan 7.10; Rev 20.12. *My jewels*, my treasured possession.

and the Lord hearkened and heard; and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.

¹⁷ ‘And they shall be mine,’ saith the Lord of Hosts, ‘in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.’¹⁸ Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.’

Jesus Quotes Malachi 4: Judgment and Covenant Renewal

(with significant changes and additions to the King James Bible in bold)

25 ¹ ‘For behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up,’ saith the Lord of Hosts, ‘that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.’² But unto you that fear my name, shall the **Son** of Righteousness arise with healing in his

wings; and ye shall go forth and grow up as calves **in** the stall.’³ ‘And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this,’ saith the Lord of Hosts.

⁴ ‘Remember ye the law of Moses, my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.’

⁵ ‘Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord;’⁶ and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.”

Jesus Expounds All Things

26 ¹ And now it came to pass that when Jesus had told these things he expounded them unto the multitude; and he did expound all things unto them, both great and small.² And he saith, “These scriptures, which ye had not with you, the Father commanded that I should give unto you; for it was wisdom in him that they should be given unto future generations.”

CHAPTER 25

1: In contrast to the fire of Mal 3.2–3 that purified, this fire will destroy utterly. **2–3:** Both *healing* and promises that *ye shall tread down the wicked* have been part of the Nephite theophany; see 16.14; 17.6–10; 20.16 (repeated at 21.12). **2:** *Son of Righteousness*, Malachi’s original “Sun of righteousness” referred to a winged sun disk, which was a symbol of divine justice and protection in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia. The pun of sun/son works only in English, of course; see 2 Ne 26.8–9n; Ether 9.22. **4–5:** These verses are Jesus’s last recorded words to the multitude (apart from 26.2), and in them he refers to both the Law (represented by Moses) and the Prophets (represented by Elijah). **4:** *Horeb*, another name for Mount Sinai. **5:** A promise of reconciliation within families, and perhaps also between distant ancestors and their descendants. **6:** *A curse*, a ban or decree of utter destruction.

CHAPTER 26

1: Unfortunately, the Nephite record does not include Jesus’s explanation of Malachi’s prophecies. **2:** *These scriptures, which ye had not with you*, from an LDS perspective, the phrases from Mal 4.1–2 that appear in the Small Plates (1 Ne 22.15, 23–24; 2 Ne 25.13; 26.4, 6, 9), attributed to “the prophet” at 1 Ne 22.15, 23, may also have been in the writings of Zenos (referred to as “the prophet” at 1 Ne 19.11–17), and Malachi may have incorporated those earlier phrases into his own prophecies, in a manner similar to Isa 2.2–4 and Mic 4.1–3.

³ And he did expound all things, even from the beginning until the time that he should come in his glory—yea, even all things which should come upon the face of the earth, even until the elements should melt with fervent heat, and the earth should be wrapt together as a scroll, and the heavens and the earth should pass away; ⁴ and even unto the great and last day, when all people, and all kindreds, and all nations and tongues shall stand before God, to be judged of their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil— ⁵ if they be good, to the resurrection of everlasting life; and if they be evil, to the resurrection of damnation; being on a parallel, the one on the one hand and the other on the other hand, according to the mercy, and the justice, and the holiness which is in Christ, who was before the world began.

Mormon₂ Forbidden to Give a Full Account

[XII] ⁶ And now there cannot be written in this book even a hundredth part of the things which Jesus did truly teach unto

the people; ⁷ but behold the plates of Nephi do contain the more part of the things which he taught the people. ⁸ And these things have I written, which are a lesser part of the things which he taught the people; and I have written them to the intent that they may be brought again unto this people, from the Gentiles, according to the words which Jesus hath spoken.

⁹ And when they shall have received this, which is expedient that they should have first, to try their faith, and if it shall so be that they shall believe these things then shall the greater things be made manifest unto them. ¹⁰ And if it so be that they will not believe these things, then shall the greater things be withheld from them, unto their condemnation.

¹¹ Behold, I was about to write them, all which were engraven upon the plates of Nephi, but the Lord forbade it, saying, “I will try the faith of my people.” ¹² Therefore I, Mormon, do write the things which have been commanded me of the Lord. And now I, Mormon, make an end of my sayings, and

3–5: These verses combine several eschatological phrases from the NT. 3: After expounding Brass Plates scriptures (23.6), Nephite scriptures (23.14), and OT scriptures not included in the Brass Plates (26.1–2), Jesus now expounds *all things*. *He should come in his glory*, Mt 25.31 and four times in the BoM. *The elements should melt with a fervent heat* and *heavens . . . should pass away*, 2 Pet 3.10 (the addition of *and the earth* is a conflation with Mt 24.35; Mk 13.31; Lk 21.33). *Earth should be wrapt together as a scroll*, cf. Isa 34.4; Rev 6.14—both speaking of the heavens rather than the earth, as here and at Morm 5.23; 9.2 (which also refers to elements melting). 4–5: The language in these verses closely matches Mos 16.10–11. 4: *All people . . . kindreds . . . nations . . . tongues shall stand before God*, cf. Rev. 7.9. *Stand before God . . . judged . . . according to their works*, Rev 20.12 and eleven times in the BoM. 5: *If they be good to the resurrection of . . . life, and if they be evil, to the resurrection of damnation*, Jn 5.29. The mercy, justice and holiness in *Christ who was before the world began* parallels God’s saving grace given to humanity “in Christ Jesus before the world began” at 2 Tim 1.9. 7: *Plates of Nephi*, the records kept by Nephi₃, which were part of the Large Plates of Nephi. The Large Plates, in turn, were the source for Mormon’s abridgment, which we are currently reading. 6: Original chapter XII begins and ends somewhat unexpectedly, so the breaks were not followed in the 1879 chapter revisions. However, it might be noted that ch. XII, coming after a description of the Judgment Day, begins with an editorial comment on writing, while the first verses of ch. XIII again return to the themes of judgment and writing. 8: *According to the words which Jesus hath spoken*, 21.2–7. 9–10: *The greater things*, perhaps referring to the ninety-nine percent of Jesus’s teachings to Nephites that were not recorded in 3 Ne (see v. 6). In any case, the Gentiles are promised additional revelations, but only if they believe in the BoM; cf. Morm 8.12; Ether 4.13. 9: *Try their faith*, test their faith. 11–12: An example of Jesus exercising direct editorial control over the BoM. Each of the three primary narrators receive similar divine editorial guidance, often directing them to omit additional details that they know; see 1 Ne 9.3; 14.28; 3 Ne 27.23; 28.25; 30.1; Morm 5.9; Ether 4.5; 13.13. *I, Mormon*, this sort of quick, explicitly identified narrator intrusion is rare in Mormon’s abridgment, outside of the WoM and his own book; cf. 28.24; 4 Ne 1.23.

proceed to write the things which have been commanded me.

¹³ Therefore, I would that ye should behold that the Lord truly did teach the people, for the space of three days; and after that he did show himself unto them oft, and did break bread oft, and bless it, and give it unto them. ¹⁴ And it came to pass that he did teach and minister unto the children of the multitude of whom hath been spoken, and he did loose their tongues, and they did speak unto their fathers great and marvelous things, even greater than he had revealed unto the people; and he loosed their tongues that they could utter.

Jesus Departs; Infants Speak the Following Day; the Twelve Baptize

¹⁵ And it came to pass that after he had ascended into heaven—the second time that he showed himself unto them, and had gone unto the Father, after having healed all their sick, and their lame, and opened the eyes of their blind and unstopped the ears of the deaf, and even had done all manner of cures among

them, and raised a man from the dead, and had shown forth his power unto them, and had ascended unto the Father—¹⁶ behold, it came to pass on the morrow that the multitude gathered themselves together, and they both saw and heard these children; yea, even babes did open their mouths and utter marvelous things; and the things which they did utter were forbidden that there should not any man write them.

¹⁷ And it came to pass that the disciples whom Jesus had chosen began from that time forth to baptize and to teach as many as did come unto them; and as many as were baptized in the name of Jesus were filled with the Holy Ghost. ¹⁸ And many of them saw and heard unspeakable things, which are not lawful to be written. ¹⁹ And they taught, and did minister one to another; and they had all things common among them, every man dealing justly, one with another. ²⁰ And it came to pass that they did do all things even as Jesus had commanded them. ²¹ And they who were baptized in the name of Jesus were called the church of Christ.

13–16: The chronology here is complicated: v. 13 summarizes all three days and beyond; v. 14 previews what will happen on the third day; v. 15 returns to additional events of the second day; v. 16 briefly describes some events of the third day. **14:** *He did loose their tongues*, perhaps allowing children to speak with unusual fluency and articulateness, and infants to speak at all. In this case, small children are teaching their parents rather than vice versa. **15:** These miracles were recorded at 17.5–10, on the first day, though they may have been repeated on the second day, much like the administration of the sacrament. Similar lists appear in a prophecy about Jesus at Mos 3.5 and a report about his disciples at 4 Ne 1.5; cf. Isa 35.5. **16:** *Even babes did open their mouths*, cf. Mt 21.16. **17–21:** Following v. 16 we might have expected a report of Jesus's teachings to the multitude on the third day, but Mormon withholds that information. Instead, he provides a few general comments about the new Nephite church, and then in ch. 27 he inserts an account of a later visitation by Jesus to the twelve disciples. Thus, the topic of Jesus's ministry on the third day, introduced by the "marvelous things" spoken by children in v. 16, is otherwise left to speculation. Readers may assume that he taught some sort of esoteric, transformative doctrines or practices. One possibility is instruction in how "to become the sons of God" (9.17), which is one of the few phrases spoken by the voice in the darkness that is not picked up later in 3 Ne; see Morm 9.22–24n. **17:** The authority to baptize was given to the Twelve at 11.21–22; the promise that such baptisms would be followed by the Holy Ghost occurred at 12.1. **18:** *Heard unspeakable things, which are not lawful to be written*, adapted from 2 Cor 12.4 (describing a visionary experience of Paul), with the substitution of *written* for "utter"; cf. 28.13–15. **19–21:** *They had all things common*, as was the case with early Christians in Judea (Acts 2.44; 4.32) cf. 4 Ne 1.3. *Every man dealing justly, one with another*, 4 Ne 1.2. *Church of Christ*, the name had been used only once before, at the first baptisms of Alma, at Mos 18.17; it will appear subsequently at 28.23; 4 Ne 1.1, 26, 29; Moro 6.4. It was also the first name of the church JS organized in 1830 (until 1834, when it became "The Church of Latter Day Saints," then "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" in 1838; see DC 115.4).

Jesus Instructs the Twelve Disciples: 3 Nephi 27.1–28.12

Jesus Appears to the Twelve and Names His Church

27¹ And it came to pass that as the disciples of Jesus were journeying and were preaching the things which they had both heard and seen, and were baptizing in the name of Jesus, it came to pass that the disciples were gathered together and were united in mighty prayer and fasting.² And Jesus again showed himself unto them, for they were praying unto the Father in his name; and Jesus came and stood in the midst of them, and said unto them, “What will ye that I shall give unto you?”

³ And they said unto him, “Lord, we will that thou wouldst tell us the name whereby we shall call this church; for there are disputations among the people concerning this matter.”

⁴ And the Lord said unto them, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, why is it that the people should murmur and dispute because of this thing? ⁵ Have they not read the scriptures, which say ye must take upon you the name of Christ, which is my name? For by this name shall ye be called at the last day; ⁶ and whoso taketh upon him my name, and endureth to the end, the same shall be saved at the last day.

⁷ “Therefore, whatsoever ye shall do, ye shall do it in my name; therefore ye shall call the church in my name; and ye shall call upon the Father in my name that he will bless the church for my sake. ⁸ And how be it my church save it be called in my name? For if a church be called in Moses’ name then it be Moses’ church; or if it be called in the name of a man then it be the church of a man; but if it be called in my name then it is my church, if it so be that they are built upon my gospel.

⁹ “Verily I say unto you, that ye are built upon my gospel; therefore ye shall call whatsoever things ye do call, in my name; therefore if ye call upon the Father, for the church, if it be in my name the Father will hear you; ¹⁰ and if it so be that the church is built upon my gospel then will the Father show forth his own works in it. ¹¹ But if it be not built upon my gospel, and is built upon the works of men, or upon the works of the devil, verily I say unto you they have joy in their works for a season, and by and by the end cometh, and they are hewn down and cast into the fire, from whence there is no return. ¹² For their works do follow them, for it is because of their works that they are hewn down; therefore remember the things that I have told you.”

CHAPTER 27

1–12: The disciples’ question is whether the newly reorganized church should have a new name as well. Jesus’s answer suggests that they should retain the traditional name, “the church of Christ” (Mos 18.17; 3 Ne 26.21; cf. 28.23; Moro 6.4). **1:** The only other occurrence of *mighty prayer* with *fasting* was at Alma 6.6. **2:** *Stood in the midst*, see 19.15n. **5:** *Scriptures . . . name of Christ*, there are no verses in the Bible that say this; Jesus is referring to Nephite scriptures such as 2 Ne 31.13; Mos 5.8–9; 25.23; Alma 34.38. **6:** *Endureth to the end, the same shall be saved*, 2 Ne 31.15; Alma 32.13; Mt 24.13; Mk 13.13; Jesus here appends the additional requirement that such persons must take upon themselves his name. **7:** *Whatsoever ye shall do, ye shall do it in my name*, the command is similar to Col 3.17. The authority of Christ’s name is emphasized in his ministry to the Nephites, with the phrase *in my name* appearing ten times in this chapter, and nine times in ch. 18. **8:** *Save it be called in my name*, a criticism of Christian denominations that do not feature Christ in their name, such as Catholics, Anglicans, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Methodists, and Baptists. (This sentiment was widely shared by Restorationist Christians in the early 19th c.) Churches or movements known by the name of their founders are subject to particular disapproval, such as Lutheranism, Calvinism, and Wesleyanism. It is not enough, however, for a church to include Christ in its name; it also must be *built upon [his] gospel*, which will be defined in the next section. The phrase *built upon my gospel* here and in vv. 9–11 echoes the metaphor of being built upon a rock at 11.39–40; 14.24–27 (Mt 7.24–27); and 18.12–13; cf. 2 Ne 28.28; Mt 16.18. **11–12:** *For a season*, temporarily. *By and by*, WB: “in a short time after; soon.” *Hewn down and cast into the fire*, as at 14.19, with a similar context of false prophets. **12:** *Their works do follow them*, Rev 14.13, where the good deeds of the deceased will accompany them as witnesses of their righteousness.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ

¹³ “Behold I have given unto you my gospel, and this is the gospel which I have given unto you—that I came into the world to do the will of my Father, because my Father sent me.

¹⁴ And my Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross; and after that I had been lifted up upon the cross, that I might draw all men unto me, that as I have been lifted up by men even so should men be lifted up by the Father, to stand before me, to be judged of their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil—¹⁵ And for this cause have I been lifted up; therefore, according to the power of the Father I will draw all men unto me, that they may be judged according to their works.

¹⁶ “And it shall come to pass, that whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled; and if he endureth to the end, behold, him will I hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world.

¹⁷ And he that endureth not unto the end, the same is he that is also hewn down and cast

into the fire, from whence they can no more return, because of the justice of the Father.

¹⁸ “And this is the word which he hath given unto the children of men. And for this cause he fulfilleth the words which he hath given, and he lieth not, but fulfilleth all his words. ¹⁹ And no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom; therefore nothing entereth into his rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood, because of their faith, and the repentance of all their sins, and their faithfulness unto the end. ²⁰ Now this is the commandment: Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day.

²¹ “Verily, verily, I say unto you, this is my gospel; and ye know the things that ye must do in my church; for the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do; for that which ye have seen me do even that shall ye do; ²² therefore, if ye do these things blessed are ye, for ye shall be lifted up at the last day.”

13–22: This section takes the form of an inclusio since it begins and ends with *this is the/my gospel*; similarly framed explanations of the “doctrine of Christ” are found at 2 Ne 31.2–21 and 3 Ne 11.31–41. The key elements here include faith, repentance, baptism, being washed clean through Christ’s blood, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost, imitating Jesus’s works, and enduring to the end. **13:** *Will of my Father... sent me*, Jn 5.30; in Jn Jesus regularly speaks of having been “sent” by the Father. **14–15:** *Lifted up... draw all men unto me*, Jn 12.32. The phrase “draw all men unto me” in Jn has often been interpreted as referring to the conversion of both Jews and Gentiles, and that seems to be its meaning at 2 Ne 26.24; here, however, it points forward to a universal resurrection and judgment. The rhetorical balance of Jesus being *lifted up by men*, and *men be(ing) lifted up by the Father* is distinctive in the BoM for its reference to the Resurrection; elsewhere the phrase “lifted up at the last day” (nine times, including v. 22 below) refers to believers being raised up to live in God’s kingdom; see 1 Ne 13.37n. **14:** *Stand before me* substitutes for the “stand before God” [to be judged of their works] at 1 Ne 15.33; Alma 11.41; 12.8; 40.21; 3 Ne 26.4; cf. Mos 16.10; Rev 20.12. **16:** The allusion to Ex 20.7, “will not hold him guiltless” (with regard to the misuse of God’s name), suggests that being baptized in Jesus’s name and then not enduring to the end is one way to take the Lord’s name in vain. *Shall be filled*, with the Holy Ghost, as at 12.6. **19–20:** Several of the phrases and images in this passage were also combined in a description of high priests at Alma 13.10–12, including *entereth into his rest; washed their garments in my blood; because of their faith and... repentance; sanctified by... the Holy Ghost*; and *spotless before me*. **19:** *No unclean thing can enter into his kingdom*, cf. 1 Ne 15.34. *Washed their garments in my blood*, cf. Rev 7.4; 1 Ne 12.10–11 (includes “because of their faith”), and five more times in the BoM. **20:** *Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me... and be baptized in my name*, the command will be repeated at Ether 4.18 and Moro 7.34; cf. 3 Ne 9.22; Acts 2.38. *Sanctified*, made holy. **21:** [Do] *that which ye have seen me do*, cf. 2 Ne 31.12 (in another doctrinal summary); 3 Ne 18.24.

Records and Judgment

[XIII] ²³ “Write the things which ye have seen and heard, save it be those which are forbidden. ²⁴ Write the works of this people, which shall be, even as hath been written, of that which hath been. ²⁵ For behold, out of the books which have been written, and which shall be written, shall this people be judged, for by them shall their works be known unto men. ²⁶ And behold, all things are written by the Father; therefore out of the books which shall be written shall the world be judged. ²⁷ And know ye that ye shall be judges of this people, according to the judgment which I shall give unto you, which shall be just. Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am.”

Promises and Encouragement

²⁸ “And now I go unto the Father. And verily I say unto you, whatsoever things ye shall ask the Father in my name shall be given unto you. ²⁹ Therefore, ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for he that asketh, receiveth; and unto him that knocketh, it shall be opened.

³⁰ “And now, behold, my joy is great, even unto fulness, because of you, and also this generation; yea, and even the Father rejoiceth, and also all the holy angels, because of you and this generation; for none of them are lost. ³¹ Behold, I would that ye should understand; for I mean them who are now alive of this generation; and none of them are lost; and in them I have fulness of joy. ³² But behold, it sorroweth me because of the fourth generation from this generation, for they are led away captive by him even as was the son of perdition; for they will sell me for silver and for gold, and for that which moth doth corrupt and which thieves can break through and steal. And in that day will I visit them, even in turning their works upon their own heads.”

³³ And it came to pass that when Jesus had ended these sayings he said unto his disciples, “Enter ye in at the strait gate; for strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leads to life, and few there be that find it; but wide is the gate, and broad the way which leads to death, and many there be that travel therein, until the night cometh, wherein no man can work.”

23–24: The injunction to keep a record went to the entire Twelve, although the BoM only includes Mormon’s abridgment of Nephi₃’s account. For things *which are forbidden* in general, see 26.16, 18; 28.14; details specifically forbidden for Mormon to write are noted at 26.11 and 28.25. **23:** On the original chapter break, see 26.6n. **24:** That is, keep a record in the future consistent with that of the past, perhaps with an allusion to the fulfillment of prophecies that “have been and shall be” (23.3). **25–26:** People in the last days will judge the Nephites based on accounts kept by Nephite prophet/historians (cf. Mos 12.8), though everyone will eventually be judged individually according to records kept in heaven (cf. Rev 20.12). **26:** From the bibliocentric perspective of the BoM, even God the Father is a writer. **27:** *Ye shall be judges of this people*, see 1 Ne 12.8–10; Morm 3.19. In this context, the last sentence is a reminder that Jesus is a righteous judge. *What manner of men ought ye to be*, the author of 2 Pet 3.11 asks a similar question, but Jesus’s answer here is much more concise. **28–32:** Here we see a conflation of several phrases from Jn 16–17 and Mt 6–7 (quoted in 3 Ne 13–14): “I go to the Father” (Jn 16.16); “whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you” (Jn 16.23); “ask and ye shall receive” (Jn 16.24); “knock... opened... asketh... receiveth... knocketh... opened” (Mt 7.7–8); “joy... be full” (Jn 16.24); “none of them are lost” and “the son of perdition” (Jn 17.12); “moth doth corrupt... thieves... steal” (Mt. 6.19). **30–32:** The righteousness of the first three generations after Christ’s visitation, followed by wickedness and destruction in the fourth generation, was prophesied at 1 Ne 12.11–12; 2 Ne 26.9; Alma 45.10–12. **32:** *It sorroweth me*, given Jesus’s foreknowledge, he feels grief today for sins that will be committed centuries later, by future generations. *The son of perdition*, perhaps Judas Iscariot. *They will sell me for silver*, as Judas Iscariot did; see Mt 26.15. **33:** Compare 14.13–14 (Mt 7.13–14); here v. 13 is split and v. 14 is inserted in the middle; in addition *death* is substituted for “destruction.” *The night cometh, wherein no man can work*, Jn 9.4; cf. Alma 34.33.

Jesus Grants the Individual Requests of the Twelve and Departs

28¹ And it came to pass when Jesus had said these words, he spake unto his disciples, one by one, saying unto them, “What is it that ye desire of me, after that I am gone to the Father?”

² And they all spake, save it were three, saying, “We desire that after we have lived unto the age of man, that our ministry, wherein thou hast called us, may have an end, that we may speedily come unto thee in thy kingdom.”

³ And he said unto them, “Blessed are ye because ye desired this thing of me; therefore, after that ye are seventy and two years old ye shall come unto me in my kingdom; and with me ye shall find rest.”

⁴ And when he had spoken unto them, he turned himself unto the three, and said unto them, “What will ye that I should do unto you, when I am gone unto the Father?”⁵ And they sorrowed in their hearts, for they durst not speak unto him the thing which they desired.

⁶ And he said unto them, “Behold, I know your thoughts, and ye have desired the thing which John, my beloved, who was with me in

my ministry, before that I was lifted up by the Jews, desired of me.⁷ Therefore, more blessed are ye, for ye shall never taste of death; but ye shall live to behold all the doings of the Father unto the children of men, even until all things shall be fulfilled according to the will of the Father, when I shall come in my glory with the powers of heaven.⁸ And ye shall never endure the pains of death; but when I shall come in my glory ye shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye from mortality to immortality; and then shall ye be blessed in the kingdom of my Father.⁹ And again, ye shall not have pain while ye shall dwell in the flesh, neither sorrow save it be for the sins of the world.

“And all this will I do because of the thing which ye have desired of me, for ye have desired that ye might bring the souls of men unto me, while the world shall stand.¹⁰ And for this cause ye shall have fulness of joy; and ye shall sit down in the kingdom of my Father; yea, your joy shall be full, even as the Father hath given me fulness of joy; and ye shall be even as I am, and I am even as the Father; and the Father and I are one;¹¹ and the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me; and the Father giveth the Holy Ghost unto the children of men, because of me.”

CHAPTER 28

1–3: Following from 27.29, Jesus invites his disciples to ask for whatever they desire. Nine of the twelve request a full life of service, followed by reunion with Christ in heaven. The particular significance of *seventy and two years* is uncertain. **4–9:** Three of the twelve wish to continue their ministry in a state between mortality and immortality, until the resurrection day. **5:** *They durst not speak*, perhaps they feared their request was too much, or that it might seem a covert criticism of their brethren. **6:** *I know your thoughts*, mind reading is a divine capability in the BoM; see Mos 24.12n. *The thing which John . . . desired of me*, see Jn 21.20–24, which reports an early Christian tradition that the beloved disciple (later identified as the apostle John) would not die until Christ’s second coming. The author of Jn gently pushes back against that belief, though the BoM accepts the tradition and adds three more disciples to the category of those who would not die. During the translation of the BoM, JS received a revelation containing additional information about the fate of John the Beloved; see DC 7. 7: *Never taste death and when I shall come in my glory* are combined at both Mt 16.27–28 and Lk 9.26–27. Both passages also include references to Christ coming with his angels, which is probably the meaning of *with the powers of heaven* in this verse; see 20.22n; 21.25 (in P). **8:** *Changed in the twinkling of an eye from mortality to immortality*, cf. 1 Cor 15.52–53. *Twinkling*, WB: “a moment; an instant; the time of a wink.” **9:** *Neither sorrow save it be for the sins of the world*, such sorrow will begin at 4 Ne 1.44; cf. v. 38 below. **10–11:** The three disciples will experience extraordinary joy and unity with the Godhead. Similar language concerning the relationship of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost was heard at 11.27, 32. *Ye shall be even as I am*, they will fully realize the invitation of 27.27. *Because of me*, perhaps “for my sake” or “because they believe in me” (as at 19.22).

¹² And it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words, he touched every one of them with his finger save it were the three who were to tarry, and then he departed.

Mormon₂ Writes of the Three Disciples

¹³ And behold, the heavens were opened, and they were caught up into heaven, and saw and heard unspeakable things. ¹⁴ And it was forbidden them that they should utter; neither was it given unto them power that they could utter the things which they saw and heard; ¹⁵ and whether they were in the body or out of the body, they could not tell; for it did seem unto them like a transfiguration of them, that they were changed from this body of flesh into an immortal state, that they could behold the things of God. ¹⁶ But it came to pass that they did again minister upon the face of the earth; nevertheless they did not minister of the things which they had heard and seen, because of the commandment which was given them in heaven.

¹⁷ And now, whether they were mortal or immortal, from the day of their transfiguration, I know not; ¹⁸ but this much I know, according to the record which hath been given—they did

go forth upon the face of the land, and did minister unto all the people, uniting as many to the church as would believe in their preaching; baptizing them, and as many as were baptized did receive the Holy Ghost.

¹⁹ And they were cast into prison by them who did not belong to the church. And the prisons could not hold them, for they were rent in twain. ²⁰ And they were cast down into the earth; but they did smite the earth with the word of God, insomuch that by his power they were delivered out of the depths of the earth; and therefore they could not dig pits sufficient to hold them. ²¹ And thrice they were cast into a furnace and received no harm. ²² And twice were they cast into a den of wild beasts; and behold they did play with the beasts as a child with a suckling lamb, and received no harm.

²³ And it came to pass that thus they did go forth among all the people of Nephi, and did preach the gospel of Christ unto all people upon the face of the land; and they were converted unto the Lord, and were united unto the church of Christ, and thus the people of that generation were blessed, according to the word of Jesus.

12: *The three who were to tarry*, these individuals are commonly referred to in LDS writings and folklore as the “Three Nephites,” even though the term never occurs in the BoM, which prefers “three disciples” (4 Ne 1.37; Ether 12.17), raising the possibility that some of them were ethnically Lamanites. **13–15:** The phrases *caught up into heaven* and *heard unspeakable things* and *forbidden to utter* and *whether they were in the body or out of the body, they could not tell* all reflect a mystical experience that Paul reported at 2 Cor 12.3–4; cf. 26.18. **15:** *Transfiguration*, only here and v. 17; WB: “a change of form; particularly, the supernatural change in the personal appearance of our Savior on the mount.” *That they could behold the things of God*, several verses in the OT assume that seeing God in his full glory would be so overpowering as to be lethal to humans; e.g., Ex 19.21; Judg 13.22; Isa 6.5; and especially Ex 33.20: “there shall no man see me and live”; yet there are other OT passages in which people see and converse with God. The BoM here resolves the paradox by suggesting that mortals could be transformed in a way that would allow them to survive a direct encounter with deity; the idea is developed further in later LDS scriptures such as Moses 1.1–11 and DC 67.11. **17–18:** Mormon is careful here not to speak beyond what he knows, though he has had personal interactions with the three disciples (v. 26), and he later receives additional information (v. 37). For a similar example of careful reticence, see Alma 7.8. **19–22:** In a passage of proleptic narration, these events will not happen until sometime between +210 and +230; see the parallel passage at 4 Ne 1.29–33, as well as Morm 8.24. **19:** The walls of the prison holding Alma and Amulek were similarly “rent in twain” at Alma 14.27. **21–22:** These miraculous deliverances are similar to those of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego at Dan 3, and Daniel himself at Dan 6. **22:** The description is reminiscent of the “sucking child” who “shall play” by a nest of poisonous snakes and not be hurt (Isa 11.8), suggesting that they have entered a state similar to the millennial era; see v. 39 below. **23:** *According to the word of Jesus*, perhaps 27.30–31.

²⁴ And now I, Mormon, make an end of speaking concerning these things for a time.

²⁵ Behold, I was about to write the names of those who were never to taste of death, but the Lord forbade; therefore I write them not, for they are hid from the world. ²⁶ But behold, I have seen them, and they have ministered unto me.

²⁷ And behold they will be among the Gentiles, and the Gentiles shall know them not. ²⁸ They will also be among the Jews, and the Jews shall know them not. ²⁹ And it shall come to pass, when the Lord seeth fit in his wisdom that they shall minister unto all the scattered tribes of Israel, and unto all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, and shall bring out of them unto Jesus many souls, that their desire may be fulfilled, and also because of the convincing power of God which is in them.

³⁰ And they are as the angels of God, and if they shall pray unto the Father in the name of Jesus they can show themselves unto whatsoever man it seemeth them good. ³¹ Therefore, great and marvelous works shall be wrought by them, before the great and coming day when all people must surely stand before the judgment-seat of Christ; ³² yea even among the Gentiles shall there be a great and marvelous work wrought by them, before that judgment day.

³³ And if ye had all the scriptures which give an account of all the marvelous works of Christ, ye would, according to the words of Christ, know that these things must surely come. ³⁴ And wo be unto him that will not

hearken unto the words of Jesus, and also to them whom he hath chosen and sent among them; for whoso receiveth not the words of Jesus and the words of those whom he hath sent receiveth not him; and therefore he will not receive them at the last day; ³⁵ and it would be better for them if they had not been born. For do ye suppose that ye can get rid of the justice of an offended God, who hath been trampled under feet of men, that thereby salvation might come?

³⁶ And now behold, as I spake concerning those whom the Lord hath chosen, yea, even three who were caught up into the heavens, that I knew not whether they were cleansed from mortality to immortality—³⁷ but behold, since I wrote, I have inquired of the Lord, and he hath made it manifest unto me that there must needs be a change wrought upon their bodies, or else it needs be that they must taste of death; ³⁸ therefore, that they might not taste of death there was a change wrought upon their bodies, that they might not suffer pain nor sorrow save it were for the sins of the world.

³⁹ Now this change was not equal to that which shall take place at the last day; but there was a change wrought upon them, insomuch that Satan could have no power over them, that he could not tempt them; and they were sanctified in the flesh, that they were holy, and that the powers of the earth could not hold them. ⁴⁰ And in this state they were to remain until the judgment day of Christ; and at that day they were to receive a greater change, and

26: *They have ministered unto me*, see Morm 8.10–11. **27–32:** The three disciples will undertake a global ministry of covert but miraculous proselytizing. **29:** *Their desire*, see 28.9. **30:** *Unto whatsoever man it seemeth them good*, they will operate according to their own judgment and volition, unlike angels, who act only at God's command (see Moro 7.29–30). **33:** As with Nephi at 1 Ne 13.20–29, Mormon believes the incompleteness of the scriptural record can be an obstacle to understanding, though in this case it is God himself who forbids the dissemination of a full account; see 26.11–12. **34:** *The words of Jesus*, particularly his words to the Nephites, as recorded in the BoM; see 21.11. **35:** *Trampled under feet*, see 1 Ne 19.7n. **36–40:** Mormon reports a recent revelation offering more details about the physiology of the three disciples, who are in an intermediate state between mortality and immortality that will allow them to live for centuries, without ordinary bodily or psychological limitations. **38:** *Pain nor sorrow save...for the sins of the world*, see v. 9 above. **39:** *Satan could have no power over them*, characteristic of people living in the millennial era, according to 1 Ne 22.26; cf. 2 Ne 30.18.

to be received into the kingdom of the Father to go no more out, but to dwell with God eternally in the heavens.

The Book of Mormon as a Sign of Covenant Fulfillment

29¹ And now behold, I say unto you that when the Lord shall see fit, in his wisdom, that these sayings shall come unto the Gentiles according to his word, then ye may know that the covenant which the Father hath made with the children of Israel, concerning their restoration to the lands of their inheritance, is already beginning to be fulfilled.² And ye may know that the words of the Lord, which have been spoken by the holy prophets, shall all be fulfilled.

And ye need not say that the Lord delays his coming unto the children of Israel.³ And ye need not imagine in your hearts that the words which have been spoken are vain, for behold, the Lord will remember his covenant which he hath made unto his people of the house of Israel.⁴ And when ye shall see these sayings coming forth among you, then ye need not any longer spurn at the doings of the Lord, for the sword of his justice is in his right

hand; and behold, at that day, if ye shall spurn at his doings he will cause that it shall soon overtake you.

⁵ Wo unto him that spurneth at the doings of the Lord!

Yea, wo unto him that shall deny the Christ and his works!

⁶ Yea, wo unto him that shall deny the revelations of the Lord, and that shall say the Lord no longer worketh by revelation, or by prophecy, or by gifts, or by tongues, or by healings, or by the power of the Holy Ghost!

⁷ Yea, and wo unto him that shall say at that day, to get gain, that there can be no miracle wrought by Jesus Christ; for he that doeth this shall become like unto the son of perdition, for whom there was no mercy, according to the word of Christ!

⁸ 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.⁹ Therefore ye need not suppose that ye can turn the right hand of the Lord unto the left, that he may not execute judgment unto the fulfilling of the covenant which he hath made unto the house of Israel.

CHAPTER 29

This chapter is structured chiasmally: the covenant with Israel being fulfilled (vv. 1, 9), the Lord remembering his covenant (vv. 3, 8), and “ye need not any longer spurn” (vv. 4, 8), with four woe pronouncements at the center (vv. 5–7). **1:** *When the Lord shall see fit, in his wisdom*, similar language occurs at 2 Ne 27.22; Alma 29.8; 3 Ne 28.29; Morm 5.13—all with regard to additional scripture or revelation. *These sayings* [the BoM] *shall come unto the Gentiles according to his word*, see 21.2–4, 7, 26–28; cf. 23.4; 26.8. **2–3:** The book of 3 Nephi is framed by a thematic inclusio where doubts about the timing of Christ’s first coming at 1.4–9 are here matched by doubts about the timing of his parousia, or second coming, with assurances in both instances that neither the prophecies nor the people’s faith would be “in vain” (1.5–6, 8; 29.3). *The Lord delays his coming*, with phrasing borrowed from Mt 24.48 and Lk 12.45, Mormon is speaking directly to latter-day Christians who are beginning to lose hope in the eschatological promises; see the book of 2 Peter for an early 1st-c. parallel. **4:** *Spurn*, WB: “to manifest disdain in rejecting any thing; to make contemptuous opposition.” **6–7:** Mormon is warning against cessationism rather than skepticism. He is speaking to those who accept the reality of NT miracles, but believe they ended with the apostolic age, perhaps because they were no longer needed after the formation of the biblical canon. Mormon assumes that those advocating cessationism will be professional clergy (*to get gain*), and indeed most lay Christians have continued to believe in miracles, though cessationism has sometimes been associated with Calvinism. **6:** At Morm 9.7, Moroni will directly address those who *deny the revelations of the Lord*, as well as gifts of the Spirit; cf. Moro 10.8–19. **7:** *According to the word of Christ*, reference uncertain, but see 27.32. **8:** *Game*: WB: “mockery; sport; derision; as, to make *game* of a person.” **9:** *Turn the right hand . . . unto the left*, deflect or dissuade the Lord from his intentions.

Mormon₂ Speaks the Words of Christ to the Gentiles

(with phrases repeated from 3 Nephi 21.12–21 in bold)

[XIV] **30**¹ Hearken, O ye Gentiles, and hear the words of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, which he hath commanded me that I should speak concerning you, for, behold he commandeth me that I should write, saying:

² “Turn, all ye **Gentiles**, from your wicked ways; and **repent** of your evil doings, of your **lyings and deceivings**,

and of your **whoredoms**, and of your secret abominations, and your idolatries, and of your murders, and your **priestcrafts**, and your **envyings**, and your **strifes**, and from all your wickedness and abominations, and **come unto me**, and be baptized in my name, that ye may receive a remission of your sins, and be filled with the Holy Ghost, that ye may be numbered with **my people** who are of the **house of Israel**.”

CHAPTER 30

This brief chapter combines the plan of salvation with salvation history as individual discipleship is associated with Gentiles being adopted into the house of Israel. **1:** Mormon, the historian, has shifted roles; he is now speaking the words of Christ as a prophet. *Christ, the Son of the living God*, Mt 16.16; Jn 6.69; Morm 5.14; 9.29. **2:** Jesus’s message in this verse roughly matches the content and sequence of the insertions that were added to Mic 5.8–15 at 3 Ne 21, although here he is directly addressing the Gentiles, and there is a substitution at the end of *that ye may be numbered with my people* for the earlier “them will I cut off from among my people.” *Turn ye . . . from your wicked ways and . . . evil doings*, Zech 1.4; cf. Jer 25.5. The invitation to repent and be baptized in Jesus’s name, in order to receive a remission of sins and the Holy Ghost, parallels Acts 2.38. Various elements of this invitation (including *come unto me*) were combined earlier at 21.6 and 27.20; cf. 12.2. *Numbered with my people*, see 16.13n.

INTRODUCTION TO 4 NEPHI

The most striking characteristic of 4 Nephi is its brevity. This single-chapter book recounts a few general trends that develop over the course of three centuries (as compared with the 150-year period that takes up Mosiah, Alma, Helaman, and 3 Nephi). Notices of passing years happen quickly, sometimes several in a single verse, with few details of corresponding events. The Nephites and Lamanites, in the immediate aftermath of Jesus's visit, start out promisingly. The church of Christ is organized and "the people were all converted unto the Lord" (1.2). Their entire society is restructured with no poverty, no crime, and no ethnic divisions; rather, "they were in one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God" (1.17). It is remarkable that Mormon, editing the Large Plates for readers in the latter days, sees little need to provide specifics about what would have been an extraordinary era, in terms of government, politics, law, economics, education, customs, and culture.

In the late second century, some people break away from the church and call themselves Lamanites, a term that seems to reflect a religious rather than a strictly ethnic distinction (1.20). Class divisions and rival churches emerge in the early third century, leading to widespread wickedness, which is followed by the people dividing into traditional kinship factions. Again, Mormon treats these lineage designations as primarily religious (1.35–39). By the end of the third century, the Gadianton robbers have reappeared. The book concludes with Ammaron, a grandson of Nephi, for whom the book was named, burying the sacred national records to preserve them.

The book of 4 Nephi covers events from ca. 35–320 CE.

FOURTH NEPHI

THE BOOK OF NEPHI

Who Is the Son of Nephi—One of the Disciples of Jesus Christ

An account of the people of Nephi, according to his record.

A New Society

[1] **1** ¹ And it came to pass that the thirty and fourth year passed away,^a and also the thirty and fifth,^b and behold the disciples of Jesus had formed a church of Christ in all the lands round about. And as many as did come unto them, and did truly repent of their sins, were baptized in the name of Jesus; and they did also receive the Holy Ghost. ² And it came to pass in the thirty and sixth year,^c the people were all converted unto the Lord, upon all the face of the land, both Nephites and Lamanites, and there were no contentions and disputations among them, and every man did deal justly one with another. ³ And they had all things common among them; therefore there were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift.

⁴ And it came to pass that the thirty and seventh year passed away also,^d and there still continued to be peace in the land. ⁵ And there were great and marvelous works wrought by the disciples of Jesus, insomuch that they did heal the sick, and raise the dead, and

cause the lame to walk, and the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear; and all manner of miracles did they work among the children of men; and in nothing did they work miracles save it were in the name of Jesus.

⁶ And thus did the thirty and eighth year pass away,^e and also the thirty and ninth,^f and forty and first,^g and the forty and second,^h yea, even until forty and nine years had passed away,ⁱ and also the fifty and first,^j and the fifty and second;^k yea, and even until fifty and nine years had passed away.^l ⁷ And the Lord did

^a 1 +34 years

^b 1 +35 years

^c 2 +36 years

^d 4 +37 years

^e 6 +38 years

^f 6 +39 years

^g 6 +41 years

^h 6 +42 years

ⁱ 6 +49 years

^j 6 +51 years

^k 6 +52 years

^l 6 +59 years

CHAPTER 1

Preface. *According to his record*, that is, Nephi₄. There is no account of the transfer of records from Nephi₃ to Nephi₄, though apparently it happened shortly after Jesus's visitation. 2–3: The phrases *every man did deal justly one with another* and *they had all things common among them* are repeated from the preview of the ministry of the Twelve at 3 Ne 26.19. The basis for God's kingdom on earth is justice combined with economic and social equality. *Partakers of the heavenly gift*, an apparent reference to the Holy Ghost, based on a reworking of Heb 6.4; cf. Ether 12.8. 5: This same list of miracles appeared earlier at Mos 3.5, in a prophecy of Jesus's mortal ministry; cf. 3 Ne 26.15. 7: For a list of burned cities, see 3 Ne 9.3, 9–10.

prosper them exceedingly in the land; yea, insomuch that they did build cities again where there had been cities burned.⁸ Yea, even that great city Zarahemla did they cause to be built again.⁹ But there were many cities which had been sunk, and waters came up in the stead thereof; therefore these cities could not be renewed.

¹⁰ And now, behold, it came to pass that the people of Nephi did wax strong, and did multiply exceedingly fast, and became an exceedingly fair and delightsome people.

¹¹ And they were married, and given in marriage, and were blessed according to the multitude of the promises which the Lord had made unto them.¹² And they did not walk any more after the performances and ordinances of the law of Moses; but they did walk after the commandments which they had received from their Lord and their God, continuing in fasting and prayer, and in meeting together oft both to pray and to hear the word of the Lord.

¹³ And it came to pass that there was no contention among all the people, in all the land; but there were mighty miracles wrought among the disciples of Jesus.

¹⁴ And it came to pass that the seventy and first year passed away,^a and also the seventy and second year,^b yea, and in fine, till the seventy and ninth year had passed away;^c yea, even an hundred years had passed away,^d

and the disciples of Jesus, whom he had chosen, had all gone to the paradise of God, save it were the three who should tarry; and there were other disciples ordained in their stead; and also many of that generation had passed away.

¹⁵ And it came to pass that there was no contention in the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people.¹⁶ And there were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness; and surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God.¹⁷ There were no robbers, nor murderers, neither were there Lamanites, nor any manner of -ites; but they were in one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God.¹⁸ And how blessed were they! For the Lord did bless them in all their doings; yea, even they were blessed and prospered until an hundred and ten years had passed away;^e and the first generation from Christ had passed away, and there was no contention in all the land.

^a 14 +71 years

^b 14 +72 years

^c 14 +79 years

^d 14 +100 years

^e 18 +110 years

8: For the burning of Zarahemla, see 3 Ne 8.8; 9.3. **9:** The city of Moroni, on the east coast, would have been in this category (3 Ne 8.9; 9.4), along with the submerged cities listed in 3 Ne 9.7. *Fair and delightsome*, only here and 2 Ne. 5.21, describing the Lamanites before they were cursed. Since righteous Nephites and Lamanites have been intermingling (and probably intermarrying) for the last 75 years or so, the use of the phrase here is an indication that the sign of the curse has been removed from the portion of Nephite society with Lamanite ancestry; cf. 3 Ne 2.14–16. **12:** For the end of the law of Moses, see 3 Ne 1.24–25; 15.4–5. *Fasting and prayer and meeting together oft* are part of the proper order of the church at Moro 6.5; cf. Alma 6.6; 3 Ne 18.22. **14:** *Save it were the three who should tarry*, see 3 Ne 28.4–8. **15:** As in the Bible, the phrase *love of God* can mean either “our love for God” or “God’s love for humanity.” **16:** The suggestion that the Nephites after Christ’s visitation were the happiest people who had ever lived is a bold assessment; cf. Alma 50.23. **17:** Benjamin’s vision of a unified people who would think of themselves as *children of Christ* (only here, Mos 5.7, and Morm 9.26), rather than as Nephites, Lamanites, Mulekites, etc., has finally been realized. *Heirs of the kingdom of God*, Mos 15.11; cf. Jas 2.5.

The Sources of Fourth Nephi: Nephi₁, Amos₁, and Amos₂

¹⁹ And it came to pass that Nephi, he that kept this last record, (and he kept it upon the plates of Nephi) died, and his son Amos kept it in his stead; and he kept it upon the plates of Nephi also. ²⁰ And he kept it eighty and four years, and there was still peace in the land, save it were a small part of the people who had revolted from the church and taken upon them the name of Lamanites; therefore there began to be Lamanites again in the land.

²¹ And it came to pass that Amos died also, (and it was an hundred and ninety and four years from the coming of Christ)^a and his son Amos kept the record in his stead; and he also kept it upon the plates of Nephi; and it was also written in the book of Nephi, which is this book.

Divisions among the People

²² And it came to pass that two hundred years had passed away;^b and the second generation had all passed away save it were a few. ²³ And now I, Mormon, would that ye should know that the people had multiplied, insomuch that they were spread upon all the face of the land, and that they had become exceeding rich, because of their prosperity in Christ.

²⁴ And now, in this two hundred and first year^c there began to be among them those

who were lifted up in pride, such as the wearing of costly apparel, and all manner of fine pearls, and of the fine things of the world. ²⁵ And from that time forth they did have their goods and their substance no more common among them. ²⁶ And they began to be divided into classes; and they began to build up churches unto themselves to get gain, and began to deny the true church of Christ.

²⁷ And it came to pass that when two hundred and ten years had passed away^d there were many churches in the land; yea, there were many churches which professed to know the Christ, and yet they did deny the more parts of his gospel, insomuch that they did receive all manner of wickedness, and did administer that which was sacred unto him to whom it had been forbidden because of unworthiness. ²⁸ And this church did multiply exceedingly because of iniquity, and because of the power of Satan who did get hold upon their hearts.

²⁹ And again, there was another church which denied the Christ; and they did persecute the true church of Christ, because of their humility and their belief in Christ; and they did despise them because of the many miracles

^a 21 +194 years

^b 22 +200 years

^c 24 +201 years

^d 27 +210 years

19–21: In peaceful, prosperous conditions, the Nephite writers are exceptionally long lived. Nephi₁ keeps the record from +33 to +110, or 77 years; Amos, keeps the record from +110 to +194, or 84 years; and Amos, keeps the record from +194 to +305 (v. 47), or 111 years, which stretches human limitations. **20:** *Taken upon them the name of Lamanites*, after several generations of ethnic mixing, these neo-Lamanites are defined by religion rather than by biological descent, but see Morm 1.8–9n. **24–26:** After a hiatus of nearly two centuries, old patterns reemerge, with prosperity leading to pride and social inequality. For the first time since Nehor, however, rival churches to the church of Christ are established, characterized by a professional clergy (*to get gain*); see Alma 1.5–6. **24:** This is the only mention of *pearls* in the BoM, apart from a quotation from the Sermon on the Mount at 3 Ne 14.6. **25:** See v. 3 above. **26:** *True church*, only here, v. 29, and 2 Ne 9.2. **27–28:** *Many churches in the land*, referring to distinct denominations (as in the prophecies of Nephi; e.g., 1 Ne 22.23; 2 Ne 28.3) rather than different congregations of a single church (as in the NT and Mos–Alma; e.g. Mos 25.19), though *this church* in v. 28 may suggest multiple congregations of a single, alternative denomination. *Administer . . . unworthiness*, a reference to the Eucharist; this new church contravened Jesus’s instructions for closed communion; see 3 Ne 18.28–29. **29:** A second new church denies Christ entirely, along with miracles.

which were wrought among them.³⁰ Therefore they did exercise power and authority over the disciples of Jesus who did tarry with them, and they did cast them into prison; but by the power of the word of God, which was in them, the prisons were rent in twain, and they went forth doing mighty miracles among them.

³¹ Nevertheless, and notwithstanding all these miracles, the people did harden their hearts, and did seek to kill them, even as the Jews at Jerusalem sought to kill Jesus, according to his word.³² And they did cast them into furnaces of fire, and they came forth receiving no harm.³³ And they also cast them into dens of wild beasts, and they did play with the wild beasts even as a child with a lamb; and they did come forth from among them, receiving no harm.

³⁴ Nevertheless, the people did harden their hearts, for they were led by many priests and false prophets to build up many churches, and to do all manner of iniquity. And they did smite upon the people of Jesus; but the people of Jesus did not smite again. And thus they did dwindle in unbelief and wickedness, from year to year, even until two hundred and thirty years had passed away.^a

A Great Division

³⁵ And now it came to pass in this year, yea, in the two hundred and thirty and first year,^b there was a great division among the people.

³⁶ And it came to pass that in this year there arose a people who were called the Nephites, and they were true believers in Christ; and

among them there were those who were called by the Lamanites—Jacobites, and Josephites, and Zoramites;³⁷ therefore the true believers in Christ, and the true worshipers of Christ, (among whom were the three disciples of Jesus who should tarry) were called Nephites, and Jacobites, and Josephites, and Zoramites.

³⁸ And it came to pass that they who rejected the gospel were called Lamanites, and Lemuelites, and Ishmaelites; and they did not dwindle in unbelief, but they did wilfully rebel against the gospel of Christ; and they did teach their children that they should not believe, even as their fathers, from the beginning, did dwindle.³⁹ And it was because of the wickedness and abomination of their fathers, even as it was in the beginning. And they were taught to hate the children of God, even as the Lamanites were taught to hate the children of Nephi from the beginning.

The Return of the Gadianton Robbers

⁴⁰ And it came to pass that two hundred and forty and four years had passed away,^c and thus were the affairs of the people. And the more wicked part of the people did wax strong, and became exceedingly more numerous than were the people of God.⁴¹ And they did still continue to build up churches unto themselves, and adorn them with all manner of precious things. And thus did two hundred and

^a 34 +230 years

^b 35 +231 years

^c 40 +244 years

30–33: See Mormon’s editorial foreshadowing at 3 Ne 28.19–22; cf. Morm 8.24. 31: *According to his word*, reference uncertain. 35–39: Portions of the populace are identifying with ancient lineages, but in Mormon’s telling the new division between Nephites and Lamanites is primarily religious rather than genetic; see vv. 19–21n above. The lack of belief among the new Lamanites came suddenly and deliberately, as opposed to the gradually decreasing interest or apathy that had characterized earlier generations of Lamanites (see v. 38). 38–39: Just as the rebellion of the original Laman and Lemuel affected their descendants for centuries, so too the rebellion of the first generation of new Lamanites will have long-term consequences for their children and grandchildren. *Taught to hate... from the beginning*, see Mos 10.17. 41: *Build up churches*, the phrase here seems to refer to both physical buildings and institutions; cf. “build up secret oaths and combinations” in the next verse.

fifty years pass away,^a and also two hundred and sixty years.^b

⁴² And it came to pass that the wicked part of the people began again to build up the secret oaths and combinations of Gadianton.

⁴³ And also the people who were called the people of Nephi began to be proud in their hearts, because of their exceeding riches, and become vain like unto their brethren, the Lamanites. ⁴⁴ And from this time the disciples began to sorrow for the sins of the world.

⁴⁵ And it came to pass that when three hundred years had passed away,^c both the people of Nephi and the Lamanites had become exceeding wicked one like unto another. ⁴⁶ And it came to pass that the robbers of Gadianton did spread over all the face of the land; and there were none that were righteous save it were the disciples of Jesus. And gold and silver did they lay up in store in abundance, and did traffic in all manner of traffic.

Ammaron Inherits the Records and Hides Them

⁴⁷ And it came to pass that after three hundred and five years had passed away,^d (and the

people did still remain in wickedness) Amos died; and his brother, Ammaron, did keep the record in his stead. ⁴⁸ And it came to pass that when three hundred and twenty years had passed away,^e Ammaron, being constrained by the Holy Ghost, did hide up the records which were sacred—yea, even all the sacred records which had been handed down from generation to generation, which were sacred—even until the three hundred and twentieth year from the coming of Christ. ⁴⁹ And he did hide them up unto the Lord, that they might come again unto the remnant of the house of Jacob, according to the prophecies and the promises of the Lord. And thus is the end of the record of Ammaron.

^a 41 +250 years

^b 41 +260 years

^c 45 +300 years

^d 47 +305 years

^e 48 +320 years

42: The Gadianton robbers had been destroyed at 3 Ne 5.4–6, in the twenty-first year, but see Hel 2.13–14.

44: This *sorrow* was foretold at 3 Ne 28.9, 38. **45–46:** Moral differences between the Nephites, the Lamanites, and the robbers were negligible, though in contrast to standard Deuteronomistic expectations, in this era wickedness and prosperity go hand in hand. *Traffic*, WB [“traffick”]: “trade; commerce, either by barter or by buying and selling.” **47–49:** Being from the same generation as Amos, Ammaron must have been elderly when he took possession of the records; see 1.19–21n. He hides the records in the earth or a cave (see Morm 1.3) after fifteen years. This would have been the entire corpus of Nephite royal records, including the Large Plates of Nephi, from which Mormon later made his abridgment. At about this time, he informs the ten-year-old Mormon of their existence and location; see Morm 1.2–4. **49:** *Hide them up unto the Lord*, so that they could be found again; see Hel 13.17–20; cf. Morm 1.2–3; 5.12; 8.13–14; Ether 15.11. *According to the prophecies and the promises of the Lord*, see 2 Ne 28.2; 29.2; Enos 1.13, 16; 3 Ne 21.2–4.

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF MORMON

Mormon completes his shortened version of the Large Plates with an abridgment of his own contribution to those plates, where he had recorded events leading up to the final days of the Nephites. The earlier, longer account, he tells readers, was mostly taken up with “wickedness and abominations” (2.18), and he does not want to burden them with the sorrowful details (5.8–9). His concise narration suggests that he is mostly interested in bringing his history to its sad, seemingly inevitable conclusion. And his awareness that he is writing for non-Nephites in the distant future is evident in how he structures his work. His book was originally divided into three chapters, each of which ended with Mormon directly addressing different combinations of his latter-day audience: Gentiles, Israelites, and Lamanites (3.17–22; 5.8–24; 7.1–10). At chapter 8, Moroni takes over from Mormon, with a terse note concerning his death: “my father hath been slain in battle” (8.5). He does not tell the story or convey any last words. Most of Moroni’s two-chapter addition consists of prophecies and messages for his future readers.

As might be fitting for a historian, the chronology of Mormon’s life can be reconstructed fairly precisely from the dates he provides, more so than for any other figure in the Book of Mormon. He was born about 310 CE (4 Ne 1.48; Morm 1.2) and died in 385 (6.4; 8.2–3). Major milestones in his life will be noted in the summary of contents below. While the chronology is relatively clear, the geography is not. Mormon speaks of gathering the Nephites to the land of Cumorah, in the northern part of Nephite territories, where they fought their final battle. He also reports that he buried all the Nephite records in a hill of the same name, except for the abridgment that he would pass on to his son Moroni, that is, the gold plates said to be the source of the Book of Mormon (6.6). Many Latter-day Saints have assumed that Mormon’s Cumorah was the same hill in New York where Joseph Smith uncovered the gold plates, which was referred to as Cumorah by church members starting in the 1830s. Others, however, have suggested that the Nephites’ last stand was fought at another hill named Cumorah somewhere in Central America. It is also unclear how Mormon is connected to the lineage of Nephite record keepers that stretches from Alma₂ to Ammaron, over a period of four centuries. He is not a direct descendant of Ammaron (1.5), but rather caught the attention of his predecessor by being an unusually bright and serious child (1.2).

CONTENTS

Chapter 1: At age ten, Mormon is informed by Ammaron, the current record keeper, that he will someday be responsible for the corpus of Nephite records. Five years later, in an era of warfare and wickedness, he wants to preach to the people but the Lord forbids it.

Chapter 2: Mormon, at fifteen, is appointed leader of the Nephite armies. After a series of defeats and retreats over the course of five years, they manage to regain some territory from the Lamanites and Gadianton robbers, but they do not repent. At thirty-five, Mormon recovers the Large Plates of Nephi, which had been buried by Ammaron, and adds his own chapters. Nephite victories in the next five years result in a peace treaty with the Lamanites, which holds for a decade.

Chapter 3: When Mormon is fifty, the Nephites are unrepentant but nevertheless repel an invasion. After additional victories in the next two years, they decide to go on the offensive and Mormon resigns his military commission in protest.

Chapters 4–5: For thirteen years Mormon continues his pacifist stance, while the Nephites experience several defeats and retreat northward. (Perhaps this is the time when he began his abridgment of the Large Plates.) Mormon resumes his command at sixty-five, when he also collects the rest of the records that had been hidden by Ammaron. He prophesies to readers about events in the last days.

Chapters 6–7: Over several years, Mormon gathers his people in a grand retreat to the land of Cumorah for a last battle with the Lamanites. He completes his abridgment, which he hands on to his son Moroni, and then buries the rest of the records. Nearly all the Nephites are killed, and Mormon concludes his book with a message to the future descendants of his enemies.

Chapters 8–9: Rather abruptly, Moroni takes over his father's book, noting Mormon's death in battle at age seventy-five. Moroni finishes by providing information about the gold plates, along with prophecies and warnings directed to his future readers.

Mormon 1–8 covers events from ca. 320–385 CE; chapters 8–9 are dated to ca. 400 CE.

INTERPRETATION

As the final contours of Nephite history come into view, the Book of Mormon narrative unfolds as a tragedy. The preaching of prophets such as Nephi and Abinadi, the establishment of a church by Alma₁, the spiritual leadership of Alma₂ and Helaman, the martial prowess of Captain Moroni, and even the three generations of righteous believers after Christ's visit all come to naught in a final paroxysm of death and destruction. Mormon ascribes the fate of the Nephites to the wickedness and faithlessness of his own generation, but it is possible, even probable, that the seeds of that demise were sown earlier, with their many episodes of pride, ethnocentrism, greed, tolerance of secret combinations, and constant recourse to militarism. (Mormon does add two new sins in recounting his own era—magic arts and witchcraft, whatever those might have entailed; see 1.19; 2.10). When Moroni steps in to complete his father's book, the lesson that he draws for readers is poignant: "Give thanks unto God that he hath made manifest unto you our imperfections, that ye may learn to be more wise than we have been" (9.31).

Because the Nephite annihilation had been foreseen in vision and prophecy by Nephi (1 Ne 12.13–20; 15.5; 2 Ne 26.10–11), Alma (Alma 45.8–14), and Samuel (Hel 13.8–10; 15.17), it raises questions about God's foreknowledge and human agency, as well as the relationship between the collective guilt and punishment associated with salvation history, and the individual accountability underlying the plan of salvation. Was the fate of the Nephites avoidable? Mormon does not exactly answer these questions, though his reflections in Helaman 12 suggest that he believed people have a natural tendency toward pride and rebellion, despite God's constant offer of mercy. (He has a glimmer of hope at 2.10–12, which is dashed in the next verse.) Unlike the divine judgments on display in 3 Nephi 8–9, where the Lord sent destruction from heaven, the end of the Nephites comes through mundane, human means. As Mormon observes, "The judgments of God will overtake the wicked; and it is by the wicked that the wicked are punished; for it is the wicked that stir up the hearts of the children of men unto bloodshed" (4.5).

GUIDE TO READING

As is often the case, it can be useful to weigh Mormon's history against what he reveals of his life story. The attention he gives in his abridgment to Alma's church may be due, at least in part, to family tradition; he was named for its place of origin (3 Ne 5.12). His clear admiration for Captain Moroni (Alma 48.11–18) may represent professional respect from one military man to another. But then again, his evident sympathy for the Anti-Nephi-Lehies may have been connected to his own practice of pacifism (Morm 3.11–16). In any case, as someone who had seen the horrors of continual, violent conflict firsthand (4.10–12; 5.8–9), it is striking that he never speaks of war figuratively or makes it a metaphor for Christian living. Is Mormon's despairing tone in Helaman 12 related to the frustrations and disappointments of his interactions with his own people? (1.13–17; 2.12–15; 6.16–22). And one wonders whether his preaching directly to his future readers (in chs. 3, 5, and 7) may have been compensation for his failed attempts to successfully preach repentance to his contemporaries (3.1–3).

In trying to reconstruct Mormon's thought and personality, there are three additional chapters still ahead, for those reading the Book of Mormon sequentially, that are particularly valuable. In his own book, Moroni includes a transcript of a sermon that his father Mormon delivered on faith, hope, and charity (ch. 7), along with two personal letters (chs. 8 and 9). In the first document, readers can hear Mormon's voice as a religious leader rather than a historian. In the letters, originally intended only for his son, Mormon shares theological, social, and psychological concerns in a more candid manner than in his abridged history. This is what Mormon sounds like, according to text, when he is speaking privately.

It is also worth noting how Mormon's editing and commenting style—not just in his little book, but throughout his history—differs from the characteristic literary strategies of other major narrators. Unlike Nephi and Moroni, Mormon never includes sermons without identifying the immediate context, he never offers his own lengthy quotations of scripture or creative interpretations, and he is relatively reticent about his feelings. In his own book, warfare, wickedness, and records are virtually his only themes, except when he is plaintively preaching to his future audience. It makes for somber reading.

THE BOOK OF MORMON

(chapters 1–7)

Mormon₂ to Receive the Records

[1] **1** ¹ And now I, Mormon, make a record of the things which I have both seen and heard, and call it the book of Mormon.

² And about the time that Ammaron hid up the records unto the Lord,^a he came unto me, (I being about ten years of age, and I began to be learned somewhat after the manner of the learning of my people) and Ammaron said unto me, “I perceive that thou art a sober child, and art quick to observe; ³ therefore, when ye are about twenty and four years old I would that ye should remember the things that ye have observed concerning this people; and when ye are of that age go to the land Antum, unto a hill which shall be called Shim; and there have I deposited unto the Lord all the sacred engravings concerning this people.

⁴ And behold, ye shall take the plates of Nephi unto yourself, and the remainder shall ye leave in the place where they are; and ye shall engrave on the plates of Nephi all the things that ye have observed concerning this people.”

War between the Nephites and Lamanites

⁵ And I, Mormon, being a descendant of Nephi, (and my father’s name was Mormon) I remembered the things which Ammaron commanded me. ⁶ And it came to pass that I, being eleven years old,^b was carried by my father into the land southward, even to the land of Zarahemla. ⁷ The whole face of the land had become covered with buildings, and the people were as numerous almost, as it were the sand of the sea.

⁸ And it came to pass in this year there began to be a war between the Nephites, who consisted of the Nephites and the Jacobites and the Josephites and the Zoramites; and this war was between the Nephites, and the Lamanites and the Lemuelites and the Ishmaelites. ⁹ Now the Lamanites and the Lemuelites and the Ishmaelites were called Lamanites, and the two parties were Nephites and Lamanites.

^a ² +320 years; see 4 Ne 1.48–49

^b ⁶ +321 years

CHAPTER 1

1: This smaller *book of Mormon* was originally divided into three chapters, each of which Mormon concluded by directly addressing the Gentiles, Israelites, or Lamanites among his latter-day readers; see 3.17–22; 5.8–24; 7.1–10. **2–5:** It is not obvious that Mormon belongs to the lineage that has kept the Nephite records for eight generations, from Alma₂ to Ammaron. **2:** *Sober*, WB: “Serious; solemn; not under the influence of passion.” **3–4:** Ammaron wants Mormon to retrieve the Large Plates of Nephi about the year +334. Mormon apparently is not able to do so until +345, when he is thirty-five (2.16–17). He returns for the rest of the records when he is sixty-five (4.16, 23). **3:** *The land Antum*, most of the lands and cities mentioned in Morm have not been referred to previously in the BoM, which may indicate that the Nephites have moved into new territories. **8–9:** The story is easier to tell if the various groups are simplified into two parties, and in any case, after several centuries of ethnic mixing (including Mulekites and perhaps indigenous peoples), the ancient ancestral lines they identify with are social and religious rather than biological; see 4 Ne 1.35–39n. Nevertheless, Mormon himself in the 4th c. notes his connection to Nephi (v. 5; cf. 8.13) and claims to be a “pure descendant of Lehi” (3 Ne 5.20).

¹⁰ And it came to pass that the war began to be among them in the borders of Zarahemla, by the waters of Sidon. ¹¹ And it came to pass that the Nephites had gathered together a great number of men, even to exceed the number of thirty thousand. And it came to pass that they did have in this same year a number of battles, in which the Nephites did beat the Lamanites and did slay many of them. ¹² And it came to pass that the Lamanites withdrew their design, and there was peace settled in the land; and peace did remain for the space of about four years,^a that there was no bloodshed.

Wickedness Prevails

¹³ But wickedness did prevail upon the face of the whole land, insomuch that the Lord did take away his beloved disciples, and the work of miracles and of healing did cease because of the iniquity of the people. ¹⁴ And there were no gifts from the Lord, and the Holy Ghost did not come upon any, because of their wickedness and unbelief.

¹⁵ And I, being fifteen years of age and being somewhat of a sober mind, therefore I was visited of the Lord, and tasted and knew of the goodness of Jesus. ¹⁶ And I did endeavor to preach unto this people, but my mouth was shut, and I was forbidden that I should preach unto them; for behold they had wilfully rebelled against their God; and the beloved

disciples were taken away out of the land, because of their iniquity. ¹⁷ But I did remain among them, but I was forbidden to preach unto them, because of the hardness of their hearts; and because of the hardness of their hearts the land was cursed for their sake.

¹⁸ And these Gadianton robbers, who were among the Lamanites, did infest the land, insomuch that the inhabitants thereof began to hide up their treasures in the earth; and they became slippery, because the Lord had cursed the land, that they could not hold them, nor retain them again. ¹⁹ And it came to pass that there were sorceries, and witchcrafts, and magics; and the power of the evil one was wrought upon all the face of the land, even unto the fulfilling of all the words of Abinadi, and also Samuel the Lamanite.

The Nephites Retreat

2 ¹ And it came to pass in that same year^b there began to be a war again between the Nephites and the Lamanites. And notwithstanding I being young, was large in stature; therefore the people of Nephi appointed me that I should be their leader, or the leader of their armies. ² Therefore it came to pass that

^a ¹² That is, until +325 years

^b ¹ +325 years

13–14: Spiritual gifts cannot be manifest without righteousness and belief—a point Moroni affirms at Moro 10.19. *Beloved disciples*, see 3 Ne 28.4–32; 4 Ne 1.30–33. The phrase again connects these three men to the disciple in Jn “whom Jesus loved”; see Jn 19.26; 20.2; 21.7, 20–24. **15:** *Visited by the Lord*, reminiscent of Nephi’s experience; see 1 Ne 2.16n. *Tasted of the goodness of Jesus*, an image derived from Ps 34.8; the verb “taste” is sometimes used in the BoM to describe spiritual experiences, characterized as God’s love (Mos 4.11), light (Alma 32.35), or joy (Alma 36.24). **16–17:** The only other instance in scripture of someone being forbidden to preach occurs at Acts 16.6–7. Although the three disciples are *taken away out of the land*, they will nevertheless visit Mormon and Moroni later; see 8.10–11. **17:** *The land was cursed for their sake*, foreshadowing the destruction of the Nephites. Similar phrasing has been used to describe the pre-conquest Canaanites (1 Ne 17.35) and the doomed Jaredites (Ether 7.23; 11.6), and also as a prophetic warning for the Lehites (1 Ne 17.38; 2 Ne 1.7; Jacob 2.29; 3.3; Alma 37.28, 31; 45.16). **18–19:** *Magic(s)*, only here and 2.10. *The fulfilling of all the words of Abinadi, and also Samuel*, see Hel 13.17–18, 30–31, 35–37; and perhaps Mos 16.5.

CHAPTER 2

1–2: It is unlikely that a fifteen-year-old would be appointed to command armies unless he had come from a powerful political or military family. *Large in stature* is only used elsewhere to describe the young Nephi (1 Ne 2.16; 4.31).

in my sixteenth year I did go forth at the head of an army of the Nephites, against the Lamanites; therefore three hundred and twenty and six years had passed away.^a

³ And it came to pass that in the three hundred and twenty and seventh year ^b the Lamanites did come upon us with exceeding great power, insomuch that they did frighten my armies; therefore they would not fight, and they began to retreat towards the north countries. ⁴ And it came to pass that we did come to the city of Angola, and we did take possession of the city, and make preparations to defend ourselves against the Lamanites. And it came to pass that we did fortify the city with our might; but notwithstanding all our fortifications the Lamanites did come upon us and did drive us out of the city. ⁵ And they did also drive us forth out of the land of David. ⁶ And we marched forth and came to the land of Joshua, which was in the borders west by the seashore.

⁷ And it came to pass that we did gather in our people as fast as it were possible, that we might get them together in one body. ⁸ But behold, the land was filled with robbers and with Lamanites; and notwithstanding the great destruction which hung over my people, they did not repent of their evil doings; therefore there was blood and carnage spread throughout all the face of the land, both on the part of the Nephites and also on the part of the Lamanites; and it was one complete revolution throughout all the face of the land.

⁹ And now, the Lamanites had a king, and his name was Aaron; and he came against us with an army of forty and four thousand. And behold, I withstood him with forty and two thousand. And it came to pass that I beat him with my army that he fled before me. And behold, all this was done, and three hundred and thirty years had passed away.^c

Sorrow without Repentance

¹⁰ And it came to pass that the Nephites began to repent of their iniquity, and began to cry even as had been prophesied by Samuel the prophet; for behold no man could keep that which was his own, for the thieves, and the robbers, and the murderers, and the magic art, and the witchcraft which was in the land. ¹¹ Thus there began to be a mourning and a lamentation in all the land because of these things, and more especially among the people of Nephi.

¹² And it came to pass that when I, Mormon, saw their lamentation and their mourning and their sorrow before the Lord, my heart did begin to rejoice within me, knowing the mercies and the long-suffering of the Lord, therefore supposing that he would be merciful unto them that they would again become a righteous people. ¹³ But behold this my joy was vain, for their sorrowing was not unto repentance,

^a 2 +326 years

^b 3 +327 years

^c 9 +330 years

7: *Get them together in one body*, this was the same strategy that had been successfully employed by Lachoneus in 3 Ne 3–4. 8: *Revolution*, since Mormon is not describing a revolt against an established government, the meaning here seems closer to “upheaval” or “cyclical recurrence (of violence).” 10: *As had been prophesied by Samuel*, see Hel 13.31–37. *For the thieves*, because of the thieves. 11: *Mourning and lamentation . . . in all the land . . . among the people of Nephi*, similar phrasing was used in Alma 28.4 to describe what was, at the time, the aftermath of unprecedented warfare. 12: *Sorrow before the Lord* suggests that there is a religious aspect to their remorse. *Become a righteous people*, a phrase previously used to describe Lamanite converts such as the Anti-Nephi-Lehies; see Alma 19.35; 23.7; 25.14; Hel 6.1. Unfortunately, the Nephites of Mormon’s day will prove incapable of following their example. 13: *Their sorrowing was not unto repentance*, that is, they were lacking in the type of penitence that Paul described as “godly sorrow”; see 2 Cor 7.9–10.

because of the goodness of God; but it was rather the sorrowing of the damned, because the Lord would not always suffer them to take happiness in sin.¹⁴ And they did not come unto Jesus with broken hearts and contrite spirits, but they did curse God, and wish to die. Nevertheless they would struggle with the sword for their lives.

¹⁵ And it came to pass that my sorrow did return unto me again, and I saw that the day of grace was passed with them, both temporally and spiritually; for I saw thousands of them hewn down in open rebellion against their God, and heaped up as dung upon the face of the land. And thus three hundred and forty and four years had passed away.^a ¹⁶ And it came to pass that in the three hundred and forty and fifth year^b the Nephites did begin to flee before the Lamanites; and they were pursued until they came even to the land of Jashon, before it was possible to stop them in their retreat.

Mormon₂ Updates the Records

¹⁷ And now, the city of Jashon was near the land where Ammaron had deposited the records unto the Lord, that they might not be destroyed. And behold I had gone according to the word of Ammaron, and taken the plates of Nephi, and did make a record according to the words of Ammaron.

¹⁸ And upon the plates of Nephi I did make a full account of all the wickedness and abominations; but upon these plates I did forbear to make a full account of their wickedness

and abominations, for behold, a continual scene of wickedness and abominations has been before mine eyes ever since I have been sufficient to behold the ways of man.¹⁹ And wo is me because of their wickedness; for my heart has been filled with sorrow because of their wickedness, all my days; nevertheless, I know that I shall be lifted up at the last day.

The Land Is Divided

²⁰ And it came to pass that in this year the people of Nephi again were hunted and driven. And it came to pass that we were driven forth until we had come northward to the land which was called Shem.²¹ And it came to pass that we did fortify the city of Shem, and we did gather in our people as much as it were possible, that perhaps we might save them from destruction.

²² And it came to pass in the three hundred and forty and sixth year^c they began to come upon us again.²³ And it came to pass that I did speak unto my people, and did urge them with great energy, that they would stand boldly before the Lamanites and fight for their wives, and their children, and their houses, and their homes.²⁴ And my words did arouse them somewhat to vigor, inasmuch that they did not flee from before the Lamanites, but did stand with boldness against them.

^a 15 +344 years

^b 16 +345 years

^c 22 +346 years

14: *Come unto Jesus with broken hearts and contrite spirits*, cf. 3 Ne 9.20. *Curse God, and wish to die*, cf. Job 2.9. Mormon finds their desires for death and for survival self-contradictory. **15:** *The day of grace*, that is, the time when they still could make choices that would change the outcome. The phrase occurred regularly in the 18th–19th c. *Heaped up as dung upon the face of the land*, the same dehumanizing simile occurs at Jer 8.2; 16.4. **17:** *Where Ammaron had deposited the records*, see 4 Ne 1.48–49. *According to the word of Ammaron*, see 1.2–4. **18:** *The plates of Nephi*, the Large Plates of Nephi. *These plates*, Mormon's abridgment of the Large Plates. *Sufficient*, old enough. **19:** *Wo is me*, seven times in the OT, but only here in the BoM. *My heart has been filled with sorrow because of their wickedness*, Nephi, had experienced the same emotion; see Hel 7.9. **23:** In contrast to Captain Moroni's title of liberty, Mormon does not try to inspire his people with pleas to defend their religion; cf. Alma 46.12.

²⁵ And it came to pass that we did contend with an army of thirty thousand against an army of fifty thousand. And it came to pass that we did stand before them with such firmness that they did flee from before us. ²⁶ And it came to pass that when they had fled we did pursue them with our armies, and did meet them again, and did beat them; nevertheless the strength of the Lord was not with us; yea, we were left to ourselves, that the Spirit of the Lord did not abide in us; therefore we had become weak like unto our brethren.

²⁷ And my heart did sorrow because of this the great calamity of my people, because of their wickedness and their abominations. But behold, we did go forth against the Lamanites and the robbers of Gadianton, until we had again taken possession of the lands of our inheritance. ²⁸ And the three hundred and forty and ninth year had passed away.^a

And in the three hundred and fiftieth year^b we made a treaty with the Lamanites and the robbers of Gadianton, in which we did get the lands of our inheritance divided. ²⁹ And the Lamanites did give unto us the land northward, yea, even to the narrow passage which led into the land southward. And we did give unto the Lamanites all the land southward.

A Chance for Repentance

3 ¹ And it came to pass that the Lamanites did not come to battle again until ten

years more had passed away. And behold, I had employed my people, the Nephites, in preparing their lands and their arms against the time of battle.

² And it came to pass that the Lord did say unto me, “Cry unto this people: ‘Repent ye, and come unto me, and be ye baptized, and build up again my church, and ye shall be spared.’” ³ And I did cry unto this people, but it was in vain; and they did not realize that it was the Lord that had spared them, and granted unto them a chance for repentance. And behold they did harden their hearts against the Lord their God.

Nephite Victories Lead to War Fever

⁴ And it came to pass that after this tenth year had passed away, making, in the whole, three hundred and sixty years from the coming of Christ,^c the king of the Lamanites sent an epistle unto me, which gave unto me to know that they were preparing to come again to battle against us. ⁵ And it came to pass that I did cause my people that they should gather themselves together at the land Desolation, to a city which was in the borders, by the narrow pass which led into the land southward. ⁶ And there we did place our armies, that we might stop the armies of the Lamanites, that they

^a 28 +349 years

^b 28 +350 years

^c 4 +360 years

25: Although the Nephites are victorious again, their numerical position has worsened from v. 9. **26:** Mormon does not interpret the Nephite victory as a sign that the Lord is on their side, or that they are deserving of divine aid. *Weak like unto their brethren*, in fulfillment of King Benjamin’s prophecy at Mos 1.13; cf. Hel 4.24. **27–29:** Despite Mormon’s assertion that the Nephites had recovered *the lands of our inheritance*, their position was not strong since they were forced to give up most of those lands the next year.

CHAPTER 3

1: *Preparing their lands*, presumably by building fortifications. **2:** Mormon is commanded by the Lord to preach, in contrast to 1.16–17, about thirty-five years earlier when he was forbidden from doing so. **3:** *The Lord had spared them*, not by strengthening them (2.26), but simply by allowing them to live longer and perhaps repent. **4:** Mormon offers no reason for why the Lamanite king would have forewarned the Nephites of an impending attack, though perhaps the situation is similar to that of 3 Ne 3, when the Nephites gathered together in response to a letter from an enemy commander.

might not get possession of any of our lands; therefore we did fortify against them with all our force.

⁷ And it came to pass that in the three hundred and sixty and first year^a the Lamanites did come down to the city of Desolation to battle against us; and it came to pass that in that year we did beat them, insomuch that they did return to their own lands again. ⁸ And in the three hundred and sixty and second year^b they did come down again to battle. And we did beat them again, and did slay a great number of them, and their dead were cast into the sea.

⁹ And now, because of this great thing which my people, the Nephites, had done, they began to boast in their own strength, and began to swear before the heavens that they would avenge themselves of the blood of their brethren who had been slain by their enemies.

¹⁰ And they did swear by the heavens, and also by the throne of God, that they would go up to battle against their enemies, and would cut them off from the face of the land.

Mormon₂ Refuses to Lead His People into War

¹¹ And it came to pass that I, Mormon, did utterly refuse from this time forth to be a commander and a leader of this people, because of their wickedness and abomination. ¹² Behold, I had led them, notwithstanding their wickedness I had led them many times to battle, and had loved them, according to the love of God

which was in me, with all my heart; and my soul had been poured out in prayer unto my God all the day long for them; nevertheless, it was without faith, because of the hardness of their hearts. ¹³ And thrice have I delivered them out of the hands of their enemies, and they have repented not of their sins.

¹⁴ And when they had sworn by all that had been forbidden them by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, that they would go up unto their enemies to battle, and avenge themselves of the blood of their brethren, behold the voice of the Lord came unto me, saying, ¹⁵ “Vengeance is mine, and I will repay; and because this people repented not after I had delivered them, behold, they shall be cut off from the face of the earth.”

¹⁶ And it came to pass that I utterly refused to go up against mine enemies; and I did even as the Lord had commanded me; and I did stand as an idle witness to manifest unto the world the things which I saw and heard, according to the manifestations of the Spirit which had testified of things to come.

Mormon₂'s Message to the Gentiles and Latter-Day Israel

¹⁷ Therefore I write unto you, Gentiles, and also unto you, house of Israel, when the work shall commence, that ye shall be about to

^a 7 +361 years

^b 8 +362 years

9–10: The Nephites interpret their two successive victories as evidence that God was with them, hence they swear by his throne in the heavens (even though this was explicitly forbidden at 3 Ne 12.34 (Mt 5.34)). In actuality, their spiritual situation has not changed from 2.26, and they are as mistaken as King Noah's armies were at Mos 11.18–19.

11–16: This passage is framed by an inclusio marked by *utterly refuse* [to go to war], though with a transition from Mormon's commanding others to his own receiving commands from God. **11:** Mormon's pacifist renunciation will last for more than thirteen years; see 5.1. **12:** Although Mormon loses faith in his people, as well as hope (5.2), his love for them continues. **13:** *Thrice have I delivered them*, the first deliverance was at 2.9, the second at 2.25–26, and the third at 3.7–8. **14:** *Sworn by all that had been forbidden*, see v. 9–10n. **15:** *Vengeance is mine, and I will repay*, Rom 12.19 (quoting Deut 32.35); cf. Morm 8.20. The Lord thus promises to do to the Nephites what they themselves had sworn to do to the Lamanites—*cut [them] off from the face of the earth*; see v. 10 above.

16: *The manifestations of the Spirit which had testified of things to come*, see v. 20 below. **17:** Having withdrawn from trying to lead or persuade his own people, Mormon turns his attention to his future readers—the Israelites and Gentiles in the latter days. *When the work shall commence*, a key BoM eschatological phrase; see 1 Ne 14.17; 2 Ne 3.13; 30.8; 3 Ne 21.26–29.

prepare to return to the land of your inheritance; ¹⁸ yea, behold, I write unto all the ends of the earth; yea, unto you, twelve tribes of Israel, who shall be judged according to your works by the twelve whom Jesus chose to be his disciples in the land of Jerusalem. ¹⁹ And I write also unto the remnant of this people, who shall also be judged by the twelve whom Jesus chose in this land; and they shall be judged by the other twelve whom Jesus chose in the land of Jerusalem.

²⁰ And these things doth the Spirit manifest unto me; therefore I write unto you all. And for this cause I write unto you, that ye may know that ye must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, yea, every soul who belongs to the whole human family of Adam; and ye must stand to be judged of your works, whether they be good or evil; ²¹ and also that ye may believe the gospel of Jesus Christ, which ye shall have among you; and also that the Jews, the covenant people of the Lord, shall have other witness besides him whom they saw and heard, that Jesus, whom they slew, was the very Christ and the very God. ²² And I would that I could persuade all ye ends of the earth to repent and prepare to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.

The Nephites Attack the Lamanites and Are Defeated

[III] **4** ¹ And now it came to pass that in the three hundred and sixty and third year^a the Nephites did go up with their armies to battle against the Lamanites, out of the land Desolation. ² And it came to pass that the armies of the Nephites were driven back again to the land of Desolation. And while they were yet weary, a fresh army of the Lamanites did come upon them; and they had a sore battle, insomuch that the Lamanites did take possession of the city Desolation, and did slay many of the Nephites, and did take many prisoners. ³ And the remainder did flee and join the inhabitants of the city Teancum. (Now the city Teancum lay in the borders by the sea-shore; and it was also near the city Desolation.)

⁴ And it was because the armies of the Nephites went up unto the Lamanites that they began to be smitten; for were it not for that, the Lamanites could have had no power over them. ⁵ But, behold, the judgments of God will overtake the wicked; and it is by the wicked that the wicked are punished; for it is

^a 1 +363 years

18–20: The descendants of Lehi will be judged by the twelve disciples of 3 Ne (see 3 Ne 27.27), but those twelve will themselves be judged by the Jerusalem twelve (see Mt 19.28; Lk 22.30); Nephi had taught the same thing at 1 Ne 12.9–10. In the end, however, all people, both inside and outside the covenant, will *stand before the judgment-seat of Christ*. **18:** In the BoM, the phrase *all the ends of the earth* is closely associated with Isa 52.10: “all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God” (which is quoted at Mos 12.24; 15.31; 3 Ne 16.20; 20.35). Here Mormon uses the expression as he offers his last message of salvation to the entire world. *Twelve tribes of Israel*, including the ten lost tribes; cf. 1 Ne 22.3–4; 3 Ne 16.4; 17.4. **20–22:** Mormon hopes that his writings will have four effects on his readers: (1) they will know they must all be judged according to their works; (2) they will believe the gospel; (3) the Jews will have another witness that Jesus was the Christ, or the Messiah; and (4) everyone will repent. **20:** *The judgment-seat of Christ*, Rom 14.10; 2 Cor 5.10; and six times in the BoM (all in the words of either Mormon or Moroni). *Family of Adam*, only here and 2 Ne 9.21. **21:** *Covenant people of the Lord*, non-biblical, but seven times in the BoM (all in 1–2 Ne and Morm). *Other witness*, probably “other witnesses” or “another witness”—perhaps the BoM. *Very*, WB: “true; real.” **22:** This desire is similar to Jesus’s command at 3 Ne 27.20, which summarizes the essence of the gospel message.

CHAPTER 4

According to 3.11–16, Mormon is a recorder rather than a participant in the events of this chapter (note the shift to third-person narration, which will continue until v. 23). **4:** The Nephites are here contravening principles of “just war” that had been established more than 400 years earlier; see Alma 43.46–47; 48.14; cf. 3 Ne 3.20–21. **4–5:** Mormon offers a moral explanation for the Nephite defeat, followed by a general theological principle.

the wicked that stir up the hearts of the children of men unto bloodshed.

Nephite Gains and Losses; Great Wickedness

⁶ And it came to pass that the Lamanites did make preparations to come against the city Teancum. ⁷ And it came to pass in the three hundred and sixty and fourth year^a the Lamanites did come against the city Teancum, that they might take possession of the city Teancum also. ⁸ And it came to pass that they were repulsed and driven back by the Nephites. And when the Nephites saw that they had driven the Lamanites they did again boast of their strength; and they went forth in their own might, and took possession again of the city Desolation. ⁹ And now all these things had been done, and there had been thousands slain on both sides, both the Nephites and the Lamanites.

¹⁰ And it came to pass that the three hundred and sixty and sixth year had passed away,^b and the Lamanites came again upon the Nephites to battle; and yet the Nephites repented not of the evil they had done, but persisted in their wickedness continually. ¹¹ And it is impossible for the tongue to describe, or for man to write a perfect description of the horrible scene of the blood and carnage which was among the people, both of the Nephites and of the Lamanites; and every heart was hardened, so that they delighted in the shedding of blood continually. ¹² And there never had been so great wickedness among all the children

of Lehi, nor even among all the house of Israel, according to the words of the Lord, as was among this people.

¹³ And it came to pass that the Lamanites did take possession of the city Desolation, and this because their number did exceed the number of the Nephites. ¹⁴ And they did also march forward against the city Teancum, and did drive the inhabitants forth out of her, and did take many prisoners both women and children, and did offer them up as sacrifices unto their idol gods.

¹⁵ And it came to pass that in the three hundred and sixty and seventh year,^c the Nephites being angry because the Lamanites had sacrificed their women and their children, that they did go against the Lamanites with exceeding great anger, insomuch that they did beat again the Lamanites, and drive them out of their lands.

The Beginning of the End

¹⁶ And the Lamanites did not come again against the Nephites until the three hundred and seventy and fifth year.^d ¹⁷ And in this year they did come down against the Nephites with all their powers; and they were not numbered because of the greatness of their number. ¹⁸ And from this time forth did the Nephites gain no power over the Lamanites,

^a 7 +364 years

^b 10 +366 years

^c 15 +367 years

^d 16 +375 years

8: *Boast again of their own strength*, similar boasting at 3.9 had led Mormon to resign his command; cf. Mos 11.19. *In their own might*, as opposed to "in the strength of the Lord" (twice in the OT and eight times in the BoM, cf. 2.26). **11:** *Impossible for tongue to describe, or for man to write*, the phrasing echoes 3 Ne 17.17, where things were too marvelous and joyful to communicate. This verse presents the polar opposite. **12:** A devastating assessment. *According to the words of the Lord*, reference uncertain. **14–15:** This is the first notice of human sacrifice in the BoM (also v. 21), though the possibility was raised at Alma 34.10–11. *Idol gods*, unique here. **16–23:** For five years the Nephites saw successive gains and losses of territory around the cities of Desolation and Teancum (+363 to +367), but after warfare resumes in +375, the Nephites suffer defeat after defeat, never again reconquering lost lands. **18:** *Even as a dew before the sun*, a rare example of a BoM narrative simile; cf. 2.15; Mos 20.10–11; Alma 14.29; 43.44.

but began to be swept off by them even as a dew before the sun.

¹⁹ And it came to pass that the Lamanites did come down against the city Desolation; and there was an exceedingly sore battle fought in the land Desolation, in the which they did beat the Nephites. ²⁰ And they fled again from before them, and they came to the city Boaz; and there they did stand against the Lamanites with exceeding boldness, insomuch that the Lamanites did not beat them until they had come again the second time. ²¹ And when they had come the second time, the Nephites were driven and slaughtered with an exceedingly great slaughter; their women and their children were again sacrificed unto idols. ²² And it came to pass that the Nephites did again flee from before them, taking all the inhabitants with them, both in towns and villages.

²³ And now I, Mormon, seeing that the Lamanites were about to overthrow the land, therefore I did go to the hill Shim, and did take up all the records which Ammaron had hid up unto the Lord.

The Nephites Retreat

5 ¹ And it came to pass that I did go forth among the Nephites, and did repent of the oath which I had made that I would no more assist them; and they gave me command again of their armies, for they looked upon me as though I could deliver them from their afflictions. ² But behold, I was without hope, for I knew the judgments of the Lord which should come upon them; for they repented not of their iniquities, but did struggle for

their lives without calling upon that Being who created them.

³ And it came to pass that the Lamanites did come against us as we had fled to the city of Jordan; but behold, they were driven back that they did not take the city at that time. ⁴ And it came to pass that they came against us again, and we did maintain the city. And there were also other cities which were maintained by the Nephites, which strongholds did cut them off that they could not get into the country which lay before us, to destroy the inhabitants of our land. ⁵ But it came to pass that whatsoever lands we had passed by, and the inhabitants thereof were not gathered in, were destroyed by the Lamanites, and their towns, and villages, and cities were burned with fire; and thus three hundred and seventy and nine years passed away.^a

⁶ And it came to pass that in the three hundred and eightieth year^b the Lamanites did come again against us to battle, and we did stand against them boldly; but it was all in vain, for so great were their numbers that they did tread the people of the Nephites under their feet. ⁷ And it came to pass that we did again take to flight, and those whose flight was swifter than the Lamanites did escape, and those whose flight did not exceed the Lamanites were swept down and destroyed.

A Message to Lamanites and Gentiles in the Last Days

⁸ And now behold, I, Mormon, do not desire to harrow up the souls of men in casting

^a 5 +379 years

^b 6 +380 years

20: *Fled again*, the first time was at v. 3; they will again flee at v. 22 and 5.7. **23:** *The records which Ammaron had hid up*, see 4 Ne 1.48–49; Morm 1.3.

CHAPTER 5

1: *Repent*, in this case, to change one's mind. *The oath which I had made*, see 3.11–16. **2:** *Without hope*, see 3.12n. **3–7:** Under Mormon's leadership the Nephites are able to hold their positions for a few years, but by +380 they are again in retreat. At this point, Mormon is about seventy years old. **8:** *All things which are hid must be revealed upon the house-tops* adapts phrasing from Mt 10.26–27 and Lk 12.2–3; cf. 2 Ne 27.11–12. The idea is that the sorts of things families say to one another while they are relaxing on their flat roofs will become public knowledge.

before them such an awful scene of blood and carnage as was laid before mine eyes; but I, knowing that these things must surely be made known, and that all things which are hid must be revealed upon the house-tops—⁹ and also that a knowledge of these things must come unto the remnant of these people, and also unto the Gentiles, who the Lord hath said should scatter this people, and this people should be counted as naught among them—therefore I write a small abridgment, daring not to give a full account of the things which I have seen, because of the commandment which I have received, and also that ye might not have too great sorrow because of the wickedness of this people.

¹⁰ And now behold, this I speak unto their seed, and also to the Gentiles who have care for the house of Israel, that realize and know from whence their blessings come.¹¹ For I know that such will sorrow for the calamity of the house of Israel; yea, they will sorrow for the destruction of this people; they will sorrow that this people had not repented that they might have been clasped in the arms of Jesus.

¹² Now these things are written unto the remnant of the house of Jacob; and they are written after this manner, because it is known of God that wickedness will not bring them forth unto them; and they are to be hid up

unto the Lord that they may come forth in his own due time.¹³ And this is the commandment which I have received; and behold, they shall come forth according to the commandment of the Lord, when he shall see fit, in his wisdom.

¹⁴ And behold, they shall go unto the unbelieving of the Jews; and for this intent shall they go—that they may be persuaded that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God; that the Father may bring about, through his most Beloved, his great and eternal purpose, in restoring the Jews, or all the house of Israel, to the land of their inheritance, which the Lord their God hath given them, unto the fulfilling of his covenant;¹⁵ and also that the seed of this people may more fully believe his gospel, which shall go forth unto them from the Gentiles.

For this people shall be scattered, and shall become a dark, a filthy, and a loathsome people, beyond the description of that which ever hath been amongst us, yea, even that which hath been among the Lamanites, and this because of their unbelief and idolatry.¹⁶ For behold, the Spirit of the Lord hath already ceased to strive with their fathers; and they are without Christ and God in the world; and they are driven about as chaff before the wind.

9: *A knowledge . . . must come*, through the BoM. *Who the Lord said should scatter this people*, see 3 Ne 16.8; cf. 1 Ne 13.14. *The commandment which I have received*, 1.4; cf. 2.18. **10:** *From whence their blessings come* refers to the house of Israel as a source of the Gentiles' blessings (2 Ne 10.18; 3 Ne 21.22), similar to when Nephi reminded the Gentiles of how much they owe the Jews for the Bible and its message of salvation (2 Ne 29.4). *In the arms of Jesus* has a few early 19th-c. precedents, but see 6.17. **12:** *These things*, the BoM. *Wickedness will not bring them forth*, only God can preserve and eventually make the Nephite records accessible. *Own due time*, non-biblical, but ten times in the BoM; with reference to the coming forth of the BoM at Enos 1.16 and here, and to the sealed portion of Mormon's plates at 1 Ne 14.26; 2 Ne 27.10, 21–22; cf. Ether 3.27. **13:** *When [the Lord] shall see fit, in his wisdom*, see 3 Ne 29.1n. **14:** *Most Beloved*, unique here. **15:** Mormon's connection of *dark* with *filthy* and *loathsome* (cf. 1 Ne 12.23) has racist overtones that are unacceptable today, and are even questionable by the standards of the BoM itself, taken as a whole; see 2 Ne 5.21n. **16–18:** When Mormon does not want to provide sordid details, he moves toward metaphor, as in these verses; cf. 4.18. **16:** *The Spirit of the Lord hath already ceased to strive*, see 1 Ne 7.14n. *Without Christ and God in the world*, an expansion of Eph 2.12; cf. Mos 27.31. *Driven about as chaff before the wind*, cf. Ps 1.4 (describing "the ungodly").

17 They were once a delightful
 people,
 and they had Christ for their
 shepherd;
 yea, they were led even by God the
 Father.

18 But now, behold, they are led about
 by Satan,
 even as chaff is driven before the
 wind,
 or as a vessel is tossed about upon the
 waves,
 without sail or anchor,
 or without anything wherewith to
 steer her;
 and even as she is, so are they.

19 And behold, the Lord hath reserved their
 blessings, which they might have received in
 the land, for the Gentiles who shall possess the
 land.

20 But behold, it shall come to pass that they
 shall be driven and scattered by the Gentiles;
 and after they have been driven and scattered
 by the Gentiles, behold, then will the Lord
 remember the covenant which he made unto
 Abraham and unto all the house of Israel.

21 And also the Lord will remember the

prayers of the righteous, which have been put
 up unto him for them.

22 And then, O ye Gentiles, how can ye
 stand before the power of God, except ye shall
 repent and turn from your evil ways? 23 Know
 ye not that ye are in the hands of God? Know
 ye not that he hath all power, and at his great
 command the earth shall be rolled together as
 a scroll? 24 Therefore, repent ye, and humble
 yourselves before him, lest he shall come out
 in justice against you—

lest a remnant of the seed of Jacob
 shall go forth among you as a lion,
 and tear you in pieces,
 and there is none to deliver.

Preparations for the Last Battle

[III] **6** 1 And now I finish my record
 concerning the destruction of
 my people, the Nephites. And it came to pass
 that we did march forth before the Lamanites.
 2 And I, Mormon, wrote an epistle unto the
 king of the Lamanites, and desired of him that
 he would grant unto us that we might gather
 together our people unto the land of Cumorah,
 by a hill which was called Cumorah, and there

18: A ship without sail, anchor, or a steering mechanism will drift aimlessly; similarly, once a person is off course, it may not matter much where he or she goes. **20–24:** *Driven and scattered by the Gentiles* refers to the displacement and abuse of Native Americans. The Lord promises that such mistreatment will come to an end, and unless the Gentiles repent, they will reap the consequences of their actions; cf. 3 Ne 16.8–11. **20–21:** Moroni will repeat these sentiments in his own conclusion at 9.36–37. **20:** *Then will the Lord remember the covenant*, this idea occurs nine times in the OT, once in the NT, and thirteen times in the BoM. **21:** *Remember the prayers of the righteous*, see Prov 15.29; 2 Ne 26.15; Enos 1.11–13; Morm 8.23–24. **22:** *Repent and turn from your evil ways* echoes Mormon's words to the Gentiles at 3 Ne 30.2. **23:** *The earth shall be rolled together as a scroll*, also 9.2; Isaiah spoke of the heavens being treated thus (Isa 34.4), while Jesus referred to the earth being "wrapt together as a scroll" at 3 Ne 26.3. **24:** The last part of this verse is a paraphrase of Mic 5.8, which was cited by Jesus at 3 Ne 20.16; 21.12.

CHAPTER 6

2: Compare the letter sent to Mormon by the Lamanite king some twenty years earlier, which also allowed the Nephites to assemble for battle (3.4–5). Gathering together would give the Nephites more strength, but also present a compact, more defined target for the Lamanites. *Cumorah*, the first mention of this place name in the BoM. Early Latter-day Saints, beginning with OC in 1835, referred to the hill in western New York where JS discovered the gold plates as "Cumorah," though some LDS scholars have hypothesized that the location of the final Nephite battle may have been at another hill with the same name elsewhere in the Americas.

we could give them battle.³ And it came to pass that the king of the Lamanites did grant unto me the thing which I desired.

⁴ And it came to pass that we did march forth to the land of Cumorah, and we did pitch our tents around about the hill Cumorah; and it was in a land of many waters, rivers, and fountains; and here we had hope to gain advantage over the Lamanites.⁵ And when three hundred and eighty and four years had passed away,^a we had gathered in all the remainder of our people unto the land of Cumorah.

⁶ And it came to pass that when we had gathered in all our people in one to the land of Cumorah, behold I, Mormon, began to be old; and knowing it to be the last struggle of my people, and having been commanded of the Lord that I should not suffer the records which had been handed down by our fathers, which were sacred, to fall into the hands of the Lamanites, (for the Lamanites would destroy them) therefore I made this record out of the plates of Nephi, and hid up in the hill Cumorah all the records which had been entrusted to me by the hand of the Lord, save it were these few plates which I gave unto my son Moroni.

The Last Battle

⁷ And it came to pass that my people, with their wives and their children, did now behold the armies of the Lamanites marching towards them; and with that awful fear of death which fills the breasts of all the wicked, did they await to receive them.⁸ And it came to pass that they came to battle against us, and every soul was filled with terror because of the greatness of their numbers.⁹ And it came to pass

that they did fall upon my people with the sword, and with the bow, and with the arrow, and with the ax, and with all manner of weapons of war.¹⁰ And it came to pass that my men were hewn down, yea, even my ten thousand who were with me, and I fell wounded in the midst; and they passed by me that they did not put an end to my life.

¹¹ And when they had gone through and hewn down all my people save it were twenty and four of us, (among whom was my son Moroni) and we having survived the dead of our people, did behold on the morrow, when the Lamanites had returned unto their camps, from the top of the hill Cumorah, the ten thousand of my people who were hewn down, being led in the front by me.

¹² And we also beheld the ten thousand of my people who were led by my son Moroni.

¹³ And behold, the ten thousand of Giddiddonah had fallen, and he also in the midst.

¹⁴ And Lamah had fallen with his ten thousand; and Gilgal had fallen with his ten thousand; and Limhah had fallen with his ten thousand;

and Joneam had fallen with his ten thousand; and Cumenihah, and Moronihah, and Antionum, and Shiblom, and Shem,

^a 5 +384 years

6: *Began to be old*, Mormon would have been 74. *The Lamanites would destroy them*, echoing Enos's fears at Enos 1.14. *I made this record*, the plates found by JS, which contain Mormon's abridgment of the Large Plates of Nephi. **10–15:** Mormon reports 230,000 Nephite deaths, which is an unlikely number, particularly given the paucity of archaeological evidence for a New World civilization of that size at the time. But ancient histories regularly exaggerate numbers, and it is possible that *ten thousand* was a generic term like "myriad" (which in Greek is literally ten thousand) or the name of a military unit rather than an actual count of soldiers. **10–11:** The threefold repetition of *hewn down* literalizes a Nephite prophetic metaphor for destruction that appears more than a dozen times in the BoM; cf. Mt 3.10.

and Josh, had fallen with their ten thousand each.

¹⁵ And it came to pass that there were ten more who did fall by the sword, with their ten thousand each; yea, even all my people—save it were those twenty and four who were with me, and also a few who had escaped into the south countries, and a few who had dissented over unto the Lamanites—had fallen; and their flesh, and bones, and blood lay upon the face of the earth, being left by the hands of those who slew them to molder upon the land, and to crumble and to return to their mother earth.

Mormon₂'s Lamentation

¹⁶ And my soul was rent with anguish, because of the slain of my people, and I cried:

¹⁷ “O ye fair ones,
how could ye have departed from
the ways of the Lord!

O ye fair ones,
how could ye have rejected that
Jesus,
who stood with open arms to
receive you!

¹⁸ Behold, if ye had not done this, ye
would not have fallen.

But behold, ye are fallen, and
I mourn your loss.

¹⁹ O ye fair sons and daughters,
ye fathers and mothers,

ye husbands and wives,
ye fair ones,

how is it that ye could have fallen!

²⁰ But behold, ye are gone,
and my sorrows cannot bring your
return.

²¹ “And the day soon cometh that your mortal must put on immortality, and these bodies which are now moldering in corruption must soon become incorruptible bodies; and then ye must stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, to be judged according to your works; and if it so be that ye are righteous, then are ye blessed with your fathers who have gone before you.

²² “O that ye had repented before this great destruction had come upon you. But behold, ye are gone, and the Father, yea, the Eternal Father of heaven, knoweth your state; and he doeth with you according to his justice and mercy.”

Mormon₂'s Counsel to Latter-Day Lamanites

7 ¹ And now, behold, I would speak somewhat unto the remnant of this people who are spared, if it so be that God may give unto them my words, that they may know of the things of their fathers; yea, I speak

15: *Molder*, WB: “to turn to dust by natural decay,” cf. Alma 28.11. *To crumble . . . to their mother earth*, 2 Ne 9.7 (speaking of the final fate of all humankind if there were no resurrection). **16:** *My soul was rent with anguish . . . the slain of my people*, Mormon’s response to the destruction of the Nephites matches that of Nephi when he saw the same event in a vision; see 2 Ne 26.7; cf. 1 Ne 15.4–5; 17.47. **17:** *O ye fair ones*, a poignant example of the literary device of apostrophe—addressing people who are not present, in a way that underscores their absence; cf. 3 Ne 10.4–5. *Fair*, probably “beautiful” rather than “light-skinned,” given the ethnic mixing of the previous centuries; cf. 3 Ne 8.25. **21:** The phrasing reflects Mos 16.10, which parallels 1 Cor 15.52–54 and Rev 20.12; cf. Alma 5.15. Note that both BoM chapters also include references to God extending his “arms of mercy” (Mos 16.12; Alma 5.33), which corresponds to the “open arms” mentioned in v. 17 above. **22:** Mormon’s lament *O that ye had repented before this great destruction* echoes the regrets of survivors at 3 Ne 8.24–25.

CHAPTER 7

Somewhat remarkably, Mormon makes an urgent, generous appeal to the posterity of the enemies who have just annihilated his people.

unto you, ye remnant of the house of Israel; and these are the words which I speak:

² Know ye that ye are of the house of Israel.

³ Know ye that ye must come unto repentance, or ye cannot be saved.

⁴ Know ye that ye must lay down your weapons of war, and delight no more in the shedding of blood, and take them not again, save it be that God shall command you.

⁵ Know ye that ye must come to the knowledge of your fathers, and repent of all your sins and iniquities, and believe in Jesus Christ, that he is the Son of God, and that he was slain by the Jews, and by the power of the Father he hath risen again, whereby he hath gained the victory over the grave; and also in him is the sting of death swallowed up. ⁶ And he bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead, whereby man must be raised to stand before his judgment-seat. ⁷ And he hath brought to pass the redemption of the world, whereby he that is found guiltless before him at the judgment day hath it given unto him to dwell in the presence of God in his kingdom, to sing

ceaseless praises with the choirs above, unto the Father, and unto the Son, and unto the Holy Ghost, which are one God, in a state of happiness which hath no end.

⁸ Therefore repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus, and lay hold upon the gospel of Christ, which shall be set before you, not only in this record but also in the record which shall come unto the Gentiles from the Jews, which record shall come from the Gentiles unto you. ⁹ For behold, this is written for the intent that ye may believe that; and if ye believe that ye will believe this also; and if ye believe this ye will know concerning your fathers, and also the marvelous works which were wrought by the power of God among them. ¹⁰ And ye will also know that ye are a remnant of the seed of Jacob; therefore ye are numbered among the people of the first covenant; and if it so be that ye believe in Christ, and are baptized—first with water, then with fire and with the Holy Ghost, following the example of our Savior, according to that which he hath commanded us—it shall be well with you in the day of judgment. Amen.

2–7: He lists four facts, of increasing length, that he wants the descendants of the Lamanites to know concerning who they are and what they must do to be saved. The four repetitions of *know ye that* are an example of anaphora. 4: Mormon urges pacifism (the phrasing echoes Hel 5:51), though he allows for the possibility that the Lord himself may call for war, presumably against the Gentiles; see 5:24. 5–7: This summary of the plan of salvation is followed in v. 8 by instructions for how to access that plan. 5: *Your fathers*, perhaps Nephite and Lamanite prophets who testified of Christ, or more generally, the ancient Lehtes as a cautionary yet inspiring example (see v. 9). Nephi and Lehi also spoke of the latter-day Lamanites coming to “a knowledge of their fathers” at 1 Ne 15:14; 2 Ne 3:12; 30:5. *Victory over the grave and sting of death swallowed up*, Mos 16:7–8; Alma 22:14; cf. 1 Cor 15:54–55. 7: *Sing... praises with the choirs above*, the same depiction of heaven occurred at Mos 2:28. *Which are one God*, see 2 Ne 31:21n; Mos 15:1–9n. 8: *Repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus*, cf. Acts 2:38, with ten variations in the BoM. *Lay hold upon, seize. This record, the BoM. The record which shall come unto the Gentiles from the Jews... from the Gentiles unto you*, the Bible, which would eventually be taken to Native Americans by the Gentiles; see 1 Ne 13:38. 9–10: Belief in the Bible and the BoM will lead to the two types of knowledge that Mormon had enjoined in vv. 2 and 5: knowledge of their forefathers and of their identity as Israelites. 9: *This*, the BoM. *That*, the Bible. Mormon suggests that belief in the Bible and the BoM should be mutually reinforcing. 10: *Ye are a remnant of the seed of Jacob*, the same point that was made in v. 2, but this time it is followed by an explanation of why it matters. *First covenant*, Heb 8:7; 9:1. The first covenant, which was made with Israel, stands in contrast with the “new covenant” at Jer 31:31 and Heb 8:6–13, but unlike the author of Heb, the BoM does not argue that the old covenant is obsolete and “ready to vanish away.” In fact, the first covenant is still very much in force, and God will fulfill its promises. *Baptized... following the example of our Savior*, see 2 Ne 31:6–12; cf. Mt 3:13–17; Mk 1:9–11; Lk 3:21–22; Jn 1:29–34. *According to that which he hath commanded us*, see 3 Ne 12:1. *It shall be well with you in the day of judgment* extends God’s promise of peace in the land (see Deut 5:33) to salvation in the next life through the gospel of Christ; Moro 7:47 adds that “it shall be well” at the last day for those who possess charity.

MORONI'S ADDITIONS TO HIS FATHER'S RECORD

(Mormon 8–Moroni 10)

Moroni, the last major narrator in the Book of Mormon, is portrayed as a somewhat reluctant author. Mormon reported that he had entrusted “these few plates” (presumably his abridgment of the Large Plates of Nephi) to his son Moroni in 384 CE (Morm 6.6). Shortly thereafter, Mormon was killed in battle, but Moroni’s first writings were not inscribed onto the plates until 400 CE (Morm 8.6). In the intervening decade and a half, Moroni had apparently been wandering alone as a fugitive from the Lamanites. Finally, he writes two chapters to close out his father’s book before hiding the records in the earth (8.4). This relatively brief coda, written to fulfill his father’s command (8.1), consists mostly of admonitions to future readers, and seems to have been intended as the original ending to the Book of Mormon:

And these things are written that we may rid our garments of the blood of our brethren [the Lamanites], who have dwindled in unbelief. And behold, these things which we have desired concerning our brethren, yea, even their restoration to the knowledge of Christ, are according to the prayers of all the saints who have dwelt in the land. And may the Lord Jesus Christ grant that their prayers may be answered according to their faith; and may God the Father remember the covenant which he hath made with the house of Israel; and may he bless them forever, through faith on the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. (9.35–37)

This would have been a fitting conclusion to the book, so it comes as a surprise when the record continues into the book of Ether, especially since Moroni had earlier stated that he could only write a “few things” because there was no more room on the plates and he had no ore from which he could fashion new ones (8.1, 5).

Nevertheless, with no explanation of his personal circumstances, or where he found material to manufacture additional plates, or even an indication as to when he is writing, Moroni produces an account of the Jaredites, abridged from the twenty-four plates that had been discovered by the people of Limhi five centuries earlier (Mos 8.7–9; 28.10–19). In doing so, he fulfills an open-ended editorial promise made by

Mormon in the book of Mosiah, when he mentioned the Jaredite record and left off with the words “And this account shall be written hereafter; for behold, it is expedient that all people should know the things which are written in this account” (Mos 28:19). Moroni’s history of the Jaredites is decidedly more terse than his father’s recounting of the affairs of the Nephites, but it is interspersed with six editorial comment sections in which Moroni directly addresses the Gentiles of the latter days. In the last of those comments, at Ether 12, Moroni attempts a second time to bring the Book of Mormon to a close (after which he quickly wraps up the story of the Jaredites):

And now I, Moroni, bid farewell unto the Gentiles, yea, and also unto my brethren whom I love, until we shall meet before the judgment-seat of Christ, where all men shall know that my garments are not spotted with your blood. And then shall ye know that I have seen Jesus, and that he hath talked with me face to face, and that he told me in plain humility, even as a man telleth another in mine own language, concerning these things; and only a few have I written, because of my weakness in writing. And now, I would commend you to seek this Jesus of whom the prophets and apostles have written, that the grace of God the Father, and also the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of them, may be and abide in you forever. Amen. (Ether 12:38–41)

The phrase “my weakness in writing” is significant.

If the first indication of Moroni’s authorial reluctance was a delay of many years before he began writing, the second is his self-consciousness. Just before his initial farewell, he noted that he was writing in a highly stylized, non-vernacular language (“if we could have written in Hebrew, behold, ye would have had no imperfection in our record”) and implored his readers, “Condemn me not because of mine imperfection” (Morm 9:30–34). At Ether 12, Moroni returns to this theme in more detail, lamenting in prayer that his writing does not compare with his speaking abilities:

Lord, the Gentiles will mock at these things, because of our weakness in writing . . . thou hast also made our words powerful and great, even that we cannot write them; wherefore, when we write we behold our weakness, and stumble because of the placing of our words; and I fear lest the Gentiles shall mock at our words. (Ether 12:23, 25)

He then reports the Lord’s reassurances to him, which involve granting to the Gentiles a sense of charity, rather than blessing Moroni with stronger writing skills. (Some readers may wonder if Joseph Smith may have been projecting his own anxieties about clumsy writing and a lack of formal education onto Moroni.)

A third sign of Moroni’s hesitancy as a writer is his tendency to borrow and adapt the words of others. This is particularly evident in his own book, completed in 420 CE, more than thirty years after the death of his father. Of its ten chapters, seven are primarily derived from his predecessors, including four brief quotations of liturgy and ordinances (chs. 2–5), a lengthy sermon by his father, Mormon (ch. 7), and two letters from Mormon (chs. 8 and 9). In chapter 10, Moroni’s third and final farewell, he draws heavily on 1 Corinthians 12 (however he may have accessed the words of that Pauline epistle), and incorporates key phrases from the final words of several earlier record keepers—Lehi, Nephi, Jacob, Enos, Amaleki, and Mormon. Shortly thereafter, he concludes the Book of Mormon with these sentences:

And now I bid unto all, farewell. I soon go to rest in the paradise of God, until my spirit and body shall again reunite, and I am brought forth triumphant through the air, to meet you before the

pleasing bar of the great Jehovah, the Eternal Judge of both quick and dead. Amen. (Moro 10.34)

In all, Moroni composes three separate endings for his father's record, though this does not appear to have been his intention from the beginning—even if it ultimately parallels Mormon's three addresses to future readers at Mormon 3.17–22; 5.8–24; 7.1–10.

Unlike Nephi, or to a lesser extent Mormon, Moroni reveals very little of his personal life. He tells readers nothing about his family, his ecclesiastical responsibilities (noted at Moro 8.1), or his military service (noted at Morm 6.12). He mentions in passing his interactions with the immortal Three Disciples (Morm 8.10–11), his visions (Morm 8.34–35; Ether 12.39), and the commands he received from the Lord (Ether 4.5; 8.26; 13.13), but he does not retell stories from his life, other than recounting conversations he had with Jesus (Ether 4; 12). What readers do see is a portrait of loneliness, sorrow, and uncertainty. After noting the annihilation of the Nephites, he laments:

I even remain alone to write the sad tale of the destruction of my people. But behold, they are gone, and I fulfil the commandment of my father. And whether they [the Lamanites] will slay me, I know not. . . . My father hath been slain in battle, and all my kinsfolk, and I have not friends nor whither to go; and how long the Lord will suffer that I may live I know not. (Morm 8.3, 5)

Indeed, by the time Moroni begins writing, he sounds like a man who has lost nearly all human contact, living in a mental world filled with ancient records, revelations from God, and visions of his future readers (“Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing”; Morm 8.35.)

He prophesies of dire spiritual conditions in the last days (Morm 8.26–41), and he believes in revelation, which he has experienced firsthand, and which he sees as possible for his readers to receive as well. In his conclusion to his father's book, he specifically speaks to people in the latter days who doubt miracles and revelation (Morm 9.7–29), and at the close of his own book, which will complete the Book of Mormon as a whole, he urges readers to seek their own miracles and revelation (Moro 10.1–23).

In Moroni's additions to his father's record (Morm 8–9; Ether; Moroni), he primarily fulfills Mormon's unmet editorial promise concerning the Jaredites, ties up other loose ends with respect to priesthood ordinances and church governance, offers encouragement and warnings to Gentiles and Lamanites in the latter days, and bears testimony. In doing so, however, he significantly reshapes the message of the Book of Mormon. With Moroni's contributions, the sad tale of the end of the Nephites becomes not just a singular tragedy, but another iteration in a typology of destruction, in which one civilization after another destroys itself by rejecting God and his prophets. What happened to the Nephites is similar to what happened among the Jaredites, and it will happen again to modern Gentiles if they do not heed the witness of the Book of Mormon (see Ether 2.9–12). In each of the three cases, there is a divinely led immigration to the Americas by a people bringing a sacred text with them: the Jaredites had a record from the creation through Babel (Ether 1.3), the Nephites had the Brass Plates (1 Ne 5.10–22), and the Gentiles will have the Bible (1 Ne 13.19–23). Their fate in the New World, however, is determined by how they respond to additional, contemporary revelation that supplements their traditional scripture. It is up to them to receive God's word in a way that will fulfill the promises of the promised land.

THE BOOK OF MORMON

(chapters 8–9)

Moroni₂ Finishes His Father's Book: Mormon 8–9

The End of the Nephites

[IV] 8 ¹ Behold I, Moroni, do finish the record of my father, Mormon.

Behold, I have but few things to write, which things I have been commanded by my father.

² And now it came to pass that after the great and tremendous battle at Cumorah, behold, the Nephites who had escaped into the country southward were hunted by the Lamanites, until they were all destroyed. ³ And my father also was killed by them, and I even remain alone to write the sad tale of the destruction of my people. But behold, they are gone, and I fulfil the commandment of my father. And whether they will slay me, I know not.

⁴ Therefore I will write and hide up the records in the earth; and whither I go it mattereth not. ⁵ Behold, my father hath made this record, and he hath written the intent thereof. And behold, I would write it also if I had room upon the plates, but I have not; and ore I have none, for I am alone. My father hath been slain

in battle, and all my kinsfolk, and I have not friends nor whither to go; and how long the Lord will suffer that I may live I know not.

⁶ Behold, four hundred years have passed away since the coming of our Lord and Savior.^a

⁷ And behold, the Lamanites have hunted my people, the Nephites, down from city to city and from place to place, even until they are no more; and great has been their fall; yea, great and marvelous is the destruction of my people, the Nephites. ⁸ And behold, it is the hand of the Lord which hath done it. And behold also, the Lamanites are at war one with another; and the whole face of this land is one continual round of murder and bloodshed; and no one knoweth the end of the war.

⁹ And now, behold, I say no more concerning them, for there are none save it be the Lamanites and robbers that do exist upon the face of the land. ¹⁰ And there are none that do know the true God save it be the disciples of Jesus, who did tarry in the land until the wickedness of the people was so great that the

^a 6 +400 years

CHAPTERS 8–9

As Moroni takes over his father's record, these two chapters are his first attempt to conclude the BoM as a whole. His other two farewells are at Ether 12 and Moro 10. One assumes that he wrote each conclusion assuming that it would be the last, but in the end his three farewells match the three written by Mormon at 3.17–22; 5.8–24; and 7.1–10. For other writerly farewells in the BoM, see 2 Ne 33.10–15; Jacob 6.5–13; 7.26–27; Enos 1.25–27; Omni 1.25–26.

CHAPTER 8

2: *Who had escaped into the country southward*, see 6.15. **2–3:** Moroni's lament is similar to Elijah's at 1 Kings 19.10, 14. **3:** It is perhaps surprising that Moroni does not tell the story of his father's death, or record his last words. **4:** *Whither I go it mattereth not*, Moroni is echoing Abinadi (Mos 13.9), reflecting his realization that martyrdom may be his fate as well; cf. Ether's last words at Ether 15.34. **5:** *He hath written the intent thereof*, the reference to "greater things" in v. 12 below and at 3 Ne 26.8–10 suggests the latter as the passage Moroni has in mind here, but Mormon had also shared his editorial intentions at Morm 3.20–22; 5.14–15; 7.9–10. **6:** It has been sixteen years since the final battle, and only now is Moroni attempting to finish his father's record. **8:** *It is the hand of the Lord which hath done it*, in contrast with the same phrase at Isa 41.20 where the Lord has acted directly to aid Israel, here God's judgment against the Nephites has been accomplished through the Lamanites. **10:** *The Lord would not suffer them to remain*, see 1.13, 16.

Lord would not suffer them to remain with the people; and whether^a they be upon the face of the land no man knoweth. ¹¹ But behold, my father and I have seen them, and they have ministered unto us.

¹² And whoso receiveth this record, and shall not condemn it because of the imperfections which are in it, the same shall know of greater things than these. Behold, I am Moroni; and were it possible, I would make all things known unto you.

The Record to Come to Light according to the Lord's Promises

¹³ Behold, I make an end of speaking concerning this people. I am the son of Mormon, and my father was a descendant of Nephi. ¹⁴ And I am the same who hideth up this record unto the Lord; the plates thereof are of no worth, because of the commandment of the Lord (for he truly saith that no one shall have them to get gain), but the record thereof is of great worth; and whoso shall bring it to light, him will the Lord bless. ¹⁵ For none can have power to bring it to light save it be given him of God; for God wills that it shall be done with an eye single to his glory, or the welfare of the ancient and long dispersed covenant people of the Lord. ¹⁶ And blessed be he that shall bring this thing to light; for it shall be brought out of

darkness unto light, according to the word of God; yea, it shall be brought out of the earth, and it shall shine forth out of darkness, and come unto the knowledge of the people; and it shall be done by the power of God.

¹⁷ And if there be faults they be the faults of a man. But behold, we know no fault; nevertheless God knoweth all things; therefore, he that condemneth, let him be aware lest he shall be in danger of hell fire. ¹⁸ And he that saith, "Show unto me, or ye shall be smitten"—let him beware lest he commandeth that which is forbidden of the Lord. ¹⁹ For behold, the same that judgeth rashly shall be judged rashly again; for according to his works shall his wages be; therefore, he that smiteth shall be smitten again, of the Lord. ²⁰ Behold what the scripture says: "Man shall not smite, neither shall he judge; for judgment is mine,"^b saith the Lord, and "Vengeance is mine also, and I will repay."^c

²¹ And he that shall breathe out wrath and strifes against the work of the Lord, and against the covenant people of the Lord who are the house of Israel, and shall say, "We will destroy

^a 10 P *whither* [that is, where]; 1830 whether

^b 20 Reference uncertain

^c 20 Morm 3.15; cf. Deut 32.35; Rom 12.19; Heb 10.30

11: The opportunity to interview people who had been present at Christ's coming to the Nephites three centuries earlier would have been a remarkable resource for a historian; cf. 3 Ne 28.26. **12:** Moroni repeatedly acknowledges that his scriptural record may contain *imperfections*; cf. the BoM title page and Ether 12.23–25, but also v. 17 below. *The same shall know of greater things than these*, reiterating Mormon's observation at 3 Ne 26.9; the phrasing echoes Jn 1.50. **13:** Moroni's explicit connection of Mormon and Nephi here will be matched by a series of quotations from each in ch. 9. **14:** *Hideth this record unto the Lord*, the phrase is used in the BoM title page to refer to the gold plates received by JS, which were buried by Moroni; references to other records that were similarly hidden by Ammaron and Mormon occur at 4 Ne 1.48–49 and Ether 15.11. Moroni emphasizes the value of the record over the plates, even though the latter are made of gold. **15:** The reference to an *eye* that is *single*, from the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 6.22; 3 Ne 13.22) is clarified by the addition of *to his glory*. *The ancient . . . covenant people of the Lord* are identified as the Jews at 2 Ne 29.4–5; the reference here seems to include the Lehités as well. **16:** *He that shall bring this thing to light*, that is, JS. *According to the word of God*, perhaps Alma 37.23–25; cf. 2 Ne 3.5. **17:** *He shall be in danger of hell fire*, Mt 5.22 (3 Ne 12.22), again from the Sermon on the Mount, where the warning is given to those who say "Thou fool." **18:** *Show unto me*, that is, "show me the plates." **19:** *The same that judgeth rashly shall be judged rashly again*, by God; see Mt 7.2 (3 Ne 14.2), also from the Sermon on the Mount. **20:** Moroni ascribes the entire quotation to scripture, though only the last part (*vengeance . . . repay*) can be found in the Bible or the BoM; see 3.15n.

the work of the Lord, and the Lord will not remember his covenant which he hath made unto the house of Israel”—the same is in danger to be hewn down and cast into the fire; ²² for the eternal purposes of the Lord shall roll on, until all his promises shall be fulfilled.

²³ Search the prophecies of Isaiah. Behold, I cannot write them. Yea, behold I say unto you, that those saints who have gone before me, who have possessed this land, shall cry, yea, even from the dust will they cry unto the Lord; and as the Lord liveth he will remember the covenant which he hath made with them. ²⁴ And he knoweth their prayers, that they were in behalf of their brethren. And he knoweth their faith, for in his name could they remove mountains; and in his name could they cause the earth to shake; and by the power of his word did they cause prisons to tumble to the earth; yea, even the fiery furnace could not harm them, neither wild beasts nor poisonous serpents, because of the power of his word. ²⁵ And behold, their prayers were also in behalf of him that the Lord should suffer to bring these things forth. ²⁶ And no one need say they shall not come, for they surely shall, for the Lord hath spoken it; for out of

the earth shall they come, by the hand of the Lord, and none can stay it.

The Day When the Record Will Come Forth

And it shall come in a day when it shall be said that miracles are done away; and it shall come even as if one should speak from the dead.

²⁷ And it shall come in a day when the blood of saints shall cry unto the Lord, because of secret combinations and the works of darkness.

²⁸ Yea, it shall come in a day when the power of God shall be denied, and churches become defiled and be lifted up in the pride of their hearts; yea, even in a day when leaders of churches and teachers shall rise in the pride of their hearts, even to the envying of them who belong to their churches.

²⁹ Yea, it shall come in a day when there shall be heard of fires, and tempests, and vapors of smoke in foreign lands; ³⁰ and there shall also be heard of wars, rumors of wars, and earthquakes in divers places.

³¹ Yea, it shall come in a day when there shall be great pollutions upon the face of the earth; there shall be murders, and robbing, and lying, and deceivings, and whoredoms, and all manner

23: *Search the prophecies of Isaiah*, presumably because of his assurances that the Lord will fulfill his promises to Israel; Jesus gave the same counsel at 3 Ne 23.1. On the prayers of earlier saints, see 2 Ne 29.1–2; Enos 1.11–18; WoM 1.11; cf. 2 Ne 3.19–20. **24:** Compare the reports concerning the three disciples at 4 Ne 1.30–33. *Move mountains*, see Jacob 4.6; Ether 12.30. *Cause the earth to shake*, see 1 Ne 17.45; Hel 5.27. *Cause prisons to tumble*, see Alma 14.27; 3 Ne 28.19; Ether 12.13. *Furnace could not harm them*, see 3 Ne 28.21. *Neither wild beasts*, see 3 Ne 28.22. *Nor poisonous serpents*, see 9.24. As often happens in the BoM, God’s power is manifest in his word; the phrase *by the power of his word* appears at Jacob 4.9; Alma 5.5; Morm 9.17. **25–26a:** *In behalf of him*, that is, JS. *These things*, that is, the BoM (note the shift to the singular pronoun *it* in the last sentence of v. 26, which is continued though v. 32). *Stay*, WB: “to stop” or “to delay.” **26b–41:** A condemnation of Christianity in JS’s era. Pride, in particular, is mentioned repeatedly. Verses 26–32 are structured by anaphora, with six opening repetitions of *it shall come in a day when*. **26b:** *Miracles are done away*, see 3 Ne 29.6–7n; cf. 2 Ne 28.6. *Speak from the dead*, the voices of deceased Nephites will be heard again; see 2 Ne 27.13n; Morm 9.30. **27:** *The blood of saints shall cry*, 2 Ne 26.3; 28.10; vv. 40–41 below. **28:** *The power of God shall be denied*, cf. 2 Ne 28.5–6; Jacob 6.8; Moro 10.7, 32. *Churches . . . lifted up in . . . pride*, cf. 2 Ne 28.12. **30:** *Heard of wars, rumors of wars and earthquakes in divers places*, Mt 24.6–7; Mk 13.7–8. **31:** A similar list of moral failings in the last days was given by Mormon at 3 Ne 30.2. The anonymous quotation is reminiscent of 19th-c. Universalism; cf. 2 Ne 28.7–8. Note that this is the fourth allusion to 2 Ne 28 in six verses; that chapter also addressed the theme of corrupt churches in the latter days. Although Moroni has witnessed these things in vision himself (vv. 34–35), he draws on the words of others to relate what he knows. *Pollutions*, WB: “defilement; uncleanness; impurity.” *In the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity*, Acts 8.23 and four times in the BoM.

of abominations; when there shall be many who will say, “Do this, or do that, and it mattereth not, for the Lord will uphold such at the last day.” But wo unto such, for they are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity.

³² Yea, it shall come in a day when there shall be churches built up that shall say, “Come unto me, and for your money you shall be forgiven of your sins.” ³³ O ye wicked and perverse and stiffnecked people, why have ye built up churches unto yourselves to get gain? Why have ye transfigured the holy word of God, that ye might bring damnation upon your souls? Behold, look ye unto the revelations of God; for behold, the time cometh at that day when all these things must be fulfilled.

³⁴ Behold, the Lord hath shown unto me great and marvelous things concerning that which must shortly come, at that day when these things shall come forth among you. ³⁵ Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing. ³⁶ And I know that ye do walk in the pride of your hearts; and there are none save a few only who do not lift themselves up in the pride of their hearts, unto the wearing of very fine apparel, unto envying, and strifes, and malice, and persecutions,

and all manner of iniquities; and your churches, yea, even every one, have become polluted because of the pride of your hearts. ³⁷ For behold, ye do love money, and your substance, and your fine apparel, and the adorning of your churches, more than ye love the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted.

³⁸ O ye pollutions, ye hypocrites, ye teachers who sell yourselves for that which will canker, why have ye polluted the holy church of God? Why are ye ashamed to take upon you the name of Christ? Why do ye not think that greater is the value of an endless happiness than that misery which never dies? Because of the praise of the world? ³⁹ Why do ye adorn yourselves with that which hath no life, and yet suffer the hungry, and the needy, and the naked, and the sick and the afflicted to pass by you, and notice them not?

⁴⁰ Yea, why do ye build up your secret abominations to get gain, and cause that widows should mourn before the Lord, and also orphans to mourn before the Lord, and also the blood of their fathers and their husbands to cry unto the Lord from the ground, for vengeance upon your heads? ⁴¹ Behold, the sword of vengeance hangeth over you; and the time soon cometh that he avengeth the blood of the saints upon you, for he will not suffer their cries any longer.

32: This is probably not just a condemnation of Catholic indulgences, but of any church that promises redemption in return for generous donations. **33:** Moroni shifts to the second person as he addresses his religiously corrupt readers directly (a rhetorical stance that he explains in vv. 34–35). *Wicked and perverse*, this non-biblical phrase occurs five other times in the BoM, always referring to people who face imminent judgment and destruction, such as the people of Ammonihah or the Nephites right before Jesus’s coming (e.g., Alma 9.8; Hel 13.29). *Transfigured*, perhaps referring to spiritualized rather than literal interpretations of scripture, given the next sentence about the fulfillment of revelations. **34:** *That which must shortly come*, that is, shortly after the publication of the BoM. **36:** *Envying, and strifes, and malice, and persecutions, and all manner of iniquities*, repeating the words of Samuel the Lamanite at Hel 13.22; cf. Alma 4.9. **37:** A devastating critique of misplaced priorities. Even the construction of beautiful church buildings is condemned if the needs of the poor and the sick remain unmet. This verse and 4 Ne 1.41 are the only places in the BoM where the word *churches* clearly refers to physical structures; cf. 2 Ne 28.13. **38:** *Canker*, WB: “to decay; to grow rusty”; the verb is applied to gold and silver at Jas 5.3. **39:** *That which hath no life*, the implication is that human life is more valuable than any inanimate object. *Notice them not*, not only do the affluent refuse to help the impoverished, they do not even see them. A similar list of callous indifference was seen at Alma 4.12. **40:** *Secret abominations*, “secret combinations” would be a better reading; the idea is that such organizations will murder righteous men, leaving their widows and children bereft, as the blood of the deceased cries out for vengeance. The God of the OT was particularly concerned with the plight of widows and the fatherless, who are mentioned together more than two dozen times in that text. **41:** *Sword of vengeance* is unique here, standing in for the more expected “sword of justice,” but it follows from the human desire for vengeance in the preceding verse, as well as the assertion in v. 20 that vengeance belongs to the Lord.

MORMON 9: MORONI DRAWS ON NEPHI AND MORMON

In his first attempt to conclude the Book of Mormon, Moroni interweaves several distinctive phrases and concepts from the first and last keepers of the Large Plates. (Some have biblical precedents.)

Ref.	Phrase	Source
9.2	“the earth shall be rolled together as a scroll”	Mormon – Morm 5.23
9.2–3	“the Lamb of God”	Nephi – thirty-two times in Nephi’s writings
9.7	deny revelations, prophecies, gifts, healings, tongues	Mormon – 3 Ne 29.6
9.9	“[God is] the same yesterday, today and forever”	Nephi – 1 Ne 10.18; 2 Ne 27.23; 29.9
9.10–19	“a God of miracles” (five times)	Nephi – 2 Ne 27.23; 28.6
9.19–20	miracles cease	Mormon – Moro 7.27–37 (four times)
9.20–21	“the right way” is to believe in Christ	Nephi – 2 Ne 25.28–29
9.29	“the Son of the Living God”	Nephi – 2 Ne 31.16 Mormon – 3 Ne 30.1; Morm 5.14
9.29	“and if ye do this . . . ye will in nowise be cast out”	Nephi – 2 Ne 25.29

Note that Moroni emphasized his connection with both of these men at 8.13: “I am the son of Mormon, and my father was a descendant of Nephi.”

A Message for Those Who Do Not Believe in Christ

9¹ And now, I speak also concerning those who do not believe in Christ. ² Behold, will ye believe in the day of your visitation—behold, when the Lord shall come, yea, even that great day when the earth shall be rolled together as a scroll, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, yea, in that great day when ye shall be brought to stand before the Lamb of God—then will ye say that there is no God? ³ Then will ye longer deny the Christ, or can ye behold the Lamb of God?

Do ye suppose that ye shall dwell with him under a consciousness of your guilt? Do ye suppose that ye could be happy to dwell with that holy Being, when your souls are racked with a consciousness of guilt that ye have ever abused his laws?

⁴ Behold, I say unto you that ye would be more miserable to dwell with a holy and just God, under a consciousness of your filthiness before him, than ye would to dwell with the damned souls in hell. ⁵ For behold, when ye shall be brought to see your nakedness before God, and also the glory of God, and the holiness of Jesus Christ, it will kindle

CHAPTER 9

2: *Day of your visitation* is a phrase derived from Isa 10.3 (2 Ne 20.3), where it means “the day of punishment.” *Rolled together . . . fervent heat*, see 3 Ne 26.3n. **3–6:** Moroni speaks of a type of self-judgment, by which individuals will be sorted by their own consciences. **5:** *See your nakedness before God*, like Adam and Eve in the garden, see Gen 3.7–11. *Flame of unquenchable fire*, here referring to feelings of intense guilt as opposed to actual burning. The pain will be psychological rather than physical; cf. Mos 2.38.

a flame of unquenchable fire upon you.
 6 O then ye unbelieving, turn ye unto the Lord; cry mightily unto the Father in the name of Jesus, that perhaps ye may be found spotless, pure, fair, and white, having been cleansed by the blood of the Lamb, at that great and last day.

A Message for Those Who Do Not Believe in Revelations or Miracles

7 And again I speak unto you who deny the revelations of God, and say that they are done away, that there are no revelations, nor prophecies, nor gifts, nor healing, nor speaking with tongues, and the interpretation of tongues;
 8 behold I say unto you, he that denieth these things knoweth not the gospel of Christ; yea, he has not read the scriptures; if so, he does not understand them. 9 For do we not read that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and in him there is no variableness neither shadow of changing?

10 And now, if ye have imagined up unto yourselves a god who doth vary, and in whom there is shadow of changing, then have ye imagined up unto yourselves a god who is not

a God of miracles.¹¹ But behold, I will show unto you a God of miracles, even the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; and it is that same God who created the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are.

12 Behold, he created Adam, and by Adam came the fall of man. And because of the fall of man came Jesus Christ, even the Father and the Son; and because of Jesus Christ came the redemption of man.¹³ And because of the redemption of man, which came by Jesus Christ, they are brought back into the presence of the Lord; yea, this is wherein all men are redeemed, because the death of Christ bringeth to pass the resurrection, which bringeth to pass a redemption from an endless sleep, from which sleep all men shall be awakened by the power of God when the trump shall sound; and they shall come forth, both small and great, and all shall stand before his bar, being redeemed and loosed from this eternal band of death, which death is a temporal death.¹⁴ And then cometh the judgment of the Holy One upon them; and then cometh the time that

6: *Cleansed by the blood of the Lamb*, cf. Lev 14.25. 7–8: *And say that they are done away*, again Moroni is not speaking to skeptics who deny the reality or possibility of revelation and miracles, but rather to modern Christians who believe such manifestations of the Spirit are no longer needed; cf. 8.26. The list of miracles has several items in common with 1 Cor 12.4–11, which Moroni will adapt at Moro 10.8–17. 9: The assertion that *God is the same yesterday, today, and forever* appears in Nephite scripture at 1 Ne 10.18; 2 Ne 27.23; 29.9, as well as at Heb 13.8. The 2 Ne reference appears to be Moroni's source, since the same verse is also quoted in v. 11. *No variableness neither shadow of changing*, see Alma 7.20 and Jas 1.17 (both of which have "turning" rather than *changing*). 10–19: The non-biblical phrase *God of miracles* appears five times in this passage, cf. 2 Ne 27.23; 2 Ne 28.6 (in another condemnation of cessationism); the phrase was quite rare before 1830. 11: *Created the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are*, an adaptation of Ex 20.11 that is also found at 2 Ne 2.14 and 3 Ne 9.15. 12–14: This chain of causation stretching from the creation of Adam to the Final Judgment encapsulates the main ideas of BoM theology. The passage begins with anadiplosis, where the ending of a phrase is repeated at the beginning of the next; other examples occur at 2 Ne 2.13; 9.25; Alma 42.17, 23; Moro 8.25–26. 12–13: *The redemption of man* seems like an obvious corollary to "the fall of man," but the phrase appears only in these two verses. 13: *Endless sleep*, the physical death that would be endless, were it not for resurrection through Christ. *When the trump shall sound*, cf. 1 Cor 15.52; Mos 26.25. *Small and great . . . shall stand before his bar*, cf. Rev 20.12. 14: *He that is filthy . . . righteous still*, Rev 22.11; unlike the verse in Rev, which expresses a hope that people will continue in their present course until they get what they deserve at the Lord's coming, the BoM refers to a time after the Final Judgment. The idea is that God's judgment, far from being arbitrary, will simply confirm forever the essential nature that each person exhibited during his or her lifetime; cf. 2 Ne 9.15–16. This is similar to the concept of "restoration" at Alma 41. *He that is happy . . . unhappy still* is Moroni's extrapolation of the filthy/righteous dichotomy, in reverse order.

he that is filthy shall be filthy still;
 and he that is righteous shall be
 righteous still;
 he that is happy shall be happy still;
 and he that is unhappy shall be
 unhappy still.

¹⁵ And now, O all ye that have imagined up unto yourselves a god who can do no miracles, I would ask of you, have all these things passed, of which I have spoken? Has the end come yet? Behold I say unto you, Nay; and God has not ceased to be a God of miracles. ¹⁶ Behold, are not the things that God hath wrought marvelous in our eyes? Yea, and who can comprehend the marvelous works of God? ¹⁷ Who shall say that it was not a miracle that by his word the heaven and the earth should be; and by the power of his word man was created of the dust of the earth; and by the power of his word have miracles been wrought? ¹⁸ And who shall say that Jesus Christ did not do many mighty miracles? And there were many mighty miracles wrought by the hands of the apostles.

¹⁹ And if there were miracles wrought then, why^a has God ceased to be a God of miracles and yet be an unchangeable Being? And behold,

I say unto you he changeth not; if so he would cease to be God; and he ceaseth not to be God, and is a God of miracles. ²⁰ And the reason why he ceaseth to do miracles among the children of men is because that they dwindle in unbelief, and depart from the right way, and know not the God in whom they should trust.

Moroni₂ Quotes Jesus (Mark 16.15–18); Signs Follow Belief; Doubt Not

²¹ Behold, I say unto you that whoso believeth in Christ, doubting nothing, whatsoever he shall ask the Father in the name of Christ it shall be granted him; and this promise is unto all, even unto the ends of the earth. ²² For behold, thus said Jesus Christ, the Son of God, unto his disciples who should tarry, yea, and also to all his disciples, in the hearing of the multitude:

Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature; ²³ and he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned. ²⁴ And these

^a 19 Or *wrought, then why*

15: *Imagined up . . . do no miracles*, picking up phrases from v. 10. **17:** Note the continued emphasis on God's power as manifest through *his word*; see 8.24n. **18:** *Apostles* is unexpected here since the Nephite Twelve are always referred to as "disciples" but perhaps Moroni has learned about the early church in Judea through revelation (cf. Ether 12.41; Moro 2.2); miracles wrought "by the hands of the apostles" are mentioned at Acts 5.12. **19:** *He changeth not*, cf. Mal 3.6 (quoted at 3 Ne 24.6). *He would cease to be God*, Moroni connects God's essence to his unchangeableness; earlier Alma had argued that injustice would similarly terminate God's divinity; see Alma 42.13, 22–26. **20:** Moroni acknowledges that in the latter days there would be fewer revelations and miracles than in biblical or BoM times, but he attributes this to human unbelief rather than a change in divine power or will. The same point is made at 3 Ne 19.35; Morm 1.13–14; Moro 7.35–38; 10.19, 24; cf. Mt 13.58; Ether 12.12. **21:** Moroni introduces the quotation with an adaptation of v. 25 below ("whosoever shall believe," "doubting nothing," and "even unto the ends of the earth"), which includes a substitution suggesting that answered prayers are the equivalent of "confirm all my words." The promise that God will give believers whatever they ask for is reiterated from 3 Ne 18.20; 27.28; cf. Mk 11.24; Jn 15.16; 16.23. **22–24:** Moroni is reporting an event from Jesus's visit to the Nephites—perhaps from the missing third day of his ministry—that was not recorded in 3 Ne. His mention of the *disciples who should tarry* seems extraneous, unless they were the source of his information; see 8.11n. The wording of the quotation exactly matches Mk 16.15–18 (with the addition of an *and* at the beginning of v. 23). The biblical passage is part of the "longer ending" of Mark, which textual scholars have determined was probably a second-century addition to the original Gospel. Its appearance in the BoM can be interpreted either as an example of JS following the KJV even in its mistakes, or as an additional, divine witness that the long ending of Mark was based on authentic traditions about Jesus.

signs shall follow them that believe—in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover;²⁵ and whosoever shall believe in my name, doubting nothing, unto him will I confirm all my words, even unto the ends of the earth.

²⁶ And now, behold, who can stand against the works of the Lord? Who can deny his sayings? Who will rise up against the almighty power of the Lord? Who will despise the works of the Lord? Who will despise the children of Christ? Behold, all ye who are despisers of the works of the Lord, for ye shall wonder and perish.

²⁷ O then despise not, and wonder not, but hearken unto the words of the Lord, and ask the Father in the name of Jesus for what things soever ye shall stand in need. Doubt not, but be believing, and begin as in times of old, and come unto the Lord with all your heart, and work out your own salvation with fear and trembling before him.²⁸ Be wise in the days of your probation; strip yourselves of all uncleanness; ask not, that^a ye may consume it on your lusts, but ask with a firmness unshaken, that

ye will yield to no temptation, but that ye will serve the true and living God.²⁹ See that ye are not baptized unworthily; see that ye partake not of the sacrament of Christ unworthily; but see that ye do all things in worthiness, and do it in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God; and if ye do this, and endure to the end, ye will in nowise be cast out.

The Language of This Record

³⁰ Behold, I speak unto you as though I spake from the dead; for I know that ye shall hear^b my words. ³¹ Condemn me not because of mine imperfection, neither my father, because of his imperfection, neither them who have written before him; but rather give thanks unto God that he hath made manifest unto you our imperfections, that ye may learn to be more wise than we have been.

³² And now, behold, we have written this record according to our knowledge, in the characters which are called among us the reformed Egyptian, being handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of speech.³³ And if our plates had been sufficiently large we should have written in Hebrew; but the Hebrew hath been altered by us also; and if we could have written in Hebrew, behold, ye would have had no imperfection in our

^a 28 Or *ask, not that*

^b 30 1830 *hear*; P, 1981, *have*

25: This sentence does not come from Mk, though *confirm all my words* may be related to Mk 16.20 (“confirming the word with signs following”). 26: *Behold*, pay attention. A similar combination of *behold*, *all ye who are despisers* with *wonder and perish* and with *work* is found at Acts 13.41. 27–28: These verses provide clarification as to the content, manner, and motivation of prayer requests necessary to access the broad promise in v. 21. 27: *As in times of old*, before doubt and unbelief became fashionable. *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*, Phil 2.12; cf. Alma 34.37. 28: *Ask* and *that ye may consume it on your lusts*, Jas 4.3. *Serve the true and living God*, 1 Thess 1.9. 29: *Partake not of the sacrament of Christ unworthily*, 1 Cor 11.27–29; 3 Ne 18.29. This is the only time in the Bible or BoM when the word *sacrament* refers to the Lord’s Supper. 30: *As though I spake from the dead*, see 8.26bn. 31: *Mine imperfections*, see 8.12n. *That ye may learn to be more wise than we have been*, a poignant admission of failure, perhaps on behalf of the entire Nephite civilization; see Jacob 6.12n. 32: *Reformed Egyptian*, presumably transformed over the course of a thousand years from the original Egyptian of the Brass Plates, see 1 Ne 1.2; Mos 1.4. 33: Moroni blames the imperfections in his record on his having to write in a more concise literary language rather than his vernacular dialect.

record.³⁴ But the Lord knoweth the things which we have written, and also that none other people knoweth our language; therefore^a he hath prepared means for the interpretation thereof.

³⁵ And these things are written that we may rid our garments of the blood of our brethren, who have dwindled in unbelief.³⁶ And behold, these things which we have desired concerning our brethren, yea, even their restoration to the knowledge of Christ,

are according to the prayers of all the saints who have dwelt in the land.³⁷ And may the Lord Jesus Christ grant that their prayers may be answered according to their faith; and may God the Father remember the covenant which he hath made with the house of Israel; and may he bless them forever, through faith on the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

^a 34 P, 1830, 1981 language; *and because that none other people knoweth our language*, therefore

34: *Prepared means for the interpretation thereof*, referring to the Nephite “interpreters” that Moroni buried with the plates, or perhaps JS’s personal seer stone that he used in the translation process; see Mos 28.13–14n. **35:** *Rid our garments of the blood*, see 2 Ne 9.44n. **36–37:** The reference to *the prayers of all the saints who have dwelt in the land*, which will cause God to *remember the covenant which he hath made*, reiterates Moroni’s prophecy at 8.23.

INTRODUCTION TO ETHER

According to Mormon's history, in about 125 BCE a group of men from Zeniff's colony in the land of Nephi tried to locate the land of Zarahemla, from which the colonists had come two generations earlier. Their quest was unsuccessful. Instead, they found in the wilderness a land of ruins, strewn with bones. They also discovered twenty-four gold plates filled with engravings in an unknown language, which they brought back home to their king, Limhi (Mos 8.7–12). Eventually, the colonists were able to return to Zarahemla where the king of that land, Mosiah₂, translated the plates by means of a spiritual device—two seer stones “fastened into the two rims of a bow,” like a figure eight (Mos 22.13–14; 28.11–18). The plates told the story of an earlier people, whose ancestors had been led by God to the Americas just after the destruction of the Tower of Babel, who had subsequently destroyed themselves. Mormon noted that “this account shall be written hereafter” (Mos 28.19).

Mormon, however, died before he could incorporate this material into his abridgment, and the task was left to his son Moroni, who does just this in the book of Ether, which begins:

And now I, Moroni, proceed to give an account of those ancient inhabitants who were destroyed by the hand of the Lord upon the face of this north country. And I take mine account from the twenty and four plates which were found by the people of Limhi, which is called the book of Ether. (1.1–2)

Ether, a prophet, had been a witness of the last battles of his people, which resulted in their annihilation. After their demise, he inscribed an account of their history onto the twenty-four gold plates and then hid them where they could be found by Limhi's men many years later (Ether 15.33). Ether's people were descended from Jared and his brother, and thus are referred to as Jaredites, though that name appears only once in the Book of Mormon, at Moroni 9.23. There is yet more backstory.

Around the time of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in the early sixth century BCE, God guided the Lehitites to the New World, and he also led the Mulekites, in a separate migration, to a location north of the Lehitites, a land the Nephites would later call Desolation because of the bones and ruins found there, which were the remains of the Jaredites (Alma 22.30). The two groups of Israelites lived separately in the Americas, apparently unaware of each other, for three and a half centuries. At some point, however, before the Nephites and Mulekites united under King Mosiah₁, the Mulekites had discovered the last survivor of the Jaredites, a man named Coriantumr. There was also an account of Coriantumr and his people inscribed onto a large stone, which Mosiah₁ translated “by the gift and power of God” (Omni 1.19–22). The stele translated by Mosiah₁, and the twenty-four plates translated by his grandson Mosiah₂ (or perhaps by Mosiah₂'s father, Benjamin; see Mos 21.28) thus constituted two strands of written evidence for the fate of the mysterious earlier inhabitants of the land.

King Mosiah₂ had provided to his curious people a general summary of Ether's record, which caused them to “mourn exceedingly” because of the destruction of the Jaredites (Mos 28.12, 18), but the full

translation, particularly with details about the brother of Jared's vision and Jaredite secret combinations, was kept from the Nephites (Alma 37.21–32; 63.12; Hel 6.25) until after Jesus's appearance at Bountiful (Ether 4.1–2). Four centuries later, Moroni inscribed an abridgment of Ether's record onto his own plates, supplementing Mormon's abridgment of the Large Plates of Nephi, but he sealed the portion recounting specifics from the vision of the brother of Jared before burying them in the ground (Ether 3.25–28; 4.4–5; 5.1; cf. 2 Ne 27.6–8). The plates prepared by Moroni were the gold plates that Joseph Smith claimed to have found in a hill near his home in upstate New York.

Smith and other witnesses reported that a large portion of the gold plates was sealed, from one-third to two-thirds, and he was commanded not to open those pages. This would seem to leave little room for the bulk of the translated Book of Mormon, but one possible explanation, from an LDS perspective, is that the plates recovered by Smith consisted only of the books of Ether (with its sealed portion) and Moroni. Because he did not translate line by line from the physical plates, instead relying on a revealed translation accessed through a seer stone, it would not have been necessary for Smith to have had Mormon's complete writings in his possession.

Moroni begins the book by noting that Ether's record included an account of primordial history from "the creation of the world, and also of Adam" down to "the great tower," but he will begin his abridgment at Babel (1.1–6). After a quick recounting of Ether's genealogy back to Jared, the book of Ether is divided into three parts. The first summarizes the experiences of the brother of Jared, a curiously unnamed figure, including his people's migration to the New World and his dramatic vision (chs. 1–6). This is followed by a chronicle of nearly thirty Jaredite kings (chs. 7–11), who are mostly descended from Jared, and whose reigns are briefly narrated in chronological order, that is, in a reverse sequence to Ether's genealogy in chapter 1. And finally, Moroni rounds out his history of the Jaredites with an account of their last king, Coriantumr (the survivor who was discovered by the Mulekites), and their last prophet, Ether (chs. 12–15). Interspersed within his abridgment are six discrete passages of Moroni's editorial comments (1.1–6; 2.9–12; 3.17–20; 4.1–5.6; 8.20–26; 12.6–41), each of which either begins with something like "and now I, Moroni" or is followed by "and now I proceed with my record."

CONTENTS

Chapters 1–2: After identifying the source of his account (the twenty-four gold plates found by the people of Limhi) and incorporating a genealogy of its final prophet-author, Ether, Moroni relates how Jared and his brother, along with their family and friends, were led by the Lord from the Tower of Babel to the seashore, where they built ocean-going barges.

Chapter 3: In order to provide light for the ships, the brother of Jared fashions glass-like stones and asks the Lord to illuminate them with his touch. As this happens, the brother of Jared sees the Lord's spiritual body—that of the premortal Jesus—and is then shown a vision of all the inhabitants of the earth past, present, and future. He writes a record of his experience, which he is commanded to seal up for a future era.

Chapters 4–5: Moroni adds a few details about the sealed account, with instructions for the translator who will recover the plates, and tells his latter-day readers that they too may someday have access to such hidden records, in addition to the Book of Mormon, if they repent of their sins.

Chapter 6: The Jaredites sail to a promised land in the Americas, where they prosper and choose one of Jared's sons as their king.

Chapters 7–11: The reigns of twenty-nine kings are recounted in quick succession, including incidents of rebellion, war, captivity, murder, religious persecution, and treachery, sometimes abetted by secret combinations.

Chapter 12: When the last Jaredite prophet, Ether, begins to prophesy, Moroni interrupts his account for a discourse on faith, and a report of a conversation he had with the Lord about how the latter-day Gentiles might react to his awkward writing style.

Chapters 13–16: Moroni recounts some of Ether’s prophecies, followed by a narrative of the end of the Jaredites when two armies, led by Shiz and Coriantumr, entirely exterminate each other. The last words in the book are Ether’s rather than Moroni’s.

The chronology of the book of Ether is obscure, covering the period from the tower of Babel (a legendary event often dated by biblical literalists to about 2200 BCE) to sometime after the Mulekites arrived in the Americas in the sixth century BCE.

INTERPRETATION

The first thing to note is how atypical the Jaredite history is, in a book that otherwise focuses on an isolated branch of Israel and the mission of the house of Israel in general. Because the Jaredites are descended from a group of people who left the Old World before the time of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, they are not Israelites and thus know nothing of the Abrahamic Covenant or the Mosaic Law (hence their keeping of swine at 9.18). In addition, there is little indication that the Jaredites were Christian, which is unexpected in the Book of Mormon given its current subtitle, “Another Testament of Jesus Christ.” It is true that the brother of Jared saw the pre-mortal Christ in a vision, but he was instructed to seal up his account of that experience and not share it until Jesus came to earth and was “lifted up on the cross” (3.21, 27–28; 4.1). That seems to have been what happened, for while there are Jaredite prophets who warn their people to repent or be destroyed, they are never portrayed as speaking specifically of Christ, as opposed to the general term for deity, Lord (though one king, Emer, and one prophet, Ether, are reported to have seen private visions of the future Jesus; see 9.22 and 13.4).

Nevertheless, the book of Ether is filled with discussions of Christ, and that is due almost entirely to Moroni’s editing. As mentioned above, Moroni’s account of the Jaredites is punctuated by six clearly marked editorial comment sections, and nearly every reference to Christ in the book of Ether is found within these comments (the outliers are in bold):

Moroni’s Editorial Interruptions	Specific References to Jesus
1.1–6	
2.9–12	2.12 3.14 (Christ’s words to the brother of Jared)
3.17–20	3.17, 19, 20
4.1–5.6	4.1, 2, 3, 7, 8; 5.5
8.20–26	9.22
12.6–41	12.7, 16, 19, 22, 31, 32, 33, 35, 38, 39, 41 13.4

In other words, it appears that Moroni took a basically non-Christian history composed by Ether, and then Christianized it. Perhaps Mormon’s difficulty in conceptualizing how a history of the non-Israelite, non-Christian Jaredites might fit into his abridgment of the Nephite records was one reason he put off this task, eventually leaving it to his son Moroni. (Coincidentally, this is similar to how the Hebrew book of Esther—which never

mentions prayer, the Mosaic Law, or even God—was updated in the Greek translation of the Septuagint with six additional sections, totaling 105 verses, that include explicit elements of Jewish piety. The expanded version of Esther is in the Apocrypha.)

Another way in which Ether fits somewhat uneasily with the rest of the Book of Mormon is its hints that God's interactions with humankind may be more expansive than the Nephites had realized, with their focus on the house of Israel and the plan of salvation. The story of the Jaredites offers a detailed example of God overseeing the exodus of a non-Israelite people (as is also suggested at Amos 9.7), and the brother of Jared is saved without the benefit of baptism or a church (neither term ever appears in Ether with respect to the Jaredites, nor is there any mention of Christ's future atonement). Furthermore, Moroni seems to have deliberately recounted events from the life of the brother of Jared with phrases and sequencing that represent a literary and spiritual reversal, taking that prophet back from "the great tower [of Babel], at the time the Lord confounded the language of the people" (1.33) to a time before the Fall when God and man were at one: "Behold, the Lord showed himself unto him, and said, 'Because thou knowest these things ye are *redeemed from the fall*; therefore ye are *brought back into my presence*. . . . Seest thou that ye are created after mine own image? Yea, even all men were created in the beginning after mine own image'" (3.13, 15, emphasis added).

This reversal of the fall of Adam may be a plan of salvation corollary to Mormon's salvation history structuring of the Book of Mormon as a reversal of the fall of Jerusalem (see the introduction to Mormon's Abridgment), but the brother of Jared follows a different path from the standard Nephite progression of faith, repentance, baptism, receiving the Holy Ghost, death, resurrection, judgment, and eternal life with God. Instead, the Jaredite prophet is reunited with God in this life, through sure faith and certain knowledge. Nevertheless, Christ is at the center of both processes, as can be seen in his words to the brother of Jared: "Because of thy faith thou hast seen that I shall take upon me flesh and blood," followed a few verses later by "Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. Behold, I am Jesus Christ" (3.9, 14). Moroni further observes, "Because of the knowledge of this man he could not be kept from beholding within the veil" (3.19; cf. 12.19–21), and he reports a revelation indicating that this incident may be of particular value to his latter-day readers: "'And in that day that they [the Gentiles] shall exercise faith in me,' saith the Lord, 'even as the brother of Jared did, that they may become sanctified in me, then will I manifest unto them the things which the brother of Jared saw'" (4.7). In some instances, apparently, extraordinary faith can substitute for priesthood ordinances, particularly when they are unavailable. Moroni will return to the topic of potent faith at the end of his chronicle of Jaredite kings, in chapter 12.

Another anomalous passage in this book occurs in chapter 13, when Ether prophesies of future events that would have been unintelligible to his Jaredite contemporaries. In Moroni's paraphrased account, Ether tells his people about a new Jerusalem that would someday come from heaven to their land, and then he quickly backtracks to inform them of the old Jerusalem, which they know nothing about. Ether continues by foretelling a gathering of God's chosen people that would fulfill "the covenant which God made with their father, Abraham" (an unfamiliar figure to the Jaredites), and preaching of a "remnant of the seed of Joseph" (another unknown name) and of the end times when "the earth shall pass away[;] and there shall be a new heaven and a new earth." One gets the impression that Moroni has used the occasion of Ether's preaching to relay to his readers prophecies that he thought might be more applicable to them. In any case, God abruptly brings the discussion to an end: "And I was about to write more, but I am forbidden" (13.13), contrary to Moroni's own desires (Morm 8.12). (This is yet another example of God exercising editorial control over the Book of Mormon. Nephi and Mormon were similarly commanded to cut short some of their writings, usually with regard to eschatological matters; see 1 Ne 14.24–25; 3 Ne 26.11–12; 28.25).

GUIDE TO READING

If Moroni's somewhat laconic, annalistic recounting of Jaredite history is unexpectedly framed on either side by episodes of dramatic revelation and esoteric knowledge (chs. 3, 13), the majority of his abridgment functions typologically, as a grim precedent for the eradication of the Nephites. Readers can look for thematic and phrasal similarities in migrations, ocean crossings, monarchy, prophets, iniquity, warfare, and various blessings and curses on the land, in addition to cultural differences such as Jaredite kings being succeeded by their youngest sons or being kept in captivity for years on end. It is also worth noting passages where Moroni explicitly highlights connections between the Jaredites and the Nephites by pointing to parallel divine manifestations (3.17–18), similar causes for their demise (8.20–21), prophecies about replacement by the Nephites (11.20–21; 13.20–21), and observing that both civilizations ended at the same location (9.3; 15.11). This identification of cultural parallels reflects the long-running tendency for Nephite leaders to view the Jaredite story as a cautionary tale for their own people, much as the prophets of Judah looked to the destruction of Israel by the Assyrians as a fate to be avoided if at all possible (see Alma 46.22; Hel 6.28; Moro 9.23).

In reading the book of Ether, it may also be useful to imagine how Nephites in the days of Mosiah might have responded to these stories, especially when they saw the swords and breastplates that had been recovered along with the twenty-four plates (Mos 8.9–11). It may not be coincidental that King Mosiah dissolved the monarchy shortly after translating the Jaredite record, which portrayed a continual round of royal infighting and murder (Mos 28–29). Readers might also wonder about Moroni's reaction to the records he was abridging. He confesses that he was intimidated by the eloquent writing style of the brother of Jared (12.24), which he presumably encountered in excerpts transcribed by Ether or in Mosiah's translation (Mos 28.17; Ether 4.1). He may have found in Ether a kindred spirit, that is, someone who was also the last righteous survivor of his people, composing a history for the distant future.

Perhaps the most practical advice, however, is to pay attention to the things that Moroni intended his readers to focus on, as signaled in his six comment sections (easily identified by the headings in this edition). In these passages he underscores the aspects of Jaredite history that he believes are especially relevant to Gentiles, Jews, and Lamanites in the latter days: God's insistence that the inhabitants of the Americas should serve him or suffer divine retribution, the power of strong faith and perfect knowledge, the dire perils of secret combinations, the transformative power of humility and charity, and the urgency of historical precedents. Ether 2.11 offers a fairly typical example, alluding typologically to both the Jaredites and Nephites, and fraught with eschatological fervor:

And this cometh unto you, O ye Gentiles, that ye may know the decrees of God—that ye may repent, and not continue in your iniquities until the fulness come, that ye may not bring down the fulness of the wrath of God upon you as the inhabitants of the land have hitherto done.

THE BOOK OF ETHER

The record of the Jaredites, taken from the twenty-four plates found by the people of Limhi in the days of King Mosiah.

Moroni₂'s First Editorial Comment: Abridging the Twenty-Four Plates

[1] **1** ¹ And now I, Moroni, proceed to give an account of those ancient inhabitants who were destroyed by the hand of the Lord upon the face of this north country. ² And I take mine account from the twenty and four plates which were found by the people of Limhi, which is called the book of Ether.

³ And as I suppose that the first part of this record—which speaks concerning the creation of the world, and also of Adam, and an account from that time even to the great tower, and whatsoever things transpired among the children of men until that time—is had among the Jews, ⁴ therefore I do not write those things which transpired from the days of Adam until that time; but they are had upon the plates; and whoso findeth them, the same will have power that he may get the full account. ⁵ But behold, I give not the full

account, but a part of the account I give, from the tower down until they were destroyed. ⁶ And on this wise do I give the account.

The Genealogy of Ether

He that wrote this record was Ether,
and he was a descendant of
Coriantor.

⁷ Coriantor was the son of Moron.

⁸ And Moron was the son of Ethem.

⁹ And Ethem was the son of Ahah.

¹⁰ And Ahah was the son of Seth.

¹¹ And Seth was the son of Shiblón.

¹² And Shiblón was the son of Com.

¹³ And Com was the son of
Coriantum.

¹⁴ And Coriantum was the son of
Amnigaddah.

¹⁵ And Amnigaddah was the son of
Aaron.

¹⁶ And Aaron was a descendant of
Heth,

who was the son of Hearthom.

¹⁷ And Hearthom was the son of Lib.

CHAPTER 1

Preface: This description, added in 1920, was not part of the original BoM. The abridgment of the Jaredite record was promised at Mos 28.17–19. **1–6:** This is the first of six discrete comment sections by which Moroni shapes his account of the Jaredites. **1:** From this verse forward, the 1830 typesetter was once again working from the printer's rather than the original manuscript; see Hel 13.17n. *Proceed to give an account*, an editorial phrase that was used earlier at 1 Ne 10.1; 3 Ne 5.19. *Destroyed by the hand of the Lord* is unexpected since the Jaredites destroyed one another in civil war, but see Morm 8.7–8 for a similar comment. **2:** Moroni is apparently abridging King Mosiah's translation of the twenty-four plates; see Mos 28.10–19. On the discovery of the plates, see Mos 8.7–9. **3–4:** Moroni omits the equivalent of Gen 1–10 from his abridgment since this information will be available in the Bible. Nevertheless, many readers would have found an alternative, early account of the primeval history quite interesting. *The great tower*, the tower of Babel; cf. Mos 28.17. **6–33:** This genealogy will be the basis for the chronicle of Jaredite kings in chs. 7–11. **6:** *A descendant of Coriantor*, according to 11.23, Ether was the son of Coriantor. **11:** *Shiblón* is later referred to as “Shiblóm”; see 11.4. **16:** *A descendant of Heth*, according to 10.31, Aaron was the son of Heth.

ETHER 1–3: REVERSAL OF THE FALL

Allusions	Verbal and Narrative Parallels	Ether	Genesis
<i>The Tower</i>	The Lord “confounded the language of the people” and they were “scattered upon all the face of the earth.”	1.33	11.9
<i>Noah</i>	The Lord commands the brother of Jared to “gather together thy flocks, both male and female, of every kind; and thy families,” along with “fowls of the air” to put into a boat.	1.41 2.2–3	6.18–19 6.20
<i>Antediluvian wickedness</i>	The Lord chastises the brother of Jared, warning him that “my spirit will not always strive with man.” Later the prophet confesses that “our natures have become evil continually.”	2.14–15 3.2	6.3 6.5
<i>Expulsion</i>	The Jaredites, like Adam and Eve, are “driven forth” into the wilderness because of iniquity.	3.3	3.23–24
<i>Touch and sight</i>	God touches the sixteen stones; Adam and Eve touch/ eat the forbidden fruit. The eyes of Adam and Eve, as well as those of the brother of Jared, are opened, and they are all afraid.	3.6 3.6	3.3, 6 3.7, 10
<i>In God’s presence</i>	Adam and Eve try to hide from “the presence of the Lord,” but he asks them a series of four questions (followed by curses). The brother of Jared answers three questions from the Lord, and then is told “ye are redeemed from the fall; therefore ye are brought back into my presence” (followed by a vision).	3.7–13	3.8–13
<i>Creation</i>	The Lord asks the brother of Jared, “Seest thou that ye are created after mine own image? Yea, even all men were created in the beginning after mine own image.”	3.15	1.27

¹⁸ And Lib was the son of Kish.

¹⁹ And Kish was the son of Corom.

²⁰ And Corom was the son of Levi.

²¹ And Levi was the son of Kim.

²² And Kim was the son of Morianton.

²³ And Morianton was a descendant of Riplakish.

²⁴ And Riplakish was the son of Shez.

²⁵ And Shez was the son of Heth.

²⁶ And Heth was the son of Com.

²⁷ And Com was the son of Coriantum.

²⁸ And Coriantum was the son of Emer.

²⁹ And Emer was the son of Omer.

³⁰ And Omer was the son of Shule.

³¹ And Shule was the son of Kib.

³² And Kib was the son of Orihah, who was the son of Jared;

³³ which Jared came forth with his brother and their families, with some others and their families, from the great tower, at the time the

³³: For the biblical account of the tower, see Gen 11.1–9. *Confound*, WB: “to throw into disorder.” *Swore in his wrath*, cf. Ps. 95.11; the biblical version of Babel says nothing about the Lord’s anger.

Lord confounded the language of the people, and swore in his wrath that they should be scattered upon all the face of the earth; and according to the word of the Lord the people were scattered.

Jared, and His Brother Appeal to the Lord

³⁴ And the brother of Jared being a large and mighty man, and a man highly favored of the Lord, Jared, his brother, said unto him, “Cry unto the Lord, that he will not confound us that we may not understand our words.” ³⁵ And it came to pass that the brother of Jared did cry unto the Lord, and the Lord had compassion upon Jared; therefore he did not confound the language of Jared; and Jared and his brother were not confounded.

³⁶ Then Jared said unto his brother, “Cry again unto the Lord, and it may be that he will turn away his anger from them who are our friends, that he confound not their language.”

³⁷ And it came to pass that the brother of Jared did cry unto the Lord, and the Lord had compassion upon their friends and their families also, that they were not confounded.

³⁸ And it came to pass that Jared spake again unto his brother, saying, “Go and inquire of the Lord whether he will drive us out of the land, and if he will drive us out of the land,

cry unto him whither we shall go. And who knoweth but the Lord will carry us forth into a land which is choice above all the earth? And if it so be, let us be faithful unto the Lord, that we may receive it for our inheritance.” ³⁹ And it came to pass that the brother of Jared did cry unto the Lord according to that which had been spoken by the mouth of Jared.

⁴⁰ And it came to pass that the Lord did hear the brother of Jared, and had compassion upon him, and said unto him, ⁴¹ “Go to and gather together thy flocks, both male and female, of every kind; and also of the seed of the earth of every kind; and thy families; and also Jared thy brother and his family; and also thy friends and their families, and the friends of Jared and their families.” ⁴² And when thou hast done this thou shalt go at the head of them down into the valley which is northward. And there will I meet thee, and I will go before thee into a land which is choice above all the lands of the earth. ⁴³ And there will I bless thee and thy seed, and raise up unto me of thy seed, and of the seed of thy brother, and they who shall go with thee, a great nation. And there shall be none greater than the nation which I will raise up unto me of thy seed, upon all the face of the earth. And thus I will do unto thee because this long time ye have cried unto me.”

34–43: In this account, while Jared is the instigator of action, only his brother is able to communicate directly with God. **34:** *The brother of Jared*, this kinship term is used through the book of Ether to refer to a man whose proper name, according to LDS tradition, was revealed by JS in 1834 to be Mahonri Moriancumer. The brother of Jared will lead the people to the promised land, but the royal line will come from Jared—a development that will be explained at 6.22–27. **35–36:** Either the language of the brothers and their friends was not changed, or it was changed in exactly the same way; 3.24 suggests the latter. **38:** *A land choice above all the earth*, Jared’s hopeful speculation is confirmed in v. 42; see 2.7n. **40–43:** In contrast with the Lehites, the original Jaredite migration included friends as well as family. According to 6.16, there were twenty-two friends in the company, plus their children. **41:** The instructions are reminiscent of those given to Noah (Gen 6.19)—a parallel that will become explicit at 6.7. **42:** *I will go before thee*, as the Lord would later go before the Israelites as they entered the promised land, according to Deut 31.8. **43:** These blessings promised to Jared and his brother make them parallel figures to Abraham, who would also be led to a land where his descendants would become “a great nation” (Gen 12.2).

The Jaredites Begin Their Travels

2 ¹ And it came to pass that Jared and his brother, and their families, and also the friends of Jared and his brother and their families, went down into the valley which was northward, (and the name of the valley was Nimrod, being called after the mighty hunter) with their flocks which they had gathered together, male and female, of every kind. ² And they did also lay snares and catch fowls of the air; and they did also prepare a vessel, in which they did carry with them the fish of the waters. ³ And they did also carry with them deseret, which, by interpretation, is “a honey bee”; and thus they did carry with them swarms of bees, and all manner of that which was upon the face of the land, seeds of every kind.

⁴ And it came to pass that when they had come down into the valley of Nimrod the Lord came down and talked with the brother of Jared; and he was in a cloud, and the brother of Jared saw him not. ⁵ And it came to pass that the Lord commanded them that they should go forth into the wilderness, yea, into that quarter where there never had man been. And it came to pass that the Lord did go before them, and did talk with them as he stood in a cloud, and gave directions whither they should travel.

⁶ And it came to pass that they did travel in the wilderness, and did build barges, in which they did cross many waters, being directed continually by the hand of the Lord. ⁷ And the

Lord would not suffer that they should stop beyond the sea in the wilderness, but he would that they should come forth even unto the land of promise, which was choice above all other lands, which the Lord God had preserved for a righteous people. ⁸ And he had sworn in his wrath unto the brother of Jared, that whoso should possess this land of promise, from that time henceforth and forever, should serve him, the true and only God, or they should be swept off when the fulness of his wrath should come upon them.

Moroni₂'s Second Editorial Comment: The Decrees of God concerning the Land

⁹ And now, we can behold the decrees of God concerning this land, that it is a land of promise; and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall serve God, or they shall be swept off when the fulness of his wrath shall come upon them. And the fulness of his wrath cometh upon them when they are ripened in iniquity. ¹⁰ For behold, this is a land which is choice above all other lands; wherefore he that doth possess it shall serve God or shall be swept off; for it is the everlasting decree of God. And it is not until the fulness of iniquity among the children of the land, that they are swept off.

¹¹ And this cometh unto you, O ye Gentiles, that ye may know the decrees of God—that ye may repent, and not continue in your iniquities until the fulness come, that ye may not bring down the fulness of the wrath of God

CHAPTER 2

1: *Nimrod... the mighty hunter*, see Gen 10.8–9. **4:** *The Lord came down... in a cloud*, as at Num 11.25; cf. Ex 34.5; Mos 27.11. **5:** *The Lord did go before them... in a cloud*, cf. Ex 13.21. *Talk with them as he stood in a cloud*, similar phenomena are reported at Deut 5.22; cf. Mt 17.5; Mk 9.7; Lk 9.35. **7:** *Land... which is choice above all other lands*, 1 Ne 2.20; 13.30; 2 Ne 1.5; Ether 9.20; cf. Jacob 5.43. **8–10:** The thrice-repeated warning that inhabitants of the new promised land who do not serve God will be swept off in his anger appears to apply to the Jaredites, then to the Nephites, and finally to readers in the last days. **8:** *Sworn in his wrath*, this may refer to God's anger at 1.33, or the Lord may be foreseeing his future wrath against unfaithful inhabitants of the land of promise. **9:** *Fulness of his wrath* and *ripe(ned) in iniquity*, 9.20 and 1 Ne 17.35 (referring to the earlier inhabitants of the original promised land of Israel). **11:** Moroni addresses his future readers directly. *This*, this record. *The inhabitants of the land*, referring to both the Jaredites and the Nephites.

upon you as the inhabitants of the land have hitherto done.¹² Behold, this is a choice land, and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall be free from bondage, and from captivity, and from all other nations under heaven, if they will but serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ, who hath been manifested by the things which we have written.

Chastening in the Wilderness

¹³ And now I proceed with my record; for behold, it came to pass that the Lord did bring Jared and his brethren forth even to that great sea which divideth the lands. And as they came to the sea they pitched their tents; and they called the name of the place Moriancumer; and they dwelt in tents, and dwelt in tents upon the seashore for the space of four years.

¹⁴ And it came to pass at the end of four years that the Lord came again unto the brother of Jared, and stood in a cloud and talked with him. And for the space of three hours did the Lord talk with the brother of Jared, and chastened him because he remembered not to call upon the name of the Lord.¹⁵ And the brother of Jared repented of the evil which he had done, and did call upon the name of the Lord for his brethren who were with him.

And the Lord said unto him, "I will forgive thee and thy brethren of their sins; but thou shalt not sin any more, for ye shall remember that my Spirit will not always strive with man;

wherefore, if ye will sin until ye are fully ripe ye shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord. And these are my thoughts upon the land which I shall give you for your inheritance; for it shall be a land choice above all other lands."

Air and Light for the Barges

¹⁶ And the Lord said, "Go to work and build, after the manner of barges which ye have hitherto built." And it came to pass that the brother of Jared did go to work, and also his brethren, and built barges after the manner which they had built, according to the instructions of the Lord. And they were small, and they were light upon the water, even like unto the lightness of a fowl upon the water.¹⁷ And they were built after a manner that they were exceeding tight, even that they would hold water like unto a dish; and the bottom thereof was tight like unto a dish; and the sides thereof were tight like unto a dish; and the ends thereof were peaked; and the top thereof was tight like unto a dish; and the length thereof was the length of a tree; and the door thereof, when it was shut, was tight like unto a dish.

¹⁸ And it came to pass that the brother of Jared cried unto the Lord, saying, "O Lord, I have performed the work which thou hast commanded me, and I have made the barges according as thou hast directed me.¹⁹ And behold, O Lord, in them there is no light;

12: A similar promise that the land could be free from outside interference by other nations appeared at 2 Ne 1.8–9. *The things which we have written*, in the BoM. **13:** *And now I proceed with my record* is a typical formula for Moroni to close off his comment sections; cf. 6.1; 9.1; 13.1. *Moriancumer*, apparently named after the brother of Jared; see 1.34n. **14–15:** After chastising the brother of Jared for his infrequent prayers, the Lord takes a surprisingly conversational tone, sharing his thoughts rather than issuing commands. *My Spirit will not always strive with man*, Gen 6.3; see 1 Ne 7.14n. **16–17:** The Jaredite barges were enclosed on both the bottom and the top. It is possible that there was also an open deck area, and the passengers retreated within the enclosed space during storms. **16:** *Barges which ye have hitherto built*, see v. 6 above. **17:** The literary device of epistrophe can be seen in the five clauses ending with *like unto a dish*. **19:** The brother of Jared identifies three problems in the ship design: light, steering, and air. The Lord responds to each concern in a different way. He provides explicit instructions with regard to air (vv. 20–21), he takes care of the navigation himself (6.8), and he asks the brother of Jared to come up with a plan for light on his own (vv. 23–25). *Whither*, here meaning "how?"

whither shall we steer? And also we shall perish, for in them we cannot breathe, save it is the air which is in them; therefore we shall perish.”

²⁰ And the Lord said unto the brother of Jared, “Behold, thou shalt make a hole in the top, and also in the bottom; and when thou shalt suffer for air thou shalt unstop the hole and receive air. And if it be so that the water come in upon thee, behold, ye shall stop the hole, that ye may not perish in the flood.”²¹ And it came to pass that the brother of Jared did so, according as the Lord had commanded.

²² And he cried again unto the Lord saying, “O Lord, behold I have done even as thou hast commanded me; and I have prepared the vessels for my people, and behold there is no light in them. Behold, O Lord, wilt thou suffer that we shall cross this great water in darkness?”

²³ And the Lord said unto the brother of Jared, “What will ye that I should do that ye may have light in your vessels? For behold, ye cannot have windows, for they will be dashed in pieces; neither shall ye take fire with you, for ye shall not go by the light of fire.”²⁴ For behold, ye shall be as a whale in the midst of the sea; for the mountain waves shall dash upon you. Nevertheless, I will bring you up again out of the depths of the sea; for the winds have gone forth out of my mouth, and also the rains and

the floods have I sent forth.²⁵ And behold, I prepare you against these things; for ye cannot cross this great deep save I prepare you against the waves of the sea, and the winds which have gone forth, and the floods which shall come. Therefore what will ye that I should prepare for you that ye may have light when ye are swallowed up in the depths of the sea?”

Sixteen Small Stones

3¹ And it came to pass that the brother of Jared, (now the number of the vessels which had been prepared was eight) went forth unto the mount, which they called the mount Shelem, because of its exceeding height, and did molten out of a rock sixteen small stones; and they were white and clear, even as transparent glass; and he did carry them in his hands upon the top of the mount, and cried again unto the Lord, saying,² “O Lord, thou hast said that we must be encompassed about by the floods. Now behold, O Lord, and do not be angry with thy servant because of his weakness before thee; for we know that thou art holy and dwellest in the heavens, and that we are unworthy before thee; because of the fall our natures have become evil continually; nevertheless, O Lord, thou hast given us a commandment that we must call upon thee,

20: An air hole in the bottom of the ship is puzzling; perhaps what is meant was a port hole above the waterline in the bottom section of the ship. *Flood*, WB: “a great flow of water.” **22:** The brother of Jared points out that the Lord has not yet answered his question from v. 19 about light. **23–25:** The Lord’s speech begins and ends with the same question: *what will ye that I should do/prepare?* **23:** Small pieces of translucent material have been used in buildings since antiquity, but the first windows made of glass, which might be *dashed*, date from Roman times. **25:** The phrase *swallowed up in the depths of the sea* also appears in the parallel Nephite nautical narrative at 1 Ne 18.10, 15, 20.

CHAPTER 3

1: *Molten*, see 1 Ne 17.9n. **2:** *Because of the fall our natures have become evil continually*, a stark view of human nature that echoes the traditional Christian idea of “total depravity,” though there are differences in how Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists, and Methodists explain that concept. The theological reference may seem somewhat extraneous here, but it foreshadows what will happen in v. 13. *Evil continually*, Gen 6.5 (describing humanity at the time of Noah). *Given us a commandment that we must call upon thee*, see 2.14; the twelve repetitions of “O Lord” from 2.18 to 3.5 may be a response to God’s chastisement at 2.14 for not remembering “to call upon the name of the Lord.”

that from thee we may receive according to our desires.³ Behold, O Lord, thou hast smitten us because of our iniquity, and hast driven us forth, and for these many years we have been in the wilderness; nevertheless, thou hast been merciful unto us.

“O Lord, look upon me in pity, and turn away thine anger from this thy people, and suffer not that they shall go forth across this raging deep in darkness; but behold these things which I have molten out of the rock.⁴ And I know, O Lord, that thou hast all power, and can do whatsoever thou wilt for the benefit of man; therefore touch these stones, O Lord, with thy finger, and prepare them that they may shine forth in darkness; and they shall shine forth unto us in the vessels which we have prepared, that we may have light while we shall cross the sea.⁵ Behold, O Lord, thou canst do this. We know that thou art able to show forth great power, which looks small unto the understanding of men.”

The Brother of Jared, Sees the Premortal Christ

⁶ And it came to pass that when the brother of Jared had said these words, behold, the Lord stretched forth his hand and touched the stones one by one with his finger. And the veil was taken from off the eyes of the brother of Jared, and he saw the finger of the

Lord; and it was as the finger of a man, like unto flesh and blood; and the brother of Jared fell down before the Lord, for he was struck with fear.

⁷ And the Lord saw that the brother of Jared had fallen to the earth; and the Lord said unto him, “Arise, why hast thou fallen?”

⁸ And he saith unto the Lord, “I saw the finger of the Lord, and I feared lest he should smite me; for I knew not that the Lord had flesh and blood.”

⁹ And the Lord said unto him, “Because of thy faith thou hast seen that I shall take upon me flesh and blood; and never has man come before me with such exceeding faith as thou hast; for were it not so ye could not have seen my finger. Sawest thou more than this?”

¹⁰ And he answered, “Nay; Lord, show thyself unto me.”

¹¹ And the Lord said unto him, “Believest thou the words which I shall speak?”

¹² And he answered, “Yea, Lord, I know that thou speakest the truth, for thou art a God of truth, and canst not lie.”

¹³ And when he had said these words, behold, the Lord showed himself unto him, and said, “Because thou knowest these things ye are redeemed from the fall; therefore ye are brought back into my presence; therefore I show myself unto you.”

4: *Shine forth in darkness*, cf. Alma 37.23 (referring to a seer stone). **5:** *Great power, which looks small*, compare the connection between “small means” and “great things” in God’s works according to 1 Ne 16.29 and Alma 37.6–7. **6:** *The veil*, Ether’s account suggests that spiritual entities are close by but invisible. Nevertheless, that opacity can be temporarily removed, either by God or by extraordinary human faith/knowledge (see vv. 19–20; 12.19–21). *The finger of the Lord*, cf. Ex 31.18 and Deut 9.10, where “the finger of God” was said to have written the stone tablets of the law given to Moses. **9:** The Lord identifies himself as the future Christ; the human-like finger the brother of Jared has seen does not yet consist of *flesh and blood*; cf. v. 16. **10:** *Show thyself unto me*, this could be a dangerous request, as with Moses at Ex 33.17–23; see 3 Ne 28.15n, and compare Arjuna’s vision of Krishna’s totality in ch. 11 of the Bhagavad Gita. **12:** *God of truth*, Deut 32.4; Ps 31.5; Isa 65.16. *God... canst not lie*, cf. Titus 1.2; Heb 6.18; Enos 1.6. **13:** *Ye are redeemed from the fall*, because the Fall resulted in a separation of Adam and his descendants from God, the brother of Jared’s reunion with the Lord represents a form of redemption. This redemption, however, comes through faith and knowledge (*because thou knowest these things*) rather than a more typical mode of repentance made possible through Christ’s atonement.

¹⁴ “Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. Behold, I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son. In me shall all mankind have life,⁴ and that eternally, even they who shall believe on my name; and they shall become my sons and my daughters.

¹⁵ “And never have I showed myself unto man whom I have created, for never has man believed in me as thou hast. Seest thou that ye are created after mine own image? Yea, even all men were created in the beginning after mine own image. ¹⁶ Behold, this body, which ye now behold, is the body of my spirit; and man have I created after the body of my spirit; and even as I appear unto thee to be in the spirit will I appear unto my people in the flesh.”

Moroni₂'s Third Editorial Comment: A Perfect Knowledge of God

¹⁷ And now, as I, Moroni, said I could not make a full account of these things which are written, therefore it sufficeth me to say that Jesus showed himself unto this man in the spirit, even after the manner and in the likeness of the same body even as he showed himself unto the Nephites. ¹⁸ And he ministered unto him even as he ministered unto the Nephites; and all this, that this man might know that he

was God, because of the many great works which the Lord had showed unto him. ¹⁹ And because of the knowledge of this man he could not be kept from beholding within the veil; and he saw the finger of Jesus, which, when he saw, he fell with fear; for he knew that it was the finger of the Lord; and he had faith no longer, for he knew, nothing doubting. ²⁰ Wherefore, having this perfect knowledge of God, he could not be kept from within the veil; therefore he saw Jesus; and he did minister unto him.

A Sealed Vision of All Things

²¹ And it came to pass that the Lord said unto the brother of Jared, “Behold, thou shalt not suffer these things which ye have seen and heard to go forth unto the world, until the time cometh that I shall glorify my name in the flesh; wherefore, ye shall treasure up the things which ye have seen and heard, and show it to no man. ²² And behold, when ye shall come unto me, ye shall write them and shall seal them up, that no one can interpret them; for ye shall write them in a language that they cannot be read. ²³ And behold, these two stones will I give unto thee, and ye shall seal them up also with

^a 14 1830 light; P, 1981 *life*

14: The text suggests a pause between vv. 13 and 14, to give time for the Lord to appear before introducing himself. *To redeem my people*, here referring not only to Israel (a lineage that the brother of Jared predates), but to everyone who follows Christ. *They who shall believe on my name... become my sons and daughters*, cf. Jn 1.12; Mos 5.7. **15:** *Created... after mine own image*, see Gen 1.27. **17–20:** Similar to how Paul identifies in Abraham a faith-filled mode of salvation preceding and outside the law of Moses (Rom 4), Moroni sees the brother of Jared as an exemplar of faith-filled salvation apart from other institutions. **17:** *In the likeness of the same body*, because the brother of Jared saw Christ's spirit body rather than the physical body that was seen by the Nephites at 3 Ne 11–26. **19–20:** *He had faith no longer*, Alma also taught that faith was distinct from, and could be superseded by, “perfect knowledge”; see Alma 32.21, 26, 34. **21–28:** Before receiving the vision, the brother of Jared is commanded to make a record of what he will see, but in a language unknown to others. **21:** *The time cometh that I shall glorify my name in the flesh*, referring to the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus; see 4.1. **22:** *When ye shall come unto me*, the meaning of this time reference is unclear; “go down from me” would better fit the context, as at 4.1. *Write them and shall seal them up*, this command will be repeated at v. 27, thus framing the vision in vv. 25–26 as an inclusio. Daniel receives similar instructions at Dan 12.4; cf. 1 Ne 14.26. **23:** *These two stones* seem to be distinct from the sixteen the Lord has just touched. They may have been the seer stones that King Mosiah used to translate the twenty-four plates found by Limhi's people (Mos 8.13; 28.13–16), as well as the “interpreters” that were given to JS along with the gold plates (4.5; DC 17.1; JS–History 1.35); see Mos 28.13–14n.

the things which ye shall write.²⁴ For behold, the language which ye shall write I have confounded; wherefore I will cause in my own due time that these stones shall magnify to the eyes of men these things which ye shall write.”

²⁵ And when the Lord had said these words, he showed unto the brother of Jared all the inhabitants of the earth which had been, and also all that would be; and he withheld them not from his sight, even unto the ends of the earth.²⁶ For he had said unto him in times before, that if he would believe in him that he could show unto him all things—it should be shown unto him; therefore the Lord could not withhold anything from him, for he knew that the Lord could show him all things.

²⁷ And the Lord said unto him, “Write these things and seal them up; and I will show them in mine own due time unto the children of men.”²⁸ And it came to pass that the Lord commanded him that he should seal up the two stones which he had received, and show them not, until the Lord should show them unto the children of men.

Moroni₂'s Fourth Editorial Comment: The Sealed Portion of the Gold Plates

4¹ And the Lord commanded the brother of Jared to go down out of the mount from the presence of the Lord, and write the things which he had seen; and they were

forbidden to come unto the children of men until after that he should be lifted up upon the cross; and for this cause did king Mosiah^a keep them, that they should not come unto the world until after Christ should show himself unto his people.² And after Christ truly had showed himself unto his people he commanded that they should be made manifest.³ And now, after that, they have all dwindled in unbelief; and there is none save it be the Lamanites—and they have rejected the gospel of Christ—therefore I am commanded that I should hide them up again in the earth.

⁴ Behold, I have written upon these plates the very things which the brother of Jared saw; and there never were greater things made manifest than those which were made manifest unto the brother of Jared.⁵ Wherefore the Lord hath commanded me to write them; and I have written them. And he commanded me that I should seal them up; and he also hath commanded that I should seal up the interpretation thereof; wherefore I have sealed up the interpreters, according to the commandment of the Lord.

Moroni₂'s Fourth Editorial Comment (cont.): The Lord Promises Additional Revelations to Those Who Believe

⁶ For the Lord said unto me, “They shall not go forth unto the Gentiles until the day that

^a 1 P Benjamin; 1849 Mosiah; cf. Mos 21.28

²⁴: *Magnify*, a reference to translation. *In my own due time*, the phrase was applied to other sacred writings yet to be revealed at 1 Ne 14.26 (referring to prophets who had also been “shown all things”); 2 Ne 27.10, 21; Enos 1.16; Morm 5.12.

CHAPTER 4

1: The reading from P implies that King Benjamin was still alive when Ammon and the people of Limhi returned to Zarahemla at Mos 22.13–14. This is possible in the chronology, but just barely, hence the textual emendation in 1849; see Mos 21.28n. Apparently the information about the Jaredites that Mosiah conveyed to his people at Mos 28.11–18 did not include the vision of the brother of Jared. **2**: *He commanded that they should be made manifest*, reference uncertain, but perhaps the command was given on the third day of Jesus’s ministry. **3**: *Hide them up again in the earth*, the first time they were hidden was by Ether; see 15.33. **6–19**: These instructions to Moroni were apparently given some time before he recorded them, since at 5.1 he notes that they were written “according to my memory.”

they shall repent of their iniquity, and become clean before the Lord.”⁷ “And in that day that they shall exercise faith in me,” saith the Lord, “even as the brother of Jared did, that they may become sanctified in me, then will I manifest unto them the things which the brother of Jared saw, even to the unfolding unto them all my revelations,” saith Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of the heavens and of the earth, and all things that in them are.

⁸ And he that will contend against the word of the Lord, let him be accursed; and he that shall deny these things, let him be accursed. “For unto them will I show no greater things,” saith Jesus Christ, “for I am he who speaketh;”⁹ and at my command the heavens are opened and are shut; and at my word the earth shall shake; and at my command the inhabitants thereof shall pass away, even so as by fire.¹⁰ And he that believeth not my words believeth not my disciples; and if it so be that I do not speak, judge ye; for ye shall know that it is I that speaketh, at the last day.

¹¹ “But he that believeth these things which I have spoken, him will I visit with the manifestations of my Spirit, and he shall know and bear record. For because of my Spirit he shall know that these things are true; for it persuadeth

men to do good.¹² And whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do good is of me; for good cometh of none save it be of me. I am the same that leadeth men to all good; he that will not believe my words will not believe me—that I am; and he that will not believe me will not believe the Father who sent me. For behold, I am the Father, I am the light, and the life, and the truth of the world.

¹³ “Come unto me, O ye Gentiles, and I will show unto you the greater things, the knowledge which is hid up because of unbelief.¹⁴ Come unto me, O ye house of Israel, and it shall be made manifest unto you how great things the Father hath laid up for you, from the foundation of the world; and it hath not come unto you, because of unbelief.¹⁵ Behold, when ye shall rend that veil of unbelief which doth cause you to remain in your awful state of wickedness, and hardness of heart, and blindness of mind, then shall the great and marvelous things which have been hid up from the foundation of the world from you—yea, when ye shall call upon the Father in my name, with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, then shall ye know that the Father hath remembered the covenant which he made unto your fathers, O house of Israel.

7: *Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of the heavens and of the earth*, this lengthy title was also used at Mos 3.8; cf. Hel 14.12. 8: *Let him be accursed*, Gal 1.8–9 (speaking of those who “preach any other gospel”). 9: *The heavens are opened and are shut*, referring to rain, or perhaps to visions. 10: *He that believeth not my words*, that is, Christ’s words as contained in the BoM. *If... judge ye... at the last day*, Nephi expressed a similar sentiment at 2 Ne 33.11; cf. 5.6. *Ye shall know that it is I that speaketh... day*, Isa 52.6 (quoted at 3 Ne 20.39); cf. the end of vv. 8 and 19. 11–12: A similar argument is found at Moro 7.12–16. 11: The Lord’s words here provide a template for knowing whether or not the BoM is true; cf. Moro 10.3–6. *The manifestations of my Spirit*, perhaps referring to spiritual gifts; see 1 Cor 12.7 and Moro 10.8. *It persuadeth men to do good*, cf. 2 Ne 33.4 and Ether 8.26 (referring to the writings of Nephi and Moroni, respectively). 12: *Good cometh of none save it be of me*, clearly non-Christians can do good, but perhaps there is a sense here that they unknowingly reflect God’s goodness. *The Father who sent me* is a characteristic expression in the Gospel of John. *I am the Father*, the BoM is ambiguous on the relationship of the Father and the Son; some verses seem to support Trinitarianism (e.g., 2 Ne 31.21; Alma 11.44; 3 Ne 11.27; 20.35; 28.10; Morm 7.7; 9.12), while others suggest modalism (e.g., Mos 15.1–7; 3 Ne 1.14) or tritheism (e.g., 2 Ne 31.14–15; Mos 3.8; 3 Ne 17.4; Ether 3.14; Moro 7.27). At Jn 8.12, Jesus said “I am the light of the world”; at 3 Ne 9.18 and 11.11 that was expanded to “I am the light and the life of the world” (cf. Mos 16.9; Alma 38.9); here he adds *and the truth of the world*. 13–14: Gentiles and Israelites in the last days are given parallel promises; in both cases they can receive additional truths if they *come unto* [Christ], and the instructions for how to do so are found in v. 18. *The greater things*, see 3 Ne 26.9–10n. 15: *Then shall the great and marvelous things*, the thought is left incomplete, but the implication is that they shall “be made known unto you.”

¹⁶ “And then shall my revelations which I have caused to be written by my servant John be unfolded in the eyes of all the people. Remember, when ye see these things, ye shall know that the time is at hand that they shall be made manifest in very deed. ¹⁷ Therefore, when ye shall receive this record ye may know that the work of the Father has commenced upon all the face of the land.

¹⁸ “Therefore, repent all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me, and believe in my gospel, and be baptized in my name; for he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned; and signs shall follow them that believe in my name. ¹⁹ And blessed is he that is found faithful unto my name at the last day, for he shall be lifted up to dwell in the kingdom prepared for him from the foundation of the world. And behold it is I that hath spoken it. Amen.”

Moroni₂'s Fourth Editorial Comment (cont.): A Message to the Future Translator

[II] **5** ¹ And now I, Moroni, have written the words which were commanded

me, according to my memory; and I have told you the things which I have sealed up; therefore touch them not in order that ye may translate; for that thing is forbidden you, except by and by it shall be wisdom in God. ² And behold, ye may be privileged that ye may show the plates unto those who shall assist to bring forth this work; ³ and unto three shall they be shown by the power of God; wherefore they shall know of a surety that these things are true.

⁴ And in the mouth of three witnesses shall these things be established; and the testimony of three, and this work, in the which shall be shown forth the power of God and also his word, of which the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost bear record—and all this shall stand as a testimony against the world at the last day. ⁵ And if it so be that they repent and come unto the Father in the name of Jesus, they shall be received into the kingdom of God.

⁶ And now, if I have no authority for these things, judge ye; for ye shall know that I have authority when ye shall see me, and we shall stand before God at the last day. Amen.

16: *Revelations... written by my servant John*, the book of Revelation; see 1 Ne 14.18–27. Fittingly, *the time is at hand* is an inclusion that frames Rev; see Rev 1.3 and 22.10. *These things*, the BoM. **17:** More details about how the BoM will be a harbinger of the work of the Father are given at 3 Ne 21.7, 26–28. **18:** This verse expands Christ's words at 3 Ne 27.20 by adding *believe in my gospel* and combining them with Mk 16.16–17 (quoted at Morm 9.23–24, and here repurposing *in my name*). **19:** *The kingdom prepared for him from the foundation of the world*, Mt 25.34; 2 Ne 9.18.

CHAPTER 5

Compare the instructions for the BoM translator given in this chapter to those at 2 Ne 27.20–23. **1:** *The things which I have sealed up*, see 4.4–5; JS and other witnesses reported that a portion of the gold plates was sealed. *Touch them not in order that ye may translate*, these words are directed to JS. *By and by*, WB: “in a short time after; soon.” **2–3:** See the “Testimony of Three Witnesses”; cf. 2 Ne 27.12. **4:** *In the mouth of three witnesses... be established*, Deut 19.15 (quoted at Mt 18.16; 2 Cor 13.1); cf. 2 Ne 11.3. *Stand as a testimony... at the last day*, cf. Mos 3.24; 17.10. Note that the *Holy Ghost* is never spoken of by the Jaredites; the only references in Ether are in Moroni's comments, here and in ch. 12. **5:** A shortened version of the spiritual path outlined at 4.18–19, with *come unto the Father* replacing “come unto me [Christ].” **6:** Moroni echoes Jesus's words at 4.10; cf. 2 Ne 33.11. *When ye shall see me*, according to JS, Moroni appeared to him on September 21, 1823. *We shall stand before God at the last day*, cf. Moro 10.27.

The Jaredites Sail to the Promised Land

[III] 6 ¹ And now I, Moroni, proceed to give the record of Jared and his brother. ² For it came to pass after the Lord had prepared the stones which the brother of Jared had carried up into the mount, the brother of Jared came down out of the mount, and he did put forth the stones into the vessels which were prepared, one in each end thereof; and behold, they did give light unto the vessels. ³ And thus the Lord caused stones to shine in darkness, to give light unto men, women, and children, that they might not cross the great waters in darkness.

⁴ And it came to pass that when they had prepared all manner of food, that thereby they might subsist upon the water, and also food for their flocks and herds, and whatsoever beast or animal or fowl that they should carry with them—and it came to pass that when they had done all these things they got aboard of their vessels or barges, and set forth into the sea, commending themselves unto the Lord their God.

⁵ And it came to pass that the Lord God caused that there should be a furious wind blow upon the face of the waters, towards the promised land; and thus they were tossed upon the waves of the sea before the wind. ⁶ And it came to pass that they were many times buried in the depths of the sea, because of the mountain waves which broke upon them, and also the great and terrible tempests which were

caused by the fierceness of the wind. ⁷ And it came to pass that when they were buried in the deep there was no water that could hurt them, their vessels being tight like unto a dish, and also they were tight like unto the ark of Noah; therefore when they were encompassed about by many waters they did cry unto the Lord, and he did bring them forth again upon the top of the waters. ⁸ And it came to pass that the wind did never cease to blow towards the promised land while they were upon the waters; and thus they were driven forth before the wind.

⁹ And they did sing praises unto the Lord; yea, the brother of Jared did sing praises unto the Lord, and he did thank and praise the Lord all the day long; and when the night came, they did not cease to praise the Lord. ¹⁰ And thus they were driven forth; and no monster of the sea could break them, neither whale that could mar them; and they did have light continually, whether it was above the water or under the water. ¹¹ And thus they were driven forth, three hundred and forty and four days upon the water.

¹² And they did land upon the shore of the promised land. And when they had set their feet upon the shores of the promised land they bowed themselves down upon the face of the land, and did humble themselves before the Lord, and did shed tears of joy before the Lord, because of the multitude of his tender mercies over them. ¹³ And it came to pass that they went forth upon the face of the land, and began to till the earth.

CHAPTER 6

3: *Cross the great waters in darkness*, see 2.22. **4:** *Commend*, WB: “to entrust.” **6:** *Mountain waves*, 2.24. **7:** *Tight like unto a dish*, 2.17. *The ark of Noah*, see Gen 6.14–16. **8:** *The wind did never cease to blow*, a lovely image of God’s continual care in bringing his people through troubles to a blessed destination. *Driven forth before the wind* suggests that the vessels had sails; cf. 1 Ne 18.8. **9:** Contrast the disrespectful maritime singing of 1 Ne 18.9. *Praise the Lord all the day long*, as Nephi did during his own ocean voyage at 1 Ne 18.16. **10:** Because *them* seems to refer to the people rather than the ships, the unusual meanings (both found in WB) of “stop” for *break* and “interrupt” for *mar* may make better sense of the sentence. *Have light continually* suggests a possible parallel with the eternal light of Jesus Christ mentioned at 3.14 [1830 reading]. **11:** This is a long time to be on a ship; one assumes they would have occasionally stopped along the way to replenish their supplies. **12:** That the eight barges had stayed together through a sea journey of nearly a year is miraculous. *The multitude of his tender mercies*, Ps 69.16 (note the similar contexts of vv. 6–7 and Ps 69.14–15).

The People Multiply

¹⁴ And Jared had four sons; and they were called Jacom, and Gilgah, and Mahah, and Orihah. ¹⁵ And the brother of Jared also begat sons and daughters. ¹⁶ And the friends of Jared and his brother were in number about twenty and two souls; and they also begat sons and daughters before they came to the promised land; and therefore they began to be many. ¹⁷ And they were taught to walk humbly before the Lord; and they were also taught from on high. ¹⁸ And it came to pass that they began to spread upon the face of the land, and to multiply and to till the earth; and they did wax strong in the land.

The People Desire a King

¹⁹ And the brother of Jared began to be old, and saw that he must soon go down to the grave; wherefore he said unto Jared, "Let us gather together our people that we may number them, that we may know of them what they will desire of us before we go down to our graves." ²⁰ And accordingly the people were gathered together. Now the number of the sons and the daughters of the brother of Jared were twenty and two souls; and the number of sons and daughters of Jared were twelve, he having four sons. ²¹ And it came to pass that they did number their people; and after that they had numbered them, they did desire of them the things which they would that they should do before they went down to their graves.

²² And it came to pass that the people desired of them that they should anoint one of their sons to be a king over them. ²³ And now behold, this was grievous unto them. And the brother of Jared said unto them, "Surely this thing leadeth into captivity." ²⁴ But Jared said unto his brother, "Suffer them that they may have a king." And therefore he said unto them, "Choose ye out from among our sons a king, even whom ye will."

²⁵ And it came to pass that they chose even the firstborn of the brother of Jared; and his name was Pagag. And it came to pass that he refused and would not be their king. And the people would that his father should constrain him, but his father would not; and he commanded them that they should constrain no man to be their king. ²⁶ And it came to pass that they chose all the brothers of Pagag, and they would not. ²⁷ And it came to pass that neither would the sons of Jared, even all save it were one; and Orihah was anointed to be king over the people.

The Chronicle of Jaredite Kings: Ether 6.28–11.23

The Reign of Orihah

²⁸ And he began to reign, and the people began to prosper; and they became exceedingly rich. ²⁹ And it came to pass that Jared died, and his brother also. ³⁰ And it came to pass that Orihah did walk humbly before the Lord, and did remember how great things the Lord had

15: *Begat sons and daughters*, a phrase that imparts a primordial feel to the book of Ether, where it appears twelve times (and nowhere else in the BoM); in the Bible it occurs seventeen times in Gen 5–11 (with just one additional occurrence in 2 Chr). **17:** *Walk humbly before the Lord*, v. 30; cf. Mic 6.8. **19:** *That we may number them*, this hardly seems necessary for the few Jaredite families at that time, but anciently a formal census, used for conscription and taxation, was often associated with kingship; see v. 22. **20:** *Sons and daughters . . . twenty and two souls*, the brother of Jared may have had multiple wives, though perhaps sequentially since polygamy is condemned at 10.5. **21:** *Desire*, ask. **22–26:** The familiarity of the sons of Mosiah with this account (Mos 28.17–18) may have led to their own refusal to take on kingship at Mos 29.3; see Mos 29.7n. **24:** By contrast, the first kings of Israel were chosen by God rather than by the people. **27:** Orihah seems to have been the youngest son of Jared, according to the list in v. 14 above; see 7.3n.

done for his father, and also taught his people how great things the Lord had done for their fathers.

7 ¹ And it came to pass that Orihah did execute judgment upon the land in righteousness all his days, whose days were exceeding many. ² And he begat sons and daughters; yea, he begat thirty and one, among whom were twenty and three sons. ³ And it came to pass that he also begat Kib in his old age.

The Reign of Kib (Corihor, rebels; Shule restores)

And it came to pass that Kib reigned in his stead; and Kib begat Corihor. ⁴ And when Corihor was thirty and two years old he rebelled against his father, and went over and dwelt in the land of Nehor; and he begat sons and daughters, and they became exceeding fair; wherefore Corihor drew away many people after him. ⁵ And when he had gathered together an army he came up unto the land of Moron where the king dwelt, and took him captive, which brought to pass the saying of the brother of Jared that they would be brought into captivity. ⁶ (Now the land of Moron, where the king dwelt, was near the land which is called Desolation by the Nephites.)

⁷ And it came to pass that Kib dwelt in captivity, and his people under Corihor his son, until he became exceeding old; nevertheless Kib begat Shule in his old age, while he was yet in captivity. ⁸ And it came to pass that Shule was angry with his brother; and Shule

waxed strong, and became mighty as to the strength of a man; and he was also mighty in judgment. ⁹ Wherefore, he came to the hill Ephraim, and he did molten out of the hill, and made swords out of steel for those whom he had drawn away with him; and after he had armed them with swords he returned to the city Nehor, and gave battle unto his brother Corihor, by which means he obtained the kingdom and restored it unto his father Kib.

The Reign of Shule (Noah₂ and Cohor, rebel; Nimrod₂ restores)

¹⁰ And now because of the thing which Shule had done, his father bestowed upon him the kingdom; therefore he began to reign in the stead of his father. ¹¹ And it came to pass that he did execute judgment in righteousness; and he did spread his kingdom upon all the face of the land, for the people had become exceeding numerous. ¹² And it came to pass that Shule also begat many sons and daughters. ¹³ And Corihor repented of the many evils which he had done; wherefore Shule gave him power in his kingdom.

¹⁴ And it came to pass that Corihor had many sons and daughters. And among the sons of Corihor there was one whose name was Noah. ¹⁵ And it came to pass that Noah rebelled against Shule, the king, and also his father Corihor, and drew away Cohor his brother, and also all his brethren and many of the people. ¹⁶ And he gave battle unto Shule, the king, in which he did obtain the land of their first inheritance; and he became a king over that part of the land.

CHAPTERS 7–11

This chronicle closely follows Ether's genealogy at 1.6–33, but in reverse order.

CHAPTER 7

2: *He begat thirty and one*, see 6.20n. **3:** The pattern of passing the kingdom to a son born in his father's *old age* suggests that the Jaredites practiced a form ultimogeniture ("last born") rather than primogeniture ("first born").

5: *The saying of the brother of Jared*, see 6.23. **6:** *Desolation*, in the land northward, was given this name by the Nephites when they discovered the bones and empty ruins of the Jaredites; see Mos 8.8; Alma 22.30. **9:** Even taking the word *molten* as a verb (see 1 Ne 17.9n), it appears to be missing an object, such as "ore." Any mention of *steel* in pre-Columbian America is anachronistic. The city Nehor seems to have been Corihor's base of power; see verse 4.

¹⁷ And it came to pass that he gave battle again unto Shule, the king; and he took Shule, the king, and carried him away captive into Moron. ¹⁸ And it came to pass as he was about to put him to death, the sons of Shule crept into the house of Noah by night and slew him, and broke down the door of the prison and brought out their father, and placed him upon his throne in his own kingdom. ¹⁹ Wherefore, the son of Noah did build up his kingdom in his stead; nevertheless they did not gain power any more over Shule the king, and the people who were under the reign of Shule the king did prosper exceedingly and wax great.

²⁰ And the country was divided, and there were two kingdoms: the kingdom of Shule and the kingdom of Cohor, the son of Noah. ²¹ And Cohor, the son of Noah, caused that his people should give battle unto Shule, in which Shule did beat them and did slay Cohor. ²² And now Cohor had a son who was called Nimrod; and Nimrod gave up the kingdom of Cohor unto Shule, and he did gain favor in the eyes of Shule; wherefore Shule did bestow great favors upon him, and he did do in the kingdom of Shule according to his desires.

²³ And also in the reign of Shule there came prophets among the people, who were sent from the Lord, prophesying that the wickedness and idolatry of the people was bringing a curse upon the land, and they should be destroyed if they did not repent. ²⁴ And it came to pass that the people did revile against the prophets, and did mock them. And it came to pass that king Shule did execute judgment against all those who did revile against the prophets. ²⁵ And he did execute a law

throughout all the land, which gave power unto the prophets that they should go whithersoever they would; and by this cause the people were brought unto repentance. ²⁶ And because the people did repent of their iniquities and idolatries the Lord did spare them, and they began to prosper again in the land.

And it came to pass that Shule begat sons and daughters in his old age. ²⁷ And there were no more wars in the days of Shule; and he remembered the great things that the Lord had done for his fathers in bringing them across the great deep into the promised land; wherefore he did execute judgment in righteousness all his days.

The Reign of Omer (Jared₂ rebels; Esrom and Coriantumr, restore)

8 ¹ And it came to pass that he begat Omer, and Omer reigned in his stead. And Omer begat Jared; and Jared begat sons and daughters. ² And Jared rebelled against his father, and came and dwelt in the land of Heth. And it came to pass that he did flatter many people, because of his cunning words, until he had gained the half of the kingdom. ³ And when he had gained the half of the kingdom he gave battle unto his father, and he did carry away his father into captivity, and did make him serve in captivity.

⁴ And now, in the days of the reign of Omer he was in captivity the half of his days. And it came to pass that he begat sons and daughters, among whom were Esrom and Coriantumr; ⁵ and they were exceedingly angry

19: *Build up his kingdom in his stead*, presumably in his home territory of the “land of their first inheritance” (v. 16).

20–21: Cohor, Shule’s grandnephew, is twice identified as *the son of Noah* to distinguish him from the Cohor who was Noah’s brother (v. 15). **23:** This is the first mention of *prophets* in the Jaredite narrative; they will reappear at 9.28. Note that the land is cursed, rather than the people; see 1 Ne 17.35n; Alma 45.16n. **25:** The king of the Lamanites will issue a similar decree at Alma 23.1–3.

CHAPTER 8

5: A night battle was sufficiently unusual to merit mention.

because of the doings of Jared their brother, insomuch that they did raise an army and gave battle unto Jared. And it came to pass that they did give battle unto him by night.⁶ And it came to pass that when they had slain the army of Jared they were about to slay him also; and he plead with them that they would not slay him, and he would give up the kingdom unto his father. And it came to pass that they did grant unto him his life.

The Emergence of Secret Combinations

⁷ And now Jared became exceeding sorrowful because of the loss of the kingdom, for he had set his heart upon the kingdom and upon the glory of the world.⁸ Now the daughter of Jared being exceeding expert, and seeing the sorrows of her father, thought to devise a plan whereby she could redeem the kingdom unto her father.

⁹ Now the daughter of Jared was exceeding fair. And it came to pass that she did talk with her father, and said unto him, “Whereby hath my father so much sorrow? Hath he not read the record which our fathers brought across the great deep? Behold, is there not an account concerning them of old, that they by their secret plans did obtain kingdoms and great glory?”¹⁰ And now, therefore, let my father send for Akish, the son of Kimnor; and behold, I am fair, and I will dance before him, and I will please him, that he will desire me to wife; wherefore if he shall desire of thee that ye shall

give unto him me to wife, then shall ye say, ‘I will give her if ye will bring unto me the head of my father, the king.’”

¹¹ And now Omer was a friend to Akish; wherefore, when Jared had sent for Akish, the daughter of Jared danced before him that she pleased him, insomuch that he desired her to wife. And it came to pass that he said unto Jared, “Give her unto me to wife.”

¹² And Jared said unto him, “I will give her unto you, if ye will bring unto me the head of my father, the king.”

¹³ And it came to pass that Akish gathered in unto the house of Jared all his kinsfolk, and said unto them, “Will ye swear unto me that ye will be faithful unto me in the thing which I shall desire of you?”¹⁴ And it came to pass that they all sware unto him, by the God of heaven, and also by the heavens, and also by the earth, and by their heads, that whoso should vary from the assistance which Akish desired should lose his head; and whoso should divulge whatsoever thing Akish made known unto them, the same should lose his life.¹⁵ And it came to pass that thus they did agree with Akish.

And Akish did administer unto them the oaths which were given by them of old who also sought power, which had been handed down even from Cain, who was a murderer from the beginning.¹⁶ And they were kept up by the power of the devil to administer these oaths unto the people, to keep them in darkness, to help such as sought power to gain power,

8: *Expert*, WB: “experienced; skillful.” One is usually an expert in some particular field; here the daughter of Jared has a generalized cunning. **9:** *The record which our fathers brought*, nothing more is known of this record, though it was apparently a version of the primeval history from Gen (see Ether 1.2–4). *Secret plans*, the phrase is generally associated with the Jaredites in the BoM; see Alma 37.29, 32. *Obtain kingdoms and great glory*, precisely what Jared had set his heart upon in v. 7. **10:** The plot is reminiscent of the daughter of Herodias at Mt 14.6–12 and Mk 6.19–29, but in the NT there is no marriage request and John the Baptist is actually beheaded, while Omer escapes (9.1–3). **11:** *Omer was a friend to Akish*, the observation adds an element of betrayal to the coup that will be reported at 9.1. **14:** *Sware . . . by the heavens . . . earth . . . heads*, cf. Mt 5.34–36 (3 Ne 12.34–36); Morm 3.10, 14. *God of heaven* is a characteristically post-exilic phrase, used only here in the BoM. **15:** *Cain, who was a murderer from the beginning*, see Gen 4; Hel 6.26–27; cf. Moses 5.29–31 in the LDS Pearl of Great Price. **16:** The phrase *sought power to gain power* highlights the insatiable nature of avarice and ambition.

and to murder, and to plunder, and to lie, and to commit all manner of wickedness and whoredoms.¹⁷ And it was the daughter of Jared who put it into his heart to search up these things of old; and Jared put it into the heart of Akish; wherefore, Akish administered it unto his kindred and friends, leading them away by fair promises to do whatsoever thing he desired.

¹⁸ And it came to pass that they formed a secret combination, even as they of old; which combination is most abominable and wicked above all, in the sight of God;¹⁹ for the Lord worketh not in secret combinations, neither doth he will that man should shed blood, but in all things hath forbidden it, from the beginning of man.

Moroni₂'s Fifth Editorial Comment: Secret Combinations

²⁰ And now I, Moroni, do not write the manner of their oaths and combinations, for it hath been made known unto me that they are had among all people, and they are had among the Lamanites.²¹ And they have caused the destruction of this people of whom I am now speaking, and also the destruction of the people of Nephi.²² And whatsoever nation shall uphold such secret combinations, to get power and gain, until they shall spread over the nation, behold, they shall be destroyed; for the Lord will not suffer that the blood of his saints, which shall be shed by them, shall always cry unto him from the ground

for vengeance upon them and yet he avenge them not.

²³ Wherefore, O ye Gentiles, it is wisdom in God that these things should be shown unto you, that thereby ye may repent of your sins, and suffer not that these murderous combinations shall get above you, which are built up to get power and gain—and the work, yea, even the work of destruction come upon you, yea, even the sword of the justice of the Eternal God shall fall upon you, to your overthrow and destruction if ye shall suffer these things to be.²⁴ Wherefore, the Lord commandeth you, when ye shall see these things come among you that ye shall awake to a sense of your awful situation, because of this secret combination which shall be among you; or wo be unto it, because of the blood of them who have been slain; for they cry from the dust for vengeance upon it, and also upon those who built it up.

²⁵ For it cometh to pass that whoso buildeth it up seeketh to overthrow the freedom of all lands, nations, and countries; and it bringeth to pass the destruction of all people, for it is built up by the devil, who is the father of all lies; even that same liar who beguiled our first parents, yea, even that same liar who hath caused man to commit murder from the beginning; who hath hardened the hearts of men that they have murdered the prophets, and stoned them, and cast them out from the beginning.

17: *Kindreds and friends* are also associated with secret combinations at 3 Ne 6.27–28; 7.6. **20:** Moroni interrupts his narrative at a crucial moment; the story will resume at 9.1. **21:** *Caused the destruction of this people of whom I am now speaking*, that is, the Jaredites; see 14.8–10. *And also the destruction of the people of Nephi*, see Hel 2.13–14 for Mormon's similar assessment. **22–24:** Secret combinations can only take hold in a society if the population is passively complicit. **22:** *Blood of his saints . . . cry unto him from the ground*, cf. 2 Ne 26.3; 28.10; 3 Ne 9.11 (all of these are derived from Gen 4.10). *Blood . . . cry unto him from the ground for vengeance*, similar language is associated with secret combinations at Alma 37.30; Morm 8.40. **23:** *The sword of the justice of the Eternal God*, 1 Ne 12.18 (in O). **24:** *These things* may refer to the Jaredite record, or to modern secret combinations. **25:** *Devil, who is the father of all lies . . . beguiled our first parents*, see Gen 3.1–7, 13. The wording here matches 2 Ne 9.9; cf. Jn 8.44. *Caused man to commit murder from the beginning*, the devil does not appear in the Cain and Abel story at Gen 4.1–12, but see Moses 5.18–37.

²⁶ Wherefore, I, Moroni, am commanded to write these things that evil may be done away, and that the time may come that Satan may have no power upon the hearts of the children of men, but that they may be persuaded to do good continually, that they may come unto the fountain of all righteousness and be saved.

The Overthrow and Restoration of Omer (Jared₂ and Akish rule in the interim)

[IV] **9** ¹ And now I, Moroni, proceed with my record. Therefore, behold, it came to pass that because of the secret combinations of Akish and his friends, behold, they did overthrow the kingdom of Omer. ² Nevertheless, the Lord was merciful unto Omer, and also to his sons and to his daughters who did not seek his destruction. ³ And the Lord warned Omer in a dream that he should depart out of the land; wherefore Omer departed out of the land with his family, and traveled many days, and came over and passed by the hill of Shim, and came over by the place where the Nephites were destroyed, and from thence eastward, and came to a place which was called Ablom, by the seashore, and there he pitched his tent, and also his sons and his daughters, and all his household, save it were Jared and his family.

⁴ And it came to pass that Jared was anointed king over the people, by the hand of

wickedness; and he gave unto Akish his daughter to wife. ⁵ And it came to pass that Akish sought the life of his father-in-law; and he applied unto those whom he had sworn by the oath of the ancients, and they obtained the head of his father-in-law, as he sat upon his throne, giving audience to his people. ⁶ For so great had been the spreading of this wicked and secret society that it had corrupted the hearts of all the people; therefore Jared was murdered upon his throne, and Akish reigned in his stead.

⁷ And it came to pass that Akish began to be jealous of his son, therefore he shut him up in prison, and kept him upon little or no food until he had suffered death. ⁸ And now the brother of him that suffered death, (and his name was Nimrah) was angry with his father because of that which his father had done unto his brother. ⁹ And it came to pass that Nimrah gathered together a small number of men, and fled out of the land, and came over and dwelt with Omer.

¹⁰ And it came to pass that Akish begat other sons, and they won the hearts of the people, notwithstanding they had sworn unto him to do all manner of iniquity according to that which he desired. ¹¹ Now the people of Akish were desirous for gain, even as Akish was desirous for power; wherefore, the sons of Akish did offer them money, by which means they drew away the more part of the people after them.

¹² And there began to be a war between the sons of Akish and Akish, which lasted for the

26: Satan may have no power upon the hearts of the children of men, the same phrase occurred at 2 Ne 30.18; cf. 1 Ne 22.26. *Fountain of all righteousness*, 1 Ne 2.9; Ether 12.28 (which identifies the term as a metaphor for Christ).

CHAPTER 9

3: Lehi and Joseph (the husband of Mary), will similarly be warned in dreams to flee; see 1 Ne 2.1–2; Mt 2.13. *The place where the Nephites were destroyed*, that is, the land of Cumorah; see Morm 6. **4:** Being anointed king *by the hand of wickedness* is a striking example of synecdoche, where a part stands in for the whole. **5–6:** Once secret combinations are set in motion, they are difficult to control. In a turn of poetic justice, it was Jared, rather than Omer, who lost his head. Or in another BoM expression, his sins were literally “answered upon his own head” (Jacob 1.19; Mos 29.30–31). **5:** *Applied*, WB: “to make request.” **8:** Nimrah is the name of the brother, not the deceased prisoner. **11:** Power can be bought as well as seized. **12:** As prophesied at 7.23.

space of many years, yea, unto the destruction of nearly all the people of the kingdom, yea, even all, save it were thirty souls, and they who fled with the house of Omer.¹³ Wherefore, Omer was restored again to the land of his inheritance.

The Reign of Emer (righteousness leads to prosperity)

¹⁴ And it came to pass that Omer began to be old; nevertheless, in his old age he begat Emer; and he anointed Emer to be king to reign in his stead.¹⁵ And after that he had anointed Emer to be king he saw peace in the land for the space of two years, and he died, having seen exceeding many days, which were full of sorrow. And it came to pass that Emer did reign in his stead, and did fill the steps of his father.

¹⁶ And the Lord began again to take the curse from off the land, and the house of Emer did prosper exceedingly under the reign of Emer; and in the space of sixty and two years they had become exceeding strong, insomuch that they became exceeding rich—¹⁷ having all manner of fruit, and of grain, and of silks, and of fine linen, and of gold, and of silver, and of precious things;¹⁸ and also all manner of cattle, of oxen, and cows, and of sheep, and of swine, and of goats, and also many other kinds of animals which were useful for the food of man.¹⁹ And they also had horses, and asses, and there were elephants and cureloms and cumoms; all of which were useful unto man, and more especially the elephants and cureloms and cumoms.

²⁰ And thus the Lord did pour out his blessings upon this land, which was choice above all other lands; and he commanded that whoso should possess the land should possess it unto the Lord, or they should be destroyed when they were ripened in iniquity: “For upon such,” saith the Lord, “I will pour out the fulness of my wrath.”^a

²¹ And Emer did execute judgment in righteousness all his days, and he begat many sons and daughters; and he begat Coriantum, and he anointed Coriantum to reign in his stead.²² And after he had anointed Coriantum to reign in his stead he lived four years, and he saw peace in the land; yea, and he even saw the Son of Righteousness, and did rejoice and glory in his day; and he died in peace.

The Reigns of Coriantum, and Com,

²³ And it came to pass that Coriantum did walk in the steps of his father, and did build many mighty cities, and did administer that which was good unto his people in all his days. And it came to pass that he had no children even until he was exceeding old.²⁴ And it came to pass that his wife died, being an hundred and two years old. And it came to pass that Coriantum took to wife, in his old age, a young maid, and begat sons and daughters; wherefore he lived until he was an hundred and forty and two years old.²⁵ And it came to pass that he begat Com, and Com reigned in his stead; and he reigned forty and nine years,

^a 20 Ether 2.8–9

14–25: Near annihilation under Omer (v. 12) leads to more than two centuries of peace and righteousness under Emer, Coriantum, and Com. **15:** *Fill the steps of his father*, unique here, but see v. 23. **16:** *The curse*, see 7.23. **18–19:** The animals listed in these verses are anachronistic from a New World perspective. It is noteworthy, however, that since the Jaredites preceded the law of Moses, there was no prohibition for them against *swine*. The identification of *cureloms* and *cumoms* is uncertain since the terms are unique to the BoM. **22:** *Son of Righteousness*, apparently referring to Jesus; see 2 Ne 26.8–9n; 3 Ne 25.2n. *Rejoiced... in his day*, Hel 8.22 (also referring to visions of the future Christ). **24:** Like many of the figures in the primeval history of Gen, the Jaredites enjoyed improbable lifespans; cf. 2 Chr 24.15.

and he begat Heth; and he also begat other sons and daughters.

The Reign of Heth, (wickedness brings famine and poisonous snakes)

²⁶ And the people had spread again over all the face of the land, and there began again to be an exceeding great wickedness upon the face of the land, and Heth began to embrace the secret plans again of old, to destroy his father.

²⁷ And it came to pass that he did dethrone his father, for he slew him with his own sword; and he did reign in his stead.

²⁸ And there came prophets in the land again, crying repentance unto them—that they must prepare the way of the Lord or there should come a curse upon the face of the land; yea, even there should be a great famine, in which they should be destroyed if they did not repent.

²⁹ But the people believed not the words of the prophets, but they cast them out; and some of them they cast into pits and left them to perish. And it came to pass that they did all these things according to the commandment of the king, Heth.

³⁰ And it came to pass that there began to be a great dearth upon the land, and the inhabitants began to be destroyed exceeding fast because of the dearth, for there was no rain upon the face of the earth. ³¹ And there came forth poisonous serpents also upon the face of the land, and did poison many people. And it

came to pass that their flocks began to flee before the poisonous serpents, towards the land southward, which was called by the Nephites Zarahemla. ³² And it came to pass that there were many of them which did perish by the way; nevertheless, there were some which fled into the land southward.

³³ And it came to pass that the Lord did cause the serpents that they should pursue them no more, but that they should hedge up the way that the people could not pass, that whoso should attempt to pass might fall by the poisonous serpents. ³⁴ And it came to pass that the people did follow the course of the beasts, and did devour the carcasses of them which fell by the way, until they had devoured them all.

Now when the people saw that they must perish they began to repent of their iniquities and cry unto the Lord. ³⁵ And it came to pass that when they had humbled themselves sufficiently before the Lord he did send rain upon the face of the earth; and the people began to revive again, and there began to be fruit in the north countries, and in all the countries round about. And the Lord did show forth his power unto them in preserving them from famine.

The Reign of Shez, (Shez₂ Rebels)

10 ¹ And it came to pass that Shez, who was a descendant of Heth—for Heth had perished by the famine, and all his

26: *The people had spread again over all the face of the land*, after the population was catastrophically reduced at the time of Omer, see 9.12. **28:** Jaredite prophets were previously mentioned at 7.23–25. *Prepare the way of the Lord*, the phrase echoes Isa 40.3, and its several allusions in both the NT and the BoM. In the Jaredite context, it is not clear when these prophets thought the Lord might come. **30:** *Dearth*, WB: “scarcity; famine; barrenness.” **31–32:** There was some overlap between Jaredite and Nephite territories, particularly in the latter part of each civilization, when the Jaredites fled south and the Nephites fled north. **33–34:** As with the rain, God also controls the snakes, which displace the Jaredites’ domesticated animals southward and prevent the people from following their flocks into territories that would later belong to the Nephites. **34–35:** The repentance of the Jaredites in the face of famine prefigures the experience of the Nephites at the time of Neph₃; see Hel 11.7–17. Nevertheless, the poisonous snakes will remain a problem for several generations; see 10.19.

CHAPTER 10

1: *A descendant of Heth*, Shez was probably a son of Heth; see 1.25. It is remarkable that a king’s household—generally the most powerful, resource-rich members of society—would die in a famine. *Build up again a broken people*, a poignant description of the task that faced the new king.

household save it were Shez—wherefore, Shez began to build up again a broken people. ² And it came to pass that Shez did remember the destruction of his fathers, and he did build up a righteous kingdom; for he remembered what the Lord had done in bringing Jared and his brother across the deep; and he did walk in the ways of the Lord; and he begat sons and daughters.

³ And his eldest son, whose name was Shez, did rebel against him; nevertheless, Shez was smitten by the hand of a robber, because of his exceeding riches, which brought peace again unto his father. ⁴ And it came to pass that his father did build up many cities upon the face of the land, and the people began again to spread over all the face of the land. And Shez did live to an exceeding old age; and he begat Riplakish. And he died, and Riplakish reigned in his stead.

The Reign of Riplakish (the people rebel)

⁵ And it came to pass that Riplakish did not do that which was right in the sight of the Lord, for he did have many wives and concubines, and did lay that upon men's shoulders which was grievous to be borne; yea, he did tax them with heavy taxes; and with the taxes he did build many spacious buildings. ⁶ And he did erect him an exceedingly beautiful throne; and he did build many prisons, and whoso would not be subject unto taxes he did cast into prison; and whoso was not able to pay taxes he did cast into prison; and he did cause that they should labor continually for their

support; and whoso refused to labor he did cause to be put to death. ⁷ Wherefore he did obtain all his fine work, yea, even his fine gold he did cause to be refined in prison; and all manner of fine workmanship he did cause to be wrought in prison. And it came to pass that he did afflict the people with his whoredoms and abominations.

⁸ And when he had reigned for the space of forty and two years the people did rise up in rebellion against him; and there began to be war again in the land, insomuch that Riplakish was killed, and his descendants were driven out of the land.

The Reign of Morianton,

⁹ And it came to pass after the space of many years, Morianton, (he being a descendant of Riplakish) gathered together an army of outcasts, and went forth and gave battle unto the people; and he gained power over many cities; and the war became exceeding sore, and did last for the space of many years; and he did gain power over all the land, and did establish himself king over all the land. ¹⁰ And after that he had established himself king he did ease the burden of the people, by which he did gain favor in the eyes of the people, and they did anoint him to be their king. ¹¹ And he did do justice unto the people, but not unto himself because of his many whoredoms; wherefore he was cut off from the presence of the Lord.

¹² And it came to pass that Morianton built up many cities, and the people became exceeding rich under his reign, both in buildings, and

2: *Remember the destruction of his fathers*, a striking contrast with the regular BoM formula of remembering the captivity and deliverance of their fathers. **3:** It is a sad commentary when the murder of a son is said to have brought peace to his father. **5:** Concubines, heavy taxes, and extravagant buildings fit the BoM model of wicked kings, as with King Noah at Mos 11.1–2, 8–10. *Do that which was right in the sight of the Lord*, v. 16 below, and fifteen times in 2 Kings and 2 Chron. **6:** Apparently skilled craftsmen were among those who either refused or were unable to pay taxes. **8:** This is the only reported populist revolt in Jaredite history. **9:** *Outcasts*, members of the royal line who had been driven out in the previous verse. **10:** Morianton seems to have gained popular support by lowering taxes. Note that the phrase *the people* appears five times in vv. 9–12, as Morianton co-opts the people's uprising in v. 8 and restores monarchical rule. **11:** The idea that a person might not “do justice” to himself because of sin is intriguing.

in gold and silver, and in raising grain, and in flocks, and herds, and such things which had been restored unto them.¹³ And Morianton did live to an exceeding great age, and then he begat Kim; and Kim did reign in the stead of his father; and he did reign eight years, and his father died.

The Reigns of Kim, Levi, Corom, and Kish

And it came to pass that Kim did not reign in righteousness, wherefore he was not favored of the Lord.¹⁴ And his brother did rise up in rebellion against him, by which he did bring him into captivity; and he did remain in captivity all his days; and he begat sons and daughters in captivity, and in his old age he begat Levi; and he died.

¹⁵ And it came to pass that Levi did serve in captivity after the death of his father, for the space of forty and two years. And he did make war against the king of the land, by which he did obtain unto himself the kingdom.¹⁶ And after he had obtained unto himself the kingdom he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord; and the people did prosper in the land; and he did live to a good old age, and begat sons and daughters; and he also begat Corom, whom he anointed king in his stead.

¹⁷ And it came to pass that Corom did that which was good in the sight of the Lord all his days; and he begat many sons and daughters; and after he had seen many days he did pass away, even like unto the rest of the earth; and Kish reigned in his stead.¹⁸ And it came to pass that Kish passed away also, and Lib reigned in his stead.

The Reign of Lib, (the Jaredites are blessed and industrious)

¹⁹ And it came to pass that Lib also did that which was good in the sight of the Lord. And in the days of Lib the poisonous serpents were destroyed. Wherefore they did go into the land southward, to hunt food for the people of the land, for the land was covered with animals of the forest. And Lib also himself became a great hunter.²⁰ And they built a great city by the narrow neck of land, by the place where the sea divides the land.²¹ And they did preserve the land southward for a wilderness, to get game.

And the whole face of the land northward was covered with inhabitants.²² And they were exceedingly industrious, and they did buy and sell and traffic one with another, that they might get gain.²³ And they did work in all manner of ore, and they did make gold, and silver, and iron, and brass, and all manner of metals; and they did dig it out of the earth; wherefore, they did cast up mighty heaps of earth to get ore, of gold, and of silver, and of iron, and of copper. And they did work all manner of fine work.

²⁴ And they did have silks, and fine-twined linen; and they did work all manner of cloth, that they might clothe themselves from their nakedness.²⁵ And they did make all manner of tools to till the earth, both to plow and to sow, to reap and to hoe, and also to thrash.²⁶ And they did make all manner of tools with which they did work their beasts.²⁷ And they did make all manner of weapons of war. And they did work all manner of work of exceedingly curious workmanship.

²⁸ And never could be a people more blessed than were they, and more prospered by the

14: The rebellious brother who took over the throne is never named. **19:** *The poisonous serpents*, see 9.31–33.

21: The prohibition against development in the land southward suggests a surprising ecological awareness.

22: *Traffic*, WB: “trade.” **23–27:** The industriousness of the people is underscored by seven repetitions of *they did work/make all manner of* in just five verses. **23–24:** There is no evidence of iron or brass metallurgy in the ancient Americas, though gold, silver, and copper were certainly used. *Silks* may refer to some fabric other than the product of silkworms, which were unknown in the pre-Columbian era. **25:** *Thrash*, thresh. **28:** *Never... a people more blessed*, Moroni, as the narrator, marks this moment as the high point of Jaredite civilization, just as Mormon had done for the Nephites at Alma 50.23 and then 4 Ne 1.16. *For the Lord had spoken it*, see 1.42; 2.15; cf. 9.20.

hand of the Lord. And they were in a land that was choice above all lands, for the Lord had spoken it.²⁹ And it came to pass that Lib did live many years, and begat sons and daughters; and he also begat Hearthom.

The Reign of Hearthom to the Reign of Com₂ (prophets warn of destruction)

³⁰ And it came to pass that Hearthom reigned in the stead of his father. And when Hearthom had reigned twenty and four years, behold, the kingdom was taken away from him. And he served many years in captivity, yea, even all the remainder of his days.³¹ And he begat Heth, and Heth lived in captivity all his days. And Heth begat Aaron, and Aaron dwelt in captivity all his days; and he begat Amnigaddah, and Amnigaddah also dwelt in captivity all his days; and he begat Coriantum, and Coriantum dwelt in captivity all his days; and he begat Com.

³² And it came to pass that Com drew away the half of the kingdom. And he reigned over the half of the kingdom forty and two years; and he went to battle against the king, Amgid, and they fought for the space of many years, during which time Com gained power over Amgid, and obtained power over the remainder of the kingdom.³³ And in the days of Com there began to be robbers in the land; and they adopted the old plans, and administered oaths after the manner of the ancients, and sought again to destroy the kingdom.³⁴ Now Com did fight against them much; nevertheless, he did not prevail against them.

11¹ And there came also in the days of Com many prophets, and prophesied of the destruction of that great people except they

should repent, and turn unto the Lord, and forsake their murders and wickedness.² And it came to pass that the prophets were rejected by the people, and they fled unto Com for protection, for the people sought to destroy them.³ And they prophesied unto Com many things; and he was blessed in all the remainder of his days.⁴ And he lived to a good old age, and begat Shiblom; and Shiblom reigned in his stead.

The Reign of Shiblom, [or Shiblom,] (his rebellious brother kills the prophets)

And the brother of Shiblom rebelled against him, and there began to be an exceeding great war in all the land.⁵ And it came to pass that the brother of Shiblom caused that all the prophets who prophesied of the destruction of the people should be put to death;⁶ and there was great calamity in all the land, for they had testified that a great curse should come upon the land, and also upon the people, and that there should be a great destruction among them, such an one as never had been upon the face of the earth, and their bones should become as heaps of earth upon the face of the land except they should repent of their wickedness.

⁷ And they hearkened not unto the voice of the Lord, because of their wicked combinations; wherefore, there began to be wars and contentions in all the land, and also many famines and pestilences, insomuch that there was a great destruction, such an one as never had been known upon the face of the earth; and all this came to pass in the days of Shiblom.⁸ And the people began to repent of their iniquity; and inasmuch as they did the Lord did have mercy on them.

30–31: The details of how, why, and by whom the kingdom was taken from Hearthom are left unspecified. Between Hearthom and Com, four generations of the royal line (descended from Jared) do not reign but rather are held in captivity. 33: *After the manner of the ancients*, see 8.14–19; 9.5.

CHAPTER 11

1: Earlier prophets bearing similar messages were mentioned at 7.23 and 9.28; cf. vv. 5–6 below. 4: *Shiblom* is called *Shiblom* at 1.11. The spelling ending in *m* is probably a transcription error; see the discussion in ATV. Shiblom's rebellious brother is unnamed; cf. 10.14. 6: This prophecy is fulfilled at 14.21; Omni 1.22; Mos 8.8.

The Reigns of Ahah and Ethem (new prophets arise)

⁹ And it came to pass that Shiblom was slain, and Seth was brought into captivity, and did dwell in captivity all his days. ¹⁰ And it came to pass that Ahah, his son, did obtain the kingdom; and he did reign over the people all his days. And he did do all manner of iniquity in his days, by which he did cause the shedding of much blood; and few were his days.

¹¹ And Ethem, being a descendant of Ahah, did obtain the kingdom; and he also did do that which was wicked in his days. ¹² And it came to pass that in the days of Ethem there came many prophets, and prophesied again unto the people; yea, they did prophesy that the Lord would utterly destroy them from off the face of the earth except they repented of their iniquities. ¹³ And it came to pass that the people hardened their hearts, and would not hearken unto their words; and the prophets mourned and withdrew from among the people.

The Reign of Moron (two mighty men rebel)

¹⁴ And it came to pass that Ethem did execute judgment in wickedness all his days; and he begat Moron. And it came to pass that Moron did reign in his stead; and Moron did that which was wicked before the Lord. ¹⁵ And it came to pass that there arose a rebellion among the people, because of that secret combination which was built up to get power and gain; and there arose a mighty man among them in iniquity, and gave battle unto Moron, in which he did overthrow the half of the kingdom; and

he did maintain the half of the kingdom for many years. ¹⁶ And it came to pass that Moron did overthrow him, and did obtain the kingdom again.

¹⁷ And it came to pass that there arose another mighty man; and he was a descendant of the brother of Jared. ¹⁸ And it came to pass that he did overthrow Moron and obtain the kingdom; wherefore, Moron dwelt in captivity all the remainder of his days; and he begat Coriantor.

Coriantor's Life in Captivity; More Prophecies of Utter Destruction

¹⁹ And it came to pass that Coriantor dwelt in captivity all his days. ²⁰ And in the days of Coriantor there also came many prophets, and prophesied of great and marvelous things, and cried repentance unto the people, and except they should repent the Lord God would execute judgment against them to their utter destruction; ²¹ and that the Lord God would send or bring forth another people to possess the land, by his power, after the manner by which he brought their fathers. ²² And they did reject all the words of the prophets, because of their secret society and wicked abominations.

²³ And it came to pass that Coriantor begat Ether, and he died, having dwelt in captivity all his days.

The Reign of Coriantumr₂: Ether 12–15

The Prophet Ether

[V] **12** ¹ And it came to pass that the days of Ether were in the days

9: Seth was Shiblom's [Shiblon's] son; see 1.11. **11:** Ethem was probably a son of Ahah; see 1.9. **12:** These prophecies will be fulfilled in ch. 15. **14–18:** Neither *mighty man* is named. **14:** *Execute judgement in wickedness all his days* reverses the formulaic expression at 7.1, 27; 9.21. **17:** *A descendant of the brother of Jared*, and so may have represented a rival lineage to that of Jared. **21:** *Another people*, this could refer to either the Lehiters or the Mulekites.

CHAPTER 12

This chapter is the second of Moroni's three farewells to his readers; see Morm 8–9n. It offers a quick overview of key episodes from Nephite history, culminating in Moroni's parting words in vv. 38–41. **1:** Ether is in the royal lineage of Jared (1.6, 32), but he is a prophet rather than a ruler. His father Coriantor was the last in that line of kings. Coriantumr's lineage is unspecified, but if he is related to the unnamed king of 11.17–18, he is a descendant of the brother of Jared.

of Coriantumr; and Coriantumr was king over all the land.² And Ether was a prophet of the Lord; wherefore Ether came forth in the days of Coriantumr, and began to prophesy unto the people, for he could not be restrained because of the Spirit of the Lord which was in him.

³ For he did cry from the morning, even until the going down of the sun, exhorting the people to believe in God unto repentance lest they should be destroyed, saying unto them that by faith all things are fulfilled—⁴ Wherefore, whoso believeth in God might with surety hope for a better world, yea, even a place at the right hand of God, which hope cometh of faith, maketh an anchor to the souls of men, which would make them sure and steadfast, always abounding in good works, being led to glorify God.⁵ And it came to pass that Ether did prophesy great and marvelous things unto the people, which they did not believe, because they saw them not.

Moroni₂'s Sixth Editorial Comment: On Faith

⁶ And now, I, Moroni, would speak somewhat concerning these things; I would show unto the world that faith is things which are hoped for and not seen; wherefore, dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith.⁷ For it

was by faith that Christ showed himself unto our fathers, after he had risen from the dead; and he showed not himself unto them until after they had faith in him; wherefore, it must needs be that some had faith in him, for he showed himself not unto the world.⁸ But because of the faith of men he has shown himself unto the world,^a and glorified the name of the Father, and prepared a way that thereby others might be partakers of the heavenly gift, that they might hope for those things which they have not seen.⁹ Wherefore, ye may also have hope, and be partakers of the gift, if ye will but have faith.

¹⁰ Behold it was by faith that they of old were called after the holy order of God.¹¹ Wherefore, by faith was the law of Moses given. But in the gift of his Son hath God prepared a more excellent way; and it is by faith that it hath been fulfilled.¹² For if there be no faith among the children of men God can do no miracle among them; wherefore, he showed not himself until after their faith.

¹³ Behold, it was the faith of Alma and Amulek that caused the prison to tumble to the earth.¹⁴ Behold, it was the faith of

^a 8 Or ^[7] for he showed himself not unto the world ⁸ but [meaning "except"] because of the faith of men. He has shown himself unto the world

4: *Hope... an anchor to the soul(s)... sure and steadfast*, Heb 6.19. *Steadfast, always abounding in good works*, Mos 5.15; cf. 1 Cor 15.58. **5:** *Because they saw them not*, see Mos 1.6n. **6–21:** The structure of this editorial comment, as well as its theme and some of its language, parallels Heb 11. Note that most of the examples are drawn from Nephite history rather than the Jaredite account Moroni is here editing. **6:** *Faith is things which are hoped for and not seen*, the explanation seems to be missing elements that are present at Heb 11.1: "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (NRSV); cf. Alma 32.21. *Dispute not because ye see not*, that is to say, "Readers, do not be like the Jaredites in the previous verse." **7:** *Showed himself unto our fathers*, see 3 Ne 11. 7–8: The alternative punctuation in the footnote resolves the apparent contradiction that Christ *showed himself not unto the world* in one verse, and then *has shown himself unto the world* in the next; cf. v. 12. **8:** *Glorified the name of the Father*, cf. 3 Ne 9.15; 23.9. *Partakers of the heavenly gift*, this likely refers to the gift of the Holy Ghost; see 4 Ne 1.2–3n; Heb 6.4. **10:** *By faith... called after the holy order*, see Alma 13.3. **11:** Because the law of Moses was fulfilled in Christ, the gospel as taught among the Nephites appears to be the *more excellent way* that Moroni has in mind, but see 1 Cor 12.31, where it refers to charity. **12:** See 3 Ne 19.35; Morm 9.20n. **13:** See Alma 14.26–29. **14:** See Hel 5.35–49n. According to Hel 5.41, 47, as well as 3 Ne 9.20, it was the faith of the Lamanites themselves, rather than that of Nephi₂ and Lehi₄, that resulted in their baptism with fire.

Nephi and Lehi that wrought the change upon the Lamanites, that they were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost.¹⁵ Behold, it was the faith of Ammon and his brethren which wrought so great a miracle among the Lamanites.¹⁶ Yea, and even all they who wrought miracles wrought them by faith, even those who were before Christ and also those who were after.

¹⁷ And it was by faith that the three disciples obtained a promise that they should not taste of death; and they obtained not the promise until after their faith.¹⁸ And neither at any time hath any wrought miracles until after their faith; wherefore they first believed in the Son of God.

¹⁹ And there were many whose faith was so exceeding strong, even before Christ came, who could not be kept from within the veil, but truly saw with their eyes the things which they had beheld with an eye of faith, and they were glad.²⁰ And behold, we have seen in this record that one of these was the brother of Jared; for so great was his faith in God, that when God put forth his finger he could not hide it from the sight of the brother of Jared, because of his word which he had spoken unto him, which word he had obtained by faith.²¹ And after the brother of Jared had beheld the finger of the Lord, because of the promise which the brother of Jared had obtained by faith, the Lord could not withhold anything from his sight; wherefore he showed him all things, for he could no longer be kept without the veil.

Moroni₂'s Sixth Editorial Comment (cont.): Moroni₂ Talks with the Lord about the Gentiles, the Book of Mormon, and His Weakness

²² And it is by faith that my fathers have obtained the promise that these things should come unto their brethren through the Gentiles; therefore the Lord hath commanded me, yea, even Jesus Christ.

²³ And I said unto him, "Lord, the Gentiles will mock at these things, because of our weakness in writing; for Lord thou hast made us mighty in word by faith, but thou hast not made us mighty in writing; for thou hast made all this people that they could speak much, because of the Holy Ghost which thou hast given them;²⁴ and thou hast made us that we could write but little, because of the awkwardness of our hands. Behold, thou hast not made us mighty in writing like unto the brother of Jared, for thou madest him that the things which he wrote were mighty even as thou art, unto the overpowering of man to read them.²⁵ Thou hast also made our words powerful and great, even that we cannot write them; wherefore, when we write we behold our weakness, and stumble because of the placing of our words; and I fear lest the Gentiles shall mock at our words."

²⁶ And when I had said this, the Lord spake unto me, saying, "Fools mock, but they shall mourn; and my grace is sufficient for the meek, that they shall take no advantage of your weakness;²⁷ and if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and

15: See Alma 17–26. **17:** See 3 Ne 28.4–16. **20–21:** See 3.6–28. **22:** *The promise*, see 2 Ne 29.1–2; Enos 1.11–18; WoM 1.11. **22:** *The Lord hath commanded me*, that is, to write this record. **23–25:** Other discussions of weakness in writing occur at 2 Ne 3.18–21; 33.1–4, 11; like Nephi before him, Moroni is also laying claim to the prophecy of Joseph of Egypt in 2 Ne 3. **24:** *The things which he wrote*, Moroni is referring to the sealed account of the brother of Jared's vision; see 3.21–28. **26–28:** God does not deny that Moroni's writings are weak, but he asserts that weak things—including the BoM itself—can become strong to those who receive them in faith. Indeed, weaknesses are gifts that can lead to humility and grace. **27:** *My grace is sufficient... weak things become strong*, cf. 2 Cor 12.9–10.

my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them.²⁸ Behold, I will show unto the Gentiles their weakness, and I will show unto them that faith, hope and charity bringeth unto me—the fountain of all righteousness.”

²⁹ And I, Moroni, having heard these words, was comforted, and said, “O Lord, thy righteous will be done, for I know that thou workest unto the children of men according to their faith; ³⁰ for the brother of Jared said unto the mountain Zerin, ‘Remove’—and it was removed. And if he had not had faith it would not have moved; wherefore thou workest after men have faith. ³¹ For thus didst thou manifest thyself unto thy disciples; for after they had faith, and did speak in thy name, thou didst show thyself unto them in great power.

³² “And I also remember that thou hast said that thou hast prepared a house for man, yea, even among the mansions of thy Father, in which man might have a more excellent hope; wherefore man must hope, or he cannot receive an inheritance in the place which thou hast prepared.

³³ “And again, I remember that thou hast said that thou hast loved the world, even unto the laying down of thy life for the world, that thou mightest take it again to prepare a place for the children of men. ³⁴ And now I know

that this love which thou hast had for the children of men is charity; wherefore, except men shall have charity they cannot inherit that place which thou hast prepared in the mansions of thy Father. ³⁵ Wherefore, I know by this thing which thou hast said, that if the Gentiles have not charity, because of our weakness, that thou wilt prove them, and take away their talent, yea, even that which they have received, and give unto them who shall have more abundantly.”

³⁶ And it came to pass that I prayed unto the Lord that he would give unto the Gentiles grace, that they might have charity.

³⁷ And it came to pass that the Lord said unto me, “If they have not charity it mattereth not unto thee, thou hast been faithful; wherefore, thy garments shall be made clean. And because thou hast seen thy weakness thou shalt be made strong, even unto the sitting down in the place which I have prepared in the mansions of my Father.”

Moroni₂'s Sixth Editorial Comment (cont.): Farewell

³⁸ And now I, Moroni, bid farewell unto the Gentiles, yea, and also unto my brethren whom I love, until we shall meet before the judgment-seat of Christ, where all men shall know that my garments are not spotted with your blood.

³⁹ And then shall ye know that I have seen Jesus, and that he hath talked with me face to face, and that he told me in plain humility—even

28: This verse introduces what follows, as the argument moves from faith (vv. 29–31) to hope (v. 32) to love, or charity (vv. 33–35). *Fountain of all righteousness*, see 8.26n. **29:** *Comforted*, WB: “strengthened; consoled; encouraged.” **30:** Nothing further is known of this incident, but see Morm 8.24. **31:** 3 Ne 27–28. **32:** *Prepared a house... among the mansions of thy Father*, cf. Enos 1.27; Jn 14.2. Where the NT verse spoke of dwelling places or rooms within the father’s house (the KJV use of “mansions” is somewhat confusing); here the promise is of an entire house among mansions. **33:** *Thou hast loved the world... laying down of thy life... take it again*, cf. Jn 10.17–18; 2 Ne 2.8; 26.24; 3 Ne 9.22. **35:** *Prove, test. Take away their talent... give unto them who shall have more*, cf. Mt 25.28–29. The word *talent*, which in the Bible is a unit of money, is used only here in the BoM, where it seems to refer to “the fulness of the gospel” (3 Ne 16.10–12), or perhaps “the word of God” (2 Ne 28.29–30). **36–38:** According to DC 135.5, Hyrum Smith read these verses aloud to his brother Joseph shortly before they were both killed at Carthage Jail in 1844. **36:** Grace leads to charity because charity is a gift from God; see Moro 7.47–48. **37:** *Thy garments shall be made clean*, faithfulness in declaring the gospel results in absolution from the sins of one’s hearers; see 2 Ne 9.44n. **39:** Moroni is the only figure in the BoM who is said to have spoken with God *face to face*, as did Jacob (Gen 32.30) and Moses (Ex 33.11; Deut 34.10), but compare the brother of Jared’s experience with the premortal Christ at 3.13–16.

as a man telleth another—in mine own language, concerning these things;⁴⁰ and only a few have I written, because of my weakness in writing.

⁴¹ And now, I would commend you to seek this Jesus of whom the prophets and apostles have written, that the grace of God the Father, and also the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of them, may be and abide in you forever. Amen.

Ether Prophecies of a New Jerusalem

[VI] 13 ¹ And now I, Moroni, proceeded to finish my record concerning the destruction of the people of whom I have been writing.² For behold, they rejected all the words of Ether; for he truly told them of all things, from the beginning of man; and that after the waters had receded from off the

face of this land it became a choice land above all other lands, a chosen land of the Lord; wherefore the Lord would have that all men should serve him who dwell upon the face thereof;³ and that it was the place of the New Jerusalem, which should come down out of heaven, and the holy sanctuary of the Lord.

⁴ Behold, Ether saw the days of Christ, and he spake concerning a New Jerusalem upon this land.⁵ And he spake also concerning the house of Israel, and the Jerusalem from whence Lehi should come—after it should be destroyed it should be built up again, a holy city unto the Lord; wherefore, it could not be a new Jerusalem for it had been in a time of old; but it should be built up again, and become a holy city of the Lord; and it should be built unto the house of Israel—⁶ and that a New Jerusalem should be built up upon this land, unto the remnant of the seed of Joseph, for which things there has been a type.⁷ For as Joseph brought

*41: I would commend you to seek, I would recommend that you seek. Of whom the prophets and apostles have written, that is, in the Old and New Testaments. Because the word *apostle* is consistently used to refer to Jesus's apostles in the Old World (as opposed to the Nephite twelve disciples), this is one of only two specific references in the BoM to the NT as a whole; the other is at 1 Ne 13.39. Of course, *prophets* could also include God's messengers to the Nephites. *The grace of God the Father . . . Lord Jesus Christ . . . be and abide in you forever*, Moroni closes his final comment section with phrasing similar to that used by Mormon as he ended his letter at Moro 9.26—a text Moroni would have had in his possession but has not yet included in his record. He may have felt that his “weakness in writing” could be remedied by borrowing the more eloquent words of others.*

CHAPTER 13

1–12: It is unexpected that Ether would write of the New Jerusalem since the Jaredites had left the Old World many centuries before David established the old Jerusalem as a capital city. Similarly, the references to Joseph and Abraham would seem extraneous to Ether's audience since the Jaredites were not of the house of Israel, nor were they descendants of Abraham. Perhaps Moroni is expanding on Ether's original prophecies, as he did at 12.6–41. **2:** *After the waters had receded*, see Gen 8.13–14. Moroni had written earlier at 2.8–12 of the necessity for those living in this land to serve God. **3:** *The New Jerusalem, which shall come down out of heaven*, Rev 3.12; 21.2, both of which refer to the heavenly counterpart and eventual replacement for the historic city (the new city is described in detail at Rev 21.9–22.5). The BoM, by contrast, envisions the New Jerusalem as an earthly counterpart on the American continent built by latter-day Lehiters with assistance from the Gentiles. The only other BoM references to the New Jerusalem, outside of Ether 13, are 3 Ne 20.22; 21.23–25. *Holy sanctuary* seems to refer to a temple complex within the New Jerusalem. **4–8:** This was the most-cited passage from the BoM in early LDS literature (1830–46), closely followed by 3 Ne 21.1–7 (on the BoM and the gathering of Israel) and 2 Ne 30.3–6 (on the BoM and the restoration of Native Americans). **6–7:** Moroni perceives a type, or a parallel, between Joseph's taking refuge in Egypt and some of his descendants taking refuge in the New World. The similarities are that both Joseph and the Lehiters survive abroad, unknown to their kinsmen back home, and perform a work there that will save their relatives (a father in one case and posterity in the other). In addition, neither will return to their native land. **7:** *Joseph brought his father down into the land of Egypt, even so he died there*, see Gen 46.1–7; 49.33. Joseph's father, Jacob, died peacefully in Egypt rather than earlier of starvation in Canaan.

his father down into the land of Egypt, even so he died there; wherefore, the Lord brought a remnant of the seed of Joseph out of the land of Jerusalem, that he might be merciful unto the seed of Joseph that they should perish not, even as he was merciful unto the father of Joseph that he should perish not.

⁸ Wherefore, the remnant of the house of Joseph shall be built upon this land; and it shall be a land of their inheritance; and they shall build up a holy city unto the Lord, like unto the Jerusalem of old; and they shall no more be confounded, until the end come when the earth shall pass away.⁹ And there shall be a new heaven and a new earth; and they shall be like unto the old save the old have passed away, and all things have become new.¹⁰ And then cometh the New Jerusalem; and blessed are they who dwell therein, for it is they whose garments are white through the blood of the Lamb; and they are they who are numbered among the remnant of the seed of Joseph, who were of the house of Israel.

¹¹ And then also cometh the Jerusalem of old; and the inhabitants thereof, blessed are they, for they have been washed in the blood of the Lamb; and they are they who were scattered and gathered in from the four quarters of the earth, and from the north countries, and are partakers of the

fulfilling of the covenant which God made with their father, Abraham.¹² And when these things come, bringeth to pass the scripture which saith:

“There are they who were first,
who shall be last;
and there are they who were last,
who shall be first.”^a

Ether in Hiding

¹³ And I was about to write more, but I am forbidden; but great and marvelous were the prophecies of Ether; but they esteemed him as naught, and cast him out; and he hid himself in the cavity of a rock by day, and by night he went forth viewing the things which should come upon the people.¹⁴ And as he dwelt in the cavity of a rock he made the remainder of this record, viewing the destructions which came upon the people, by night.

¹⁵ And it came to pass that in that same year in which he was cast out from among the people there began to be a great war among the people, for there were many who rose up, who were mighty men, and sought to destroy Coriantumr by their secret plans of wickedness,

^a 12 Reference uncertain

8–11: At the end of time, both the new Jerusalem in the Americas and the old Jerusalem in Judea will be replaced by heavenly cities. *A new heaven and a new earth . . . passed away*, Rev 21.1 (the following verses speak of “the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down,” and 21.5 has “I make all things new”). *Old things have passed away, and all things have become new*, 2 Cor 5.17; cf. 3 Ne 12.47; 15.2–3. *Garments are white through the blood of the Lamb*, cf. Rev 7.14; 1 Ne 12.10; Alma 13.11; 34.36. **8:** *The remnant of the house of Joseph*, that is, the modern descendants of the Lamanites. **10:** *Blessed are they who dwell therein*, the allusion to Ps 84.4 suggests that the entire city of New Jerusalem will be a temple; a similar concept underlies Rev 21.22. **11:** Here the people themselves, and not just their clothing, have been cleansed by the blood of the Lamb; this is also the case at 1 Ne 12.11; Morm 9.6; Moro 10.33. *Gathered in . . . from the north countries*, referring to the lost tribes; see Jer 23.7–8; 31.8. *Covenant . . . with their father, Abraham*, see Gen 12.1–3; 17.1–8. **12:** This antimetabole, or chiasmic aphorism, is attached to three different stories in the NT: Mt 19.30 (Mk 10.31); Mt 20.16; Lk 13.30. At 1 Ne 13.42 and Jacob 5.63, the saying is applied to the Jews and the Gentiles. Here it is unclear whether the *first* and *last* refer to the two Jerusalems, or to the two branches of Israel located in the Western and Eastern Hemispheres. **13:** *But I am forbidden*, for additional instances of the Lord exercising editorial control over the contents of the BoM, see 1 Ne 14.28; 3 Ne 26.11–12; 28.25. *Great and marvelous were the prophecies of Ether*, resumptive repetition from 12.5. *Esteemed him as naught*, regarded him as worthless. *Cavity of a rock* occurs four times in this chapter and also at 1 Ne 3.27, perhaps referring not to a cave but rather a crevice in the rocks, as at Isa 2.19; 7.19; Jer 16.16 (KJV: “holes of the rocks”). **15:** Coriantumr was briefly introduced at 12.1–2. *Of which hath been spoken*, see 8.20–26.

of which hath been spoken. ¹⁶ And now Coriantumr, having studied, himself, in all the arts of war and all the cunning of the world, wherefore he gave battle unto them who sought to destroy him. ¹⁷ But he repented not, neither his fair sons nor daughters; neither the fair sons and daughters of Cohor; neither the fair sons and daughters of Corihor; and in fine, there were none of the fair sons and daughters upon the face of the whole earth who repented of their sins.

¹⁸ Wherefore, it came to pass that in the first year that Ether dwelt in the cavity of a rock, there were many people who were slain by the sword of those secret combinations, fighting against Coriantumr that they might obtain the kingdom. ¹⁹ And it came to pass that the sons of Coriantumr fought much and bled much.

²⁰ And in the second year the word of the Lord came to Ether, that he should go and prophesy unto Coriantumr that, if he would repent, and all his household, the Lord would give unto him his kingdom and spare the people—²¹ otherwise they should be destroyed, and all his household save it were himself. And he should only live to see the fulfilling of the prophecies which had been spoken concerning another people receiving the land for their inheritance; and Coriantumr should receive a burial by them; and every soul should be destroyed save it were Coriantumr.

²² And it came to pass that Coriantumr repented not, neither his household, neither the people; and the wars ceased not; and they sought to kill Ether, but he fled from before them and hid again in the cavity of the rock.

Shared Fights with Coriantumr₂

²³ And it came to pass that there arose up Shared, and he also gave battle unto Coriantumr; and he did beat him, insomuch that in the third year he did bring him into captivity. ²⁴ And the sons of Coriantumr, in the fourth year, did beat Shared, and did obtain the kingdom again unto their father.

²⁵ Now there began to be a war upon all the face of the land, every man with his band fighting for that which he desired.

²⁶ And there were robbers, and in fine, all manner of wickedness upon all the face of the land.

²⁷ And it came to pass that Coriantumr was exceedingly angry with Shared, and he went against him with his armies to battle; and they did meet in great anger, and they did meet in the valley of Gilgal; and the battle became exceeding sore. ²⁸ And it came to pass that Shared fought against him for the space of three days. And it came to pass that Coriantumr beat him, and did pursue him until he came to the plains of Heshlon.

²⁹ And it came to pass that Shared gave him battle again upon the plains; and behold, he did beat Coriantumr, and drove him back again to the valley of Gilgal. ³⁰ And Coriantumr gave Shared battle again in the valley of Gilgal, in which he beat Shared and slew him. ³¹ And Shared wounded Coriantumr in his thigh, that he did not go to battle again for the space of two years, in which time all the people upon the face of the land were shedding blood, and there was none to restrain them.

17: *Cohor* and *Corihor* may be contemporary figures, or they may be ancient kings of a rival royal lineage; see ch. 7. *Fair sons and daughters*, repeated four times, is an ominous turn of phrase, see 3 Ne 9.2; Morm 6.19. **21:** Context suggests “he only should live” rather than *he should only live*. *Prophecies . . . another people receiving the land*, see 11.21. *Coriantumr should receive a burial by them*, this prophecy is fulfilled at Omni 1.20–22; cf. Ether 15.29–30 for Coriantumr being the last of the Jaredites. **23:** Nothing is known of Shared’s origins.

The Brother of Shared Fights with Coriantumr₂ and Gains the Throne

14¹ And now there began to be a great curse upon all the land because of the iniquity of the people, in which, if a man should lay his tool or his sword upon his shelf, or upon the place whither he would keep it, behold, upon the morrow, he could not find it, so great was the curse upon the land.² Wherefore every man did cleave unto that which was his own, with his hands, and would not borrow neither would he lend; and every man kept the hilt of his sword in his right hand, in the defence of his property and his own life and of his wives and children.

³ And now, after the space of two years, and after the death of Shared, behold, there arose the brother of Shared and he gave battle unto Coriantumr, in which Coriantumr did beat him and did pursue him to the wilderness of Akish.

⁴ And it came to pass that the brother of Shared did give battle unto him in the wilderness of Akish; and the battle became exceeding sore, and many thousands fell by the sword.

⁵ And it came to pass that Coriantumr did lay siege to the wilderness; and the brother of Shared did march forth out of the wilderness by night, and slew a part of the army of Coriantumr, as they were drunken.⁶ And he came forth to the land of Moron, and placed himself upon the throne of Coriantumr.

⁷ And it came to pass that Coriantumr dwelt with his army in the wilderness for the space of two years, in which he did receive great strength to his army.⁸ Now the brother of Shared, whose name was Gilead, also

received great strength to his army, because of secret combinations.⁹ And it came to pass that his high priest murdered him as he sat upon his throne.¹⁰ And it came to pass that one of the secret combinations murdered him in a secret pass, and obtained unto himself the kingdom; and his name was Lib; and Lib was a man of great stature, more than any other man among all the people.

Coriantumr₂ Attempts to Regain His Kingdom from Lib₂

¹¹ And it came to pass that in the first year of Lib, Coriantumr came up unto the land of Moron, and gave battle unto Lib.¹² And it came to pass that he fought with Lib, in which Lib did smite upon his arm that he was wounded; nevertheless, the army of Coriantumr did press forward upon Lib, that he fled to the borders upon the seashore.¹³ And it came to pass that Coriantumr pursued him; and Lib gave battle unto him upon the seashore.¹⁴ And it came to pass that Lib did smite the army of Coriantumr, that they fled again to the wilderness of Akish.

¹⁵ And it came to pass that Lib did pursue him until he came to the plains of Agosh. And Coriantumr had taken all the people with him as he fled before Lib in that quarter of the land whither he fled.¹⁶ And when he had come to the plains of Agosh he gave battle unto Lib, and he smote upon him until he died; nevertheless, the brother of Lib did come against Coriantumr in the stead thereof, and the battle became exceeding sore, in the which Coriantumr fled again before the army of the brother of Lib.

CHAPTER 14

1: *The curse upon the land*, see Hel 13.30–36; Morm 1.17–18. **3:** The brother of Shared is identified as Gilead in v. 8. *Wilderness of Akish*, presumably named after the founder of secret combinations in chs. 8–9. **5:** *Lay siege to the wilderness*, probably referring to a place of retreat in a wilderness region. **6:** The land of Moron was identified as a royal territory at 7.5–6. **10:** *Murdered him in a secret pass*, that is, the high priest assassin. **12:** This is Coriantumr's second major wound; see 13.31.

Shiz Pursues Coriantumr,

¹⁷ Now the name of the brother of Lib was called Shiz. And it came to pass that Shiz pursued after Coriantumr, and he did overthrow many cities, and he did slay both women and children, and he did burn the cities. ¹⁸ And there went a fear of Shiz throughout all the land; yea, a cry went forth throughout the land: “Who can stand before the army of Shiz? Behold, he sweepeth the earth before him!”

¹⁹ And it came to pass that the people began to flock together in armies, throughout all the face of the land. ²⁰ And they were divided; and a part of them fled to the army of Shiz, and a part of them fled to the army of Coriantumr. ²¹ And so great and lasting had been the war, and so long had been the scene of bloodshed and carnage, that the whole face of the land was covered with the bodies of the dead. ²² And so swift and speedy was the war that there was none left to bury the dead, but they did march forth from the shedding of blood to the shedding of blood, leaving the bodies of both men, women, and children strewed upon the face of the land, to become a prey to the worms of the flesh. ²³ And the scent thereof went forth upon the face of the land, even upon all the face of the land; wherefore the people became troubled by day and by night, because of the scent thereof. ²⁴ Nevertheless, Shiz did not cease to pursue Coriantumr; for he had sworn to avenge himself upon Coriantumr of the blood of his brother, who had been slain, and the word of the Lord which came to Ether that Coriantumr should not fall by the sword.

²⁵ And thus we see that the Lord did visit them in the fulness of his wrath, and their wickedness and abominations had prepared a way for their everlasting destruction.

²⁶ And it came to pass that Shiz did pursue Coriantumr eastward, even to the borders of the seashore, and there he gave battle unto Shiz for the space of three days. ²⁷ And so terrible was the destruction among the armies of Shiz that the people began to be frightened, and began to flee before the armies of Coriantumr; and they fled to the land of Corihor, and swept off the inhabitants before them, all them that would not join them.

²⁸ And they pitched their tents in the valley of Corihor; and Coriantumr pitched his tents in the valley of Shurr. Now the valley of Shurr was near the hill Comnor; wherefore, Coriantumr did gather his armies together upon the hill Comnor, and did sound a trumpet unto the armies of Shiz to invite them forth to battle. ²⁹ And it came to pass that they came forth, but were driven again; and they came the second time, and they were driven again the second time. And it came to pass that they came again the third time, and the battle became exceeding sore.

³⁰ And it came to pass that Shiz smote upon Coriantumr that he gave him many deep wounds; and Coriantumr, having lost his blood, fainted, and was carried away as though he were dead. ³¹ Now the loss of men, women and children on both sides was so great that Shiz commanded his people that they should not pursue the armies of Coriantumr; wherefore, they returned to their camp.

18: *Sweepeth the earth*, a similar metaphor appears at Isa 14.23 (2 Ne 24.23). **21:** *Covered with the bodies of the dead*, in fulfillment of 11.6, and as reported at Mos 8.8; 21.26. **23:** A similar phenomenon was reported at Alma 16.11. **24:** *Word of the Lord... Coriantumr should not fall*, apparently Shiz had heard of Ether's prophecy at 13.20–21 and wanted to disprove it. **25:** *Thus we see... in the fulness of his wrath*, see 2.8. **28:** *Sound a trumpet*, this is the only mention of musical instruments among BoM peoples.

Preparations for the Last Battle

15¹ And it came to pass when Coriantumr had recovered of his wounds, he began to remember the words which Ether had spoken unto him.² He saw that there had been slain by the sword already nearly two millions of his people, and he began to sorrow in his heart; yea, there had been slain two millions of mighty men, and also their wives and their children.³ He began to repent of the evil which he had done; he began to remember the words which had been spoken by the mouth of all the prophets, and he saw them that they were fulfilled thus far, every whit; and his soul mourned and refused to be comforted.

⁴ And it came to pass that he wrote an epistle unto Shiz, desiring him that he would spare the people, and he would give up the kingdom for the sake of the lives of the people.⁵ And it came to pass that when Shiz had received his epistle he wrote an epistle unto Coriantumr, that if he would give himself up, that he might slay him with his own sword, that he would spare the lives of the people.⁶ And it came to pass that the people repented not of their iniquity; and the people of Coriantumr were stirred up to anger against the people of Shiz; and the people of Shiz were stirred up to anger against the people of Coriantumr; wherefore, the people of Shiz did give battle unto the people of Coriantumr.

⁷ And when Coriantumr saw that he was about to fall he fled again before the people of Shiz.⁸ And it came to pass that he came to

the waters of Ripliancum, which, by interpretation, is “large,” or “to exceed all”; wherefore, when they came to these waters they pitched their tents; and Shiz also pitched his tents near unto them; and therefore on the morrow they did come to battle.⁹ And it came to pass that they fought an exceedingly sore battle, in which Coriantumr was wounded again, and he fainted with the loss of blood.

¹⁰ And it came to pass that the armies of Coriantumr did press upon the armies of Shiz that they beat them, that they caused them to flee before them; and they did flee southward, and did pitch their tents in a place which was called Ogath.¹¹ And it came to pass that the army of Coriantumr did pitch their tents by the hill Ramah (and it was that same hill where my father Mormon did hide up the records unto the Lord, which were sacred).

¹² And it came to pass that they did gather together all the people upon all the face of the land, who had not been slain, save it was Ether.¹³ And it came to pass that Ether did behold all the doings of the people; and he beheld that the people who were for Coriantumr were gathered together to the army of Coriantumr; and the people who were for Shiz were gathered together to the army of Shiz.¹⁴ Wherefore, they were for the space of four years gathering together the people, that they might get all who were upon the face of the land, and that they might receive all the strength which it was possible that they could receive.

CHAPTER 15

1–3: Coriantumr’s change of heart is underscored by four repetitions of *he began to* in just three verses. **1:** *The words which Ether had spoken unto him*, see 13.20–21. **2:** Two million deaths seems unreasonably high, particularly since there have been no conclusive traces of a large, Mesopotamian-based Jaredite civilization discovered in the New World, but see Morm 6.10–15n. **3:** *Remembered the words... of all the prophets*, see 7.23–26; 9.28–30; 11.1–7, 12–13, 20–21. *Mourned... refused to be comforted*, Gen 37.34–35; Ps 77.2; Jer 31.15. **4:** Coriantumr had earlier rejected an offer from the Lord that would have spared his people and still left him with his kingdom (13.20); his bargaining position with Shiz is now very much reduced. **5:** Shiz’s demand would have proven Ether’s prophecy false (see 14.24n), but the counteroffer is rendered moot by the resurgence of anger in the next verse. **9:** *Wounded again*, see 13.31; 14.12, 30. **11:** *Ramah*, like Gilgal (13.27), is also a place name in the Bible. *That same hill*, see Morm 6.6. **13:** This binary division of the people originated at 14.20.

The Destruction of the Jaredites

¹⁵ And it came to pass that when they were all gathered together, every one to the army which he would, with their wives and their children—both men, women and children being armed with weapons of war, having shields, and breastplates, and head-plates, and being clothed after the manner of war—they did march forth one against another to battle; and they fought all that day, and conquered not.

¹⁶ And it came to pass that when it was night they were weary, and retired to their camps; and after they had retired to their camps they took up a howling and a lamentation for the loss of the slain of their people; and so great were their cries, their howlings and lamentations, that they did rend the air exceedingly.

¹⁷ And it came to pass that on the morrow they did go again to battle, and great and terrible was that day; nevertheless, they conquered not, and when the night came, again they did rend the air with their cries, and their howlings, and their mournings, for the loss of the slain of their people.

¹⁸ And it came to pass that Coriantumr wrote again an epistle unto Shiz, desiring that he would not come again to battle, but that he would take the kingdom, and spare the lives of the people. ¹⁹ But behold, the Spirit of the Lord had ceased striving with them, and Satan had full power over the hearts of the people;

for they were given up unto the hardness of their hearts, and the blindness of their minds that they might be destroyed; wherefore they went again to battle.

²⁰ And it came to pass that they fought all that day, and when the night came they slept upon their swords.

²¹ And on the morrow they fought even until the night came. ²² And when the night came they were drunken with anger, even as a man who is drunken with wine; and they slept again upon their swords.

²³ And on the morrow they fought again; and when the night came they had all fallen by the sword save it were fifty and two of the people of Coriantumr, and sixty and nine of the people of Shiz. ²⁴ And it came to pass that they slept upon their swords that night.

And on the morrow they fought again, and they contended in their might with their swords and with their shields, all that day. ²⁵ And when the night came there were thirty and two of the people of Shiz, and twenty and seven of the people of Coriantumr. ²⁶ And it came to pass that they ate and slept, and prepared for death on the morrow.

And they were large and mighty men as to the strength of men. ²⁷ And it came to pass that they fought for the space of three hours, and they fainted with the loss of blood. ²⁸ And it came to pass that when the men of

15–32: This section recounts the last eight days of the Jaredites. The details must have been communicated to Ether, who was in hiding at the time (13.22; 15.12, 33), either by God or by Coriantumr himself. The coming of night that is mentioned eight times in vv. 16–25 seems both literal and metaphorical. **15:** Some of these *breastplates* will be retrieved by an expedition sent out by Limhi, many centuries later; see Mos 8.10. **16–17:** *A howling and a lamentation for the loss of the slain* recalls the destruction at the time of Jesus's coming to the Nephites (3 Ne 10.2). The beginning of Jaredite civilization was marked by nighttime praises of the Lord (6.9); it ends with nocturnal howling, lamentations, and cries. **18:** This is a reiteration of the offer Coriantumr made at v. 4 above. **19:** In this verse, Moroni repurposes earlier language from his account of the Jaredites to show how gross iniquity culminates in violence: “my Spirit will not always strive with man” (2.15); “Satan may have no power upon the hearts” (8.26); “hardness of heart and blindness of mind” (4.15)—though the phrases have precedents elsewhere in the BoM and the Bible. **20–25:** *They fought . . . and when the night came* is repeated four times in these verses, along with three iterations of *slept upon their swords*, suggesting a grueling, numbing march toward death. **22:** *Drunken with anger*, they are past the point of rational deliberation or spiritual feeling. **28:** *He swore . . . that he would slay Coriantumr*, this has become an obsession for Shiz; see 14.24; 15.5.

Coriantumr had received sufficient strength that they could walk, they were about to flee for their lives; but behold, Shiz arose, and also his men, and he swore in his wrath that he would slay Coriantumr or he would perish by the sword.²⁹ Wherefore, he did pursue them, and on the morrow he did overtake them; and they fought again with the sword. And it came to pass that when they had all fallen by the sword, save it were Coriantumr and Shiz, behold Shiz had fainted with the loss of blood.

³⁰ And it came to pass that when Coriantumr had leaned upon his sword, that he rested a little, he smote off the head of Shiz.³¹ And it came to pass that after he had smitten off the head of Shiz, that Shiz raised up on his hands and fell; and after that he had struggled for

breath, he died.³² And it came to pass that Coriantumr fell to the earth, and became as if he had no life.

The End of Ether

³³ And the Lord spake unto Ether, and said unto him, “Go forth.” And he went forth, and beheld that the words of the Lord had all been fulfilled; and he finished his record; (and the hundredth part I have not written) and he hid them in a manner that the people of Limhi did find them.

³⁴ Now the last words which are written by Ether are these, “Whether the Lord will that I be translated, or that I suffer the will of the Lord in the flesh, it mattereth not, if it so be that I am saved in the kingdom of God. Amen.”

31: The story of the Jaredites concludes on a mythical note, since bodily movement after decapitation would be impossible. **32:** *Became as if he had no life*, Moroni ends his account ambiguously, though Coriantumr did not die that day. Readers may have expected Moroni to say something about the fulfillment of Ether’s prophecy at 13.20–21 concerning Coriantumr’s demise; nevertheless, the rest of the story is revealed at Omni 1.20–22. **33:** *Go forth*, presumably from his vantage point in the cavity of a rock (13.22; 15.12–13). It is strange that Moroni could not write more than a *hundredth part* of the Jaredite record, since it was contained in only twenty-four plates, but the expression is a common trope of Nephite record keepers; see Jacob 3.13n. *The people of Limhi did find them*, see Mos 8.7–11; 28.11. **34:** Ether imagines two possible fates: being translated like the three Nephite disciples many centuries later (see 3 Ne 28), or dying as an ordinary mortal. It is unclear which alternative transpired. *Translated*, WB: “removed to heaven without dying.” *It mattereth not*, see Morm 8.4n.

INTRODUCTION TO MORONI

Moroni is the only book in the Book of Mormon with no instances of “it came to pass.” It is also the only multi-chapter book in which the current LDS chapter divisions have remained unchanged from the original chapters of the 1830 edition. The book of Moroni contains no narratives, but instead consists of brief, discrete literary units of quotation and exhortation. It began as an afterthought, a miscellany compiled for the benefit of Lamanites in the latter days:

Now I, Moroni, after having made an end of abridging the account of the people of Jared, I had supposed not to have written more, but I have not as yet perished . . . wherefore, I write a few more things, contrary to that which I had supposed . . . that perhaps they may be of worth unto my brethren, the Lamanites, in some future day. (1.1, 4)

What Moroni thought they would find helpful is a few details about church ordinances and administration, along with a sermon and two letters from his father, Mormon. It is a somewhat eclectic collection of traditions and documents, which nevertheless addresses a few of the most divisive issues in Protestant Christianity: how the Eucharist should be understood and celebrated, priesthood ordination (curiously, the Nephite church did not include the New Testament offices of bishop or deacon), the question of infant baptism, the role of miracles and angels in the modern world, and the epistemological basis for religious knowledge.

CONTENTS

Chapters 1–6: In these short chapters, Moroni recounts specific instructions given by Christ to the Nephites concerning bestowing the Holy Ghost, priesthood ordinations, words to be used in the Eucharist prayers, and procedures for baptisms and worship services.

Chapter 7: This is a transcription of a sermon Mormon once delivered on faith, hope, and charity, including information on discerning good from evil, the ministry of angels, and miracles.

Chapters 8–9: Again, Moroni copies into his record the words of his father: a letter regarding infant baptism, and another letter recounting harrowing contemporary events.

Chapter 10: Moroni concludes his book by urging latter-day Lamanites to seek for miracles and revelation, particularly with regard to the truth of the Book of Mormon, and an invitation to all people to come to Christ.

The book of Moroni was written just after 420 CE (10.1), but the sermon and letters attributed to Mormon would have been composed before his death in 385 CE.

INTERPRETATION

Despite its disparate elements, Moroni's book has a unifying theme: how to find peace in the midst of social disintegration. This was a challenge Moroni himself had faced as he saw his civilization collapse, and he believes the lessons he learned from history, his father, and his own revelations will someday be useful to the descendants of the Lamanites. His first answer is to become part of a well-regulated religious community that conducts its affairs according to Christ's teachings and the power of the Holy Ghost (chs. 2–6). His second recommendation comes from his father, who memorably addresses his remarks to "the peaceable followers of Christ" (7.3), and who offers standards for discerning between good and evil in persons, practices, and precepts: Does it invite goodness? Does it lead to Christ? Does it exemplify charity or love? (ch. 7). Third, in the case of religious disputes such as infant baptism, clarity comes from revelation. Mormon writes, "I inquired of the Lord concerning the matter[,] and the word of the Lord came to me by the power of the Holy Ghost, saying . . ." (8.7). Fourth, when confronted with cruelty and evil, Mormon counsels persistent opposition, compassion for victims, applying equal standards to one's own tribe, and personal faithfulness (ch. 9). And finally, Moroni concludes by urging his readers to avail themselves of spiritual gifts, particularly the witness of the Holy Ghost by which they "may know the truth of all things" (10.5), and assuring them that no one need be "confounded" if they seek to be "perfected in Christ" through the grace of God (10.31–32).

In times of trouble, relationships can be particularly meaningful, though Moroni here is writing from the perspective of one bereft of such communal sustenance. Being part of a religious congregation was a distant memory, as was his father. The sermon transcript and letters in his possession would have been treasured mementos of a personal connection that ended with his father's death. The letters demonstrate considerable tenderness, as when Mormon quotes to his son, who has been newly called to the ministry, a line from the standard ordination prayer (3.3; 8.3), or when Mormon uses the phrase "my son" fourteen times in chapters 8–9, and "my beloved son" five times (these are the only occurrences in scripture referring to someone other than Jesus). Even so, one wonders whether their relationship was constrained by distance or circumstances. Moroni never quotes anything that his father said to him in conversation; he only cites written communications.

GUIDE TO READING

The book of Moroni brings Nephite history to a close, and with it the Book of Mormon as a whole, but chronological order does not match dictation order. After Joseph Smith's scribe had written out Moroni's last words, Smith continued by dictating 1 Nephi–Words of Mormon. It may be interesting to identify thematic and stylistic continuities between the end and the beginning of the Book of Mormon. Nephi and Moroni write about God's covenant with Israel and the corruption of churches in the latter days in similar ways. Moroni also employs some distinctive phrases from Lehi and Nephi in chapter 10. From a naturalistic point of view, this could be the result of words and ideas still reverberating in Smith's mind during his last few weeks of textual production. From within the frame of the narrative, however, Moroni may have spent time poring over the Small Plates, which had been recently rediscovered by his father among the records in his possession (WoM 1.1–6). It is also worth noting the connections with the farewell of Amaleki, the last author of the Small Plates, at Omni 1.25–26, which also cites record-keeping predecessors and foreshadows (or recapitulates) some of the major concerns of Moroni's book: prophecy and revelation, the ministering of angels, spiritual gifts, the sources of good and evil, and an exhortation "to come unto Christ"—the only such invitations in the entire Book of Mormon extended by narrators directly to readers (Omni 1.26; Moro 10.30, 32).

As the final character and last writer in the Book of Mormon, Moroni is in a unique position to bridge the divide between the past and the future. He has access to records from throughout Nephite history, and also the clearest conception of his eventual readers, whom he claims to have seen in vision (Morm 8.35). It may be useful to read his book with that double perspective in mind. In the first few chapters he draws on liturgical precedents dating back some four hundred years to Jesus's visit to the Nephites; in the middle chapters he looks to recent history and his father's counsel; and in the last chapter he adapts and combines the parting words of some of the earliest writers of his civilization. In each instance his editorial choices have been made, he asserts, with the needs of future readers in mind. He also includes slightly modified quotations from 1 Corinthians 12–13 in his final chapter, presumably for the benefit of readers who will recognize them from the King James Bible. The Book of Mormon concludes a few verses later, yet that is not really the end of the story since, according to LDS tradition, Moroni would later provide the metaphysical link between the Nephites and the modern world by appearing as a resurrected angel to Joseph Smith in 1823 and telling him about the gold plates that he himself had buried some fourteen hundred years earlier.

THE BOOK OF MORONI

A Few More Things

[I] **1** ¹ Now I, Moroni, after having made an end of abridging the account of the people of Jared, I had supposed not to have written more, but I have not as yet perished; and I make not myself known to the Lamanites lest they should destroy me. ² For behold, their wars are exceedingly fierce among themselves; and because of their hatred they put to death every Nephite that will not deny the Christ. ³ And I, Moroni, will not deny the Christ; wherefore, I wander whithersoever I can for the safety of mine own life. ⁴ Wherefore, I write a few more things, contrary to that which I had supposed; for I had supposed not to have written any more; but I write a few more things, that perhaps they may be of worth unto my brethren, the Lamanites, in some future day, according to the will of the Lord.

Moroni₂'s Instructions for Church Order and Ordinances: Moroni 2–6

The Gift of the Holy Ghost

[III] **2** ¹ The words of Christ, which he spake unto his disciples, the twelve whom he had chosen, as he laid his hands upon them—

² And he called them by name, saying, “Ye shall call on the Father in my name, in mighty prayer; and after ye have done this ye shall have power that to him upon whom ye shall lay your hands, ye shall give the Holy Ghost; and in my name shall ye give it, for thus do mine apostles.”

³ Now Christ spake these words unto them at the time of his first appearing; and the multitude heard it not, but the disciples heard it; and on as many as they laid their hands, fell the Holy Ghost.

CHAPTER 1

1: *The people of Jared*, unique here. *Supposed*, expected. **2–3:** Moroni is aware of other scattered Nephite survivors, but he is not in contact with them. Instead, he is wandering and hiding by himself. One imagines he would have identified with Ether, whose story he has just recounted. **4:** *A few more things*, the chapters that follow include instructions for worship and ritual, particularly in areas where the Bible is not clear. They may have been provided as a service to latter-day Gentiles, but Moroni primarily has in mind the descendants of the Lamanites. *I write . . . unto my brethren, the Lamanites*, the book of Moroni is framed by an inclusio that begins here and concludes at 10.1. There is deep pathos in Moroni's writing for the descendants of the people who have slain his family and friends, and who may kill him as well (Morm 8.2–5).

CHAPTERS 2–6

Much as the authors of the Jewish Mishnah recorded details of temple worship after its destruction in 70 CE, Moroni is here documenting church liturgy and practices that he, in his solitary state, will never again experience in a faith community.

CHAPTER 2

1: The words that follow were promised at 3 Ne 18.36–37. **2:** The power to bestow the Holy Ghost came through a two-part process. Jesus first touched and gave authorization to each of the Twelve individually (*called them by name*), but then they themselves had to request and receive power from the Father by *mighty prayer*. *Upon whom ye shall lay your hands*, this is the first indication in the BoM that the laying on of hands was associated with receiving the Holy Ghost. There are two passages in the NT that mention the practice (*thus do mine apostles*): Acts 8.14–20; 19.1–7. Compare Moro 8.26, where the Holy Ghost comes in response to “meekness and lowliness of heart” rather than a formal ordinance. **3:** Accounts of the Twelve bestowing the Holy Ghost occurred at 3 Ne 26.17 and 4 Ne 1.1, though neither of those mentioned laying on of hands.

Ordinations

[III] 3 ¹ The manner which the disciples, who were called the elders of the church, ordained priests and teachers—

² After they had prayed unto the Father in the name of Christ, they laid their hands upon them, and said, ³ “In the name of Jesus Christ I ordain you to be a priest (or if he be a teacher, “I ordain you to be a teacher”) to preach repentance and remission of sins through Jesus Christ, by the endurance of faith on his name to the end. Amen.”

⁴ And after this manner did they ordain priests and teachers, according to the gifts and callings of God unto men; and they ordained them by the power of the Holy Ghost, which was in them.

The Sacrament: Blessing the Bread

[IV] 4 ¹ The manner of their elders and priests administering the flesh and blood of Christ unto the church; and they administered it according to the commandments of Christ; wherefore we know the manner to be true; and the elder or priest did minister it—

² And they did kneel down with the church, and pray to the Father in the name of Christ, saying:

³ “O God, the Eternal Father,
we ask thee in the name of thy Son,
Jesus Christ,
to bless and sanctify this bread

CHAPTER 3

1: The Twelve are here referred to as *elders*; previously Nephite elders were only mentioned at Alma 4.7, 16; 6.1. By contrast, *priests and teachers* have been pervasive throughout Nephite history, beginning with Nephi ordaining his brothers (2 Ne 5.26), and then continuing when Alma, established his church (Mos 23.17; 25.19–21). **2:** The association of laying on of hands with ordination was seen at Alma 6.1. **3:** This verbal formula for priesthood ordination is not currently used in the LDS Church. *Preach repentance and remission of sins*, cf. Mk 1.4; Lk 3.3; 24.47; 3 Ne 7.23. *Endurance . . . end*, see 8.3n. **4:** No instructions are given for the ordaining of elders. In the contemporary LDS Church, ordinances and blessings are performed by the authority of the priesthood rather than by the power of the Holy Ghost.

CHAPTERS 4–5

The fact that these prayers refer to the congregation in the third person (*they* and *them* rather than “we” and “us”) indicates that the administering elders and priests are speaking as mediators with God on behalf of the people rather than as representative members of the community.

CHAPTER 4

1: *The flesh and blood of Christ*, the ambiguity of this description with regard to the nature of the sacramental bread and wine (reflecting 3 Ne 18.7, 11, 28–29; 20.8) is resolved by the wording of the prayers that follow: the Eucharist is a memorial rather than divine substance or presence. *According to the commandments of Christ*, the two sacrament prayers may have been revealed at the time of 3 Ne 18.1–14. *Wherefore we know*, it is unclear who is included in the plural pronoun *we*. **3:** *Bless and sanctify*, in the Bible the two terms are only combined when God established the Sabbath at Gen 2.3; the phrase has also been used in the US Episcopal Book of Common Prayer since 1790 to consecrate the Holy Communion. *Sanctify*, WB: “to make holy; to set apart or appoint to a holy, sacred or religious use.” *To the souls of all those who partake of it*, the reference here to souls (rather than simply “to all those who partake of it”) signals the metaphorical nature of the eucharistic consumption of the Lord’s body and blood; see 3 Ne 20.8n. *In remembrance of the body*, 3 Ne 18.7, although that verse suggests a possible additional phrase: “in remembrance of my body, which I have shown unto you” (corresponding to “in remembrance of the blood of the Son, which was shed for them” in the prayer on the wine at 5.2). In this interpretation, the bread would represent Christ’s resurrection, while the wine represents his atonement. *Keep his commandments which he hath given them*, for the Nephites, this would have referred to the teachings they had received during Jesus’s visits in 3 Ne. *Always remember him and have his Spirit to be with them*, 3 Ne 18.7.

to the souls of all those who partake of it;
 that they may eat in remembrance of
 the body of thy Son,
 and witness unto thee, O God, the
 Eternal Father,
 that they are willing to take upon them
 the name of thy Son,
 and always remember him,
 and keep his commandments which
 he hath given them,
 that they may always have his Spirit to
 be with them.
 Amen.”

The Sacrament: Blessing the Wine

[V] **5** ¹ The manner of administering
 the wine—

Behold, they took the cup, and said:

² “O God, the Eternal Father,
 we ask thee, in the name of thy Son,
 Jesus Christ,
 to bless and sanctify this wine
 to the souls of all those who drink of it,

that they may do it in remembrance of
 the blood of thy Son,
 which was shed for them;
 that they may witness unto thee,
 O God, the Eternal Father,
 that they do always remember him,
 that they may have his Spirit to be with
 them.
 Amen.”

Baptism

[VI] **6** ¹ And now I speak concerning
 baptism.

Behold, elders, priests, and teachers were
 baptized; and they were not baptized save
 they brought forth fruit meet that they were
 worthy of it. ² Neither did they receive any
 unto baptism save they came forth with a
 broken heart and a contrite spirit, and wit-
 nessed unto the church that they truly
 repented of all their sins. ³ And none were
 received unto baptism save they took upon
 them the name of Christ, having a determin-
 ation to serve him to the end.

⁴ And after they had been received unto
 baptism, and were wrought upon and cleansed

CHAPTER 5

2: The prayer over the wine is shorter than for bread in that it omits the lines about taking the name of the Son and keeping his commandments; otherwise, they are quite similar. *In remembrance of the blood... shed for them and always remember him... Spirit to be with them*, 3 Ne 18.11. The two prayers are reproduced in DC 20.77, 79, with the exception of the substitution of “has given them” for “hath given them” at 4.3, a change that was made in the 1835 DC; the 1833 Book of Commandments retained the “hath.”

CHAPTER 6

This is the fourth BoM passage that includes instructions for governing the church; see Mos 18; 26; 3 Ne 18. In this brief chapter, Moroni will draw on phrasing from all three of those earlier discussions. The chapter begins with the requirements for baptism (vv. 1–3), instructions for integrating new members into the church (v. 4), and then general guidance for church fellowship and worship (vv. 5–9). Directions for performing baptisms, including the words to be used, were provided earlier at 3 Ne 11.22–26. **1–2:** It appears from these verses that Nephite elders, priests, and teachers had authority to baptize, but only elders could remove people from the church (v. 7). **1:** *Fruit meet that they were worthy of it*, that is, actions in keeping with their worthiness; cf. Mt 3.8; Alma 5.36; 9.30. **2:** *A broken heart and a contrite spirit*, the signifier of Christ’s new covenant and a replacement for animal sacrifice; see 3 Ne 9.19–20; 12.19. *Witnessed unto the church*, perhaps in a public confession of faith and contrition. **3:** *To the end*, that is, until death, as at Mos 18.13. **4:** The idea that people can be *cleansed* by the Holy Ghost is unique here. Keeping a record of the names of church members is an important aspect of ministering to them; cf. Mos 6.1. *Continually watchful unto prayer*, Alma 34.39 (also advice to recent converts). *Relying alone upon the merits of Christ*, 2 Ne 31.19; see Hel 14.13n. *The author and the finisher of their faith*, Heb 12.2, where it refers to how Jesus is the definitive example of faith (NRSV: “the pioneer and perfecter of our faith”), as the one who first completed the course of faith, and then made it possible for others to do so as well.

by the power of the Holy Ghost, they were numbered among the people of the church of Christ; and their names were taken, that they might be remembered and nourished by the good word of God, to keep them in the right way, to keep them continually watchful unto prayer, relying alone upon the merits of Christ, who was the author and the finisher of their faith.

Church Order

⁵ And the church did meet together oft, to fast and to pray, and to speak one with another concerning the welfare of their souls.

⁶ And they did meet together oft to partake of bread and wine, in remembrance of the Lord Jesus.

⁷ And they were strict to observe that there should be no iniquity among them; and whoso was found to commit iniquity, and three witnesses of the church did condemn them before the elders, and if they repented not, and confessed not, their names were blotted out, and they were not numbered among the people of Christ. ⁸ But as oft as they repented and sought forgiveness, with real intent, they were forgiven.

⁹ And their meetings were conducted by the church after the manner of the workings of the Spirit, and by the power of the Holy Ghost; for as the power of the Holy Ghost led them whether to preach, or to exhort, or to pray, or to supplicate, or to sing, even so it was done.

Moroni₂ Quotes Mormon₂'s Sermon on Faith, Hope, and Charity: Moroni 7

Distinguishing between Good and Evil

[VII] **7** ¹ And now I, Moroni, write a few of the words of my father Mormon, which he spake concerning faith, hope, and charity; for after this manner did he speak unto the people, as he taught them in the synagogue which they had built for the place of worship.

² “And now I, Mormon, speak unto you, my beloved brethren; and it is by the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, and his holy will, because of the gift of his calling unto me, that I am permitted to speak unto you at this time. ³ Wherefore, I would speak unto you that are of the

5: *Meet together oft*, as Jesus had commanded at 3 Ne 18.22. *Meet together oft, to fast and to pray... welfare of their souls*, cf. Alma 6.6; 4 Ne 1.12. **7:** *Repented not... names were blotted out... not numbered among the people*, Mos 26.36; cf. Alma 5.57; 6.3. *People of Christ*, unique here. **8:** Moroni regularly emphasizes the importance of acting *with real intent*, a non-biblical phrase that appears four times in his book, and also at 2 Ne 31.13. **9:** The description suggests worship services characterized by a Spirit-led spontaneity; other occurrences of the phrase *the workings of the Spirit* (2 Ne 1.6; Jacob 4.15; WoM 1.7) support this. It is not clear whether such meetings were directed or planned by local leaders.

CHAPTER 7

1: *Faith, hope, and charity* [love] is a famous slogan of Paul's (1 Cor 13.13; 1 Thess 1.3; 5.8). The same triad of theological virtues appeared earlier in the BoM at 2 Ne 31.19–20; Alma 7.24; 13.29; Ether 12.28. It is perhaps surprising that Nephite Christians are still building and worshiping in *synagogues* several centuries after Jesus established his church among them, but see 3 Ne 18.32. **2:** *Our Lord Jesus Christ*, which is very common in the writings of Paul, appears in the BoM only here and at 9.26. *Calling*, here a divine summons to the ministry, as at Jacob 2.3; Alma 13.3–8; 29.13; Moro 8.1. **3:** *Peaceable followers of Christ*, only here in scripture, but there are a few occurrences in the 18th–19th c. The adjective is in stark contrast to the pervasive violence and warfare that Mormon has seen throughout his life; see Morm 2.18–19. *Enter into the rest of the Lord* is ultimately derived from Ps 95.11, where it refers to settling in the promised land. The argument at Heb 4 suggests an ultimate rest in the

church, that are the peaceable followers of Christ, and that have obtained a sufficient hope by which ye can enter into the rest of the Lord, from this time henceforth until ye shall rest with him in heaven.⁴ And now my brethren, I judge these things of you because of your peaceable walk with the children of men.⁵ For I remember the word of God which saith ‘by their works ye shall know them’;^a for if their works be good, then they are good also.

⁶ “For behold, God hath said, ‘A man being evil cannot do that which is good; for if he offereth a gift, or prayeth unto God, except he shall do it with real intent it profiteth him nothing.’^b For behold, it is not counted unto him for righteousness.⁸ For behold, if a man being evil giveth a gift, he doeth it grudgingly; wherefore it is counted unto him the same as if he had retained the gift; wherefore he is counted evil before God.⁹ And likewise also is it counted evil unto a man, if he shall pray and not with real intent of heart; yea, and it profiteth him nothing, for God receiveth none such.¹⁰ Wherefore, a man being evil cannot do that which is good; neither will he give a good gift.¹¹ For behold, a

bitter fountain cannot bring forth good water; neither can a good fountain bring forth bitter water; wherefore, a man being a servant of the devil cannot follow Christ; and if he follow Christ he cannot be a servant of the devil.

¹² “Wherefore, all things which are good cometh of God; and that which is evil cometh of the devil; for the devil is an enemy unto God, and fighteth against him continually, and inviteth and enticeth to sin, and to do that which is evil continually.¹³ But behold, that which is of God inviteth and enticeth to do good continually; wherefore, every thing which inviteth and enticeth to do good, and to love God, and to serve him, is inspired of God.¹⁴ Wherefore, take heed, my beloved brethren, that ye do not judge that which is evil to be of God, or that which is good and of God to be of the devil.

¹⁵ “For behold, my brethren, it is given unto you to judge, that ye may know good from evil; and the way to judge is as plain (that ye may know with a perfect knowledge) as the daylight is from the dark night.¹⁶ For behold, the Spirit

^a 5 3 Ne 14.20; Mt 7.20

^b 6 Reference uncertain

presence of God, a promise that is made explicit at Alma 12.34–37; cf. Alma 57.36; 60.13; 3 Ne 27.19. Here Mormon alludes to a two-step process by which believers can enter into God’s rest while still in mortality, and then eventually into eternal rest in heaven. **6–9:** Two examples are given of evil people trying to appear good, but their grudging charity and insincere prayers do not count for much. **6:** A similar observation, ending with “it profiteth me nothing” occurs at 1 Cor 13.3, from a NT passage that will be quoted again at the end of the chapter. **7:** *Counted unto him for righteousness*, Gen 15.6 (speaking of Abraham’s faith); the phrase was interpreted by Paul at Rom 4.1–12, and by Jacob at Jacob 4.4–5. **11:** The correlation between different types of fountains and water echoes that of trees and fruit at Mt 7.17–18 (3 Ne 14.17–18), perhaps influenced by the “sweet water and bitter” at Jas 3.11. *Servant of the devil*, unique here. **12–19:** Moroni may have included these guidelines from his father with an eye toward future readers who want to assess the origins and value of the BoM itself; see 10.6n. **12:** *All things... of the devil*, the same observation was made at Omni 1.25 and Alma 5.40; cf. Jas 1.17. *The devil is an enemy unto God*, Mos 16.5; the unrepentant, natural man is similarly declared “an enemy to God” at Mos 2.38; 3.19. **13:** Mormon provides religious criteria for judging impulses, people, and institutions. *To love God, and to serve him*, cf. Deut 10.12; 11.13; see 2 Ne 31.20n. **14:** Compare Isa 5.20 (2 Ne 15.20): “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil.” **15:** The metaphor of daylight here will give way to the “light of Christ” in v. 18. **16–17:** The same criterion for judgment, based on whether something “persuadeth men to do good,” had been introduced at Ether 4.11–12. In the NT, the term “Spirit of Christ” refers to something given to believers (Rom 8.9; 1 Pet 1.11); here it is a gift shared by everyone and has a conscience-like function. In Mormon’s formulation, good and evil are inextricably connected with belief or disbelief in Christ. This leaves open the question of whether one can follow Jesus’s example without being an avowed Christian. **16:** *Know good from evil* is a BoM phrase linked to the Edenic tree of Gen 2–3 (which invariably speaks of knowing “good and evil”).

of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil; wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God.¹⁷ But whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do evil, and believe not in Christ, and deny him, and serve not God, then ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of the devil; for after this manner doth the devil work, for he persuadeth no man to do good, no, not one; neither do his angels; neither do they who subject themselves unto him.

¹⁸ “And now, my brethren, seeing that ye know the light by which ye may judge, which light is the light of Christ, see that ye do not judge wrongfully; for with that same judgment which ye judge ye shall also be judged.¹⁹ Wherefore, I beseech of you, brethren, that ye should search diligently in the light of Christ that ye may know good from evil; and if ye will lay hold upon every good thing, and condemn it not, ye certainly will be a child of Christ.”

Mormon₂ on Faith, Angels, and Miracles

²⁰ “And now, my brethren, how is it possible that ye can lay hold upon every good thing?

²¹ And now I come to that faith, of which I said

I would speak; and I will tell you the way whereby ye may lay hold on every good thing.

²² “For behold, God knowing all things, being from everlasting to everlasting, behold, he sent angels to minister unto the children of men, to make manifest concerning the coming of Christ; and in Christ there should come every good thing.²³ And God also declared unto prophets, by his own mouth, that Christ should come.²⁴ And behold, there were divers ways that he did manifest things unto the children of men, which were good; and all things which are good cometh of Christ; otherwise men were fallen, and there could no good thing come unto them.²⁵ Wherefore, by the ministering of angels, and by every word which proceeded forth out of the mouth of God, men began to exercise faith in Christ; and thus by faith, they did lay hold upon every good thing; and thus it was until the coming of Christ.

²⁶ “And after that he came men also were saved by faith in his name; and by faith, they become the sons of God. And as sure as Christ liveth he spake these words unto our fathers, saying, ‘Whatsoever thing ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is good, in faith believing that ye shall receive, behold, it shall be done unto you.’^a

^a 26 3 Ne 18.20; cf. Enos 1.15

The gift of discerning between the two alternatives was mentioned at 2 Ne 2.5, 26; Alma 12.31; Hel 14.31; here it is explained as a function of the *Spirit of Christ*. **17:** *Persuadeth no man to do good, no, not one*, a twist on Ps 14.3; 53.3; cf. Moro 10.25. **18–19:** *Light* is an apt metaphor since it makes it possible to see and discern clearly. *Light of Christ* here seems synonymous with the “*Spirit of Christ*” in v. 16; the only other occurrence of the phrase, at Alma 28.14, is more generic. *With that same judgment... also be judged*, Mt 7.2 (3 Ne 14.2); in Mt, this warning comes after an injunction to “judge not.” Here, by contrast, it follows instructions on how to judge correctly (beginning in v. 14 above), and Mormon himself judges his listeners in vv. 4 and 39. **19:** *Every good thing* will be a key phrase in vv. 19–28, where it is repeated six times; the most significant precedent is at Deut 26.11. **21:** *That faith, of which I said I would speak*, this is actually the first time Mormon has mentioned faith. **22–25:** The idea that people, through revelation, could have faith in Christ before his birth is a distinctive teaching of the BoM. **24:** *Divers ways*, in addition to the words of angels and prophets. **25:** *By every word which proceeded... out of the mouth of God*, Deut 8.3 (quoted at Mt 4.4). **26:** *By faith, they become the sons of God*, cf. Jn 1.12; 3 Ne 9.17; and v. 48 below. *Whatsoever thing ye shall ask*, the citations in the footnotes are the closest BoM precedents, but the wording echoes phrases from Mt 21.22; Jn 15.7, 16; 16.23. *As Christ liveth*, a unique variation on the oath “as the Lord liveth,” which occurs 27 times in the OT and 17 times in the BoM.

²⁷ “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, have miracles ceased because Christ hath ascended into heaven, and hath sat down on the right hand of God, to claim of the Father his rights of mercy which he hath upon the children of men?²⁸ For he hath answered the ends of the law, and he claimeth all those who have faith in him; and they who have faith in him will cleave unto every good thing; wherefore he advocateth the cause of the children of men; and he dwelleth eternally in the heavens.

²⁹ “And because he hath done this, my beloved brethren, have miracles ceased? Behold I say unto you, Nay; neither have angels ceased to minister unto the children of men.³⁰ For behold, they are subject unto him, to minister according to the word of his command, showing themselves unto them of strong faith and a firm mind in every form of godliness.³¹ And the office of their ministry is to call men unto repentance, and to fulfil and to do the work of the covenants of the Father, which he hath made unto the children of men, to prepare the way among the children of men, by declaring the word of Christ unto the chosen vessels of the Lord, that they may bear testimony of him.³² And by so doing, the Lord God prepar-eth the way that the residue of men may have faith in Christ, that the Holy Ghost may have place in their hearts, according to the power

thereof; and after this manner bringeth to pass the Father, the covenants which he hath made unto the children of men.

³³ “And Christ hath said, ‘If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me.’^a ³⁴ And he hath said, ‘Repent all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me, and be baptized in my name, and have faith in me, that ye may be saved.’^b

³⁵ “And now, my beloved brethren, if this be the case that these things are true which I have spoken unto you—and God will show unto you, with power and great glory at the last day, that they are true—and if they are true, has the day of miracles ceased?³⁶ Or have angels ceased to appear unto the children of men? Or has he withheld the power of the Holy Ghost from them? Or will he, so long as time shall last, or the earth shall stand, or there shall be one man upon the face thereof to be saved?

³⁷ “Behold I say unto you, Nay; for it is by faith that miracles are wrought; and it is by faith that angels appear and minister unto men; wherefore, if these things have ceased wo be unto the children of men, for it is because of unbelief, and all is vain.³⁸ For no man can

^a ³³ Reference uncertain

^b ³⁴ 3 Ne 9.22; 27.20; Ether 4.18

27–28: Christ’s atoning sacrifice gave him the right to extend mercy to believers; it is this privilege that he claimed from the Father. 27: *Ascended into heaven and hath sat down on the right hand of God* parallels a non-biblical phrase from the 5th-c. Apostles’ Creed: “ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God” (cf. Mk 16.19; 1 Pet 3.22); see Jacob 2.5n. 28: This verse provides an explanation of how Jesus can be our “advocate with the Father” (1 Jn 2.1). *Answered the ends of the law*, satisfied the legal penalties; see 2 Ne 2.5–7. *Cleave*, WB: “to hold to; to adhere with strong attachment.” 29–38: Mormon closely associates faith with miracles, as Moroni does in all three of his conclusions; see Morm 9.7–25; Ether 12.6–21; Moro 10.12. His discussion here suggests that God’s faithful people in all ages will experience miracles and angelic visitations regularly. 31: *Office*, WB: “a duty, charge or trust of a sacred nature.” Alma also taught that angels declare messages of repentance and preparation; see Alma 13.21–24. Paul is called a *chosen vessel* at Acts 9.15, as is Mary at Alma 7.10. 32: *That the residue of men may have faith in Christ*, cf. Acts 15.17. *Residue of men*, the rest of humankind. 33: Moroni will refer to this same quotation at 10.23. 35: *Will show unto you, with power and great glory at the last day, that they are true*, compare 2 Ne 33.11, where Nephi uses similar phrasing to convey his expectation that his words will be validated at the Judgment Day. 37: *It is by faith that angels appear*, notably Moroni, who chose to include these words from his father, will himself become a ministering angel who will appear to JS and give him the plates that contain this account. 38: *Awful is the state . . . as though there had been no redemption made*, Mormon seems to be alluding to Alma’s teachings regarding those who harden their hearts against God’s word; see Alma 12.13, 18.

be saved, according to the words of Christ, save they shall have faith in his name; wherefore, if these things have ceased, then has faith ceased also; and awful is the state of man, for they are as though there had been no redemption made.

³⁹ “But behold, my beloved brethren, I judge better things of you, for I judge that ye have faith in Christ because of your meekness; for if ye have not faith in him then ye are not fit to be numbered among the people of his church.”

Mormon₂ on Hope and Charity (with a quotation of 1 Corinthians 13.4–7)

⁴⁰ “And again, my beloved brethren, I would speak unto you concerning hope. How is it that ye can attain unto faith, save ye shall have hope? ⁴¹ And what is it that ye shall hope for? Behold I say unto you that ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ and the power of his resurrection, to be raised unto life eternal, and this because of your faith in him according to the promise. ⁴² Wherefore, if a man have faith he must needs have hope; for without faith there cannot be any hope.

⁴³ “And again, behold I say unto you that he cannot have faith and hope, save he shall be meek, and lowly of heart. ⁴⁴ If so, his faith and hope is vain, for none is acceptable before God, save the meek and lowly in heart; and if a man be meek and lowly in heart, and confesses

by the power of the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Christ, he must needs have charity; for if he have not charity he is nothing; wherefore he must needs have charity.

⁴⁵ And charity suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.^a

⁴⁶ “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth. Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail— ⁴⁷ But charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him.

⁴⁸ “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is;

^a 45 1 Cor 13.4–7

39: Meekness is a sign of true faith; see vv. 43–44 below. **40–41:** Faith in Christ is accompanied by hope, characterized here as an expectation of eternal life. *According to the promise*, reference uncertain, but see 2 Ne 31.19–20; Alma 7.15–16. **43:** Jesus described himself as “meek and lowly in heart” at Mt 11.29; the phrase was also used by Alma at Alma 37.33–34. **44–48:** It is significant that a chapter that begins with standards for judging concludes with an exhortation to love. **44:** The necessary conjunction of faith, hope, and charity is reiterated at 10.20. *If so*, that is, if a person is lacking in meekness and lowliness of heart. *If he have not charity he is nothing*, 1 Cor 13.2; cf. 2 Ne 26.30. **45:** Aside from the addition of four *ands* (one of which takes the place of a “charity”) and the omission of “charity vaunteth not itself” and “doth not behave itself unseemly,” the wording of this verse is exactly the same as 1 Cor 13.4–7. **46:** Compare 1 Cor 13.2, 8, 13. **48:** The ability to love is a gift from God, but it can be requested. *That ye may become the sons of God*, like their predecessors in v. 26. The wording from *sons of God to even as he is pure* closely parallels 1 Jn 3.2–3, which is itself an answer to the exclamation “behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us.”

that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure. Amen.”

Moroni₂ Quotes a Letter from Mormon₂: Moroni 8

Mormon₂ on Infant Baptism

[VIII] **8** ¹ An epistle of my father Mormon, written to me, Moroni; and it was written unto me soon after my calling to the ministry. And on this wise did he write unto me, saying:

² My beloved son, Moroni, I rejoice exceedingly that your Lord Jesus Christ hath been mindful of you, and hath called you to his ministry, and to his holy work. ³ I am mindful of you always in my prayers, continually praying unto God the Father in the name of his Holy Child, Jesus, that he, through his infinite goodness and grace, will keep you through the endurance of faith on his name to the end. Amen.”

⁴ And now, my son, I speak unto you concerning that which grieveth

me exceedingly; for it grieveth me that there should disputations rise among you. ⁵ For, if I have learned the truth, there have been disputations among you concerning the baptism of your little children. ⁶ And now, my son, I desire that ye should labor diligently, that this gross error should be removed from among you; for, for this intent I have written this epistle.

⁷ For immediately after I had learned these things of you I inquired of the Lord concerning the matter. And the word of the Lord came to me by the power of the Holy Ghost, saying, ⁸ “Listen to the words of Christ, your Redeemer, your Lord and your God: ‘Behold, I came into the world not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance; the whole need no physician, but they that are sick; wherefore, little children are whole, for they are not capable of committing sin; wherefore the curse of Adam is taken from them in me, that it hath no power over them; and the law of circumcision is done

CHAPTER 8

3: In speaking of Moroni’s recent call to the ministry (v. 1), Mormon uses language that would have been meaningful to both of them: the phrase *endurance of faith on his name to the end* from the ordination prayer at 3.3. These are the only two occurrences of the phrase in scripture. *Holy child, Jesus*, Acts 4.27, 30. **5–7:** Infant baptism seems to be a recent phenomenon among the Nephites, for which new guidance, via revelation, is required. **5:** *If I have learned the truth*, Mormon is writing in response to a hearsay report. **7:** “The word of the Lord came unto me, saying” is a prophetic formula almost exclusively associated with Jer and Ezek (where it occurs nearly sixty times); here it is uniquely augmented by the Christian phrase *by the power of the Holy Ghost* (non-biblical, but used nearly twenty times in the BoM). **8–11:** Little children inherit *the curse of Adam*, which has resulted in spiritual death, but the effects are nullified by Christ’s atonement until they reach an age at which they are capable of conscious sin; cf. Mos 3.16. Because they lack the knowledge and agency to sin, they have no need of baptism for repentance. **8:** *I came into the world . . . they that are sick*, the two clauses are reversed in Mt 9.12–13; Mk 2.17; Lk 5.31–32. *The law of circumcision is done away in me*, this principle is clear from the NT, but many Christians have viewed infant baptism as a replacement for Jewish circumcision, that is, as a ceremony of initiation whereby a newborn becomes part of a covenant community (the practice was partially based on Paul’s analogy at Col 2.11–12). Mormon seems to be aware of such arguments. Despite frequent references in the BoM to the law of Moses, this is the only time circumcision is mentioned.

away in me.’ ”⁹ And after this manner did the Holy Ghost manifest the word of God unto me; wherefore, my beloved son, I know that it is solemn mockery before God, that ye should baptize little children.

¹⁰ “Behold I say unto you that this thing shall ye teach—repentance and baptism unto those who are accountable and capable of committing sin; yea, teach parents that they must repent and be baptized, and humble themselves as their little children, and they shall all be saved with their little children.

¹¹ And their little children need no repentance, neither baptism. Behold, baptism is unto repentance unto the remission of sins.

¹² But little children are alive in Christ, even from the foundation of the world; if not so, God is a partial God, and also a changeable God, and a respecter to persons; for how

many little children have died without baptism! ¹³ Wherefore, if little children could not be saved without baptism, these must have gone to an endless hell. ¹⁴ Behold I say unto you, that he that supposeth that little children need baptism is in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity; for he hath neither faith, hope, nor charity; wherefore, should he be cut off while in the thought, he must go down to hell. ¹⁵ For awful is the wickedness to suppose that God saveth one child because of baptism, and the other must perish because he hath no baptism.

¹⁶ Wo be unto them that shall pervert the ways of the Lord after this manner, for they shall perish except they repent. Behold, I speak with boldness, having authority from God; and I fear not what man can do; for perfect love casteth out all fear. ¹⁷ And I am filled with charity, which is everlasting love;

9: *Solemn mockery*, in the sense that infant baptism is a counterfeit ordinance, or a misunderstanding so profound that it mocks the atonement (see v. 23). This is strong language against a religious ritual that in JS’s time was practiced by Catholics, Anglicans, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Methodists. Denominations in the early 19th c. that rejected infant baptism included Baptists and Restorationist movements such as the Disciples of Christ. **10:** Rather than treating infants as adults, adults who wish to be saved need to become more like little children; the same point was made at Mos 3.16–19. *Saved with their little children*, that is, with their children who had died; see v. 12. High rates of infant and child mortality in the premodern era would have meant that most families had lost children to death. **11:** The idea that *the remission of sins* comes as a result of *fulfilling the commandments* recurs in v. 25 below; see 3 Ne 7.16n. **12–15:** Mormon’s argument is that condemning infants who die without baptism to endless hell would make God arbitrary and unjust. **12:** *Alive in Christ*, 2 Ne 25.25; cf. Rom 6.11; 1 Cor 15.22. The concept becomes a refrain in Mormon’s letter, picking up the word *all* along the way: “little children are alive in Christ” (v. 12) becomes “they are all alive in him” (v. 19) and finally “all little children are alive in Christ” (v. 22). *Partial*, biased or unfair. *Changeable*, WB: “fickle, inconstant.” *Respecter to persons*, Acts 10.34. **14:** The belief that one’s eternal fate is set at the moment of death was stated earlier at Alma 20.17 and 34.30–35. *In the gall of bitterness... bonds of iniquity*, Acts 8.23 and four times in the BoM. *He must go down to hell*, in an ironic twist, those who falsely believe that unbaptized infants will be consigned to hell will themselves end up in that place. **16:** *I speak with boldness* and *I fear not what man can do*, Heb 13.6. Perhaps aptly, Mormon’s words *having authority from God* echo the Nephite baptismal prayer; see Mos 18.13; 3 Ne 11.25. *Perfect love casteth out... fear*, 1 Jn 4.18, referring to fear of God’s judgment; here the slogan is expanded with the word *all* to include fear of human displeasure as well.

wherefore, all children are alike unto me; wherefore, I love little children with a perfect love; and they are all alike and partakers of salvation.

¹⁸ For I know that God is not a partial God, neither a changeable being; but he is unchangeable from all eternity to all eternity. ¹⁹ Little children cannot repent; wherefore, it is awful wickedness to deny the pure mercies of God unto them, for they are all alive in him because of his mercy. ²⁰ And he that saith that little children need baptism denieth the mercies of Christ, and setteth at naught the atonement of him and the power of his redemption. ²¹ Wo unto such, for they are in danger of death, hell, and an endless torment. I speak it boldly; God hath commanded me. Listen unto them and give heed, or they stand against you at the judgment-seat of Christ.

²² For behold that all little children are alive in Christ, and also all they that are without the law. For the power of redemption cometh on all them that have no law; wherefore, he that is not condemned, or he that is under no

condemnation, cannot repent; and unto such baptism availeth nothing— ²³ but it is mockery before God, denying the mercies of Christ, and the power of his Holy Spirit, and putting trust in dead works.

²⁴ Behold, my son, this thing ought not to be; for repentance is unto them that are under condemnation and under the curse of a broken law.

²⁵ And the first fruits of repentance is baptism; and baptism cometh by faith unto the fulfilling the commandments; and the fulfilling the commandments bringeth remission of sins; ²⁶ and the remission of sins bringeth meekness, and lowliness of heart; and because of meekness and lowliness of heart cometh the visitation of the Holy Ghost, which Comforter filleth with hope and perfect love, which love endureth by diligence unto prayer, until the end shall come, when all the saints shall dwell with God.

21: *Listen unto them*, that is, to these words. The idea that prophetic words will stand as a witness against listeners was seen earlier at 2 Ne 25.28; cf. Deut 31.26. **22–23:** Just as little children lack the knowledge to choose or reject faith in Christ, the same is true for those who have never heard of God’s law and thus sin in ignorance. Neither group is subject to the requirements of repentance and baptism. The fate of those who are *without the law* is also discussed at 2 Ne 9.25–26; Mos 3.11; 15.24 (the last two references similarly occur in passages that mention the moral status of children); cf. Rom 2.12–16. **23:** *Dead works*, Heb 6.1; 9.14. The equating of infant baptism with dead works is puzzling. Perhaps the phrase reflects an assumption that ordinances performed without necessity are dead, or that such baptisms were related to the law of Moses (through circumcision; see v. 8), which according to 2 Ne 25.25 has become “dead” to Christians. **25–26:** A series of anadiplosis, where the last words of a line are repeated at the beginning of the next. The familiar BoM sequence of faith, repentance, baptism, remission of sins, and the Holy Ghost that constitutes the “doctrine of Christ” at 2 Ne 31.2–21; 3 Ne 11.32–39; 27.13–22, is here integrated with the famous Christian triad of faith, hope, and love. **26:** This is the only occurrence in the BoM of *Comforter*, here referring to the Holy Ghost, as at Jn 14.16, 26; 15.26; 16.7.

Mormon₂ Writes about the Destruction of the Nephites

²⁷ Behold, my son, I will write unto you again if I go not out soon against the Lamanites. Behold, the pride of this nation, or the people of the Nephites, hath proven their destruction except they should repent. ²⁸ Pray for them, my son, that repentance may come unto them. But behold, I fear lest the Spirit hath ceased striving with them; and in this part of the land they are also seeking to put down all power and authority which cometh from God; and they are denying the Holy Ghost. ²⁹ And after rejecting so great a knowledge, my son, they must perish soon, unto the fulfilling of the prophecies which were spoken by the prophets, as well as the words of our Savior himself.

³⁰ Farewell, my son, until I shall write unto you, or shall meet you again. Amen.

Moroni₂ Quotes a Second Letter from Mormon₂: Moroni 9

[Moroni₂'s heading] The second epistle of Mormon to his son Moroni.

The Hardened Hearts of the Nephites

[IX] **9** ¹ My beloved son, I write unto you again that ye may know that I am yet alive; but I write somewhat of that which is grievous. ² For behold, I have had a sore battle with the Lamanites, in which we did not conquer; and Archeantus has fallen by the sword, and also Luram and Emron; yea, and we have lost a great number of our choice men.

³ And now behold, my son, I fear lest the Lamanites shall destroy this people; for they do not repent, and Satan stirreth them up continually to anger one with another. ⁴ Behold, I am laboring with them continually; and when I speak the word of God with sharpness they tremble and anger against me; and when

27: Of all the sins that beset the Nephites, Mormon points to *pride* as the most significant; cf. 1 Ne 12.19. 28: *Pray for them... that repentance may come*, that is, that they might enter into the path outlined in vv. 24–26. In his next letter, Mormon's attitude toward his fellow Nephites has become even more despairing (see 9.21). *The Spirit has ceased striving with them*, see 1 Ne 7.14n; cf. 2 Ne 26.11 (where this moment was predicted), Morm 5.16 (for a similar, recent observation), and Ether 15.19 (for a typological precedent among the Jaredites). *Put down all... power and authority*, cf. 1 Cor 15.24, where a prerogative of God is here usurped by humans against God. 29: For prophecies about the consequences of rejecting knowledge, see 2 Ne 1.10; Alma 9.18–24; 45.11–12. For Jesus's words concerning the destruction of the Nephites, see 3 Ne 27.32.

CHAPTER 9

This letter must have been written after +375, when Mormon resumed his military command (Morm 5.1). It represents the polar opposite of Mormon's sermon in ch. 7, demonstrating in graphic terms what happens when people lose all sense of charity. 2: The three named individuals appear only here in the BoM. 3–5: Anger, mentioned three times in these verses, is a primary characteristic of the destruction-bound Nephites. *Satan stirreth them up continually to anger*, previously it has always been Nephite dissenters who stir the Lamanites to anger; here Satan works directly on the Nephites themselves. *They do not repent* and *the Spirit of the Lord hath ceased striving* both echo 8.27–28.

I use no sharpness they harden their hearts against it; wherefore, I fear lest the Spirit of the Lord hath ceased striving with them.⁵ For so exceedingly do they anger that it seemeth me that they have no fear of death; and they have lost their love, one towards another; and they thirst after blood and revenge continually.

⁶ And now, my beloved son, notwithstanding their hardness, let us labor diligently; for if we should cease to labor, we should be brought under condemnation; for we have a labor to perform whilst in this tabernacle of clay, that we may conquer the enemy of all righteousness, and rest our souls in the kingdom of God.

The Wickedness and Suffering of the Nephites

⁷ And now I write somewhat concerning the sufferings of this people. For according to the knowledge which I have received from Amoron, behold, the Lamanites have many prisoners, which they took from the tower of Sherrizah; and there were men, women, and children.⁸ And the husbands and fathers of those women and children they have slain; and they feed the women upon the flesh of their husbands,

and the children upon the flesh of their fathers; and no water, save a little, do they give unto them.

⁹ And notwithstanding this great abomination of the Lamanites, it doth not exceed that of our people in Moriantum. For behold, many of the daughters of the Lamanites have they taken prisoners; and after depriving them of that which was most dear and precious above all things, which is chastity and virtue—¹⁰ and after they had done this thing, they did murder them in a most cruel manner, torturing their bodies even unto death; and after they have done this, they devour their flesh like unto wild beasts, because of the hardness of their hearts; and they do it for a token of bravery.

¹¹ O my beloved son, how can a people like this, that are without civilization—¹² (and only a few years have passed away, and they were a civil and a delightful people)¹³ but O my son, how can a people like this, whose delight is in so much abomination—¹⁴ how can we expect that God will stay his hand in judgment against us?

¹⁵ Behold, my heart cries: “Wo unto this people. Come out in judgment, O God, and hide their sins, and wickedness, and abominations from before thy face!”

5: Mormon's letter is framed by *thirst after/seeking for blood and revenge*, here and in v. 23. **6:** *Enemy of all righteousness*, Acts 13.10; cf. Mos 4.14. *Tabernacle of clay*, see Mos 3.5n.7: Amoron appears only here. The location of Sherrizah is unknown. **8–10:** The Lamanites and Nephites have become equivalently wicked, as evidenced by atrocities perpetrated on hapless prisoners. These sorts of details, included in a candid letter to his son, give us some idea of what Mormon deliberately omitted from his abridged record; see Morm 2.13; 5.8–9. **9:** Moriantum appears only here. Mormon somewhat obliquely refers to rape in a verse that has become problematic in the contemporary era. The LDS Church today disavows the notion that virtue or chastity can be lost through rape or abuse. **11–13:** *How can a people like this*, Mormon cannot bear to complete his repeated question. **15:** *Come out in judgment*, Mormon's desire for justice overcomes his loyalty to this people. *Hide...from before thy face*, these words recall an earlier destruction of the Nephites; see 3 Ne 9.5, 7, 8, 11.

¹⁶ And again, my son, there are many widows and their daughters who remain in Sherrizah; and that part of the provisions which the Lamanites did not carry away, behold, the army of Zenephi has carried away, and left them to wander whithersoever they can for food; and many old women do faint by the way and die.¹⁷ And the army which is with me is weak; and the armies of the Lamanites are betwixt Sherrizah and me; and as many as have fled to the army of Aaron have fallen victims to their awful brutality.

¹⁸ O the depravity of my people! They are without order and without mercy. Behold, I am but a man, and I have but the strength of a man, and I cannot any longer enforce my commands.¹⁹ And they have become strong in their perversion; and they are alike brutal, sparing none, neither old nor young; and they delight in everything save that which is good; and the suffering of our women and our children upon all the face of this land doth exceed everything; yea, tongue cannot tell, neither can it be written.

Mormon₂'s Words of Farewell to Moroni₂

²⁰ And now, my son, I dwell no longer upon this horrible scene. Behold, thou knowest the wickedness of this people; thou knowest that they are without principle, and

past feeling; and their wickedness doth exceed that of the Lamanites.

²¹ Behold, my son, I cannot recommend them unto God lest he should smite me.

²² But behold, my son, I recommend thee unto God, and I trust in Christ that thou wilt be saved; and I pray unto God that he will spare thy life, to witness the return of his people unto him, or their utter destruction; for I know that they must perish except they repent and return unto him.²³ And if they perish it will be like unto the Jaredites, because of the wilfulness of their hearts, seeking for blood and revenge.

²⁴ And if it so be that they perish, we know that many of our brethren have dissented over unto the Lamanites, and many more will also dissent over unto them; wherefore, write somewhat a few things, if thou art spared and I shall perish and not see thee; but I trust that I may see thee soon; for I have sacred records that I would deliver up unto thee.

²⁵ My son, be faithful in Christ; and may not the things which I have written grieve thee, to weigh thee down unto death; but may Christ lift thee up, and may his sufferings and death, and the showing his body unto our fathers, and his mercy and long-suffering, and the hope of his glory and of

16: Zenephi is likely a Nephite commander whose callous disregard for civilians matches that of the Lamanites. **17:** *Aaron*, that is, Aaron₃, the king of the Lamanites; see Morm 2.9; 3.4. **20:** *Horrible scene*, only here and Morm 4.11. **23:** *Wilfulness*, WB: "obstinacy; stubbornness; perverseness." **24:** *Write somewhat a few things*, Morm 8–9 or the book of Moroni may have been Moroni's response to this request; cf. 1.4; 10.1. **25:** There is a nice literary contrast between things that *weigh [one] down unto death*, and being lifted up in Christ (through his death). *The hope of his glory*, Jacob 4.4, 11; cf. Rom 5.2, where the meaning is something like "hope of sharing the glory of God."

eternal life, rest in your mind forever.²⁶ And may the grace of God the Father, whose throne is high in the heavens, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who sitteth on the right hand of his power, until all things shall become subject unto him, be, and abide with you forever. Amen.

Moroni₂'s Exhortation to the Lamanites: Moroni 10.1–23

Pray for a Manifestation of the Truth

[X] **10**¹ Now I, Moroni, write somewhat as seemeth me good; and I write unto my brethren, the Lamanites; and I would that they should know that more than four hundred and twenty years have passed away since the sign was given of the coming of Christ.^a ² And I seal up these records, after I have spoken a few words by way of exhortation unto you.

³ Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things, if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them, that ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam even down until the time that ye shall receive these things, and ponder it in your hearts.

⁴ And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.⁵ And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.

⁶ And whatsoever thing is good is just and true; wherefore, nothing that is good denieth the Christ, but acknowledgeth that he is.⁷ And ye may know that he is, by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore I would exhort you

^a 1 +420 years

26: An expansion of the formula “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you (all). Amen” (6x in the NT). *Who sitteth on the right hand of his power*, Mt 26.64; Mk 14.62; Lk 22.69. *Until all things shall become subject unto him*, cf. 1 Cor 15.27–28; Heb 2.8. *May the grace of God the Father... and our Lord Jesus Christ... be and abide with you forever*, a concluding blessing that Moroni apparently adapted for his own farewell at Ether 12.41.

CHAPTER 10

This is Moroni's third and final ending; see Morm 8–9n. **1–2:** As Moroni imagines his future audience, the difference between writing and speaking blurs; cf. 2 Ne 33.13; Morm 7.1; 9.30. **1:** It is remarkable that Moroni concludes his book with a generous invitation to the people who are trying to kill him; see 1.2–4. **2:** *A few words of exhortation*, specifically, Moroni will urge his readers to do eight things, each time with the phrase “I (would) exhort you.” He wants them to remember God's mercies (v. 3), ask God for a witness (v. 4), not deny God's power (v. 7), not deny God's gifts (v. 8), remember the source of every good gift (v. 18), remember that God is unchanging (v. 19), remember his words (v. 27), and come unto Christ (v. 30). **3:** *Wisdom in God*, that is, according to God's wisdom; the phrase occurs five times in the BoM, always in conjunction with sacred records. *Merciful*, the BoM begins and ends with references to God's mercy; see 1 Ne 1.20n. **4:** Moroni offers a method for determining whether or not the BoM is true. Even though these words are specifically directed to latter-day Lamanites, they nevertheless have wider application and have long been recommended to all readers by LDS members and missionaries. *Ask... if these things are not true*, the “if” clause with a negative assumes that the answer will affirm that they are indeed true (the alternative “ask if these things are true” would be more neutral); at Ether 4.11, the Lord conveys the same idea in an unambiguously positive form. *With real intent*, see 6.8n. **6:** In asserting that all good things are true and affirm Christ, Moroni seems to be applying his father's teachings about distinguishing between good and evil to the BoM itself, and how readers can judge whether it came from God; see 7.12–19. **7:** In the BoM, denying the power of God is a sin associated with the last days; see 2 Ne 28.3–6; Morm 8.28. *The same today and tomorrow, and forever* is unique here, and contrasts with “the same yesterday, today, and forever,” which occurs seven times in the BoM and at Heb 13.8.

that ye deny not the power of God; for he worketh by power, according to the faith of the children of men, the same today and tomorrow, and forever.

The Gifts of God (with shared phrasing from 1 Corinthians 12)^a

⁸ And again, I exhort you, my brethren, that ye deny not the gifts of God, for they are many; and they come from the same God. And **there are different** ways that these **gifts** are **administered**; **but it is the same God who worketh all in all**; and they are **given by the manifestations of the Spirit of God unto men, to profit them.**

⁹ For behold, **to one is given by the Spirit of God, that he may teach the word of wisdom**;

¹⁰ and **to another**, that he may teach **the word of knowledge by the same Spirit**;

¹¹ and **to another**, exceeding great **faith**;
and **to another, the gifts of healing by the same Spirit**;

¹² and again, **to another**, that he may **work mighty miracles**;

¹³ and again, **to another**, that he may **prophesy concerning all things**;

¹⁴ and again, **to another**, the beholding of angels and ministering **spirits**;^b

¹⁵ and again, **to another**, all **kinds of tongues**;

¹⁶ and again, **to another, the interpretation of languages** and of **divers kinds of tongues.**

¹⁷ And **all these** gifts come by the **Spirit of Christ**; and they come unto **every man severally**, according as **he will.** ¹⁸ And I would exhort you, my beloved brethren, that ye remember that every good gift cometh of Christ. ¹⁹ And I would exhort you, my beloved brethren, that ye remember that he is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and that all these gifts of which I have spoken, which are spiritual, never will be done away, even as long as the world shall stand, only according to the unbelief of the children of men.

²⁰ Wherefore, there must be faith; and if there must be faith there must also be hope; and if there must be hope there must also be charity. ²¹ And except ye have charity ye can

^a 8 Verses 8–17 clarify and expand upon 1 Cor 12.4–11; words and phrases in common are in bold.

^b ¹⁴ 1 Cor 12.10 reads “discerning of spirits”

8–17: Phrases from 1 Cor 12.4–11, sometimes slightly modified but generally in the same order, are connected in different ways to produce a similar discourse. The BoM version is expansive, with the addition of adjectives such as “great,” “mighty,” and “all,” and it also includes wording from a similar list at Omni 1.25. **8:** *Worketh all in all*, “activates all of them in everyone” (NRSV). **9–10:** The BoM shifts the emphasis from speaking wisdom or knowledge to explicitly teaching. **11:** In this account, faith, or at least *great faith*, is a gift. **14:** The NT “discerning” has become *beholding*, and “spirits” has been expanded into two types of divine beings. *Ministering spirits*, here distinct from angels, may refer to the three disciples (3 Ne 28), who “ministered” to both Mormon and Moroni (3 Ne 28.26; Morm 8.10–11), and who would “minister” to Jews and Gentiles in coming centuries (3 Ne 28.27–29). **16:** The distinction between *languages* and *tongues* may refer to human languages as opposed to the unknown, celestial dialects of glossolalia. In addition, *the interpretation of languages* may refer to translations from ancient writings, such as the BoM claims to be. **17:** *Severally*, WB: “separately; distinctly.” *As he will*, as Christ chooses; cf. 1 Cor 12.11, where the Spirit decides who gets which gifts. **18–19:** Moroni is the only Nephite to refer explicitly to the Lamanites (v. 1) as his *beloved brethren*. **19:** Moroni made this same point, at greater length, at Morm 9.7–20; cf. Moro 7.36–37. The word *only* here means “except.” **20–23:** Like Paul, Moroni follows his list of spiritual gifts with a discussion of faith, hope, and charity; cf. 1 Cor 13.13. **21:** *Except ye have charity... in the kingdom of God*, Moroni had expressed a similar thought at Ether 12.34.

in nowise be saved in the kingdom of God; neither can ye be saved in the kingdom of God if ye have not faith; neither can ye if ye have no hope.²² And if ye have no hope ye must needs be in despair; and despair cometh because of iniquity.²³ And Christ truly said unto our fathers, “If ye have faith ye can do all things which are expedient unto me.”^a

Moroni₂'s Farewell to All the Ends of the Earth: Moroni 10.24–34

(with phrases adapted from previous Nephite writers in bold)

Remember These Things

²⁴ And now I speak unto all the ends of the earth—that if the day cometh that the power and gifts of God shall be done away among you, it shall be because of unbelief.²⁵ And wo be unto the children of men if this be the case; for there shall be none that doeth good among you, no not one. For if there be one among you that doeth good, he shall work by the power and gifts of God.²⁶ And wo

unto them who shall do these things away and die, for they die in their sins, and they cannot be saved in the kingdom of God; and I speak it according to the words of Christ; and I lie not.

²⁷ And I exhort you to remember these things; for the time speedily cometh that ye shall know that I lie not, for **ye shall see me at the bar of God**; and the Lord God will say unto you, “Did I not declare my words unto you, which were written by this man, like as **one crying from the dead**, yea, even as one speaking out of the **dust**?”^b

²⁸ I declare these things unto the fulfilling of the prophecies. And behold, **they shall proceed forth out of the mouth of the everlasting God**;^c and his word shall hiss forth from generation to generation.²⁹ And **God shall show unto you, that that which I have written is true**.^d

^a 23 See Moro 7.33.

^b 27 The bolded words in v. 27 are adapted from Nephi₁; see 2 Ne 33.11, 13.

^c 28 Adapted from Nephi₁; see 2 Ne 33.14.

^d 29 Adapted from Mormon₂; see Moro 7.35.

24–34: In addition to the concluding warnings, exhortations, and invitations that Moroni extends to all of his latter-day readers in these verses, he also—somewhat remarkably—manages to weave in distinctive phrases from the last words of many of his Nephite record-keeping predecessors, as documented in the textual notes. The entire section functions something like a verbal curtain call, as we hear the voices of prophets who have appeared throughout the BoM one last time. **24:** The phrasing here is reminiscent of Mormon’s words at 7.37–38. **25:** *None that doeth good among you, no not one*, Ps 14.3 (quoted at Rom 3.12); cf. Moro 7.17. *One among you that doeth good* may refer to JS, who translated “by the gift and power of God” (BoM title page). **26:** *Do these things away*, dismiss these things. For other references to the fate of one’s soul being determined at the moment of death (suggesting the impossibility of postmortal repentance), see 8.14n. **27:** Both Nephi and Jacob also wrote of meeting their readers at the bar of God (2 Ne 33.11; Jacob 6.13), but only Moroni provides the question God will ask there. The idea is similar to Islamic traditions that Muhammad will meet believers in the day of resurrection and judgment, at the Pond of Abundance. *My words . . . written by this man*, the BoM, though written by men like Moroni, contains the words of God (a point made even more emphatically in v. 28). *Crying from the dead, yea, even as one speaking out of the dust*, Moroni conflates the more common expressions of “speaking from the dead” (2 Ne 27.13; Morm 8.26; 9.30) and “crying from the dust” (2 Ne 3.19–20; 33.13; Morm 8.23); cf. Isa 29.4. Perhaps these are the prophecies referred to in the next verse. **28:** *Proceed forth out of the mouth of . . . God*, see 1 Ne 13.24n. A promise that the words of the Nephites would “hiss forth” was given to Nephi at 2 Ne 29.2–3, but since the word *hiss* generally has a negative connotation, perhaps the meaning here is closer to “whisper,” as at Isa 29.4: “thy voice shall whisper out of the dust”; cf. 2 Ne 26.16.

Come unto Christ

³⁰ And again **I would** exhort you **that ye would come unto Christ,**^a and **lay hold upon every good gift,**^b and touch not the evil gift, nor the unclean thing.

³¹ And **awake, and arise from the dust,**^c O Jerusalem;
yea, and put on thy beautiful
garments, O daughter of Zion;
and strengthen thy stakes
and enlarge thy borders forever,
that thou mayest no more be
confounded,
that the covenants of the Eternal
Father
which he hath made unto thee,
O house of Israel,
may be fulfilled.

³² Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for

you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in nowise deny the power of God.³³ And again, if ye by the grace of God are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God—through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father unto the remission of your sins—that ye become holy, without spot.

³⁴ And now **I bid** unto all, **farewell. I soon go to rest**^d in the paradise of God, **until** my spirit and body shall again reunite, and I am brought forth triumphant through the air, to **meet you before the pleasing bar of the great Jehovah,**^e the Eternal Judge of both quick and dead. Amen.

THE END

^a ³⁰ Adapted from Amaleki; see Omni 1.26.

^b ³⁰ Adapted from Mormon₂; see Moro 7.19.

^c ³¹ Adapted from Lehi₁; see 2 Ne 1.14.

^d ³⁴ Adapted from Enos; see Enos 1.27.

^e ³⁴ Adapted from Jacob₂; see Jacob 6.13.

30: *Lay hold upon every good gift*, reiterating Moroni's message from 7.20–25. *Touch not . . . the unclean thing*, Isa 52.11 (quoted at 2 Cor 6.17; Alma 5.57; 3 Ne 20.41). **31:** The first two lines reflect Isa 52.1–2, while the next three lines echo Isa 54.2, 4 (in both cases selecting and rearranging phrases rather than quoting directly as at 3 Ne 20.36–37 and 22.2, 4). The concluding triplet reiterates language from 1 Ne 14.17; 3 Ne 16.5; 20.12; 21.4. Given the significance of the writings of Isaiah to the Nephites, it is fitting that the BoM concludes with one final example of “likening his words” to their own circumstances; see 1 Ne 19.23–24; 2 Ne 11.2, 8; cf. 3 Ne 23.1–3. **32–33:** Moroni clarifies his exhortation in v. 30 by outlining a path to sanctification. Its emphasis on grace, sinlessness, and love has similarities with Methodist teachings about Christian perfection, but it can also be seen as an explication of Jesus's command at 3 Ne 12.48 (Mt 5.48) to “be perfect.” The four repetitions of *perfect(ed) in Christ* in these verses are striking (the single other occurrence in scripture is at Col 1.28). **32:** *His grace [is] sufficient for you*, cf. Ether 12.26–27; 2 Cor 12.9. **33:** While the Father's covenants with Israel will surely be fulfilled (v. 31), this verse speaks of a new covenant by which individuals can be sanctified through Christ; cf. Ether 4.7; 1 Cor 1.2. Similarly, while words “sanctify,” “not having spot,” and “holy” at Eph 5.26–27 refer to the church, here they apply to individual believers. **34:** *Rest in the paradise of God*, a concept that was explained at Alma 40.12. *Triumphant through the air*, a phrase associated with John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (12.452). *Judge of both quick and dead*, Acts 10.42; 2 Tim 4.1; 1 Pet 4.5. *Quick*, the living, Moroni concludes the BoM with a declaration that this is not really the end; the story will be continued at some later date, when he will meet his readers in person, before God, the Eternal Judge.

TESTIMONY OF THREE WITNESSES

Both testimonies were published in the first edition of the Book of Mormon, 1830

Be it known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, unto whom this work shall come: That we, through the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, have seen the plates which contain this record, which is a record of the people of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites, their brethren, and also of the people of Jared, who came from the tower of which hath been spoken. And we also know that they have been translated by the gift and power of God, for his voice hath declared it unto us; wherefore we know of a surety that the work is true. And we also testify that we have seen the engravings which are upon the plates; and they have been shown unto us by the power of God, and not of man. And we declare with words of soberness, that an angel of God came down from heaven, and he brought and laid before our eyes, that we beheld and saw the plates, and the engravings thereon; and we know that it is by the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, that we beheld and bear record that these things are true. And it is marvelous in our eyes. Nevertheless, the voice of the Lord commanded us that we should bear record of it; wherefore, to be obedient unto the commandments of God, we bear testimony of these things. And we know that if we are faithful in Christ, we shall rid our garments of the blood of all men, and be found spotless before the judgment-seat of Christ, and shall dwell with him eternally in the heavens. And the honor be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, which is one God. Amen.

Oliver Cowdery
David Whitmer
Martin Harris

TESTIMONY OF EIGHT WITNESSES

Be it known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, unto whom this work shall come: That Joseph Smith, Jun., the translator of this work, has shown unto us the plates of which hath been spoken, which have the appearance of gold; and as many of the leaves as the said Smith has translated we did handle with our hands; and we also saw the engravings thereon, all of which has the appearance of ancient work, and of curious workmanship. And this we bear record with words of soberness, that the said Smith has shown unto us, for we have seen and hefted, and know of a surety that the said Smith has got the plates of which we have spoken. And we give our names unto the world, to witness unto the world that which we have seen. And we lie not, God bearing witness of it.

Christian Whitmer	Hiram Page
Jacob Whitmer	Joseph Smith, Sen.
Peter Whitmer, Jun.	Hyrum Smith
John Whitmer	Samuel H. Smith

TESTIMONY OF EMMA SMITH

Interview of Emma Smith by Joseph Smith III in Nauvoo, Illinois, 1879, Saints' Herald 26 (1 October 1879): 289–90

Question: What of the truth of Mormonism?

Answer: I know Mormonism to be the truth; and believe the Church to have been established by divine direction. I have complete faith in it. In writing for your father I frequently wrote day after day, often sitting at the table close by him, he sitting with his face buried in his hat, with the [seer] stone in it, and dictating hour after hour with nothing between us.¹

Q. Had he not a book or manuscript from which he read, or dictated to you?

A. He had neither manuscript nor book to read from.

Q. Could he not have had, and you not know it?

A. If he had had anything of the kind he could not have concealed it from me.

Q. Are you sure that he had the plates at the time you were writing for him?

A. The plates often lay on the table without any attempt at concealment, wrapped in a small linen table cloth, which I had given him to fold them in. I once felt of the plates, as they thus lay on the table, tracing their outline and shape. They seemed to be pliable like thick paper, and would rustle with a metallic sound when the edges were moved by the thumb, as one does sometimes thumb the edges of a book.

Q. Where did father and Oliver Cowdery write?

A. Oliver Cowdery and your father wrote in the room where I was at work.

Q. Could not father have dictated the Book of Mormon to you, Oliver Cowdery and the others who wrote for him, after having first written it, or having first read it out of some book?

A. Joseph Smith [and for the first time she used his name direct, having usually used the words, “your father,” or “my husband”]² could neither write nor dictate a coherent and well-worded letter, let alone dictating a book like the Book of Mormon. And, though I was an active participant in the scenes that transpired, and was present during the translation of the plates, and had cognizance of things as they transpired, it is marvelous to me, “a marvel and a wonder,”³ as much so as to any one else.

Q. I should suppose that you would have uncovered the plates and examined them?

A. I did not attempt to handle the plates, other than I have told you, nor uncover them to look at them. I was satisfied that it was the work of God, and therefore did not feel it to be necessary to do so.

Q. Major Bidamon⁴ here suggested: Did Mr. Smith forbid your examining the plates?

A. I do not think he did. I knew that he had them, and was not specially curious about them. I moved them from place to place on the table, as it was necessary in doing my work.

¹ Emma was Joseph's first scribe, and even though her handwriting is not found in the extant 28 percent of the original manuscript, she may have written a majority of the lost 116 pages.

² This bracketed note was in the original.

³ See Isa 29.4.

⁴ Emma married Lewis C. Bidamon after the martyrdom of her first husband, Joseph Smith.

- Q. Mother, what is your belief about the authenticity, or origin of the Book of Mormon?
- A. My belief is that the Book of Mormon is of divine authenticity—I have not the slightest doubt of it. I am satisfied that no man could have dictated the writing of the manuscripts unless he was inspired; for, when acting as his scribe, your father would dictate to me hour after hour; and when returning after meals, or after interruptions, he would at once begin where he had left off, without either seeing the manuscript or having any portion of it read to him. This was a usual thing for him to do. It would have been improbable that a learned man could do this; and, for one so ignorant and unlearned as he was, it was simply impossible.

TESTIMONY OF JOSEPH SMITH

This account, taken from Joseph Smith's 1838 personal history in the Pearl of Great Price, was included in the 1920 edition.

Joseph Smith's own words about the coming forth of the Book of Mormon follow:

On the evening of the . . . twenty-first of September [1823], . . . I betook myself to prayer and supplication to Almighty God. . . . While I was thus in the act of calling upon God, I discovered a light appearing in my room, which continued to increase until the room was lighter than at noon-day, when immediately a personage appeared at my bedside, standing in the air, for his feet did not touch the floor. He had on a loose robe of most exquisite whiteness. It was a whiteness beyond anything earthly I had ever seen; nor do I believe that any earthly thing could be made to appear so exceedingly white and brilliant. His hands were naked, and his arms also, a little above the wrist; so, also, were his feet naked, as were his legs, a little above the ankles. His head and neck were also bare. I could discover that he had no other clothing on but this robe, as it was open, so that I could see into his bosom. Not only was his robe exceedingly white, but his whole person was glorious beyond description, and his countenance truly like lightning. The room was exceedingly light, but not so very bright as immediately around his person. When I first looked upon him, I was afraid; but the fear soon left me.

He called me by name, and said unto me that he was a messenger sent from the presence of God to me, and that his name was Moroni; that God had a work for me to do; and that my name should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues, or that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people. He said there was a book deposited, written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent, and the source from whence they sprang. He also said that the fulness of the everlasting Gospel was contained in it, as delivered by the Savior to the ancient inhabitants; also, that there were two stones in silver bows—and these stones, fastened to a breastplate, constituted what is called the Urim and Thummim—deposited with the plates; and the possession and use of these stones were what constituted 'seers' in ancient or former times; and that God had prepared them for the purpose of translating the book.



Again, he told me, that when I got those plates of which he had spoken—for the time that they should be obtained was not yet fulfilled—I should not show them to any person; neither the breastplate with the Urim and Thummim; only to those to whom I should be commanded to show them; if I did I should be destroyed. While he was conversing with me about the plates, the vision was opened to my mind that I could see the place where the plates were deposited, and that so clearly and distinctly that I knew the place again when I visited it. After this communication, I saw the light in the room begin to gather immediately around the person of him who had been speaking to me, and it continued to do so until the room was again left dark, except just around him; when, instantly I saw, as it were, a conduit open right up into heaven, and he ascended till he entirely disappeared, and the room was left as it had been before this heavenly light had made its appearance.

I lay musing on the singularity of the scene, and marveling greatly at what had been told to me by this extraordinary messenger; when, in the midst of my meditation, I suddenly discovered that my room was again beginning to get lighted, and in an instant, as it were, the same heavenly

messenger was again by my bedside. He commenced, and again related the very same things which he had done at his first visit, without the least variation; which having done, he informed me of great judgments which were coming upon the earth, with great desolations by famine, sword, and pestilence; and that these grievous judgments would come on the earth in this generation. Having related these things, he again ascended as he had done before.

By this time, so deep were the impressions made on my mind, that sleep had fled from my eyes, and I lay overwhelmed in astonishment at what I had both seen and heard. But what was my surprise when again I beheld the same messenger at my bedside, and heard him rehearse or repeat over again to me the same things as before; and added a caution to me, telling me that Satan would try to tempt me (in consequence of the indigent circumstances of my father's family), to get the plates for the purpose of getting rich. This he forbade me, saying that I must have no other object in view in getting the plates but to glorify God, and must not be influenced by any other motive than that of building his kingdom; otherwise I could not get them. After this third visit, he again ascended into heaven as before, and I was again left to ponder on the strangeness of what I had just experienced; when almost immediately after the heavenly messenger had ascended from me for the third time, the cock crowed, and I found that day was approaching, so that our interviews must have occupied the whole of that night.

I shortly after arose from my bed, and, as usual, went to the necessary labors of the day; but, in attempting to work as at other times, I found my strength so exhausted as to render me entirely unable. My father, who was laboring along with me, discovered something to be wrong with me, and told me to go home. I started with the intention of going to the house; but, in attempting to cross the fence out of the field where we were, my strength entirely failed me, and I fell helpless on the ground, and for a time was quite unconscious of anything. The first thing that I can recollect was a voice speaking unto me, calling me by name. I looked up, and beheld the same messenger standing over my head, surrounded by light as before. He then again related unto me all that he had related to me the previous night, and commanded me to go to my father and tell him of the vision and commandments which I had received. I obeyed; I returned to my father in the field, and rehearsed the whole matter to him. He replied to me that it was of God, and told me to go and do as commanded by the messenger. I left the field, and went to the place where the messenger had told me the plates were deposited; and owing to the distinctness of the vision which I had had concerning it, I knew the place the instant that I arrived there.

Convenient to the village of Manchester, Ontario county, New York, stands a hill of considerable size, and the most elevated of any in the neighborhood. On the west side of this hill, not far from the top, under a stone of considerable size, lay the plates, deposited in a stone box. This stone was thick and rounding in the middle on the upper side, and thinner towards the edges, so that the middle part of it was visible above the ground, but the edge all around was covered with earth. Having removed the earth, I obtained a lever, which I got fixed under the edge of the stone, and with a little exertion raised it up. I looked in, and there indeed did I behold the plates, the Urim and Thummim, and the breastplate, as stated by the messenger. The box in which they lay was formed by laying stones together in some kind of cement. In the bottom of the box were laid two stones crossways of the box, and on these stones lay the plates and the other things with them.

I made an attempt to take them out, but was forbidden by the messenger, and was again informed that the time for bringing them forth had not yet arrived, neither would it, until four years from that time; but he told me that I should come to that place precisely in one year from that time, and that he would there meet with me, and that I should continue to do so until the time should come for obtaining the plates. Accordingly, as I had been commanded, I went at the

end of each year, and at each time I found the same messenger there, and received instruction and intelligence from him at each of our interviews, respecting what the Lord was going to do, and how and in what manner his kingdom was to be conducted in the last days.



At length the time arrived for obtaining the plates, the Urim and Thummim, and the breastplate. On the twenty-second day of September, one thousand eight hundred and twenty-seven, having gone as usual at the end of another year to the place where they were deposited, the same heavenly messenger delivered them up to me with this charge: that I should be responsible for them; that if I should let them go carelessly, or through any neglect of mine, I should be cut off; but that if I would use all my endeavors to preserve them, until he, the messenger, should call for them, they should be protected.

I soon found out the reason why I had received such strict charges to keep them safe, and why it was that the messenger had said that when I had done what was required at my hand, he would call for them. For no sooner was it known that I had them, than the most strenuous exertions were used to get them from me. Every stratagem that could be invented was resorted to for that purpose. The persecution became more bitter and severe than before, and multitudes were on the alert continually to get them from me if possible. But by the wisdom of God, they remained safe in my hands, until I had accomplished by them what was required at my hand. When, according to arrangements, the messenger called for them, I delivered them up to him; and he has them in his charge until this day, being the second day of May, one thousand eight hundred and thirty-eight.

GENERAL ESSAYS

The Origins of the Text

The story of Mormonism begins with a book. As Joseph Smith first told the tale, he was visited on the night of September 21, 1823, by an angel named Moroni, who informed him of an ancient record written on thin sheets of gold buried a few miles from his home in upstate New York. Smith was seventeen at the time. In March 1830, he published a translation of that record called the Book of Mormon, and a little more than a week after that, he organized a church based on its teachings. Later generations of missionaries would refer to Smith's First Vision of 1820, when he saw the Father and the Son, as the foundational episode for the faith, but that experience was not generally discussed until the last years of Smith's short life—he died in 1844 at the age of thirty-nine—and indeed such visions of God were not that unusual in the religious fervor of the Second Great Awakening. What was definitely uncommon, however, was a new work of scripture that claimed equal status with the Bible. From 1830 on, everyone who heard of Joseph Smith knew of the angel and the gold plates, given that the Book of Mormon was, and remains, at the center of Latter-day Saint proselytizing efforts. Indeed, Smith himself once referred to the Book of Mormon as “the keystone of our religion.”¹

The traditional, faithful account of the text's origins can be summarized as follows. A decade before the fall of Judah to the Babylonians in 586 BCE, God led the allied families of Lehi and Ishmael from Jerusalem across the sea to a new promised land somewhere in the Americas. Their descendants soon split into rival factions known as the Nephites, who accepted new revelations concerning the nature of salvation and the future Christ, and the Lamanites, who rejected such notions. After three and a half centuries of increasing Lamanite pressure, a small group of refugee Nephites encountered and gained political control over the remnants of a second group who had fled Jerusalem at the time of the Babylonian conquest, the Mulekites, whose leaders were descended from David's royal lineage. The strained relationship between Nephites and Lamanites continued—with warfare, missionary efforts, and defections going both ways—until a period of social chaos (and Lamanite righteousness) culminated in a three-day visit by the resurrected Jesus, who established a church and inaugurated two centuries of peace. Old tensions then reappeared and the Nephites were eventually destroyed by the Lamanites.

Shortly before that annihilation, in the fourth century CE, a prophet/general named Mormon wrote a history of the thousand years of Nephite civilization, which he abridged from royal records and inscribed onto gold plates. His son Moroni, the last of the Nephites, added a few more pages, including a history of a pre-Nephite civilization known as the Jaredites, who had come to the Americas from Mesopotamia, and then he buried the plates in a stone box. Fourteen hundred years later, that same Moroni, now a resurrected being serving as an angel, appeared to the young Joseph Smith in his bedroom in 1823 and told him where he could find the plates. Although Smith located them the next day, he was not allowed to take possession of the Nephite record until 1827. In a letter to a newspaper editor, Smith described what he had found:

These records were engraven on plates which had the appearance of gold, each plate was six inches wide and eight inches long and not quite so thick as common tin. They

1 Joseph Smith History, vol. C-1, 1255 (Nov. 28, 1841), josephsmithpapers.org.

were filled with engravings in Egyptian characters and bound together in a volume, as the leaves of a book with three rings running through the whole. The volume was something near six inches in thickness, a part of which was sealed. The characters on the unsealed part were small, and beautifully engraved.²

He was, however, commanded by the angel not to show the plates to others, apart from eleven appointed witnesses who would sign one of the two affidavits printed in the first edition.

At the same time Smith received the plates, he was also given “interpreters,” which he described as two transparent stones set in a silver, figure-eight–shaped frame, something like a pair of spectacles. Eventually he discovered that he could read the Nephite record by looking into the interpreters, though it was more convenient to use a seer stone that he had previously acquired and employed in his teenage years as a treasure seeker (a form of folk magic that was widespread at the time). Somewhat confusingly, after 1833 Smith and his associates referred to both the interpreters and the seer stone by the biblical term “Urim and Thummim,” even though that ancient divinatory device was used for quite different purposes. Generally, Smith would put the seer stone into his upturned hat and then place his face in the hat to block out the ambient light while he dictated aloud to scribes. The first people to take dictation in this way were his wife Emma and an older neighbor, Martin Harris. Between the two of them, they wrote over one hundred pages of text, which was subsequently stolen when Harris took the manuscript home to show his skeptical wife. The Book of Mormon as we have it today was primarily written from Smith’s dictation by a new acquaintance, Oliver Cowdery, in April–June 1829. It was published early the next year in a volume of 588 pages. Smith reported that after the translation was completed, the angel took back the plates, though we do have a brief text of almost two hundred characters copied from the plates that does not match any known script or language.³

The faithful story, even if true, is rather fantastical, and early tellings provoked derision, as well as a search for more naturalistic explanations. At first the Book of Mormon was dismissed as an obvious fraud related to Smith’s earlier money-digging activities, but because it was a substantial piece of work, filled with multiple characters and coherent narrative episodes, some suspected that it might have been beyond the abilities of Smith himself, who had only a few years of formal schooling. Eber D. Howe’s *Mormonism Unveiled* (1834) popularized a theory that the Book of Mormon had been plagiarized from an unpublished novel written two decades earlier by Solomon Spalding, a local shopkeeper who had graduated from Dartmouth. In addition, Howe posited a secret collaboration between Smith and Sidney Rigdon, a Baptist preacher who had joined the LDS Church in Ohio in November 1830. This became the prevalent non-Mormon theory of the book’s origins for over half a century. However, when Spalding’s manuscript reappeared in 1884, it bore little resemblance to Smith’s scripture. After Fawn Brodie’s influential biography of Smith, *No Man Knows My History* (1945), most non-Mormon scholars have viewed the Book of Mormon as Smith’s own composition, in which he drew on popular ideas about Indian origins of the sort found in Ethan Smith’s (no relation) *View of the Hebrews* (1823), precedents of modern histories written in biblical style such as Gilbert Hunt’s *The Late War* (1816), revivalist preaching that Smith would have heard regularly (his family was religious but unchurched), his own study of the Bible, and his personal experiences, concerns, and family dynamics, all filtered through his remarkable imagination and storytelling abilities.

2 Joseph Smith, “Church History,” *Times and Seasons* (Nauvoo, IL) (March 1, 1842), 707–8.

3 “Characters Copied by John Whitmer, circa 1829–1831,” josephsmithpapers.org.

The one concrete piece of evidence for the production of the Book of Mormon is the original manuscript, that is, the sheets of paper containing the transcription of Smith's dictation as his scribes first heard him speak the words aloud. Only 28 percent of that manuscript is extant, and it tends to corroborate the traditional LDS account of having been written from oral dictation. It basically consists of one long, unpunctuated string of words, which scribes apparently received twenty to thirty words at a time and then read back to Smith for immediate corrections. Aside from a few errors made in transcribing a second copy for the printer and a handful of emendations made by the typesetter (who also provided the punctuation and paragraphing), the 1830 Book of Mormon was basically identical to what Smith had dictated. Eyewitnesses to that process confirmed the seer-stone-in-a-hat procedure, and reported that Smith could dictate for hours at a time, did not work from a previously existing book or manuscript, and after taking breaks would pick up from where he left off without having anything read back to him. In short, both believers and outsiders agree that Smith's transmission of the text was done orally and fairly rapidly, one time through, at a pace of seven or eight printed pages a day. Given Smith's travels and other labors during the spring of 1829, he would have been able to devote only about sixty-five days to dictation.

This complicates naturalistic explanations. The more complex and tightly constructed the narrative seems to be, the less likely it is to be the product of spontaneous oral composition. It could be pointed out, however, that Smith had several years to work out at least the general outline of the narrative, if not the specific wording, before the intense burst of literary production in 1829, and his mother later recalled her teenage son's facility in storytelling:

During our evening conversations, Joseph would occasionally give us some of the most amusing recitals that could be imagined. He would describe the ancient inhabitants of this continent, their dress, mode of traveling, and the animals upon which they rode; their cities, their buildings, with every particular; their mode of warfare; and also their religious worship. This he would do with as much ease, seemingly, as if he had spent his whole life with them.⁴

Latter-day Saints might observe, however, that she puts this in the context of Joseph receiving information from the angel Moroni, and several of the types of descriptions she mentions are not characteristic of the Book of Mormon.

From a comparative perspective, one could point to a few other documented examples of lengthy books created by rapid dictation that made claims to supernatural origins, such as Bahá'u'lláh's *Kitáb-i-Íqán* (1882), a two hundred-page Bahá'í scripture dictated in two days and two nights; Pearl Curran's *Sorry Tale* (1912), channeled from the seventeenth-century spirit of Patience Worth through a Ouija board; and Helen Schucman's *A Course in Miracles* (1976), received through "inner dictation" from Jesus. There are, of course, significant differences in both content and production between these works and the Book of Mormon, but their existence perhaps makes the scripture dictated by Smith less singular.

The LDS account of Book of Mormon origins, as related in the book itself and in Joseph Smith's 1838 autobiography (the relevant portions of which were canonized in 1880 in the Pearl of Great Price), has remained fairly stable. Nevertheless, there have been some adjustments, particularly in the last few decades. Well into the twentieth century, Latter-day Saints assumed the

⁴ Lucy Mack Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet* (Liverpool: S. W. Richards, 1853), 85.

events described in the Book of Mormon took place across all of North and South America, with its climactic battles happening around the Great Lakes and the victorious Lamanites becoming the principal ancestors of the American Indians. Over time, references to Smith's use of a seer stone in translating virtually disappeared in church literature and were never reflected in official artwork. In recent years, however, many Latter-day Saints, responding to a growing scientific consensus about the ancient Americas, have begun to view the Nephites and Lamanites as a small minority whose history unfolded in a limited region in Central America among larger indigenous populations. Furthermore, the LDS Church has become more open about Smith's seer stone, publishing photographs of it for the first time in 2015.⁵ More revisions appear to be currently underway regarding Smith's role in the translation process and the relationship of the English text to whatever may have been written on the gold plates.

Perhaps the greatest divide between Latter-day Saints and outsiders is their view of the origins of the Book of Mormon—whether it was in some sense a revelation from God that came through supernatural means, or if it can be entirely explained as the product of Joseph Smith's conscious or subconscious mind. This is not simply a matter of secular critics who reject angels and seer stones out of hand. Some of Mormonism's most vociferous opponents have been deeply religious, and indeed Latter-day Saints themselves resort to naturalistic explanations when confronted with miraculous claims from other faith traditions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, or even different branches of Christianity. This situation, of course, is common to all religions—believers and nonbelievers can be identified by their disagreements about key metaphysical assertions—but with Mormonism the core issue is the Book of Mormon and the credibility it either affords or denies to Joseph Smith.

Yet in contrast to many reports of encounters with the divine or the transcendent that can be regarded as subjective experiences—visions, dreams, voices, revelations, oneness, bliss, enlightenment—the claimed physicality of the gold plates would seem to narrow the grounds for scholarly bracketing or interfaith suspension of disbelief. In addition to the three witnesses who saw the plates in a spiritual context that included an angel, and the eight witnesses who together physically examined the plates under ordinary circumstances, several others, both believers and skeptics, reported hefting or moving the plates as they were wrapped in a cloth or secured in a wooden box. It seems clear that Smith had something material in his possession that he claimed was an ancient artifact, and those who handled it estimated that it weighed between forty and sixty pounds.

While it might be useful or generous to leave open the option of sincere delusion, in which Smith encountered the plates in visionary form—something like the treasure texts (*terma*) of Tibetan Buddhism—the evident existence of a material object tends to force opinions in one of two directions: (1) he was telling the truth about actual metal plates delivered by an angel, or (2) he knowingly used a homemade set of plates to either encourage others to believe in revelations that he himself considered authentic (with the ends justifying the means), or to perpetrate a fraud for his personal aggrandizement. The second interpretation finds a possible parallel in James Jesse Strang, a would-be successor to Smith who said that an angel had shown him where to dig for a set of three small metal plates measuring about 2.5 × 1.5 inches, with inscriptions on both sides, which he translated into a short text of eighteen sentences. Strang exhibited his plates openly and published a full transcription of the characters and images, though all the evidence uncovered in

⁵ Royal Skousen and Robin Scott Jensen, eds., *Joseph Smith Papers: Revelations and Translations Vol 3, Pt. 1: Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2015), xx–xxi.

later evaluations points to his having fabricated the plates. Religious studies scholar Ann Taves has offered an interesting variation that recovers some middle ground when she suggests that Smith may have created plates that he then sincerely believed were transformed by God into an object with genuine religious validity, as many Christians believe occurs with ordinary bread and wine during Communion, or in a story in the Book of Mormon itself when God touched human-molten stones so that they shined in the darkness (Ether 3).⁶ Much of this could be sorted out if the gold plates were still available for physical inspection and analysis, but two hundred years after their disappearance, and long after the deaths of the witnesses to the dictation, the most valuable evidence for the origins of the Book of Mormon is contained within the text itself.

Three observations could be made at this point. First, whether the origins of the Book of Mormon are ultimately to be found within the mind of Joseph Smith or not, he is hardly an explicit presence in the Nephite record. In fact, there are only four passages that even obliquely refer to him as a future seer or translator (2 Ne 3.6–15; 3 Ne 21.9–10; Morm 8.14–16, 25; Ether 5). This is quite different from, for example, the pervasive role of Muhammad in the Qur'an. Within the pages of the Book of Mormon, Smith does not interact with God or with the spirits of deceased Nephites, and his reactions to or interpretations of incidents recounted in the narrative are entirely absent. This pattern continued throughout his life. He was much more likely to preach from the Bible than the Book of Mormon. Indeed, he almost never referred to specific characters or events from that text, he generally did not quote from the book in his writings or sermons, and the angel Moroni was the only Nephite he claimed to have encountered (and that was only between 1823 and 1829). In short, Smith treated the Book of Mormon as something external to himself, whose contents he was not particularly familiar with. He certainly never produced anything else like it. That book of scripture, coming at the very beginning of his public life, emerged fully formed as a unified, coherent, history-like narrative of nearly 270,000 words and almost two hundred named characters interacting with one another in complicated plot lines. His later, relatively brief, mostly discursive revelations, such as those collected in the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price, along with his revisions of the King James Bible, are not in the same category.

Second, while historical anachronisms and incongruities provide important evidences of Book of Mormon origins, they may not be as definitive as some nonbelievers assume. The Mormon scripture presents itself as a translation of an ancient text, but without having access to the gold plates, it is impossible to determine the exact nature of the translation, and that ambiguity allows Latter-day Saints considerable room for faith. By the same token, the parallels with antiquity that believers are fond of highlighting may also prove elusive, for similar reasons. And the cogency of arguments that appeal to the depths of its doctrines or the beauty of its teachings will depend on the background of the reader. The relationship of the book to external history, or even to God, will always be in dispute, but taken as a whole, it turns out to be more integrated and consistent than the Bible. Some of the methods and approaches developed by biblical scholars may be useful in trying to understand the Book of Mormon, but the two books present very different types of evidence, at least with respect to historical claims.

And finally, questions about the origins of the Book of Mormon should be answered in the context of a careful reading of the entire book, or at least a representative sample, rather than a few verses selected because they seem to support one position or another. Working through the text

⁶ Ann Taves, "History and the Claims of Revelation: Joseph Smith and the Materialization of the Golden Plates," *Numen* 61 (2014): 182–207.

in a comprehensive, systematic manner—paying attention to its language, thematic concerns, characteristic rhetorical strategies, and narrative flow—will reveal a level of literary sophistication and religious seriousness that may be surprising to some. The book dictated by Joseph Smith incorporates multiple narrators, literary genres, and purported sources. It exhibits a complex narrative structure that includes flashbacks, embedded documents, creative interpretations of scriptural passages, and internal allusions. It cares fervently not only about Indian origins and the state of contemporary Christianity but also God’s covenants with Israel, the nature of salvation, prophecy, scripture, faith, eschatology, human agency, and divine justice and mercy. It addresses these themes, and many more, through an extended, continuous, intricate narrative recounted in language and phrasing mostly derived from the King James Bible. The Book of Mormon is clearly the product of intense religious reflection, and shows deep engagement with both the Old and New Testaments. These large-scale patterns, developed over hundreds of pages, are surely relevant to discussions of its origins, even if any assessment of what Joseph Smith was or was not capable of, given his natural abilities, will always be a subjective judgment. Regardless of whether it came into existence through imagination or revelation, the Book of Mormon is an extraordinary work of religious literature, fully deserving of the title “scripture.” And like all sacred texts, the book is more than its origins.

The Transmission and Language of the Text

Joseph Smith reported that he first saw the gold plates on September 22, 1823, the day after he had been visited by the angel Moroni, when he went to the hill indicated by the angel and uncovered the stone box in which they had been buried. Moroni reappeared and told him the time had not yet come for him to retrieve the record, but to return in a year for further instructions. These visits occurred annually (on the autumnal equinox) until Smith was finally allowed to take the plates home in September 1827. He was twenty-one and had been married for less than a year. In December, persecution in his hometown of Palmyra, New York, caused him and his wife Emma to move about 130 miles southeast to Harmony (now Oakland), Pennsylvania, to live near her parents.

Translation efforts proceeded rather slowly. In February 1828, a Palmyra neighbor named Martin Harris visited the Smiths in Harmony, and then went to New York City to consult with scholars such as Charles Anthon at Columbia College, taking with him a paper on which Joseph had copied some of the characters from the plates. He returned satisfied that Smith actually had some sort of ancient artifact—he had not been permitted to see the plates themselves—and he, along with Emma, began to take dictation as Smith read the words aloud from either the Nephite interpreters or his own seer stone. By June they had produced about 116 pages, which Harris carried back to Palmyra to show his wife and a few others. The pages were stolen and never recovered; the angel chastised Smith and took back the plates; and Smith lost his ability to translate. During that same time period, his and Emma’s first child was either stillborn or died shortly after birth, with Emma herself nearly losing her life.

Smith was given a second chance that fall, when the angel returned the plates and God commanded him to continue from where he had left off the earlier dictation, at the beginning of the book of Mosiah, rather than going back and retranslating Mormon’s abridgment of the first four hundred years of Nephite history. Nevertheless, Smith did not make much progress until a young Palmyra schoolteacher, who had heard of the gold plates, came to visit him in Harmony at the beginning of April 1829. This was Oliver Cowdery, who became his primary scribe as he dictated Mosiah through Moroni, followed by the Small Plates of Nephi (1 Ne–WoM) that substituted for

the pages that had been lost by Harris. This means that the dictation order differs from the sequence of the current Book of Mormon, which follows the chronology of Nephite history, with an addendum in Ether covering the earlier civilization of the Jaredites.

The translation was completed in late June 1829, when a copyright was secured and arrangements were made for publication. Still feeling the sting of his earlier loss, Smith instructed Cowdery to make a second copy for the printer to use while he himself retained the original. (In the printer's manuscript, the book of Mosiah begins at page 117, hence the approximation of 116 pages for the length of the manuscript lost by Harris.) Most of the Book of Mormon was typeset from the printer's manuscript, with about one-sixth (Hel 13.17–Morm 9.37) being set from the original manuscript when some of Smith's associates took the printer's copy with them to apply for a Canadian copyright. Smith placed the original manuscript into the hollowed-out cornerstone of the Nauvoo House in 1841 for safekeeping, but when it was removed forty years later, it had suffered significant damage from water and mold. Today 28 percent survives, along with the entire printer's manuscript.

A careful examination of the two manuscripts reveals that the first edition of the Book of Mormon, published in March 1830, faithfully reproduced Smith's text as originally dictated, aside from some copying errors and a few emendations by Cowdery and the non-Mormon typesetter, John Gilbert, who also provided the punctuation, capitalization, standardized spelling, and paragraphing. Many of the book's first readers noted its irregular grammar, archaic scripture-like diction, and pervasive use of phrases from the King James Bible, which they held up for ridicule. Smith apparently chafed at the grammatical criticisms and consequently made about three thousand minor adjustments of wording for the second edition, printed in 1837, though not always systematically. For instance, he replaced *had ought to* with *ought to* in 11 of 21 cases; *in the which* with *in which* in 27 of 57 cases; past-tense *done* with *did* in 9 of 10 cases (as in "this he done"); and he removed all 15 instances of prepositional *a* (as in "I was a journeying"). He corrected subject-verb agreement over 150 times, along with eliminating double negatives and other nonstandard constructions, but the majority of the revisions he made were stylistic. These included more than 200 examples each of *saith* being changed to *said*, *hath* to *has*, and deletions of unnecessary *that*. By far the largest single type of modification was nearly 1,000 instances of *which* being changed to *who(m)* when *which* refers to people. He even deleted 47 instances of the ubiquitous *came to pass*.⁷

In the history of the Book of Mormon text, the 1837 edition featured the most extensive regularization of grammar and style. For the third edition, in 1840, Smith made a few corrections based on the original manuscript, and several dozen additional grammatical revisions. Similar changes were made in the major editions of 1920 and 1981. Through all of this linguistic updating, the meaning of the text has remained essentially unchanged. There have only been a dozen or so deliberate corrections that might substantially affect the basic narrative or theology, as in the following instances (additions are in italics, deletions in brackets, and substitutions are marked with italics and a slash):

1837 edition

1 Ne 11.18—the mother *of the Son* of God

1 Ne 11.21—the Lamb of God, yea, even *the Son of* the Eternal Father

⁷ Royal Skousen, *History of the Text of the Book of Mormon: Grammatical Variation*, 2 vols. (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2016), 1:36–43, 455–67; 2:880–97.

- 1 Ne 11.32—*the Son* of the everlasting God
 1 Ne 12.18—and *Jesus Christ/the Messiah* which is the Lamb of God
 1 Ne 13.40—the Lamb of God is *the Son* of the Eternal Father
 Mos 21.28—king *Benjamin/Mosiah* had a gift from God
 Alma 5.48—the Son [of] the Only Begotten of the Father
 Alma 13.9—the Son [of] the Only Begotten of the Father
 1840 edition
 1 Ne 20.1—out of the waters of Judah (*or out of the waters of baptism*)
 2 Ne 30.6—they shall be a *white/pure* and a delightsome people
 1920 edition
 Ether 4.1—for this cause did king *Benjamin/Mosiah* keep them

It is striking that in the 1837 and 1840 editions, Smith never revised any of the dozen or more in-text “or” corrections that were part of the original dictation, such as “weapons of peace, or weapons of war for peace” (Alma 24.19), with the single exception of Ether 9.2.⁸

The current official text is the 2013 version, which differs from the 1981 edition by only three dozen changes in spelling and punctuation.⁹ One assumes that eventually The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will authorize a new edition that corrects inadvertent copying or printing errors by adopting several hundred superior readings identified by Royal Skousen, the foremost expert on textual criticism of the Book of Mormon. It is unclear, however, whether the LDS Church will ever update the archaic biblical pronouns and grammatical forms such as “thou,” “ye,” “hast,” “doth,” or “saith,” as the Community of Christ (the second-largest denomination of Mormon Christianity) did in their *Revised Authorized Version* of 1966.

In addition to extensive but minor modifications of grammar and style, later editions of the Book of Mormon also reformatted the text. As first published in 1830, the scripture was divided into fifteen internal books, which were further subdivided into one to fifteen chapters, according to breaks that were part of the original dictation (the book of Alma was an outlier with thirty chapters). As in the King James Bible, dialogue was not set off by quotation marks. There were also no indications of content, aside from a few sentences of introduction at the beginning of some of the books and chapters (again part of the original dictation). It was the typesetter who decided where to begin and end paragraphs, but rather than following the contours of narrative or discourse, he simply used as guideposts a few common phrases such as “it came to pass,” “and now,” or “behold.” One result is that single paragraphs occasionally continued uninterrupted for multiple pages. This novelistic format, with its dense blocks of text, was retained for all the editions published during Joseph Smith’s lifetime (1837, 1840, 1841), although the last of these included an index at the end that provided an overview of the book’s contents.

It is somewhat surprising, however, that a book intended to function as scripture, as a counterpart equal in authority to the Bible, was not divided into verses. That finally came in the 1879

8 1830 to *his sons and to his daughters, which were not, or which did not seek his destruction*; 1837 to *his sons and to his daughters who did not seek his destruction*.

9 “Summary of Approved Adjustments for the 2013 Edition of the Scriptures,” https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/bc/content/shared/content/english/pdf/scriptures/approved-adjustments_eng.pdf. The only words that were changed were the restoration of “and so forth” at the end of the preface to Helaman and a change of *plead(ed)* to *pled* at Alma 1.11; 47.15; Ether 8.6.

edition when Apostle Orson Pratt arranged the text into the numbered verses and shorter chapters that Latter-day Saints still use today. (Community of Christ editions retain the original chapters subdivided into their own versification, which was introduced in 1908.) Pratt also added scriptural cross-references at the bottom of pages, along with a few explanatory notes. The next major edition, produced by Apostle James Talmage in 1920, reformatted the text into double columns with brief summaries at the beginning of each chapter—much like the King James Bible—and added chronological notations on each page, as well as introductory material to the volume, including excerpts from Smith’s 1838 history about the discovery and translation of the plates. This basic format was continued in 1981, with revised chapter summaries and greatly expanded cross-references at the bottom of each page. In 1982, a subtitle was added: *The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ*.

In his 2003 *Reader’s Edition*, published by the University of Illinois Press, Grant Hardy reformatted the text in the manner of modern Bible translations, with paragraphs, superscripted verse numbers, section headings, quotation marks, and poetic forms where appropriate. (Similar formatting appears in this annotated edition.) By contrast, Royal Skousen opted for a minimalist approach in *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text*, published by Yale University Press in 2009. He set the text in sense-lines reminiscent of the short strings of words that would have been dictated by Joseph Smith to his scribes, broken only by blank lines indicating a new paragraph (as determined by Skousen himself). The most significant contribution of Skousen’s edition, however, is its scholarly reconstruction of Smith’s original dictation, based on a comprehensive analysis of the two manuscripts and twenty major editions. Using the standard tools of textual criticism, as documented in his six-volume *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon* (2004–9), Skousen restored the text to its original form, insofar as is humanly possible, including the nonstandard grammar that had been gradually revised and updated over the years. Any serious study of the language of the Book of Mormon should begin with Skousen’s reconstructed text.

These volumes are part of Skousen’s Book of Mormon Critical Text Project, which has also included typographical facsimiles of the original and printer’s manuscripts, as well as book-length analyses of Book of Mormon grammar, language, and spelling. As Skousen tracked every variant in the history of the text, he discovered that the earliest version was more consistent in some of its phraseology. Also, its lengthy quotations from the Bible were closer to the King James Version than in the current official edition. One of his most unexpected findings, however, was the identification of Early Modern English syntax and usage in the earliest text. In their volume on the text’s original language, Skousen and his collaborator Stanford Carmack noted three examples of archaic syntax: plural subjects taking *-eth* verbs (such as “they dieth”); non-emphatic periphrastic *did* (as in “the Lord did bless us”); and finite clause complementation rather than infinitive complementation after the five verbs *cause*, *command*, *desire*, *make*, and *suffer* (as in “cause the earth that it shall pass away,” as opposed to the infinitival “cause the earth to pass away”). None of these constructions, which were pervasive in the Book of Mormon, are characteristic of either the King James Bible or Joseph Smith’s personal writings, yet they can be found in similar ratios and usage patterns in some books from the sixteenth century.¹⁰

¹⁰ Royal Skousen, *History of the Text of the Book of Mormon: The Nature of the Original Language*, 2 vols. (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2016), 1:557–611.

In addition, Carmack has found that most of the language decried as bad grammar in the Book of Mormon (e.g., “in them days,” “after he had eat,” “there was robbers,” “not do none of these things”), which has been systematically edited out of the text, had precedents in published works in Early Modern English and would have been acceptable in the less standardized linguistic environment of the sixteenth through seventeenth centuries.¹¹ Skousen has identified about fifty examples of archaic, non-biblical word uses and phrases in the Book of Mormon that had died out by the 1700s, and he has observed that there are very few words or expressions in the Mormon scripture that would have been entirely foreign to English speakers from the 1530s to the 1730s.¹² These considerations have led the two scholars to suggest that most, but not all, of the vocabulary and syntax of the Book of Mormon are characteristic of Early Modern English, broadly defined—a hypothesis taken up by some Latter-day Saints as evidence that Joseph Smith was not the actual author of the Book of Mormon.

To his credit, Skousen notes possible counterexamples to his theory, yet there are other potential explanations that could be explored. Several of the archaic definitions cited by Skousen can be found in Noah Webster’s 1828 *American Dictionary of the English Language*. It is unclear how much coincidence is involved when unusual phrases from the Book of Mormon also show up a few times in massive, searchable databases such as *Early English Books Online*, which includes more than 750 million words, or what those matches might mean. Even if much of the nonstandard grammar in the Book of Mormon had precedents in Early Modern English, some usages might independently have been part of Joseph Smith’s vernacular, just as subject-verb disagreement and double negatives still exist in informal speech today. There are many expressions in the Book of Mormon, particularly of a religious nature, that while originating in previous centuries, nevertheless became widely used and familiar in the early 1800s. Perhaps some of the syntax could be explained by Smith overusing particular features of biblical diction as he attempted to imitate its sound, as apparently happened with the narrative transitions *come to pass* and *behold*. For example, the King James Bible uncharacteristically uses the periphrastic *did* more than a hundred times with the single verb *eat*. And it should be noted that thus far Skousen and Carmack’s hypothesis has not received much attention from other experts of Early Modern English. All this is not to dismiss their work, which is by far the most precise and nuanced analysis of Book of Mormon language ever produced. Clearly, the new scripture was dictated in an idiosyncratic form of English that doesn’t exactly match the King James Bible or Smith’s rural New York dialect, and some of those differences are subtle, consistent, and profound—which leads to additional questions, particularly for believers.

The first asks how much of Joseph Smith is in the Book of Mormon. Smith himself did not offer many details about the translation process, other than affirming that it was done through “the gift and power of God.”¹³ Some LDS scholars believe that the seer stone provided mental impressions of Nephite history and sermonizing, which Smith then put into his own words. This mode of translation might account for some of the irregular grammar, the anachronisms, and the phrases borrowed from the King James Bible, as well as Smith’s willingness to modify wording and grammar in later editions. Others, however, think that Smith probably saw a written text in

11 Stanford Carmack, “A Look at Some ‘Nonstandard’ Book of Mormon Grammar,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 11 (2014): 209–62; also in Skousen, *Grammatical Variation*, 1:45–95.

12 Skousen, *Nature of the Original Language*, 1:91–410 (with updates in the forthcoming part 8 of volume 3 of the Book of Mormon Critical Text Project).

13 Book of Mormon, 1830 preface.

the seer stone and read it aloud to his scribes—which better explains the consistency of language, the intricacies of the narrative, the internal allusions, the testimony of eyewitnesses to the dictation process, and the immediate corrections that appear regularly in the original manuscript when scribes got a word wrong or misspelled a name at its first appearance. In this case, Smith would have been given access to a previously existing, celestial translation, and the exact wording would have been external to his own language, concepts, and experiences. (It is important to note that the two theories refer only to the translation process, not to the translation itself. The English Book of Mormon may be a rather free translation that was nevertheless revealed word for word. In fact, the presence of so many phrases from the King James Version, particularly from biblical texts written after 600 BCE, argues strongly for it being a translation characterized by functional rather than formal equivalence.) Both positions can be supported by LDS scripture, with some Latter-day Saints citing DC 9.8 (“you must study it out in your mind”), while others point to 2 Ne 27.20 (“thou shalt read the words which I shall give unto thee”).

Either mode of translation leads to a second question: why would God reveal new scripture in a form of English that was nonstandard for the time and place of its intended recipients? The easiest explanation assumes Smith as a mediator. He realized that adopting the language of the King James Bible could make a new installment of God’s word more acceptable in the religious environment of nineteenth-century America, but his proficiency in biblical diction was limited, as was his mastery of standard grammar. (Somewhat similarly, the Greek NT is notoriously unpolished and even ungrammatical in places.) Smith’s deliberate archaicizing made the Book of Mormon distinct from his ordinary speech and from the few contemporary works in pseudo-biblical style that Eran Shalev has described—whose authors perceived and imitated different aspects of the King James Bible.¹⁴ On the other hand, the hypothesis that Smith received verbal revelation (in written form) may better fit the data, yet it is not clear what divine purposes might have been served through nonstandard grammar when compared with the obvious losses in clarity and credibility, particularly since the published text was revised as soon as practicably possible. It is not unreasonable to ask why, if the translation came fully formed, as a word-for-word revelation from God, it wasn’t lovelier, more elevated, or a better fit for modern English.

From a theological perspective, the notion of a preexisting translation is intriguing since it would make the Book of Mormon a hybrid scripture. Christians have often shied away from assertions of verbal revelation, which would make God the direct author of every word of the Bible, as Muslims claim for the Qur’an and some Orthodox Jews for the Torah. Instead, Christian theologians tend to see prophets and biblical authors as receiving messages from God in a nonverbal form, which they subsequently put into writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Thus the Bible is not explicitly God’s voice, but rather a record of various encounters with the Divine, expressed in human language, albeit with supernatural assistance and oversight. This theory of mediated revelation would not apply to the English Book of Mormon if it had been revealed word-for-word, yet it would nevertheless describe the experience of Nephite prophets and authors who, according to the text itself, wrote from their individual viewpoints and sometimes struggled to articulate their spiritual insights and understandings of God’s providence (2 Ne 33.1–4; Morm 9.30–34; Ether 12.23–37). Nephite record keepers even admit the possibility of error in their accounts (BoM title page; 1 Ne 19.6; 3 Ne 8.2; Morm 8.12, 17). The issues are not resolved by

¹⁴ Eran Shalev, *American Zion: The Old Testament as a Political Text from the Revolution to the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 84–117; Skousen, *Nature of the Original Language*, 1:555–620.

a regularly cited quotation from Brigham Young, which both allows for angelic authors and also suggests that the exact language of the Book of Mormon is not integral to its mission: “When God speaks to the people, he does it in a manner to suit their circumstances and capacities. . . . Should the Lord Almighty send an angel to rewrite the Bible, it would in many places be very different from what it now is. And I will even venture to say that if the Book of Mormon were now to be rewritten, in many instances it would materially differ from the present translation.”¹⁵

Outsiders may find such speculations meaningless; to them it is obvious that Smith was the sole author of the text, which can accordingly be read as a reflection of his emerging ideas and sensibilities. Yet Latter-day Saints are often deeply engaged in such questions since accepting the book as a miraculous translation is one of the foundations of their religious identity. There are, however, a few aspects of reading the Book of Mormon with an eye to its transmission and language that could be significant to believers and outsiders alike. For instance, interpretations of the scripture should take into account that the canonical order of the text differs from the dictation order—which began with Mosiah and then continued through Moroni, before turning back to 1 Nephi through Words of Mormon. Thus commonalities in the portions of the book dealing with the last and first generations of the Nephites, including a shift from *therefore* to *wherefore* and an emphasis on Christocentric baptism and eschatology, could be naturalistically explained by the fact that they were dictated in quick succession.¹⁶ Latter-day Saints, in turn, might suggest that the similarities were at least partially due to Mormon’s late discovery of the Small Plates, and Moroni’s close reading of that sacred text which had recently come into his possession (WoM 1.1–8).¹⁷

All readers should be aware that the current official version reflects extensive grammatical and stylistic updating, though revisions of the narrative are nearly non-existent. And it may be helpful to those investigating the literary value of the Book of Mormon to recognize that much of the beauty and sophistication of the text does not reside in its language, which does not offer the sustained eloquence of the Qur’an or the Hebrew prophets or the bhakti poets of Hinduism and Sikhism, or the linguistic exuberance of the Daoist Zhuangzi, or the philosophical humor of the Vimalakirti Sutra. Years of familiarity and positive experiences make Latter-day Saints, particularly those who grew up with the Book of Mormon, less aware of its awkward diction, which is immediately evident to those coming to the text for the first time. In addition, few of its expressions are entirely original—much of the phrasing comes from the Bible or can be found in nineteenth-century religious discourse. Nevertheless, the repetitions and balanced phrases can sometimes result in memorable passages that manifest a type of rhetorical power.

Here are three brief examples. The first comes from a speech in which King Benjamin is urging his people to greater devotion to God.

I say unto you that if ye should serve him who has created you from the beginning, and is preserving you from day to day, by lending you breath, that ye may live and move and do according to your own will, and even supporting you from one moment

15 Brigham Young, “The Kingdom of God,” July 13, 1862, *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London: LDS Booksellers Depot, 1854–86), 9:311.

16 Brent Lee Metcalfe, “The Priority of Mosiah: A Prelude to Book of Mormon Exegesis,” in *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, ed. Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993), 395–444.

17 Rebecca A. Roesler, “Plain and Precious Things Lost: The Small Plates of Nephi,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 52, no. 2 (2019): 85–106.

to another—I say, if ye should serve him with all your whole souls yet ye would be unprofitable servants. (Mos 2.21)

The second occurs in Alma’s warning to the wicked inhabitants of Ammonihah, quoting the words of an angel. The formatting, from this annotated edition, highlights the parallel phrases.

Therefore, prepare ye the way of the Lord,
for the time is at hand that all men shall reap a reward of their works,
according to that which they have been—
if they have been righteous they shall reap the salvation of their souls,
according to the power and deliverance of Jesus Christ;
and if they have been evil they shall reap the damnation of their souls,
according to the power and captivity of the devil. (Alma 9.28)

And finally, an excerpt from Alma’s admonition to his oldest son, formatted into poetic lines, offers the striking analogy of rising daily from one’s bed and rising from the dead for the Final Judgment.

Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings,
and he will direct thee for good;
yea, when thou liest down at night lie down unto the Lord,
that he may watch over you in your sleep;
and when thou risest in the morning
let thy heart be full of thanks unto God;
and if ye do these things,
ye shall be lifted up at the last day. (Alma 37.37)

All three examples have had minor grammatical updating, including corrections of the original “art preserving you,” and “every man shall reap a reward of their works,” and most interestingly, “counsel the Lord,” which seems to take the archaic meaning of “to ask counsel of; to consult.” Some readers may find the language of these verses pleasing or even inspiring, yet much of the meaning and literary quality is derived from the broader context and from intertextual allusions. For instance, *when thou liest down* and *when thou risest* are distinctive phrases from Deuteronomy 6.7 and 11.19, two of the most famous biblical injunctions to teach one’s children—exactly what Alma is attempting to do in this passage. Identifying such connections and resonances is one of the main points of this annotated edition, in addition to explicating the sometimes opaque language and convoluted narrative.

The Book of Mormon, especially in its earliest form, was composed in an odd, perhaps unique, form of English. It is not clear what that might say about the origins of the text, or about the nature of scripture, or about God, or Joseph Smith, or nineteenth-century America. Yet while the language is important, it is probably not the most important aspect of the book. As the Catholic sociologist Thomas O’Dea noted long ago, those who ridicule its language “have often failed to note the intellectuality of the Book of Mormon.”¹⁸

18 Thomas F. O’Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 30.

The Book of Mormon and the Bible

Believers and outsiders, by definition, will have fundamentally different views about the origin and significance of the Book of Mormon, yet all readers can agree that the new American scripture is heavily dependent on the Bible. Indeed, it was intended to be a companion to the Bible—extending its narrative, clarifying its ambiguities, filling in gaps, and updating its message. To many, it will seem obvious that Joseph Smith was responding to the King James Bible, which was a ubiquitous element of his religious and social environment. He heard its familiar stories and sonorous phrases in sermons and speeches and in conversations with family and friends. He would have encountered allusions in newspapers and tracts, and he had studied the volume himself from childhood. For Latter-day Saints, the connections between the two books are ancient and more diffuse. Lehi and his family had come to the New World carrying the Brass Plates, a sort of proto-Hebrew Bible that included “the five books of Moses . . . a record of the Jews from the beginning, even down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah . . . and also prophecies of the holy prophets” (1 Ne 5.11–13). Nephite writers were said to have studied and preached from these texts for centuries, though the connection to Israelite culture was somewhat indirect since the Brass Plates were written in Egyptian rather than Hebrew (Mos 1.4), perhaps related to the “reformed Egyptian” of the gold plates themselves (1 Ne 1.2; Morm 9.32–33). So, like American Protestants, the Nephites were working from a sacred text in translation. (It should be noted that some LDS scholars hold that Nephite authors were using an Egyptian-like script to more or less represent Hebrew words, albeit in a more concise form.)

The believers’ scenario, based on claims of the text itself, may work, to some extent, for writings that mainly originated before 600 BCE, such as the core of Deuteronomy and other books of the Torah, a first version of the Deuteronomistic History, and early chapters of Isaiah.¹⁹ There are problems of anachronism, however, when Book of Mormon authors quote and allude to exilic or postexilic texts, including Second Isaiah (Isa 40–55), Ezekiel, and Malachi, not to mention the New Testament concepts and phrases that are pervasive throughout the book. In many cases, the later biblical materials are not simply interpolated into the narrative or sprinkled in as a linguistic overlay, but rather are integral to the stories and theology of the Book of Mormon. And the fact that the phrasing is obviously derived from the 1611 King James Bible only increases the mystery. Latter-day Saints might quote 2 Nephi 29.8, “I speak the same words unto one nation like unto another,” and note that some of the most anachronistic phrasing is put into the mouths of angels. Yet close phrasal connections with the entire Bible are so extensive that, from a faithful perspective, they require even more supernatural explanation—perhaps posthumous editing by Nephite authors in the spirit world, or updating by God himself, or a miraculous translation that reinterpreted or even adapted the Nephite record quite freely, in a manner tailored to the expectations of Bible-reading Americans in the nineteenth century.

Anyone opening the Book of Mormon will immediately notice its quasi-biblical diction, which includes archaic vocabulary (e.g., *behold*, *beseech*, *exceeding*, *lest*, *loins*, *wroth*, *yea*), grammar

¹⁹ “Deuteronomistic History” is a convenient designation for the books of Joshua, Judges, 1–2 Samuel, and 1–2 Kings, which are known in Judaism as the Former Prophets. Technically, the term refers to a widely accepted hypothesis, first proposed by Martin Noth in 1943, that these books were written by a single historian, or a school of historians, reflecting the themes, language, and concerns of the book of Deuteronomy, which was probably the “book of the law” discovered in the Temple in 622 BCE during the reign of King Josiah. The Deuteronomistic History went through several redactions, both before and after the fall of Judah to the Babylonians in 586 BCE.

(*doth, I would that, know ye that, spake, standeth, thou hast*), and expressions (*all manner of, came to pass, face of the land, go no more out, on this wise*). Royal Skousen has identified subtle differences from the language of the King James Bible, but by and large, the Book of Mormon reads like an imitation of biblical style.²⁰ Those who are familiar with the Bible may recognize distinctive phrases that come from specific verses, such as *dead works, enemy of all righteousness, hope in Christ, maketh flesh his arm, marvelous work, one faith and one baptism, pure heart and clean hands, robe of thy righteousness, still small voice, sting of death, temperate in all things, and wars and rumors of wars*. There are hundreds of examples of this type of intertextuality, many of which are identified in this annotated edition. Even more obvious are the dozens of allusions to biblical stories such as the Fall; the Exodus; the Exile; and Jesus's birth, baptism, and resurrection; and the large blocks of text quoted nearly verbatim from the King James Bible, including Isaiah 2–14; 29; 48–54; Malachi 4–5; and Matthew 5–7, along with substantial portions of Exodus 20, Micah 5, Mark 16, and 1 Corinthians 12–13.

At the level of narrative and theology, the Book of Mormon also exhibits a clear familial relationship with the Bible. The Nephite scripture as a whole is structured similarly to the Old Testament, with internal books named for prophets or political leaders, based on source materials ostensibly written over several centuries. Chronologically, the narrative begins near the end of 2 Kings, continuing the story of a branch of Israel into the New World with comparable types of political developments (migrations, kings, judges, warfare), divine interventions (prophets, angels, visions, revelations, covenants, deliverances), and themes (the election of Israel, obedience to commandments, God's judgment and mercy, repentance, salvation, social justice, moral government, conversion, religious communities, eschatology). Both the doctrines and miracles in the Book of Mormon are roughly in line with biblical precedents, especially when compared with narrative works of non-Western scripture such as the Mahabharata or the Lotus Sutra, or even some New Testament apocrypha, which often exhibit more fantastical modes of storytelling. In fact, it might be useful to think of the Book of Mormon as a sequel to the Deuteronomistic History, though with the striking introduction of Christianity into an Old Testament setting, along with a New Testament emphasis on faith as the acceptance of doctrinal truths, as opposed to the trust in God and faithfulness to covenant that characterize the Hebrew Bible.

Latter-day Saints tend to emphasize the ways in which the Book of Mormon parallels the Bible. They are less attuned to the significant differences between the two books. To begin with, the Book of Mormon is a much more unified and integrated text, thanks to the presence of the three main narrators: Nephi, Mormon, and Moroni. Unlike biblical narrators, who are anonymous and reticent about their editing, the Nephite narrators are characters within the story, with particular backgrounds and intentions, which they often explicitly reveal. It is as if the entire Hebrew Bible had been edited by Ezra, or the New Testament Gospels and Letters had been collected and edited by Paul. Book of Mormon narrators have distinct voices and perspectives, yet on the whole the theology of the Nephite scripture is more consistent than that of the Bible (though this is also what one would expect if the book was authored by Joseph Smith). The Book of Mormon incorporates a number of different genres, including poetry, prayers, allegories, an apocalypse, scriptural exegesis, sermons, and letters, but these are all integrated within a unitary narrative framework. There are no law codes or wisdom texts or entire books consisting of prophetic oracles or letters.

20 Skousen, *The Nature of the Original Language*, 1:91–182, 210–90, 344–403.

The Book of Mormon depicts a world in which God regularly and directly intervenes in human affairs, much like the Bible, but in a manner that seems to have been updated to better fit nineteenth-century sensibilities. While supernatural elements are still very much present, the book contains fewer of the puzzling, irrational, or morally problematic episodes that agitated skeptics like Thomas Paine (Nephi's killing of Laban in 1 Ne 4 and God's destruction of entire cities in 3 Ne 8 are rare exceptions). The Lord never commands the Nephites to exterminate their enemies. Prophets do not attempt to kill their children, marry prostitutes, challenge God's justice, or rationalize slavery. Animal sacrifices, idolatry, exorcisms, and speaking in tongues are mentioned in passing, but without detailed accounts. Perhaps unexpectedly, there are no highlighted stories of miraculous healings, aside from Zeezrom in Alma 15. Predictions of future events are communicated in plain language, without the sort of cryptic symbolism found in the books of Daniel and Revelation. Because Jesus came to the Nephites as a divine being, the Christology in the Book of Mormon is high, with little need to explain perplexing actions of a mortal Jesus. (Strikingly, "Son of Man" theology, which is pervasive in all four Gospels, is nowhere to be found in the Book of Mormon.) And since there are so few instances of otherwise unknown cultural beliefs and practices, the world of the Book of Mormon undoubtedly seemed less foreign to its American readers than Iron Age Canaan or the Roman Empire.

Furthermore, the Nephite scripture is more "bookish" than the Bible, that is to say, more attention is given to authorship, sources, and the transmission of various plates and records. The narration is also more personal, beginning with the first line, "I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents." By contrast, extended first-person narration is not found in the Hebrew Bible, apart from Ezra-Nehemiah. Although the departure of Lehi's family from Jerusalem predated the canonization of Jewish scripture, the Brass Plates constituted a *de facto* canon, and Nephite writers treat its contents as the authoritative word of God. As they quote and allude to the Brass Plates, however, they do so differently from how New Testament authors use the Old Testament. Nephite prophets rarely proof-text, instead integrating familiar scriptures into new prophecies, and Book of Mormon typology focuses on the connections between similar events that reflect God's consistent interventions, rather than identifying persons or things that prefigure Christ and the church. Several authors are conscious that their words will someday become scripture, and the primary narrators are aware that they are ultimately writing for the benefit of readers many centuries in the future, in the latter days. In fact, they frequently address their audience directly, from the very first chapter: "Behold, I, Nephi, will show unto you . . ." (1 Ne 1.20). And while the Bible is often regarded as divinely inspired in its origins, with its transmission and translation being left to human beings, the Book of Mormon is portrayed as more human in its composition (given the limited, though inspired, perspectives of its Nephite authors) with close divine supervision of the provenance of the Gold Plates and their rendition into English.

It is noteworthy that the Book of Mormon is more self-referential than the Bible, though not to the extent of Mahayana sutras or the Qur'an, both in its conviction that it has a significant role to play in preparing the world for the end-times, and also in its premonition that many readers will not accept it as sacred scripture, particularly in comparison to the Christian Bible (which is mentioned by name at 2 Ne 29.3–10). And finally, the crowning event of the volume is the coming of the resurrected Christ in power and glory to the Nephite temple at Bountiful. It is the type of culmination that was sought for but never fulfilled in both the Old and New Testaments. Jews have long awaited the day when "the Lord shall bring again Zion" (Isa 52.8) and "the glory of the Lord" would again fill the Temple (Ezek 43.4–5) as in former times (1 Kings 8.10–11), signaling the end of the Exile. Similarly, Christians still worry about the delay of the *parousia*, when

“the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout” (1 Thess 4.16), “with his angels; and . . . shall reward every man according to his works” (Mt 16.27). In 3 Nephi, Jesus comes as God, in a public setting, to destroy the wicked and establish his kingdom. It is not the final eschaton, yet it is nonetheless a striking fulfillment of prophecy and religious yearnings that serves as a typological pre-enactment for Christ’s second coming.

The Book of Mormon can be read as Joseph Smith’s adaptation of the King James Bible, in which he drew on his familiarity with its language and stories to create an imitative narrative that addressed religious controversies of his time such as universalism, deism, cessationism, revivalism, millennialism, infant baptism, and church organization. In addition, the new scripture answered questions about the origins of American Indians, the destiny of the house of Israel, the relationship between the Old and New Testaments, and the authority of the Bible. For the most part, however, this is all done indirectly. Nephi and Moroni may prophetically decry the faults of modern Christian churches (e.g., 2 Ne 28; Morm 8), but the majority of the Book of Mormon consists of an original storyline that recounts revelations, miracles, fulfilled prophecies, doctrinal controversies, and the divine oversight of scriptural production, all set firmly within its own narrative context. For instance, the story of Alma’s conversion (Mos 27) is somewhat parallel to that of Paul (Acts 9), but there are significant differences, such as the influence of Alma’s father, that thoroughly integrate his son’s experience into Nephite political and religious history.

Composing a biblical-style novel would be an unusual way to explicate and defend theological positions—as opposed to treatises, sermons, letters, and scripture commentaries—yet it is theoretically possible for someone who knows the Bible well, and evidence suggests that Smith was fairly adept at using biblical phrases. Setting aside early revelations from the Doctrine and Covenants, which like the Book of Mormon were said to have been received through a seer stone, there are a few letters surviving from that time period in which Smith freely drew upon biblical language. For instance, on August 28, 1830, he cowrote with John Whitmer the following to members of the church in Colesville, New York (with italics added):

May you all realize the necessity of getting together often to pray and supplicate at the *Throne of grace* [Heb 4.16], that *the spirit of the Lord* may always *rest upon you* [Isa 11.2]. Remember that without asking we can receive nothing, therefore *ask in faith* [Jas 1.6], and *ye shall receive* [Mt 21.22] such blessings as God sees fit to bestow upon you. Pray not with covetous hearts *that ye may consume it upon your lusts* [Jas 4.3], but pray *earnestly for the best gifts* [1 Cor 12.31]—*fight the good fight of faith* [1 Tim 6.12], that ye may gain the *Crown which is laid up* [2 Tim 4.7–8] for those that *endure faithful unto the end* [Mt 24.13; Mk 13.13] of their probation. Therefore *hold fast that which* [1 Thess 5.21] ye have received so *liberally* [Jas 1.5] from the hand of God so that *when the time of refreshing shall come* [Acts 3.19] ye may not have *labored in vain* [Isa 49.4; Phil 2.16], but that ye may *rest from all your labors* [Rev 14.13] and have *fulness of joy* [Ps 16.11] in the Kingdom of God.²¹

21 Michael Hubbard MacKay et al., eds., *Joseph Smith Papers, Documents, Volume 1: July 1828–June 1831* (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2013), 174; see also Smith and Whitmer’s letter to the church in Colesville on December 2, 1830, on pp. 214–17, as well as Nicholas J. Frederick’s analysis of both letters in “‘Having Many Things to Write to You’: Biblical Intertextuality in Joseph Smith’s Two Colesville Letters,” *Journal of Mormon History* 47, no. 2 (2021): 23–47.

It is an open question as to whether this rather haphazard deployment of familiar phrases by Smith and Whitmer reflects Book of Mormon usage, which at times combines or modifies scriptural expressions in ingenious or theologically insightful ways, but in any case, the King James Bible was a linguistic resource for many nineteenth-century Americans. Others of Smith's family and friends similarly inserted biblical phrases into their correspondence, as can be seen in a letter from his mother, Lucy Mack Smith, to her older brother Solomon Mack (Jan. 6, 1831), and three letters from Oliver Cowdery to Joseph Smith (Nov. 6, 1829; April 8 and May 7, 1831).²²

Another possible indication of Smith's deliberate adaptation of the Bible can be found in the minor modifications made to the extended quotations. There are several hundred such adjustments, usually consisting of just a word or two, or a single phrase. Sometimes the changes subtly reshape the biblical verses for a Nephite context (as in 1 Ne 20–21//Isa 48–49 and 3 Ne 12–13//Matt 5–6), or smooth out the language, but frequently the motivation for specific revisions is unclear. Very few seem to represent superior, ancient textual variants, and the Book of Mormon generally follows the King James Bible quite closely, even when it mistranslates or relies on deficient Hebrew or Greek manuscripts. In addition, the Book of Mormon appears to pay particular attention to the italics in the King James Bible, which indicated words that were added by the translators to produce complete English sentences. Over a third of the italicized words in the extended biblical quotations are changed, though these revisions are not systematic and account for only a minority of the total modifications.²³ Nevertheless, while one might imagine Joseph Smith taking an interest in King James italics, it is far from obvious why an angel producing a preexisting translation might do so. In any case, errors of mishearing in the earliest Book of Mormon manuscripts demonstrate that the extended biblical quotations, like the rest of the text, were written from Smith's dictation. He did not tell his scribes to open a Bible, perhaps marked with changes, to copy the passages. If he was not reading the text from a seer stone, Smith must either have had multiple chapters of the Bible memorized, or he read aloud from a Bible, making alterations as he went along.

The relationship between the Book of Mormon and the Bible is, however, more profound than shared language and a few similar incidents. The American scripture functions something like a narrative commentary on its predecessor. At times this can be explicit, as when Nephi explains how Jesus's baptism could "fulfil all righteousness" (Mt 3.15; cf. 2 Ne 31.5–7), or when Christ explicates the meaning of "other sheep I have, which are not of this fold" (Jn 10.16; cf. 3 Ne 15.16–24). In other passages, the interpretations are more subtle. For example, at 1 Ne 4.2 and 17.26, Moses is said to have parted the Red Sea by his word rather than by stretching forth his hand (Ex 14.21–29), a change that highlights a consistent Book of Mormon theme of the power of divinely authorized spoken words. (For similar examples, see the annotations at 2 Ne 12.10; 31.21; Alma 5.48; 13.7; 3 Ne 12.3, 6, 12; Morm 8.15.) And there are more elaborate instances of intertextuality, as when Isaiah 29.3–5 is interspersed, in order, through 2 Nephi 26.14–19, which functions as an interpretive expansion, while verses 11–12 are recontextualized at 2 Nephi 27.6–23 as a prophecy of the interaction of Martin Harris and Charles Anthon; or when sections of Isaiah 52 are reordered at 3 Nephi 20 in a way that clarifies their eschatological significance; or phrases from recently quoted passages are integrated into new prophecies (1 Ne 22; 2 Ne 25–30; Mos 15). Interestingly, the Book of Mormon includes an allegory from the non-biblical prophet

²² Dan Vogel, ed., *Early Mormon Documents*, 5 vols. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996–2003), 1:214–17; MacKay, *Documents 1*, 94–97, 288–94, 294–97.

²³ Royal Skousen, *History of the Text of the Book of Mormon: The King James Quotations in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2019), 141–210.

Zenos, purportedly from the Brass Plates, which Jacob quotes at length and then interprets by means of phrasal allusions (Jacob 5–6), in the same manner that Nephite writers treat extended quotations of Isaiah.

The book of Isaiah receives particular attention in the Nephite record, with chapters 2–14 reproduced in a single block (2 Ne 12–24), and chapters 48–54 being quoted over the course of several different narratives, often with overlapping repetitions that move the quotations forward (1 Ne 20–21; 2 Ne 6–8; Mos 12–15; 3 Ne 16, 20). At times Book of Mormon figures appear to respond to earlier uses of Isaiah, as when Nephi combines phrases from 11.11 (“the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover . . . his people”) and 29.14 (“I will proceed to do a marvelous work . . . and a wonder”) at 2 Nephi 25.17, and then the Lord at 2 Nephi 29.1–3 picks up the same two phrases and adds two more, from Isaiah 5.26 and 49.22 (“hiss unto them from the end of the earth” and “my standard to the people”), thereby identifying the “marvelous work” spoken of by Nephi. In another example, Nephi, Jacob, and the Lord all interpret different phrases from Isaiah 49.22–23, and between them manage to cover most of the original passage:

Isa 49 (1 Ne 21) ²² Thus saith the Lord God: “Behold, *I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people; and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders.* ²³ And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers; they shall bow down to thee with their face towards the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet. And thou shalt know that I am the Lord; for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.”

Nephi interprets

1 Ne 22.6 Nevertheless, after they shall be nursed by the Gentiles, and *the Lord has lifted up his hand upon the Gentiles and set them up for a standard, and their children have been carried in their arms, and their daughters have been carried upon their shoulders . . .* and it meaneth us in the days to come, and also all our brethren who are of the house of Israel . . .

Jacob interprets

2 Ne 6.13 Wherefore, they that fight against Zion and the covenant people of the Lord shall lick up the dust of their feet; and the people of the Lord shall not be ashamed. For the people of the Lord are they who wait for him; for they still wait for the coming of the Messiah . . .

The Lord interprets

2 Ne 10.9 Yea, the kings of the Gentiles shall be nursing fathers unto them, and their queens shall become nursing mothers; wherefore, the promises of the Lord are great unto the Gentiles, for he hath spoken it, and who can dispute?

Nephi, Jesus, and Moroni each recommend the close study of Isaiah (2 Ne 11.2; 3 Ne 23.1; Morm 8.23), and the Mormon scripture exhibits a type of detailed scrutiny, creative interpretation, and sustained engagement with Isaiah that is rare in the current LDS Church.

In many ways, the Book of Mormon seems like more than a biblicalized guise for Smith’s ideas about contemporary issues; the text often appears to be a serious response to theological conundrums posed by the Bible itself. For instance, the Nephite writers in the Small Plates are deeply concerned about their covenantal status after they have left Jerusalem and the Holy Land, wondering whether, as a branch of Israel (1 Ne 15.12), they have been cast off or led away (2 Ne 10.20–22). Indeed, the Book of Mormon can be read as a third response to the Exile, after the Deuteronomistic History and the Prophets. Nephite authors, with their emphasis on Moses,

prophets, fulfilled prophecies, obedience to commandments, blessings and curses, and covenant obligations, take a basically Deuteronomistic approach to history. This is perhaps most clearly evident in their frequent invocation of God's promise to Lehi that "inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments ye shall prosper in the land; but inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye shall be cut off from my presence" (2 Ne 1.20, with nineteen additional citations). Gradually, through further revelations, they come to understand that they have been given a new promised land outside of Canaan, where they can again be in God's presence—as happens during Christ's visitation in 3 Nephi. One of the main themes of the Book of Mormon is the continuity of God's covenants with Israel, albeit in somewhat unexpected ways.

This continuity and adaptation can be expressed with some nuance, as when Nephi quotes one of the Ten Commandments to his brothers, saying, "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God *shall give* thee" (1 Ne 17.55), substituting a future promised land for the present-tense wording of Exodus 20.12 ("which the Lord thy God *giveth* thee"). And even when Nephi and Lehi diverge from biblical precedents—as in their preaching about "the Son of God" and their sacrifices and temple building, which do not strictly accord with the Deuteronomistic emphases on monotheism and the centralization of worship at Jerusalem—there is still an awareness of Old Testament contexts.²⁴ When Laman and Lemuel defend the righteousness of the people of Jerusalem and reject the new revelations, even going so far as to try to murder their brother, their actions can be seen in light of Deuteronomy 13.1–9, which urged Israelites to reject prophets who teach of new gods and to kill them, even "if [it be] thy brother, the son of thy mother." Tensions between those who accept or reject the revelations of Lehi and Nephi, as well as conflicts with the Mulekites over the Davidic covenant—another central concern of the Deuteronomistic History—drive much of the book's narrative arc. (Some LDS writers, drawing on controversial theories of biblical scholar Margaret Barker, have suggested that the Book of Mormon includes traces of anti-Deuteronomistic ideology, but this hypothesis runs counter to the ethos of the Book of Mormon as a whole.)

One final observation on intertextuality is that while many of the biblical phrases in the Book of Mormon seem somewhat random, like a friendly nod from one book to another, others exhibit a surprising degree of cleverness or sophistication when they interlock in complicated patterns, or assume a knowledge of the original context, or creatively adapt the wording of the King James Bible. The annotations in this edition point out many of these instances. For example, the book of Jacob begins and ends with allusions to Psalm 95, but to different verses. In 3 Nephi 19, when Jesus adapts wording from his intercessory prayer at John 17, the narrator immediately follows up with an allusion to the priestly blessing of Numbers 6. An allusion to the Third Commandment inserted into 3 Nephi 27 suggests that being baptized in Jesus's name and then not enduring to the end is one way to take the Lord's name in vain:

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord **will not hold him guiltless** that taketh his name in vain. (Ex 20.7)

And it shall come to pass, that whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled; and if he endureth to the end, behold, him **will I hold guiltless** before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world. (3 Ne 27.16)

²⁴ These problems were noted by the Book of Mormon's first serious critic, Alexander Campbell, in "Delusions," *Millennial Harbinger* 2, no. 2 (Feb. 7, 1831): 91–92; or pp. 11–12 of the 1832 pamphlet version published in Boston by Benjamin H. Greene.

Jesus's message at 3 Nephi 30.2 closely matches the content and sequence of the additions that he made in quoting Micah 5.8–15 at 3 Nephi 21.12–21, with a significant substitution at the end of “that ye may be numbered with my people” for the earlier “them will I cut off from among my people.”

Another such instance appears in Lehi's Christianizing recontextualization of a famous line from Moses's final discourse:

<p>I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed shall live. (Deut 30.19)</p>	<p>And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life through the great mediation of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil... Now my sons, I would that ye should... choose eternal life. (2 Ne 2.27–28)</p>
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Later, Jacob will similarly adapt Jeremiah's quotation of that same verse from Deuteronomy:

<p>And unto this people thou shalt say, Thus saith the Lord; Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death. (Jer 21.8)</p>	<p>Therefore, cheer up your hearts, and remember that ye are free to act for yourselves—to choose the way of everlasting death or the way of eternal life. (2 Ne 10.23)</p>
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An even more detailed example can be seen in two allusive passages that illustrate different approaches to the same biblical antecedent, the parable of the wise man and the foolish man (Mt 7.24–27; Lk 6.48–49). The first is from two sons' recollection of the words of their father, Helaman:

And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall. (Hel 5.12)

There is intensification as the original “winds” become *mighty winds* and a *whirlwind*, the winds that “beat upon that house” become *hail* and a *mighty storm*, the devil is the direct cause of the furious weather, and the sons themselves are the houses that are built upon a *sure foundation*. (In the Gospel versions, people who put Jesus's words into practice are analogous to a wise man who built a house on a rock.) Somewhat later, when Jesus appears to the Nephites—but before he preaches a revised version of the Sermon on the Mount to them—he provides an overview of his teachings and concludes:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and whoso buildeth upon this buildeth upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them. And whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil, and is not built upon my rock; but he buildeth upon a sandy foundation, and the gates of hell stand open to receive such when the floods come and the winds beat upon them. (3 Ne 11.39–40)

The imagery here combines Matthew 7.24–27 with Matthew 16.18 (“upon this rock I will build my church: and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”). In this verse, however, the rock is identified as *my doctrine* rather than the apostle Peter, as in Matthew. A similar linking of a building-upon-rock metaphor with the phrase “more or less than these” is found at 3 Nephi 18.12–13. In chapter 11 the injunction is to declare doctrine precisely; whereas in chapter 18 the commandment will be to administer the Eucharist precisely, reflecting the development from hearing to doing that underlies Matthew 7.24–27.

These sorts of comments could be multiplied at great length. Suffice it to say that the anachronistic biblical intertextuality in the Book of Mormon is confident, vibrant, and pervasive. Whether this is the result of a miraculous translation, or of Joseph Smith’s extraordinary imagination and deep engagement with the Bible, Nephite prophets are portrayed as participants in a long-running conversation with the King James Bible, inviting biblically knowledgeable readers to recognize allusions, adaptations, and recontextualizations. This shared biblicism promotes a particular type of literary relationship between Book of Mormon writers (or imagined writers) and their readers—a fellowship of playful yet serious piety. It also means that the English Book of Mormon, if it is thought of as a translation, must be a rather free rendering, and it further suggests a God who delights in wordplay, literary puzzles, intertextuality, and creative reinterpretations of scripture. Clearly the Book of Mormon, as a companion to the Bible, cannot be fully understood unless the two books are read in tandem.

Book of Mormon Theology

When the Book of Mormon was first published, many people in the area who knew the Smiths assumed it was a money-making scheme that had grown out of Joseph’s earlier involvement in searching for buried treasure, especially since he had used the same seer stone in both endeavors. Yet the scripture Smith dictated is more than a superficial, hastily compiled jumble of biblical phrases and stereotypes about Native Americans. Whatever else it may be, the Book of Mormon is a deeply religious text with serious theological ambitions. In sermons and stories, Nephite prophets present a coherent spiritual vision that draws from biblical precedents, resolves ambiguities, and both explains and applies doctrines in ways that were intelligible to nineteenth-century Christian readers. As the early critic Alexander Campbell famously noted:

This prophet Smith, through his stone spectacles, wrote on the plates of Nephi, in his book of Mormon, every error and almost every truth discussed in New York for the last ten years. He decides all the great controversies—infant baptism, ordination, the trinity, regeneration, repentance, justification, the fall of man, the atonement, transubstantiation, fasting, penance, church government, religious experience, the call to the ministry, the general resurrection, eternal punishment, who may baptize, and even the question of free masonry, republican government, and the rights of man.²⁵

This is a reasonable list, though several of the items are touched on only obliquely in the Book of Mormon, and Campbell missed other significant topics such as covenants, eschatology, spiritual

²⁵ Alexander Campbell, “Delusions,” *Millennial Harbinger* 2, no. 2 (Feb. 7, 1831): 93.

gifts, and social justice. It is possible, and often useful, to find connections between doctrinal expositions among the Nephites and Joseph Smith's contemporaries, including Calvinists, Methodists, Universalists, and Restorationists. Yet the Book of Mormon also comments on controversies from earlier Christian eras and the history of Israel (primarily through a shared reliance on the Bible). Because the Mormon scripture offers neither systematic theology nor direct engagement with nineteenth-century denominations, the general outline that follows will be more descriptive than comparative, and it should be kept in mind that Book of Mormon theology can develop over time, as later Nephite figures allude to and clarify the words of their predecessors.

The first thing readers will notice is that the Book of Mormon is an emphatically Christian text. In the first chapter, Lehi sees Jesus in vision, and through the rest of the book the names "Jesus" or "Christ" appear nearly six hundred times. Nephite prophets preach the standard Christian narrative of human history—creation, the Fall, redemption through Christ, and the consummation of all things: encompassing Jesus's return, a universal resurrection, and the last judgment—and they do so with common Christian terms such as "faith," "the devil," "the Holy Ghost," "born again," and "the kingdom of God." Distinctive features include the idea of a fortunate fall (2 Ne 2.21–27) and clarifications of spiritual and physical death, with the former entailing a separation from God and the latter a separation of soul and body. Both forms of death began with Adam's fall, and both will come to an end in a "restoration" through Christ, when all people will be resurrected and brought back into the presence of God. At that time, penitent believers who have availed themselves of Jesus's atonement will be allowed to stay, while the unrepentant will be cast out in a "second death" (2 Ne 9.6–12; Alma 12.8–18; 42.1–28; Hel 14.15–19). Hell, defined as a separation from God either before or after the Judgment Day, is real, though its fires are metaphors for remorse of conscience (Mos 2.38; Morm 9.1–5). Christian discipleship comes through an *ordo salutis* (order of salvation) consisting of faith, repentance, baptism, and the reception of the Holy Ghost—a process that can be referred to as the "gospel" or "doctrine of Christ" (2 Ne 31.2–21; 3 Ne 11.31–40; 27.13–22; Moro 8.25–26; cf. Acts 2.38). "Remission of sins" is sometimes associated with this sequence, as is "enduring to the end." Nephite Christians were expected to adhere to high moral standards, most often delineated in lists of sins to be avoided (e.g., Mos 29.14; Alma 16.18; Hel 4.11–13), and in particular, they were required to look after the poor and the needy in order to "retain a remission" of their sins (Mos 4.11–18, 26; Alma 4.11–14; cf. Alma 34.28–29).

The second thing readers may notice is that most of this Christian preaching happens before Jesus's birth. The bulk of the narrative (Mos–Hel) occurs in the last two centuries before the Christian era, when Nephite prophets established a church of anticipation based on startlingly detailed prophecies about the coming Savior. These prophecies, like those of Nephi and Jacob several generations earlier, came through angels, the word of the Lord, and Spirit-informed readings of scripture. The last of these avenues has traditionally been the way that Christians have found unity in the Bible, citing passages from the Old Testament that seem to foreshadow events in the New. This mode of reading, however, tends to ignore the majority of the Hebrew Bible, which is more accurately seen as the story of Israel, and God's relationship with his chosen people. The Book of Mormon cites some of the same prooftexts for Christ's mission as New Testament authors (e.g., Deut 18.15; Isa 40.3; 53), but it also quotes other passages (e.g., Isa 11.11; 52.7–10; Mic 5.8–9) as it sets forth a unique vision of the destiny of the house of Israel.

In other words, the Book of Mormon attempts to merge the Old and New Testaments in two ways. First, it proclaims the redemption of individuals, regardless of ethnic background, in the afterlife through Christ's atonement, and suggests that this "plan of salvation" was foretold by

Hebrew prophets. This is a common Christian perspective. But Nephite prophets also view the story of Israel, related in the Old Testament, as a saga that will continue into the last days as the basis for God's dealings with all humanity. This "salvation history," focusing on peace and prosperity in this world, brought about by God working through nations and political events, asserts that lineage and ancient covenants still matter. Rather than rendering most of the Hebrew Bible obsolete, or suggesting that the Jews have been superseded by the Christian church, the Book of Mormon insists that God's covenants with Abraham and Moses are still in effect. Latter-day Israel, including some of the indigenous peoples of the Americas, will eventually come to recognize Christ as the giver of the Mosaic Law and the Holy One of Israel (1 Ne 8–10; 2 Ne 6.9; 3 Ne 15.5), and Gentile believers for their part will eventually be "numbered among the house of Israel" (1 Ne 14.1–2; 3 Ne 16.13; 21.6; 30.2) in a subsidiary position. The plan of salvation and salvation history—represented by the two allegorical trees of 1 Nephi 8 and Jacob 5—are combined in the "fulness of the gospel" (1 Ne 10.14; 13.24; 3 Ne 16.10–12), with Christ at the center of each. Through his atonement all people will be resurrected and brought into the presence of God; and at his command the diaspora will end as Jews return to the Promised Land and other remnants of Israel take possession of their own lands of inheritance, where they will enjoy God's presence in this life as king and deliverer. (Although Nephite prophets foretell the eventual conversion of the Jews and regard the Law of Moses as symbolic and temporary, the Book of Mormon is not exactly supersessionist; God continues to love and honor the Jews as his chosen people—even if the Book of Mormon is reticent about post-biblical, rabbinic Judaism.)

One challenge in trying to reconcile the Old and New Testaments is the issue of monotheism. The Hebrew Bible is adamant that there is only one God, while early Christians spoke of Jesus as both God and the Son of God. The Book of Mormon reproduces the ambiguities of the New Testament, balancing proclamations that the Father and the Son (and the Holy Ghost) are one (2 Ne 31.21; 3 Ne 11.27; 28.10; Morm 7.7) with descriptions of how the three are in relationship with one another, or may manifest themselves at the same time (2 Ne 31.11–16; 3 Ne 17.14–17). The early church fathers worked out subtle interpretations of the Trinity, which the Book of Mormon mainly avoids by holding to a generic conception of one God/three persons (though Mos 15.1–5 may lend itself to Modalist readings, and six of Joseph Smith's revisions for the 1837 edition help distinguish the Father and the Son; see 1 Ne 11.18, 21, 32; 13.40; Alma 5.48; 13.9; see the essay "Transmission and Language of the Text"). On a related point, the Book of Mormon is characterized by a high Christology that emphasizes the divinity rather than the humanity of Jesus. Of course, while the Nephites had heard prophecies about his mortal ministry, they only directly experienced Jesus as a resurrected being descending from the heavens, obviously God and speaking with divine authority. When Jesus teaches a version of the Sermon on the Mount in 3 Nephi, the context is quite different from what it was in Matthew. The Gospel of John famously teaches the preexistence of Christ, but the Book of Mormon takes this a step further by having the pre-mortal Jesus speak to Nephi, on the day before the Nativity (3 Ne 1.10–14). Similarly, the pre-mortal Jesus announces his identity and displays his spirit body to the brother of Jared (Ether 3.6–20).

A key aspect of salvation history in the Book of Mormon is eschatology, that is, a particular conception of how events of the last days will unfold, with the Nephite scripture itself playing a crucial role. As outlined in its pages, the establishment of the Christian church in the Old World would be followed by many centuries of religious confusion, political turmoil, war, and oppression of the various remnants of Israel, but the recovery and distribution of the Nephite record will be a signal that God has begun his final work (1 Ne 13–14; 3 Ne 20–21). The Book of Mormon

will convince doubting Gentiles of the truth of the Bible, and inform modern Lamanites of their identity as Israelites and their share in Israel's covenants. Gentiles will assist Jews in returning to Palestine, and help indigenous peoples in the New World claim their lands, where together they will build a new Jerusalem. It is important, however, to note that God is the main actor in this story; the Gentiles are merely supporting players. The gathering of different branches of Israel to the lands of their inheritance will go hand in hand with their conversion to Christianity, while unbelieving Gentiles will suffer violence and chaos culminating in the catastrophic divine judgments immediately preceding Jesus's triumphant return. The Book of Mormon does not include many details about the Second Coming or the Millennium; as in its own recounting of Nephite history, the focus is on the era leading up to Christ's arrival. The natural disasters in 3 Nephi, along with the appearance of the resurrected Jesus, constitute a limited eschaton, or a typological preview of the worldwide event still to come. In addition to his appearance among the Nephites, the resurrected Christ, according to the Book of Mormon, also visited other lost tribes of Israel (3 Ne 16.1–3; 17.4), who will someday return to the Promised Land with their own scriptural records (2 Ne 29.9–14). (While the Book of Mormon focuses primarily on Israel, there are also hints of God's interactions with other ethnicities throughout history; see Alma 29.6–8.)

The plan of salvation in the Nephite scripture is closely connected to the establishment and authority of the church, which oversaw baptisms. The book's ecclesiology is most clearly manifest in three episodes: the organization of a proto-Christian church in Mosiah 18; 25–26; its reorganization by Jesus in 3 Nephi 11; 18; and the brief sketch of ritual and liturgy in Moroni 2–6. The ecclesiastical hierarchy is somewhat vague—there are high priests, priests, and teachers, with sparse references to elders—but the book is insistent that church leaders should be unpaid and nonprofessional. Rules and procedures for baptism, the Eucharist, ordinations, and church discipline are spelled out, often in ways that settle long-standing disputes in Christianity. For instance, baptism should be done by immersion, after a confession of repentance; the Lord's Supper is a memorial rather a transubstantiation and should be administered often; priesthood authority comes directly from God and is passed on through the laying on of hands; unrepentant sinners can be removed from church registers, but they should not be excluded from worship services. As with American Restorationists, emphasis is placed on the church being named after Christ (3 Ne 27.1–8). Also of note is Mormon's condemnation of infant baptism in Moroni 8, which is one of the clearest and most pointed theological arguments in the entire book.

As might be expected in a new scripture that upends centuries of a closed Christian canon, the Book of Mormon is very interested in how religious truths can be ascertained and confirmed, with four major sources being put forward: scripture, revelatory experiences, miracles, and the quiet witness of the Spirit. Before Lehi's family can journey to a new promised land, they need to acquire a durable, physical copy of the Hebrew scriptures, in the form of the Brass Plates (1 Ne 3–5). Without this record, it would have been impossible for their descendants to remain faithful to God (1 Ne 4.14–16; Mos 1.3–5). Various Nephite prophets interpret the scriptures in ways that integrate the written word with their own revelations as they emphasize long-term prophecies, often with multiple fulfillments, and identify passages that might apply to their own circumstances. Even the resurrected Lord is depicted as quoting and interpreting scripture, as opposed to simply speaking on his own divine authority. Yet there are limits to the efficacy of the written word. Uninspired or unscrupulous readers can misinterpret or “wrest” the meaning of sacred texts (Jacob 2.23; Alma 13.20; 33.2; 41.1; 3 Ne 1.24–25; Morm 9.8), and the future Christian Bible, seen in vision, is regarded as insufficient because of the “plain and precious things” that were deleted from the canon—hence the need for additional scriptures such as the

Book of Mormon (1 Ne 13.28–29, 38–41; 2 Ne 29). For modern readers, theological points are sometimes made by modifying or adding to biblical allusions, as can be seen in the annotations to 1 Ne 19.10; 2 Ne 25.23; Alma 5.24–25; Alma 13.3; 34.28; 3 Ne 27.27. It should also be noted, however, that there is little in the Book of Mormon in the way of secret or esoteric doctrines, aside from hints about the third day of Jesus’s ministry (3 Ne 26) and the epiphany of the brother of Jared (Ether 3–4).

Religious knowledge derived from scripture can be supplemented by dramatic revelatory experiences, at least for prophets and kings. These include dreams (sent to Lehi and Omer), visions (to Lehi and Nephi), angels (for Nephi and his brothers, Benjamin, Alma₂, the sons of Mosiah, Amulek, Nephi₂, Lehi₄, and Samuel), incapacitating manifestations of the Spirit (Alma₂, Lamoni and his father), and more commonly, the voice of the Lord. At times these definitive encounters come in response to prayer; they may also come as unbidden acts of grace, at the Lord’s initiative. It does not appear that these experiences were regularly available to ordinary Nephites, though their faith might be kindled or confirmed by miraculous deliverances, afflictions, and signs in the heavens. It is telling that when Alma wants to strengthen the faith of the people of Zarahemla, he does not point to his encounter with an angel as a precedent. Instead, he outlines a more imitable process: “I have fasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit” (Alma 5.46). Later, at Antionum, he provides a fuller explanation, encouraging his listeners to undertake an “experiment,” in which they treat the word of God like a seed, allowing it to take root in their hearts and then observing the consequences. If they feel their souls swell and their minds expand, they can gradually come to know of its truth (Alma 32). This is a subjective, interior perception rather than a sensory experience, yet it has the advantage, according to Alma, of being reliable and replicable. For the experiment to work, however, it must be done in a spirit of faith rather than skepticism, or at least with a “desire to believe” (Alma 32.27)—the same precondition that underlies Moroni’s promise to readers of the Book of Mormon (Moro 10.4–5).

As much as the Book of Mormon answers perennial questions about Christian theology, it also explores several issues in a more open-ended fashion. In both sermons and narratives, there are tensions between the Lord’s justice and mercy, between divine sovereignty and human agency, and between God dealing with people individually and collectively. The first dichotomy is addressed in an abstract, conceptual fashion at Alma 42; perhaps more striking, however, is the juxtaposition between the destruction by fire, flood, and landslide of more than a dozen large cities in 3 Nephi 9.1–12, followed immediately by a promise of divine welcome and healing in verses 13–22, and then Christ’s tender blessing of children in 3 Nephi 17. God’s mercy is praised throughout the text, particularly with respect to revelation and the atonement, yet there are limits; Nehor’s Universalist-like declaration that “all mankind should be saved at the last day” is roundly condemned (Alma 1.2–15; cf. Alma 42.1–28; Hel 12.25–26).

The balance between sovereignty and agency can be seen in conditional and unconditional prophecies, in the ability of people to choose how they will respond to grace (reminiscent of Arminianism), as well as divine and human cooperation in the production of scripture. An emphasis on individual choice and accountability in sermons and conversion stories is countered by the continuing significance of lineage and ethnicity in salvation history, where covenants with entire peoples, as well as blessings and curses, hold sway. Readers may note, for instance, that the regular invocation of God’s promise to Lehi that “inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments ye shall prosper in the land” (2 Ne 1.20) is primarily directed to the Nephites

collectively rather than to individuals; the Book of Mormon does not preach a simplistic prosperity gospel.

In several respects, the Book of Mormon as a whole enacts or illustrates theological principles. The tragic tales of destruction for both the Jaredites and the Nephites constitute a typological pattern, and a warning, for people in the last days. Toward the end of his record, Moroni implores his readers to “give thanks unto God that he hath made manifest unto you our imperfections, that ye may learn to be more wise than we have been” (Morm 9.31). The new revelations given to Lehi and his descendants, affirming and supplementing the spiritual truths on the Brass Plates, particularly with regard to the nature of God and salvation, prefigured the way the Book of Mormon would someday add to the witness of the Bible. They also foreshadow how later revelations to Joseph Smith, again on the nature of God and salvation, would continue to expand human theological understanding. Indeed, the very existence of the Book of Mormon, with its miraculous origin story, can be construed as direct evidence that prophecy, spiritual gifts, and revelation have continued into the modern era. It stands as a tangible witness of God’s willingness to speak anciently to nations beyond the confines of the Holy Land as well as to people many centuries later. In other words, the theological significance of the book is found in what it claims to be, as well as what it says.

Latter-day Saints today give more attention than ever to the contents of the Book of Mormon, and while their church remains aligned with the basic theology of the new scripture, there are a few places in which contemporary LDS teachings have diverged from Nephite precedents. (Such discrepancies are not necessarily troubling to faithful members, given their strong belief in continuing revelation.) In some cases, later doctrinal and ecclesiastical refinements are simply missing from the Book of Mormon. These include current Latter-day Saint understandings of the physical nature of God, a pre-mortal existence, temple sealings, baptism for the dead, and three degrees of post-resurrection glory. Similarly, the Nephites never distinguish between the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods, and there is no mention of deacons, bishops, or apostles among the Nephites—even though these offices were significant in the New Testament.

In other instances, the Book of Mormon seems poorly suited to support current Church emphases. The scripture says nothing about eternal families, and even earthly families receive little attention, at least with respect to wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters. Prophecies of the literal gathering of Israel in the last days have been spiritualized in recent decades as references to missionary work or vicarious temple work, and the term “Lamanite” is no longer routinely applied to Native Americans. Gifts of the Spirit are still valued, but modern church leaders do not follow Nephite prophets in claiming angelic visitations or making predictive prophecies, nor do they fit the Nephite definition of a “seer,” that is, someone who uses “interpreters” to translate (Mos 8.13–18). In contrast to LDS practice, but in continuity with the Hebrew bible, several major prophets in the Book of Mormon preach from outside the ecclesiastical hierarchy, including Lehi, Benjamin, Abinadi, and Samuel the Lamanite. Temple worship is a key aspect of Latter-day Saint theology, and while some LDS commentators claim to see in the Book of Mormon echoes of the modern endowment ceremony (a ritualized reenactment of the creation and fall, with sacred clothing, covenants, and gestures), the connections are tenuous. Aside from a presumption that sacrifices and offerings prescribed by the Mosaic Law occurred in Nephite temples, the text gives scant attention to what happened within those sacred precincts. Indeed, after Christ’s visit in 3 Nephi, when he announces the fulfillment of the law, temples are never mentioned again, even though Nephites continued to construct churches and synagogues. (Similarly, high priests are not mentioned after Jesus’s visitation.)

And finally, there are a few examples of current LDS teachings that contradict, or abrogate, Book of Mormon precedents. Nephite prophets thought that a person's eternal fate was set at the moment of death, with no opportunity for post-mortal repentance (Alma 20.17; Moro 8.14), and that those who died "without the law" have no need of baptism (Moro 8.22–23). Modern church members, by contrast, believe that missionary work continues in the spirit world and they perform vicarious baptisms for all deceased persons. Contemporary church leaders denounce racism and affirm that dark skin is neither a curse nor a sign of estrangement from God (contra 2 Ne 5.21–23), and they further insist that victims of rape have not lost their virtue or chastity (contra Moro 9.9).

In conclusion, a brief summation of Book of Mormon theology could incorporate the following elements. Human history tends toward violence, corruption, and tragedy, but precarious circumstances can be transcended through individual faithfulness and covenant communities. God has a plan for humankind, centered on his relationship with Israel and his reconciliation with sinners through Christ's atonement, and he is reliable, though his promises may not unfold in quite the way that believers expect. Jesus Christ will redeem all people from the Fall and from death, and after a universal resurrection those who have relied on his grace and repented of their sins will enjoy eternal life in the presence of God. People in diverse times and places have had access to the gospel of Christ, sometimes through a church, and have an opportunity to change their ways before being judged according to their deeds and their knowledge. And in a self-referential nod, the Book of Mormon will be an instrument of God in the last days in disseminating truth and preparing the world for its final consummation.

Lived Religion in the Book of Mormon

Nephite prophets are often portrayed as introducing or explicating doctrinal principles in their preaching, which sometimes includes scriptural exegesis. However, a great deal of the theological work in the Book of Mormon is done through stories. Conversion, faithfulness, seeking after God and receiving revelation, repentance, self-sacrifice, compassion, and proper and improper modes of worship are often shown through action rather than simply discussed in the abstract. These practical aspects of belief, as played out in the lives of Book of Mormon characters, seem intended as models for readers, who may find narratives more memorable and inspiring than generalized exhortations. Fourteen aspects of lived religion that are significant in the Book of Mormon will be treated below, in alphabetical order.

Belief and skepticism. At issue here is not the content of belief, but rather, how one comes to believe. The book begins with revelations to Lehi, foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem and commanding him to flee with his family into the wilderness. The people at Jerusalem reject his warnings, and Laman and Lemuel suppress their doubts only after Lehi speaks to them with such power that "their frames did shake before him" (1 Ne 2.14). The first thoughtful skeptic in the Book of Mormon is Nephi himself, who is troubled enough by Lehi's startling revelations that he prays for direction. He reports that the Lord "did visit me, and did soften my heart that I did believe all the words which had been spoken by my father" (2.16). Later on, Nephi will receive spiritual information and guidance as he prays for his brothers (2.18-19) or sits "pondering in [his] heart" (11.1).

Nephi, of course, is an extraordinary individual, a prophet chosen by God, but he suggests that his brothers could have enjoyed similar access to revelation if only they had "inquired of the Lord" (15.8). When they protest that "the Lord maketh no such thing known unto us," Nephi quotes a

divine promise that he himself had already put into practice: “If ye will not harden your hearts, and ask me in faith, believing that ye shall receive, with diligence in keeping my commandments, surely these things shall be made known unto you” (15.9, 11). Perhaps not coincidentally, this is essentially the same promise conveyed at the end of the book by Moroni, addressing readers who want to know whether the Nephite record is true or not (Moro 10.4).

In the intervening pages are stories of two hardened skeptics, Sherem and Korihor, who articulate their reasons for disbelief: worshipping Christ is contrary to the law of Moses, long-term prophecy is impossible, religious belief is the result of delusion and tradition, there is no evidence for an afterlife, and spiritual leaders seek to exploit their followers (Jacob 7; Alma 30). Both men, when challenged, suggest that the issue could be settled by a sign from God, and both receive divine punishment shortly thereafter—the Book of Mormon tends not to leave readers in doubt with regard to the morality of its characters. Actually, the book as a whole is somewhat ambiguous about the role of signs and miracles in promoting faith. Some Nephite authors insist that belief must precede miracles (Mos 8.18; 3 Ne 19.35; Morm 9.24; Ether 12.6, 12; Moro 7.37), though there are several examples in the narrative of unbelievers who were shown powerful signs, sometimes with positive results (Alma in Mos 27; the Nephites in 3 Ne 1) and sometimes not (Hel 16.13–16; 3 Ne 2.1–2). (The Book of Mormon itself is described by Jesus at 3 Ne 21.1–7 as a sign given to an unbelieving world in the latter days.) Perhaps as a middle position, Alma recommends to the Zoramites a process he describes as an “experiment,” whereby a small amount of faith in God’s word, or even just a “desire to believe,” will be rewarded by a spiritual manifestation, which will then enable greater faith, leading to much stronger assurances, on the analogy of a small seed developing into a large tree. Many Zoramites took up this challenge and thereby became believers (Alma 32; 35).

Community. The Book of Mormon generally regards ordinary individuals as members of natural communities such as Nephites and Lamanites (the Mulekites are rarely treated as a distinct ethnicity) or inhabitants of particular lands or cities. There is some permeability in the borders—Nephite dissenters regularly join the Lamanites, and converted Lamanites occasionally become Nephites—but for the most part groups appear in the narrative as distinct entities that are blessed or punished according to their collective faithfulness in keeping God’s commandments. The preeminent example of a voluntary community, however, is the Christian church that Alma₁ founded about 150 BCE, looking forward to the coming of Jesus. He introduced the ritual of baptism with instructions as to how church members should support one another, by being “willing to bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light; yea, and . . . willing to mourn with those that mourn, yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort” (Mos 18.8)—words that are often cited at contemporary LDS baptismal services. He further commanded them to “impart of their substance of their own free will . . . to every needy, naked soul” (18.28).

The fortunes of the new church waxed and waned over subsequent decades, depending on how well they were able to live up to these standards. Again and again, the limiting factors were pride, inequality (both social and economic), and, to a lesser extent, doctrinal disputes (Alma 1.19–30; 4.6–10; Hel 3.33–35; 4.11–12, 23; 3 Ne 1.24–25; 6.10–14; 11.28). The church for a long time was a minority movement within the larger population, though it eventually spread throughout Nephite lands and even among the Lamanites. At its height, after Christ’s visit to the New World, church members are described as having “all things common among them” (4 Ne 1.3), much like early Christians in the New Testament (Acts 2.44–45; 4.32), and social and ethnic divisions ceased to be significant: “neither were there Lamanites, nor any manner of -ites; but they were in one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God” (4 Ne 1.17). Unfortunately,

before the cataclysmic end of the narrative, divisions between Lamanites and Nephites reappear, apparently based on belief as much as on lineage.

Faith. One of the book's earliest and most celebrated expressions of religious trust is voiced by Nephi when his father assigns him the difficult and dangerous task of procuring the Brass Plates. He responds, "I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the things which he commandeth them" (1 Ne 3.7). Later figures similarly affirm their faith in God in times of affliction, or sorrow, or danger, including Alma (Alma 31.26–35), Helaman's young soldiers (56.45–48), Helaman himself (58.11, 37), and Pahoran (61.12–13). There are also satisfying stories of deliverance, when people in trouble had prayed and put their trust in the Lord: Nephi threatened by his brothers (1 Ne 7, 18), the people of Limhi in bondage to the Lamanites (Mos 7, 21–22), the people of Alma₁ oppressed by the priests of Noah (Mos 23–24), Alma₂ and Amulek in prison (Alma 14), Alma₂ in despair over his sins (Alma 36), Helaman in dire military straits (Alma 58), Nephi₂ and Lehi₄ in prison (Hel 5), and Nephi₃ seeking to avert the massacre of church members (3 Ne 1). Such tales put into sharp relief the times when divine assistance does not come—the martyrdom of Abinadi at Mosiah 17, the slaughter of believing women and children at Alma 14 and converted Lamanites at Alma 24, or lamentations for the war dead at Alma 28. In such cases, however, witnesses affirm that the deceased will ultimately be vindicated and delivered into eternal life.

Perhaps the most poignant expression of faith in the Book of Mormon is again seen in the life of Nephi, when he composes a psalm in which he struggles with his sins and frustrations—alluding to particular incidents in his life—and in the end resolves to "trust in [the Lord] forever" (2 Ne 4). At the end of his writings, he recommends that his readers also place their trust in God, taking a long-term perspective: "Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father, 'Ye shall have eternal life'" (2 Ne 31.20).

Family dynamics. The Book of Mormon begins with a dysfunctional family, that of Lehi and Sariah, which is fragmented and acrimonious enough that brothers attempt to kill each other. Throughout 1 Nephi there are stories of anger, complaints, violence, reprimands, regret, forgiveness, and mutual support, which do not add up to a happy ending; in 2 Nephi the family splits irrevocably, with repercussions that will last for generations. There are lessons to be learned from these chapters, but they are often difficult, and it is perhaps unfortunate that Lehi's family is the most fully developed of any in the book. Even so, the depicted interactions are nearly exclusively among male family members; sisters and wives are mentioned only in passing, and they are never named (aside from Sariah). This pattern continues throughout the Book of Mormon: relationships between fathers and sons are regularly portrayed and explored, as when Lehi blesses his sons (2 Ne 1–4), or Alma entrusts sacred records to one son and deals with another's waywardness (Alma 37; 39–42), or Mormon writes personal letters to his son (Moro 8–9). Less often, brothers are shown preaching together (2 Ne 6.1–4; Alma 45.22; Hel 5), gently chiding each other (Omni 1.9; Alma 26.10–12), or beginning an expedition together (Ether 1).

Glimpses of women within families are fleeting—the only verbal exchange between a husband and wife, Lehi and Sariah, spans eight verses (1 Ne 5.1–8); a group of wives plead for their husbands' lives (Mos 23.33–34); young soldiers mention the faith of their mothers (Alma 56.47–48); one daughter plots on her father's behalf (Ether 8.7–17); unnamed women mourn their deceased fathers and husbands (1 Ne 16.34–35; Mos 21.9; Alma 18.42–19.5; Alma 28.5); and two fathers

offer daughters in marriage (Alma 17.24; Ether 9.4). Jacob speaks movingly of the pain felt by wives and children in the aftermath of male infidelity, particularly with regard to polygamy and concubinage (Jacob 2–3), but no individualized stories of such difficulties are presented in the text. The near absence of husbands and wives working together or of happy families, along with the complete invisibility of relationships between mothers and daughters, brothers and sisters, or among sisters, makes the Book of Mormon an awkward fit for the family-centered devotion of contemporary Latter-day Saints. The scripture shows men fighting to defend their wives and children, yet there is never any discussion of reuniting with loved ones in heaven, or of family relationships extending into the eternities. And though Jesus commands the Nephites to “pray in your families unto the Father, always in my name, that your wives and your children may be blessed,” the Book of Mormon does not depict either family prayer or what a blessed family might look like, with the significant exception of fathers and sons.

Gender and race. These are two of the most difficult aspects of the Book of Mormon for many readers. Women are mostly absent from the narrative, with only three named female characters—Sariah, Abish, and Isabel—whose deeds are recounted in a total of eighteen verses. Other women appear occasionally, with two Lamanite queens being the most prominent (Alma 19; 22), yet there are only eight verses that feature direct speech by women (1 Ne 5.2, 8; 16.35; Alma 19.4–5, 9; Ether 8.9–10). This is extreme, even when compared to the Old and New Testaments. There are general references to the spiritual capacities of women (Mos 5.7; 24.22; 27.25; Alma 32.23; 3 Ne 17.25; Ether 3.13), so faithful women are portrayed in the text, but one has to look carefully to find them.

Hostility between Nephites and Lamanites is a central feature of the book, and Nephite attitudes toward their estranged brethren appear racist by contemporary standards. Lamanites are described as dark, filthy, loathsome, and idle (1 Ne 12.23; Morm 5.15). The prejudices seem primarily cultural, based on religious differences and a distinction between hunter-gatherer and agricultural lifestyles (Enos 1.20), yet skin color was also a factor. Nephi asserted that the Lamanites had been cursed “with a skin of blackness” (the only instance of “black” being applied to the Lamanites) as a discouragement from intermarriage between the two peoples (2 Ne 5.19–25; Alma 3.6–10; cf. Jacob 3.5, 9), and there are suggestions that converted Lamanites might become “white and delightsome” (2 Ne 30.6, in the earliest versions; 3 Ne 2.14–16). Even more pervasive, however, is the narrators’ assumption that the Lamanites are rather passive and childlike, generally incapable of decisive action without the instigation of Nephite dissenters.

This stark summary of the way ethnic distinctions are depicted in the Book of Mormon—unflattering to Nephites and Lamanites alike—becomes more complicated in broader readings of the text. Nephites can come under the Lamanite curse without undergoing a change in complexion (Alma 3.4–19), and dark-skinned Lamanites can be paragons of righteousness, far surpassing the Nephites in faithfulness (Hel 6; 13–15). Most significant, however, is Nephi’s declaration that God invites “all to come unto him and partake of his goodness . . . black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God” (2 Ne 26.33). The Nephites do not always live up to this lofty ideal, yet after Christ appears to them, divisions between Nephites and Lamanites are erased in a long era of righteousness and harmony. There is no similar narrative arc in the Book of Mormon for women, even though Nephi’s evocation of God’s impartiality also encompassed gender differences.

Moral courage. As might be expected in a religious text, there are several instances in which individuals choose to stand by their principles in the face of danger and loss. The prophet Abinadi delivers his message despite the threat of imminent martyrdom (Mos 13; 17), the sons of King

Mosiah abdicate their princely positions in order to preach the gospel to their enemies (Alma 17; 26), Pahoran gently and courageously deflects Captain Moroni's anger (Alma 61). What is perhaps less expected is how many exemplars of ethical resolution are Lamanites: an unnamed king faces down his angry people to protect Nephites whom he himself has wronged (Mos 20), Abish raises her solitary voice at a moment of political crisis (Alma 19), King Lamoni refuses a direct order from his father in order to help Nephite missionaries (Alma 20.8–16), that same father later offers to give up his entire kingdom in return for salvation (Alma 22.15), and a Lamanite prophet returns to preach to a hostile Nephite city whose inhabitants attempt to kill him (Hel 13; 16). The most prominent examples of moral courage in the Book of Mormon are the curiously named Anti-Nephi-Lehies, a group of Lamanite converts who renounce their former violent lifestyle with an oath to never again take up arms, even in self-defense. Over a thousand are slain, without resistance, by their angry Lamanite kinsmen (Alma 24), before they seek refuge with the Nephites (Alma 27). A few years later, the Anti-Nephi-Lehies themselves welcome refugees, despite threats of military retaliation (Alma 35), and during the Amalickiahite Wars, they take in thousands of recently disarmed, potentially dangerous, prisoners of war (Alma 62.14–17, 26–29).

Obedience. One of the oft-repeated themes in the Book of Mormon is that keeping God's commandments brings blessings, while neglecting them results in alienation and adversity. This general principle is demonstrated throughout the narrative, but it is less clear which specific commandments Nephite leaders and writers have in mind. There are particular, immediate commands that come to prophets, as when God tells Lehi to flee Jerusalem, leaving behind his gold and silver (1 Ne 2.2–4; 3.16), or when Alma is commanded to preach at Ammonihah (8.14–18, 29; 9.1; cf. Hel 13.2–3). In addition, most Book of Mormon sermons include a charge to repent and believe in Christ. Nevertheless, context suggests that the direct reference behind most injunctions to “keep the commandments of God” is probably the law of Moses. Nephi realized from the beginning that the Lord's promise to Lehi of prosperity in return for obedience required that his descendants have access to the Mosaic Law inscribed on the Brass Plates (1 Ne 4.14–16), and there are regular allusions to strictly obeying the Law of Moses (2 Ne 5.10; 25.24; Mos 2.3; Alma 30.3), even among converted Lamanites (Alma 25.13–16; Hel 13.1; 15.5–6). Yet this is easy to miss because the Book of Mormon says almost nothing about sacrifices and offerings, regulations for priests, judicial procedures, dietary laws, purity laws, or feasts. Indeed, there are only two references in the entire text to Nephites keeping the Sabbath (Jarom 1.5; Mos 18.23).

What the book does have is numerous morality lists, such as Mormon attributing Nephite military losses to “the pride of their hearts, because of their exceeding riches, yea, it was because of their oppression to the poor, withholding their food from the hungry, withholding their clothing from the naked, and smiting their humble brethren upon the cheek, making a mock of that which was sacred, denying the spirit of prophecy and of revelation, murdering, plundering, lying, stealing, committing adultery, rising up in great contentions” (Hel. 4.12). Pride figures prominently in the ups and downs of Nephite civilization. On the other hand, Jacob ascribes the future, long-term survival of the Lamanites to one particular virtue: “Because of this observance, in keeping this commandment [to embrace monogamy and eschew sexual immorality], the Lord God will not destroy them, but will be merciful unto them” (Jacob 3.6).

Politics and government. In the eyes of Book of Mormon narrators, political developments are closely tied to religion. The ideal government is rule by a divinely appointed monarch (Mos 1.10; 2.11) who can “establish the laws of God, and judge this people according to his commandments” (Mos 29.13), following the model outlined at Deuteronomy 17.14–20. The narrative includes examples of both righteous and wicked kings, of whom the paradigmatic examples are King

Benjamin and King Noah, respectively. Benjamin adopts a frugal lifestyle, serving his people selflessly and preaching the gospel to them (Mos 1–6). Noah, by contrast, lives in indolent luxury, indulging with his courtiers in polygamy, drunkenness, and extravagant building projects, all paid for by a 20 percent tax (Mos 11). It is important to note that both kings are popular rulers, whose people happily follow their example, for good or evil. The slavery under the Lamanites that follows Noah's reign, however, is regarded as true tyranny, in which the new overlords expropriate fifty percent of the people's production, on pain of death (Mos 7.21–22).

A generation after Benjamin, his son King Mosiah dissolves the monarchy, recognizing the dangers of rebellion, inequality, and the moral damage that a wicked ruler can cause (Mos 29). In the background is not only the negative example of King Noah but also a newly recovered record of destructive Jaredite kings, and perhaps concerns about the appeal of the Davidic royal covenant among the Mulekites. Mosiah establishes a system of judges that provides more scope for “the voice of the people” (a somewhat obscure phenomenon, which does not appear to operate like democratic elections), though the chief judgeship itself is mostly a hereditary, life-long position, tightly controlled by the Nephites. Over the next century, “king-men” rebel in an attempt to restore the monarchy, Captain Moroni assembles a Christian militia, and “secret combinations” surreptitiously infiltrate government offices in order to protect their members, harm their enemies, and plunder the people. All of these factor into the spiritual health of the nation, especially the secret combinations (also seen among the Jaredites), which are described as dangerous, quasi-religious organizations held together by oaths and covenants.

Poverty and wealth. As with the classic Hebrew prophets, social justice is a continual concern of Nephite prophets. One of their primary messages is that God will judge societies by how they treat the poor and the vulnerable. Jacob warns of wealth and pride, asserting that the only valid reason for seeking riches is “to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry, and to liberate the captive, and administer relief to the sick and the afflicted” (Jacob 2.19). King Benjamin urges his people to give to the poor, without judging their worthiness for assistance, since we ourselves are all beggars before God (Mos 4.16–30). Alma's church was characterized by social and economic equality, a result of sharing material resources (Mos 18.27–29; Alma 1.25–28; 4.6–14; 5.53–56; 3 Ne 6.10–13). Repeatedly, one of the first indications of inequality among the Nephites is the appearance of “costly apparel.” Religiously mandated generosity is not simply a matter of personal choice or volunteerism: King Limhi uses state authority to redistribute goods to widows and the fatherless (Mos 21.17), and a majority of the Nephite populace decide to set aside land for the resettlement of Anti-Nephi-Lehi refugees (Alma 27.20–26). Similar to how Isaiah, Amos, and Micah assert that God cares more about social justice than about festivals and sacrifices (Isa 1.10–17; Am 5.21–24; Mic 6.6–8), King Benjamin declares that the atonement of Christ has no lasting effect for those who do not share what they have with the needy (Mos 4.26). Amulek proclaims that God will not hear the prayers of those who turn away the misfortunate (Alma 34.28), and Moroni castigates latter-day Christians who “love money, and your substance, and your fine apparel, and the adorning of your churches, more than ye love the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted” (Morm 8.36–37).

Priesthood and church governance. After Lehi's family arrived in the New World and the Nephites had separated from the Lamanites, Nephi built a temple and consecrated his younger brothers Jacob and Joseph as priests, with teaching authority in addition to their implied ritual responsibilities for sacrifices and offerings (2 Ne 5.16, 26). For centuries thereafter, kings continue to appoint priests (Mos 6.3; 11.4–5), until Alma, establishes his church in a separated Nephite colony and ordains unpaid local preachers as “priests,” with he himself being the “high priest”

(Mos 18.18, 26; 23.16–17). When the people of Alma rejoin the majority of Nephites in Zarahemla, King Mosiah allows him to expand his church organization (Mos 25.19–24) and to expel sinners from church membership (Mos 26). There are regular references in the narrative to temples and sanctuaries, presumably established by the state and employing hereditary priests to conduct sacrifices in accordance with the law of Moses among both Nephites and Lamanites, but these religious experts are not under the jurisdiction of church leaders (Alma 16.13–15; 23.1–2). Note that the cities of Ammonihah and Antionum have their own priests, who are not part of Alma’s church organization (Alma 14.18; 32.5; 35.5), and Alma spends time in a sermon to the former city arguing for the authority of charismatic, non-hereditary, church priests (Alma 13.1–20). When the resurrected Christ appears to the Nephites, he calls twelve disciples, to whom he gives new authority for baptisms and for bestowing the gift of the Holy Ghost (3 Ne 11.18–30; Moro 2). He also institutes the Lord’s Supper, and stipulates limited Communion and open worship services (3 Ne 18). But there are no details about changes in organization other than a comment that when the twelve disciples died, “there were other disciples ordained in their stead” (4 Ne 1.14). And finally, there are half a dozen references throughout the Book of Mormon to church leaders titled “elders,” though their duties and position in the hierarchy are unclear.

Repentance and Conversion. The most dramatic example of conversion in the text, illustrating both spiritual and psychological aspects of repentance, is that of Alma₂ and the sons of Mosiah. Indeed, their story is recounted in detail twice (Mos 27; Alma 36). Nevertheless, the appearance of an angel, a crucial component of Alma’s conversion, is foreign to the experience of most people. When Alma later expounds a replicable method for coming to know spiritual truths, it is based on subjective feelings rather than on miracles or angels (Alma 32). Most conversions in the book are the result of preaching. Occasionally, hearers fall to the ground in fear or amazement (Jacob 7.21; Mos 4.1–3; Hel 9.4–5; 3 Ne 1.15–18; 3 Ne 11.12), with two instances of coma-like paralysis (Alma 18.40–43; 22.17–19). The poor are particularly receptive to preaching (Alma 32.1–6), while priests and lawyers are viewed as more resistant (Alma 10; 14; 3 Ne 6.20–21), with Alma₁ and Zeezrom being notable exceptions (Mos 17.1–4; Alma 12; 14.6–7; 15).

Spiritual gifts. At the conclusion of the Nephite record, Moroni insists that believers will always be attended by spiritual gifts, adapting Paul’s list from 1 Corinthians 12: teaching, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, seeing angels, speaking in tongues, and interpreting languages (Moro 10.8–23). These phenomena are amply illustrated throughout the narrative, with the exceptions of healings and speaking in tongues. For instance, sixteen individuals are said to have seen angels. Other forms of revelation are less evenly distributed. Only Lehi and the Jaredite king Omer have revelatory dreams. Lehi and Nephi are the sole recipients of visions (with one ambiguous case, mentioned below). Revelation may take the form of impressions, though the voice of the Lord is regularly depicted as coming in exact words. With the Liahona, God communicated through rotating “spindles,” as well as written messages (1 Ne 16.9–10, 26–29). There are two kings who translate unknown languages by the power of God, with the second doing so by seer stone (Omni 1.20–22; Mos 8; 28.10–19). Revelation often occurs in response to prayer, yet there are other times that it comes unbidden, as when Lehi, Nephi, Mosiah₁, Alma₁, and Omer are all warned by God to flee with their people (1 Ne 2.1–5; 2 Ne 5.1–7; Omni 1.12–13; Mos 23.1–4; Ether 9.1–3). There are instances of prophets and missionaries being able to read the minds of others through the Spirit (Alma 12.2–7; 18.16–20; Hel 9.40–41), and in one extraordinary episode, Nephi is instructed by God on how to construct a ship, which presumably would have entailed specific information about rigging, sails, rudder design, and waterproofing a hull (1 Ne 17.8; 18.1–4). There is an assumption that revelation is available to all seekers (1 Ne 15.8–11;

Alma 32.22–23; Moro 10.4–5), even if the Book of Mormon for the most part recounts stories of revelation coming to prophets and rulers. In three instances, presumably righteous people request that prophets inquire of God on their behalf (Alma 16.4–8; 43.23–24; Ether 1.34–42). And in the one example of a revelation to an ordinary individual, Abish is described as having been “converted unto the Lord for many years, on account of a remarkable vision of her father,” though it is unclear whether it was she or her father who saw the vision (Alma 19.16).

War and peace. Warfare is a constant occurrence in the Book of Mormon, with about seventeen distinct conflicts, though it gains particular prominence in the last half of the book of Alma (chs. 43–62), which provides a detailed account of the military exploits of Captain Moroni in the Zoramite and Amalickiahite wars. Apparently the narrator, Mormon, writing some four centuries later, was impressed with Moroni’s patriotism, faith, charisma, innovative use of armor (perhaps based on recovered Jaredite artifacts), tactical skills, and generosity toward his defeated enemies. Mormon praises Captain Moroni in the highest terms (Alma 48.11–18) and even names his own son after him. Earlier in the narrative, there were examples of fighting that were approved or unapproved by God (compare Mos 10 with chs. 11 and 21), but Mormon, again as the narrator, makes an explicit case for the morality of defensive warfare at Alma 43.45–47, and Captain Moroni’s own theory of just war is sketched out in his speech to Zerahemnah and in his letters to Ammoron and Pahoran (Alma 44.1–7; 54; 60). Nevertheless, Mormon complicates this picture with details that are less flattering to Moroni—about his temper, his skirting of legal restrictions, and an aggressive campaign that might today be considered ethnic cleansing (Alma 50.7–9). There are also counterexamples, including the pacifist Anti-Nephi-Lehies, and Helaman, a religious leader turned military commander who was gentler, more overtly spiritual, and arguably more successful with less bloodshed than Captain Moroni (Alma 56–58). In addition, three verses at Helaman 5.50–52 suggest that unnamed Lamanite missionaries contributed more to the peace and territorial security of the Nephites in a single year than Captain Moroni did in two decades of bloody conflicts and massive casualties. Taken as a whole, the Book of Mormon is hardly a paean to militarism since in the end, the warring Nephites are decisively defeated and erased from history (as were the Jaredites before them). Indeed, Mormon himself was the head of the Nephite armies in their final era, and when he saw the results of incessant hostility and violence, he renounced his command and spent thirteen years as a pacifist (Morm 3.11–16; 5.1).

Worship and prayer. The Nephite history is filled with both positive and negative examples. Lehi’s first revelation came as he was praying “with all his heart, in behalf of his people” (1 Ne 1.5); Nephi and Jacob similarly received revelations when they prayed for their relatives (1 Ne 2.18; Jacob 2.11). Enos demonstrated an expanding circle of concern as he prayed first for himself, then for his brethren, and then for his enemies (Enos 1.1–17). Ammon and Alma exuberantly praised God in matched speeches at Alma 26 and 29. Alma and his fellow missionaries were appalled by Zoramite worship, in which participants recited the same self-congratulatory prayer, one after another. Their alarm, however, may have come from the prayer’s anti-Christian content and context—once a week, in a house of worship—rather than its studied eloquence or repetition (Alma 31.1–23), since Alma responded with a highly polished prayer himself, followed by advice to pray at all times, in all places (Alma 31.24–35; 33.2–11; cf. 34.17–27), and Moroni provided exact wording for the Communion prayers that were repeated often in worship services (Moro 4–5). Alma₁ instructed members of his new church to keep the Sabbath and meet together for preaching one day a week (these may have been different days; Mos 18.23–25), with church meetings being described as occasions for prayer, fasting, preaching, and singing, as led by the Holy Ghost (Alma 6.4–6; 4 Nephi 1.12; Moro 6.5–9). In addition to petitionary prayer, Nephites

regularly offer prayers of praise, often employing the formula “blessed be the name of my/our God” (Enos 1.1; Alma 7.4; 26.8, 36; 57.35; 3 Ne 4.32).

The Book of Mormon and the Latter-day Saints

The Book of Mormon has always been central to Latter-day Saint identity. It was Joseph Smith’s claims to have discovered and translated the gold plates that first brought him to public attention in 1829 by word of mouth, a handful of newspaper notices, and a preaching journey through northwestern New York by Solomon Chamberlin, a religious seeker who carried sixty-four unbound pages of the new scripture that was still in press. The Book of Mormon was first published on March 26, 1830, and eleven days later Smith formally organized the “Church of Christ.” In June, Samuel Smith, Joseph’s younger brother, became the first missionary of the church as he set out to sell copies of the book he described as “a history of the origin of the Indians.”²⁶ By the end of 1831, critics were using the words “Mormonites,” “Mormons,” and “Mormonism” to refer to the emerging religious movement and its adherents. Believers, including Joseph Smith himself, soon accepted and eventually embraced the two latter terms as fair descriptions of their particular form of Christianity.

As early as June 1829, Smith’s primary scribe Oliver Cowdery drew on the manuscript of the Book of Mormon to compile guidelines for the future church with regard to baptism, priesthood ordinations, and the Lord’s Supper, in a document he titled “Articles of the Church of Christ.” A similar, expanded document was prepared by Smith in April 1830 and eventually canonized as Section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Although it incorporated instructions for priesthood offices and duties that went well beyond the Book of Mormon, it nevertheless firmly grounded church practices on precedents from the Nephite scripture, which it described as containing “a record of a fallen people, and also the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles and also to the Jews, proving unto them that the holy scriptures be true, and also that God doth inspire men and call them to his holy work in these last days, as well as in days of old, that he may be the same God forever.”²⁷ The Eucharist prayers from the Book of Mormon are still recited every week in LDS worship services, which otherwise include no formal liturgical readings of the Bible, or even LDS scripture, in contrast to many Christian denominations.

The first Latter-day Saints tended to preach more from the Bible than from the Book of Mormon. In fact, LDS publications from 1832–38 cited the former twenty times more frequently than the latter.²⁸ In part, this was because church members were more familiar with the Bible, and because they relied on the Bible’s authority when communicating with outsiders. When they did reference the Book of Mormon, it was generally in conjunction with three themes: events of the last days, the history and future of Native Americans, and Joseph Smith’s calling as a new prophet. According to Grant Underwood, the most cited passages from 1830–46 were Ether 13.4–8 (an American New Jerusalem), 3 Ne 21.1–7 (the Book of Mormon as a sign that the restoration of Israel had commenced), 2 Ne 30.3–6 (Indians restored to a knowledge of their Israelite ancestry),

26 Lucy Mack Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet* (Liverpool: S. W. Richards, 1853), 152.

27 Michael Hubbard MacKay et al., eds., *Joseph Smith Papers, Documents, Volume 1: July 1828–June 1831* (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2013), 116–26, 368–74.

28 Grant Underwood, “Book of Mormon Usage in Early LDS Theology,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 17, no. 3 (1984): 52–53. Much of this paragraph is drawn from Underwood’s article.

2 Ne 3.4–21 (blessings to the descendants of the biblical Joseph, which include the Indians), 2 Ne 29.3 (complaints about the Book of Mormon as a new Bible), 3 Ne 8.5–9, 12 (archaeological evidences), 1 Ne 22.6–12 (identity of a Moses-like prophet), 3 Ne 15.11–16.4 (the Nephites as the “other sheep” of Jn 10.16), Ether 2.7–12 (a warning decree concerning America), and Morm 8.29–30 (the state of the contemporary world).

Early members of the church regarded the eschatology outlined in the Book of Mormon as both literal and imminent—that the book would convert Native Americans in large numbers, who would gather to an American New Jerusalem with the help of Gentile allies, and then subjugate unconverted Gentiles. At the same time, the new scripture would aid in the conversion of the Jews, who would return to the original Jerusalem. Some Latter-day Saints believed that the brutal Indian Removal Act of 1830, which forced tribes to relocate west of the Mississippi River, was an unintentional fulfillment of prophecies of gathering. Oliver Cowdery, along with three others, traveled to Indian Territory in late 1830 on a “Lamanite Mission” to share the news of the Book of Mormon with the Shawnee and the Delaware (Lenape), and in 1831, Independence, Missouri, was designated as the site for the New Jerusalem. But the missionaries saw little success among Native Americans (though they converted a number of reformed Baptists along the way in Ohio), and Mormons themselves were expelled from Missouri in 1838. As it became evident that the timeline of the last days was more prolonged than they had anticipated, early LDS millenarianism cooled. Their doctrinal attention turned to newer revelations coming to Joseph Smith on subjects such as priesthood organization, communitarian economics, multiple degrees of eternal glory, a dietary code, temple ordinances, the pre-mortal existence of souls, the plurality of gods, and religiously sanctioned polygamy—all of which became distinctive beliefs and practices despite their near absence in the Book of Mormon. The importance of these theological developments eventually led some Latter-day Saints to wonder how the Book of Mormon could contain “the fulness of the gospel” (DC 20.9; 42.12) when it left out so many of their key doctrines—a question that was usually answered by pointing to the centrality of Christ in the text.

Throughout the nineteenth century, church leaders and missionaries continued to hold up the Book of Mormon as evidence of Joseph Smith’s prophetic status, but its contents received relatively little attention compared to the story of its miraculous production and its association with Native Americans.²⁹ Most Latter-day Saints assumed that its message simply affirmed biblical truths. For instance, in an 1870 discourse Brigham Young noted, “What are the doctrines of the Book of Mormon? The same as those of the Bible.” He then identified the “other sheep” of John 10.16 as the ancestors of “the aborigines of this country”; alluded to the “sticks” of Judah and Joseph in Ezekiel 37, which Latter-day Saints interpreted as references to the Bible and their new scripture; and concluded “the Book of Mormon, however, declares that the Bible is true, and it proves it; and the two prove each other true.”³⁰ Orson Pratt was probably the nineteenth-century apostle most interested in the Book of Mormon. He was the editor for the 1879 edition, which was the first to feature numbered Bible-style verses (making it much easier to cite specific passages), and the first to include cross-references and a few geographical footnotes (reflecting the common LDS belief that Nephite lands extended from South America to North America, with

29 Terryl L. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture That Launched a New World Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 63–64, 82–88.

30 Brigham Young, “The Source of Intelligence, Etc.,” May 29, 1870, *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London: LDS Booksellers Depot, 1854–86), 13:174–75.

the Isthmus of Panama as the “narrow neck” between them). Yet in an influential series of six pamphlets titled *Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon* (1850–51), Pratt devoted their ninety-six pages to arguments that extrabiblical revelation was both reasonable and necessary, stories of Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon witnesses, miracles among modern believers, and how the Nephite record fulfilled biblical prophecies such as Ezekiel 37 (the sticks of Judah and Joseph becoming one), Isaiah 29 (a “sealed” book that would “speak out of the ground,” quoted in 2 Ne 26–27), and Psalm 85 (“truth shall spring out of the earth”). He never mentioned Nephi, or Alma, or Moroni.

The next LDS leaders to write extensively about the Book of Mormon were George Reynolds and B. H. Roberts, both of the Seventy (the church council immediately below the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles). In 1888, Reynolds published *The Story of the Book of Mormon*—a detailed, illustrated retelling for young readers, with chapters at the end on Nephite chronology, women, domestic life, agriculture, warfare, laws, names, and geography. In effect, this volume was the first Book of Mormon commentary. Reynolds later published a dictionary of the Book of Mormon (1891) and a complete concordance (1900)—a labor of twenty years that began while he was imprisoned in a federal penitentiary for polygamy. B. H. Roberts, a tireless researcher and prolific defender of the faith, completed his three-volume *New Witnesses for God* in 1909. The first volume focused on Joseph Smith, while the latter two systematically examined the claims of the Book of Mormon in terms of current archaeology, anthropology, and biblical scholarship. Roberts also dealt at length with the most common objections to the Book of Mormon, including the Spalding Theory (that Smith had plagiarized an unpublished novel about Indian origins), poor grammar, anachronisms, and miscellaneous improbabilities. In the end, he concluded that none of these criticisms “constitute an insuperable difficulty in the way of a rational faith in the Book of Mormon.”³¹ Around 1922, Roberts wrote three papers for his ecclesiastical colleagues in which he presented criticisms against the book’s authenticity in a stronger form, including parallels with Ethan Smith’s 1823 treatise on Indian origins, *View of the Hebrews*. This research project caused some concern among Latter-day Saints when it came to light in the 1980s, though it appears that Roberts continued to believe in the historicity and scriptural authority of the Nephite record until his death in 1933.

Despite the work of Reynolds and Roberts, the Book of Mormon was not central to LDS study or teaching from the late nineteenth century through the first half of the twentieth century, although it was certainly in the canon and an important part of the Joseph Smith story. This was the era of Utah settlement, mass emigration, national conflict over polygamy, and Mormon attempts to be accepted as fully American and Christian after Utah became a state in 1896. Indeed, the 1920 edition was intended to make the Book of Mormon look as much like the Bible as possible; Latter-day Saints wanted to fit in. The relative neglect of the Book of Mormon began to change in the mid-twentieth century, not primarily because of church authorities, but through the efforts of lay scholars, most of whom were professors at Brigham Young University. Four men were particularly influential: Sydney Sperry, Hugh Nibley, John Welch, and John Sorenson.

In the early 1900s, church-sponsored academies in the Intermountain West gave way to public schools. In an effort to provide religious education that could supplement secular learning, the LDS seminary program was created in 1912, in which high school students could take religion courses off-campus during the school day, with credit being given for classes on the Old and New

31 B. H. Roberts, *New Witnesses for God*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1909), 3:559.

Testaments. By 1930, there were over eighty such seminaries and the Church Educational System had been expanded to include institutes as well, that is, off-campus religious instruction at the university level. Nearly one hundred men were employed as full-time teachers, though they had no academic training in religion. Sydney Sperry was a seminary and institute instructor who, at his own initiative, became the first Latter-day Saint to receive a PhD in biblical studies, from the University of Chicago in 1931. The next year he joined the faculty of Brigham Young University.

There was a movement in the early 1930s to professionalize seminary and institute instruction. Eleven teachers were sent by the church to follow in Sperry's footsteps in gaining advanced degrees at the University of Chicago, and biblical scholars from that university were invited to Utah to lead summer workshops. The "Chicago Experiment," however, became mired in the modernist-fundamentalist controversy of the day, and when it appeared that exposure to higher criticism challenged traditional LDS views of scripture and revelation, the program was terminated. J. Reuben Clark, of the First Presidency, delivered an influential address in 1938 titled "The Charted Course of the Church in Education," in which he argued that the primary responsibility of church educators was to instill faith and sustain orthodoxy, including the proposition that "the Book of Mormon is just what it professes to be." Thereafter, the Church Educational System turned away from secular academic training, perspectives, and publications—a situation that still holds today in the Religious Education program at BYU, even though other university departments are expected to show strong engagement with mainstream academic discourse in their fields. (Not coincidentally, in the 1950s Clark also strenuously advocated a rejection of modern translations in favor of retaining the King James Version as the official LDS Bible.)

Sperry, for his part, dedicated his career to showing how biblical scholarship, at least of the conservative sort, could be compatible with LDS scripture and doctrine. In addition to books on the Old and New Testaments, he published *Our Book of Mormon* in 1947—a groundbreaking study in which he analyzed the structure of the text, identified its major genres, argued for its literary value, explored its Hebraistic features, and explained how it countered contemporary biblical scholarship on issues such as the documentary hypothesis of the Pentateuch, multiple authorship of Isaiah, and nonliteral interpretations of the tower of Babel. More books followed, including *The Book of Mormon Testifies* (1952), *Answers to Book of Mormon Questions* (1967), and *Book of Mormon Compendium* (1968). Contemporary LDS understandings of the Book of Mormon and its relationship to the Bible still follow the basic paths laid by Sperry.

After earning a PhD in ancient history from Berkeley and serving in the army during World War II, Hugh Nibley, a remarkable polymath, arrived at BYU in 1946 and took a new approach to the Book of Mormon that electrified LDS readers. Not only did he defend the scripture against familiar criticisms, he also identified new evidences that seemed to prove its authenticity. Ranging widely through the texts and scholarship of the ancient Near East (though pointedly leaving aside the ancient Americas), he found parallels that Joseph Smith could not have known in 1830. These included proper names from Egyptian and Hebrew, legends of shining stones, details of desert travel that would have applied to Lehi's family, apocalyptic imagery, hidden treasure lore, writing on metal plates, patterns of warfare, and much more. A series of articles for the church magazine *Improvement Era* became *Lehi in the Desert and the World of the Jaredites* (1952), a manual for Sunday instruction became *An Approach to the Book of Mormon* (1964), and new discoveries at Qumran and Nag Hammadi inspired *Since Cumorah* (1967). Nibley mostly wrote for an LDS popular audience, but his books were erudite, witty, and breathtaking in their confident defense of Mormonism and its signature scripture—so much so that they inspired two generations of young Latter-day Saints scholars to go to graduate school for the linguistic and historical expertise

that would allow them to do similar apologetics. Indeed, Nibley was so influential that his collected works were republished in nineteen volumes from 1986 to 2010.

Church leaders were thrilled as Nibley made traditional LDS beliefs concerning the historicity of the Book of Mormon (and the Book of Abraham) intellectually viable and respectable. Some had been pressing for years for the Book of Mormon to have a more prominent role in LDS teaching and culture. Stories of the Nephites had long been part of Sunday school for children, and in 1953 the president of the Primary Association commissioned Arnold Friberg to create a series of twelve Book of Mormon paintings for the *Children's Friend* magazine. Friberg's vivid, masculinized illustrations, which were eventually included in official editions of scripture, became the lens through which most Latter-day Saints imagined Book of Mormon characters and events. (They also caught the eye of Cecil B. DeMille, who hired Friberg as a designer for his blockbuster film *The Ten Commandments*.) In 1961, BYU began requiring a two-semester course on the Book of Mormon for all first-year students. Study of the Book of Mormon from cover to cover became more prominent in seminary and institute through the 1960s and 1970s, as those programs expanded internationally and shifted toward a reliance on local volunteer instructors. In 1963, a missionary edition was published that included photographs of metalwork, textiles, murals, and buildings from southern Mexico and Peru "dated from the Book of Mormon period." Missionary discussions were standardized in 1973, with the Book of Mormon being introduced in the first lesson with strong encouragement for investigators to begin reading it (a practice that continues to the present day). In that same decade the scripture was made a central focus of adult Sunday school, which, starting in 1982, devoted an entire year to the Book of Mormon (alternating in a four-year rotation with the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Doctrine and Covenants—another practice that continues into the present).

As the Book of Mormon became more prevalent in church pedagogy and manuals, there was a shift away from historical or literary treatments toward a more doctrinal approach. For instance, a new edition in 1981 retained the basic formatting of the 1920 version (individual verses in double columns), but with new doctrine-oriented chapter headings and greatly expanded cross-references, many linked to the "Topical Guide" published in the LDS Bible two years earlier—all of which encouraged insular scripture study focused on gospel principles. Nevertheless, the desire for more academic modes of reading and argument persisted. John Welch sought to meet that need by establishing the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) in 1979. The organization aimed to disseminate and encourage research on the Book of Mormon by reprinting scholarly articles and papers, and when Welch joined the Law School faculty at BYU the next year, the operation moved with him. Welch himself was a prolific scholar, writing extensively on linguistic and historical aspects of the Book of Mormon, most notably the ancient literary form of chiasmus, which he had discovered in the scripture while he was a young missionary. FARMS began publishing the *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* (later the *FARMS Review*) in 1989, and the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* in 1992. In a gesture of church support, the organization was made an official part of BYU in 1997, where it was eventually merged into the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship.

FARMS is closely associated with a major reconceptualization of Book of Mormon history. Most Latter-day Saints since 1830 assumed the events of the scripture had taken place throughout the Western Hemisphere, with Jaredites, Nephites, and Lamanites being the ancestors of all indigenous peoples in the Americas. By the late twentieth century, this view was no longer tenable for church members acquainted with pre-Columbian history and archaeology. John Sorenson, a

professor of anthropology at BYU, was a key figure in developing a limited-geography model, which instead viewed the Lehighites as occupying a much smaller territory of perhaps two hundred by five hundred miles, surrounded by peoples whose ancestors had come over the Bering Straits thousands of years earlier. (Significantly, Nephite cities are separated by journeys of days, not weeks.) He suggested that the most likely site for Book of Mormon history was in Mesoamerica—specifically southern Mexico and Guatemala, with the “narrow neck of land” being the Isthmus of Tehuantepec—based on geographical features and cultural parallels such as cities and sophisticated writing systems. There were precedents for these ideas. In the 1840s a church newspaper speculated that the Nephite capital of Zarahemla was probably in Guatemala, and many of the illustrations in Reynolds’s 1888 *Story of the Book of Mormon* featured Mesoamerican backgrounds.³² But Sorenson brought a new level of textual analysis and academic rigor to the issue.

In 1984, the church gave tacit approval to Sorenson’s theory by publishing in the *Ensign* magazine a two-part series that he had written, and the next year his book-length argument appeared as *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, co-published by FARMS and Deseret Book, the church’s official press. Since then, Sorenson’s ideas have been widely accepted among Latter-day Saint scholars, though popular speakers have recently advocated a North American mound builder context for Nephite history, known as the “heartland model.” It should be noted, however, that the church itself has not taken an official position on Book of Mormon geography, and many members are not particularly interested in the question. They simply assume that it happened somewhere in the Americas, and they look to the text primarily for spiritual guidance and its strong testimony of Christ—an approach that was encouraged by the adoption in 1982 of the subtitle “Another Testament of Jesus Christ.”

LDS preaching and culture became even more tightly connected to the Book of Mormon in the late 1980s under church president Ezra Taft Benson, who made the increased use of the scripture a major theme of his presidency. He spoke frequently about how the book was “written for our day” and urged members to “flood the earth with the Book of Mormon” and study it daily as “a lifetime pursuit.”³³ Citations of the Book of Mormon in LDS general conference talks and church publications rose sharply, as did translations. By 2000, 100 million copies of the book had been printed in sixty-seven languages, with the 150 million milestone being reached in 2011. Currently the Book of Mormon is available in more than one hundred languages, even as the church begins to rely more on digital versions.

To grow up as a Latter-day Saint in the last half-century was to be immersed in the Book of Mormon—hearing its stories at church and in family gatherings; seeing pictures of Nephites in chapels, homes, and church magazines; singing children’s songs about its heroes; watching animated and film adaptations; buying novels and action figures inspired by its characters; writing talks on its themes; studying it for a year in high school at seminary, which required reading the text and memorizing twenty-five key passages; perhaps visiting church historic sites in New York and Pennsylvania associated with its translation as a sort of pilgrimage, on trips that may have included the Hill Cumorah Pageant—a massive outdoor reenactment of the book’s narrative presented nearly every summer since 1937. The Book of Mormon was a source of unity and identity

32 “Zarahemla,” *Times and Seasons*, October 1, 1842.

33 See his General Conference talks “The Book of Mormon—Keystone of Our Religion” and “Flooding the Earth with the Book of Mormon” in the *Ensign* magazine, November 1986 and November 1988.

for church members, and belief in its historicity was a boundary marker separating true believers from “cultural Mormons.”

Things have shifted slightly in recent years. In 2014, BYU replaced its required two-semester Book of Mormon course with a one-semester class that takes a topical approach to the text (the new course has also been mandated for institute students around the world). In 2019, Sunday school was reduced by half for all church members, as it is now taught only every other week, and the Hill Cumorah Pageant was discontinued. At the same time, there has been more encouragement for personal and family study of the Book of Mormon through the coordinated *Come, Follow Me* curriculum, also introduced in 2019. The manuals for home study, Sunday school, seminary, and institute all follow the same pattern of focusing on general principles supported by key verses, with questions encouraging self-reflection and contemporary application, supplemented by numerous quotations from current church leaders. Almost no attention is given to historical context, narrative structure, textual analysis, or literary considerations such as language or genre. (Even the sort of detailed, premodern scriptural exegesis illustrated within the text itself by Nephi, Abinadi, Alma, and the resurrected Christ would be foreign to modern Latter-day Saints, not to mention the academic study of Hebrew that Joseph Smith organized for members in Kirtland.) Because the church has taken such a minimalist approach, with few aids for serious study—and a scriptural text that has not been substantively updated or reformatted in over a century—blogs and podcasts on the prescribed weekly readings have proliferated. One particularly ambitious attempt to provide background information from a faithful perspective is the website *Book of Mormon Central*.

The thirty Book of Mormon videos produced by the church from 2019 to 2023 offer another example of efforts to keep the scripture interesting and relevant. Even though church manuals have moved away from historical approaches, there is still considerable official resistance to non-literal interpretations of its claims. Each of the videos begins with a voiceover explaining that what follows is “based on actual events as recorded in the Book of Mormon.” The actors wear clothing reminiscent of Bible movies, and various episodes are set among buildings of stone, adobe, thatch, and woven mats, for an indeterminate geographical locale. Most of the dialogue is taken directly from the Book of Mormon, and thus reproduces its quasi-King James idiom, though a few modern lines are added for continuity, and in particular, women are given short speaking parts. The script thoughtfully excerpts key sermons and thus functions as a canon within the canon, even as it simplifies complex theological arguments and obscures literary patterns of allusion and repetition. What tends to be omitted are the frequent references to “brethren,” as well as uncomfortable topics such as human nothingness, judgment, Satan, damnation, and the fear of the Lord. Undoubtedly the next generation of Latter-day Saints will be as influenced in their perceptions of the Nephites by these videos as their parents and grandparents were by the paintings of Arnold Friberg.

Becoming a Latter-day Saint, either as a child or a convert, is often a matter of learning to read the Book of Mormon in particular ways. The first task is to gain a testimony of the book. Parents, leaders, teachers, and missionaries continually stress that the way to do this is to take up the challenge at Moroni 10.4, that is, to read the book and then ask God for a spiritual witness of its truth. In the age of the internet, members and investigators alike are increasingly aware of difficulties arising from archaeology, genetics, linguistics, and historical improbabilities, as well as apologetic responses, yet they are assured that all this is beside the point. As B. H. Roberts explained in 1909, the manifestation of the Spirit “must ever be the chief source of evidence for the truth of the Book of Mormon. All other evidence is secondary to this, the primary and infallible. No arrangement of

evidence, however skillfully ordered; no argument, however adroitly made, can ever take its place.”³⁴ This appeal to the Spirit was noticed by a skeptical Alexander Campbell in 1832, but Roberts was one of the first to clearly articulate the idea, after which it became dominant in LDS discourse.³⁵

In seeking answers directly from the Lord, young Latter-day Saints follow the example of Joseph Smith before the First Vision, or Nephi after he heard his father’s prophecies (1 Ne 1.16). Once they have felt the assurance of the Spirit, they are encouraged to share this knowledge with friends, family, and fellow church members, often in testimony meetings held on the first Sunday of every month. A testimony of the Book of Mormon is commonly regarded as the foundation for a religious life. Ezra Taft Benson’s concise formulation from 1975 is regularly recited: “If the Book of Mormon is true, then Jesus is the Christ, Joseph Smith was his prophet, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is true, and it is being led today by a prophet receiving revelation.”³⁶ Although this reasoning is not as self-evident as he may have assumed—seekers who come to believe the book is inspired may not view the LDS Church as exclusively true, or may align themselves with other Restorationist denominations such as the Community of Christ—nevertheless millions of LDS adherents have followed its logic.

After someone has accepted the Book of Mormon as the word of God, the next task is to apply its teachings to his or her life. To be a Latter-day Saint is, to some extent, to live in the world revealed through (or created by) the text. Believers tend to read themselves into the story; the question is, where? Early members looked for visions, revelations, and angelic visitations similar to those they read about in the Nephite record; today few claim such extraordinary spiritual gifts. Where Latter-day Saints of European descent once saw themselves as the Gentiles who would assist American Indians in transforming the world spiritually and politically, they now identify with the remnants of scattered Israel being gathered through missionary work. Indigenous members, the majority of whom live Mexico, South America, and the South Pacific, may regard themselves as Lamanites, in complicated ways. While in the 1830s, it seemed to Latter-day Saints that they were living in the last few years before Christ’s coming, like Nephi₂ and Samuel the Lamanite, that event has been put off into the indefinite future, perhaps a century away, as it was for Alma₂, or even longer. Mormon pioneers could imagine how Lehi and Alma₁ had also built Zion in the wilderness; missionaries could look to the examples of the sons of Mosiah. Modern LDS conservatives can see themselves as patriots similar to those who rallied around Moroni’s title of liberty to resist king-men and secret combinations; LDS progressives view their values as reflecting those of King Benjamin and the Anti-Nephi-Lehies. In times of remarkable institutional growth, church members recalled the prophecies of mass conversions in the last days; now that growth has slowed it is more common to be reminded of Nephi’s vision: “I beheld the church of the Lamb of God, and its numbers were few” (1 Ne 14.12).

What seems to have remained constant is that believers in the Book of Mormon have generally identified with the Nephites and Lamanites who tried to live as disciples of Christ, practicing a controversial faith that would ultimately be vindicated when Jesus came. Both ideas, in fact, are in their church’s formal name: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In summary, the LDS Church continues to stand by claims of historicity, though it emphasizes the spiritual message of the volume, and it encourages members to seek and share religious experiences

34 Roberts, *New Witnesses for God*, 2:vi–vii.

35 Campbell, “Delusions,” 90, 95.

36 Ezra Taft Benson, “The Book of Mormon Is the Word of God,” *Ensign*, May 1975.

centered on the work. For their part, church members today read the Book of Mormon frequently, are familiar with its contents, and use it as an object of faith and a repository of doctrinal principles and moral exemplars, even though this has not always been the case. The Book of Mormon has a more prominent role in the lives of the faithful now than it did a century ago.

The Book of Mormon in American History

The Book of Mormon was published in 1830 in New York, when both the state and the nation were in a period of transition. Whether the new scripture ultimately came from Joseph Smith or from God, it seemed to address many of the social and religious concerns of the day, in ways that made sense to its first readers. Yet because it took the form of a Bible-like narrative set in the ancient past, connections with Smith's cultural environment were generally indirect rather than explicit—with the exception of Nephite prophecies of the era in which the book would someday come forth. Early believers tended to focus on the book's similarities with the Bible, while skeptics were more interested in the character and background of Joseph Smith, leaving the task of situating the Book of Mormon in its nineteenth-century context to later critics and historians, who identified numerous parallels between incidents and beliefs attributed to the Nephites and those found in Smith's own era. Latter-day Saints countered with parallels from the ancient world, though the two endeavors do not stand on equal footing. Scholars know much more about the early history of the United States than they do about the ancient world—in part because of the availability of evidence—and there is an obvious, direct connection between the Book of Mormon and nineteenth-century America. In addition, the fact that the Mormon scripture is available only in English, rather than in an earlier, ancient-language version, presents a significant challenge for LDS apologists.

Yet the Book of Mormon did not simply reflect prevalent assumptions of the early Republic; it often challenged them, even if readers sometimes failed to appreciate the book's nuances. For instance, in June 1830, a newspaper reported that “the book purports to give an account of the ‘Ten Tribes,’” referring to the inhabitants of the kingdom Israel who had been conquered and deported by the Assyrians in 722 BCE.³⁷ The idea that the American Indians were descended from the lost tribes was common at the time, and was most famously expressed in Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews* (1823). But this is not what the Book of Mormon itself says. The story of the Nephites began more than a century later in Jerusalem, just a few years before the Babylonian exile. Unfortunately, the same mistake about the Book of Mormon being a history of the ten tribes has been repeated by reputable scholars up to the present day (though in their defense, the issue can be obscured by the fact that the Nephites traced their lineage to Joseph's son Manasseh, the progenitor of one of the lost tribes). This essay will identify a few aspects of the Book of Mormon that intersected with the lives of its first readers in terms of culture, social issues, and theology, noting both similarities and differences.

America in 1830 was a young nation, anxious about its place in the world and awash in religion. The Louisiana Purchase of 1803 had dramatically increased the size of the country, and settlers were moving westward into new states such as Indiana, Mississippi, Illinois, and Missouri, all of which had been established between 1816 and 1821, displacing Native Americans in the process. The population was growing and land speculation was rife. Significant wars with Native

37 [A fellow named Joseph Smith], *Cincinnati Advertiser and Ohio Phoenix*, June 2, 1830.

peoples had been fought in 1811, 1813, and 1817. Indeed, American expansionism and tensions with the Indians were major causes of the War of 1812 with Great Britain. Despite a financial crisis in 1819, the nation saw considerable economic growth through the 1810s and 1820s as new industries arose and markets became national, thanks in part to improved transportation networks including the Erie Canal, completed in 1825, that ran through Joseph Smith's hometown of Palmyra. In an era when traditional communal values were giving way to individualism and materialism, religion itself seemed to become a marketplace where people could choose their beliefs and religious affiliations. New Yorkers, like many Americans, were caught up in the Second Great Awakening, experiencing waves of revivalist fervor as denominations vied for new members. And in 1825, Mordecai Noah enthusiastically proclaimed Grand Island, New York, in the Niagara River, as a gathering place for Jews.

Coming at a time when many citizens of the United States were trying to imagine what their national destiny might be, the Book of Mormon taught that America, no less than the Holy Land, had a key role to play in God's plans for humankind, particularly in the last days leading up to the Millennium. According to the new scripture, European settlers were only the most recent immigrants to be led by God to the New World, and they had a chance to avoid the tragic fates of the Jaredites and the Nephites who had preceded them. As Moroni prophesied, addressing his readers directly:

We can behold the decrees of God concerning this land, that it is a land of promise; and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall serve God, or they shall be swept off when the fulness of his wrath shall come upon them. . . . And this [the Book of Mormon] cometh unto you, O ye Gentiles, that ye may know the decrees of God—that ye may repent . . . that ye may not bring down the fulness of the wrath of God upon you as the inhabitants of the land have hitherto done. (Ether 2.9, 11)

This ominous warning of recurring destruction reflects the book's premillennial temperament, which stood in contrast to competing ideas of American progress. The land was especially blessed, but the inhabitants could come and go in typological reenactments orchestrated by God. Thus the American experiment from Columbus to the Puritans to the Revolution (all alluded to in 1 Ne 13.10–19), which came at the expense of indigenous peoples, was not necessarily bound to succeed. The Book of Mormon evinces considerable anxiety about the precariousness of freedom, morality, and Providential favor as it illustrates the dangers of pride, rebelliousness, false religion, and corrupt government, along with class and ethnic divisions.

White Americans were meant to identify with the "Gentiles" in the Book of Mormon (as in 1 Ne 13–14), while Native Americans were to see themselves as the descendants of the Lamanites. The relationship was to be proselytizing with assistance from European settlers to indigenous peoples rather than conquest, with Indians eventually being restored to a position of prominence. Unrepentant disbelieving Gentiles, however, would be scourged by latter-day Lamanites (3 Ne 20–21)—a threat that seemed to envision a resurgence of the sort of tribal alliance that Tecumseh had put together before his death in 1813. Early Latter-day Saints believed that these events were imminent and would take place within the territory of the United States, though uncertainties in prophetic chronology and geography left open the possibility of later fulfillments across North and South America.

Perhaps unexpectedly, the ancient inhabitants of the New World were described more in biblical terms than in nineteenth-century Indian stereotypes. The Book of Mormon mentions in

passing the “Great Spirit” (eighteen references, all in Alma 18–19; 22), mound-building (Alma 16.11), and burying weapons (not explicitly identified as hatchets or tomahawks [Alma 24]), but Lamanites are never described as red men, and there are no references to wigwams, moccasins, blankets, feathers, or canoes, all of which appear in the “Book of Pukei” (an 1830 parody of the Book of Mormon), Oliver Cowdery’s 1831 address to the Delaware Indians, and an 1835 LDS hymn.³⁸ Nephite relations with the Lamanites roughly paralleled those of white settlers to Native Americans in scenes of missionizing and warfare, but the ethnic boundaries were more porous in the Book of Mormon, with Nephites becoming Lamanites and vice versa, and a surprising reversal of spiritual roles in the generation before Jesus’s visitation. In the Mormon scripture, the Nephites were generally more civilized and blessed than the Lamanites, yet the book’s prophecies foretold a time when American Indians would enjoy divine favor as covenant Israel, while European immigrants would be guests on land that God had given to the indigenous peoples as their perpetual inheritance. That is to say, white settlers would gain salvation and a share of that inheritance only if they were adopted into the covenant that God had made with the Lamanites and their native descendants.

The Early National Period saw a rise in individualism as new economic opportunities led to increasing geographical and social mobility. Initiative, hard work, and luck, at times combined with unscrupulous conniving and appropriation of natural resources, allowed some people to gain advantage over others, with a concomitant loss of cooperation and community. Democracy and a market economy made it possible for talented, ambitious men from a variety of backgrounds to gain wealth, power, and influence, while partisan newspapers encouraged ordinary people to argue over politics. Religion also reached the masses in ways that emphasized individual agency through conversions, personal Bible study, and preaching, with the latter two endeavors often undertaken by men, and sometimes women, with more conviction than education. Eran Shalev has written persuasively about the use of the Old Testament in forging a collective identity for the new Republic, which gradually gave way to the more individualistic, evangelical impulses of the New Testament.³⁹ The Book of Mormon seems to canonize a similar moment of balance between communal and individual salvation. Nephi and Jesus speak at length about the covenants God made with Israel, quoting long passages from the Hebrew prophets, even though charismatic preaching and individual conversions are also major themes, as can be seen in the missionary journeys of Alma and the sons of Mosiah (Alma 5–26). Moreover, the setting, content, and language of King Benjamin’s discourse (Mos 2–5) have struck many readers as reminiscent of revivalist camp meetings, albeit with few of the emotional and physical excesses that were disparaged by nonbelievers.

At the beginning of the book of Alma, the Nephites shift from a monarchy to something like a republic, overseen by judges (often a hereditary position), with weight given to “the voice of the people” (though not obviously manifest through elections). Yet the new system is rather unsteady and rumblings of discontent from those who wish to restore kingship continue for the next two hundred pages. In Alexander Campbell’s famous summary of contemporary controversies

38 “The Book of Pukei—Chap. 2,” *The Reflector* (Palmyra, NY), July 7, 1830; Parley P. Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt*, ed. Parley P. Pratt [his son] (New York: Russell Brothers, 1874), 56–59; “O Stop and Tell Me, Red Man,” in Emma Smith, comp., *A Collection of Sacred Hymns for the Church of the Latter Day Saints* (Kirtland, OH: F. G. Williams, 1835), 83–84.

39 Eran Shalev, *American Zion: The Old Testament as a Political Text from the Revolution to the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013). Shalev’s volume includes a chapter on the Book of Mormon.

addressed in the Book of Mormon, he listed a number of religious doctrines and concluded with “free masonry, republican government, and the rights of man.” It is true that the Book of Mormon speaks of “liberty,” “freedom,” and “rights” in a non-biblical fashion that appears to reflect the moral and social values of classic Republicanism, however Richard Bushman has identified significant divergences from the American model, including the virtual absence in Nephite history of popular revolution or heroic resistance to government oppression.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the regular themes of morally inflected prosperity, divinely sanctioned war, egalitarian cooperation, and celebrations of agriculture and industriousness (which do not veer into praises of incipient capitalism) would have appealed to Republican sensibilities of the nineteenth century.

It is also worth noting that some of the cultural phenomena found in both the Book of Mormon and the early Republic have connections to the Bible. A few Nephite sermons appear to draw on models from the Deuteronomistic History (e.g., Josh 24.1–28 and 1 Ne 17.23–47; 1 Kings 2.1–4 and 2 Ne 1.13–21). Stories of proselytizing and conversion are prominent in the New Testament. Tensions between salvation history and the plan of salvation (offering divine deliverance to nations and individuals, respectively) are deeply rooted in the biblical record. In addition, political instability in the reign of judges, which has parallels in the Early National Period, can be explained in the Book of Mormon as due to the Mulekites, who could have retained allegiance to the Davidic covenant. On the other hand, concerns about secret combinations that infiltrate the government and play a crucial role in the destruction of the Nephites, and bear some resemblance to anti-Masonic fears that swept through New York in the 1820s, have few biblical precedents. Nephite discussions of priesthood ranks and authority (e.g., Alma 13) seem out of place in the context of nineteenth-century Protestantism. And while warnings about increasing economic inequality and social injustice can be readily found in both the Book of Mormon and the early United States, these dismal trends have provoked dismay throughout history. Finally, readers might note a few major issues from nineteenth-century America that are almost entirely absent from the Book of Mormon, such as slavery (especially after the Missouri Compromise of 1820), temperance (that is, drinking as a social problem), and the role of women in preaching and religious movements in general.

Some readers have identified more specific connections between the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith’s early life and local culture. For instance, when Smith was a teenager, he was involved in folk magic as a sayer who advised treasure hunters where to dig for gold and silver. Indeed, he appears to have used his personal seer stone to translate large portions of the Book of Mormon. Yet the narrative itself does not give much attention to such practices, aside from some oblique allusions to seer stones (Mos 8.13–18; Alma 37.23–25) and a prophecy about unrecoverable treasures cursed to become “slippery” (Hel 12.18–19; 13.17–20, 31–36; Morm 1.18). There are also a few incidents in the scripture that parallel episodes from Smith’s biography, such as a spiritual dream of his father from 1811 that shares elements with Lehi’s dream of the tree in 1 Nephi 8.⁴¹

Probably more important, however, are the regular occurrences of preaching in the text, which may reflect the many sermons that Smith had heard (though he was not a regular churchgoer). William Davis, recognizing that the book was produced through dictation, that is, as a form of

⁴⁰ Campbell, “Delusions,” 93; Richard Lyman Bushman, *Believing History: Latter-day Saint Essays*, ed. Reid L. Neilson and Jed Woodworth (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 47–64, 118–22.

⁴¹ Lucy Mack Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet* (Liverpool: S. W. Richards, 1853), 58–59.

oral performance, has written an important study placing the Book of Mormon in the context of nineteenth-century oral culture, particularly sermonizing.⁴² Davis provides an extensive overview of the training and techniques of preachers at the time, who prepared outlines of major points (“laying down heads”) from which they could speak more or less extemporaneously, from either written or memorized notes. He suggests that, in like manner, Smith may have spent several years composing the outlines of Nephite narratives and sermons before he dictated them to scribes over the course of just a few months. However, evidence for Smith’s intentional adoption of such techniques is somewhat tenuous, and traces in the Book of Mormon, such as the summary prefaces to several internal books and a reference to “the heads” at Jacob 1.4, are rather sparse and may not be a sufficient explanation for the intricate structure and arguments in the new scripture. Still, there is more to be said about stylistic similarities between Nephite sermons and American preaching, including rhetorical questions, repetitions such as anaphora (repetition of an initial word in multiple sentences), epistrophe (repetition of a word at the end of clauses or sentences), antimetabole (repetition of words while reversing their order, as “all for one, one for all”), striking contrasts, and concluding exhortations. Many Latter-day Saints are open to the idea that Smith put spiritual impressions of the Nephite record into his own words, presenting them in familiar literary forms.

As might be expected for a work of religious literature, most of the intersections between the Book of Mormon and the world of its first readers involve spiritual matters, with the most direct connections occurring in prophetic passages. For instance, the prediction in 1 Nephi 13.5 of “the formation of a church which is most abominable above all other churches,” rich and luxurious, that oppressed and tortured the saints, even tampering with scripture, would have reinforced anti-Catholic prejudices in the early Republic. Modern Protestants, however, also come in for condemnation. Nephi prophesied of a time when churches would “contend one with another; and their priests shall contend one with another, and they shall teach with their learning, and deny the Holy Ghost” (2 Ne 28.4). Some future ministers would preach cessationism, proclaiming that in “this day he [the Lord] is not a God of miracles; he hath done his work” (v. 6), while others, sounding like Universalists, would falsely promise, “if it so be that we are guilty, God will beat us with a few stripes, and at last we shall be saved in the kingdom of God” (v. 8). Nephi concluded his vision of modern American Christianity with this dire assessment:

They have all gone out of the way. . . . Because of pride, and because of false teachers and false doctrine, their churches have become corrupted. . . . They rob the poor because of their fine sanctuaries; they rob the poor because of their fine clothing; and they persecute the meek and the poor in heart, because in their pride they are puffed up.
(vv. 11–13)

At the end of the Book of Mormon, Moroni will echo these predictions (Morm 8.26–41).

Within the primary narrative itself, Nephite religious leaders correct their heretical peers who espouse doctrines reminiscent of Universalism and Calvinism (similarities that were noted by early Latter-day Saints in reference guides to the Book of Mormon, annotating Alma 1, 2, 13, 31).⁴³

⁴² William L. Davis, *Visions in a Seer Stone: Joseph Smith and the Making of the Book of Mormon* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020).

⁴³ Grant Underwood, “Book of Mormon Usage in Early LDS Theology,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 17, no. 3 (1984): 37, 65–67.

They also offer decisive pronouncements on controversial issues such as the scope of salvation, the atonement, resurrection, proper baptism, the Eucharist, and church organization and discipline, as Alexander Campbell observed. In fact, Nephite prophets preach a version of the Christian gospel that is roughly aligned with Arminian free will (in contrast to Calvinist predestination), Methodist perfectionism, and the spiritual path of faith, repentance, baptism, remission of sins, and gift of the Holy Spirit that was articulated by the Disciples of Christ (a Protestant denomination dating from early in the nineteenth century and formally constituted in 1831). These, however, tend to be generic parallels with biblical precedents. The Book of Mormon rarely uses technical theological terms such as justification, sanctification, depravity, assurance, or covenant of grace. And while there are a few prominent stories of martyrdom that might have reminded Protestants of their own historic struggles for religious freedom (e.g., Mos 17; Alma 14), the Nephite perpetrators are breakaway local figures rather than Catholic-like authorities representing a dominant religion.

The theological ideas espoused by various Book of Mormon characters would have sounded familiar to nineteenth-century Americans, yet the general religious outlook of the volume was perhaps more significant than any particular denominational positions. At a time when ordinary believers were feeling the challenges of deism, biblical criticism, and outright skepticism from writers such as Thomas Paine and Ethan Allen, the Book of Mormon defended traditional understandings of miracles, revelation, prophecy, and other spiritual gifts. Indeed, it responded to common objections not through direct refutation, but by providing ostensibly historical examples of remarkable religious experiences. Ancient prophets outside the land of Israel spoke with God, heeded commandments to write scripture, and made predictions with astonishing precision, often about the life of Christ. Their writings affirmed the truths of the Bible, including the historicity of Adam and Eve, the tower of Babel, divine covenants, God's communications with Hebrew prophets, the miracles and resurrection of Jesus, and the predictions of end times found in the book of Revelation.

Biblically savvy readers in the nineteenth century may have found the Book of Mormon more rational, more moral, and more cohesive than the Bible itself, especially since the Mormon scripture merges the Old and New Testaments, has fewer examples of obscure beliefs and customs, and generally shows good things happening to good people, while bad things happen to evildoers. Incidents of unmerited suffering are rare, and in such cases the narrators are quick to offer faithful interpretations (as at Mos 23.19–24; Alma 14.9–11; 24.23–27). The evangelical historian Timothy L. Smith once identified five ways in which the Book of Mormon strengthened the authority of the Bible for its early readers: grounding Christianity in both Testaments, affirming God's concern for all humanity, reiterating the significance of ethical righteousness, emphasizing the role of the Holy Spirit in the lives of God's people, and promising the literal fulfillment of prophecies concerning the last days.⁴⁴ In addition, the Book of Mormon presented itself as more reliable than the Bible with regard to regularly disputed questions of authorship, textual transmission, canonicity, consistency, and translation. In the end, the Mormon scripture sought to bolster rather than supplant the authority of the Bible (e.g., 2 Ne 3.11–12), even as it attempted to overturn notions of biblical uniqueness and sufficiency. Accepting the testimony of the Book of Mormon required readers to give up *sola scriptura*.

⁴⁴ Timothy L. Smith, "The Book of Mormon in a Biblical Culture," *Journal of Mormon History* 7 (1980): 3–21.

Some were willing to make that trade, particularly since the new scripture appeared to be a fresh manifestation of divine power, attested by contemporary witnesses. David Holland has examined early American desires for the clarity and vitality of additional revelation, as well as resistance to reopening the Christian canon, among both mainstream and more marginal religious figures, with the Book of Mormon as a key example.⁴⁵ For believers, their adopted scripture offered not just additional religious knowledge and guidance, but the assurance that God was continuing to speak in their own day through signs, wonders, revelations, and angels. The book provided ordinary Americans an opportunity to grapple with issues of faith, rationality, superstition, spiritual power, deception, and ecclesiastical authority. In an era characterized by intense interest in Bible reading, denominational competition, and experiential religion, it gave people something to argue about.

How much of an impact did the Book of Mormon have on later American history? Certainly not as much as the book itself had hoped. It did not resolve religious controversies or allay criticisms of the Bible. There were no mass conversions of the Indians, and the number of Gentile converts, while substantial, eventually plateaued at about 2 percent of the US population. The new scripture inspired a few imitators, including James Strang and James C. Brewster, and perhaps influenced later religious writings such as the Shakers' *Holy, Sacred and Divine Roll and Book*, but it had virtually no influence in secular literature. Whatever impact the Book of Mormon had came primarily through the religious community it created. Believers gathered first to Ohio, then Missouri, then Illinois, then Utah, taking their sacred text with them. Eventually Latter-day Saints became an important part of American stories of immigration, western expansion, church-state relations, national politics, and legal controversies testing the limits of religious tolerance, freedom, and pluralism.

More than forty years ago, the eminent historian Gordon Wood wrote a descriptive summary of the new American Bible that is still useful today:

The Book of Mormon together with Joseph Smith's revelations gave to Mormonism a popular authoritative appeal that none of the other religions could match. Even the primitive gospelers' return to the simplicity of the New Testament had not ended their quarreling over interpreting the Scriptures. The Book of Mormon cut through these controversies and brought the Bible up-to-date. It was written in plain biblical style for plain people. It answered perplexing questions of theology, clarified obscure passages of the Bible, and carried its story into the New World. And it did all this with the assurance of divine authority. The Book of Mormon brought to the surface underlying currents of American folk thought that cannot be found in the learned pamphlets or public orations of the day. . . . The Book of Mormon is an extraordinary work of popular imagination and one of the greatest documents in American cultural history.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ David F. Holland, *Sacred Borders: Continuing Revelation and Canonical Restraint in Early America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁴⁶ Gordon S. Wood, "Evangelical America and Early Mormonism," *New York History* 61, no. 4 (1980): 380–81.

The Book of Mormon as Literature

The question of what makes some written texts worthy of close study and rereading, and others not, is often approached by an appeal to “literature”—a broad, much-disputed category that traditionally includes fiction, poetry, and drama. Yet nonfiction works of biography, essay, philosophy, and history are sometimes admitted to the club, and scholars have argued for the inclusion of oral performances and cinema as well. What such compositions seem to have in common, speaking in the most general terms, is that they operate at a more deliberate, creative, and thoughtful level than ordinary, practical writing that is quickly consumed and forgotten, or is only consulted for useful facts. Literary authors are verbal artists, whose works display an unusual degree of perception, self-consciousness, mastery of form, and awareness of prior texts. Their words are deemed wonderfully effective and beautiful. People seek out literature for its ability to provide diversion, understanding, and insight, or to evoke particular emotions, and their tastes are often shaped by critics, publishers, and academics who have long argued about which books deserve a place in the canon of great literature. Scripture—an archetypal example of canon—is a special case, because the reasons for carefully reading sacred texts go beyond entertainment or incisive description or social critique or sentiment. In addition to whatever other qualities they may have, these works are regarded by adherents as being especially holy and authoritative, even salvific. Opinions about such texts, as well as their dissemination, are often connected to the size or prestige of the religious community that considers them sacred.

It is not necessary for books of scripture to be literary masterpieces, but it is fortunate when this happens, particularly for believers. It seems fitting that communications from sages or celestial beings should transcend everyday language and discernment. Everyone, regardless of faith commitments, can take delight in the clever plot twists of Buddhist Jataka tales, the sparkling Daoist anecdotes of Zhuangzi, or the soaring cadences of the book of Job. The Book of Mormon, with its ungainly repetitive style, is not an obvious candidate for literary acclaim. Yet if readers can see past the individual sentences and verses to larger units of paragraphs, pericopes, chapters, and books, its literary features become more evident (many of which are noted in the annotations in the present volume). There is a range and verve to the story of the Nephites, which despite its convoluted narrative unfolds according to a coherent underlying design. And for a work with disputed origins, a literary approach offers common ground for discussion between those who regard the text as historical and those who view it as fiction. Someone, somewhere had to determine how the narrative should be structured and presented, with what sorts of details, including physical descriptions, chronological markers, direct discourse, and editorial comments. In a relatively complex work like the Book of Mormon, a great deal of thinking went into its production, especially with respect to the narrators and their relationship to their ostensible source materials. This essay provides an overview organized by standard components of literary analysis, followed by a few general observations.

Genre. The Book of Mormon is a religious text that takes the form of a historical narrative. This is somewhat unusual for world scripture of the last thousand years, although there are precedents in the historical books of the Bible, as well as multiple examples in the Hindu and Buddhist canons. The narrative arc of the Mormon scripture makes it a tragedy twice over, since both the Jaredite and Nephite civilizations end in destruction, due to their wickedness. The ending, however, is somewhat open-ended given Nephite prophecies of the preservation and recovery of their records in the latter-days, when modern readers would find themselves in a position similar to the Nephites, with an opportunity to either accept or reject the book’s witness of Christ. The three

primary narrators—Nephi, Mormon, and Moroni—who often write in the first person, seek to draw readers into their world, occasionally addressing them directly: a practice that begins in the first chapter (1 Ne 1.20) and continues into the last (Moro 10.3, 24). There is an assumption, as in *Chronicles*, that significant histories should be written by prophets (1 Chr 29.29–30; 2 Chr 9.29; 12.15). However, unlike biblical writers, the Nephite narrators are aware that they are writing scripture for a future audience living many centuries later.

Structure. The Mormon scripture is organized something like the Bible, with fifteen books named for their authors or first major characters. The narrative generally follows chronological order in recounting the thousand-year history of the Nephites, with an appendix at the end (in *Ether*) relating the story of their predecessors, the Jaredites. The first generation of Nephites receives a great deal of attention, as does the last hundred years before Jesus's post-resurrection appearance in the New World—an event that serves as the climax of the book. Otherwise, narrative time passes fairly quickly. As with the Bible, the Book of Mormon incorporates multiple storylines, a variety of embedded documents, and poetic passages. But the new scripture also gives more space to extended flashbacks, frequently employs phrases from quoted documents in the surrounding material, and is cogently framed by prophecies at the beginning (1 Ne 12; 2 Ne 26) and retrospective summations at the end (Morm 5 and 9; *Ether* 12). Furthermore, the Nephite anthology, unlike the Old and New Testaments, is said to have been deliberately compiled by dramatized narrators, that is, narrators who are also characters in the book, who speak freely about their intentions and editing. This means that every passage is subject to at least two levels of narration, and sometimes more. For instance, 2 Nephi 3 reports the last words of Lehi to his son Joseph, in which Lehi quotes writings from the biblical Joseph that had been preserved on the Brass Plates. And all of this was included by Nephi in a second version of his life story (the Small Plates), which was in turn chosen by Mormon for inclusion as a supplement to his own abridgment of the official history of the Nephites (the Large Plates). This type of complicated narrative setting is more likely to be encountered in Hindu scriptures such as the *Bhagavad Gita* or the *Bhagavata Purana* than in American literature of the early nineteenth century.

Characters. There are a couple hundred named individuals in the Book of Mormon, with about three dozen playing major roles in the story. Most of these are related to one another, and nearly all of them are male (Sariah and a Lamanite queen are the two main exceptions). As in the Bible, there is little in the way of physical description or interior monologue, although the narrators confide their private thoughts to their readers. Characterization is mostly expressed through words and actions, and personalities are, for the most part, rather flat. Book of Mormon figures are readily identifiable as either good or evil. For instance, Nephi stands in sharp contrast to his rebellious older brothers Laman and Lemuel. But because Nephi is the one writing the account, and because he has chosen to portray his brothers in a reductive fashion, that editorial decision may make Nephi himself a more interesting, rounded figure. There are several examples of dramatic conversions (Alma₁, Alma₂, King Lamoni, Zeezrom), but no cases in which good men go wrong, as with Saul or David in the Bible. Gradual character development may be present, if one looks carefully, in the lives of Nephi and Alma₂, yet assessments of individuals are typically suggested by contrasts between rough contemporaries rather than earlier and later stages of their lives. For example, Benjamin and Noah appear as paradigmatic good and evil kings, and Captain Moroni and Amalickiah are military commanders devoted to freedom and tyranny, respectively. Several of the major characters have distinctive voices, and the primary narrators write from different perspectives. Nephi is a visionary who includes contextless sermons and creative

interpretations of scripture as he talks about his family and the house of Israel, while Mormon does none of these things. On the other hand, Mormon seems to believe that the facts of history, appropriately presented, will persuade readers of spiritual truths, while Moroni sees the witness of the Spirit as the key to changing minds and hearts.

Plot. Stories tend to unfold in episodic fashion with alternating preaching and warfare, religious and political leaders responding to challenges to their authority, and recurring cycles of prosperity and disaster dependent on the willingness of people to love their neighbors and believe in Christ. The appearance of Jesus in 3 Nephi validates the words of Nephite prophets through the centuries, yet it comes as something of a surprise, since the predictions had mostly been about Jesus's life and ministry in Judea rather than a post-resurrection visit to the New World. After two hundred years of uncharacteristic peace and harmony (covered in just a couple of pages), old divisions reemerge, giving rise to renewed warfare and the rapid demise of Nephite civilization. Narratives are often related in pairs or triplets, encouraging readers to look for parallels and contrasts. Examples include the refutations of the heretics Sherem and Korihor (Jacob 7; Alma 30), the conversions of Alma₂ and Lamoni (Mos 27; Alma 18–19), and Alma₂'s sermons to three cities and his three sons (Alma 5–13; 36–42). The distinctive phrasing shared by some of these parallel stories strengthens the argument for deliberate organization by the author or narrators. The Book of Mormon narrative is also strikingly bookish, as the preservation and recovery of records figure prominently in its stories.

Themes. Descriptions of major themes can be found in the essays on “Book of Mormon Theology” and “Lived Religion in the Book of Mormon.”

Style. Many readers have found the Book of Mormon tedious and difficult to stay engaged with. Indeed, it is hard to get around Mark Twain's review from chapter 16 of *Roughing It* (1872), in which he famously pronounced the book “chloroform in print,” continuing:

The author labored to give his words and phrases the quaint, old-fashioned sound and structure of our King James's translation of the Scriptures; and the result is a mongrel—half modern glibness, and half ancient simplicity and gravity. . . . Whenever he found his speech growing too modern—which was about every sentence or two—he ladled in a few such Scriptural phrases as “exceeding sore,” “and it came to pass,” etc., and made things satisfactory again.

Quips aside, it is possible to examine the book's style a little more closely. The diction is indeed quasi-biblical, with characteristic syntax and idioms borrowed from the King James Bible, along with hundreds of recognizable phrases. Much of the original grammar was irregular by nineteenth-century standards but has since been updated, to an extent, in subsequent editions. The prose remains somewhat clumsy and repetitive. Narrative portions are in a different register from the numerous sermons and speeches, which tend to use more literary devices and biblical allusions. Occasionally the language becomes particularly elevated, with short parallel clauses and phrases, and these passages have been formatted as poetry in this edition. (Lengthy excerpts from the Hebrew prophets have also been arranged into poetic lines, as is customary in contemporary Bibles.) Direct speech plays an important role in the narrative, though the official LDS edition, like the King James Bible, lacks quotation marks. As in biblical literature, dialogue in the Book of Mormon generally includes only two interlocutors (one of whom may be a group of people). Even when others are present, conversation usually takes place between just two persons. In short, despite some modest stylistic variety, the Book of Mormon is not known for its rich vocabulary,

nimble syntax, original metaphors, or felicitous expressions. Its literary interest is not typically at the level of individual sentences.

Rhetoric. Nephite writers and orators employ a number of rhetorical devices to give structure and emphasis to their words. Often, these literary techniques draw on the same repetitions that some readers find tiresome, including anaphora, or repetition of the first words of successive phrases or clauses (e.g., 2 Ne 9.31–38; Mos 18.19–29; Alma 34.18–25; Morm 8.26–31); epistrophe, or repetition of last words (Mos 18.30; Hel 10.8–10; Ether 2.17); chiasmus, or inverted repetition (Mos 5.10–12; Alma 36.1–30; 41.13–15); antithesis, or contrasting ideas juxtaposed in balanced phrases (1 Ne 17.45; 2 Ne 1.7; Jacob 4.10; Alma 60.36), and repeated key words such as the seven instances of “light” at Alma 19.6, the seven of “joy” at Alma 27.17–19, and thirteen of “remember” at Helaman 5.6–13. Such examples could be multiplied many times over, especially in cases with fewer repeated elements. The use of resumptive repetition, where the narrator interrupts his story and then begins again by repeating the last phrase before the interruption, is pervasive throughout the text (e.g., Alma 8.14; 22.27; and 23.1; 3 Ne 6.17; Ether 12.5 and 13.13), as are inclusios, that is, repetitions that frame distinct literary units. Examples of the latter occur at 2 Nephi 31 (v. 2: “I must speak of the doctrine of Christ”; and v. 21: “And now, behold, this is the doctrine of Christ”) and Mosiah 11.20–25, where Abinadi’s message is framed on both sides by “thus said the Lord, and thus hath he commanded me.” Inclusios also demarcate major episodes spanning several chapters (compare Alma 3.1–3 and 44.21–22; Alma 45.21 and 62.44), and even entire books (2 Ne 1.15 and 33.6; Jacob 1.7 and 6.6). Some LDS scholars have detected Hebrew-like parallelism in Book of Mormon poetry, including those that biblical scholars have labeled synonymous, antithetical, and synthetic, as well as additional parallelistic patterns in many prose sections. For examples of tightly constructed passages that are replete with literary devices, see 2 Nephi 9, Alma 5, and Alma 31.

Intratextuality. As has been noted in several other essays, the Book of Mormon draws heavily on phrases from the King James Bible, sometimes in interesting ways. There may be significant variations, or the original context may illuminate the Nephite usage, or familiar expressions may be reinterpreted for new situations. (The integration of Isaiah 29 into 2 Nephi 26–27 is one such example.) Equally important, however, is intratextuality, that is, cases in which Book of Mormon writers appear to quote or allude to one another. For instance, Nephi’s prophecy at 2 Nephi 28.15–32 includes a number of phrases that were earlier used by his younger brother Jacob in chapter 9. When Ammon recounts his conversion at Alma 26.17, he describes himself as having been in a “sinful and polluted state,” and in so doing places himself in the same spiritual situation as the Lamanites described at Mosiah 25.11 (the only other use of the phrase). At Alma 29.9, Alma echoes the words of his father at Mosiah 23.10–11, indicating that he has chosen a similar path, and at Alma 36.22 he includes a substantive attributed quotation from Lehi (1 Ne 1.8; not yet dictated by Joseph Smith). In Mormon’s letter to his son, written shortly after the latter’s call to the ministry, he incorporates a phrase from the Nephite ordination prayer (Moro 3.3 and 8.3, which are the only two occurrences of that phrase). And at Mosiah 24.13–15, the Lord himself seems to allude to Alma’s instructions about baptism (Mos 18.10–13). Some of the repetition in the scripture may be haphazard, but there are many instances in which distinctive words or similarities in contexts suggest deliberate connections.

Narratology. Because the Book of Mormon is presented as the product of extensive editing done by characters with particular biographies, much of the pleasure in reading the text as literature comes from weighing the narrative against the implicit, and at times explicit, intentions of the narrators. In other words, given what we know of Nephi, Mormon, or Moroni (whether they

were historical figures or fictional constructs), how might the structure and content of the final text reflect their personalities and priorities? Answers begin with careful observations of the contours of the narrative, noting its constituent parts and organization (including original chapter divisions). For instance, Nephi abruptly inserts an undated sermon of his brother Jacob into his personal history at 2 Nephi 6–10. There is a major shift at Alma 45, when Mormon transitions from one source text to another. An account of the third day of Jesus’s ministry among the Nephites is missing. The last two chapters in the (small) book of Mormon were actually written by Moroni. The Jaredite narrative is shaped by six distinct comment sections in the book of Ether. Moroni makes three attempts to bring the Book of Mormon to a close (Morm 8–9; Ether 12; Moro 10). These sorts of editorial maneuvers invite interpretation: what do they reveal about the narrators as characters?

Sometimes this internal editing is handled quite smoothly, as when Mormon recounts a war occurring on two separate fronts in Alma 52–62, or when an extended flashback (Alma 17–27) catches up to the main narrative at the joyful event with which it began. (Even more impressive is the flashback at Mosiah 8.21–21.28, which returns to the same point in a conversation.) The destruction of the city of Ammonihah is related twice (Alma 16 and 25), as the culmination of two separate narrative strands, with different but complementary sequences of causation. Elsewhere, however, there are anomalies that also call out for explanation. Why was Nephi’s own blessing from his father omitted from 2 Nephi 1–4? Why does Mormon begin an account of the Zoramite War at Alma 35.10–13, only to interrupt it with seven chapters of sermons, before he picks up the narrative again at 43.5? Why do five of the six letters included by Mormon in his history occur within the text block of Alma 54–61? Why does Mormon devote just two verses to the stunning development that the Lamanites, after being converted by Lamanite missionaries, returned lands captured from the Nephites (Hel 5.50–51), as opposed to dozens of chapters detailing Captain Moroni’s not entirely successful attempts to accomplish the same end through warfare?

Traces of the narrators can even be found in distinctive phrasing. For instance, a central event in 1 Nephi is Lehi’s recounting of an allegorical dream to his sons (ch. 8), followed by Nephi’s interpretation of the dream for his brothers (ch. 15), but key phrases from the dream reappear at 2 Nephi 31.17–20, when Nephi finally reveals the last key to the allegory—the meaning of the “straight and narrow path.” The interplay of prophecies and their fulfillments is an important structuring device in the book, and while narrators often explicitly note when specific prophecies have come true, there are also cases when the recounting of the later events incorporates recognizable phrases from the original prediction, as in Mosiah 11.23–25 and 21.10–15. Moroni seems keenly aware of the words of his predecessors, as when he expands on Nephi’s reflections about weakness in writing (2 Ne 33.1–4, 11; Ether 12.23–28), or when he intersperses phrases used by half a dozen earlier record keepers into his own final farewell (Moro 10.24–34). To appreciate the Book of Mormon as literature, readers must follow the logic of the text and pay attention to the work of the narrators, looking for chronological disruptions, significant juxtapositions and omissions, seams in the merging of implied sources, and intratextual connections.

Broader Patterns. The traditional literary categories above can be supplemented by a few comments about how the Book of Mormon is conceptualized as a whole. The text has an uncommon relationship to its readers, in that it presents itself as something like a message in a bottle—a plea deliberately fashioned for distant readers and entrusted to God’s care and conveyance. The primary editors are not writing for their contemporaries, but rather for future generations. Nephi describes his words, addressed to “the ends of the earth,” as “the voice of one crying from the dust”

(2 Ne 33.13). Moroni goes even further, imagining the Lord someday saying: “Did I not declare my words unto you, which were written by this man, like as one crying from the dead, yea, even as one speaking out of the dust?” (Moro 10.27). The book is a warning to its latter-day readers, grounded in typological recurrence, that the wicked will be swept off the American promised land just like the Nephites, and the Jaredites before them. (Moroni, who had summarized the twenty-four Jaredite plates, has the clearest conception of this broad pattern. Nephi seems unaware of the Jaredites; the first definite allusion to them in the Small Plates occurs at Jacob 5.43–44.)

Yet the Book of Mormon’s message to the modern world is not unremittingly dire. Within the grand scheme of the Nephite story there are tales of repentance and deliverance as well as examples of evil and destruction. Hope and joy are regularly illustrated, even if they do not prevail in the end. Along the way, temporal and spiritual perspectives are interwoven through a succession of carefully crafted narratives and formal sermons, interpretations of older scriptures are supplemented by new revelations, and the editors draw from their purported sources to fashion a history in which form often correlates with meaning. For instance, the intricately structured account of Abinadi’s trial (with parallels to Moses in Pharaoh’s court) shows the law of Moses, represented by the Ten Commandments, being fulfilled in Christ by way of Isaiah 53 (Mos 12–16). There are three examples of paired narratives in which a story demonstrating moderate success gained through faithful competence is immediately followed by a similar tale in which extraordinary results come to those who rely on divine assistance: the deliverances of the people of Limhi and then the people of Alma₁ (Mos 22; 23–24); the preaching of Alma₂ among the Nephites and then the sons of Mosiah among the Lamanites (Alma 4–16; 17–27); and the military campaigns of Captain Moroni and then Helaman (Alma 51–55; 56–58). The implication is that both types of service have a place within God’s providential care.

One of the most significant patterns can be found in the way that Book of Mormon history enacts a reversal of Israelite history from Sinai to the Babylonian exile, whereby the Lehitites experience a series of political developments that begin with Lehi’s flight from Jerusalem and culminate in their return to God’s presence in 3 Nephi (see the introduction to Mormon’s Abridgment of the Large Plates). This temporal restoration is matched by promises throughout the book of a spiritual restoration in which the fall of Adam will be overcome by the atonement of Christ, returning each individual soul to their body in the Resurrection, and to the presence of God at the Judgment Day. (At Ether 3, Moroni describes a distinct, special case of reversing the Edenic fall; see the textbox there.) Indeed, multifaceted restoration is a key concept in the Mormon scripture, which portrays itself as a newly recovered source of long-lost truths and as a harbinger of the restoration of lost and scattered peoples.

General Observations. While the Book of Mormon exhibits aesthetic qualities, they are not those of mainstream literature. Perhaps this makes it something like naive art, produced by artists with little formal training or exposure to elite culture, which can nevertheless be arresting or impressive on its own terms. The Smith family read newspapers, but there is little indication that they were engaged with contemporary literature. The story of the Nephites is quite removed from the literary world of Walter Scott, Washington Irving, and James Fenimore Cooper, or even the religious fiction amply documented by David Reynolds.⁴⁷ It is much more connected to the Bible,

⁴⁷ David S. Reynolds, *Faith in Fiction: The Emergence of Religious Literature in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981).

but again in atypical ways. American scriptural writing at the time tended toward embellished retellings of Bible stories, to be followed in the 1830s and 1840s by novels written from the perspective of fictional witnesses to events of the New Testament. The Book of Mormon goes far beyond this as it presents an alternative biblical civilization, set in ancient America, where transplanted Israelites received Christocentric revelations, discovered prophecies of Jesus hidden in the Hebrew Bible, and eagerly awaited the coming of the Messiah. The best touchstone for evaluating the literary quality of the Mormon scripture is the King James Bible, which it clearly emulates in both diction and style. As in the historical portions of the Old and New Testaments, descriptions are sparse, dialogue is limited but significant, ideas are set forth in lengthy speeches, the narrative is moved forward through stock phrases and transitions, characters' thoughts are inaccessible apart from their words and actions (with the exception of the narrators), verbal repetitions abound, and there are type-scenes where similar events recur with different characters.

At first glance, the new scripture can seem like a rough, superficial imitation of the Bible, yet closer inspection shows that there are deeper influences. In particular, the Nephite record appears to draw on the methods and sensibilities of the Deuteronomistic History. Both works create national histories, supposedly based on earlier sources, that are shaped by a theological agenda. The narratives are fairly didactic as they unfold according to regularly reiterated moral principles (e.g., 2 Ne 1.20), and they share similar themes, including covenants, prophecy, warfare, immoral rulers, and a promised land, as well as loss, exile, and family disintegration. In both cases the narrators employ precise year counts and parallel narratives (with phrasal connections) to structure their histories. They encourage reflection and remembrance on the part of readers through allusions to earlier incidents, and they keep stories on track, despite editorial comments and digressions, through resumptive repetition. Of course, there are significant differences as well—for instance, the Book of Mormon is much more interested in proselytizing and church-state relations than the Deuteronomistic History, and much less concerned with the idolatry of neighboring nations—but the two works share an unmistakable literary kinship, and thus can be usefully compared to each other. In general, the Mormon scripture presents New Testament ideas in narrative forms adapted from the Old Testament.

Some LDS scholars have responded to criticisms of the repetitive style of their scripture by identifying examples of classic literary devices, which they take as evidence of the Hebraic roots of the text, the scribal training of its ancient authors, and the relative exactness of its English translation. The most ambitious presentation of this approach is Donald Parry's reformatted Book of Mormon, which employs indentation, underlining, and italics on nearly every page to show antithetic parallelism, synthetic parallelism, anaphora, chiasmus, simple and extended alternates, and much more.⁴⁸ His meticulous analysis is noteworthy, but also narrow in its focus. He limits his attention to verbal patterns that appear in contiguous verses, thereby ignoring broader instances of editorial shaping and interconnections that take place across chapters, and he is mainly interested in ancient precedents, even though many of the rhetorical techniques he cites can be found outside the Bible, including in nineteenth-century preaching.

Parry's work highlights some important aspects of Book of Mormon language and style (even if it does not constitute proof of its historicity), but his formatting tends to render the book into a compendium of rhetorical devices, which can disrupt the sustained attention required for reading

⁴⁸ Donald W. Parry, *Poetic Parallelisms in the Book of Mormon: The Complete Text Reformatted* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2007).

comprehension, treating the text as an object rather than a medium of communication. Similarly, the verse-by-verse presentation of the LDS official edition and the sense-lines of Royal Skousen's Yale edition obscure the literary units and overall structure of the scripture, making it difficult to follow the narrative and the arguments, or to see the editorial hand of the narrators, or to understand how the text uses and adapts passages from the Bible, or even to distinguish dialogue from narration (since both these publications, like Parry's, eschew quotation marks). By contrast, the formatting in this edition is much more suited to reading the Book of Mormon as literature, with larger narrative units readily identified, headings and paragraphs that indicate changes of speakers and topics, quotation marks and poetic forms, and a few highlighted examples of rhetorical devices. The goal has been to bring to the foreground the literary features of the text, and thereby emphasize its meaning and message. Additional details about literary techniques and biblical intertextuality in specific passages can be found in the annotations.

The origins of the Book of Mormon make it an unusual book. Its contents are equally unusual, as a scriptural sequel to the Bible that merges themes of the Old and New Testaments via the story of a remnant of Israel, a new promised land, and prophets who receive revelations that expand conceptions of God and salvation. Its narrative arc, beginning at the fall of Judah, reverses the national history of the Israelites to culminate in a communal theophany, reminiscent of Sinai, and the establishment of God's kingdom, which is ultimately lost several centuries later in warfare and destruction. At the same time, it seeks to explain the rise and fall of indigenous peoples of the Americas, and it addresses political and religious issues of the contemporary era through original stories and detailed predictions ascribed to ancient prophets. Through all this, it employs a broad variety of literary techniques. The Book of Mormon's complex structure, integrated plot lines, deep engagement with the Bible, internal allusions, elaborate rhetorical devices, and sophisticated narration argue for a more carefully thought-out, crafted text than a cursory reading might suggest. Even aside from its religious claims, it is an ingenious, innovative work of early American literature.

Reading the Book of Mormon as Ancient History

The Book of Mormon presents itself as an authentic work of history, written in the first person by narrators emerging from specific contexts, beginning with Judah's political cataclysm in the early sixth century BCE and eventually linking to Christianity's greatest event—the life and resurrection of Jesus. If it is fiction, it's historical fiction, though that possibility is never signaled in either the text or the paratext, with the exception of Joseph Smith being identified as the “author and proprietor” on the title page of the first edition, using terminology borrowed from copyright law to assert ownership. That identification was dropped in subsequent editions, and even in the preface and witness statements of the first edition Smith was described as having translated “by the gift and power of God” a historical record written on ancient gold plates he had discovered near his home in western New York. He reiterated that story throughout his life, and early Latter-day Saints regarded the new scripture as a factual account, written by ancient prophets, of the origins of Native Americans whom they believed were descendants of Israelite immigrants to the New World. This has been the standard story among believers ever since, although it has been accepted by very few people outside the faith, most of whom view the Book of Mormon as a work of religious fiction created by Smith. In trying to understand how the text functions as scripture within Mormonism, it can be useful to explore what it means to read the book as ancient history.

Most Latter-day Saints take the historical accuracy of the Book of Mormon as a given, just as they do accounts from Genesis or the Gospels. Reading narratives of Nephite prophets, missionaries, and political leaders as factual descriptions provides evidence that God exists, that he regularly communicates with his children in familiar ways, that he rewards the righteous, that his promises are sure, and that salvation is accessible to all through Christ. Church members feel comfortable emulating the actions of scriptural exemplars and applying the lessons of the text to their own lives, with the assurance that Jesus will someday return to the earth, just as he appeared to the Nephites after his resurrection. To accept the historicity of the Book of Mormon is to accept a supernatural view of the world, especially in light of the unusual circumstances of the book's production, which was said to involve an angel, gold plates, and a miraculous translation. (By contrast, readers of the Bible can accept that much of its content is based in history without necessarily adopting a believer's perspective.) Reading the Book of Mormon as a literal translation of an ancient record can be inspiring, comforting, and motivating. It is also basically a premodern approach to scripture.

The situation becomes more complicated for Latter-day Saints who are interested in positioning the text within reconstructions of the ancient world derived from archaeology, anthropology, biology, and linguistics. Some may be looking for scientific or historical evidence that can bolster faith in the book's claims, including its divine provenance. Others might be trying to reduce dissonance with academic, secular understandings of pre-Columbian America. Still others may be trying to visualize the book's characters as fully embodied individuals responding to their historical surroundings (an approach that characterizes some of the annotations in the present volume). A challenge to each of these endeavors is that the Book of Mormon is poorly suited to the historical-critical method, at least with regard to the ancient world. Nothing is known about Nephite civilization, if there was one, outside the pages of the Mormon scripture. There are no other texts written in the "reformed Egyptian" of the gold plates, and there are no archaeological sites or artifacts that can be definitively identified as Nephite.

The chronological parameters are fairly clear, with two dates anchoring the narrative—first, the book begins in "the first year of the reign of Zedekiah" (1 Ne 1.4), dated by modern historians to 597 BCE; and second, the signs of the birth of Jesus, currently calculated at 6–4 BCE, are tied to the ninety-second year of the Nephite judges (3 Ne 1.4–21), after which the Nephites continue for another 420 years. In several verses, the time between the first two events is specified as 600 years (1 Ne 10.4; 19.8; 2 Ne 25.19; 3 Ne 1.1; 2.6), but this is a bit too long. To fit the Nephite record into scholarly chronology, these 600-year statements have to be taken as a rough approximation. Alternatively, some Latter-day Saints have suggested that the Nephites may have adopted a form of the ancient Hebrew lunar year of about 354 days, with occasional intercalary months, or the Mesoamerican Long Count year of 360 days. (To avoid confusion, this volume uses a countdown style in its chronological notes once the reign of the judges begins, and then later marks years by counting up from the signs of Jesus's birth.) Time spans for the Jaredites and the first centuries of the Nephites are vague, but dates for the reign of judges are regular and precise with few missteps, regardless of whether references to the beginnings and endings of specific years are separated by a few verses or by several chapters.

In contrast to the chronology, the physical setting for events in the Book of Mormon is indeterminate. The first seventeen chapters of the scripture are set in Jerusalem and the Arabian Peninsula, but once Lehi's family arrives in the new promised land, definitive geographical landmarks are lacking. Instead, there are generic descriptions of a land southward joined to a land northward by a "narrow neck" and surrounded by seas. For more than a century, most Latter-day

Saints held to a hemispheric model of Book of Mormon geography, with Lehi's party landing in South America, major Nephite cities in Central America, and the final conflict between Nephites and Lamanites occurring in New York State. In addition, the narrative reads as if the land was virtually uninhabited at the time of Lehi, with no stories of encounters with indigenous peoples. Consequently, the introduction to the 1981 edition referred to the Lamanites as "the principal ancestors of the American Indians." Over the course of the twentieth century, however, many Latter-day Saints came to realize that traditional assumptions about the Book of Mormon could not be reconciled with the consensus of scientists and historians. The Americas were widely inhabited long before 600 BCE, and Native American cultures had no obvious connections to the ancient Near East. In addition, more careful readings of the scriptural text revealed that the events described therein would have taken place in an area of a few hundred miles, not thousands of miles. These observations led to limited geography models for the Book of Mormon, and the church revised the book's introduction in the 2013 edition to identify the Lamanites as "*among* the ancestors of the American Indians" (emphasis added).

LDS scholars came to see Mesoamerica as the most likely site for the Jaredites and Nephites, based on geography and the presence in that region of writing systems, large cities, complex government and social structures, calendars, and metallurgy, all dating to Book of Mormon times. The natural features of southern Mexico and Guatemala can be roughly matched to the internal geography of the text, including a narrow neck of land (the Isthmus of Tehuantepec) and a river flowing northward (the Grijalva), along with various highlands, coastlines, and wilderness areas (even if it requires shifting the cardinal directions counterclockwise by more than 45 degrees). This geographical model was most fully developed by John Sorenson, who viewed Book of Mormon peoples as living in an area dominated by the Olmecs and Mayas, and Lamanites intermarrying with indigenous groups. Some Latter-day Saints have resisted this interpretation, primarily because it contradicts statements made by Joseph Smith and other early church leaders, and because they believe that Nephite prophecies about the promised land apply particularly to the United States. Accordingly, they have proposed a North American "heartland model" of Book of Mormon geography, with the Jaredites and Nephites connected to the Adena and Hopewell mound-builder cultures. They regard the Mississippi as the River Sidon and the Great Lakes as the surrounding seas mentioned in the scriptural text. They also argue that the hill where Joseph Smith found the gold plates is identical to the hill Cumorah where the last battles of the Nephites took place, while the Mesoamerican model requires two hills with the same name, one in Mesoamerica and the other in New York. A few church members have also proposed settings for the Book of Mormon in South America, Baja California, or even the Malay Peninsula.

Part of the motivation for establishing a historical setting for the scripture is to better understand details of its narratives. For instance, from a Mesoamerican perspective, some of the swords may have been *macuahuitl*, that is, wooden clubs embedded with obsidian blades (such weapons, unlike metal swords, could be stained with blood, as at Alma 24.12–15); the "place of arms" mentioned in Alma 47.5 might have been an obsidian outcrop; and the rise of Teotihuacan in the fourth century may have had an impact on late Nephite/Lamanite relations. But even more pressing has been a desire to defend the book's historical claims against critics who have pointed out anachronisms and improbabilities for more than a century. As archaeology became more professionalized and reliable, it became clear that some of the plants, animals, and artifacts mentioned in passing were out of place in pre-Columbian America, including horses, cattle, asses, goats, swine, elephants, wheat, silk, iron, steel, brass, and chariots. More recently, DNA studies have failed to find connections between Native Americans and Near Eastern peoples, and no non-Mormon

linguists have recognized any direct contact between New World and Old World languages. Furthermore, the Book of Mormon features quotations from biblical books that postdated Lehi's departure from Jerusalem, such as Second Isaiah, and includes concerns and ideas that were part of Joseph Smith's cultural environment, including universalism, the corrupting influence of secret societies, slippery treasures, and infant baptism.

Latter-day Saints believe that many of these criticisms can be allayed, to an extent, by focusing on the Book of Mormon as a translation and a religious record. As an English-language translation, particularly one that adopts much of the vocabulary and syntax of the King James Bible, the new scripture may have used familiar terms to represent less well-known plants and animals, or this sort of lexical substitution could have been practiced by the Nephites themselves when they arrived in the Americas and encountered New World animals such as tapirs, peccaries, or brocket deer. So also, theological concepts in Nephite discourse may have been updated into forms that made more sense to the book's nineteenth-century American readers. For instance, criticisms of paid clergy that sound like objections to Protestant ministers (e.g., Mos 18.26–28; Alma 1.3, 12) could have originally been directed against hereditary Levitical priests brought to the New World by the Mulekites. And there are odd complications as well. For example, even though horses are mentioned fourteen times in the text, there are no references to any Nephites or Lamanites actually riding horses, and “chariots” are never connected to wheels, leaving open the possibility that the Nephite vehicle may have been a type of litter or sedan chair. Some inaccuracies can be explained as a result of Nephites writing from their limited, human understandings, or as a function of the translation, but they do not necessarily imply that there were no Nephites whatsoever.

A second line of argument is that the primary intention of the Book of Mormon was to convert readers and testify of Christ. It was not written as a precise record of events, or a modern-style history, but rather as an account of God's dealings with the Nephites, highlighting the theological import of various incidents and consequently omitting many of the social, economic, and political details that contemporary historians find valuable. Indeed, the Mormon scripture can be read as a type of biblical history that utilizes literary patterns to reveal divine causation, with the descendants of Israel being central to the human experience. Indeed, covenant faithfulness is more significant in the narrative than technological innovations, or detailed descriptions of customs and lifestyles, or the exact identifications of populations (see Jacob 1.13–14). Instead, it is sacred history narrating the arc from exile and loss in 1 Nephi to a return to God's presence in 3 Nephi. But these sorts of accommodations have not been entirely satisfying to some Latter-day Saints who have continued to search for more concrete evidences of historical Nephites and Lamanites.

Over the last several decades, a few of the Book of Mormon's controversial claims have found independent support from the right time period: cement as a building material in Mesoamerica (Hel 3.7–11), domesticated barley in North America (Mos 7.22; 9.9; Alma 11.7), and writing on metal in the Near East before 600 BCE (though nothing close to lengthy texts attributed to the Brass Plates). Yet the most promising archaeological confirmations of the scripture have come from the Arabian Peninsula rather than the Americas. LDS researchers have identified a possible travel route for Lehi's family, as well as sites on the Oman coast that seem to fit the description of their camp at “Bountiful.” Even more impressive is the discovery of three altars in Yemen, dated to the seventh century BCE, bearing the tribal name NHM (usually transliterated as “Nihm”) at just about the place Nephi referred to as “Nahom” (1 Ne 16.34). These findings are not conclusive; there are questions, for instance, about the Semitic consonant represented by the *b* in Nahom,

about geographic details, or whether the name might have been adopted by Smith from the biblical prophet Nahum. Nevertheless, many Latter-day Saints have viewed such real-world correspondences as supporting their faith. Others have been troubled by the lack of direct historical evidence in the Americas. There are no authenticated reports of pre-Columbian New World sites that show any evidence of Old World influence in the form of pottery, tools, weapons, inscriptions, or agricultural products. Finding these sorts of items in an excavation would not prove the Book of Mormon true, but they would make it more historically plausible and indicate potential locations for further research. (Many Latter-day Saints assume that confirming evidences will someday be unearthed.) When challenged to produce a single, credible Nephite artifact, apologists tend to point toward broader patterns of geographical consistency and Mesoamerican cultural parallels such as cities, fortifications, warfare, and roads. Or they look to secondary confirmations from ancient Near Eastern parallels, literary features, and witness statements.

Eleven men signed one of two affidavits included in the 1830 edition averring that they had seen Smith's gold plates. The Three Witnesses had done so in a supernatural context, hearing the voice of God and seeing an angel, while the Eight Witnesses reported that Smith had shown them the plates in an ordinary manner, allowing them to touch, handle, and turn the pages, examining the engraving up close. Most of the witnesses later fell out with Smith, or were excommunicated from the church he founded, but there is little evidence that any of them ever recanted their testimonies, which they reiterated throughout their lives. In addition, several other individuals, including women and men, both believers and nonbelievers, left statements that they had felt the plates through a cloth or had lifted the heavy box said to contain them. Even though the plates were generally not directly consulted when Smith was dictating (they were often wrapped in linen nearby on the table), their physicality and status as an ancient artifact suggested that Smith's encounter with Nephites and their records was more than a visionary experience. The plates themselves would have provided direct evidence, open to scientific scrutiny, had they not been returned to the angel (according to Smith), but Latter-day Saints nevertheless regard the witness statements as strong validation of the new scripture's authenticity.

Another category of indirect evidence, pioneered by LDS scholars such as Hugh Nibley and John Welch, has been the identification of parallels between the Book of Mormon and Old World cultures, particularly when the latter would have been unknown to Joseph Smith. If the Mormon scripture does not include the references to the beans, squash, jade, cacao, blowguns, or ball courts that readers might expect today from a historical account, neither does it mention the moccasins, canoes, or peace pipes that were stereotypical in writings about Indians in the early nineteenth century. Instead, the Book of Mormon portrays a generically biblical civilization. Apparently, Nephite authors looked more to their Israelite heritage than to their New World surroundings. Included in their writings are cultural connections to the ancient Near East that were recognized only after the publication of the Book of Mormon, including prophetic commission and covenant patterns (1 Ne 1; Mos 2–6); literary forms and devices such as conventional psalm outlines, inclusios, and chiasmus (e.g., 2 Ne 4; Alma 36); a few Hebrew and Egyptian names (e.g., Nephi, Sariah, Mosiah, Alma, Jershon, Paanchi); and details regarding ancient olive cultivation (Jacob 5). There are also elements in the Book of Mormon that are more readily apparent in the Bible, including poetic parallelism, legal procedures, and Hebraisms such as the construct state, cognate accusatives, and the pervasive use of the conjunction *and*. (More striking is the Hebrew *if-and* conditional construction, which does not appear in the King James Bible and which was edited out of later editions of the Book of Mormon.) The idea is that if the Book of Mormon contains

genuine ancient elements that were discovered by scholars only after Smith's day, he could not have been the author.

A third type of secondary confirmation comes from observations about the complexity and coherence of the narrative. The Book of Mormon includes a diverse array of genres (history, sermons, prophecy, scriptural exegesis, poetry, allegory, letters, etc.); multiple levels of narration, with later narrators editing and commenting on previous accounts; and literary techniques such as flashbacks, embedded documents, and parallel narratives. Nearly two hundred named individuals, some ninety different place names, and about seven hundred geographical references are handled virtually without contradiction or error (there are only two geographical mistakes in the entire book, at Alma 51.26 and 53.6). In addition, Nephite writers keep track of genealogical relationships, the sources of various plates and records, and successions of rulers, including the Jaredite king-list of Ether 1.6–33 that is reversed and expanded in chapters 7–11. Over the course of the book, distinct voices emerge (particularly Nephi, Jacob, Alma, Mormon, and Moroni) as they construct detailed theological arguments, reflect on history and their own experiences, and interact with one another and with the Bible (especially Exodus, Deuteronomy, the Deuteronomistic History, and Isaiah) in ways that are consistent with their being astute readers of their predecessors and of scripture. All of these features suggest that the book originated with a carefully composed written record that took shape over centuries, rather than in an extemporaneous oral performance by a talented storyteller working from a general outline. (The annotations in this volume track many of these intricate textual interconnections, though they also identify numerous references to New Testament phrases and nineteenth-century influences that work against strictly historical readings.) Impressions of writerly abilities will surely be subjective in the end, but believers may wonder whether authors of fiction are capable of creating characters who are wiser or more literarily astute than themselves—given that Book of Mormon figures such as Nephi and Alma may seem more experienced and thoughtful than Joseph Smith in his early twenties.

The problems with historical readings of the Book of Mormon are sometimes compared to similar challenges with the Bible, where there is little archaeological confirmation for the primeval history of Genesis 1–11, the patriarchs, the conquest of Canaan, or even the united monarchy. The two controversies share some characteristics. For example, neither scriptural text was written as modern-style history, and there are obvious difficulties with expecting external support for single, miraculous events such as the parting of the Red Sea, the resurrection of Jesus, or Alma's conversion by an angel. Yet the differences probably outweigh the similarities because claims for the Book of Mormon are more pointed and specific. Where biblical issues of historicity can often be accommodated as the history of tradition, or as beliefs of people at the time, Nephite authors affirm their status as eyewitnesses, with the gold plates being autograph documents engraved by Mormon and Moroni themselves. And the inclusion of the Small Plates means that stories from the first generation of Nephites, about revelations and travails in Lehi's family, cannot be read as traditions refashioned by Mormon centuries later for theological purposes; rather, they were firsthand accounts written by Nephi and Jacob. Even more significantly, the absence of external confirmation for a single historical figure or event is quite different from the absence of direct evidence for an entire civilization. No one doubts that the kingdoms of Israel and Judah once existed. For the Book of Mormon, it is possible to think of Jaredites and Nephites as relatively small subcultures in ancient America that did not leave many distinct traces in the archaeological record, but references to hundreds of thousands or even millions of deaths in the final battles (Morm 6.11–15; Ether 15.2) would need to be discounted as the kind of numerical exaggeration that is often found in ancient texts.

Approaching the Book of Mormon as an English translation of a pre-Columbian record with biblical roots would require readers to acknowledge both ancient and modern elements in the text, especially since it spoke meaningfully to nineteenth-century Christians despite what would have been vast differences in environment, culture, and worldview. One significant attempt to reconcile these elements was made by Blake Ostler in a 1987 article introducing his “expansion theory.” Ostler noted the presence in the Mormon scripture of religious concepts from Smith’s day and language from the King James Bible, as well as linguistic and cultural parallels from the ancient Near East (leaving aside American antiquities). He identified ancient customs that appear in the text, such as covenant renewal festivals and prophetic lawsuits, and then theorized that they could have been reshaped and expanded in translation to reflect the camp meetings and theological disputations that would have been familiar to Joseph Smith, using Mosiah 1–6 and 12–16 as key examples. While acknowledging that some of the typically Christian ideas attributed to the Nephites may have developed in response to revelations received by their prophets, Ostler argued that the translation involved human and divine interaction in what he described as “creative co-participation.”⁴⁹

This type of analysis may be fruitful for Latter-day Saints scholars, though they are considerably constrained by having only a translation to work with, and that translation—done by means of a seer stone—may be one of a kind. Without access to the original source, it is hard to know how the English words relate to whatever may have been on the gold plates. Also, different lines of apologetic arguments assume different modes of translation. To accommodate them, the Book of Mormon would need to be a free enough rendition to account for conceptual and linguistic updating by the translator (especially the many expressions borrowed from the King James Bible), yet also close enough to replicate in English the literary structures, rhetorical devices, and internal allusions intended by the ancient writers. Alternatively, the Book of Mormon could be a radically reconceptualized version of its ancient source—something along the lines of the musical *Hamilton*, which is based on actual events and persons, with some of its lyrics drawn from historical documents, but reconfigured into a genre, modern musical theater, that would have been foreign to the Founding Fathers, and clever wordplay they would have found unintelligible. The finished product has a remarkable verve and coherence of its own, though no one should imagine that Hamilton, Washington, and the Schuyler sisters actually spoke (or sang) in the styles of hip-hop and rap. So also, the Book of Mormon may be an innovative artistic creation based on the experiences and words of ancient prophets. As long as there is some core or kernel of historical fact, some connection with Israelites led to the Americas by God, the book’s religious witness and miraculous origins still hold.

The Book of Mormon invites readers who accept its historicity to imagine the three phases of prodigious labor that would have been involved in its production, from (1) its ancient authors crafting a complex, sophisticated historical account based on earlier records and reflecting their own priorities, as with, for example, Mormon downplaying Nephite/Mulekite tensions and Moroni Christianizing the Jaredite experience; to (2) Nephi, Mormon, and Moroni personally forging metal plates (1 Ne 1.17; 3 Ne 5.11; Morm 8.5) and then engraving Egyptian-like characters on them; to (3) the creation, by someone, of an English translation that creatively yet faithfully reflects the central features of the original record. Unfortunately, rigorous analysis is possible

49 Blake T. Ostler, “The Book of Mormon as a Modern Expansion of an Ancient Source,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 20, no. 1 (1987): 66–123.

only for the first of these processes since the gold plates are unavailable for inspection and little can be said about a translation of a nonextant text written in an otherwise unknown language. Readers may apply something like biblical source criticism, form criticism, and redaction criticism to the Book of Mormon, but without related ancient texts for comparison or multiple versions or firm historical anchors, these will generally amount to literary criticism—which may well be the most promising avenue for Latter-day Saints hoping to find evidence for the book’s historicity (barring dramatic archaeological discoveries yet to come). And in the end, as in other religions, supernatural explanations might obviate the need for rational analysis. For instance, Latter-day Saints have spent considerable effort trying to understand how a substantial set of metal plates could be made of gold and still be light enough to be carried—one popular hypothesis is that they were made of tumbaga, a copper/gold alloy. Yet a Jewish midrash suggests that Moses was able to carry the stone tablets at Mount Sinai only because the letters God had engraved on them miraculously made them light enough to lift.

In summary, taking the Book of Mormon seriously as history in the contemporary era requires some sort of limited geography model that acknowledges the presence of a large number of indigenous peoples in the Americas before 600 BCE, as well as an awareness of anachronisms in the text, and an openness to different types of translation. Reading the Mormon scripture as history might also involve tracking the movements of its characters on a hypothetical map based on internal references (such as the one included in this volume), tracing the development of their ideas over time, weighing their words against their life stories, and looking for the minds of ancient Nephite narrators as conveyed through their writings and editing, with authorial intentions that may be separate from those of Joseph Smith. (Ironically the LDS Church’s official formatting, which makes every verse equivalently “scriptural,” undercuts reading historically with a clear sense of who is speaking, in what context.) Church leaders remain very committed to the idea of Book of Mormon historicity in general, regarding anything else as compromising its witness of God and Joseph Smith’s status as a prophet, yet the specifics are left up to individual members; the church takes no official position on where the book’s events took place or the nature of the translation. The message seems to be that God values a type of faith that is, to some extent, more dependent on spiritual experience than on concrete evidence—otherwise readers would have access to the gold plates, archaeological confirmation, or revelations to Smith’s prophetic successors about the location of Nephite cities. Belief in a historical Book of Mormon is central to the testimony of most Latter-day Saints and shapes the way they relate to the text, even if it presents a challenge for outsiders. Like the ancient Nephites awaiting the coming of Christ, many faithful church members expect that their belief will someday be validated—if not in the near future, then at the Judgment Day.

Reading the Book of Mormon as Fiction

Fictional readings of the Book of Mormon serve different purposes and have different stakes and implications for Latter-day Saints and for outsiders. This essay will consider both audiences, beginning with the latter. For many readers, the idea that the Book of Mormon is fiction is unproblematic. It seems obvious to them that the text had its origin in the mind of Joseph Smith, and that it is best read in comparison with other biblically inflected Christian novels such as *Pilgrim’s Progress*, *Prince of the House of David*, and *Ben-Hur*. Alternatively, it might usefully be compared to other works of fiction that have been accepted as scripture by various religious communities, including the Mahabharata, the Lotus Sutra, or Jewish and Christian apocryphal and

pseudepigraphal writings. Such readers may be aware of the Book of Mormon's unusual mode of production and remarkable literary features—many of which are highlighted by adherents as evidences of its historicity—yet it is easier to imagine naturalistic explanations for a lengthy, complex, rapidly dictated text than it is to accept accounts of supernatural experiences, particularly when they seem to require belief in a large, ancient civilization that left virtually no trace. After all, people regularly do things in the fields of sports, music, languages, mathematics, and science that may seem inexplicable, even superhuman, to those who do not share the gifts and talents of those performers or creators.

Those who regard the Mormon scripture as nineteenth-century fiction can read it historically for information about Joseph Smith's life, ideas, and environment. It may offer important insights about popular culture at the time with respect to religion, politics, moral standards, rhetoric, and theories of Indian origins. The book might provide a window into Smith's upbringing, ambitions, and imaginative abilities. It may have things to say about theological concerns or attitudes toward the Bible among Smith's contemporaries. Yet the key to reading the book as fiction is to set it in the context of other fictional works of the day, looking for similarities and differences, and asking why Smith's book took the form it did. It is the differences that are most immediately striking, particularly in the mode of narration. Though Nephite narrators may be self-revealing and intrusive in comparison with biblical narrators, the storytelling personae of novels written by authors such as Susanna Rowson, Charles Brockden Brown, and Catharine Sedgwick are constant presences who describe what the characters are doing and saying in remarkable detail. Their thinking, emotions, appearance, and gestures—even how they move about a room—are all laid bare in real time. Pages and pages are filled with dialogue. And the narrators freely relate their own interpretations and responses to the actions they recount. This, of course, is all in service to verisimilitude—a quality quite lacking in the Book of Mormon—that allows readers to immerse themselves in the world of text. It also helps that early American novels were generally set in contemporary times, or the recent past, so that readers could easily imagine the protagonists as people they might know.

By contrast, the Book of Mormon is more like a novel of ideas, with sparsely delineated characters delivering long discourses and representing clashing points of view, as with Nephi and his brothers, or Alma and Korihor. Every so often there are episodes of migration, warfare, conversion, or court drama (but never romance) that add interest and color as they illustrate core principles. Poetry, allegory, apocalypse, typology, scriptural exegesis, and clever rhetoric all have a place. The driving issues are theological, and the story takes place in an ancient, vaguely biblical setting, with few details of material culture. It is possible to enter into the world created by the text, but probably only through the Bible. Early readers whose worldviews and sense of the distant past were primarily shaped by their reading of the Old and New Testaments could perceive the characters of the Book of Mormon, who speak in biblical cadences, as familiar, relatable figures. If viewed as historical fiction, 1 Nephi is anchored in a context derived from the Hebrew Bible: Jerusalem on the brink of destruction, a flight into the wilderness, God leading a chosen family to a new promised land, and worries about the meaning of exile and covenant faithfulness. This historical setting is filled out with anachronistic concepts from the New Testament, lengthy biblical quotations, and prophecies of Smith's own era in the early United States, presumably on the brink of the end times. The rest of the book continues this pattern (with fewer references to the last days until Jesus's ministry in 3 Nephi and the books of Mormon and Moroni) as it traces the rise and fall of a Christian civilization in the Americas. The entire work is given coherent shape by dramatized narrators who interact with imaginary source materials. And all

of this is accomplished in quasi-archaic diction, roughly following narrative patterns drawn from the Bible.

Yet the book's clever construction goes beyond simply imitating the Bible. When read attentively, it appears that the narration both creates and obscures tensions within its account of Nephite history. Every so often there are hints of alternative perspectives or broader circumstances that have been repressed in the editing, presumably because they might distract readers from the theological points the narrators are attempting to make. Nephi, for example, tends to minimize the complaints of his brothers, though they may have been justified given the chosen historical setting of the work. And while the Nephites are obviously the heroes of the story, reasonable criticisms of their colonial-like hegemony over the numerically superior Mulekites and Lamanites can be heard in the voices of various dissenters. Captain Moroni is described as a paragon of righteous military leadership, though some of his actions might undercut that characterization. The relatively late revelation that Mulekite leaders were direct descendants of Davidic kings (Hel 6.10; 8.21) puts Nephite domination in a new light and threatens the simple didacticism that Mormon, as the narrator, wants to convey. Moroni uses a series of six editorial comments in the book of Ether to Christianize the Jaredite story, which seems originally to have had little connection to Jesus. (More details about these tensions can be found in the book introductions in this volume.) Despite such clues of not-entirely-reliable narration, the compelling sincerity of the primary narrators is striking. All this is to say that the portrayal of imagined editors editing imaginatively would have been a considerable achievement in an early nineteenth-century novel.

Whatever its literary merits, the Book of Mormon is a stunningly original work in many respects. Its scope, proliferation of characters, levels of narration, and incorporation of diverse genres are remarkable, as is the sheer audacity of creating a new Bible for the American continent. It is impressive that this was the first composition of a twenty-three-year-old farmer and day laborer with limited education, and that he managed to get his book published. As a work of fiction, the Book of Mormon cannot be extricated from Joseph Smith and his writing process, whatever that might have been. Do the intricate continuities of the narrative suggest that the book was carefully crafted and thought out before it was dictated? Or is it better characterized as a mostly extemporaneous composition? How might the dictation order influence interpretation? Or more broadly, how did the loss of the 116 pages change the trajectory of the project as a whole? Another key consideration is the author's intentions, which are somewhat opaque. Was Smith primarily motivated by personal gain or by a sincere belief that he was doing God's work? Or did the urge to write come from psychological needs that he himself may not have fully understood? All of these are valid, legitimate, and valuable approaches to the Book of Mormon. Indeed, they are similar to the ways Latter-day Saints themselves read the scriptures and religious writings of other faith communities.

Even more impressive than the book's creativity and ingenuity is the fact that it quickly attracted a band of devoted followers, who were devout in the most literal sense. Launching or reshaping a literary movement is a rare, extraordinary accomplishment; founding a new religion is even more so. Smith's work tapped into the religious and social assumptions, worries, and yearnings of thousands of Americans and Europeans who welcomed its arrival. This excitement was intimately connected to their feelings about the Bible. Indeed, to use an anachronistic term, the Book of Mormon might be considered Bible fan fiction (an observation made by the creators of *The Book of Mormon*, the 2011 Broadway musical). People who loved the Bible wanted more of it. They wanted additional episodes and spin-offs that continued the story by filling in gaps, answering questions, exploring alternative plot lines, shifting the focus to an American setting, and

addressing contemporary issues. The Book of Mormon became central to how they understood and acted in the world.

Sometimes the question arises of how the Mormon scripture might be compared to other beloved, immersive works of fiction that are continually reread by avid fans, offering readers escape into richly imagined worlds of history, fantasy, or science fiction—books by authors such as Jane Austen, Arthur Conan Doyle, J. R. R. Tolkien, and J. K. Rowling. Certainly a community of like-minded readers is integral to the experience of those who reread the Book of Mormon regularly, but such believers have less to work with, as can be seen in the comparative flatness of their cinematic renditions. The other writers gradually built up their novelistic universes through multiple volumes and series. Smith never again wrote anything like his first book, which is perhaps a bit surprising for a storyteller of prodigious talent, especially since the Book of Mormon itself sets up the possibility of sequels: the records of the lost tribes (2 Ne 29.12–13; 3 Ne 16.1–3; 17.4), the events of the third day of Christ's New World ministry (3 Ne 26.6–9), and the visions of the brother of Jared (Ether 4.1–7). In addition, the genres of scripture and modern fiction operate differently. Fiction offers entry into other lives and other worlds, with enticements of insight, pathos, humor, social critique, cautionary examples, models for action, diversion, and delight. The relationship between authors and their creations, as well as publishers and consumers, is well understood and accepted. But the Book of Mormon, read as scripture, is more than a venue for vicarious excitement or tragedy or intrigue, seen through a novelist's exquisite powers of observation and reflection; it purports to reveal the world as it actually is. In other words, the book assures readers that God, miracles, revelation, angels, and prophets factually exist, and if they are not experiencing such things in their own lives, it is because they are blind to, or are sequestered from, the spiritual forces that give meaning and direction to human history. For believers, scripture is more authoritative and demanding than novels could ever be, even for their most ardent, passionate admirers.

Tensions between fiction, scripture, and history are probably inescapable for Latter-day Saints. For most outsiders, however, arguments about Book of Mormon historicity can seem somewhat quaint and of limited interest, except, perhaps, for what they might reveal about faith-filled hermeneutics and scriptural authority. Evidences for and against the existence of ancient American prophets may be significant to people who are invested in the religion or are considering joining, but they are not urgent topics for academic researchers. Latter-day Saints, especially those who grew up in the faith, may gain a better sense of how things look to non-Mormons by imagining how they themselves might respond to claims made for the historicity of an Indian epic, the Ramayana, based on evidence conservative Hindus have drawn from astronomy, biology, botany, archaeology, and geology, such as arguments about the origin and significance of Rama's Bridge, a thirty-mile-long chain of shoals connecting India to Sri Lanka. The dates, sites, and even existence of Lord Rama are fiercely contested, and for many in India these are not obscure, esoteric debates. They have an impact on popular culture, higher education, and politics, sometimes with deadly consequences, as happened in the 1990s at Ayodhya (thought to be the birthplace of Rama). Nevertheless, it is possible for non-Hindus to read, appreciate, and enjoy the tales of Rama and Sita without being caught up in concerns about their historicity.

The issue of a fictional Book of Mormon—meaning that there were never any Jaredites, Nephites, Lamanites, or Mulekites—is more complicated for those who identify as believers or church members. For traditional Latter-day Saints it is important to keep in mind that hypotheses about the Book of Mormon as inspired fiction are ways to preserve faith and allow for continuing

church participation, despite what may seem to be a paucity of concrete evidence for the ancient origins of the scripture and the abundance of nineteenth-century elements in the text. As was seen in the previous essay, over the last half-century church leaders and ordinary members alike have adjusted their understandings of Book of Mormon history in response to increasing knowledge about the ancient Americas. For some, the shifts advocated by faithful scholars and apologists, such as limited-geography models, do not go far enough in reducing cognitive dissonance with scientific findings in New World archaeology, anthropology, and genetics, yet they still want to believe that there is something divine in the Book of Mormon, that it is true in some way or other, and that it can be responded to as authoritative, sacred scripture. The remainder of this essay will explore what it might mean for believers to read the book as fiction—pointing out options and precedents, noting what might be gained as well as what could be lost, and why this approach has met with strenuous resistance from church authorities and conservative LDS academics.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to church members reading the Book of Mormon as fiction is that it requires them to discount or explain away what the book says about itself, and what Joseph Smith said about its origins. The scripture straightforwardly presents itself as an ancient record, written at God's command, hidden and preserved until it could be recovered and translated in the latter days. The narrators, including Nephi, Jacob, Mormon, and Moroni, are explicit about their intentions, writing processes, sources, and editing, even claiming that they will meet readers face to face at the judgment bar (2 Ne 33.11; Jacob 6.13; Moro 10.27, 34). There is no sense in the text, paratext, or statements of Smith and other early believers that these Nephite narrators were imaginary characters. To regard them as fictional might appear to make deceptiveness central to the Book of Mormon's identity and message.

Can God speak through narratives that are, in a strictly historical sense, false? This, of course, is a theological rather than a historical question, but there are precedents in the Bible. Most Christians would agree that Jesus's parables were fictional tales meant to teach moral or religious lessons. Whether or not there was actually a specific victim of highway robbery who was helped by a good Samaritan, or whether a particular wayward son was once welcomed home by his father, seems somewhat beside the points that Jesus was trying to make. In the same way, many scholars regard the book of Jonah as a parable about God's persistence in offering mercy, even to the hated Ninevites; hence the existence of the "great fish," and the incident of Jonah's time in its belly, are narrative elements, not actual history. Could the Book of Mormon be read as an extended parable that was revealed to Joseph Smith? Perhaps even more pertinent is the scholarly consensus that many of the books in the Bible are not what they seem. The first five books (Gen–Deut) were almost certainly not written by Moses, and large portions of Isaiah were composed after the death of its putative author. The "book of the law" said to have been found during temple renovations at the time of King Josiah (2 Kings 22), and generally identified as an early version of Deuteronomy, was likely a recent composition rather than a rediscovered ancient text. There are strong reasons for regarding the books of Esther, Job, Daniel, and Jonah as primarily fictional tales (along with Tobit and Judith in Catholic Bibles). In the New Testament, many, though not all, scholars regard the books of Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, 1–2 Timothy, and Titus as having been written by someone other than Paul, despite their explicit internal attributions to the apostle. So also James and 1–2 Peter are commonly treated as pseudonymous writings.

There is an extensive literature about the religious implications of such findings; here it will suffice to note that many faithful Jews and Christians have found ways to reconcile critical biblical

scholarship with the acceptance of fictional or even forged texts as the authoritative word of God. Canonical works of fiction may be seen as coming from authentic encounters with the Divine, when human authors attempted to articulate and convey spiritual insights in ways that would resonate with and motivate readers. There may have been confusion about genre, with the result that imaginative writings were later reinterpreted as historical. In some cases, disciples or successors could have preserved authentic teachings from famous figures, or they may have been confident about what such figures would have said, in later circumstances. Yet however these texts were produced, God's will was manifest in the canonization process of the early Christian church, so that these books rightfully belong in the Bible. Latter-day Saint academics, for the most part, have not participated in these sorts of scholarly conversations, and ordinary church members are generally unaware that such discussions have been ongoing for more than a century. These approaches could offer models for nontraditional Latter-day Saints, though such explanations may be more useful for the Bible than for the Book of Mormon, where Nephite prophets are more insistent than biblical narrators about their authorship, and since the Mormon scripture appeared in the context of modern understandings of authors, fiction, and translation.

In addition, Joseph Smith's claims about the origins of the Book of Mormon are closely connected to stories of angels and metal plates—which seem to corroborate the text's presumed historicity. It is possible to reinterpret Moroni as a dream figure, or a spiritual presence that Smith perceived and made sense of from a human perspective. The gold plates, however, are more resistant to subjective or metaphorical explanations, given the statements of the official witnesses and others who reported having felt and hefted them. Clearly, something heavy was in the box that Smith showed to his family and friends. Whether that object was manufactured by Nephite artisans more than fourteen hundred years earlier or by Smith himself would seem to conclusively reveal Smith as either a prophet or a charlatan. Yet some have proposed more nuanced interpretations somewhere in the middle, suggesting that the Book of Mormon may have been a product of sincere delusion or pious fraud. That is to say, Smith may have genuinely believed that the words that came to his mind were those of ancient American prophets, and he may have found something in the ground (perhaps an Indian artifact or an unusual stone) that he imagined to have an encoded text within it. Or he may have been aware of his own contributions in formulating the basic narrative before dictating to his scribes, and in constructing a set of plates that could stand in for an ancient record he had seen in vision, yet he still believed that God was working through him. The Book of Mormon itself appears to support a flexible, results-oriented standard of morality: "It is given unto you to judge, that ye may know good from evil... for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God" (Moro 7.16). Surely the Book of Mormon invites its readers to become better people and to believe in Christ, regardless of how it was created.

Many Latter-day Saints find these "middle-ground" hypotheses offensive or even incomprehensible, because Joseph Smith's religious authority was based primarily on his production of the Book of Mormon, specifically on his discovery and translation of the gold plates, which in the context of nineteenth-century America was much more unusual and impressive than seeing Jesus in a vision. To question his credibility on this issue, and that of the other witnesses, would seem to undermine the entire religion that he founded. The Book of Mormon is often taken as the preeminent sign of Smith's prophetic calling; if he was wrong in his understanding of the origins of that text, he may have been wrong about many other things.

A representative example of such thinking was given by Church president Gordon B. Hinckley in an interview for a 2007 PBS documentary:

[Interviewer] You are talking about the foundational story of Mormonism and why it must be taken literally, that Joseph Smith had the vision he described and obtained the plates the way he did. You said there is no middle ground. Other churches are approaching their foundational stories and turning them into metaphor at times and going perhaps for the essence of the meaning. But that isn't true for you or for this church. I'm wondering if you can develop that idea: Why can't there be a middle ground in the way those foundational stories are understood?

[Hinckley] Well, it's either true or false. If it's false, we're engaged in a great fraud. If it's true, it's the most important thing in the world. Now, that's the whole picture. It is either right or wrong, true or false, fraudulent or true. And that's exactly where we stand, with a conviction in our hearts that it is true: that Joseph went into the [Sacred] Grove; that he saw the Father and the Son; that he talked with them; that Moroni came; that the Book of Mormon was translated from the plates. . . . That's our claim. That's where we stand, and that's where we fall, if we fall.⁵⁰

From a theological perspective, it is possible that God can speak through prophets who are less than perfect, or accept and honor those among his servants who, like King David, are guilty of great crimes. God might even, for his own purposes, reveal himself to people who have a complicated relationship with truth, or who may not perceive reality in conventional ways (and particularly not in accordance with modern rational, scientific principles). But that would make for a more complicated faith than many believers are comfortable with—even if the world is, in fact, more complicated than most people assume.

For believers, there are other potential losses from reading the Book of Mormon as fiction, aside from its implications for Joseph Smith's credibility. The message of the new scripture is reinforced by the narrative. For example, one of its key themes is that God has revealed himself in various times and places outside of ancient Israel. This may be true whether or not Christ actually appeared to Nephites in the New World, but a fictional account has less evidentiary power. So also, Book of Mormon prophecies of divine judgments in the last days are less persuasive if the stories of judgments among the Nephites were merely imaginative illustrations. The same holds true for salvation history, a central feature of the book, which describes God's temporal guidance of a branch of the house of Israel across an ocean to a new land, with assurances that covenants made with Jews and their relatives in the Americas will all be fulfilled quite literally in the latter days. If there were never Israelites in the New World, then the promises of gathering and restoration are somewhat empty. And if salvation history is regarded as merely a literary trope or a teaching device, the Book of Mormon might be reduced to the plan of salvation, that is, to its witness of redemption through Christ for individuals and its advocacy of Christian living, which leaves less ground for a distinctive Mormon theology.

One might wonder whether a Book of Mormon that simply teaches generic Christianity would offer sufficient justification for affiliating with a relatively high-demand denomination

⁵⁰ "Interview: Gordon B. Hinckley," *The Mormons*, PBS, January 2007, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/mormons-hinckley/>.

such as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. And if the book's stories of angels, revelations, predictive prophecies, and divine intervention are fictional, it could be easier to apply metaphorical interpretations in the modern world, speaking, for instance, of "angels" as special people in one's life, or "revelations" as spiritual impressions, or the "gathering of Israel" as referring to bringing converts into the church rather than God directing the history of the Jews as his chosen people. There might not be anything inherently wrong with this sort of religiosity, but it would be at odds with what the Book of Mormon, and Joseph Smith himself, taught.

The situation is further complicated by the claim that the Book of Mormon is not a record of revelation, as might be said of the Bible, but is instead a revelation itself—a text that appears to have come to Smith in a fairly exact, complex literary form, regardless of whether the words were impressed upon his mind or he read them in a seer stone. Rather than being an articulation of generic spiritual impressions or a subjective report of a personal encounter with God, it conveys specific information about individuals and events in a precise literary form that includes discrete voices, narrative units, geographical and chronological anchors, flashbacks, rhetorical devices, and allusions. The book invites readers into a relationship with its narrators (who themselves claim to be composing a record of their revelations). It is certainly possible to be inspired by fictional characters, and even motivated to emulate their examples of courage, kindness, and wisdom, yet for many Latter-day Saints something would be lost in viewing Nephi, Alma, Mormon, and Moroni as figments of Smith's imagination rather than as independent witnesses and spiritual guides, whose minds, experiences, and hearts were at least somewhat independent of Smith's.

The Book of Mormon could be considered true in a moral or theological sense, even if its characters and events were not objectively real, yet it would take some effort to explain its religious value, especially in its quasi-historical particulars as opposed to its general import. (In the Community of Christ, where there has been more openness to viewing the Book of Mormon as a product of the nineteenth century, a few apostles have taken up this challenge.) Even so, some might still wonder whether those spiritual, metaphorical truths could be secure enough to base one's life upon, as befits scripture. Is God's word reliable if it is, in some fundamental way, false or misleading? The idea of inspired fiction is not a matter of inerrancy; a number of details may be inaccurate in a text that nevertheless has a historical basis, as when the Bible implausibly describes Bronze Age patriarchs traveling by camel, yet reading the Book of Mormon as a novel would be more akin to claiming that Abraham (or Adam and Eve) never existed at all. Are divine promises made to fictional figures applicable to the real world? Once again, however, biblical stories can become authoritative through millennia of tradition in ways that are out of reach for scriptural newcomers such as Nephi, Abinadi, and Alma.

Most Latter-day Saints simply take it on faith that the Book of Mormon is a factual record, accepting the testimony of church authorities and feeling that the Holy Spirit has given them a witness that the book is what it claims to be. Some church members are aware of the historical difficulties, yet consider the evidences put forward by faithful scholars to be adequate responses. Others may view the question as open but not urgent. They have found apologetic arguments at least somewhat plausible, and believe there are enough gaps and ambiguities in the archaeological record of the ancient Americas to put off judgment. They are in a position in which they can choose to believe, despite contrary evidence. There are still others, however, who have carefully examined the evidences for and against, and have come to the conclusion that believing in a historical Book of Mormon is, for them, no more possible than believing that the ten lost tribes are still in the vicinity of the North Pole (an opinion held by several early LDS

leaders).⁵¹ The benefits of intellectual consistency—that is, approaching the truth claims of Mormon scripture with the same analytical tools and respect for science-based consensus that they might bring to medicine, technology, the social sciences, and history—overshadow the theological challenges of reconceptualizing the Book of Mormon as fiction, particularly if they value other aspects of the religion and want to remain within the community of faith. The struggle to reconcile faith and reason is one of the most recurrent, admirable, and poignant features of a religious life.

Even if someone finds choosing to believe in ancient Nephites impossible, he or she can still choose to accept the Book of Mormon as scripture. The book does not need to be an ancient text in order to be miraculous. Indeed, there are several options for what reading the book as inspired fiction might look like. The alternatives below are arranged in increasing order of divine intervention. Under each scenario it is possible that Smith was operating in good faith, sincerely believing that the incidents and words coming into his mind had a historical basis and were from outside his own consciousness, that he was tapping into something sacred as he was dictating the text. In options 2–4, this would have actually been the case: (1) the Book of Mormon was entirely a creation of Joseph Smith, and is only inspired in the sense that great works of art and literature are said to be “inspired”; (2) the Book of Mormon was created by Joseph Smith with the assistance of generic inspiration from God or some higher power, and thus can connect humans with the transcendent in ways that are similar to other world scriptures and spiritual classics; (3) the Book of Mormon was created by Joseph Smith with specific revelation, which sets it apart from other world scriptures; and (4) the Book of Mormon is fiction, but that fiction was written by God and then revealed to Joseph Smith in a rather exact, direct way, with God himself sending an angel to represent Moroni and creating gold plates to buoy up the faith of Smith and his associates.

To be sure, these sorts of hypotheses, which have not been thoroughly explored by non-traditional believers, would entail an unusual view of God, in which the deity does not seem to be consistent. Can the God of truth allow or even encourage his prophets to believe in things that are nonfactual? (The theological alternative may be a God who particularly prizes the sort of faith that disregards scientific consensus.) But then again, God is not accountable to human beings, and he may not be subject to ordinary human standards. As Isaiah 55.8 declares: “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways.” Such theories are not without precedent in world religions. The renowned Jewish scholar Mordechai Breuer suggested that the different writing styles in the Pentateuch, which gave rise to the Documentary Hypothesis of multiple authors, were all composed by God himself and combined into the Torah before the creation of the world. The Book of Mormon could be a testament that there is a God who directly intervenes in human affairs, yet his purposes are ultimately inscrutable, like those of Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita. Or his intentions may be discernible, while his methods are extremely flexible, much like the Buddhist doctrine of “expedient means,” most famously explained in the Lotus Sutra’s “Parable of the Burning House.”

There are historical difficulties with traditional beliefs about the Book of Mormon, some of which are solved by inspired fiction hypotheses even as they create new difficulties, yet theological conundrums remain either way. Why would God reveal a translated ancient record that had so little historical support, that looked to many like fiction? Or alternatively, why would God reveal

51 W. W. Phelps, “Letter II,” *Messenger and Advocate* 2, no. 1 (October 1835): 194; Orson Pratt, “Where Are the Ten Tribes of Israel?” *Millennial Star* 29, no. 13 (March 30, 1867): 200–204.

eternal truths in a fictional form that claimed to be history? Many who believe that the Mormon scripture is best understood as inspired fiction would welcome new evidence that might persuade them of its historicity, such as professionally excavated sites in the New World that turned up reformed Egyptian writing on metal plates, stone inscriptions in Hebrew, or artifacts and biological remains with clear connections to the ancient Near East. Such evidence may or may not be forthcoming, but in the meantime it is important to some believers to keep open the possibility that the God of history may also be the God of fiction, at least with regard to at least a few books of scripture. Or from a more skeptical position, keenly aware of the limitations of all human perspectives, an aphorism from the poet Wallace Stevens may be apt: “The final belief is to believe in a fiction, which you know to be a fiction, there being nothing else. The exquisite truth is to know that it is a fiction and that you believe in it willingly.”⁵²

Reading the Book of Mormon as Revealed Scripture

Putting aside questions of historicity or fiction, what would it mean to read the Book of Mormon as, in some real sense, a revelation from God? What responses might be appropriate if one were to accept the story of the Nephites as scripture in its fullest, most authoritative form? Because the Book of Mormon is new scripture, a first reaction might be gratitude for such a gift, especially one that witnesses that there is a God who continues to care for humankind and to speak to them. Studying the text carefully would be a way of honoring the giver, an act of faith and devotion. And since, for believers, the book was revealed in a more direct fashion than the Bible, they might look to the ways that conservative Jews read the Torah, or Muslims the Qur’an—as an existentially significant text, in which every word is potentially meaningful. They may assume that the book reflects a divine design and that anachronisms should be taken in stride, perhaps akin to the rabbinic observation that “there is no earlier or later in the Torah.” The Mormon scripture would be perceived as perpetually relevant, addressing not only the concerns of its original audience in nineteenth-century America (or the conditions of the ancient Nephites), but allowing for continual reinterpretations and reapplications in successive generations, particularly when those reinterpretations sustain a religious community that takes its stewardship of the text as a sacred responsibility. In short, reading the Book of Mormon as a revelation entails a close scrutiny of its words and phrases, with an eye toward larger patterns and interconnections, a desire to construe its meaning fairly and accurately, and an openness to new discoveries, trusting that the text is inexhaustible. The book can be misread, of course, yet the primary temptation is under-reading rather than over-reading. There is always more to see, since God’s intentions may well exceed those of the author(s) or the translator.

When believers read their own scriptures, they generally adopt a strong form of the philosophical principle of charity, that is, they assume the text makes points that are meaningful and coherent, even in passages where the language may be somewhat obscure. With respect to the Book of Mormon, this suggests a presumption of intentionality, in which the contours of the narrative and the precise wording are viewed not as the result of Joseph Smith haphazardly drawing on a mental storehouse of common religious ideas and biblical phrases, but rather as a reflection of thoughtful crafting on the part of the book’s narrators. The idea that literary patterns and rhetorical devices such as anaphora, inclusios, chiasms, and poetic forms could be reproduced in an

52 Wallace Stevens, *Opus Posthumous*, ed. Samuel French Morse (New York: Knopf, 1957), 163.

English translation is part of the miracle. Such an approach might involve identifying antecedents for internal quotations, finding significance in verbal repetitions, noting anomalies, tracing the logical argumentation in sermons, resolving apparent contradictions, analyzing intertextual allusions, and looking for intersections between the narrators' biographies and their editorial decisions. This, to a large extent, is the mode of reading adopted in the annotations in this volume, which offers outsiders a glimpse into how Latter-day Saints might understand their scripture. For people who believe the book was literally delivered by an angel, this type of sustained attention and detailed analysis should come naturally.

The possibility of misinterpretations arising from eisegesis (readers imposing their own ideas on the text) as well as apophenia (the human tendency to imagine patterns in essentially random phenomena) should concern believers and nonbelievers alike, though they tend to err in different directions, and interreligious conversations can be helpful in distinguishing defensible interpretations from inaccurate or illusory claims. In recent decades, the identification of chiasmus in the Book of Mormon has offered a useful illustration. It seems clear that inverted parallelism (chiasmus), in which a sequence of significant words or phrases is immediately repeated in reverse order, is one of the tools of Book of Mormon rhetoric. There are numerous examples of relatively short instances (often referred to antimetabole), with only two or three repeated elements, which is fairly common in a variety of world literatures. Researchers can argue about this literary technique—highlighting ancient antecedents, parallels from the Bible or nineteenth-century oral culture, and comparisons with Joseph Smith's other revelations—but there are also several longer, more complex examples that are potentially more significant, especially since this sort of textual ordering may not have been familiar to Joseph Smith. The identification of extended chiasmus, however, especially when they appear to break the flow of the argument, or rely on frequently occurring words separated by stretches of intervening material, or are based on roughly parallel concepts or events rather than exact words, are more subjective and should be treated with caution. They may constitute evidence for the deliberate structuring of particular passages, but viewing chiasmus as the defining feature of the Book of Mormon narration or rhetoric is probably a mistake, even for readers who are open to the idea of large-scale patterns shaped by literary guideposts.

If creative interpretations are to be welcomed and debated, they also need to be tempered by a measure of humility, by a willingness to defer to the authority of scripture. Faithful Latter-day Saints may find some of their long-standing assumptions or cherished values challenged when they pay close attention to what the book actually says. It can be easy for even believing readers to assume that they are smarter than the text, especially given its linguistic awkwardness and unconventional aesthetics, not to mention its premodern ethical sensibilities. What is called for, however, is not a doctrine of infallibility, but rather a reverential yet critical mode of reading. There are parts of the scripture that exhibit attitudes that are an affront to contemporary moral standards, including racism, sexism, and militarism, as well as advocacy for monarchy and theocracy. Do such passages suggest that God is racist and sexist, or invalidate the text as true scripture? Not necessarily. The Book of Mormon portrays its words not as divine edicts, but as the language of human beings, writing from sometimes limited perspectives, and readers can question those perspectives, especially in light of the scriptural witness as a whole, while at the same time reconsidering their own views and motives.

If the book is a revelation, there are lessons that God wants to convey, and it may be that he designed the text as a field for moral inquiry, that he is pleased when readers (respectfully) argue with Nephite prophets, much as Abraham and Moses argued with the Lord himself over the fates

of Sodom and the Israelites (Gen 18.22–33; Ex 32.7–14). Ethical sensibilities are often developed through dialogue—which is a reason not to delete such passages in future editions but rather to retain them as a perpetual reminder that even prophets can sometimes get things wrong. As Moroni urges, “Give thanks unto God that he hath made manifest unto you our imperfections, that ye may learn to be more wise than we have been” (Morm 9.31). For example, believers may regard Native Americans as having either a biological or a spiritual/metaphorical connection to the Lamanites of the Book of Mormon and the Jews, but either way, the responsibility of modern Americans of European descent is clear, and should lead to discussions about how best to support the interests of indigenous peoples (and by extension other minorities), and how to assist them in living lives of dignity, self-determination, and prosperity. The goal is to not repeat the mistakes of the Nephites, who generally failed in their relations with the Lamanites.

Identifying the blind spots of the Nephites may encourage believers to examine their own prejudices, both liberal and conservative. In an age that values individualism, talk of constraints or advantages based on unchosen identities such as race, gender, ethnicity, and class can be uncomfortable, particularly if they seem imposed by God. The very notion of salvation history, in which the Lord deals with people as members of various nations or lineages, can seem outmoded. Yet a few moments of reflection will show that human lives are still greatly shaped by circumstances of birth. God at times may work through groups defined by natural or inherited ties, as well as with autonomous individuals. And as readers (not unreasonably) judge the Book of Mormon, they are in turn judged by it, with stark warnings about pride, materialism, political corruption, dishonesty, theft, sexual immorality, contention, discrimination, the rejection of spiritual gifts, and the callous disregard of the needy, among other sins. (It is perhaps worth noting the scripture has little to say about gender roles, and nothing with regard to homosexuality.) In the Book of Mormon, as in our own society, sins are committed not just by individuals, but by communities taking advantage of minority groups in systemic ways.

Most believers will interpret the scripture within the mediating framework of a church, either The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or one of the other branches of Mormon Christianity, such as the Community of Christ. Here again, there is a need for balance and dialogue. For instance, the question naturally arises as to whether the earliest version of the text represents the purest form of revelation, or whether the current officially sanctioned edition should take precedence. Indeed, the question is common to many scripture-based religious traditions. For the Book of Mormon, a scholarly reconstruction of Joseph Smith’s dictated words has been compiled by Royal Skousen, utilizing secular techniques of textual criticism.⁵³ His work is enormously significant, and may influence future church editions, but his version falls short of definitive since he was not able to consult the nearly three-quarters of the original manuscript that is no longer extant. Smith himself set a precedent for updating the grammar and style of the sacred text, a process that has been continued by his ecclesiastical successors. Scholars may point out that Smith did not claim revelation as the source for his changes in the 1837 and 1840 editions, and some of those revisions are inconsistent or arise from occasional misunderstandings. Nevertheless, church leaders can claim authority and inspiration in editing the book that scholars cannot, and their establishment of an authorized text, along with its formatting and presentation, as well as translations into foreign languages, reflect priorities such as accessibility, familiarity, and respectability that may shift over time. In a variation of canonical criticism, which recognizes the

53 Royal Skousen, *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022).

significance of the final form of scripture, Latter-day Saints generally believe that God can speak through the institutional church as well as through its founding prophet.

In any edition, the Book of Mormon text has been relatively stable, with few substantive changes, especially in comparison with most other world scriptures, including the Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price. Accepting the record of the Nephites as a revelation from God that came through Joseph Smith and was subsequently safeguarded and disseminated by the church makes it somewhat independent of both. That is to say, even as Smith and his successors have shaped the book's presentation, they themselves are subject to its gaze. Accepting the scriptural authority of the Book of Mormon does not automatically validate everything that Smith did and said in later years, or every later church practice and doctrine. Indeed, one of the functions of canon is to provide a standard measure by which to judge, and there may have been times when the church—referring either to the institution or its collective members—has not lived up to the ideals expressed within its pages. To use the scripture primarily as a sign of Smith's prophethood and of the truth of the LDS Church is to treat it as an object rather than a subject. Taking the book seriously as revelation means caring about what it says on its own, and not just what it may tell us about Joseph Smith or what support it may provide for current church teachings. Similarly, a revealed Book of Mormon is more than a device for accessing personal revelation for readers focused mainly on their own needs and desires. The word of God should be more than a mirror.

Reading the Book of Mormon as revelation is an opportunity for dialogue, for coming into a relationship with a text that speaks for God, in a conversation in which modern prophets, scholars, and fellow church members also have a voice. Yet as much as the LDS Church is invested in shaping how readers encounter and respond to the scripture—through approved formatting, curriculum materials, and official discourse—it is possible to engage with the sacred text in unconventional ways, as readers come to know Christ through a volume that speaks somewhat independently of its sponsoring institution. It is important to note that the book is not simply a compilation of doctrinal propositions that can be distilled into a handful of principles. Nor is it an anthology of religious laws, rules, and regulations. Rather, it is a complex narrative whose component episodes can be interpreted in multiple, equally legitimate ways. This is a strength rather than a weakness, as no single interpretation exhausts its meaning. The book's primary mode of communication is through its prophetic narrators, who often speak directly to readers by making observations, offering advice, and extending invitations. In addition, each of its narrators has experienced dialogic interactions with the divine, thus providing a model for emulation.⁵⁴ By coming to know Nephi, Mormon, and Moroni as they seek inspiration in conveying the words and actions of Lehi, Benjamin, Abinadi, Alma, Helaman, Samuel, and others, readers can come to know the mind and will and voice of the Lord—who himself makes an extended appearance in 3 Nephi.

Dialogue is built into the structure of the book; it is how the text works. The narrative encourages readers to respond to Nephite writers by asking questions and inferring intentions, with the assumption that those figures were thoughtful, compassionate, inspired observers of the events they recount. Granted, this is easier if one regards them as being fully historical individuals, but God's revelations may take unexpected forms. And according to Alma, not being sure whether something is true, and yet acting as if it were, is a type of faith (Alma 32.26–43). Certainly, there are other convictions that, despite ample reasons for doubt, nevertheless have the power to shape and enhance people's lives—beliefs such as “all men are created equal” or “the arc of the moral

⁵⁴ See Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon*, 209–39.

universe is long, but it bends towards justice.” To regard the Book of Mormon as a genuine revelation is to have faith that a sustained, detailed engagement with the text will transform its readers, making them better people and bringing them closer to God.

Readers who accept that the Nephite narrative originated with God, in some fashion or other, can concentrate less on the book’s production and nature, and more on its message and function. The Mormon scripture was clearly intended to create a people, a community of those who would heed its call and prepare for Jesus’s second coming. And while that future scenario may seem far-fetched or even fantastical to outsiders, it replicates the primary storyline of the Book of Mormon, in which generations of believers lived for centuries in hopeful anticipation, until their faith was finally vindicated when the resurrected Christ appeared at Bountiful. Before the latter-day counterpart arrives, however, adherents are called to repent, to serve others, to work against injustice and oppression, to seek after spiritual gifts, and to bear witness of things to come. The book’s ideal reader is someone who puts down the text with the same realization that overcame Rainer Maria Rilke as he was contemplating a fragmented Greek statue: “You must change your life.”⁵⁵

That impression may lead to ever more detailed, nuanced readings of the scripture by those who believe that God can be found in its pages—in the inspired words attributed to ancient prophets, compiled by prescient narrators, in an English-language text whose production was overseen by deity. Believers view the Book of Mormon as a manifestation of God’s love, and as with any love letter, they will pore over its contents, trying to understand it as fully and clearly as possible. They take delight in the scripture, accepting it as it is, confident that it came in a form adequate for God’s purposes. And rather than ignoring or being embarrassed by anachronisms, irregular grammar, nineteenth-century elements, or historical improbabilities, they may well treat such difficulties as puzzles holding clues about the mysteries of divine providence and revelation, to be acknowledged and explored along with the book’s literary form, consistency, complexity, rhetorical power, doctrinal innovations, and steadfast witness of Christ. Theological interpretations can follow the lead of evidence derived from historical and literary analysis, in a mode of reading that balances critical inquiry and faith. The important thing is to avoid reductive readings, that is, assuming that one has finally grasped the full meaning of the text.

To receive a book as revealed scripture is to study it continually, over the course of a lifetime and across generations, trusting that the quest for deeper understanding is never ending. As the Jewish Mishnah states with regard to Torah study, “You are not obliged to complete the work, but neither are you free to desist from it” (Pirkei Avot 2.16). And yet this endeavor is not so much an obligation as a joy and a delight. There is always more to see and discover. Or drawing from a different religious/philosophical tradition, Confucius once said, “To know it is not as good as to love it, and to love it is not as good as to delight in it” (Analects 6.20; cf. 2 Ne 4.15; 11.2).

The Book of Mormon is an unusual literary production, a “marvelous work and a wonder” (Isa 29.14; 2 Ne 25.17–18) by any account, yet a sense of sacredness and reverence is generally something that readers bring to the book, as opposed to being in the text itself. This sensibility is most often nurtured within a faith community, as Latter-day Saints participate in worship services, hear testimonies, read church literature, and engage in family discussions. There is always a hope that young members, as well as potential converts, will feel the Holy Spirit as they read the Book of Mormon, that private engagement with the text will reinforce rather than diminish perceptions

55 Rainer Maria Rilke, “Archaic Torso of Apollo” (1908).

of its holiness. The recommended approach is based on an invitation given by the book's last narrator to his future audience:

And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you by the power of the Holy Ghost. (Moro 10.4)

In most fields, warm feelings are unreliable gauges of truth, yet there is an assumption here that the question of whether the book is an authentic revelation can best be resolved through additional, personal revelation. The requirement of preexisting sincerity and faith makes it as much a test of the reader as of the scripture.

This method works for some inquirers and not for others, but for those who have come to the conclusion that the Book of Mormon is revealed scripture, there is an accompanying realization that they will be held accountable for how they respond to it. It is not enough to simply believe the book is from God, and then put it aside. Rather, the invitation is, as Nephi says, to “press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ” (2 Ne 31.20), or in Moroni’s admonition, to be “nourished by the good word of God” (Moro 6.4). The Book of Mormon is the great gift that signals a special stewardship for Latter-day Saints. To interpret the text is a serious matter, done before God and in his presence. Reading something as revealed scripture means submitting to the authority of the text. One can argue with it, respectfully and cautiously, as one does with other authority figures, but such readers are not free to simply dismiss it, neglect it, or replace its authority with something else.

To read the Book of Mormon as scripture is to recognize that however it may have been revealed to Joseph Smith, it is a miracle that continues into the present and is available for close examination. Like other sacred texts, it deserves careful scrutiny and intellectual honesty, but believers in addition will want to allow the book to speak to their hearts and shape their lives, as a counter to some aspects of modern secular culture and their own natural inclinations, so that they can discern God’s voice and follow his will. They trust that, in some way or another, he is speaking through the Nephite writers and narrators. Indeed, the Book of Mormon consistently refers to itself as coming from the mouth of the Lord (2 Ne 3.21; 29.2; Moro 10.28). And as Nephi’s brother Jacob urges, “Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts” (Jacob 6.6, quoting Ps 95.7–8).

Reading the Book of Mormon as World Scripture

As a text claiming revelatory status, the Book of Mormon can usefully be compared to many religious writings, including the works of mystics and visionaries ranging from ancient Greek oracles to Old Testament pseudepigrapha, from medieval Hindu tantra and Daoist ritual instructions to early modern Tibetan treasure texts and the angelic messages of John Dee, and from the more recent spirit communications of the Shakers and Andrew Jackson Davis to the Oahspe and Urantia books. This essay, however, will focus on scriptures that have attained, and maintained, a certain level of prominence over time, particularly in terms of organizational support, numbers of adherents, and translations into other languages. Sacred texts with this type of prominence appear rather infrequently in world history. The Book of Mormon was probably the first addition to the library of world scriptures after the Sikh Adi Granth, completed in 1604, and while it is not the

last—Bahá'í and Tenrikyō revelations also fit the criteria—it has been one of the most successful. There are nearly seventeen million Latter-day Saints around the globe today, and the Book of Mormon has been translated into more than one hundred languages, with almost 200 million copies published since 1830.

Comparing the Book of Mormon with other broadly recognized canonical writings can provide a better sense of the ways in which it might be more or less remarkable. All world scriptures have their particular strengths and weaknesses, and believers tend to use standards of judgment that highlight the positive qualities of their own sacred texts. Here the goal is a more neutral assessment, and in any case, the Mormon scripture offers an interesting example of a relatively recent world scripture with a well-documented history. Before continuing, however, it should be noted that the Book of Mormon is joined in the LDS canon by two additional books, along with the Bible: the Doctrine and Covenants (a collection of 136 revelations or documents associated with Joseph Smith, with two more revelations and two official proclamations from later church presidents), and the Pearl of Great Price (five short selections from Smith's other translations and personal histories). Both of these works are more similar to other world scriptures than is the Book of Mormon, and they are somewhat secondary, in the sense that they would not matter as much without the Nephite record that made Smith a public figure. Latter-day Saints regularly repeat Joseph Smith's declaration that the Book of Mormon is "the keystone of our religion."

Origins. In contrast to many older world scriptures that were composed, edited, and compiled by anonymous hands, the circumstances of the Book of Mormon's production are well known, even if Smith's exact methodology remains unclear. The story of the Nephites was dictated by a single individual, assisted by scribes, over the course of three months (aside from the lost 116 pages). This makes it unlike other single-author scriptures such as the Qur'an or the LDS Doctrine and Covenants, which consist of a series of revelations received over many years in response to different events and the needs of a growing religious community. The Book of Mormon is also rather lengthy at over 270,000 words, considerably longer than the New Testament and the Qur'an, but much shorter than massive Asian sacred books including the Hindu Mahabharata and some of the Buddhist Perfection of Wisdom sutras. The text of the Book of Mormon has been fairly stable since its first transcription, aside from minor grammatical and stylistic updating, though certainly not as stable as the Qur'an, or even the Hebrew Bible in its Masoretic form. As a product of the modern age, the Mormon scripture went directly into written form, as opposed to being passed on and preserved as oral literature for a time, and, remarkably, a significant portion of the original manuscript survives, as well as the entire work in a second-generation copy. This, however, is more than matched by the voluminous original transcriptions of Bahá'í revelations that are still extant.

Canonization. The Book of Mormon appeared, complete, at the very beginning of a religious movement; the text itself was instrumental in creating a fellowship of believers, and it was regarded as canonical from the day it was published. More typically, revelations and religious writings emerge from within a faith community over time, some of which gain canonical status through reputation, common usage, and eventually the authoritative approbation of leaders. The process of canonization usually takes place over centuries, as can be seen in Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Christianity. Islam is an exception, with the final form of the Qur'an being established just two decades after the death of Muhammad in 632. An even earlier exception may have been the seven sacred writings of Mani in the third century, which he apparently edited and promulgated during his lifetime, though none have survived intact. It is also significant that the Mormon scripture is fully canonical, accorded equal status with the holiest

text in Christianity, the Bible. This stands in contrast to the authoritative yet supplementary status of the Hadith, the Talmud, the Zohar, or the revelations of Ellen G. White.

Relation to previous scripture. The Book of Mormon can be described as “post-canonical” scripture, in that it attempted to reopen a canon that had seen no additions for more than a thousand years. Furthermore, the Christian Bible represents a strictly limited canon—a single book (although consisting of individual texts produced over a period in excess of a thousand years) as opposed to the hundreds of volumes in the Buddhist and Daoist canons. The Mormon scripture is aware of the difficulty this would present to its Christian readers, and Nephi himself prophesies that “many of the Gentiles shall say, ‘A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible’” (2 Ne 29.3). In a similar manner, the Qur’an, coming into a world with fixed Jewish and Christian canons, includes divine instructions to Muhammad on how to respond to those who reject his revelations, as in the famous “challenge verses” where unbelievers are invited to try to produce comparable chapters on their own (Qur’an 2.23; 10.38; 11.13; 28.49; 52.34). One difference, however, is that the Qur’an supplants Jewish and Christian scriptures, which Muslims regard as altered and corrupted; the Book of Mormon, while also decrying losses from the two testaments, sees itself as supplementing the Bible and is viewed as equal rather than superior to its canonical predecessor. Indeed, in 1920 the formatting of the Mormon scripture was changed to make it look like contemporary Bibles. It is also telling that the Book of Mormon regularly quotes the Bible, even going so far as to incorporate entire biblical chapters into its narrative. This reliance on the authority of previous scripture is even more pronounced than in the New Testament, which regularly cites passages from the Hebrew Bible as prooftexts, or the frequent quotations of Quranic verses in Kitáb-i-Íqán (Book of Certitude) of the Bahá’ís. Perhaps ironically, nearly two centuries after Joseph Smith, the LDS canon, while theoretically open to future revelations by modern prophets, is functionally closed. With a single exception (DC 138, from 1918), no revelations after 1847 have been canonized, although the recovery of the lost 116 pages would undoubtedly change the situation.

Genre. World scriptures take a variety of forms, but lengthy, history-like narratives are rare. In fact, the Book of Mormon is unique even among Smith’s scriptural productions. The book incorporates several subgenres into its framing story, including sermons, moral exhortations, letters, scriptural interpretation, prayers, allegories, and an apocalyptic vision, but everything is presented as part of an integrated whole, composed or edited by three main narrators. For comparable but much shorter examples, one could turn to the historical portions of the Old and New Testaments, where the mix of human endeavor and divine intervention is similar. Longer versions of sacred histories, with many more mythical elements, can be found in the Hindu Mahabharata, Ramayana, and Bhagavata Purana. The lengthy Zuo Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals in the Confucian Classics is also primarily historical. Yet many more world scriptures consist of wisdom literature, such as the Analects, the Daodejing, and the Dhammapada, or poetry, whose elevated language was considered particularly appropriate for revered texts or even evidence of supernatural origins. Examples of poetic scriptures include the Hindu Vedas, the Chinese Classic of Poetry, the Zoroastrian Gathas, the Hebrew psalms and prophetic books, and the Sikh Adi Granth. By comparison, the Book of Mormon may seem prosaic and unimpressive, and a compilation of its aphorisms would be somewhat meager. The Mormon scripture also has very little in the way of legal, liturgical, philosophical, or ritual material, and no myths or parables. On its own terms, an extended, coherent, consistent account of God’s actions in history may be striking, but the book’s explicit claims about the past also make it vulnerable to historical-critical objections and charges of anachronism.

Literary value. Assessments of the Book of Mormon as literature, as with other world scriptures, should take genre into account. Its main literary interest comes through its narratology, that is, the sophisticated ways in which multiple narrators handle and reshape their ostensible sources. Intricately structured speeches, with parallel phrasing and internal allusions, may also offer examples of pleasing rhetoric, though from verse to verse the language can be somewhat awkward and repetitive. While the style is clearly meant to be reminiscent of the King James Bible, the irregular grammar and odd usages often make it seem like a clumsy imitation. (Somewhat ironically, the Book of Mormon's plain language and poor grammar are closer to the New Testament in Greek than they are to the resplendent prosody of KJV English.) Many other sacred texts enjoy a deserved reputation for eloquence and literary brilliance, particularly those that are predominantly poetic. The Qur'an is a special case, in which the inimitability of its sublime rhythmic, rhymed prose, in Arabic, is regarded as one of the primary proofs of its miraculous nature. By contrast, few people will read the Book of Mormon for aesthetic pleasure; indeed, it can be rather tedious for nonbelievers. On the other hand, the Mormon scripture's pervasive use of phrases from the King James Bible, which are frequently adapted in creative, inventive ways, sometimes with theological significance, is one of the book's underrated charms, even if few readers in the twenty-first century will recognize hundreds of KJV phrases at a glance, let alone recall their original contexts. Formatting and annotations can highlight the book's literary strengths, but at the level of individual sentences, there are few of the unexpected turns of phrase or startling insights or evocative descriptions that other sacred texts regularly offer. For many faith communities, the beauty of expression found in their holy books is a clear sign of godliness. Reading the Book of Mormon as literature requires more effort and patience. It is a book that repays careful study rather than quick perusal.

Religious claims. Although the translation of the Book of Mormon is said to have come through revelation, the scripture itself is not a heavenly book existing from before the foundation of the world, as some adherents regard the Vedas, Upanishads, Torah, or Qur'an. Rather, the Book of Mormon claims to be both a text received from God and also a rediscovered ancient record written by human authors, like Buddhist Mahayana sutras preserved and recovered in later generations through supernatural means. Hence the Mormon scripture is divine, but neither eternal nor infallible. It is described as coming from the mouth of the Lord (2 Ne 3.21; 29.2; Moro 10.28), even as its prophetic narrators admit their weaknesses and possible errors (BoM title page; 1 Ne 19.6; 3 Ne 8.2; Morm 8.12, 17; Ether 12.23–25). This dual nature allows the book to declare timeless truths, while also making space for time-bound perspectives that may need to be updated. The text as a whole can be seen as a self-manifestation of God, both in the translation and in Jesus acting as a general editor of sorts, giving directions as to what should be included (1 Ne 14.24–26; 2 Ne 5.29–33; 3 Ne 26.6–12; Ether 12.22–37; 13.13), yet human agency is nevertheless integral to the Nephite record. Perhaps as a result, the book is somewhat anxious about its authority.

Because of its continuing emphasis on its own literary production, relationship with the Bible, and future role in reshaping global history, the Book of Mormon is one of the most self-conscious and self-referential scriptures in world religions, similar to the Lotus Sutra (a Mahayana text), and the Qur'an. To cite just a single example from each work:

The Lord God promised unto me [Nephi] that these things which I write shall be kept and preserved. . . and the nations who shall possess them shall be judged of them according to the words which are written. (2 Ne 25.21–22)

If... any being hears even a single verse or line of the Lotus Sutra, and thereupon has even one thought of rejoicing in it, I [the Buddha] will bestow upon them the prediction that they will attain highest, complete enlightenment. (Lotus Sutra, ch. 10)

We have sent the Scripture down to you [Muhammad] explaining everything, and as guidance and mercy and good news to those who devote themselves to God. (Qur'an 16.89)

The Book of Mormon believes that it will change the world, and in fact is a sign that God has commenced his work in the last days (3 Ne 21.5–7). At the same time, the Mormon scripture is not God's final word to humankind, as is the Qur'an. Nephite writers prophesied of similar records from other branches of Israel that will someday come to light (2 Ne 29.9–13), along with fuller accounts of Jesus's ministry in Bountiful (3 Ne 26.6–12) and the vision of the brother of Jared (Ether 4.4–7).

Parallels. Because the Book of Mormon comes out of the Christian tradition, it shares many ideas and incidents with the Bible, which was a direct influence—whether one is thinking of ancient Nephites or Joseph Smith as the author. Common elements include the calling of prophets, exodus motifs, blessings and curses, covenants, divine deliverance in battle, monarchs both good and bad, wayward sons, revelations, miracles, missionary journeys, and the establishment of local churches. Occasionally, the parallels are quite specific, as with the angelic conversions of Paul and Alma (Acts 9; Mos 27), or the deathless state of the beloved disciple and the three Nephite disciples, who, like Daniel and his companions, were saved from a furnace and a den of wild beasts (Dan 3; 6; Jn 21.20–24; 3 Ne 28), though there are usually significant differences as well. The Book of Mormon was intended to sound like the Bible, and for the most part it does so, even if the miraculous aspects are somewhat heightened, as can be seen in the unprecedented clarity of its prophecies, or the way in which Jesus does not simply multiply loaves to feed a multitude, but produces bread from nothing (3 Ne 20.1–8).

Recognizing and analyzing parallels between the Book of Mormon and the Bible are important to understanding how the newer scripture works and what its message is, but parallels with sacred texts from non-Christian religions may also be mutually illuminating. In these cases, there is little chance of direct influence, and the differences generally outweigh the similarities, yet similar ideas and stories may point toward more universal spiritual insights or religious yearnings. For example, readers might compare the brother of Jared's vision, in which he saw "all the inhabitants of the earth which had been, and also all that would be" (Ether 3.25) with the Buddha, just before his enlightenment, attaining a knowledge of his own past lives and the past, present, and future lives of other sentient beings (Mahāsaccaka Sutta; cf. Buddhacarita, ch. 14); or the sons of King Mosiah giving up their princely status to pursue spiritual goals (Mos 28.1–9) with Mahavira's abdication (Acaranga Sutra, ch. 2); or Lehi's teaching of the necessity for "opposition in all things" (2 Ne 2.11–12) with Daoist observations that the world is grounded in the dualism of yin and yang—opposites associated with qualities such as difficult and easy, heaven and earth, male and female, action and nonaction (Daodejing, chs. 2, 5, 7, 28, 42, 63).

Functions. In addition to content, readers might also compare the functions that sacred texts perform within their respective faith communities and in the lives of individual believers. In an influential essay, with data drawn from a Chinese Buddhist convent, Miriam Levering has proposed a comparative framework of four modes of scriptural reception: informative, transformative,

transactive, and symbolic.⁵⁶ While not definitive, her approach is nevertheless useful, and scriptures in various traditions fulfill these functions in different ways.

In the case of the Book of Mormon, Latter-day Saints often read for information, that is, for familiarity with stories and events, but even more for the doctrines or moral principles that are presented through the words and actions of its characters. The narrators, who are also characters, regularly provide a first interpretive pass regarding the stories they recount, as when Mormon comments “thus we see . . .” (a non-biblical phrase that appears twenty-four times in the new scripture). Members of the LDS Church are counseled to study the Book of Mormon individually and with their families, and they frequently cite the book in teaching situations, though the emphasis is on using the text to support broadly accepted theological positions articulated by church leaders. Context, causation, and extended arguments may get sparse attention. Hence the scripture is informative in a somewhat general way; there is little encouragement to read closely or critically in a manner that might challenge traditional assumptions or current ecclesiastical priorities. It has also long been common for church members to use colored pencils to highlight favorite verses in their scriptures as reminders for future reference, and more recently the church has developed apps that allow readers to mark and add comments to electronic versions of the sacred text.

In the transformative mode, believers read scripture to attain insight or to improve themselves, their families, and their faith community. Latter-day Saints hope that daily engagement with the Book of Mormon will make them better people, beginning with the discipleship that comes from regular devotional reading. They usually work through the text cover to cover, seeking a greater appreciation of the gospel and looking for precepts they can put into practice. They believe that family bonds can be strengthened by reading and discussing the Book of Mormon together. Perhaps even more important, however, is the idea that they can access the Holy Spirit by poring over the sacred record. They often report that as they read, they feel a sense of peace and receive inspiration or spiritual promptings regarding their individual circumstances, as well as supernatural confirmation of their beliefs and life choices. The archetypal example is when young Latter-day Saints or those contemplating joining the faith pray about the Book of Mormon and then receive a spiritual witness of its truthfulness. This conversion experience can reorient one’s life and sustain a long-term path of devotion, frequently aided by art and music based on the scripture, including commonly reproduced illustrations as well as hymns and children’s songs such as “An Angel from on High,” “The Iron Rod,” “Book of Mormon Stories,” and “The Armies of Helaman.” In contrast to many other religions, however, Latter-day Saints tend not to internalize lengthy passages from the Book of Mormon through memorization.

To receive scripture transactively is to believe that it can change the world, that it can be used, particularly in ritual settings, to make things happen such as solidifying relationships or performing miracles or acting with power. This mode of scripturalism is less pronounced with the Book of Mormon, aside from the expectation that sharing the book widely will result in many more people joining the LDS Church and preparing the way for Christ’s coming. Giving copies of the book to friends, acquaintances, or even strangers is viewed as meritorious, and family members may receive personalized copies at significant life events such as baptisms or beginning missionary service or going away to college. Yet there is little sense that the physical book, or intoning its words, can enable healing or protection from danger, or deliverance for the dead or connections

⁵⁶ Miriam Levering, “Scripture and Its Reception: A Buddhist Case,” in *Rethinking Scripture: Essays from a Comparative Perspective*, ed. Miriam Levering (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), 58–101.

to the cosmos—as with some Hindu and Buddhist scriptures. Latter-day Saints do not read the Book of Mormon aloud together as part of public worship (or the private worship that occurs in LDS temples), and they do not quote its verses to seal business deals, dispel temptations and evil influences, perform marriages, do penance, or ensure a good afterlife. They do not swear oaths on the volume, which they generally handle as an ordinary book rather than an object possessing extraordinary holiness or power. For instance, there are no rituals before reading and no special instructions for disposing of worn-out copies. This is in contrast to Torah scrolls, the Qur'an, and especially the Adi Granth, which Sikhs treat with the same respect as a living guru. In future years the transition to scrolling through the Book of Mormon on personal electronic devices, such as phones, may further diminish the feeling that this text is different from other books, or that reading it can be a sacred experience.

The last of Levering's four modes of reception is the symbolic, where a holy book represents the religion as a whole, and also functions as a symbol of ultimate truth and power. Because the Book of Mormon is both a distinctive and foundational element of the religion founded by Joseph Smith, his followers will forever be associated with that text. Indeed, despite recent attempts to shift traditional nomenclature, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will always be thought of as Mormons. To be seen reading the Book of Mormon at school or at work or in a public place is to identify oneself as a Latter-day Saint. The scripture can stand as a symbol for the faith, and uploading a photo of oneself to social media holding the book, or even posting inspirational quotations from its pages, is to proclaim oneself a member of that community. Yet the book can also symbolize something more transcendent than a religious denomination. For believers, the Book of Mormon represents God reaching out to humanity. It is a revelation that came through a modern prophet, and is in fact a manifestation of God's existence and continuing love for his children, a miraculous text witnessing that the same deity who spoke in ancient times in the Bible is still speaking today. Levering's categories are useful for religious studies, and while exact definitions and applications may differ, adherents of very different faith traditions may consider their scriptures to be holy, powerful, meaningful, authoritative, and transcendent in comparable ways.

It can be a valuable exercise to read the Book of Mormon alongside other world scriptures. It certainly lends dignity to the Mormon text to be seen in such company, and for outsiders, both scholars and laypersons alike, it offers an interesting case study that can help clarify significant differences and similarities among a wide range of sacred books and religious traditions. If Latter-day Saints wish their scripture to be taken seriously in academic and ecumenical settings, it is up to them to present the text in an accessible manner and to develop modes of interpretation that can accommodate contemporary sensibilities, including scientific and historical perspectives. They have to explain why time spent with the Book of Mormon is worthwhile. Their task is to elucidate the richness of the text and locate meanings that are relevant to the modern world, particularly for readers who do not necessarily view the book as any more inspired than the scriptures of Hinduism, Buddhism, or Islam. And, of course, the Golden Rule applies. Latter-day Saints who hope that others will read the Book of Mormon with generosity and care need to learn to read other people's sacred texts in the same manner—not for religious disputation, but for greater understanding and appreciation, perhaps with an openness to new spiritual insights. It is an extraordinary thing to grant a text such awesome weight in one's values, actions, and identity, or to find God in authoritative writings that are designed not just to be read, but to be reread again and again, with awe and reverence, over the course of a lifetime.

Further Reading

General

Probably the best introduction to the Book of Mormon is Terryl L. Givens's *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture That Launched a New World Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), though he focuses more on the reception of the text than on its contents. Paul C. Gutjahr's *The Book of Mormon: A Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), part of the Lives of Great Religious Books series, offers a very readable account of how the scripture has been used by Latter-day Saints. Traditional LDS interpretations can be most easily accessed through Thomas R. Valletta's *The Book of Mormon Study Guide: Start to Finish*, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2015), which compiles hundreds of brief quotations from church leaders, magazines, manuals, and faithful scholars, in addition to reproducing the scriptural text itself. The most comprehensive apologetic commentary is Brant A. Gardner's *Second Witness: Analytical and Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2007), which assumes a Mesoamerican setting for the Nephites. The Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship at Brigham Young University has published a great deal of material on LDS scriptures in various books and periodicals, including the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* (hereafter JBMS). Note that the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, or FARMS—a publisher that will appear frequently in the pages that follow—became part of BYU in 1997 and has since been incorporated into the Maxwell Institute. A useful overview of the field can be found in a series of articles in the 2021, 2022, and 2023 issues of JBMS devoted to the past, present, and future of Book of Mormon Studies.

The Origins of the Text

For a concise, well-documented account of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, see the introduction to Royal Skousen and Robin Scott Jensen, eds., *Revelations and Translations, Volume 3, Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2015), xi–xxviii. Michael Hubbard MacKay and Gerrit J. Dirkmaat's *From Darkness unto Light: Joseph Smith's Translation and Publication of the Book of Mormon* (Provo and Salt Lake City: BYU Religious Studies Center and Deseret Book, 2015) offers more details. The relevant primary sources are reproduced in Larry E. Morris, ed., *Documentary History of the Book of Mormon* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019); and Dan Vogel, ed., *Early Mormon Documents*, 5 vols. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996–2003). MacKay has written an essay on the physicality of the translation process that offers a useful counterpoint to the type of textual analysis found in this annotated edition; see his “Performing the Translation: Character Transcripts and Joseph Smith's Earliest Translation Practices,” in *Producing Ancient Scripture: Joseph Smith's Translation Projects in the Development of Mormon Christianity*, ed. Michael Hubbard MacKay, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Brian M. Hauglid (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2020), 81–104. Still influential is D. Michael Quinn's groundbreaking *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998), 136–211. Richard Lyman Bushman helpfully summarized various nineteenth-century responses to the new scripture in “The Book of Mormon and Its Critics,” in his *Believing History: Latter-day Saint History*, ed. Reid L. Neilson and Jed Woodworth (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 107–42. For the story of the production of the Book of Mormon within the context of Smith's entire life, see his *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Knopf, 2005), chs. 2–4. Bushman's is the most useful biography from a faithful yet critical point of view. The best critical yet sympathetic account of Smith's early years is

Dan Vogel, *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004). Vogel's book is unique and significant for the way it connects the events of Smith's life with a comprehensive reading of the Book of Mormon. Ann Taves provides some intriguing parallels, from a naturalistic perspective, in *Revelatory Events: Three Case Studies of the Emergence of New Spiritual Paths* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016). In 2013, the LDS Church released an official Gospel Topics Essay, "Book of Mormon Translation," that explicitly acknowledged Joseph Smith's use of a seer stone (the essay is accessible at churchofjesuschrist.org).

The Transmission and Language of the Text

The most important scholar of the textual history of the Book of Mormon is Royal Skousen, an emeritus professor of linguistics at Brigham Young University. His Book of Mormon Critical Text Project, over the course of thirty-five years, has produced exact transcriptions of the original and printer's manuscripts, a reconstruction of the text as it was first dictated, multiple volumes analyzing the textual variants in the manuscripts and twenty significant editions, as well as detailed descriptions of the book's grammar, spelling, and lengthy biblical quotations. His Critical Text series, all published under the auspices of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS), consists of *The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon* (2001); *The Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon*, 2 vols. (2001); *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon*, 6 vols., 2nd ed. (2017); and *The History of the Text of the Book of Mormon*, 8 vols. (2016–23). Skousen has also worked with Robin Jenson to produce photographic reproductions and transcripts of the original and printer's manuscripts for the Joseph Smith Papers project as vols. 3 and 4 of *Revelations and Translations* (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2015, 2021). His scholarly reconstruction of the text as first dictated, which is essential for any academic studies of Book of Mormon language, was published as *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* in 2009 by Yale University Press, with a second edition in 2022 that includes an appendix listing 724 significant textual changes. While Skousen's full publications are on a monumental scale, two relatively brief articles can give readers a sense of his methods and the significance of his discoveries for Latter-day Saints: "Conjectural Emendation in the Book of Mormon," *FARMS Review* 18, no. 1 (2006): 187–231; and "Some Textual Changes for a Scholarly Study of the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 51, no. 4 (2012): 99–117. Different LDS approaches, which tend to emphasize Smith's creative role in the translation process, can be found in Samuel Morris Brown, *Joseph Smith's Translation: The Words and Worlds of Early Mormonism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020); and Michael Hubbard MacKay, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Brian M. Hauglid, eds., *Producing Ancient Scripture: Joseph Smith's Translation Projects in the Development of Mormon Christianity* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2020).

The Book of Mormon and the Bible

For an overview of the Bible in LDS thought, see Philip L. Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible: The Place of the Latter-day Saints in American Religion*, updated edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), though the brief section on the language of the Book of Mormon (pp. 26–33) has been superseded by Royal Skousen's Critical Text Project. Skousen's *History of the Text of the Book of Mormon: The King James Quotations in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2019) provides a comprehensive treatment of the lengthy biblical quotations, including side-by-side comparisons. David P. Wright takes a careful, critical look at the quoted Isaiah passages in "Isaiah in the Book of Mormon: Or Joseph Smith in Isaiah," in *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon*, ed. Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 157–234.

Wright's analysis can be contrasted with the traditional LDS approaches found in Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch, eds., *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998); and his examination of the interaction between passages in Alma and Hebrews is particularly astute: "In Plain Terms that We May Understand": Joseph Smith's Transformation of Hebrews in Alma 12–13," in *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, ed. Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993), 165–229. Mark D. Thomas offered a preliminary analysis of biblical allusions in "A Mosaic for a Religious Counterculture: The Bible in the Book of Mormon," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 29, no. 4 (1996): 47–68; while Nicholas J. Frederick provided a broad overview in "The Bible and the Book of Mormon: A Review of Literature," *JBMS* 28 (2019): 205–36. Frederick's three articles on textual interactions between the Book of Mormon and the New Testament, published in the 2015, 2018, and 2021 issues of the *JBMS*, develop his own interpretation. A strong example of a comparative study can be seen in an article cowritten by Nicholas J. Frederick and Joseph M. Spencer, "John 11 in the Book of Mormon," *Journal of the Bible and Its Reception* 5, no. 1 (2018): 81–106. On the intersection of Margaret Barker's theories and Book of Mormon studies, see Kevin Christensen, "The Temple, the Monarchy, and Wisdom: Lehi's World and the Scholarship of Margaret Barker," in *Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem*, ed. John W. Welch, David Rolph Seely, and Jo Ann H. Seely (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2004), 449–522. Probably the first instance of a prominent biblical scholar reading a section of the Book of Mormon generously was Krister Stendahl, "The Sermon on the Mount and Third Nephi," in *Reflections on Mormonism: Judeo-Christian Parallels*, ed. Truman G. Madsen (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1978), 139–54. The same topic was taken up at much greater length by John W. Welch in his *Illuminating the Sermons at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999). Several of the essays in Taylor G. Petrey, Cory Crawford, and Eric A. Eliason, *The Bible and the Latter-day Saint Tradition* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2022), touch on biblical connections to the Book of Mormon, as does the whole of Charles Swift and Nicholas J. Frederick, eds., *They Shall Grow Together: The Bible in the Book of Mormon* (Provo and Salt Lake City: BYU Religious Studies Center and Deseret Book, 2022).

Book of Mormon Theology

Many LDS publications address theological principles from the Book of Mormon, but they tend toward paraphrase and harmonization with current LDS teachings rather than critical analysis. As of yet, there are no academic books devoted to Book of Mormon theology. Thomas F. O'Dea's pioneering overview in *The Mormons* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 26–40, from a non-LDS perspective, is still worth reading and continues to be influential. Charles R. Harrell usually includes a few sentences about the Book of Mormon in the "Early Mormonism" sections of his topically arranged compilation *"This Is My Doctrine": The Development of Mormon Theology* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2011), though his treatment is limited by both space and formatting. More in-depth analyses of particular Book of Mormon teachings, generally in comparison with nineteenth-century Christian thought, include two essays by Clyde D. Ford: "Lehi on the Great Issues: Book of Mormon Theology in Early Nineteenth-Century Perspective," *Dialogue* 38, vol. 4 (2005): 75–96; and "The Book of Mormon, the Early Nineteenth-Century Debates over Universalism, and the Development of the Novel Mormon Doctrines of Ultimate Rewards and Punishments," *Dialogue* 47, no. 1 (2014): 1–23. Also significant is Dan Vogel, "Anti-Universalist Rhetoric in the Book of Mormon" and Melodie Moench Charles, "Book of Mormon Christology," both in *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, ed. Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993). Because that volume took a secular naturalistic approach,

conservative LDS scholars offered spirited responses to these and other chapters in the 1994–95 issues of the *FARMS Review of Books*. Three essays taking up broad theological themes in the Book of Mormon are Heather Hardy, “The Double Nature of God’s Saving Work: The Plan of Salvation and Salvation History,” in *The Things Which My Father Saw*, ed. Daniel L. Belnap, Gaye Strathearn, and Stanley A. Johnson (Provo and Salt Lake City: BYU Religious Studies Center and Deseret Book, 2011), 15–36; Noel B. Reynolds, “The Gospel According to Mormon,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 68, no. 2 (2015): 218–34; and Terryl L. Givens, “The Book of Mormon and the Reshaping of Covenant,” in *Americanist Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, ed. Elizabeth Fenton and Jared Hickman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 341–62. In 2020–21, the Maxwell Institute at Brigham Young University produced a series of twelve small volumes titled *The Book of Mormon: Brief Theological Introductions*. Each installment is written by a different author (predominantly professors at BYU), and treats a different book within the Book of Mormon.

Lived Religion in the Book of Mormon

LDS writings on these topics are generally devotional rather than academic, though related topics explored from a scholarly perspective can be seen in Bryan R. Warnick, Benjamin A. Johnson, and Sang Hyun Kim, “Hospitality in the Book of Mormon,” *Dialogue* 47, no. 1 (2014): 24–47. Avram R. Shannon helpfully disentangles priesthood among the Nephites from contemporary LDS concepts in his “After Whose Order: Kingship and Priesthood in the Book of Mormon,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (2021): 75–91. For nuanced treatments of race and racial discourse in the Book of Mormon, see Jared Hickman, “The Book of Mormon as Amerindian Apocalypse,” *American Literature* 86, no. 3 (2014): 429–61; Max Perry Mueller, *Race and the Making of the Mormon People* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 31–59; and Peter Coviello, “How the Mormons Became White: Scripture, Sex, Sovereignty,” in *Americanist Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, ed. Elizabeth Fenton and Jared Hickman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 259–76. Carol Lynn Pearson’s provocative 1996 *Sunstone* essay “Could Feminism Have Saved the Nephites?” has been republished in *Mormon Feminism: Essential Writings*, ed. Joanna Brooks, Rachel Hunt Steenblik, and Hannah Wheelwright (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 174–78. Something of a response can be seen in Camille S. Williams, “Women in the Book of Mormon: Inclusion, Exclusion, and Interpretation,” *JBMS* 11, no. 1 (2002): 66–79. A review article by Joseph M. Spencer places these within a broader context: “The Presentation of Gender in the Book of Mormon: A Review of Literature,” *JBMS* 29 (2020): 231–63. David Charles Gore explores Nephite politics in *The Voice of the People: Political Rhetoric in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2019). Stephen D. Ricks and William J. Hamblin provide a comprehensive background on war and peace in their edited volume *Warfare in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1990), though several chapters take an apologetic approach intended to show continuities with ancient Near Eastern or Mesoamerican cultures. Various readings of the war chapters, along with modern applications, can be found in Patrick Q. Mason, J. David Pulsipher, and Richard L. Bushman, eds., *War and Peace in Our Time: Mormon Perspectives* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2012).

The Book of Mormon and the Latter-day Saints

The best studies of Latter-day Saint responses to the Book of Mormon are Terryl L. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); and Paul C. Gutjahr, *The Book of*

Mormon: A Biography (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012). Steven C. Harper makes insightful observations about the sort of people who responded positively to the Book of Mormon in “Infallible Proofs, Both Human and Divine: The Persuasiveness of Mormonism for Early Converts,” *Religion and American Culture* 10, no. 1 (2000): 99–118; and Janiece Johnson provides numerous examples of how early Latter-day Saints interacted with the new scripture in “Becoming a People of the Books: Toward an Understanding of Early Mormon Converts and the New Word of the Lord,” *JBMS* 27 (2018): 1–43. For an overview of LDS eschatology, including the role played by the Book of Mormon, see Grant Underwood, *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993). The works of George Reynolds and B. H. Roberts are easily accessible online, though the latter’s originally unpublished, more critical assessment can be found in his *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, ed. Brigham D. Madsen (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985). Noel B. Reynolds brings together a wealth of sources in “The Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon in the Twentieth Century,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 38, no. 2 (1999): 6–47. John-Charles Duffy offers an ambitious, provocative recounting of the intersection of LDS scholars and culture in “Defending the Kingdom, Rethinking the Faith: How Apologetics Is Reshaping Mormon Orthodoxy,” *Sunstone*, May 2004, 22–55. For the shifting understandings of the terms “Gentile,” “Israelite,” and “Lamanite” in LDS discourse, see Armand L. Mauss, *All Abraham’s Children: Changing Mormon Conceptions of Race and Lineage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003); and John-Charles Duffy, “The Use of ‘Lamanite’ in Official LDS Discourse,” *Journal of Mormon History* 34, no. 1 (2008): 118–67. Avi Steinberg puts forward a lighthearted, outsider’s perspective of some of the ways the Mormon scripture has influenced the lives of believers in *The Lost Book of Mormon* (New York: Doubleday, 2014). Daniel Becerra, Amy Easton-Flake, Nicholas J. Frederick, and Joseph M. Spencer’s *Book of Mormon Studies: An Introduction and Guide* (Provo and Salt Lake City: BYU Religious Studies Center and Deseret Book, 2022) reviews for Latter-day Saints the history and current state of the field; it also offers a window into Book of Mormon–related tensions, anxieties, and aspirations among LDS scholars today.

The Book of Mormon in American History

Signature Books has long published nontraditional studies of LDS history, many of which have made significant contributions to Book of Mormon studies, including Dan Vogel’s *Indian Origins and the Book of Mormon* (1986); Robert N. Hullinger’s *Joseph Smith’s Response to Skepticism* (1992); D. Michael Quinn’s *Mormonism and the Magic World View* (rev. ed., 1998); and Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe’s edited volume *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon* (2002). To name just a few influential journal articles: Grant Underwood’s “The Earliest Reference Guides to the Book of Mormon: Windows into the Past,” *Journal of Mormon History* 12 (1985): 69–89, on early LDS interpretations of their new scripture; G. St. John Stott’s “New Jerusalem Abandoned: The Failure to Carry Mormonism to the Delaware,” *Journal of American Studies* 21, no. 1 (1987): 71–85, which describes the unconventional nature of early Mormon attitudes toward Native Americans; and Paul Gutjahr’s “The Golden Bible in the Bible’s Golden Age: The Book of Mormon and Antebellum Print Culture,” *ATQ: 19th Century American Religion and Culture* 12, no. 4 (1998): 275–93, which sets the publication of the Book of Mormon in a history of books context. Volumes on various aspects of American history that devote significant space to the Book of Mormon include Kenneth H. Winn’s *Exiles in a Land of Liberty* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), with a chapter titled “The Book of Mormon as a Republican Document”; David F. Holland’s *Sacred Borders: Continuing Revelation and Canonical*

Restraint in Early America (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Seth Perry's *Biblical Culture and Authority in the Early United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018); and Elizabeth Fenton's *Old Canaan in a New World: Native Americans and the Lost Tribes of Israel* (New York: New York University Press, 2020), with a chapter that follows up on her "Open Canons: Sacred History and American History in The Book of Mormon," *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists* 1, no. 2 (2013): 339–61. Nathan O. Hatch reads the Book of Mormon as "a document of profound social protest" in his influential *Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 113–22. Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp's *American Scriptures: An Anthology of Sacred Writings* (New York: Penguin, 2010) offers excerpts from the Book of Mormon and several other books discussed in Stephen J. Stein's "America's Bibles: Canon, Commentary, and Community," *Church History* 64, no. 2 (1995): 169–84. And finally, Elizabeth Fenton and Jared Hickman's *Americanist Approaches to the Book of Mormon* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019) brings together LDS and non-LDS scholars with a wide variety of interests and perspectives.

The Book of Mormon as Literature

Many of the observations in this essay are developed in greater detail in Grant Hardy's *Understanding the Book of Mormon: A Reader's Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010). *JBMS* 16 (2016) features a number of articles written in response to Hardy's book by Latter-day Saints, a member of the Community of Christ, and non-Mormons. Earlier treatments of the Book of Mormon as literature, aimed at LDS audiences, include Richard Dilworth Rust, *Feasting on the Word: The Literary Testimony of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997); and Hugh W. Pinnock, *Finding Biblical Hebrew and Other Ancient Literary Forms in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999). From a more religiously neutral point of view, Mark D. Thomas's *Digging in Cumorah: Reclaiming Book of Mormon Narratives* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999) makes important points about narrative forms, or type-scenes, in the Mormon scripture, noting precedents in both the Bible and nineteenth-century religious culture. A case where the Book of Mormon imitates a biblical form particularly well is discussed in Matthew Nickerson, "Nephi's Psalm: 2 Nephi 4:16–35 in the Light of Form-Critical Analysis," *JBMS* 6, no. 2 (1997): 26–42. The topic of chiasmus comes up often in LDS discussions of the Book of Mormon as literature, due to its apologetic function and the extensive writings of John W. Welch. Welch has edited *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structures, Analyses, Exegesis* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 1988), which includes a chapter on the Book of Mormon and offers a comparative perspective, while keeping the focus firmly on the ancient world. Brent Metcalfe provides counterarguments in his "Apologetic and Critical Assumptions about Book of Mormon Historicity," *Dialogue* 26, no. 3 (1993): 153–84. Two exemplary essays from non-LDS perspectives are Laura Thiemann Scales, "'The Writing of the Fruit of Thy Loins': Reading, Writing, and Prophecy," on the role of prophet-narrators in the scripture; and R. John Williams, "The Ghost and the Machine: Plates and Paratext in *The Book of Mormon*," on the difficulties of bracketing religious and historical claims when undertaking literary analysis. Both appear in *Americanist Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, ed. Elizabeth Fenton and Jared Hickman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

Reading the Book of Mormon as Ancient History

After the groundbreaking work of Sydney Sperry and Hugh Nibley, scholarly LDS defenses of the historicity of the Book of Mormon gained even more prominence in the 1980s and 1990s.

John L. Sorenson's Mesoamerican limited geography model was introduced in *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (Provo and Salt Lake City: FARMS and Deseret Book, 1985), which was followed by several related books, notably *Images of Ancient America: Visualizing Book of Mormon Life* (1998); *Mormon's Map* (2000); and an expanded, updated explication of his theory in *Mormon's Codex: An Ancient American Book* (2013), all published by FARMS or the Maxwell Institute. Another influential analysis of Book of Mormon geography was John E. Clark, "A Key for Evaluating Nephite Geographies (Review of *Deciphering the Geography of the Book of Mormon* by F. Richard Hauck)," *FARMS Review of Books* 1, no. 1 (1989): 20–70. David R. Hocking and Rod L. Meldrum have reproduced the full scriptural text with lavish illustrations and explanations drawn from the heartland model in their *Annotated Edition of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Digital Legend Press, 2018). Convenient compilations of apologetic arguments include Noel B. Reynolds, ed., *Book of Mormon Authorship: New Light on Ancient Origins* (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1982); Noel B. Reynolds, ed., *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited: The Evidences for Ancient Origins* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1997); and Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and John W. Welch, eds., *Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2002). Critical perspectives can be found in Brent Lee Metcalfe, ed., *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon: Explorations in Critical Methodology* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993); Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe, eds., *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002); and Simon Southerton, *Losing a Lost Tribe: Native Americans, DNA, and the Mormon Church* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004). Debates over Book of Mormon historicity have continued into the twenty-first century, but mostly online, with fewer carefully researched books. One exception is Brant A. Gardner's *Traditions of the Fathers: The Book of Mormon as History* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2015), which offers refinements of Sorenson's Mesoamerican hypothesis. For a recent defense of zoological anachronisms, see Wade E. Miller and Matthew Roper, "Animals in the Book of Mormon: Challenges and Perspectives," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 56, no. 4 (2017): 133–75. Also noteworthy are two official statements by the LDS Church, both of which can be found at churchofjesuschrist.org. The first is a Gospel Topics essay titled "Book of Mormon and DNA Studies" (2014), and the second is a Gospel Topics entry, "Book of Mormon Geography" (2019), which states that "the Church's only position [on geography] is that the events the Book of Mormon describes took place in the ancient Americas."

Reading the Book of Mormon as Fiction

The most comprehensive attempt to read the Book of Mormon as fiction stemming from the life and imagination of Smith is Dan Vogel's *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004). Paul C. Gutjahr situates the Mormon scripture among novels inspired by the Bible in *An American Bible: A History of the Good Book in the United States, 1777–1880* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999). Anthony A. Hutchinson was one of the first people to suggest that the story of the Nephites might be both fictional and religiously authoritative in "The Word of God Is Enough: The Book of Mormon as Nineteenth-Century Scripture," in *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon: Explorations in Critical Methodology*, ed. Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 1993), 1–19. The essays collected in Paul Y. Hoskisson, ed., *Historicity and the Latter-day Saint Scriptures* (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2001) provide a useful overview of the objections that traditional Latter-day Saints have raised in response to theories of the Book of Mormon being "inspired fiction." On the other hand, two apostles from Community of Christ, Dale E. Luffman and Alan D. Tyree, have attempted to flesh

out that hypothesis in their respective volumes *The Book of Mormon's Witness to Its First Readers* and *Millions Call It Scripture: The Book of Mormon in the 21st Century*, both published by the Community of Christ Seminary Press in 2013. Readers new to the conversation about reconciling critical scholarship and faith could begin with Mark Zvi Brettler, Peter Enns, and Daniel J. Harrington, *The Bible and the Believer: How to Read the Bible Critically and Religiously* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), which approaches the question from Jewish, Protestant, and Catholic perspectives. Additional voices and details can be found in Luke Timothy Johnson and William Kurz, *The Future of Catholic Biblical Scholarship: A Constructive Conversation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002); and Christopher M. Hays and Christopher B. Ansberry, eds., *Evangelical Faith and the Challenge of Historical Criticism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013). The best introduction for Latter-day Saints is the forum on faith and biblical scholarship that appeared in *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity* (a journal published by BYU's Maxwell Institute) 18 (2016), which put LDS biblical scholars in dialogue with James Kugel, Candida Moss, and Peter Enns, representing Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant traditions, respectively.

Reading the Book of Mormon as Revealed Scripture

The Conservative Jewish *Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary* (New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 2001) provides a brilliant example of combining historical-critical and devotional approaches to scripture. It employs two parallel commentaries—a *pesbat* based on contemporary scholarship, and a *derash* that draws upon centuries of Jewish commentators interpreting and arguing about religious meaning of the sacred text. Intended for liturgical use in synagogues, it is both reverential and intellectually engaged. Oxford University Press's *Jewish Study Bible* (2nd ed., 2014) and *Catholic Study Bible* (3rd ed., 2016) are similarly noteworthy. Impressive scholarship and deep devotion are also on display in the *Study Qur'an: A New Translation and Commentary*, edited by Seyyed Hossein Nasr (New York: HarperOne, 2015), though the genre of the Islamic scripture and the theological commitments of its commentators result in fewer tensions with the historical-critical method. Detailed critical readings of the Book of Mormon have not yet been undertaken, with the exception of Royal Skousen's *Analysis of Textual Variants*. A. Bruce Lindgren offers some preliminary thoughts on reading the Book of Mormon as scripture, from a Community of Christ point of view, in his "Sign or Scripture: Approaches to the Book of Mormon," *Dialogue* 19, no. 1 (1986): 69–75.

Reading the Book of Mormon as World Scripture

This subject has been underexplored in both Mormon Studies and Religious Studies scholarship. There are ample starting points, such as Miriam Levering, ed., *Rethinking Scripture: Essays from a Comparative Perspective* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989); and Wilfred Cantwell Smith's magisterial *What Is Scripture: A Comparative Approach* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), but the only collection of essays that includes a chapter on the Latter-day Saints is Frederick M. Denny and Rodney L. Taylor, eds., *The Holy Book in Comparative Perspective* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1985). Even there, the essay's author, Kent P. Jackson, simply presents an LDS perspective rather than engaging in comparative work. Most of the chapters in Blair G. Van Dyke, Brian D. Birch, and Boyd J. Petersen, eds., *The Expanded Canon: Perspectives on Mormonism and Sacred Texts* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2018) are not explicitly comparative, though they do discuss LDS scripture in ways that lend themselves to interreligious dialogue. Recent pertinent articles suggesting possible avenues for future study include Joseph M. Spencer, "Christ

and Krishna: The Visions of Arjuna and the Brother of Jared,” *JBMS* 23 (2014): 56–80; and D. Morgan Davis, “Prophets and Prophecy in the Qur’an and the Book of Mormon,” *JBMS* 29 (2020): 50–84. For Latter-day Saints curious about what it might be like for people with no background in the Bible to read the Book of Mormon, Ravi M. Gupta and Kenneth R. Valpey’s translation of *The Bhagavata Purana: Selected Readings* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017) introduces a lengthy sacred text with multiple narrators and levels of narration, a complex structure, unfamiliar literary conventions, and a profusion of characters illustrating religious concepts deeply rooted in a faith tradition that includes centuries of theological reflection and commentaries. Their admirable, accessible editing can serve as a reminder of the importance of expert insiders in helping new readers make sense of other people’s scriptures.

A final note, particularly for Latter-day Saints. When reviewing or engaging in arguments about the origin, meaning, and significance of the Book of Mormon, it may be useful to keep in mind an observation from the Mishnah that “a controversy for heaven’s sake will have lasting value, but a controversy not for heaven’s sake will not endure,” citing the debates of Hillel and Shammai as an example of the former (*Pirkei Avot* 5.19). Later rabbis noted that even though those two schools strongly disagreed with each other, they nevertheless remained friends, were kindly and modest, listened carefully to the opposing side, prioritized their rivals’ arguments, were open to changing their minds, and in their disputations sought truth rather than victory.

MAPS AND CHARTS

1. Possible Routes of Lehi's Journey



This map shows possible routes of Lehi and his family from Jerusalem to Bountiful. Their journey through difficult and dry terrain would have generally followed the ancient incense route on the western edge of Arabia until they reached a place called Nahom, after which they traveled “nearly eastward” (1 Ne 17.1). Several locations on the coast of the Dhofar region of southern Oman have been suggested as possibilities for Bountiful, where they built a ship to sail to the New World. These surprisingly verdant sites offered the timber, ore, food supplies, and ocean access necessary for such an undertaking. For more details, see the special issue of the Journal of Book of Mormon Studies 15, no. 2 (2006). Adapted from Parry, Peterson, and Welch, Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon, courtesy of the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship.

2. “Mormon’s Map”

“Mormon’s Map”

LEGEND

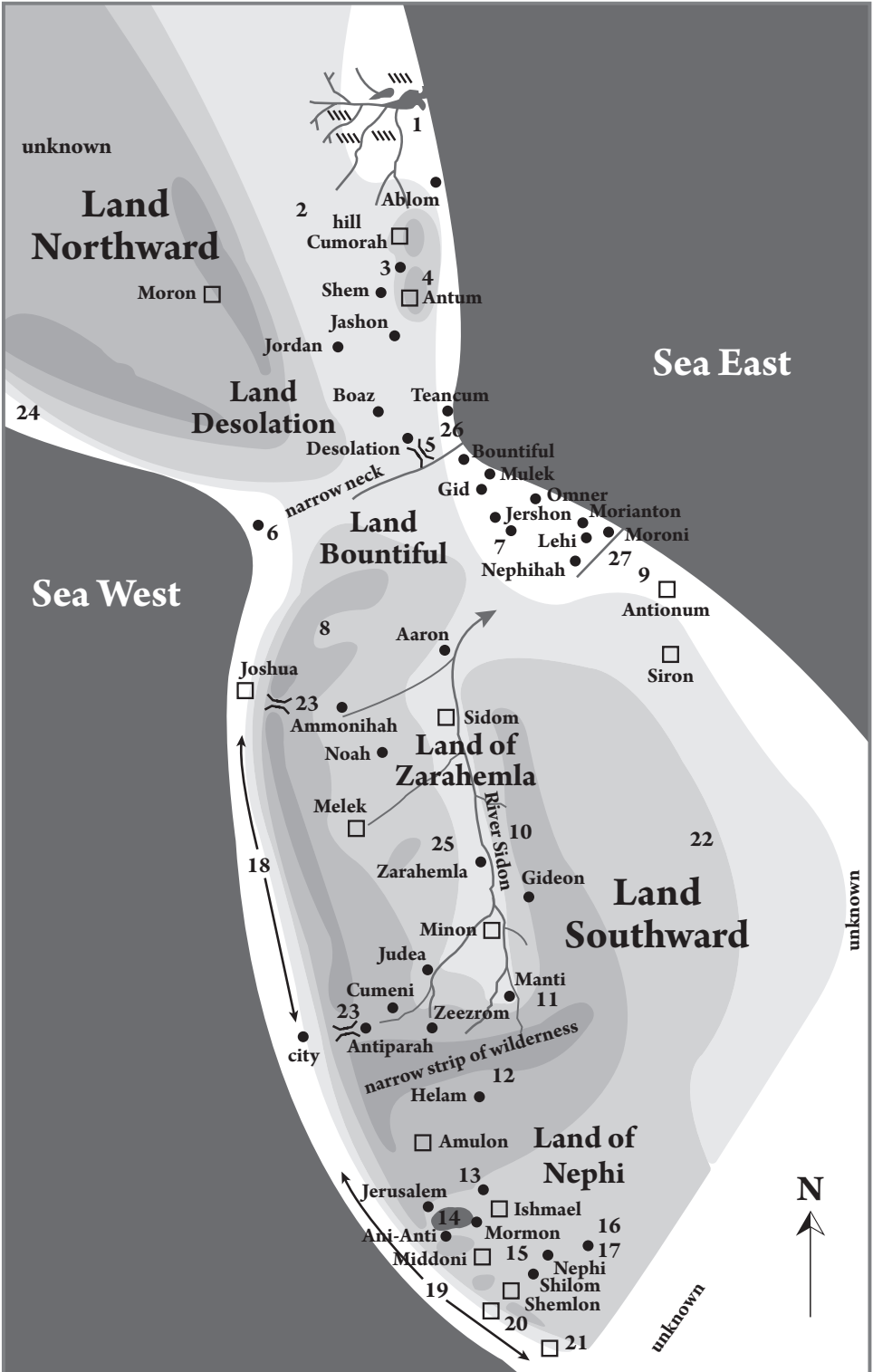
- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. waters of Ripliancum | 15. hill north of Shilom |
| 2. limit of Nephite retreat | 16. mount Antipas |
| 3. Shiz’s death; plates left | 17. place Onidah |
| 4. hill Shim | 18. wilderness on the west of the land Zarahemla |
| 5. narrow pass or passage | 19. wilderness on the west of the land of Nephi |
| 6. Hagoth’s shipbuilding site | 20. Lamanite king’s land |
| 7. Moroni ₁ ’s camp | 21. land of the first inheritance |
| 8. Nephites’ refuge between the land Bountiful and the land of Zarahemla (see 3 Nephi 3.23, 25) | 22. wilderness (see Alma 43.22) |
| 9. hill Onidah | 23. mountain pass (twice) |
| 10. hill Amnihu | 24. Hagoth’s likely destination |
| 11. hill Riplah | 25. wilderness of Hermounts |
| 12. valley of Alma | 26. “line” between Desolation and Bountiful |
| 13. dispersal point of the sons of Mosiah ₂ | 27. defense “line” |
| 14. waters of Mormon | |

- settlement
- land, no city mentioned
- ⎵ mountain pass
- ≡ swamp

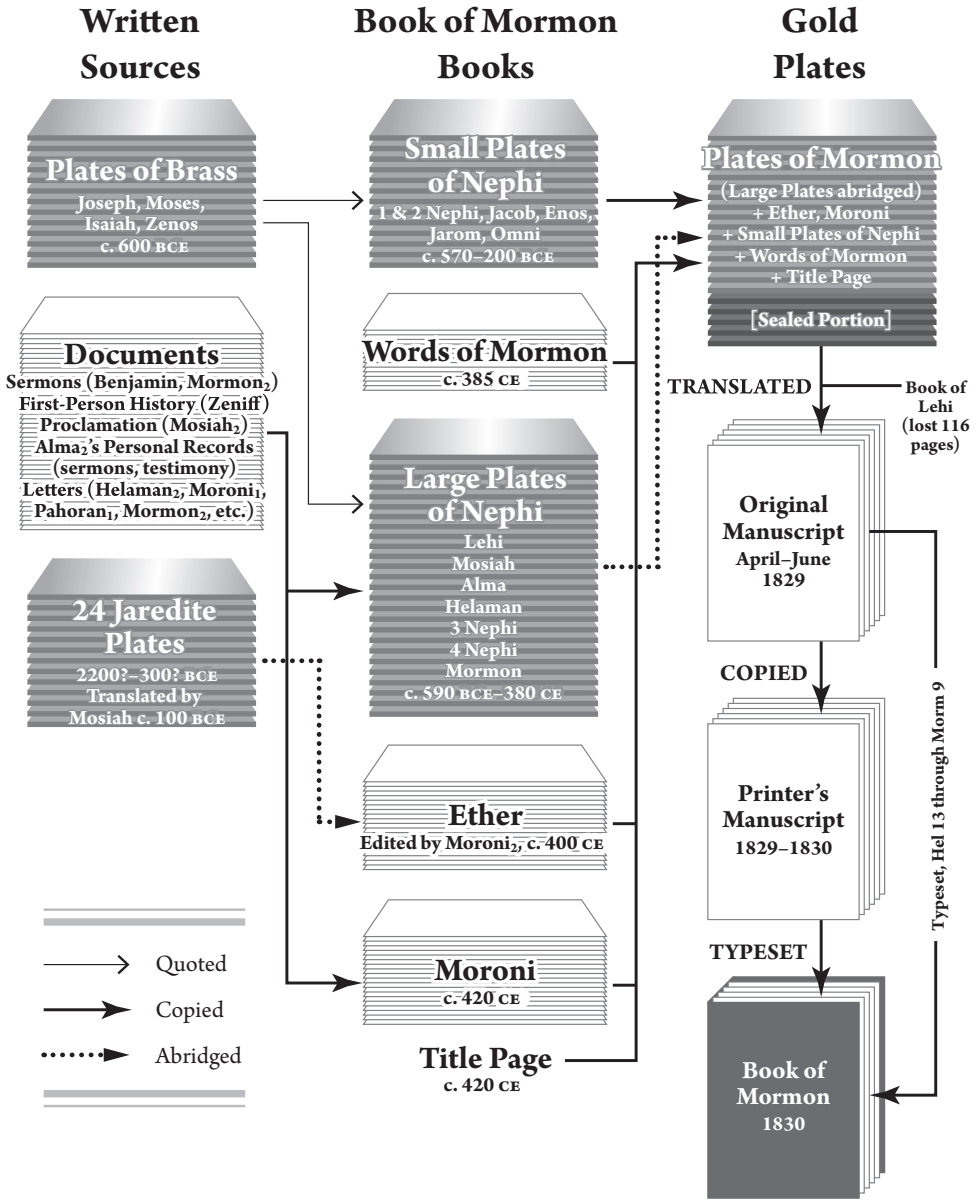
River tributaries illustrative only.

Darker area indicates higher elevation.

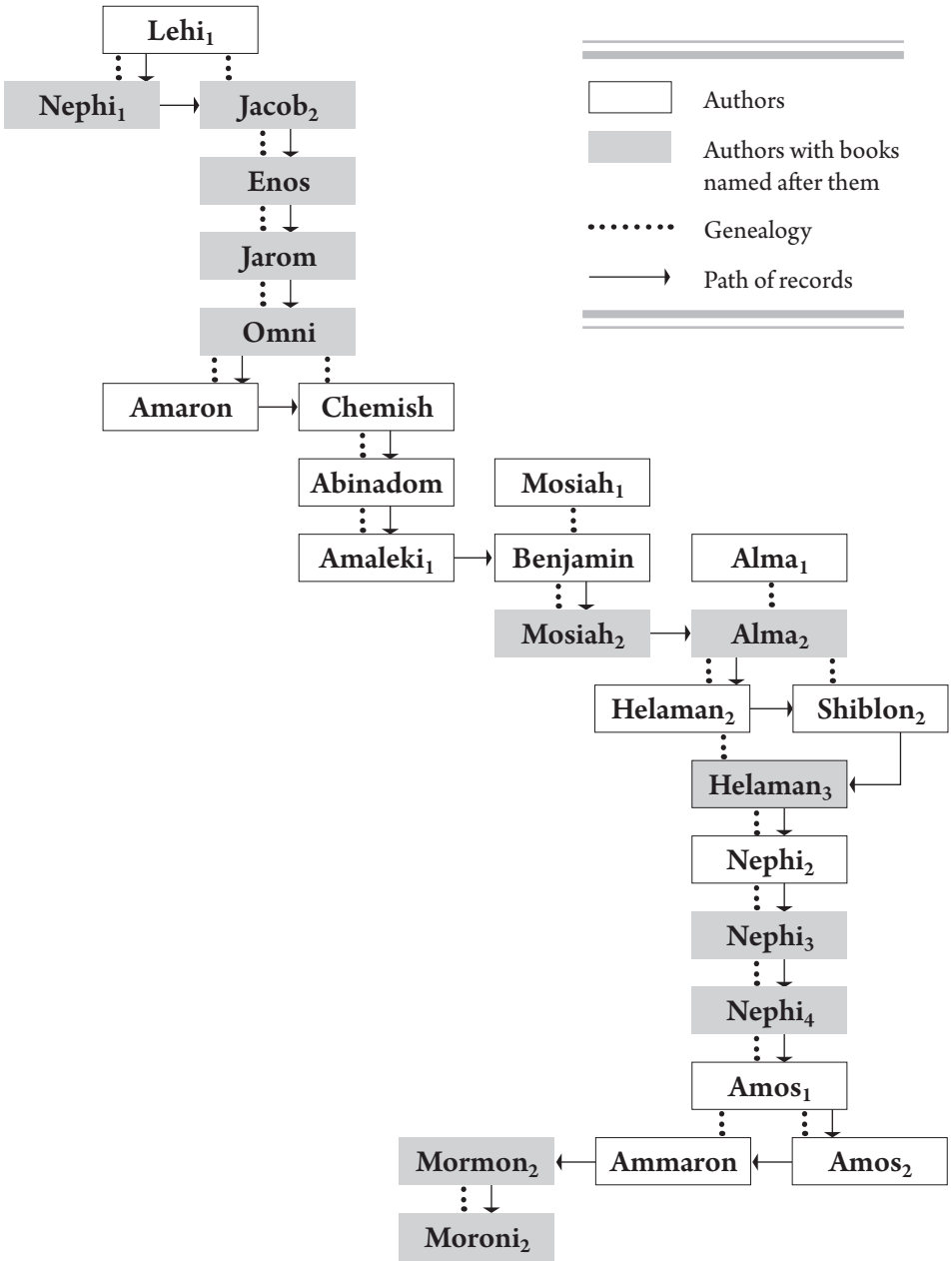
This reconstruction of Book of Mormon lands is taken from John L. Sorenson, Mormon’s Map, courtesy of the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship. It offers one of the most plausible and influential arrangements of Nephite and Lamanite geographical features based on all the information in the text. For an alternative map that is similarly based on the internal geographical references in the text, produced by a team at Brigham Young University, see <http://virtuallscriptures.org/book-of-mormon-map/>. For a detailed analysis of the considerations that go into such maps, see John E. Clark, “Revisiting ‘A Key for Evaluating Book of Mormon Geographies,’” Mormon Studies Review 23, no. 1 (2011): 13–43.



3. Book of Mormon Plates and Records



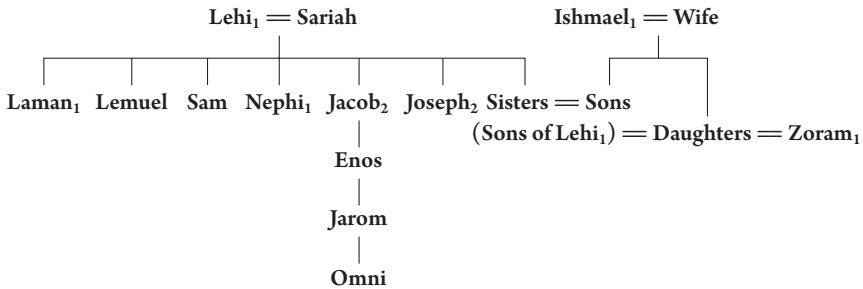
4. Record Keepers in the Book of Mormon



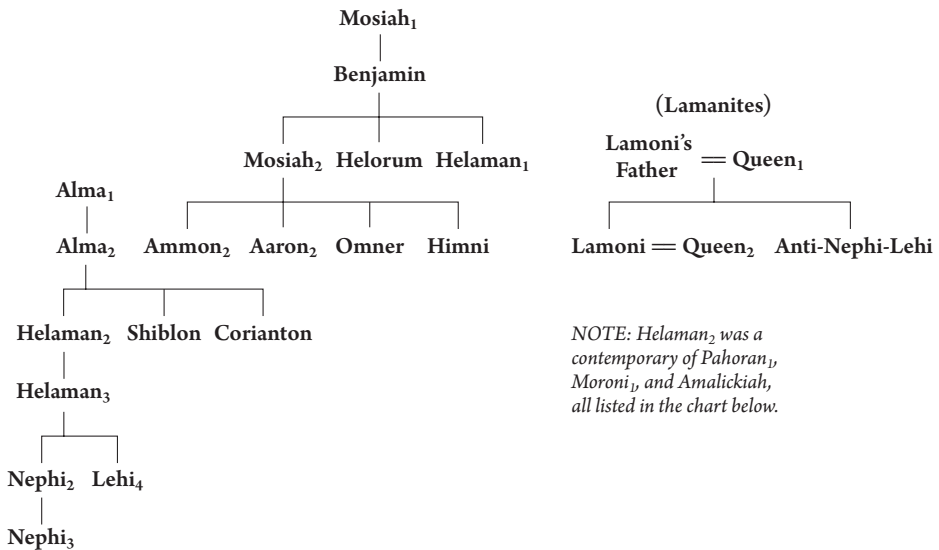
Adapted from John W. Welch and J. Gregory Welch, Charting the Book of Mormon, courtesy of the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship.

5. Key Families in the Book of Mormon

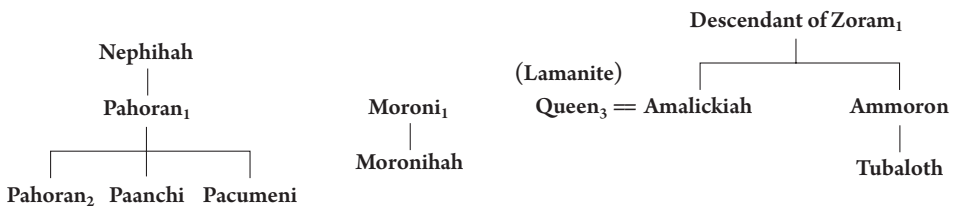
1 600–130 BCE



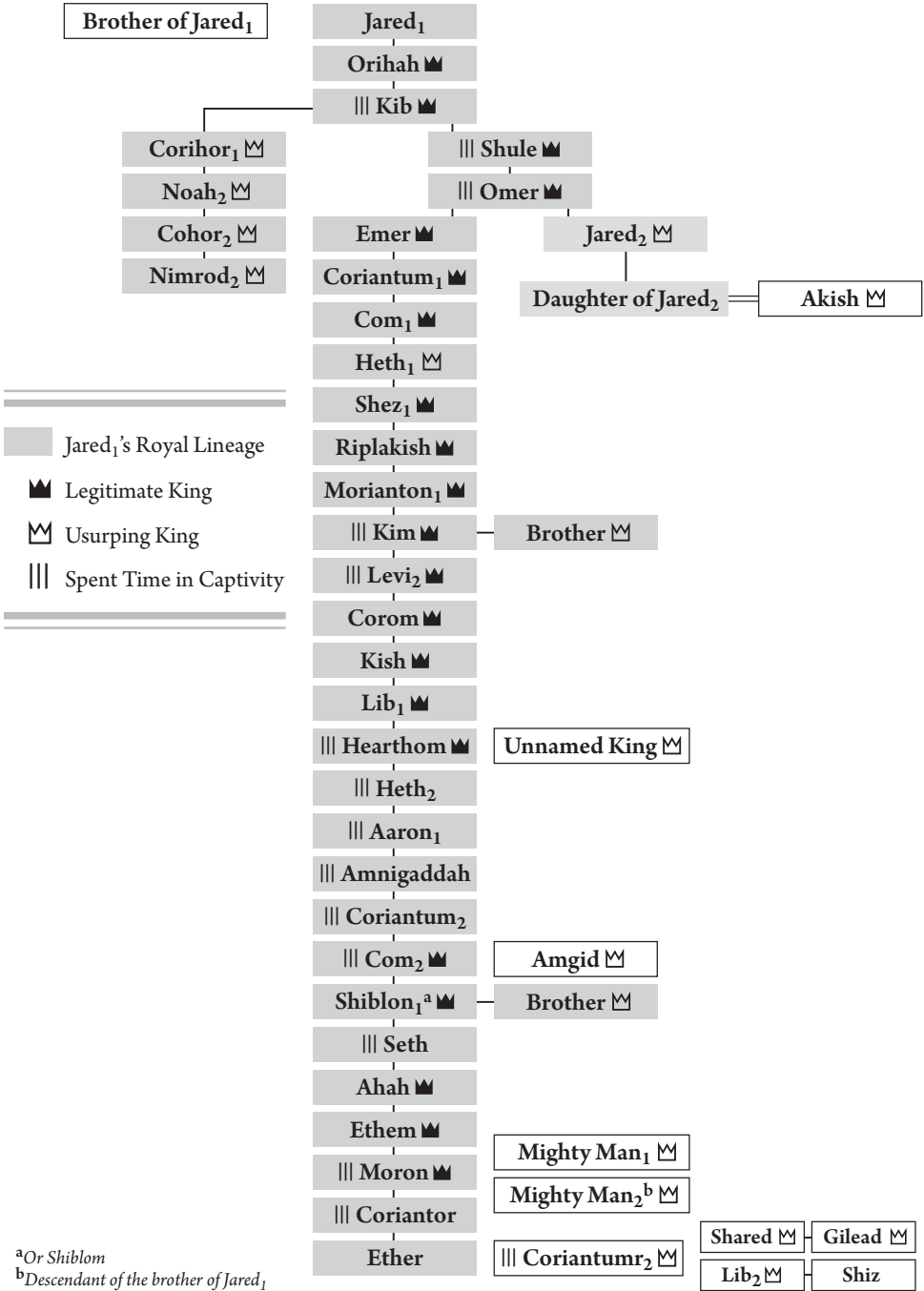
2 180 BCE–30 CE



3 80–50 BCE



6. Jaredite Kings



7. Timeline of Nephite History

Dates ¹	Key Events	Major Figures
————— 1 Nephi to Jarom —————		
600 BCE	Lehi ₁ 's family leaves Jerusalem	Lehi ₁ , Sariah, Laman ₁ ,
590 BCE	They arrive in the New World. Mulek and his party also sail to the New World about this time.	Lemuel, Nephi ₁
570 BCE	The Nephites and Lamanites divide. Nephi ₁ is made king; Jacob ₂ is consecrated as priest.	
550 BCE	“Second Nephi” becomes king.	Jacob ₂ , Sherem, Enos
•		
•		
•		
————— Omni to Words of Mormon —————		
220 BCE	Mosiah ₁ and his people flee and discover the Mulekite city of Zarahemla; the Nephites and Mulekites unite with Mosiah ₁ as their king.	Mosiah ₁
200 BCE	Zeniff establishes a Nephite colony in Lamanite territory.	Zeniff
————— Mosiah —————		
170 BCE	King Benjamin succeeds Mosiah ₁ .	Benjamin
150 BCE	In the colony, Abinadi is martyred and Alma ₁ is converted. Alma ₁ begins baptizing and establishes a Christian church in the wilderness.	Noah ₃ , Abinadi, Alma ₁
145 BCE	The colonists are enslaved by the Lamanites.	
125 BCE	King Mosiah ₂ succeeds Benjamin. The people of Limhi discover records of the Jaredites.	Mosiah ₂ Limhi
120 BCE	The colonists are rescued by Ammon ₁ and return to Zarahemla, as do Alma ₁ 's people. Alma ₁ organizes the church of God among the Nephites.	Ammon ₁ Amulon
100 BCE	Alma ₂ and the sons of Mosiah ₂ , formerly unbelievers, are converted by an angel.	
————— Alma —————		
90 BCE	The sons of Mosiah ₂ labor as missionaries among the Lamanites for fourteen years. The Nephite monarchy ends, and the reign of the judges begins with Alma ₂ as chief judge and high priest. The Amlicites rebel with Lamanite support.	Ammon ₂ , Aaron ₂ , Lamoni and his wife Alma ₂ , Nehor Amlici

¹ All dates are approximate.

Dates	Key Events	Major Figures
————— Alma —————		
85 BCE	Alma ₂ resigns his judgeship and preaches in several Nephite cities.	Nephihah, Amulek, Zeezrom
80 BCE	The Lamanites destroy Ammonihah.	
75 BCE	The sons of Mosiah ₂ return with their converts, the Anti-Nephi-Lehies, or the people of Ammon ₂ . Alma ₂ confronts Korihor and preaches to the Zoramites.	Anti-Nephi-Lehi Korihor
	Moroni ₁ leads the Nephites in the Zoramite war, in which the Zoramites join the Lamanites.	Moroni ₁ , Zerahemnah
	Amalickiah rebels; Moroni ₁ rallies Nephites around the title of liberty.	Amalickiah
	Amalickiah escapes to the Lamanites and becomes their king.	Lamanite Queen ₃
	The first Amalickiahite war (2 years) is fought. The Nephites build a line of fortified cities.	
70 BCE	A revolt in Morianton, combined with the rise of king-men and a Lamanite invasion, leads to the second Amalickiahite war (7 years).	Morianton ₂ , Pahoran ₁ , Lehi ₃ , Teancum, Ammoron
65 BCE	The war is fought on two fronts; Helaman ₂ leads the stripling warriors in battle; Moroni ₁ ousts the men of Pachus, who had taken over the capital.	Helaman ₂ , Pachus
55 BCE	After the war's conclusion, there is another short-lived invasion by the Lamanites.	Moronihah ₁
————— Helaman —————		
55 BCE	The chief judge Pahoran ₂ is assassinated.	Pahoran ₂ , Pacumeni,
50 BCE	The Lamanites briefly capture the city of Zarahemla.	Coriantumr ₃
	The Gadianton robbers arise.	Helaman ₃ , Kishkumen
	Many Nephites migrate northward.	
35 BCE	The Lamanites conquer half of the Nephite territories.	
30 BCE	Nephi ₂ and Lehi ₄ preach among both peoples and miraculously escape from a Lamanite prison. Massive conversions among the Lamanites lead them to return the lands they had conquered.	Nephi ₂ , Lehi ₄ , Cezoram
25 BCE	As the robbers make inroads among the Nephites, the Lamanites exceed the Nephites in righteousness.	
	The chief judge Seezoram is murdered; Nephi ₂ identifies the murderer.	Seezoram
15 BCE	Nephi ₂ prays for a famine; the people repent, but the robbers reemerge shortly thereafter.	
5 BCE	Samuel ₂ , the Lamanite preaches to the Nephites.	Samuel ₂

MAPS AND CHARTS

Dates	Key Events	Major Figures
3, 4 Nephi		
1 CE	Signs of the Savior's birth are seen in the New World.	Lachoneus ₁
10 CE	The Gadianton war begins (12 years).	Giddianhi, Gidgiddoni
30 CE	The church and Nephite government collapse. After cataclysmic destructions, Jesus Christ appears to the Nephites in Bountiful, ushering in a 200-year period of peace that unites Nephites and Lamanites.	Nephi ₃ , Jacob ₄ The resurrected Jesus Nephi ₃ , Nephi ₄
230 CE	The people divide once again into Nephites and Lamanites.	
260 CE	The robbers reappear.	
300 CE	Wickedness is widespread among all peoples.	Ammaron
Mormon		
325 CE	The Lamanites and robbers begin protracted warfare against the Nephites, which will drive them northward over the course of the next six decades.	Mormon ₂
350 CE	A treaty yields ten years of respite from fighting.	
360 CE	The warfare resumes.	
385 CE	The Nephites are completely destroyed by the Lamanites.	
Ether to Moroni		
400 CE	Moroni ₂ , now alone, completes his father's record.	Moroni ₂
420 CE	Moroni ₂ buries the gold plates.	

8. Chronology of the Translation

————— 1823 —————	
21 Sept	The angel Moroni first appears to Joseph Smith in his bedroom in Palmyra, NY.
22 Sept	Joseph discovers the gold plates buried in a hill not far from his home but is forbidden by the angel to remove them.
————— 1824–26 —————	
	For three consecutive years, Joseph meets the angel at the hill (later called Cumorah) on Sept 22.
————— 1827 —————	
18 Jan	Joseph marries Emma Hale.
22 Sept	Joseph, accompanied by Emma, returns to the hill and is given the plates and the interpreters (later referred to as the Urim and Thummim).
Dec	Joseph and Emma move to Harmony, PA, about 130 miles from Palmyra.
————— 1828 —————	
Feb	Martin Harris, a Palmyra neighbor, visits Joseph in Harmony and takes copies of some of the characters from the plates to scholars in New York City.
Mar (?)	Emma serves as Joseph's first scribe for his dictation of the translation.
12 April	Martin moves to Harmony to be Joseph's scribe. Joseph uses a seer stone to translate (also later referred to as the Urim and Thummim).
14 June	Martin receives permission to take about 116 pages of manuscript ("the Book of Lehi") back to Palmyra to show his wife. The manuscript is stolen.
15 June	Joseph and Emma's first child is born and dies within a few hours.
July	Joseph travels to Palmyra to inquire about Martin and the manuscript. He discovers the loss, is chastised in a revelation (DC 3), and Moroni takes back the plates and interpreters.
Sept (?)	Moroni returns the plates to Joseph.
————— 1829 —————	
Feb (?)	A few pages are translated, with Emma and Samuel Smith acting as scribes. The translation begins at the book of Mosiah, where the 116 pages had left off.
Mar	Joseph is commanded to stop translating for a while (DC 5).
————— 1829 —————	
5 April	Oliver Cowdery arrives in Harmony, offering to help with the translation, which now begins in earnest. Most of our current Book of Mormon is produced between April and June of 1829.
April	Oliver attempts to translate himself but is unsuccessful (DC 8–9).
Spring	Joseph receives a revelation (DC 10) telling him not to retranslate the lost material.

1829

- 15 May** Questions from the translation concerning baptism lead to the resurrected John the Baptist bestowing priesthood authority on Joseph and Oliver.
- early June** Joseph, Emma, and Oliver move to the Whitmer farm in Fayette, NY, to finish the translation. Some of the Whitmers occasionally act as scribes.
- 11 June** Joseph applies for the copyright to the Book of Mormon.
- late June** The three and eight witnesses see the plates. The translation is completed. The plates are returned to Moroni. E. B. Grandin declines to print the book.
- July** After a printer in Rochester shows interest in the project, Grandin reconsiders and agrees to print 5,000 copies for \$3,000.
- Aug** Oliver begins copying for the printer's manuscript. Typesetting commences.
- 25 Aug** Martin mortgages 151 acres of his farm to pay Grandin for the printing.
- 6 Nov** The copying for the printer's manuscript reaches Alma 36.

1830

- Jan** Joseph confronts Abner Cole over his unauthorized printing of excerpts.
- Feb** Oliver and Hiram Page travel to Canada to sell the Canadian copyright.
- 26 Mar** The Book of Mormon is available for purchase.
- 6 April** The restored Church of Christ is organized.

GLOSSARY

The definitions below, representing standard biblical scholarship, are adapted from other Oxford Study Bibles including the *Catholic Study Bible*, the *Jewish Annotated New Testament*, the *Jewish Study Bible*, and the *New Oxford Annotated Bible*, with a few additions of Latter-day Saint terms and people. The biblical quotations are taken from the NJPS and NRSV translations; Book of Mormon examples appear in brackets.

A

allegory An extended comparison, which directly describes one reality while indirectly describing something different. An allegory as a narrative uses action, setting, and characters to point symbolically to something else (see, e.g., the “Song of the Vineyard” in Isa 5; the parable of the sower in Mt 13.1–8, 18–23). [1 Ne 8; 15; Jacob 5]

anachronism An element in a story that is out of place because it did not exist at the time in which the story is set. Anachronisms can be valuable clues to when a narrative was written.

anadiplosis A word or phrase from the end of a line is repeated at the beginning of the next line. “The voice of the Lord convulses the wilderness; / the Lord convulses the wilderness of Kadesh” (Ps 29.7). [2 Ne 2.25; Alma 37.35; Morm 9.12–13; Moro 8.25–26]

anaphora The repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of successive lines or sentences. “As the eyes of slaves follow their master’s hand, / as the eyes of a slave-girl follow the hand of her mistress, / so our eyes are toward the Lord our God, awaiting his favor” (Ps 123.2). [1 Ne 17.31; 2 Ne 4.31–33; Alma 34.18–24; Morm 8.26–32]

anoint To touch or rub with oil as a sign that the person or thing was dedicated to God. Kings (1 Kings 1.39) and priests (Lev 8.30) were anointed, as were the bodies of those who had died (Lk 23.56). See also **messiah**.

antichrist Originally a term for false teachers and given in the plural (1 Jn 2.18, 22; 4.3; 2 Jn 7); the term comes to indicate in the post-NT period an **eschatological** figure who opposes God. [Alma 30.6, 12]

antimetabole A short form of **chiasmus** in which words in successive clauses are repeated in reverse order. “Ah, you who call evil good / and good evil, / who put darkness for light /

and light for darkness, / who put bitter for sweet / and sweet for bitter!” (Isa 5.20) [1 Ne 13.42; Alma 40.23; 3 Ne 23.13; 27.13; Moro 10.4–5]

antithesis The contrast of ideas through closely contrasted words. “For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve” (Mk 10.44). [1 Ne 17.45; Jacob 4.10; Alma 26.12; 3 Ne 18.25; Moro 7.11; 9.25]

antithetic parallelism Two parallel poetic lines related to each other by opposition or contrast. “A gentle response allays wrath; / A harsh word provokes anger” (Prov 15.1). [1 Ne 17.37; 2 Ne 1.20; Alma 9.28; Hel 12.26]

aphorism A short, memorable saying. “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev 19.18). [2 Ne 32.3; Jacob 6.12; Mos 2.17; Alma 41.10; Ether 12.26]

apocalypse (Gk “removal of the veil, revelation”). A narrative literary genre in which an angel or other heavenly being communicates to a human being the divine plan for history, especially the end of time (see, e.g., Dan 7–12; Mk 13; Rev). Apocalypses are a feature of late biblical religion. [1 Ne 11–14]

apocalyptic A worldview that assumes the disclosure of heavenly secrets, most typically to or for a community that perceives itself as suffering or victimized. Communities that espouse this worldview often interpret biblical passages (esp. in the Prophets) as pertaining to their own time.

Apocrypha (Gk “hidden things”). A group of about twenty mostly Jewish writings (e.g., Ben Sirach; 1 Maccabees), many of which were included in the **Septuagint**, but which are not included in the Jewish or Protestant canons of the Bible. Most of these works are canonical for Roman Catholics; a few more are canonical for Orthodox Christians.

GLOSSARY

apostle (Gk “one who is sent”). A delegate or representative. In the NT, an apostle was one who had known Jesus and could witness to the Resurrection (Acts 1.21–22), or a preacher of the gospel who had been called by God (1 Cor 12.28; Rom 16.7).

apostle (LDS) Members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, the two highest governing bodies in the LDS Church, are ordained as apostles and serve for life. The senior apostle becomes the president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when his predecessor dies. See **priesthood (LDS)**; **prophets (LDS)**.

apostrophe (Gk “turn from”). An address to an absent person or personified object. There is an apostrophe to Assyria in Isaiah 10.5; cf. Luke 13.34. [3 Ne 30.2; Morm 6.17–20; 8.35–37]

Assyria A Mesopotamian world power in the second and first millennia BCE. Its capital cities included Ashur and Nineveh. The Assyrian Empire conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 BCE and exiled its people. The Assyrians were well known for their massive building projects, and for their cruelty in war.

atonement Expiation for sin, or reparation for an injury committed against another. The Hebrew *kapparah* (with a possible root meaning “to cover”) refers to ritual cleansing of the Temple precincts.

B

Babylonia A Mesopotamian world power. It often competed against Assyria, which it conquered in 612 BCE. Its major city was Babylon (Akkadian “gate of the gods”). Its main god was Marduk. Babylonia destroyed Jerusalem in 586 BCE, and was conquered by the Persian king Cyrus the Great in 539 BCE.

Babylonian exile The forced relocation of some of the population of Judah, especially the elite, after the conquest by Babylonia in 597–586 BCE. The exile ended with the permitted return to the land under Cyrus (beginning ca. 538 BCE).

baptism Immersion in water, a practice found throughout Mediterranean antiquity for ritual purification. John the Baptist (Mk 1.4) may

have derived his practice from Jewish purification ritual (Lev 15.18). Paul’s connection of baptism with the death and resurrection of Christ (Rom 6.1–14) changed its meaning from purification to initiation into a new community and new identity.

BCE Before the Common Era, equivalent to BC (“before Christ”).

Book of Moses (LDS) The first eight chapters of Joseph Smith’s inspired revision of the Bible, undertaken in 1830–31 and sometimes referred to as the “Joseph Smith Translation” (JST). It begins with an account of a non-biblical vision given to Moses, followed by a revision of Genesis 1–6, with the creation and the Fall narrated by God in the first person, and extra-biblical details about Enoch’s life. The Book of Moses is included in the **Pearl of Great Price**.

C

canon (Gk “measuring rod”). The rule by which something is determined to belong or not to a category. Christian tradition uses the word for the official list of the books that make up the Bible.

canonical criticism The interpretation of a biblical text based upon its final form, rather than viewing it as an assemblage of preexisting units.

CE Common Era, equivalent to AD (Latin *anno Domini*; “in the year of the Lord”).

cherubim (sing. “cherub”). Mythical, composite creatures with body parts from various animals; they often had wings and human heads. They were commonly guardians of temples and palaces in the ancient Near East.

chiasm, pl. chiasmus (from Gk *chi*, the letter that resembles an *X*). Inverting the second pair of terms in a parallel structure, so that the corresponding terms, if laid out in a square, would form an *X*. The resultant pattern is ABB’A’, ABCB’A’, ABCC’B’A’, and so on. For example, “Truthful speech (A) wins the favor of kings (B); / They love those (B’) who speak honestly (A’)” (Prov 16.13). Chiasmus can also describe the structure of an entire passage, and it can involve several terms or parts of a passage, each of which has an analog that occurs in the reverse order of the original list

of terms or sequence of parts. [Mos 3.18–19; 5.10–12; Alma 36.1–30; 41.13–15]

Christ (Gk “anointed”). The translation of the Hebrew word *mashiah*, “messiah.” In the NT and in general usage, “Christ” always refers to Jesus of Nazareth, though in contrast to NT usage (where it is always a title, “the anointed one”), today “Christ” is often simply an alternative name for Jesus. See also **messiah**.

Christology The theological doctrines concerning the nature of Christ.

church The community of believers in a particular area; the later use of “church” to mean a building where people worship does not occur in the NT. [Of the more than 200 instances of “church(es)” in the BoM, only one refers to physical buildings (Morm 8.37).]

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS). The church founded by Joseph Smith in 1830. It was originally called the Church of Christ (1830–34), then the Church of the Latter-day Saints (1834–38), before receiving its current name by revelation in 1838. After Smith’s death in 1844, the majority of church members followed Brigham Young and immigrated to Utah. Other members became affiliated with smaller groups that accepted the Book of Mormon as authoritative scripture, such as the **Community of Christ**. Latter-day Saints have long been known as the Mormons, though they have recently distanced themselves from that designation. In addition to extra-biblical scriptures, the LDS Church holds a number of doctrines and practices that make them a unique branch of Christianity. Perhaps the most famous of these was polygamy, which was officially discontinued in 1890. See the LDS entries for **apostles**, **Godhead**, **plan of salvation**, **priesthood**, **prophets**, **Restoration**, **temples**, and **Zion**.

Community of Christ (RLDS) A branch of Mormon Christianity, distinct from the group that followed Brigham Young to Utah, that was established in 1860 under the leadership of Joseph Smith’s son, Joseph Smith III. They were known as the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS) until 2001, when they became the Community of Christ. They accept the Book of Mormon and

Doctrine and Covenants as scripture, though they reject many of Smith’s later teachings, including polygamy, and in general the tenets of their faith are more aligned with mainstream Christianity.

concubine A woman who is the sexual partner of a man, and is legally recognized as such, but who does not have the full status of a wife.

conflation A merging of two or more textual variants, sources, or allusions.

covenant (Heb *berit*). A contract or treaty. Some covenants have specific conditions or treaty stipulations, while others are covenants of grant. The biblical notion of covenant between God and Israel, especially as it appears in Deuteronomy, may reflect a theologized reworking of treaties between Assyrian kings and their vassals.

Cowdery, Oliver (LDS) (1806–50). Principal scribe for Joseph Smith’s dictation of the Book of Mormon in the **Original Manuscript**, and also the primary copyist for the **Printer’s Manuscript**. Cowdery was one of the **Three Witnesses** and a founding member of the LDS Church in 1830. He was excommunicated in 1838, then requested and received readmittance into the LDS Church in 1848. See **priesthood (LDS)**.

Cyrus King of Persia (559–530 BCE). He defeated Media in 550 and conquered most of the ancient Near East, including **Babylonia**, allowing the Jewish exiles in Babylonia to return to the land of Israel beginning about 538.

D

Davidic Having to do with the monarchic dynasty founded by David that ruled over Israel and, after the division of the kingdom, the southern part (Judah) until the Babylonian conquest and exile of the sixth century BCE; also the movement to restore that monarchy or to reproduce the self-rule that it represented.

Davidic dynasty The direct descendants of King David, who ruled in Jerusalem from the tenth to the early sixth centuries BCE. The “Davidic Covenant” refers to God’s promise that this dynasty would continue forever (2 Sam 7.8–17; Ps 89).

Day of the Lord The time mentioned in many prophetic books when God will appear as a warrior, sometimes fighting against Israel, sometimes against Israel's enemies. The earliest text to mention this Day is Amos 5.18.

Deutero-Isaiah See **Second Isaiah**.

Deuteronomistic Having the qualities or the theology of the **Deuteronomistic History**, reflecting concern for obedience to the laws given in Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomistic History The account in the books of Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings that presents the history of Israel in the promised land, interpreting it as a partial failure to keep the covenant faithfully, and the consequences of that failure. These books show significant theological and linguistic similarities, suggesting that they have a common editor or editors.

Diaspora (Gk “dispersal”). The scattering of Jews from the promised land Israel, and hence any Jews living outside Israel.

Doctrine and Covenants (LDS) A collection of revelations, nearly all received by Joseph Smith, that was first published and canonized in 1835, with substantial additions in 1844 and 1876. Two more documents were included in 1981, bringing the total number of revelations, referred to as “sections,” to 138. The **Community of Christ** has its own version of the **Doctrine and Covenants**, which differs significantly from the LDS volume.

Documentary Hypothesis A theory about the formation of the first five books of the Bible, Genesis through Deuteronomy. The hypothesis holds that there are four traditions underlying these books, naming them after a chief characteristic of each: *J* or the “Yahwist” (*J* from the German spelling “Jahveh”) uses the divine name “YHWH” (the Lord) consistently and contains much of the oldest material; *E* or the “Elohist” uses the divine name “Elohim” (God) fairly consistently and contains traditions from the Northern Kingdom of Israel; *P* or the “Priestly” writer is concerned largely with legal codes and matters of religious practice; and *D* or the “Deuteronomist” represents the traditions gathered mostly in Deuteronomy.

E

ecclesiology The theological study of the church; the doctrines that concern the nature of the Christian community.

Eight Witnesses (LDS) Eight men who claimed to have seen and handled the **Gold Plates** in 1829 and then signed a statement that has been reprinted in every edition of the Book of Mormon since 1830. They were shown the plates by Joseph Smith, as a group. See **Three Witnesses (LDS)**.

eisegesis (Gk “lead into”; opposed to **exegesis**, “lead out of”). The practice of reading into the text what one desires to find there, rather than reading out of the text to determine what it actually says.

emendation A revision made by an editor to correct a perceived mistake in a text. See **textual criticism**.

encomium A formal speech praising someone, as in a funeral oration. [Alma 48.11–18]

Ephraim Son of Joseph, for whom the most important tribe of the **Northern Kingdom** is named. Joseph's descendants through his sons Ephraim and Manasseh became two of the twelve tribes given territory in the promised land since the tribe of Levi did not receive a land allotment (Josh 14.4).

epistle A letter, sometimes intended for public reading and therefore written according to a particular literary form. [Alma 54; 56–58; 60; 61; 3 Ne 3; Moro 8; 9]

epistrophe The repetition of one or more words at the end of successive clauses, lines, or sentences. “When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child” (1 Cor 13.11). [2 Ne 25.26; Mos 1.6; Hel 12.14–17; Ether 2.17]

eschatological, eschatology (Gk *eschata*, “last things”). A concern with the end time, or the end of the world as we know it, whether that involves a new historical era radically discontinuous from this one, or an entirely new cosmos after the destruction of the current one.

eschaton (Gk “final thing”). The end of a period or era; the final stage of history.

Eucharist A ritual or service of thanksgiving, centering on the sharing of bread and wine, based on the final meal Jesus shared with his

followers before his trial and crucifixion; also called Communion, the Lord's Supper, and the Mass. See **sacrament (LDS)**.

exegesis (Gk "lead out of"). The explanation or interpretation of the meaning of a written text. See **eisegesis**.

exile The forced removal of a people from its land, and the community in which they lived in the foreign land. The Israelites of the Northern Kingdom were exiled by the Assyrians in the late eighth century BCE, and the Judeans were exiled by the Babylonians in the early sixth century. Specifically, "the Exile" is the period from 586 to 538 BCE, when much of the population of Judah was deported from Judah to Babylon. See **Babylonian exile**.

Exodus The journey that Israel took from Egypt toward the land of Israel under the leadership of Moses, according to the book of Exodus.

F

First Temple The temple in Jerusalem from Solomon's time (tenth century BCE) until the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 BCE. The First Temple period extends from the tenth to sixth centuries BCE. See **Second Temple**.

First Vision (LDS) Joseph Smith said that God the Father and Jesus Christ appeared to him in 1820, when he was fourteen, in response to a prayer asking which church he should join. He was told to join none of them. Smith's 1838 account of the First Vision was included in the **Pearl of Great Price** as part of the "Joseph Smith-History."

form criticism The interpretation of a text with particular attention to its genre and structure and to the original setting out of which it arose.

G

genre A form of literature with particular characteristics. For example, the detective story is a genre. Once a genre is established, the audience for it knows what to expect and can respond more easily to any given work. Biblical genres include oracles, laments, proverbs, hymns, parables, letters, gospels, and apocalypses.

Gentile A non-Jew. [In the BofM, which regards the descendents of Lehi as a non-Jewish

branch of Israel, "Gentile" refers to non-Israelites.]

Gilbert, John H. (LDS) (1802–95). The non-LDS typesetter of the first edition of the Book of Mormon, who added punctuation and paragraphing to the dictated text, working mainly from the **Printer's Manuscript**. Gilbert regularized the spelling and made some minor corrections to the text.

gloss A word or phrase of explanation added by an author or editor to clarify a difficult reading or a foreign term.

glossolalia The phenomenon of ecstatic speech, or "speaking in tongues" that characterized some early Christian worship (1 Cor 12.10, 28, 30); it occurs in some Pentecostal Christian worship in the present day. The report of the speeches on the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) in Acts 2.4–11 maintains that the languages spoken were human languages that could be understood by those in attendance; the reports in the letters reflect not a known, spoken language but a transitory occurrence during worship when one or more worshipers would break into speech (perhaps regarded as the speech of heavenly beings) that neither they nor their hearers could understand.

Godhead (LDS) A non-Trinitarian doctrine of Christian deity, in which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are separate beings, but one in purpose. Subsequent to the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith taught that the Father and the Son have glorified physical bodies, while the Holy Ghost is a personage of spirit (DC 134.22).

Gold Plates (LDS) The source for the Book of Mormon, according to Joseph Smith. Smith reported that the angel **Moroni** told him in 1823 of an ancient record, written on thin metal sheets, that was buried in a hill near his home in upstate New York. He was permitted to retrieve the plates in 1827, and then he returned them to the angel after the translation was finished. See **Eight Witnesses**; **Three Witnesses**.

Gospel (Old English "god spel," "good news," translating Gk *euangelion*). A written account of Jesus's life or sayings, or more broadly, the "good news" of his life, death, and resurrection.

H

Harris, Martin (LDS) (1783–1875). A neighbor of Joseph Smith and one of his earliest supporters. Harris was a scribe for the first 116 pages of the Book of Mormon, which was subsequently stolen. He was one of the **Three Witnesses**, and mortgaged his farm to pay the printing costs for the new scripture. Harris was baptized the day the LDS Church was organized in 1830, excommunicated in 1837, and readmitted in 1842. After Smith's death, Harris affiliated with other branches of Mormon Christianity, and finally immigrated to Utah where he was rebaptized into the LDS Church in 1870.

Hebraism The reproduction in another language of characteristic Hebrew phraseology.

Hebrew Bible A term used to refer to what Christians call the (Protestant) Old Testament. Though the two terms refer to the same body of writings, the order of books in the Hebrew Bible (that is, the Jewish Bible) differs from that found in the Old Testament. The scripture is also referred to as the *Tanakh*, an acronym formed from the beginning letters of its three divisions: *Torah* (The Law), *Nevi'im* (The Prophets), and *Ketuvim* (The Writings).

higher criticism The effort to distinguish among the sources of biblical documents, and to trace them back to their origins, so far as that is possible; distinguished from “lower criticism” or textual criticism, which is concerned with establishing the most accurate text in its final form. See **Documentary Hypothesis**; **textual criticism**.

historical-critical method Interpreting a text by trying to understand its original setting and audience, and what it would have meant when it was originally written or spoken. This method uses the tools of historical research to understand the conditions of the past, and critical tools to understand the traditions and developments that lie behind the surface of the text. It is also a general term that includes such methods as **form criticism** and **redaction criticism**.

hosanna A Hebrew word meaning “Save!” that was used as a cry of acclamation (Ps 118:26; Mt 21.9). [1 Ne 11.6; 3 Ne 4.32; 11.17]

I

incarnation (Latin, “enfleshment”). The belief that a divine being has become human in some form.

inclusio The use of the same word or phrase at the end of a passage as appeared at the beginning, thus rounding off or completing it. *Inclusio* may have been used to mark subsections of a work. It is also called *inclusion*, *frame*, and *envelope structure* (e.g., 1 Kings 19.10 and 14; Ps 118.1 and 29; Mt 4.23 and 9.35; Rev 1.3 and 22.10). [2 Ne 1.15 and 33.6; Mos 11.20 and 25; Alma 3.1–3 and 44.21–22; 3 Ne 27.13 and 21]

inerrancy The doctrine that the Bible is without error. In its most expansive form, *inerrancy* asserts that the Bible's original manuscripts contain no errors—*theological, historical, or scientific*. A more restrained version claims that the Bible is *inerrant* in matters of faith, but that it may contain material that cannot be reconciled with science.

ingathering (*kibutz galuyot*, “ingathering of the exiles”). The belief that the Jewish people will ultimately return to the land of Israel from their places of exile.

inspiration The belief that the words uttered by a human being are really the words of a divine being. In the ancient world, prophets and oracles were thought to be inspired. In Christian tradition, the notion of inspiration was eventually applied to the whole Bible.

interpolation An insertion of material into a previously existent text. [1 Ne 21.1; 2 Ne 23.22; Alma 56.52–53; 3 Ne 12.19–20, 46–47]

intertextuality The interrelationship between one part of a text (or a collection of texts) and other parts. *Intertextuality* can take the form of recurrent images (the vineyard in Isa 5.1–10 and 27.2–4), quotation and/or inner biblical interpretation (Jer 25.2–4 is partly quoted in Dan 9.2 before it is reinterpreted; Ps 94.11 is quoted at 1 Cor 3.20), or allusion (the promise made to Noah in Gen 9.11 is alluded to at Isa 54.8). [1 Ne 22; 2 Ne 26.14–19; Mos 21.2–17; Alma 36.22; 42.1–3; Moro 10.8–17]

Israel The name given by God to Jacob (Gen 32:28); also the name for both the union of twelve tribal groups, of which David and

Solomon were kings, and for the northern section of this kingdom, which split off after the death of Solomon and began a separate political existence under Jeroboam (1 Kings 12). The capital of Israel was Samaria. See **Judah; Northern Kingdom; Southern Kingdom**.

J

Johannine Characteristic of, or having to do with, the NT literature associated with the Gospel of John and 1, 2, 3 John; sometimes (though not in more recent scholarship) also applied to the book of Revelation.

Judah One of the sons of Israel; also the major tribal group of the Southern Kingdom. According to the biblical text, after the death of Solomon (1 Kings 12.1–20), the kingdom divided into two, with Judah in the south and Israel in the north. The capital of Judah was Jerusalem.

Judahites The term for inhabitants of the tribal area of Judah in the period before the Persian, Greek, and Roman rule, during which time Judah is referred to as “Yehud,” “Ioudaia,” and “Judaea,” and the inhabitants are Judeans. The terms “Judaism” and “Jew” are derived from the latter name.

Judea (Judaea). The Roman name for the area of Judah.

justification Translation of the underlying Greek term “making righteous,” expressing the restoration of one’s proper relationship to the moral realm or to God (see Rom 5.1–21).

K

KJV (King James Version or King James Bible). An English translation of the Bible, first published in 1611.

L

lament A poem of grief or mourning (e.g., Ps 137). [3 Ne 10.3–7; Morm 6.17–20]

Latter-day Saints (LDS) A shortened reference to members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The adjective “Latter-day” was intended to differentiate modern disciples of Christ from the former-day saints, or Christians, of the NT era. Like other Restorationist denominations, the LDS

Church insisted that it was reinstating the earliest form of Christianity, in accordance with the Bible, but it differed in its claims of angels restoring priesthood authority, along with new scriptures and modern prophets and apostles.

law The usual English translation of Hebrew word *torah*, which more generally means “teaching, instruction.” *Torah* is also the name for the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, Genesis through Deuteronomy.

Law of Moses The commandments given by God to Moses at Mount Sinai, as recorded in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy. They include instructions regarding moral issues, civil law, ritual purity, food, sacrifices and offerings, feast days, the priesthood, and the Tabernacle. The Ten Commandments, or Decalogue, are a small portion of the Mosaic Law, which included 613 commandments according to post-biblical rabbis.

laying on hands A gesture of healing, blessing, or setting something or someone apart for religious purposes.

Levites Originally the Israelite tribe or group from which priests were chosen; later, after the establishment of the Zadokites as priests (1 Kings 1), they were subordinate Temple servants who assisted the priests in their duties. Zadokites were descendants of Zadok, who was a descendant of Aaron and high priest at the time of David and Solomon.

Liturgical Characteristic of an order for worship, either directions for action (rituals) or texts for speaking (rites).

Liturgy The form or ritual for communal, public worship.

Lord’s Supper A term (used in the NT only at 1 Cor 11.20) for the commemoration or reenactment of Jesus’s last meal with his followers. See **Eucharist**.

Lost Manuscript (LDS) The first portion of the Book of Mormon dictation, approximately 116 pages, that was stolen from Martin Harris in 1828 and never recovered.

Lost Tribes Descendants of the ten tribes of Israelites in the Northern Kingdom who were carried off by the Assyrians in 722 BCE.

LXX The Roman numeral 70, the standard abbreviation for the Septuagint.

M

Manasseh One of Joseph's two sons. See **Ephraim**.

Masoretic Text The text of the Hebrew Bible, established by Jewish scholars (Masoretes). The text consists of the Hebrew consonants, vowel signs, accent markings, and other notes. Texts derived from this effort date from ca. 900 to 1000 CE. The Masoretic Text is the only complete form of the Hebrew Bible that has survived, though individual manuscripts of books are among the Dead Sea Scrolls, which are about a thousand years older.

messiah (Heb *mashiah*, "anointed [one]") A title for a king or other servant or agent of God (priest, prophet, or even the non-Israelite **Cyrus** in Isa 45.1). In the Hebrew Bible, *mashiah* never refers to the future ideal king. Later the term came to be used of the expected savior of the Jewish people, and was taken over by Christians to refer to Jesus, whom they believed to be the Messiah (Gk *christos*, "anointed"). See also **Christ**.

Messianic Having to do with the Messiah or with the era that the Messiah was inaugurating.

metaphor A direct comparison between two things. "The Lord is my shepherd" (Ps 23.1). [1 Ne 17.1; 2 Ne 28.16; Jacob 6.7; Mos 7.30–31; Hel 5.12; Morm 8.41]

midrash, midrashic (Heb *derash* "inquire").

Interpretation that finds meanings in a text that are other than, or go beyond, the "plain sense" (see **peshat**). These readings often point to the contemporary significance of earlier writings.

Mishnah (Heb "oral instruction," from *shannah* "repeat"). The compilation of oral law and rabbinic commentary, edited ca. 200 CE, that is the basis of the Talmud.

Mormon (LDS) The primary narrator in the Book of Mormon; an informal name for members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, derived from their belief in the Book of Mormon. Originally, "Mormon," along with "Mormonism," was a derisive nickname wielded by critics, but over time the LDS Church came to accept and even embrace the term, though recently it has attempted to limit its usage. The label "Mormon Church" is particularly discouraged, though "Mormon"

is still neutrally applied to aspects of Latter-day Saint culture and history such as the "Mormon Trail," or to refer to the broader set of denominations that accept the Book of Mormon as scripture, as in "Mormon Studies" or "Mormon Christianity."

Moroni, angel (LDS) The last narrator in the Book of Mormon, who buried the **Gold Plates**. After his death (in the 5th c.), he became an angel who appeared to Joseph Smith in 1823 and revealed to him the location of the plates. Because he is often associated with the angel "fly[ing] in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach" of Revelation 14.6, a statue of Moroni has been placed atop numerous LDS temples.

Mosaic Having to do with Moses or with the teaching that Moses is purported to have proclaimed in the **Torah** (or **Pentateuch**).

mystery In the NT, a divine truth that is kept hidden by God (see Rom 16.25–26); a revelation about God's plan (Eph 1.9–10). [1 Ne 10.18–19; Jacob 4.17–18; Alma 12.9–10; 40.3]

N

NJPS New Jewish Publication Society translation of the **Hebrew Bible**, published in 1985.

Northern Kingdom The political assembly of tribal groups that split off from the kingdom of Israel after Solomon's death. This newly formed kingdom was itself called Israel, and in some texts also **Ephraim**, after its largest tribe.

NRSV New Revised Standard Version Bible translation, published in 1989; the latest in a series of revisions of the **KJV**, including the Revised Version (1885) and the Revised Standard Version (1952).

O

Ordination A formal ceremony and process by which certain members of the community are set apart for religious service, for instance as priests (Lev 8.1–46). [2 Ne 6.2; Alma 13.10; Moro 3.1–4]

Original Manuscript (LDS) The first transcription of the Book of Mormon, written by scribes as Joseph Smith first dictated the words while looking in a seer stone. About 28 percent of

the manuscript is still extant, mainly from 1 Nephi and Alma, and is extremely important for **textual criticism** of the Book of Mormon. One-sixth of the first edition (1830), from Helaman 13 to Mormon 9, appears to have been typeset directly from the Original Manuscript rather than from the **Printer’s Manuscript**.

oxymoron (Gk “clever-foolish”). Combining two terms that appear contradictory. [Alma 31.16; 44.5; Hel 12.7]

P

Palestine A name derived from the Roman designation *Provincia Syria Palaestina* (“Syro-Palestinian Province”), which replaced *Provincia Judaea* (“Judean Province”) after the revolt of 135 CE. *Palaestina* was the Roman spelling of “Philistine” and was probably intended as a derogation of Jewish claims to the territory.

parable A statement or story that uses figurative or imaginative language to evoke a reality that lies beyond the literal level of the story or statement. A parable makes its point by analogy, or the comparison of a known fact, situation, or experience with one that is less familiar. In the **Synoptic Gospels**, Jesus is often portrayed as teaching with parables such as the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son. [Book of Mormon figures do not employ parables in their teaching.]

parallelism A characteristic feature of biblical Hebrew poetry in which the second line of a unit in some way echoes the meaning or grammatical structure of the first line. (Occasionally there are three lines.) This can take the form of a repetition of the meaning, or of a statement of opposites, or of a further statement that serves to extend or modify the first line in some way. Psalms, Proverbs, and several of the early prophetic books such as Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, and Jeremiah are largely composed in parallelistic form. [1 Ne 17.35–40; Alma 26.11–12; 34.18–25; 37.33–37; Hel 12.2–12]

parousia (Gk “coming”). A secular term for the arrival of a conquering general or emperor, it came to designate the **Second Coming** of

Christ; the expected return of the **Messiah** at the end of the age or the end of the world.

patriarchs The founding fathers of Israel: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Pauline Characteristic of the thought or writings of Paul; those letters generally accepted to be by Paul: Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon.

Pearl of Great Price (LDS) By far the shortest of the four scriptures accepted by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Its current contents—the **Book of Moses** (seven chapters from Smith’s revision of the Bible), the Book of Abraham (five chapters from Smith’s translation of Egyptian papyri), “Joseph Smith–Matthew” (a revision of Mt 24), “Joseph Smith–History” (excerpts from his 1838 autobiography), and thirteen “Articles of Faith”—were first collected and published in 1851. They were canonized in 1880.

Pentateuch (Gk “five scrolls”). The first five books of the Bible—Genesis through Deuteronomy—regarded as a unit after its final editing during or after the Exile. The traditional term in Judaism for this collection of books is **Torah**, “teaching.” Although these five books are traditionally grouped together, they contain markedly different kinds of writing—including prehistory, narrative, law, and ritual instruction—and scholars have investigated the materials of which they are composed. See **Documentary Hypothesis**.

Pentecost (Gk “fiftieth [day]”). The Greek name for the Jewish festival of Weeks (Shavuoth), which occurs fifty days after Passover. On the Pentecost after Jesus’s resurrection, according to Acts 2, the Holy Spirit descended on his followers and inspired them to speak in different languages.

pericope (Gk “[what is] cut out”). A short passage from a longer text that can be read as a complete unit.

personification Representing an idea, a value, or other abstract thought as a person. Wisdom is personified as a woman in Proverbs 8; cf. Psalm 85.10. [2 Ne 9.10; Mos 8.20; Alma 42.24]

peshat (Heb “simple”) The “plain sense” or “contextual sense” of a text, often contrasted

with *derash*, the homiletical, or preaching, meaning (see *midrash*).

Pharisees A movement among Jews in the first century CE, according to Josephus and the NT. The Pharisees were concerned to extend Jewish practice into all areas of life, and followed the tradition of interpretation (Oral Law) associated with the schools of Hillel and Shammai.

plan of salvation (LDS) A general term in the Book of Mormon (more commonly, the “plan of redemption”) referring to how individuals, through the atonement of Christ, can escape the effects of sin and death and be reunited with God. The details were greatly expanded in later LDS theology to include a pre-existence as spirit children of Heavenly Parents, a mortal probation on earth, an interim postmortal residency in either paradise or spirit prison, resurrection, and an assignment after the Final Judgment to one of three kingdoms of glory.

priest, high priest In the Hebrew Bible, the priest (Heb *kohen*) was the official set apart to preside at the worship in the Temple, particularly to offer sacrifices of various kinds. In the NT the term “priest” (primarily *hiereus*) is applied only to the Jewish priesthood of the Temple (*archiereus*, “high priest,” “chief priest,” e.g., Mt 2.4), a pagan priest (Acts 14.13), Melchizedek (e.g., Heb 7.1), Jesus Christ (Heb 10.21), or the whole of the Christian people (“priesthood,” 1 Pet 2.5; “priests,” Rev 1.6). The Greek term *presbyteros*, from which the English word *priest* is derived, means “elder” and is so translated in the KJV and NRSV (e.g., Jas 5.14; 2 John 1.1).

priesthood (LDS) In current LDS teaching and practice, there are two major divisions of the priesthood: the Aaronic, comprising the offices of deacon, teacher, priest, and bishop; and the Melchizedek, including the offices of elder, high priest, patriarch, seventy, and apostle. Most males are ordained to the Aaronic priesthood offices as teenagers (with the exception of bishop, which is reserved for the leader of a local congregation). Nearly all adult men are ordained as elders, with high priests having authority to officiate in church administration as members of bishoprics and

higher ecclesiastical positions. Priesthood holders have both administrative and pastoral duties, and are often assigned to specific responsibilities for limited terms, during which they serve as part-time, unpaid volunteers. Some of the seventy and all the apostles are full-time professionals. Women are excluded from the priesthood in the LDS Church, though this is not the case in the **Community of Christ**, where the priesthood is organized differently. See **Restoration**.

Printer’s Manuscript (LDS) A copy of the Original Manuscript created for the use of **John Gilbert**, the typesetter for the first edition of the Book of Mormon. The manuscript survives virtually intact, missing just three lines from the bottom of the first page. Like the Original Manuscript, it consists of long strings of words divided into books and chapters, with almost no punctuation. See **scribes (LDS)**.

prolepsis The literary device of foreshadowing or anticipating a later development in a narrative, or anticipating and answering an argument from an opponent (Deut 30.1–4; Jn 11.2; Rom 9.19; Jas 2.18). [Mos 4.17–18; 23.19–24; Alma 32.17; Hel 2.13–14; 3 Ne 7.1]

promised land A conventional term for the Land of Israel, as it was promised to Abraham and to the descendants of Abraham (“this land that I have promised,” Ex 32.13). [For the Lehtes and Jaredites, there was another promised land, somewhere in the Americas (e.g., 1 Ne 17.13–14; 18.23; Ether 6.5, 12).]

prophet (Gk *prophetes*, “speak out” or “speak forth”). The **Septuagint** translation of *navi’* (“one who is called”), the standard Hebrew term for prophet. Contrary to popular usage, prophets were not predominantly foretellers of the future. Rather, they were intermediaries between God and the people who had a crucial role in critiquing and trying to change society to bring it in line with God’s commandments. Predictions of doom and destruction were intended to get Israel to repent and change its behavior.

prophet (LDS) A designation for the president of **The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints**, sometimes applied to apostles as well. The Prophet is at the head of the First

Presidency, where he is assisted by two apostles serving as his first and second counselors.

psalm (Gk *psalmos*). A song accompanied by musical instruments. In the Bible the songs cover a wide variety of styles and greatly differing content; psalms appear in many places (e.g., 1 Sam 2.1–10; Jonah 2.1–9), but the principal collection of them is found in the book of Psalms. [2 Ne 4.16–35; Alma 33.4–11]

pseudepigrapha (Gk “writings with false attributions of authorship”). A diverse group of Jewish or Christian religious writings attributed to notable biblical persons, such as Enoch, Moses, and Solomon, that are not included in the books of the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, or the Apocrypha. These writings date from about 250 BCE to 200 CE, and some of them are quoted or alluded to in the Bible.

pseudonymous Written or published under a false name. Pseudonymous writing in antiquity is often attributed to someone much better known than the actual writer, in order to give the text the benefit of the presumed authority of the famous person.

R

redaction criticism The study of how already-existing textual units—narratives of incidents, laws, proverbs, or other isolatable pieces that can be disentangled by **source criticism**—were combined into larger texts by the activities of editors, called “redactors.” Redaction criticism concentrates on the perspective of the editor, trying to deduce what editorial intentions can be understood from the way smaller units are arranged, expanded, and combined.

Restoration (LDS) Refers to the reestablishment of priesthood authority and the recovery of correct doctrines that had been lost shortly after the apostolic era. **Latter-day Saints** believe that the Aaronic priesthood, including the authority to baptize and administer the **sacrament**, was restored by the resurrected John the Baptist to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in 1829. The Melchizedek priesthood, with the authority to confer the gift of the Holy Ghost and direct the church,

was restored by Peter, James, and John in 1830. Key principles of the gospel were restored in the Book of Mormon and in revelations to modern-day prophets, such as those found in the **Doctrine and Covenants**. See **priesthood (LDS)**.

revelation (Latin “remove the veil,” translating Gk *apokalypsis*). Belief or insight granted to a human being by a deity or heavenly being.

rhetoric (Gk “speaker, orator”). The art or study of persuasive speech or writing.

S

sacrament (LDS) The LDS term for the **Eucharist** or **Lord’s Supper**, which is administered weekly in “sacrament meetings.” Religious rites called “sacraments” by other Christians—including baptism, confirmation, marriage, and priesthood ordination—are referred to as “ordinances” in LDS discourse.

sacrifice (Latin “make holy”). The practice of giving something of value to God to show one’s devotion or commitment. In Israelite religion, sacrifice, usually of an animal or bird (though grain and wine were also offered), was carried out by the ritual destruction of part or all of it by fire on an altar, by chasing it off into the wilderness, by letting it fly away, or by pouring it out on the ground or against the side of the altar. By giving to God something of value, the offerer symbolized the bonding of self with God or the reunion with God after a sinful or unclean person received forgiveness and purification. Christianity took over this idea of sacrifice and applied it to the life and death of Jesus Christ, teaching, according to some understandings, that Christ’s sacrifice was an **atonement** for human sin.

saint(s) (Latin “holy one[s]”). In the NT, the term for all Christians (2 Cor 1.1), or for what all Christians are “called” to be (Rom 1.7; 1 Cor 1.2). [1 Ne 14.12; Mos 3.19]

Saints (LDS) See **Latter-day Saints**.

salvation history The ongoing story of God’s redemptive activities in human history. This theological interpretation of history is particularly evident in Deuteronomy, **Second Isaiah**, and Luke-Acts. [Salvation history is prominent in many BoM chapters, including

1 Ne 10; 12–14; 2 Ne 25–29; Jacob 5;
3 Ne 20–26.]

Satan (Heb “adversary, accuser”). The Satan (a title, not a name) in Job 1.6–12; 2.1–7 is a member of the divine council who serves as a prosecutor or tester of God’s faithful (see also Zech 3.1). In the Gospels Satan serves as the chief tempter and head of the demonic realm (Mt 4.1–11; 12.26); in the book of Revelation Satan is identified with the Edenic serpent, the dragon, and the devil (12.9; 20.2). [1 Ne 13.29; Alma 8.9; Hel 6.21; 3 Ne 2.2–3]

scribe In general, one who could write, especially official documents, and take down dictation for letters, legal proceedings, and so on. In the NT, a scribe was a lawyer, one who was expert in the requirements and meaning of Jewish law.

scribes (LDS) Individuals who transcribed Joseph Smith’s original dictation of the Book of Mormon, or made the copy for the printer. **Emma Smith** and **Martin Harris** (perhaps with minor help from Emma’s brother, Reuben, and Joseph’s brother, Samuel) were the scribes for the first portion of the Book of Mormon—about 116 pages that were lost by Harris. The current text of the Book of Mormon was transcribed in the **Original Manuscript** primarily by Oliver Cowdery, with a few pages toward the end of the process written by scribes tentatively identified as John Whitmer and Christian Whitmer, two of the **Eight Witnesses**. The **Printer’s Manuscript** was mostly written by Oliver Cowdery, with several dozen pages copied by Martin Harris, and a couple of pages by Joseph’s brother, Hyrum. See **Lost Manuscript**.

scriptures (LDS) The four books of scripture regarded as canonical in the LDS Church: the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the **Doctrine and Covenants**, and the **Pearl of Great Price**. Together they are sometimes referred to as the “standard works.” The **KJV** is the official, approved Bible for English-speaking Latter-day Saints.

Second Coming The return of a glorified Christ to earth in judgment and redemption. See **parousia**.

Second Isaiah, also Deutero-Isaiah. The general term for chapters 40–55 of the book of

Isaiah. These chapters are primarily concerned with the promise of return from exile and the events leading up to the decree of the Persian king Cyrus in 538 BCE permitting the exiles to return to Judah from Babylon and rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple. See **Third Isaiah**.

Second Temple The Temple constructed beginning ca. 515 BCE by the returning exiles, and continued and expanded over the course of time, until its destruction by the Romans in 70 CE.

seer stones (LDS) Instruments used to translate and to receive revelation. These include the Nephite “interpreters” (two seer stones set within a spectacles-like frame) found with the **Gold Plates**, and Joseph Smith’s personal seer stone, which he had used as a teenager to recover lost items and search for buried treasure, in a tradition of folk magic. After 1833, Latter-day Saints referred to both types of seer stones as the **Urim and Thummim**, borrowing a biblical term (e.g., Ex 28.30; Lev 8.8; Num 27.21).

Septuagint The ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. The Septuagint was translated over a lengthy period beginning probably in the third century BCE. Traditionally there were seventy-two translators, a number that was rounded off to seventy and, in Roman numerals, used as the abbreviation for this translation (**LXX**). The Septuagint was prepared for the use of Jews who lived in the **Diaspora** whose main language was Greek. It is important for several reasons: it translated a version of the Hebrew text that is older than the **Masoretic text**; it contains additional works, grouped in early editions of the **KJV** and in the **NRSV** as the **Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books**, most of which were originally written in Greek; and it was the Old Testament of early Christians and therefore represents what they thought of as Scripture. See **Apocrypha**.

Sheol The underworld or abode of the dead. In the **Hebrew Bible**, all deceased persons descended to Sheol; there is no concept of a separate heaven and hell.

simile A comparison, using “like” or “as” rather than, as in metaphor, linking two things

- directly. “My heart is like wax, melting within me” (Ps 22.15). [Mos 12.10–12, 20.11; Alma 46.21–22, 24; Morm 4.18; 5.17–18]
- Sinai** Properly, the name of a peninsula bounded on the north by the Mediterranean Sea, on the east by the Gulf of Aqaba, and on the west by the Gulf of Suez. Traditionally the mountain of Sinai, purportedly the location where Moses received the Decalogue (Ten Commandments), is on this peninsula, but no mountain has been definitively identified as the biblical Sinai.
- Smith, Emma Hale (LDS)** (1804–79). Wife of Joseph Smith. She accompanied him to the hill to retrieve the **Gold Plates** in 1827, and was an early scribe as he dictated the Book of Mormon. She was baptized into the LDS Church in 1830, on the day it was organized. After her husband’s death in 1844, she stayed in Illinois rather than immigrating to Utah with Brigham Young’s group, and eventually affiliated with the **Community of Christ**.
- Smith, Joseph, Jr. (LDS)** (1805–44). Dictated the Book of Mormon in 1829 at the age of twenty-three, and founded **The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints** the next year. Smith led church members from New York to Ohio to Missouri to Illinois, where he was assassinated at age thirty-eight. During his lifetime, LDS Church membership grew to over twenty-five thousand.
- Smith, Lucy Mack (LDS)** (1775–1856). Mother of Joseph Smith. In 1845 she dictated a family history, which was revised and published in 1853 as *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet* (reprinted as the *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*). This book is a major source of information about Joseph Smith’s early life and the coming forth of the Book of Mormon.
- sorites** A philosophical argument in the form of linked propositions. The second part of each proposition forms the first part of the next, and the series therefore becomes an extended chain of reasoning (e.g., Rom 8.29–30; 10.14–15; 1 Cor 15.15–18). [2 Ne 2.13; 9.25; 11.7; Moro 8.25–26]
- source criticism** The effort to discover the sources or documents behind a text and to explore how the sources were combined into larger units. See **Documentary Hypothesis**; **Synoptic Gospels**.
- Southern Kingdom** The remaining part of the undivided kingdom of Israel, after the northern tribes withdrew from Israel at Solomon’s death (1 Kings 12). It is also called **Judah**.
- suffering servant** The figure in Isaiah 52.13–53.11 who bears the disease, punishment, or sins of others. The passage was taken by Jesus’s followers (e.g., Mt 8.17, in the context of Jesus’s healing ministry; Acts 8.27–35, referring to Jesus’s death) to be a prophecy of his life; Jewish tradition typically regards the servant as the people Israel.
- synagogue** (Gk “coming together with”). An assembly; a congregation. For Jews who were too distant from the Temple to worship at it, and for all Jews after the final destruction of the Temple by the Romans in 70 CE, the synagogue became the only form of worship. Services consisted of prayer, song, and study of the sacred text. The term also refers to a building where the community met.
- synecdoche** A figure of speech using a part of something to stand for the whole. “For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven” (Mt 16.17). [1 Ne 18.18; Mos 12.21; Alma 46.31; Ether 9.4]
- synonymous parallelism** An imprecise term used for the type of **parallelism** where the second line of a literary unit echoes the meaning of the first in different terms. “An ox knows its owner, / An ass its master’s crib: / Israel does not know, / My people takes no thought” (Isa 1.3). [2 Ne 9.52; 25.2; Alma 34.32; Hel 12.2; 3 Ne 5.21; 29.5]
- Synoptic Gospels** Matthew, Mark, and Luke. “Synoptic” means “view together,” and is applied to these writings because they, unlike John, can be readily compared. The “synoptic problem” is the observation that in many passages Matthew and Luke repeat with only minor changes what Mark says, yet in other passages they do not follow Mark, or include stories or sayings that Mark does not have, yet match each other very closely. According to the most widely held theory, Matthew and Luke relied on Mark and on another document (now lost) that contained mostly

sayings of Jesus; this second document is referred to as “Q” (from the German word *Quelle*, meaning “source”). In addition, Matthew and Luke each had their own sources.

T

Tabernacle The portable sanctuary used by the Israelites for worship and sacrifice during their wanderings in the wilderness. Exodus 25–30 contain instructions for building it; the construction is narrated in Exodus 35–40. It was eventually replaced by the **Temple**.

Temple The central place of worship for Israelite religion in Jerusalem, referring either to the **First Temple** built by Solomon or the post-exilic **Second Temple** of Zerubbabel that was enlarged and rebuilt by Herod the Great.

temples (LDS) In contrast to the one Temple in Jerusalem that centralized sacrifice and worship in accordance with Deuteronomy, Latter-day Saints have built over two hundred temples around the world that are only open to church members in good standing, where they can be sealed eternally as families, perform vicarious ordinances for deceased loved ones, and participate in the “endowment,” a ritualized reenactment of the creation and the Fall, during which they make covenants with God.

Ten Tribes See **Lost Tribes**.

testament (Latin *testamentum*, “will, covenant” for Gk *diatheke* “covenant”). A final disposition of one’s personal property, but used in the LXX to translate the Hebrew word *berit*, “covenant,” and therefore applied to the “new covenant” or “new testament” as inaugurated by Jesus (recalling Jeremiah’s promise of a “new covenant” in 31.31–34). The term “testament” therefore came to mean the collection of writings (the Hebrew Scriptures or the Christian Scriptures) that presented the covenant of God with the people of God.

Tetragrammaton (Gk “four letters”). The Hebrew divine name, YHWH, which in Jewish tradition is conventionally unpronounced; modern scholars generally use the pronunciation “Yahweh.” In most

English translations, following an ancient substitution, YHWH is represented by the word *LORD* written in capital and small capital letters.

textual criticism The effort to establish, by scholarly assessment of manuscript copies and other sources, an accurate version of a text according to what the original author had written; also called “lower criticism.”

theodicy The theological effort to justify the goodness of God in the face of suffering.

theophany (Gk “appearance of god”) The temporary appearance or manifestation of a divine being in a form that can be apprehended by the human senses.

Third Isaiah, also **Trito-Isaiah**. The scholarly term for chapters 56–66 of the book of Isaiah, which are primarily concerned with the life of the returned exiles in the province of Yehud (the Persian name for **Judah**) after 538 BCE. Some scholars doubt the separate existence of **Third Isaiah**; others maintain that it is not the product of one author, but a collection of diverse oracles by different members of a “school of Isaiah” collected during the Persian Period. See **Second Isaiah**.

Three Witnesses (LDS) Three men, **Oliver Cowdery**, **Martin Harris**, and **Peter Whitmer**, who said that an angel showed them the **Gold Plates** in 1829. Their signed testimony has been reprinted in every edition of the **Book of Mormon** since 1830. They all saw the plates on the same day, accompanied by **Joseph Smith**. See **Eight Witnesses (LDS)**.

Torah (Heb “teaching, instruction”) The first division of the **Hebrew Bible**, consisting of **Genesis** through **Deuteronomy**. The word (and hence the title) is sometimes translated “law,” but this translation is misleading since the five books contain much more than law codes and regulations.

Transfiguration (Latin “change form,” translating Gk *metamorphosis*) Name for the event recounted in **Mark** 9.2–8; **Matthew** 17.1–8; **Luke** 9.28–36, in which Jesus, accompanied by **Peter**, **James**, and **John**, ascends a mountain and appears to the disciples in dazzling white (see **Ex** 34.29), in the company of **Moses** and **Elijah**. [Related events occur at **3 Ne** 19.25; 28.15, 17.]

Trinity Christian doctrine that God, though one in being, comprises three Persons (Father, Son, and Spirit). See **Godhead (LDS)**.

Twelve, the conventional designation for Jesus's closest followers (Mk 3.14–16 and parallels; Mk 10.32). [In the Book of Mormon, the Nephite Twelve (3 Ne 12.1) are always referred to as “disciples” rather than “apostles.”]

typology (Gk *tupos*, the raised design on a seal for imprinting in wax, then by extension a pattern or model). Understanding persons or events, especially in the NT, by referring them to earlier biblical precursors (e.g., Jn 3.14; Rom 5.14; 1 Cor 5.7; Heb 10.11–12; 1 Pet 3.20–21). [Mos 3.15; Alma 33.19; 37.38–47; Ether 11.20–21; 13.6–7]

U

Urim and Thummim (Heb “lights” and “perfections”). A method of divination (the details of which are unclear) that the high priest used to discover God's response to yes-or-no questions.

Urim and Thummim (LDS) See **seer stones (LDS)**.

W

wisdom literature Modern scholarship has identified the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes,

and Job, along with certain Psalms (e.g., Ps 37), as examples of a type of literature with analogues in other ancient Near Eastern literatures. Wisdom is concerned with insight, instruction, meditation on the meaning of life, and moral exhortation. It tends to focus on the individual rather than the nation, and therefore does not generally concern itself with key events in Israel's history, such as the Exodus; central teachings, such as the covenant; or focal institutions, such as the Davidic monarchy, prophecy, or the Temple.

Z

Zion The name of the fortified hill within Jerusalem and thus, by extension, an alternative name for Jerusalem itself, especially in biblical poetry.

Zion (LDS) In addition to the ancient city of Jerusalem, the term can also refer to an ideal community of believers, the city of Enoch described in **Book of Moses** 7.18–21, the future New Jerusalem to be built in Missouri, all of North and South America, and “the pure in heart” in general (DC 97.21). Examples of extended meanings of “Zion” in the BoM include 1 Ne 13.37; 2 Ne 26.29–31.

BIBLICAL QUOTATIONS, ALLUSIONS, AND VERBAL PARALLELS

This list attempts to account for biblical expressions in the Book of Mormon in a systematic, comprehensive fashion. Parallel phrasing has been evaluated by several criteria: the number of significant words in common, syntactic complexity, distinctiveness, sequence, and context. Verses connected solely by similar ideas have been excluded, as have generic allusions to biblical narratives. In this list, Book of Mormon phrases are usually correlated with only one biblical antecedent, either the closest match or the first occurrence if the identical phrase appears multiple times in the Bible. (Some biblical verses have more than one distinctive phrase independently alluded to in the Book of Mormon.) Biblical phrases appearing seven or more times in the Book of Mormon are generally regarded as conventional usages rather than deliberate allusions. Similarly, phrases in the Book of Mormon that occur more than seven times in the Bible are treated as biblical idioms. The goal has been to identify biblical phrasing that was intended by the author (or translator), which readers familiar with the King James Bible might be expected to recognize. A supplemental list of representative conventional usages appears at the end.

boldface = quotation; “see” = OT precedent for a NT source of BoM phrasing;
“+” = NT phrasing common to multiple Gospel accounts

Genesis					
1.1	2 Ne 2.14	4.10	2 Ne 26.3	15.13, 16	Al 45.10, 12
	3 Ne 9.15		2 Ne 28.10		Hel 13.9–10
	Morm 9.11		Al 20.18	18.24, 26	Hel 13.13–14
1.1, 27	Mos 7.27		3 Ne 9.11	19.24	Hel 13.13
	Al 18.34		Morm 8.40	22.17	1 Ne 12.1
			Eth 8.22, 24	22.18	see Acts 3.25
1.4	1 Ne 18.4	4.11, 15	Al 3.7	28.17	Hel 3.28
	Jac 5.17, 20	6.3	1 Ne 7.14	32.30	Eth 12.39
1.27	Al 22.12		2 Ne 26.11	37.9	1 Ne 3.2
	Eth 3.15		Morm 5.16		1 Ne 8.2
2.3	Moro 4.3		Eth 2.15	37.34–35	Eth 15.3
	Moro 5.2		Moro 8.28	39.2–3	2 Ne 5.11
2.7	Mos 2.25		Moro 9.4	39.5	Al 10.7, 11
	Morm 9.17	6.5	Hel 15.4	42.38	1 Ne 18.18
2.17	Al 12.23		Eth 3.2		2 Ne 1.21
2.19	2 Ne 2.15		Moro 7.12	45.4	1 Ne 5.14
3.4–5	2 Ne 2.18	10.9	Eth 2.1		Al 10.3
3.5	Al 12.31	11.4	Hel 6.28	46.4	Mos 24.17
3.5, 13	Mos 16.3	11.4–8	title page		
3.6	1 Ne 8.10		Omni 1.22	Exodus	
3.17	1 Ne 17.38		Mos 28.17	1.11	Mos 24.9
	2 Ne 1.7		Eth 1.33, 35, 36	2.22	Al 13.23
	Jac 2.29	11.8	Mos 27.6		Al 26.36
	Jac 3.3	12.2	Eth 1.42–43	2.24	1 Ne 17.40
	Morm 1.17	14.18–20	see Heb 7.1–5	5.2	Mos 11.27
3.22	Al 42.5	14.20	3 Ne 4.32–33		Al 9.6
3.22, 24	Al 12.21		3 Ne 11.17	6.7	1 Ne 17.14
3.22–24	Al 42.2–3	15.6	Moro 7.7	8.1	Mos 11.20
3.23–24	2 Ne 2.19		see Jas 2.21, 23		Al 8.29

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10.21–22	3 Ne 8.20, 23	26.41	2 Ne 9.33		Moro 10.28
13.21	1 Ne 1.6		see Acts 7.51	8.6	Mos 6.6
	1 Ne 17.30	26.42	3 Ne 16.11		Mos 23.14
	Hel 5.24, 43				Mos 29.43
	Eth 2.5	Numbers			Al 25.14
14.13, 27	Mos 16.1	6.24–26	Al 7.25, 27	8.11	Al 46.8
14.21–22	1 Ne 4.2		3 Ne 19.25		Hel 11.36
	1 Ne 17.26	11.11	Mos 29.34	8.13–14	Hel 12.2
	Mos 7.19	11.25	Eth 2.4	8.16	1 Ne 17.28
14.31	1 Ne 17.26	15.28	Mos 3.11		Mos 7.19
15.4	1 Ne 4.2	16.30	2 Ne 26.5	8.18	Hel 13.22
	1 Ne 17.27	21.5	1 Ne 17.30	9.2	Eth 14.18
16.2–3	1 Ne 2.11	21.5–8	1 Ne 17.41–42	9.14	Mos 26.36
	1 Ne 16.35		2 Ne 25.20		Al 1.24
16.7	1 Ne 16.20, 25	21.8	Al 33.19		Al 5.57
	1 Ne 18.16		Al 37.46, 47		Al 6.3
16.15	3 Ne 11.8		Hel 8.15		Moro 6.7
17.6	2 Ne 25.20		3 Ne 15.9	10.12	Mos 21.35
20.2–4	Mos 12.34–36	21.9	see Jn 3.14–15		Moro 7.13
20.4–17	Mos 13.12–24	27.17	see Mt 9.36	10.12–13	Mos 2.24
20.5	Mos 11.22			10.21	3 Ne 8.19
20.7	2 Ne 26.32	Deuteronomy		12.6	Mos 2.3
	3 Ne 27.16	1.17	see Jas 2.8–9	14.2	3 Ne 16.10
20.8	Mos 18.23	4.3–4	Hel 4.25	16.18	Mos 29.29
20.11	2 Ne 2.14	4.10	Mos 1.4	16.20	Mos 29.32
	Al 11.39	4.25–26	Al 9.18	17.8	1 Ne 17.7
	3 Ne 9.15	4.31	Jac 3.6	17.17	Jac 1.15–16
	Morm 9.11	4.37	1 Ne 17.40		Mos 11.2–3
	Eth 4.7	4.39	2 Ne 29.7	18.15, 19	see Acts 3.22–23
20.12	1 Ne 17.55	5.4	Eth 12.39	19.15	see Mt 18.16
20.15	2 Ne 26.32	5.16	Al 9.16	25.1	1 Ne 16.2
20.16	Hel 7.21	5.32	Al 24.23	26.17	Mos 6.6
22.28	Mos 17.12	5.33	Morm 7.10	27.10	1 Ne 2.3
29.46	1 Ne 17.53	6.5	2 Ne 25.29	28.9	Al 25.14
	Mos 11.22		Moro 10.32		3 Ne 20.21, 22
	Mos 26.26	6.7	Al 37.37	28.37	1 Ne 19.14
31.18	2 Ne 3.17	6.15	Mos 12.8	29.9	Mos 1.7
32.8	Hel 6.31		Al 9.12, 24	29.27	Hel 13.30
32.9	Mos 3.14		Al 37.25	30.10	Morm 9.27
33.9	Eth 2.4, 14	6.17	1 Ne 4.34	30.16	Al 25.14
33.11	1 Ne 11.11		Mos 1.11	30.19	2 Ne 2.27–28
	Eth 12.39		Mos 4.6		2 Ne 10.23
34.24	Moro 10.31		Al 7.23		Hel 14.31
34.29	Mos 13.5		Al 37.20	31.8	Eth 1.42
		7.6	Al 31.18	32.4	Eth 3.12
			3 Ne 16.10	32.5	Al 9.8
Leviticus		8.3	2 Ne 3.21		Al 10.17, 25
8.30	Al 13.11		2 Ne 29.2		Hel 13.29
19.18	Mos 23.15		2 Ne 33.14	32.35	see Rom 12.19
26.3–5	2 Ne 1.9		Moro 7.25	32.46	Mos 12.29
26.12	Mos 26.17				

34.5–6	Al 45.19	14.14	see Acts 10.34	21.12	Mos 11.1
		18.28	2 Ne 28.21, 25	32.8	2 Ne 4.34
Joshua			Hel 13.28	34.2	Hel 3.20, 37
9.25	Mos 12.16	22.3	Jac 7.25	36.13	2 Ne 6.10
10.12	Hel 12.15	23.3	Mos 29.13, 16		
23.14	2 Ne 1.14			Nehemiah	
	Mos 1.9	1 Kings		4.4	1 Ne 22.13
	Al 1.1	2.2–3	2 Ne 1.14, 16		3 Ne 27.32
	Al 62.37	3.6	Hel 6.34		
	Hel 1.2	8.26	Jar 1.9	Esther	
24.15	Al 30.8		Omni 1.6	7.2	Al 20.23
24.17	Mos 7.19–20		Al 9.14		
24.19–20	Al 46.21		Al 25.17	Job	
			Al 50.19	2.9	Morm 2.14
		8.57–58	2 Ne 5.10–11	12.22	2 Ne 3.5
Judges		9.7–8	1 Ne 19.14		Al 37.25
6.17	Jac 7.13		3 Ne 16.9		Morm 8.16
	Al 30.43, 48	15.26	Mos 11.1–2	14.10	2 Ne 9.4
6.22	Al 38.7	17.24	Al 8.20	16.22	2 Ne 1.14
8.34	Al 62.50		Hel 11.8	19.26	2 Ne 9.4
		19.10, 14	1 Ne 1.20	34.21	Morm 2.18
1 Samuel			Morm 8.3	36.13–14	Hel 8.25
1.15	Enos 1.9	19.11–12	1 Ne 12.4		
	Mos 26.14	19.12	1 Ne 17.45	Psalms	
	Al 19.14		Hel 5.30	1.3	Hel 11.13, 17
	Al 46.17	22.8	3 Ne 11.3	1.4	Morm 5.16, 18
	Hel 7.11, 19		Mos 12.29	2.1	Hel 16.22
7.3	Mos 7.33		Mos 13.26		3 Ne 2.2
8.18	Mos 11.25	22.19	Hel 9.27	2.7	Mos 5.7
9.9	Mos 8.13, 15		1 Ne 1.8	2.12	Hel 12.1
	Mos 28.16	22.22–23	Al 36.22	5.8, 11	2 Ne 4.33–34
12.23	2 Ne 25.28		Al 30.42	6.6	2 Ne 33.3
12.24	title page	2 Kings		6.8	Al 5.32
	1 Ne 7.11	1.8	see Mt 3.4	7.1	Mos 7.33
	2 Ne 1.1	2.8	1 Ne 4.2		Mos 29.20
	Mos 27.16		1 Ne 17.26		Al 36.27
	Al 62.50	2.9	Hel 8.11	14.1	Al 61.13
	Eth 6.30		Al 17.9		2 Ne 28.5
17.51	1 Ne 4.9	2.16	Al 18.35		Al 30.53
20.3	1 Ne 3.15		Al 24.8	14.3	Morm 9.2
	1 Ne 4.32	16.2	Al 45.19		Moro 7.17
26.12	Mos 24.19	17.13	Eth 10.5		Moro 10.25
		22.2	Morm 5.22		see Rom 3.10
2 Samuel		22.2	Hel 3.20	16.11	see Rom 3.12
4.9	2 Ne 1.15	23.3	Mos 21.31–32		3 Ne 27.30–31
	2 Ne 33.6				3 Ne 28.10
10.1	Mos 10.6	2 Chronicles		22.3	Al 31.15
	Hel 3.37	7.14	3 Ne 30.2		Eth 3.2
13.3	Al 47.4	19.9	Mos 29.30	22.22	Al 33.9
14.7	Al 34.11				

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23.3	1 Ne 16.5 Al 7.19	69.16 69.28	Eth 6.12 Al 5.57–58	123.1 145.8–9	Eth 3.2 Jac 4.10
24.4	2 Ne 25.16 Al 5.19	73.24 75.8	Al 14.11 Al 40.26	145.9 145.20	1 Ne 1.20 2 Ne 30.10
30.5	3 Ne 10.9–10	77.2	Eth 15.3		
30.12	Al 26.37	77.7, 19–20	2 Ne 10.20	Proverbs	
31.19	2 Ne 9.10	77.18	1 Ne 17.45	1.25	1 Ne 19.7 Hel 12.6
33.9	2 Ne 5.23		Mos 27.11, 18	2.2	Mos 12.27
34.8	1 Ne 8.11 Al 36.26 Hel 12.1 Morm 1.15	78.35 84.4	Al 36.7 Al 38.7 Hel 5.12 Eth 13.10	2.6 3.11–12 15.29	WoM 1.9 see Heb 12.6 Al 10.22–23 Al 62.40 Morm 5.21
34.17	Al 36.27 Al 38.5	85.7–8 85.8	Mos 15.18 Al 58.11	16.14	Mos 20.22
34.17–18	2 Ne 4.31–32	85.11	Morm 8.16, 26	22.6	2 Ne 4.5
34.18	3 Ne 12.19 Morm 2.14 Eth 4.15 Moro 6.2	86.13 89.26	Al 5.6 1 Ne 15.15 2 Ne 4.30 2 Ne 9.45	26.11	see 2 Pet 2.22
35.5	Al 37.15 Morm 5.16, 18	90.2	Jac 7.25 Moro 7.22	Ecclesiastes	
35.7–8	1 Ne 14.3	92.1	Mos 18.23	8.12, 15	2 Ne 28.7
35.28	1 Ne 18.16 Eth 6.9	95.6	2 Ne 25.29 Enos 1.4 3 Ne 17.10	Isaiah	
37.4	Al 41.3		Jac 6.6	2	2 Ne 12
37.20	2 Ne 13.11 2 Ne 23.22 2 Ne 26.3	95.7–8 95.8, 11	Jac 1.7 Al 12.34–37 Al 13.12–16	2.3 2.10 3 3.10	Al 7.9 Al 12.14–15 2 Ne 13 1 Ne 14.5 Morm 7.10 Moro 7.47
40.1	2 Ne 4.23 Jac 7.22	95.11	Al 16.17 Moro 7.3	3.15 4	2 Ne 26.20 2 Ne 14
44.8	Al 26.12		2 Ne 9.52	5	2 Ne 15
47.2	1 Ne 11.6	106.47	Al 26.8	5.4	Jac 5.41, 47, 49
47.7	Al 5.50		3 Ne 20.13	5.9	see Mt 23.38
48.14	Hel 12.6	107.2–3	Mos 15.8,9	5.24–25	2 Ne 26.6
50.10	3 Ne 8.21, 23	107.14	Al 5.7,9	5.26	2 Ne 29.2
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51.16–17	3 Ne 9.19–20	109.13, 15	Al 1.24	6.10	see Mt 13.15
51.17	2 Ne 2.7	110.1	see Heb 10.12		Mos 2.9
55.15	2 Ne 28.23	110.4	see Heb 6.20	7	2 Ne 17
55.17	Al 34.21	115.12	Al 26.36 Moro 8.2	7.11–12 8	Jac 7.14 2 Ne 18
56.3–4	2 Ne 4.34		Jac 3.11	8.14	Jac 4.15
57.6	1 Ne 22.14	116.3	Al 14.6	9	2 Ne 19
62.2	1 Ne 13.36		Al 26.13	9.6	Al 13.18
62.10	Mos 12.29 Al 1.30 Al 7.6	118.6	Al 36.13 see Heb 13.6	10	2 Ne 20
62.12	Mos 3.24 Al 32.20	118.19 118.22	2 Ne 4.32 see Mt 21.42	10.3 11	Morm 9.2 2 Ne 21
68.22	Eth 2.24	118.23	Morm 9.16	11.4	2 Ne 30.9 Hel 10.6

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11.5–9	2 Ne 30.11–15		Hel 14.9	52.8, 10	Mos 16.1
11.11	2 Ne 6.14		Eth 9.28	52.8–10	Mos 15.29–31
	2 Ne 25.17	40.4	Hel 14.23		3 Ne 16.18–20
	2 Ne 29.1		see Lk 3.5		3 Ne 20.32–35
	Jac 6.2	41.16	2 Ne 26.5	52.10	1 Ne 19.17
12	2 Ne 22	41.20	Morm 8.8		1 Ne 22.10–11
12.1	2 Ne 4:30	43.16	2 Ne 10.20		Enos 1.13
13	2 Ne 23	44.5	2 Ne 28.3	52.11	see 2 Cor 6.17
13.10	Hel 14.20	44.22	3 Ne 9.13	52.11–15	3 Ne 20.41–45
13.22	Al 9.18	45.18	1 Ne 17.36	52.12	3 Ne 21.29
	Al 16.10	45.22	3 Ne 9.22	52.13–14	3 Ne 21.10
14	2 Ne 24		3 Ne 15.9	52.15	3 Ne 21.8
14.7	3 Ne 4.31		Eth 4.18	53	Mos 14
14.12	2 Ne 2.17		Moro 7.34	53.4	see Mt 8.17
14.25	Mos 24.14	45.23	see Rom 14.11	53.6	2 Ne 12.5
14.29	1 Ne 17.41	48	1 Ne 20		2 Ne 28.14
22.13	2 Ne 28.7–8	48.12	see Rev 22.13		Al 5.37
24.15	2 Ne 6.4	48.18	1 Ne 2.9–10		Al 13.17
25.8	Mos 15.8	49	1 Ne 21		Al 30.53
	see 1 Cor 15.54	49.8	see 2 Cor 6.2		Hel 6.31
28.10	2 Ne 28.30	49.10	Al 31.38	53.7	Mos 13.35
28.16	Jac 4.16–17		Al 32.42		Mos 15.6
	Hel 5.12	49.21–22	1 Ne 22.4, 6, 8	53.8–12	Mos 15.8–12
29.3–5	2 Ne 26.15–18	49.22	2 Ne 29.2	53.11	Mos 29.33
29.4	1 Ne 22.23	49.22–23	2 Ne 6.6–7	54	3 Ne 22
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29.6–10	2 Ne 27.2–5		2 Ne 10.9	54.5	3 Ne 11.14
29.8	1 Ne 22.14, 19	49.24–26	2 Ne 6.16–18	55.1	2 Ne 26.25
	2 Ne 6.12–13	49.26	1 Ne 22.12–13		Al 1.20
	2 Ne 10.13	50	2 Ne 7	55.1–2	2 Ne 9.50–51
29.11	2 Ne 27.6, 9, 15, 17	50.10	3 Ne 8.21, 23	55.11	2 Ne 9.17
		51	2 Ne 8.1–23		Al 12.23, 26
29.12	2 Ne 27.19	51.4	2 Ne 25.4		Al 42.5
29.13	2 Ne 28.14	51.10	2 Ne 4.20	57.13–15	2 Ne 4.32–34
29.13–24	2 Ne 27.25–35		Hel 12.16	57.14	1 Ne 14.1
29.14	1 Ne 14.7	51.19	Hel 13.32	60.19–21	Al 19.6 [OP]
	1 Ne 22.8	52.1–2	2 Ne 1.14, 23	61.10	2 Ne 4.30, 33
	2 Ne 25.17		2 Ne 8.24–25		2 Ne 9.14
	2 Ne 29.1		Jac 3.11	63.1	2 Ne 31.19
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		6.4	4 Ne 1.3	2.21, 23	Jac 4.5
Colossians					
1.16	Mos 4.9 Mos 5.15 Al 18.28, 29 Al 22.10				
1.28	Moro 10.32, 33				
2.2	Mos 18.21				

BIBLICAL QUOTATIONS, ALLUSIONS, AND VERBAL PARALLELS

3.4	Al 26.6		Al 12.13, 23	13.8	Al 5.58
3.11	Moro 7.11	2.15–16	1 Ne 22.23	14.4	2 Ne 2.9
3.15	Mos 16.3	2.16	Al 39.9		Jac 4.11
	Al 42.10	3.1–3	Moro 7.48	14.10–11	2 Ne 9.16
3.17	Al 7.23	3.20	1 Ne 9.6		Jac 6.10
	Hel 7.7		2 Ne 9.20		Mos 3.26–27
4.3	2 Ne 4.35		Morm 8.17		Mos 5.5
	Morm 9.28		Moro 7.22	14.11	Al 12.17
4.13	Hel 6.8	4.18	Moro 8.16	14.13	3 Ne 27.12
5.14	3 Ne 17.7	5.7	2 Ne 31.21	14.15	Al 26.5
			3 Ne 11.27, 36	15.3	1 Ne 1.14
			Morm 7.7		1 Ne 14.7
1 Peter			Eth 5.4		2 Ne 1.10
1.2	Al 13.3		Al 11.40		2 Ne 4.17
1.4	Hel 5.8	5.13			Jac 4.8
1.7	Eth 12.6				1 Ne 14.11–12
1.8	Hel 5.44			17.1	1 Ne 13.34
2.9	Mos 27.29	2 John		17.5	1 Ne 14.9–10
	Al 19.6	1.4	Mos 4.14–15		1 Ne 14.16–17
	Al 26.3	1.6	4 Ne 1.12		1 Ne 14.11
	Al 36.20			17.15	1 Ne 13.7–8
3.9	3 Ne 6.13	Revelation		18.12	Al 16.9–10
3.22	Moro 7.27–30	1.1	Al 16.19	18.19	2 Ne 26.3
	Moro 9.26		Hel 16.5	18.24	3 Ne 9.5–11
4.7	Al 34.39		Morm 8.34		Mos 3.5
	Moro 6.4	1.5	Al 7.14	19.6	Mos 5.15
		1.19	1 Ne 14.24		Al 6.8
2 Peter			2 Ne 6.4	19.10	Mos 15.24, 26
1.13	Moro 9.6		3 Ne 27.23	20.6	1 Ne 22.26
2.1	WoM 1.16		Eth 4.1	20.7	Hel 13.13
2.17	1 Ne 8.24	3.5	Al 5.57–58	20.9	2 Ne 9.16
	1 Ne 12.4, 17	3.12	Al 7.25	20.10	Jac 3.11
	3 Ne 8.22		Al 29.17		Jac 6.10
2.18	Al 30.31		Al 34.36		Mos 3.27
2.21	2 Ne 31.14		Hel 3.30		Al 12.17
	Al 5.37		3 Ne 28.40		Al 14.14
	Hel 6.31	4.8	2 Ne 9.46		2 Ne 9.19, 26
2.22	3 Ne 7.8		Mos 3.18	20.10, 13	2 Ne 28.23
3.1	1 Ne 2.24	6.16	Al 12.14	20.10–13	1 Ne 15.33
3.8	Al 40.8	7.9	3 Ne 26.4	20.12	Mos 16.10
3.10	3 Ne 26.3	7.14	1 Ne 12.10–11		Al 5.15
	Morm 9.2		Al 5.21		Al 11.41
3.11	3 Ne 27.27		Al 13.11		Al 12.8
3.14	Moro 10.33		Al 34.36		Al 33.22
3.16	1 Ne 15.3		3 Ne 27.19		Al 40.21
	Al 13.20		Eth 13.10–11		Morm 6.21
		7.17	1 Ne 11.25		Morm 9.13
1 John		10.4	3 Ne 26.11		2 Ne 29.11
1.7	Hel 6.3		3 Ne 28.25	20.12–13	2 Ne 9.12
1.9	Al 7.14	12.9	2 Ne 2.18	20.13	Mos 3.24
1.10	Al 5.25		Mos 16.3		

BIBLICAL QUOTATIONS, ALLUSIONS, AND VERBAL PARALLELS

21.1–2	Eth 13.3–10	21.8	Jac 3.11	22.11	2 Ne 9.16
21.4	Mos 16.9	21.10	1 Ne 11.1	22.13	Al 11.39
21.5	2 Ne 31.15	22.8–9	1 Ne 17.55		3 Ne 9.18
21.6	Al 11.39	22.10–11	Al 7.21	22.17	Al 5.34
	3 Ne 9.18		Morm 9.14		Al 42.27

A Sampling of Conventional Usages Excluded from the Quotations and Allusions List

(The first number is occurrences in the OT, the second is the NT, the third is the BoM)

I. Idiomatic Biblical Expressions Employed in the Book of Mormon (including variations)

a man of God (10,0,4)	prayer and supplication (3,4,2)
according to the word of the Lord (28,0,5)	put trust in the Lord/God (7,0,6)
all his days (21,0,22)	reigned in his stead (64,0,22)
all the day long (12,1,12)	return... upon his own head (8,0,2)
as the Lord liveth (27,0,17)	saith the Lord of Hosts (126,0,27)
be of good cheer (0,7,2)	shall know that I am the Lord (65,0,4)
begat sons and daughters (20,0,12)	stretched forth his hand (16,11,20)
brought... out of the land of Egypt (56,1,4)	the children of men (22,0,131)
carried away captive (29,0,7)	the day of judgment (0,8,4)
commandments... statutes... judgments (14,0,7)	the dust of the earth (10,0,6)
cried with a loud voice (8,15,6)	the ends of the earth (35,1,17)
did that which was right... in the sight of the Lord (17,0,2)	the God of Abraham... Isaac... Jacob (14,16,20)
famine... sword... pestilence (25,0,4)	the hand of the Lord (33,3,26)
filled with the Holy Ghost (0,8,6)	the Holy One of Israel (30,0,40)
from generation to generation (10,1,14)	the kingdom of God/heaven (0,103,54)
gave up the ghost (9,6,2)	the Lord... deliver... out of the hands of (20,1,14)
gold... silver... precious things (6,0,15)	the love of God (0,12,8)
imaginings of... heart (13,1,2)	the Most High God (9,3,6)
inquire of the Lord (20,0,14)	the will of God (0,27,7)
it came to pass (396,67,1359)	thus saith the Lord (416,0,39)
journey into the wilderness (5,0,7)	verily I say unto you (0,77,47)
laughed... to scorn (8,3,1)	wander... in the wilderness (7,0,6)
make an end of speaking (9,0,20)	which is, being interpreted (0,7,4)
observe to do (18,0,6)	with one accord (1,11,3)
our Lord Jesus Christ (0,55,3)	workers of iniquity (21,1,2)

II. Occasional Bible Phrases Employed Widely in the Book of Mormon (including variations)

according to the law of Moses (1,1,8)	enter into a covenant (2,0,25)
at the last day (0,5,49)	enter into his rest/the rest of the Lord (1,6,12)
baptize... unto repentance (0,1,14)	faith... hope... charity (1,0,8)
behold I say unto you (0,1,89)	fall into the hands of (4,1,19)
believe on his name (0,1,12)	from that time forth (2,1,10)
blessed art thou (2,3,14)	from time to time (3,0,12)
blessed by the name of... God (1,0,7)	get gain (0,1,19)
by the hand of the Lord (1,0,21)	humble themselves before the Lord/God (2,0,12)
come to the knowledge of (0,1,10)	in the strength of the Lord (2,0,8)
diligent... keeping the commandments (1,0,7)	it must needs be (0,1,21)

keep the commandments of God (0,2,37)	the hearts of the people (2,0,22)
know of a surety (1,1,11)	the judgment seat of Christ (0,2,7)
labor . . . with their own hands (0,1,8)	the knowledge of the truth (0,3,15)
land of promise (0,1,24)	the lord of the vineyard (0,4,33)
lifted up . . . in pride (1,0,18)	the mysteries of God (0,3,8)
nations, kindreds, tongues, and peoples (0,4,16)	the name of Christ (0,2,23)
peace in the land (1,0,17)	the people of God (2,3,9)
pervert the . . . ways of the Lord (0,1,11)	the power of the Holy Ghost (0,1,24)
preach the word of God (0,1,13)	the spirit of prophecy (0,1,19)
prepared . . . from the foundation of the world (0,1,15)	the time is at hand (0,2,7)
remnant of the house of Israel (1,0,10)	the twelve apostles of the Lamb (0,1,8)
repent . . . and be baptized (0,1,12)	the voice of the Lord came unto (0,1,10)
set hearts . . . upon riches (1,0,10)	the voice of the people (1,0,24)
stand before (God) . . . judged of/according to their works (0,1,11)	things of the world (0,4,12)
stir them up . . . in remembrance (0,1,8)	traditions of their fathers (0,1,27)
the doctrine of Christ (0,3,7)	upon all the face of the earth (1,0,10)
	with all diligence (1,0,10)
	works of darkness (0,2,18)

INDEX OF NAMES

This finding aid is based on the index in the 1981 edition of the Book of Mormon, but because this index includes several names that were missed in 1981 and omits biblical figures who do not appear in the Nephite record, a few of the subscripts are different. Approximate dates have been provided for most individuals (except for Jaredites), rounded off to the nearest ten. Biblical kings, however, appear with precise reign years derived from standard scholarly chronologies. The reference is to the first appearance of the name in the Book of Mormon. Jaredite kings usually have two references, the first to the genealogy in Ether 1 and the second to their first mention in the narrative. Some biblical names that appear only in Isaiah quotations have been omitted. Brackets enclose variant spellings from the original or printer's manuscripts.

A

Aaron₁: late Jaredite; Ether 1.15, 10.31

Aaron₂: son of Mosiah₂ (c. 100 BCE); Mos 27.34

Aaron₃: king of Lamanites (c. 330 CE); Morm 2.9

Aaron, city of: east of Ammonihah, perhaps in center of the land; Alma 8.13

Abel: son of Adam (Bible); Hel 6.27

Abinadi: Nephite prophet (c. 150 BCE); Mos 11.20

Abinadom: Nephite record keeper, son of Chemish (c. 160 BCE); Omni 1.10

Abish: Lamanite woman, servant of Lamoni (c. 90 BCE); Alma 19.16

Ablom: Jaredite area on the East Sea; Ether 9.3

Abraham: father of the faithful (Bible); 1 Ne 6.4

Adam: first man (Bible); 1 Ne 5.11

Agosh: Jaredite area; Ether 14.15

Aha: Nephite military officer (c. 80 BCE); Alma 16.5

Ahah: late Jaredite king; Ether 1.9, 11.10

Ahaz: king of Judah (743–727 BCE or 735–715 BCE) (Bible); 2 Ne 17.1

Aiath: city north of Jerusalem₁ (Bible); 2 Ne 20.28

Akish: early Jaredite king; Ether 8.10

Akish, wilderness of: scene of battles of Corintumr₂; Ether 14.3

Alma₁: Nephite prophet, ex-priest of Noah₃, founder of the church (c. 130 BCE); Mos 17.2

Alma₂: son of Alma₁, first chief judge, high priest (c. 100 BCE); Mos 27.8

Alma, valley of: a day's travel north of city of Helam; Mos 24.20

Amaleki₁: Nephite record keeper, son of Abinadom (c. 130 BCE); Omni 1.12

Amaleki₂: member of expedition that sought Zeniff's group (c. 120 BCE); Mos 7.6

Amalekites [or Amlicites]: group of Nephite apostates; Alma 21.2

Amalickiah: Nephite traitor, king of the Lamanites (c. 70 BCE); Alma 46.3

Amalickiahites: followers of Amalickiah; Alma 46.28

Amaron: Nephite record keeper, son of Omni (c. 280 BCE); Omni 1.3

Amgid: late Jaredite king; Ether 10.32

Aminadab: Nephite dissenter living among Lamanites (c. 30 BCE); Hel 5.39

Aminadi: descendant of Nephi₁, ancestor of Amulek; Alma 10.2

Amlici: Nephite dissenter (c. 90 BCE); Alma 2.1

Amlicites: Nephite faction desiring a king; Alma 2.11

Ammah: missionary companion of Aaron₂ (c. 100 BCE); Alma 20.2

Ammaron: Nephite record keeper, son of Amos₁ (c. 300 CE); 4 Ne 1.47

Ammon: territory and people hostile to the Israelites (Bible); 2 Ne 21.14

Ammon₁: leader of expedition to land of Nephi, Mulekite (c. 120 BCE); Mos 7.3

Ammon₂: son of Mosiah₂, missionary to Lamanites (c. 100 BCE); Mos 27.34

Ammon₂, people of: converted Lamanites, also known as Anti-Nephi-Lehies or Ammonites; Alma 27.26

Ammonihah, city of: in west, near cities of Melek, Noah, and Aaron; Alma 8.6

Ammonihah, land of: to the west of river Sidon; Alma 8.7

Ammonihahites: people of the city of Ammonihah; Alma 16.9

Ammonites: *see* Ammon₂, people of; Alma 56.57

Ammoron: Nephite traitor, brother of Amalickiah, descendant of Zoram₁, king of the Lamanites (c. 60 BCE); Alma 52.3

Amnigaddah: late Jaredite; Ether 1.14, 10.31
Amnihu: hill on east of river Sidon; Alma 2.15
Amnor: Nephite soldier (c. 90 BCE); Alma 2.22
Amnor: Nephite monetary unit; Alma 11.6
Amoron: a Nephite (c. 410 CE); Moro 9.7
Amos₁: Nephite record keeper, son of Nephi₄ (c. 150 CE); 4 Ne 1.19
Amos₂: Nephite record keeper, son of Amos₁ (c. 250 CE); 4 Ne 1.21
Amoz: father of Isaiah₁ (eighth century BCE) (Bible); 2 Ne 12.1
Amulek: missionary companion of Alma₂ (c. 80 BCE); Alma 8.21
Amulon: leader of priests of Noah₃, tributary monarch under Laman₃ (c. 160 BCE); Mos 23.32
Amulon, children of: children of priests of Noah₃; Mos 25.12
Amulon, land of: settled by Amulon and priests, between Zarahemla and Nephi; Mos 23.31
Amulonites: descendants and followers of Amulon and priests of Noah₃; Alma 21.3
Anathoth: Levite city near Jerusalem₁ (Bible); 2 Ne 20.30
Angola [or Angolah], city of: Nephite city; Morm 2.4
Ani-Anti: Lamanite village in land of Nephi; Alma 21.11
Anti-Nephi-Lehi: a brother of Lamoni, king over converted Lamanites (c. 90 BCE); Alma 24.3
Anti-Nephi-Lehies: *see* Ammon₂, people of; Alma 23.17
Antiomno: Lamanite king (c. 80 BCE); Alma 20.4
Antion: Nephite monetary unit; Alma 11.19
Antionah: a chief ruler in Ammonihah (c. 80 BCE); Alma 12.20
Antionum: Nephite commander (c. 380 CE); Morm 6.14
Antionum, land of: in the south, east of Sidon; Alma 31.3
Antiparah, city of: Nephite city on western frontier; Alma 56.14
Antipas, mount: near Onidah; Alma 47.7
Antipus: Nephite commander (c. 60 BCE); Alma 56.9
Antum, land of: contained the hill Shim, not far from the East Sea; Morm 1.3
Archeantus: Nephite military officer (c. 380 CE); Moro 9.2

Arpad: city in Northern Syria (Bible); 2 Ne 20.9
Assyria: kingdom in Western Asia (Bible); 2 Ne 17.17

B

Babylon: capital of Babylonia, in Mesopotamia (Bible); 1 Ne 1.13
Bashan: a region in northeastern Transjordan (Bible); 2 Ne 12.13
Bath: Hebrew unit of measurement, about 6 gallons (Bible); 2 Ne 15.10
Benjamin: son of Mosiah₁, Nephite prophet-king (c. 150 BCE); Omni 1.23
Bethabara: region of Galilee (Bible); 1 Ne 10.9
Boaz, city of: north of city of Desolation; Morm 4.20
Bountiful, city of: Nephite city in land of Bountiful₂; Alma 52.17
Bountiful₁, land of: area in southern Arabia, near sea (not in Bible); 1 Ne 17.5
Bountiful₂, land of: Nephite territory north of Zarahemla, in narrow neck of land just south of the land of Desolation; Alma 22.29
Brass plates: *see* plates of brass

C

Cain: son of Adam (Bible); Hel 6.27
Calno: city in Northern Syria (Bible); 2 Ne 20.9
Carchemish: city in Northern Syria (Bible); 2 Ne 20.9
Cezoram: eighth chief judge of Nephites (c. 30 BCE); Hel 5.1
Cezoram, son of: ninth chief judge (c. 30 BCE); Hel 6.15
Chaldeans: inhabitants of Chaldea, a region south and east of Babylon (Bible); 1 Ne 20.14
Chemish: Nephite record keeper, son of Omni (c. 270 BCE); Omni 1.8
Cherubim: heavenly creatures, often guardians of sacred areas (Bible); Alma 12.21
Christ: Greek translation of Hebrew *Messiah* (Bible); 2 Ne 10.3 [but 1 Ne 12.18 in O and P]
Cohor₁: brother of Noah₂; Ether 7.15
Cohor₂: early Jaredite king; Ether 7.20
Cohor₃: late Jaredite; Ether 13.17
Com₁: early Jaredite king; Ether 1.26, 9.25
Com₂: late Jaredite king; Ether 1.12, 10.31
Comnor [or Comron (P)]: Jaredite name for hill near valley of Shurr, near land of Corihor; Ether 14.28

Corianton: son of Alma₂ (c. 70 BCE); Alma 31.7
Coriantor: late Jaredite; Ether 1.6, 11.18
Coriantum₁: early Jaredite king; Ether 1.27, 9.21
Coriantum₂: late Jaredite; Ether 1.13, 10.31
Coriantumr₁: early Jaredite; Ether 8.4
Coriantumr₂: early Jaredite king, last Jaredite survivor; Omni 1.21, Ether 12.1
Coriantumr₃: apostate Nephite, Mulekite, commander of Lamanite forces (c. 50 BCE); Hel 1.15
Corihor₁: early Jaredite rebel; Ether 7.3
Corihor₂: late Jaredite; Ether 13.17
Corihor, land of: Jaredite area near borders of East Sea; Ether 14.27
Corihor, valley of: Jaredite area near borders of East Sea; Ether 14.28
Corom: middle Jaredite king; Ether 1.19, 10.16
Cumeni, city of: Nephite city to southwest; Alma 56.14
Cumenihah: Nephite commander (c. 380 CE); Morm 6.14
Cumoms: unidentified animals; Ether 9.19
Cumorah, land and hill: scene of last Nephite battle and place where Mormon₂ hid many records; Morm 6.2; *see also* Ramah, hill. Some believe that the hill in upstate New York where Joseph Smith found the gold plates was named for this ancient site.
Cureloms: unidentified animals; Ether 9.19

D

Damascus: city in Southern Syria (Bible); 2 Ne 17.8
David: second king of Israel (tenth century BCE) (Bible); 2 Ne 17.2
David, land of: between Zarahemla and West Sea; Morm 2.5
Deseret: honeybee; Ether 2.3
Desolation, city of: Nephite city to the north, in land of Desolation; Morm 3.7
Desolation, land of: north of the land of Bountiful₂, beyond the narrow neck of land; Alma 22.30

E

Eden, Garden of: home of Adam and Eve (Bible); 2 Ne 2.19
Edom: country southeast of Palestine (Bible); 2 Ne 21.14
Egypt: land of Israel's captivity (Bible); 1 Ne 5.14
Elam: country to the east of Babylonia (Bible); 2 Ne 21.11

Elijah: prophet of Israel (ninth century BCE) (Bible); 3 Ne 25.5
Emer: early Jaredite king; Ether 1.28, 9.14
Emron: Nephite military officer (c. 410 CE); Moro 9.2
Enos: Nephite prophet, record keeper, son of Jacob₂ (c. 420 BCE); Jacob 7.27
Ephah: Hebrew unit of measurement, about ½ bushel (Bible); 2 Ne 15.10
Ephraim: northern kingdom of Israelites, one of the twelve tribes (Bible); 2 Ne 17.2
Ephraim, hill of: Jaredite area near the city of Nehor; Ether 7.9
Esrom: early Jaredite; Ether 8.4
Ethem: late Jaredite king; Ether 1.8, 11.11
Ether: last Jaredite prophet, record keeper; Ether 1.6, 11.23
Eve: first woman (Bible); 1 Ne 5.11
Ezias [or Ezaias (P)]: a Hebrew prophet (not in Bible); Hel 8.20
Ezrom [or ezrum (P)]: Nephite monetary unit; Alma 11.6

G

Gad, city of: probably in land northward; 3 Ne 9.10
Gadiandi, city of: probably in land northward; 3 Ne 9.8
Gadianton [or Gaddianton]: leader of robber bands (c. 50 BCE); Hel 2.4
Gadiomnah, city of: probably in land northward; 3 Ne 9.8
Galilee: the region around the Sea of Galilee, in Palestine (Bible); 2 Ne 19.1
Gallim: city north of Jerusalem₁ (Bible); 2 Ne 20.30
Gazelem: name given to a servant of God or to a seer stone; Alma 37.23
Geba: city to the north of Jerusalem₁ (Bible); 2 Ne 20.29
Gebim: city to the north of Jerusalem₁ (Bible); 2 Ne 20.31
Gibeah: city to the north of Jerusalem₁ (Bible); 2 Ne 20.29
Gid: Nephite military officer (c. 60 BCE); Alma 57.28
Gid, city of: in the borders by the East Sea; Alma 51.26
Giddianhi: chief of the Gadianton robbers (c. 20 CE); 3 Ne 3.9

Giddonah₁ [or Gidanah (P)]: Amulek's father (c. 110 BCE); Alma 10.2
Giddonah₂: high priest in Gideon (c. 70 BCE); Alma 30.23
Gideon: Nephite leader (c. 100 BCE); Mos 19.4
Gideon, city of: east of river Sidon; Alma 6.7
Gideon, land of: east of river Sidon; Alma 8.1
Gideon, Valley of: east of river Sidon; Alma 2.20
Gidgiddonah: Nephite commander (c. 380 CE); Morm 6.13
Gidgiddoni: Nephite commander (c. 20 CE); 3 Ne 3.18
Gilead: late Jaredite king; Ether 14.8
Gilgah: early Jaredite, son of Jared₁; Ether 6.14
Gilgal: Nephite commander (c. 380 CE); Morm 6.14
Gilgal, city of: Nephite city; 3 Ne 9.6
Gilgal, valley of: Jaredite place; Ether 13.27
Gimgimno, city of: probably in the land northward; 3 Ne 9.8
Gold plates: *see* plates, gold
Gomorrhah: Mesopotamian city associated with Sodom (Bible); 2 Ne 23.19

H

Hagoth: Nephite shipbuilder (c. 50 BCE); Alma 63.5
Hamath: city in Northern Syria (Bible); 2 Ne 20.19
Hearthom: middle Jaredite king; Ether 1.16, 10.29
Helam: convert from among the people of Noah, (c. 150 BCE); Mos 18.12
Helam, city and land of: inhabited by people of Alma₁, north of land of Lehi-Nephi; Mos 23.20
Helaman₁: son of King Benjamin (c. 130 BCE); Mos 1.2
Helaman₂: son of Alma₂, prophet, military commander (c. 70 BCE); Alma 31.7
Helaman₂, sons of: children of converted Lamanites known as Ammonites (c. 60 BCE); Alma 53.16
Helaman₃: son of Helaman₂, record keeper, sixth chief judge (c. 50 BCE); Alma 63.11
Helem: brother of Ammon₁ (c. 120 BCE); Mos 7.6
Helorum: son of King Benjamin (c. 130 BCE); Mos 1.2
Hem: brother of Ammon₁ (c. 120 BCE); Mos 7.6
Hermounts: wilderness on west and north; Alma 2.37

Heshlon, plains of: Jaredite area; Ether 13.28
Heth₁: early Jaredite king; Ether 1.25, 9.25
Heth₂: middle Jaredite; Ether 1.16, 10.31
Himni: son of Mosiah₂ (c. 100 BCE); Mos 27.34
Homer: Hebrew unit of measurement, about 6½ bushels (Bible); 2 Ne 15.10
Horeb: alternative name for Mount Sinai, in the Sinai Peninsula (Bible); 3 Ne 25.4

I

Immanuel: name meaning “God is with us” (Bible); 2 Ne 17.14
Irreantum: meaning “many waters,” possibly an arm of Indian Ocean off southeastern Arabia (not in Bible); 1 Ne 17.5
Isaac: son of Abraham (Bible); 1 Ne 6.4
Isabel: harlot in land of Siron (c. 70 BCE); Alma 39.3
Isaiah₁: Hebrew prophet (eighth century BCE) (Bible); 1 Ne 15.20
Isaiah₂: one of the twelve Nephite disciples (c. 30 CE); 3 Ne 19.4
Ishmael₁: according to LDS tradition, an Ephraimite from Jerusalem₁ (c. 600 BCE); 1 Ne 7.2
Ishmael₁, Sons of: accompanied Lehi₁ and his family to the promised land (c. 600 BCE); 1 Ne 7.6
Ishmael₂: grandfather of Amulek (c. 140 BCE); Alma 10.2
Ishmael, land of: portion of land of Lehi-Nephi; Alma 17.19
Ishmaelites: descendants of Ishmael₁; Jacob 1.13
Israel: name of Jacob₁ and, by extension, of all his descendants (Bible); 1 Ne 10.12

J

Jacob₁: father of twelve tribes, name changed to Israel (Bible); 1 Ne 5.14
Jacob₂: fifth son of Lehi₁ (c. 570 BCE); 1 Ne 18.7
Jacob₃: Nephite apostate of Zoramite sect, leader of Lamanites (c. 60 BCE); Alma 52.20
Jacob₄: apostate Nephite chosen king by secret combination (c. 30 CE); 3 Ne 7.9
Jacob, city of: probably in the land northward; 3 Ne 9.8
Jacobites: descendants of Jacob₂; Jacob 1.13
Jacobugath [or Jacob-Ugath (P)]: city of followers of Jacob₄, in the land northward; 3 Ne 9.9
Jacom: early Jaredite, son of Jared₁; Ether 6.14

Jared₁: founder of Jaredites; Ether 1.32
Jared₁, brother of: first Jaredite prophet; Ether 1.34. Joseph Smith later said that his name was Mahonri Moriancumer, though this name never appears in the Book of Mormon (but *see* Ether 2.13)
Jared₂: early Jaredite king; Ether 8.1
Jaredites: descendants of Jared₁, his brother, and his friends; Moro 9.23
Jarom: Nephite prophet, son of Enos (c. 420 BCE); Jarom 1.1
Jashon, city and land of: near the land of Antum; Morm 2.16–17
Jeberechiah: father of Zechariah (eighth century BCE) (Bible); 2 Ne 18.2
Jehovah: name of God in Old Testament (Bible); 2 Ne 22.2
Jeneum [or Joneum (P)]: Nephite commander (c. 380 CE); Morm 6.14
Jeremiah₁: Hebrew prophet, contemporary of Lehi, (c. 640–580 BCE) (Bible); 1 Ne 5.13
Jeremiah₂: one of the twelve Nephite disciples (c. 30 CE); 3 Ne 19.4
Jershon, city of: on east by sea, south of land of Bountiful₂; Alma 43.25
Jershon, land of: on east by sea, south of land of Bountiful₂; Alma 27.22
Jerusalem₁: chief city of Jews and surrounding area (Bible); 1 Ne 1.4
Jerusalem₂: Lamanite city and land in land of Lehi-Nephi; Alma 21.1–2
Jesse: father of David (eleventh century BCE) (Bible); 2 Ne 21.1
Jesus: given name of the Savior and Son of God (c. 30 CE) (Bible); 1 Ne 12.18 (O, P); 2 Ne 25.19
Jews: descendants of Judah or inhabitants of kingdom of Judah (Bible); 1 Ne 1.2
John: Old World apostle (first century CE) (Bible); 1 Ne 14.27
Jonas₁: son of Nephi₃, one of the twelve Nephite disciples (c. 30 CE); 3 Ne 19.4
Jonas₂: one of the twelve Nephite disciples (c. 30 CE); 3 Ne 19.4
Jordan: river in Palestine (Bible); 1 Ne 10.9
Jordan, city of: northernmost place of Nephite land northward; Morm 5.3
Joseph₁: son of Jacob₁ (Bible); 1 Ne 5.14
Joseph₁, seed of: descendants of Joseph₁; 2 Ne 3.16
Joseph₂: sixth son of Lehi, (c. 570 BCE); 1 Ne 18.7
Josephites: descendants of Joseph₂; Jacob 1.13
Josh: Nephite commander (c. 380 CE); Morm 6.14

Josh, city of: probably in land northward; 3 Ne 9.10
Joshua, land of: land in borders west, by seashore, northwest of Zarahemla; Morm 2.6
Jotham: king of Judah, father of Ahaz (759–743/735 BCE) (Bible); 2 Ne 17.1
Judah: southern kingdom of Israelites, one of the twelve tribes (Bible); 1 Ne 1.4
Judea, city of: Nephite city on western frontier; Alma 56.9

K

Kib: early Jaredite king; Ether 1.31, 7.3
Kim: middle Jaredite king; Ether 1.21, 10.13
Kimnor: early Jaredite; Ether 8.10
Kish: middle Jaredite king; Ether 1.18, 10.17
Kishkumen [or Kishcumen (O)]: leader of robbers (c. 50 BCE); Hel 1.9
Kishkumen [or Kishcumen], city of: probably in land northward; 3 Ne 9.10
Korihor: an Anti-Christ (c. 70 BCE); Alma 30.12
Kumen: one of the twelve Nephite disciples (c. 30 CE); 3 Ne 19.4
Kumenonhi: one of the twelve Nephite disciples (c. 30 CE); 3 Ne 19.4

L

Laban: custodian of brass plates in Jerusalem₁ (c. 600 BCE); 1 Ne 3.3
Lachoneus₁: Nephite chief judge (c. 1 CE); 3 Ne 1.1
Lachoneus₂: son of Lachoneus₁ (c. 30 CE); 3 Ne 6.19
Laish: city north of Jerusalem₁ (Bible); 2 Ne 20.30
Lamah: Nephite commander (c. 380 CE); Morm 6.14
Laman₁: eldest son of Lehi₁ (c. 600 BCE); 1 Ne 2.5
Laman₂: Lamanite king (c. 200 BCE); Mos 7.21
Laman₃: son of Laman₂ (c. 180 BCE); Mos 10.6
Laman₄: Nephite soldier (c. 60 BCE); Alma 55.5
Laman, city of: probably in land northward; 3 Ne 9.10
Laman, river: river emptying into Red Sea (not in Bible); 1 Ne 2.8
Lamanites: descendants of Laman₁; 2 Ne 5.14
Lamoni: Lamanite king converted by Ammon₂, descendant of Ishmael₁ (c. 100 BCE); Alma 17.21
Lamoni, father of: king over all Lamanite lands (c. 100 BCE); Alma 18.9
Lebanon: kingdom north of Israel (Bible); 2 Ne 12.13

Lehi₁: Hebrew prophet who led his followers to promised land in the Western Hemisphere, descendant of Manasseh (c. 600 BCE) (not in Bible); 1 Ne 1.4

Lehi₂: son of Zoram₂, possibly same as Lehi₁, (c. 80 BCE); Alma 16.5

Lehi₃: Nephite military commander (c. 70 BCE); Alma 43.35

Lehi₄: son of Helaman₃, great missionary (c. 40 BCE); Hel 3.21

Lehi, city of: in land of Lehi₁, by city of Nephiah; Alma 51.24

Lehi₁, land of: eastern land adjoining land of Morianton; Alma 50.25. At Hel 6.10 the term apparently refers to the entire land south

Lehi₂, land of: apparently the entire land south; Hel 6.10

Lehi-Nephi, city and land of: also called land of Nephi, of which it is a part, in the land southward; Mos 7.1

Lehites: comprehensive term for descendants of Lehi₁ in the New World, including both Nephites and Lamanites, though the name never appears in the Book of Mormon

Lehonti: Lamanite officer (c. 70 BCE); Alma 47.10

Lemuel: second son of Lehi₁ (c. 600 BCE); 1 Ne 2.5

Lemuel, city of: Lamanite city in land of Lehi-Nephi; Alma 23.12

Lemuel, valley of: near borders of Red Sea (not in Bible); 1 Ne 2.10

Lemuelites: descendants of Lemuel; Jacob 1.13

Levi₁: son of Jacob₁, father of a tribe of Israel (Bible); 3 Ne 24.3

Levi₂: middle Jaredite king; Ether 1.20, 10.14

Liahona: meaning “a compass,” a directional device given to Lehi₁; 1 Ne 16.10, named at Alma 37.38

Lib₁: middle Jaredite king; Ether 1.17, 10.18

Lib₂: late Jaredite king; Ether 14.10

Limhah: Nephite commander (c. 380 CE); Morm 6.14

Limher: Nephite soldier (c. 90 BCE); Alma 2.22

Limhi: king of Nephites in land of Nephi (c. 120 BCE); Mos 7.9

Limnah: Nephite monetary unit; Alma 11.5

Luram: Nephite military officer (c. 380 CE); Moro 9.2

M

Madmenah: city north of Jerusalem₁ (Bible); 2 Ne 20.31

Mahah: early Jaredite, son of Jared₁; Ether 6.14

Maher-shalal-hash-baz: son of Isaiah₁ (eighth century BCE) (Bible); 2 Ne 18.1

Malachi: Hebrew prophet (sixth or fifth century BCE) (Bible); 3 Ne 24.1

Mammon: Aramaic term for riches; 3 Ne 13.24

Manasseh: son of Joseph₁, father of a tribe of Israel (Bible); 2 Ne 19.21

Manti: Nephite soldier (c. 90 BCE); Alma 2.22

Manti, city of: chief city in land of Manti; Alma 56.14

Manti, hill of: near the city of Zarahemla; Alma 1.15

Manti, land of: southernmost portion of the land of Zarahemla; Alma 16.6

Mary: mother of Jesus (Bible); Mos 3.8

Mathoni: one of the twelve Nephite disciples (c. 30 CE); 3 Ne 19.4

Mathonihah: one of the twelve Nephite disciples (c. 30 CE); 3 Ne 19.4

Medes: a people northwest of Persia (Bible); 2 Ne 23.17

Melchizedek: king of Salem, a contemporary of Abraham (Bible); Alma 13.14

Melek, land of: west of Zarahemla; Alma 8.3

Messiah: Hebrew term meaning “anointed,” translated into Greek as *Christ* (Bible); 1 Ne 1.19

Michmash: city north of Jerusalem₁ (Bible); 2 Ne 20.28

Middoni: Lamanite land; Alma 20.2

Midian: a nomadic people hostile to the Israelites (Bible); 2 Ne 20.26

Midian [or Middoni], land of: Lamanite land east of Lehi-Nephi; Alma 24.5

Migron: city north of Jerusalem₁ (Bible); 2 Ne 20.28

Minon: Nephite land on west bank of river Sidon; Alma 2.24

Moab: kingdom to the east of Judah, beyond the Dead Sea (Bible); 2 Ne 21.14

Mocum, city of: Nephite city; 3 Ne 9.7

Moriancumer, land of: Jaredite area; Ether 2.13; *see also* Jared₁, brother of

Morianton₁: middle Jaredite king; Ether 1.22, 10.9

- Morianton₂ [or Morionton]:** Nephite dissenter, founder of a city (c. 70 BCE); Alma 50.28
- Morianton [or Morionton], city of:** on east borders by the seashore; Alma 51.26
- Morianton [or Morionton (O)], land of:** area settled by Morianton₂; Alma 50.25
- Moriantum:** Nephite area, place in the land northward; Moro 9.9
- Mormon₁:** father of Mormon₂ (c. 320 CE); Morm 1.5
- Mormon₂:** Nephite prophet, general, record keeper, editor (c. 350 CE); WoM 1.1
- Mormon, forest of:** near waters of Mormon; Mos 18.30
- Mormon, place of:** region near city of Lehi-Nephi; Mos 18.4
- Mormon, waters of:** fountain in Place of Mormon; Mos 18.30
- Moron:** late Jaredite king; Ether 1.7, 11.14
- Moron, land of:** Jaredite area near the land of Desolation; Ether 7.5
- Moroni₁:** Nephite military commander (c. 100 BCE); Alma 43.16
- Moroni₂:** son of Mormon₂, last of the Nephites (c. 400 CE); WoM 1.1
- Moroni, Camp of:** near the land of Jershon; Alma 50.27
- Moroni, city of:** in southeast of Nephite lands; Alma 50.13
- Moroni, land of:** in southeast of Nephite lands; Alma 51.22
- Moronihah₁:** Nephite general, son of Moroni₁ (c. 60 BCE); Alma 62.43
- Morohihah₂:** Nephite general (c. 380 CE); Morm 6.14
- Moronihah, city of:** Nephite city; 3 Ne 8.10
- Moses:** Hebrew prophet (Bible); 1 Ne 4.2
- Mosiah₁:** Nephite prophet, king in Zarahemla, father of King Benjamin (c. 180 BCE); Omni 1.12
- Mosiah₂:** Nephite king, son of King Benjamin (c. 130 BCE); Mos 1.2
- Mosiah₂, sons of:** *see* Aaron₂, Ammon₂, Himni, Omner; Mos 27.8
- Mulek [or Muloch (P)]:** son of King Zedekiah₁ of Judah (c. 590 BCE) (not in Bible); Mos 25.2
- Mulek, city of:** Nephite city south of Bountiful; Alma 51.26
- Mulek, land of:** apparently the entire land northward; Hel 6.10
- Mulekites:** common term referring to New World descendants of Mulek, though the name never appears in the Book of Mormon
- Muloki:** missionary companion of Aaron₂ (c. 100 BCE); Alma 20.2
- N**
- Nahom:** place in Arabian Desert (not in Bible); 1 Ne 16.34
- Naphtali:** son of Jacob₁, one of the twelve tribes (Bible); 2 Ne 19.1
- Narrow neck of land:** connects lands northward and southward, between the east and west seas; Alma 63.5
- Narrow pass:** within the Narrow Neck of land; Alma 50.34
- Nazareth:** Palestinian city of Jesus's childhood (Bible); 1 Ne 11.13
- Neas:** unidentified cereal grain; Mos 9.9
- Nehor:** Nephite apostate (c. 90 BCE); Alma 1.2, named at Alma 1.15
- Nehor, city of:** Jaredite city; Ether 7.9
- Nephi₁:** fourth son of Lehi₁, prophet, record keeper, founder of Nephites (c. 600 BCE); 1 Ne 1.1
- Nephi₂:** son of Helaman₃, seventh chief judge, missionary (c. 40 BCE); Hel 3.21
- Nephi₃:** son of Nephi₂, one of the twelve Nephite disciples (c. 30 CE); 3 Ne 1.2
- Nephi₄:** son of Nephi₃ (c. 70 CE); 4 Ne 1.19
- Nephi, city of:** chief city in land of Nephi; Mos 9.15
- Nephi, land of:** land of Lehitess' first inheritance, in the south; also a smaller part of the land, sometimes called land of Lehi-Nephi; Omni 1.12
- Nephihah:** second chief judge of Nephites (c. 80 BCE); Alma 4.17
- Nephihah, city of:** in southeast, by city of Moroni; Alma 51.24
- Nephihah, land of:** in southeast, by borders of Aaron and Moroni; Alma 50.14
- Nephihah, plains of:** near the city of Nephihah; Alma 62.18
- Nephites:** descendants of Nephi₁; 2 Ne 29.12
- Neum:** Hebrew prophet quoted by Nephi₁ (not in Bible); 1 Ne 19.10
- Nimrah:** early Jaredite; Ether 9.8
- Nimrod₁:** grandson of Ham (Bible); Ether 2.1

Nimrod₂: early Jaredite; Ether 7.22
Nimrod, valley of: in Mesopotamia (not in Bible); Ether 2.1
Noah₁: patriarch at time of Flood (Bible); Alma 10.22
Noah₂: early Jaredite king; Ether 7.14
Noah₃: son of Zeniff, king over Nephites in land of Nephi (c. 160 BCE); Mos 7.9
Noah₃, priests of: wicked priests appointed by Noah₃; Mos 11.5
Noah, city and land of: in the west, near Ammonihah; Alma 16.13
Nov: city north of Jerusalem₁ (Bible); 2 Ne 20.32

O

Ogath: Jaredite place near hill Ramah, southward from the waters of Ripliancum; Ether 15.10
Omer: early Jaredite king; Ether 1.29, 8.1
Omner: son of Mosiah₂ (c. 100 BCE); Mos 27.34
Omner, city of: Nephite city by seashore on east borders; Alma 51.26
Omni: Nephite record keeper, son of Jarom (c. 360 BCE); Jarom 1.15
Onidah [or Oneidah (O, P)]: gathering place for disaffected Lamanites; Alma 47.5
Onidah, hill: in land of Antionum; Alma 32.4
Onihah, city of: Nephite city; 3 Ne 9.7
Onti: Nephite monetary unit; Alma 11.6
Ophir: kingdom in Arabia or Africa famous for its gold; 2 Ne 23.12
Oreb: prince of the Midianites (Bible); 2 Ne 20.26
Oreb, Rock of: in Palestine, in Ephraim (Bible); 2 Ne 20.26
Orihah: first Jaredite king, son of Jared₁; Ether 1.32, 6.14

P

Paanchi: son of Pahoran₁ (c. 50 BCE); Hel 1.3
Pachus: king of Nephite dissenters (c. 60 BCE); Alma 62.6
Pacumeni: son of Pahoran₁, fifth Nephite chief judge (c. 50 BCE); Hel 1.3
Pagag: son of brother of Jared₁; Ether 6.25
Pahoran₁ [or Parhoron₁]: third Nephite chief judge (c. 70 BCE); Alma 50.40
Pahoran₂ [or Parhoron₂]: son of Pahoran₁, fourth Nephite chief judge (c. 50 BCE); Hel 1.3
Palestina: land of the Philistines (Bible); 2 Ne 24.29
Pathros: Upper Egypt (Bible); 2 Ne 21.11

Pekah: king of Israel (735–732 BCE) (Bible); 2 Ne 17.1
Philistines: a people living on the Mediterranean coast, west of Judah (Bible); 2 Ne 12.6
Plates, gold: the plates of Mormon (along with the small plates of Nephi) that were discovered and translated by Joseph Smith; this term does not appear in the Book of Mormon
Plates of brass: Hebrew scriptures kept by Laban, perhaps written in some form of Egyptian; 1 Ne 3.3
Plates of Ether: twenty-four plates of gold found by Limhi's people, contained a record of the Jaredites; Mos 8.9, Ether 1.2
Plates of Jacob: alternate name for the small plates of Nephi; Jacob 3.14
Plates of Mormon: Mormon₂'s abridgment of the large plates of Nephi, plus his own record and Moroni₂'s additions; WoM 1.3
Plates of Nephi, large: historical record abridged by Mormon₂, whose abridgment constitutes the books of Mosiah, Alma, Helaman, 3 Nephi, and 4 Nephi; 1 Ne 9.2
Plates of Nephi, small: spiritual history of Nephites constituting the books of 1 Nephi, 2 Nephi, Jacob, Enos, Jarom, and Omni; 1 Ne 1.17
Plates of Zeniff: record of Zeniff's colony; Mos 8.5
Promise, land of: generally, the Americas; 1 Ne 2.20

Q

Queen₁: Lamanite, wife of Lamoni's father (c. 100 BCE); Alma 22.19
Queen₂: Lamanite, wife of Lamoni (c. 100 BCE); Alma 19.2
Queen₃: Lamanite, wife of unnamed king, later the wife of Amalickiah (c. 100 BCE); Alma 47.32

R

Rabbanah: Lamanite term meaning "powerful or great king"; Alma 18.13
Raca: word suggesting contempt in Aramaic and Greek (Bible); 3 Ne 12.22
Rahab: a mythological chaos-monster (Bible); 2 Ne 8.9
Ramah, hill: Jaredite name for hill Cumarah; Ether 15.11
Ramath [or Ramah]: city north of Jerusalem₁ (Bible); 2 Ne 20.29
Rameumptom: meaning "the holy stand," elevated place in synagogues of Zoramites₂; Alma 31.21

Red Sea: sea on the west side of Arabia; 1 Ne 2.5

Remaliah: father of Pekah (eighth century BCE) (Bible); 2 Ne 17.1

Rezin: king of Syria (ca. 750–732 BCE) (Bible); 2 Ne 17.1

Riplah, hill: east of river Sidon, near land of Manti; Alma 43.31

Riplakish: early Jaredite king; Ether 1.23, 10.4

Ripliancum, waters of: Jaredite name for body of water north of the hill Ramah; Ether 15.8

S

Salem: earlier name for Jerusalem₁ in Palestine (Bible); Alma 13.17

Sam: third son of Lehi₁ (c. 600 BCE); 1 Ne 2.5

Samaria: capital of northern kingdom of Israel (Bible); 2 Ne 17.9

Samuel₁: Hebrew prophet (eleventh century BCE) (Bible); 3 Ne 20.24

Samuel₂: Lamanite prophet (c. 5 BCE); Hel 13.2

Sarah: wife of Abraham (Bible); 2 Ne 8.2

Sariah: wife of Lehi₁ (c. 600 BCE); 1 Ne 2.5

Saul: first king of Israel (eleventh century BCE) (Bible); 2 Ne 20.29

Seantum: member of Gadianton band (c. 20 BCE); Hel 9.26

Sebus, waters of: watering place in land of Ishmael; Alma 17.26

Second Nephi: Nephite king after Nephi₁ (c. 540 BCE); Jacob 1.11, 15

Seezoram: member of Gadianton band, elected chief judge (c. 20 BCE); Hel 9.23

Senine: Nephite monetary unit; Alma 11.3

Senum: Nephite monetary unit; Alma 11.3

Seon: Nephite monetary unit; Alma 11.5

Scraphim: heavenly creatures associated with God's glory (Bible); 2 Ne 16.2

Seth: late Jaredite; Ether 1.10, 11.9

Shared: late Jaredite military leader; Ether 13.23

Shazer: campsite in Arabian desert; 1 Ne 16.13

Shear-jashub: son of Isaiah₁ (eighth century BCE) (Bible); 2 Ne 17.3

Shelem, mount: mountain in Old World named by Jaredites (not in Bible); Ether 3.1

Shem: Nephite commander (c. 380 CE); Morm 6.14

Shem, city and land of: Nephite land north of them and Jashon; Morm 2.20–21

Shemlon, land of: region bordering on land of Lehi-Nephi; Mos 10.7

Shemnon: one of the twelve Nephite disciples (c. 30 CE); 3 Ne 19.4

Sherem: an Anti-Christ (c. 540 BCE); Jacob 7.1

Sherrizah: place in the land northward; Moro 9.7

Sheum: unidentified cereal grain; Mos 9.9

Shez₁: early Jaredite king; Ether 1.24, 10.1

Shez₂: son of Shez₁; Ether 10.3

Shiblom: Nephite commander (c. 380 CE); Morm 6.14

Shiblon: Nephite monetary unit; Alma 11.15

Shiblon₁ [or Shiblom₁]: late Jaredite king, son of Com₂; Ether 1.12, 11.4

Shiblon₂: son of Alma₂ (c. 70 BCE); Alma 31.7

Shiblum [or Shilum (P)]: Nephite monetary unit; Alma 11.16

Shiloah, waters of: pool near Jerusalem₁ (Bible); 2 Ne 18.6

Shilom, city of: in land of Shilom; Mos 7.21

Shilom, land of: small region next to land of Lehi-Nephi; Mos 7.5

Shim, hill: in land of Antum; Morm 1.3

Shimnilom, city of: in land of Nephi; Alma 23.12

Shinar: another name for Babylonia (Bible); 2 Ne 21.11

Shiz: late Jaredite military leader; Ether 14.17

Shule: early Jaredite king; Ether 1.30, 7.7

Shum: Nephite monetary unit; Alma 11.5

Shurr, valley of: Jaredite place near land of Corihor; Ether 14.28

Sidom, land of: east of Ammonihah and Noah; Alma 15.1

Sidon, river: most prominent river in Nephite territory, runs north to sea; Alma 2.15

Sinai, Mount: in Sinai Peninsula (Bible); Mos 12.33

Sinim, land of: perhaps Syene, a region at the southern border of Egypt, near Aswan (Bible); 1 Ne 21.12

Siron, land of: east of Zarahemla and Antionum, by borders of the Lamanites; Alma 39.3

Solomon: third king of Israel (tenth century BCE) (Bible); 2 Ne 5.16

T

Tarshish: a Mediterranean port of uncertain location, either in Turkey or in Spain (Bible); 2 Ne 12.16

Teancum: Nephite military leader (c. 70 BCE); Alma 50.35

Teancum, city of: by seashore just north of the city of Desolation; Morm 4.3

INDEX OF NAMES

Teomner: Nephite military officer (c. 60 BCE); Alma 58.16

Three Nephites: three of the twelve Nephite disciples, never died (c. 30 CE); 3 Ne 28.4–7

Timothy: brother of Nephi₃, one of the twelve Nephite disciples (c. 30 CE); 3 Ne 19.4

Title of Liberty: Moroni₁'s banner; Alma 46.13

Tubaloth: Lamanite king (c. 50 BCE); Hel 1.16

U

Uriah: a priest at the time of Isaiah₁ (eighth century BCE) (Bible); 2 Ne 18.2

Uzziah: king of Judah (782–742/733 BCE) (Bible); 2 Ne 16.1

Z

Zarahemla: leader of the Mulekites (c. 180 BCE); Omni 1.14

Zarahemla, city of: major capital of Nephites from c. 200 BCE to 300 CE; Alma 2.26

Zarahemla, land of: region around city of Zarahemla, in the northern part of the land southward; Omni 1.12

Zarahemla, people of: descendants of Mulek's colony; Omni 1.14

Zechariah: an associate of Isaiah₁ (eighth century BCE) (Bible); 2 Ne 18.2

Zedekiah₁: last king of Judah (597–586 BCE) (Bible); 1 Ne 1.4

Zedekiah₂: one of the twelve Nephite disciples (c. 30 CE); 3 Ne 19.4

Zeezrom: lawyer in Ammonihah (c. 80 BCE); Alma 10.31

Zeezrom, city of: Nephite city on southwest frontier; Alma 56.14

Zemnaridah: captain of Gadianton robbers (c. 20 CE); 3 Ne 4.17

Zenephi: Nephite commander (c. 400 CE); Moro 9.16

Zeniff: first king of group of Nephites who return to land of Lehi-Nephi (c. 200 BCE); Mos 7.9

Zenock [or Zenoch (O)]: Hebrew prophet (not in Bible); quoted by Nephi₁ at 1 Ne 19.10; quoted by Alma₂ at Alma 33.15–16

Zenos: Hebrew prophet (not in Bible); quoted by Nephi₁ at 1 Ne 19.10–17, quoted by Jacob₂ at Jacob 5, quoted by Alma₂ at Alma 33.4–11

Zerahemnah: Lamanite commander (c. 70 BCE); Alma 43.5

Zeram: Nephite military officer (c. 90 BCE); Alma 2.22

Zerin, mount: Jaredite place; Ether 12.30

Ziff: unidentified metal used by Nephites; Mos 11.3

Zion, Mount: name of hill in Jerusalem₁ (Bible); 2 Ne 14.5

Zoram₁: servant of Laban (c. 600 BCE); 1 Ne 4.20, named at 1 Ne 4.35

Zoram₂: Nephite chief captain (c. 80 BCE); Alma 16.5

Zoram₃: Nephite dissenter (c. 70 BCE); Alma 30.59

Zoramites₁: descendants of Zoram₁; Jacob 1.13

Zoramites₂: apostate sect of Nephites, followers of Zoram₃; Alma 30.59