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### “Joseph Smith's Use of the Apocrypha”: Shadow or Reality?

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**Title** “Joseph Smith’s Use of the Apocrypha”: Shadow or Reality?

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**Abstract** Review of “Joseph Smith’s Use of the Apocrypha” (1995),  
by Jerald and Sandra Tanner.

Jerald and Sandra Tanner. "Joseph Smith's Use of the Apocrypha." *Salt Lake City Messenger* 89 (December 1995): 1-14. Free upon request.

Reviewed by John A. Tvedtnes and Matthew Roper

### **"Joseph Smith's Use of the Apocrypha": Shadow or Reality?**

After a hiatus of a quarter century, the Tanners have revisited comparisons between themes and phrases in the Book of Mormon and the King James Apocrypha. In doing so, they build upon their comparison of Book of Mormon and New Testament themes and phrases, as illustrated in their *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon* (1990) and *Answering Mormon Scholars* (1994). Undaunted by the poor reviews of these earlier works—some of which were written by the present authors<sup>1</sup>—they continue to press a case that is weak at best. Though their latest foray was in a newsletter rather than a book, we review it because it is, in a sense, an appendix to their earlier books.

The Tanners have, in their previous works, objected to the use of King James Bible wording in the Book of Mormon, indicating that it is evidence of "plagiarism" on the part of Joseph Smith. They especially object to the inclusion of New Testament expressions in the Book of Mormon because the New Testament was written long after Lehi left Jerusalem. In previous reviews, we have

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew Roper, review of *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 3 (1991): 170-87, John A. Tvedtnes, review of *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 3 (1991): 188-230; Matthew Roper, review of *Answering Mormon Scholars*, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6/2 (1994): 156-203; and John A. Tvedtnes, review of *Answering Mormon Scholars*, *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6/2 (1994): 204-49. After writing separate, uncoordinated reviews in the past, we have decided to collaborate on a single review this time.

demonstrated two important facts to which the Tanners have not responded:

1. Many of the New Testament passages draw upon the Old Testament, which was the Bible of the time. Using the Tanners' reasoning, we should consider the New Testament writers plagiarists and compare the gospel writers and the apostles—as the Tanners did Joseph Smith (pp. 8–9)—with murderer/forgery Mark Hofmann.

2. The King James Bible had a great deal of influence on nineteenth-century American speech. For example, in his 1994 review, Tvedtnes demonstrated this by showing that Lincoln's Gettysburg Address is replete with biblical expressions.<sup>2</sup> Many other such examples could be given.

One must deal with these issues before condemning the Book of Mormon as a forgery, as the Tanners have done. Their excursus (pp. 8–9) comparing the Book of Mormon with the work of forger Mark Hofmann seems intended to imply that forgery is part of the Mormon way of life, while at the same time trying to snatch up credit for having discovered at least some truth—that the “Salamander Letter” was a fabrication.<sup>3</sup> We are happy to give the Tanners credit for helping to uncover the Hofmann fraud, but this does not mean that everything else they write is gospel truth.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Tvedtnes, review of *Answering Mormon Scholars*, 235–37.

<sup>3</sup> The Tanners' comparison of the Book of Mormon with the Hofmann forgeries ignores the fact that the latter were very short. The “Salamander Letter,” their primary example, comprises merely a page and a half of handwriting. The first (1830) edition of the Book of Mormon contained over 588 pages. Short phrases of two to four words may prove significant in such a short document, but they are insignificant in a volume of 588 pages. For an important discussion of parallels, see Hugh Nibley, “The Comparative Method,” in *The Prophetic Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1989), 193–206.

<sup>4</sup> The Tanners are also quick to take credit for discovering the name *Nephi* in the Apocrypha. They write that, “while Mormon scholars were diligently seeking to find evidence that Nephi is an Egyptian name, we discovered the actual name in the King James version of the Apocrypha” (p. 2). By implication, no “Mormon scholars” were sufficiently acquainted with the Apocrypha to have read it. I (Tvedtnes) noted the name *Nephi* in 2 Maccabees 1:36 (and *Nephis* in 1 Esdras 5:21) during my senior year in high school, 1958–59, and still have the handwritten note made at the time, pasted inside my copy of the KJV Apocrypha. I acknowledged the existence of the name *Nephi* in 2 Maccabees in a note to a 1977 article: John A. Tvedtnes, “A Phonemic Analysis of Nephte and

### “Written in Egyptian?”

The Tanners note that, since the Jews had once been slaves in Egypt, “they despised the Egyptians. Consequently, faithful Jews certainly would not want their sacred scriptures to be written in that language,” as the Book of Mormon claims (p. 3). This far-reaching conclusion ignores the fact that many centuries had passed since the Israelite bondage in Egypt—time enough to abandon any hatred of the Egyptians. Indeed, the Israelite kings Solomon (1 Kings 3:1; 9:16; 10:28–29; 2 Chronicles 1:16–17; 9:28) and Jeroboam (1 Kings 11:40; 12:2; 2 Chronicles 10:2) had close ties with Egypt. During Lehi’s time, the Jews were allied with the Egyptians against the Babylonians, who were expanding their empire westward, and some Jews even went to Egypt for safety (2 Kings 18:21, 24; 23:34–35; 25:26; 2 Chronicles 36:3–4; Isaiah 30:1–4; 31:1–3; 36:6, 9; Jeremiah 2:18, 36; 24:8; 26:21–23; 37:5–11; 41:16–17; 42:14–19; 43:2, 7; 44:1, 12–15, 24–28; Ezekiel 17:15).

Moreover, examples of Jews keeping records in Egyptian and even writing Hebrew texts in Egyptian characters and vice versa are known from archaeological excavations at Arad<sup>5</sup> and Ein Qudeirah.<sup>6</sup> In addition, it has long been acknowledged by scholars that Hebrew texts of the ninth through the sixth centuries B.C. employed Egyptian numeric symbols intermingled with Hebrew text.<sup>7</sup> There are numerous other examples of other northwest

Jaredite Proper Names,” *Newsletter and Proceedings of the Society for Early Historic Archaeology* 141 (December 1977): 5.

<sup>5</sup> Yohanan Aharoni, “Hebrew Ostraca from Tel Arad,” *Israel Exploration Journal* 16/1 (1966): 1–7; Shlomo Yeivin, “A Hieratic Ostrakon from Tel Arad,” *Israel Exploration Journal* 16/3 (1966): 153–59; Shlomo Yeivin, “An Ostrakon from Tel Arad Exhibiting a Combination of Two Scripts,” *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 55 (August 1969): 98–102. See the discussion in John A. Tvedtnes, “Linguistic Implications of the Tel-Arad Ostraca,” *Newsletter and Proceedings of the Society for Early Historic Archaeology* 127 (October 1971): 1–5.

<sup>6</sup> Rudolph Cohen, “Excavations at Kadesh-Barnea 1976–1978,” *Biblical Archaeologist* 44/2 (Spring 1981): 98–99; Rudolph Cohen, “Did I Excavate Kadesh-Barnea?” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 7/3 (May/June 1981): 25–30.

<sup>7</sup> R. A. Stewart Macalister, *The Excavation of Gezer* (London: Palestine Exploration Fund, 1912), 2:276, 283, 285–87, 291; David Diringer, “On Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions Discovered at Tell-ed-Duweir (Lachish)—III,”

Semitic texts from before and after Lehi that are written in Egyptian script. In view of the mounting evidence, it is surprising that the Tanners continue to maintain that Israelite prophets could not have used the Egyptian writing system for their records. This is, in fact, one area in which discoveries made in the last several decades show that Joseph Smith was right on target long before he could have been right unless he really was a prophet.

To bolster their position that Joseph Smith's "claim that the Egyptian language was used presented a real problem" for the Book of Mormon, the Tanners cite "J. N. Washburn, a dedicated defender of the Book of Mormon" (p. 3). However, Washburn's book was published in 1954, before the excavation of either Arad (1960s) or Ein Qudeirah (late 1970s). Washburn could not have known what we know now. Not surprisingly, the Tanners do not refer to Tvedtnes's 1971 articles<sup>8</sup> nor to Stephen Ricks's 1992 article,<sup>9</sup> which discuss Jewish writings in Egyptian script from the time of Lehi.

### Apocryphal Sources and Methodological Issues

Before examining specific parallels between the Book of Mormon and the Apocrypha, it is necessary to understand the methodology employed by the Tanners. This involves some of their basic assumptions about Joseph Smith's acquaintance with the Apocrypha and his use thereof in composing some of the stories found in the Book of Mormon, notably in 1 Nephi.

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*Palestine Exploration Quarterly* (July–October 1943): 89–99; J. W. Crowfoot et al., *The Objects from Samaria* (London: Palestine Exploration Fund, 1957), 11–13, 16–18, 29–32; Yigael Yadin, "Ancient Judaean Weights and the Date of the Samaria Ostraca," in *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 8 (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961), 9–25; Yohanan Aharoni, "The Use of Hieratic Numerals in Hebrew Ostraca and the Shekel Weights," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 184 (December 1966): 13–21; Ivan T. Kaufman, "New Evidence for Hieratic Numerals on Hebrew Weights," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 188 (December 1967): 39–41; Anson F. Rainey, "Semantic Parallels to the Samaria Ostraca," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 102/1 (January–June 1970): 45–51.

<sup>8</sup> Tvedtnes, "Linguistic Implications of the Tel-Arad Ostraca"; John A. Tvedtnes, "The Language of My Father," *New Era* (May 1971): 19.

<sup>9</sup> Stephen D. Ricks, "Language and Script in the Book of Mormon," *Insights: An Ancient Window* (March 1992): 2.

## Joseph Smith's Access to the Bible

Although the Smith family apparently had a Bible at the time that Joseph Smith had his First Vision (Joseph Smith–History 1:11–12), it is not clear whether Joseph Smith used a Bible while translating the Book of Mormon. The Tanners, citing an earlier study by Reed Durham,<sup>10</sup> note that previous to commencing his revision of the Bible, Joseph Smith had already purchased a Bible containing the Apocrypha at E. B. Grandin's bookstore in Palmyra (p. 1). By citing the Durham source, they imply acceptance of his 1828 date for the purchase. But they note that "Wesley P. Walters [a late anti-Mormon], however, claimed that the actual date of purchase was October 8, 1829, not October 8, 1828" (p. 1). The 1829 date is clearly the correct one. The fly-leaf of the Bible carries an inscription in the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery: "The history of the Jews, the property of Joseph Smith and Oliver [sic] Cowdery. Bought at E. B. Grandin's Book Store, Palmyra, Wayne County, New York, October 8, 1829." Joseph Smith had not met Oliver Cowdery until April 1829. Moreover the phrase *the history of the Jews* is suggestive of Book of Mormon descriptions of the brass plates (1 Nephi 3:3; 5:12; 2 Nephi 29:4, 12–13), which were similar in some respects to the biblical record (1 Nephi 13:23; cf. the allusion to the Bible in Mormon 7:8). This phrase occurs only in those portions of the Book of Mormon dictated after Oliver Cowdery arrived on the scene.<sup>11</sup>

Best estimates suggest that the Book of Mormon translation was completed by early June 1829, with the copyright, containing the title page, being registered on 11 June 1829. By October 1829, when Oliver Cowdery purchased the Bible, the Book of Mormon was already at press and enemies of Joseph Smith such as Abner Cole were publishing satirical quips about it in the Palmyra tabloid, *The Reflector*.<sup>12</sup> In these articles Cole alludes to

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<sup>10</sup> Reed C. Durham, Jr., "A History of Joseph Smith's Revision of the Bible" (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1965), 25.

<sup>11</sup> In the "Mosiah first" theory, which the Tanners accept, the passages in 1 and 2 Nephi were not translated until after Joseph had moved to Fayette, New York.

<sup>12</sup> *The Reflector*, 2, 16, and 23 September 1829; "Our Own Affairs," *The Reflector*, 30 September 1829; *The Reflector*, 7 October 1829. All these

the copyright page,<sup>13</sup> “the building of the TEMPLE OF NEPHI” (2 Nephi 5:16),<sup>14</sup> and the “New Jerusalem” (3 Nephi 21:23–24; Ether 13:4–10),<sup>15</sup> indicating that the portions of the Book of Mormon that speak of these things had already been dictated by the Prophet. The Bible purchased in October 1829 could not have been a source of the Book of Mormon for Joseph Smith.

Even had Joseph Smith used a Bible during the dictation sequence—which is doubtful, since he had Oliver purchase one for him soon afterward—we cannot assume, as the Tanners do, that he had one which contained the Apocrypha. In the past, we simply took for granted that all Bibles during the 1820s contained the Apocrypha. The Tanners’ recent claims prompted one of the authors (Roper) to look into the matter. Having examined 143 American Bible printings of the Authorized King James Version published between 1800 and 1830, he found that only 40 (less than a third) contained the Apocrypha. Even if Joseph Smith had a Bible during the translation period, there is only one chance in three that it contained the Apocrypha.

Even if Joseph owned a Bible during the translation of the Book of Mormon, the evidence of witnesses who were present seems to exclude the possibility that he used it. His wife Emma, who for a short time acted as scribe and often performed chores in the same room where Joseph and Oliver were translating, recorded that “he had neither manuscript nor book to read from” and he couldn’t have hidden it from her even if he tried.<sup>16</sup> David Whitmer, who along with others witnessed the work at his home in Fayette, New York, reported that he did not. “Mr. Whitmer emphatically asserts as did Harris and Cowdery, that while Smith was dictating the translation he had no manuscript notes or other means of knowledge save the seer stone and the characters as shown on the plates, he being present and cognizant how it was

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appeared in the Palmyra newspaper before the purchase of the Bible at Grandin’s bookstore on 8 October 1829.

<sup>13</sup> “The Gold Bible, by Joseph Smith Junior, author and proprietor, is now in press and will shortly appear. Priestcraft is short lived.” *The Reflector*, 2 September 1829.

<sup>14</sup> *The Reflector*, 7 October 1829, emphasis in the original.

<sup>15</sup> *The Reflector*, 23 September 1829; *The Reflector*, 7 October 1829.

<sup>16</sup> “Last Testimony of Sister Emma,” *Saints’ Advocate* 2/4 (October 1879): 51.



done.”<sup>17</sup> When asked whether Joseph Smith had manuscripts at any time that he could have read from during the dictation, Whitmer replied, “No, sir. We did not know anything about the Spaulding manuscript at that time.”<sup>18</sup> “Father Whitmer, who was present very frequently during the writing of this manuscript affirms that Joseph Smith had no book or manuscript, before him from which he could have read as is asserted by some that he did, he (Whitmer) having every opportunity to know.”<sup>19</sup> These witnesses provide evidence that Joseph, whether he owned a Bible with the Apocrypha or not, did not have one open before him or hidden in his hat while he dictated the text of the Book of Mormon. Indeed, David Whitmer declared that “Smith was ignorant of the Bible” and that “when translating he first came to where Jerusalem was spoken of as a ‘Walled City’ he stopped until they got a Bible & showed him where the fact was recorded.”<sup>20</sup> The fact that they had to go *get* a Bible implies that there was not one immediately present during the dictation of the Book of Mormon. More important, the “walls of Jerusalem” are mentioned in the Book of Mormon *only* in 1 Nephi 4:4, which is part of the story the Tanners believe Joseph Smith plagiarized from the Apocrypha (p. 6). Even if the Bible they had to get to confirm the existence of the walls was in the house or in the very room where Joseph was dictating the text, because they had to get it shows that he didn’t have it beside him on the table where he could glean ideas from the Apocrypha.

### **Borrowing from the Apocrypha**

The Tanners argue that since there are conceptual, thematic, and linguistic parallels between some portions of the Apocrypha and portions of the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith obviously borrowed or “plagiarized” these concepts, themes, and language

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<sup>17</sup> Interview in *Chicago Times*, 17 October 1881, cited in *David Whitmer Interviews: A Restoration Witness*, ed. Lyndon W. Cook (Orem, Utah: Grandin, 1991), 76.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with J. W. Chatburn in *Saints’ Herald* (15 June 1882), cited in *ibid.*, 92.

<sup>19</sup> Interview in *St. Louis Republican*, 16 July 1884, cited in *ibid.*, 139–40.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with M. J. Hubble on 13 November 1886, cited in *ibid.*, 211.

from the Apocrypha. This makes us wonder how they view the writers of the New Testament. Parallels between New Testament writings and the Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha are widely acknowledged by biblical scholars. Such show that these extrabiblical texts strongly influenced the language and style of Jesus and the apostles. The United Bible Society's Greek New Testament lists over 116 New Testament allusions or quotations from the Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha.<sup>21</sup> These include not only the books known as Apocrypha but additional works such as *I Enoch*. According to R. H. Charles, "The influence of *I Enoch* on the New Testament has been greater than that of all the other apocryphal and pseudepigraphal books taken together,"<sup>22</sup> and "Nearly all the writers of the New Testament were familiar with it, and were more or less influenced by it in thought and diction."<sup>23</sup> He then lists over 128 examples from New Testament writers.<sup>24</sup> He notes that these influences were so pervasive that, "without a knowledge of the Pseudepigrapha it would be impossible to understand" the author of Revelation.<sup>25</sup>

As Latter-day Saints, we believe that John received a genuine vision from God, which he conveyed in the book of Revelation through apocalyptic language and symbolism found in the religious literature of ancient Judaism. In like manner, we accept the fact that Joseph Smith received a genuine revelation when he translated the Book of Mormon, which he conveyed in an English biblical style (King James) that would be understandable to the people of his day.

Moreover, it does not necessarily follow that, because apocryphal and pseudepigraphic works are late, they do not also contain some true information or elements that are much older. The fact that New Testament writers such as John and Jude quote or allude to these works suggests to believers in the Bible that they

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<sup>21</sup> Kurt Aland et al., eds., *The Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (London: United Bible Societies, 1968), 918–20.

<sup>22</sup> Robert H. Charles, *The Book of Enoch or I Enoch* (London: Oxford University Press, 1913), xciv.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, ix, n. 1.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, xciv–civ.

<sup>25</sup> Robert H. Charles, *The Revelation of St. John* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1920), 1:lxv.

contained at least some truth of historical or doctrinal value. Margaret Barker has recently argued that *I Enoch*, which was so influential to the early Christian community, contains many elements that date to preexilic times. "What we have in Enoch is the writing of a very conservative group whose roots go right back to the time of the first temple, when there were still kings in Jerusalem."<sup>26</sup> The Tanners' argument mistakenly assumes that all the elements found in their parallels are late and unique when, in fact, this may not be the case at all.

In previous reviews of the Tanners' works, we have argued that the language of the King James Bible played an important role in Joseph Smith's translation of the Book of Mormon not because he "plagiarized" from the Bible, but because the Bible was part of his cultural and linguistic heritage. The same could be said of other nineteenth- and early twentieth-century translators. For example, in the following chart we compare the work of two different translators, Robert H. Charles<sup>27</sup> and Howard C. Kee, each of whom translated the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*.<sup>28</sup> While Charles's work was done around the turn of the century, Kee's is more contemporary. While both are considered excellent translations, Charles chose to follow the biblical style of the King James Version, while Kee used more modern terminology.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Margaret Barker, *The Lost Prophet: The Book of Enoch and Its Influence on Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1988), 19, 108; see also other works by Margaret Barker: *The Older Testament: The Survival of Themes from the Ancient Royal Cult in Sectarian Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1987); *The Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Temple in Jerusalem* (London: SPCK, 1991); *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's Second God* (Louisville, Ky.: Knox, 1992); *On Earth as It Is in Heaven, Temple Symbolism in the New Testament* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1995).

<sup>27</sup> Robert H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), 2:282-367.

<sup>28</sup> Howard C. Kee, "Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 1:775-828.

<sup>29</sup> Two recent translators have, in some cases, preferred to use the KJV style in their English translation. These are marked \* in the column labeled "Charles" wherever they agree with Charles in using the words we have italicized. See H. W. Hollander and Marinus de Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 1985).

Charles	Kee	KJV
* <i>reserved</i> for eternal punishment (T <i>Reuben</i> 5:5)	destined for eternal punishment (T <i>Reuben</i> 5:5)	<i>reserved</i> unto judgment (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 1:6)
* <i>lusted after</i> (T <i>Reuben</i> 5:6)	filled with desire (T <i>Reuben</i> 5:6)	<i>lust[ed] after</i> (1 Cor. 10:6; Rev. 18:14)
* <i>the Mighty One of Israel</i> (T <i>Simeon</i> 6:5)	the Great One in Israel (T <i>Simeon</i> 6:5)	<i>the mighty One of Israel</i> (Isa. 1:24; 30:29)
thrones and <i>dominions</i> (T <i>Levi</i> 3:8)	thrones and authorities (T <i>Levi</i> 3:8)	thrones, or <i>dominions</i> (Col. 1:16)
* <i>the fashion of the Gentiles</i> (T <i>Levi</i> 8:14)	the gentile model (T <i>Levi</i> 8:14)	<i>the fashion of this world</i> (1 Cor. 7:31)
<i>laid waste</i> (T <i>Levi</i> 16:4)	razed to the ground (T <i>Levi</i> 16:4)	[" <i>lay/laid waste</i> " very common; " <i>rase</i> " only in Ps. 137:7]
* <i>filthy lucre</i> (T <i>Judah</i> 16:1)	sordid greed (T <i>Judah</i> 16:1)	<i>filthy lucre</i> (1 Tim. 3:3, 8; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet. 5:2)
written upon the <i>hearts</i> of men (T <i>Judah</i> 20:3)	written in the affections of man (T <i>Judah</i> 20:3)	will write it in their <i>hearts</i> (Jer. 31:33); write them upon the table of thine <i>heart</i> (Prov. 3:3)
*to offer Him the <i>firstfruits</i> (T <i>Judah</i> 21:5)	to present as offerings (T <i>Judah</i> 21:5)	[" <i>firstfruits</i> " very common]
<i>them that have familiar spirits</i> (T <i>Judah</i> 23:1)	ventriloquists (T <i>Judah</i> 23:1)	<i>them that have familiar spirits</i> (Lev. 19:31; 20:6; Isa. 19:3)

<b>Charles</b>	<b>Kee</b>	<b>KJV</b>
*And from your root shall rise a <i>stem</i> ; And from it shall grow up the rod of righteousness to the Gentiles (T <i>Judah</i> 24:5-6)	And from your root will arise the Shoot, and through it will arise the rod of righteousness for the nations (T <i>Judah</i> 24:6)	And there shall come forth a rod out of the <i>stem</i> of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. . . . 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 (Isa. 11:1, 10)
*singleness of <i>eye</i> (T <i>Issachar</i> 3:4)	singleness of vision (T <i>Issachar</i> 3:4)	thine <i>eye</i> is single (Luke 11:34; Matt. 6:22)
* <i>singleness</i> of (your) heart (T <i>Issachar</i> 4:1; 7:7)	integrity of heart (T <i>Issachar</i> 4:1); sincerity of heart (T <i>Issachar</i> 7:7)	<i>singleness</i> of [your] heart (Acts 2:46; Eph. 6:5; Col. 3:22)
<i>bowels</i> of mercy (T <i>Zebulun</i> 7:3)	merciful in your inner self (T <i>Zebulun</i> 7:3)	<i>bowels</i> of mercies (Col. 3:12)
we were all scattered unto the <i>ends of the earth</i> (T <i>Naphtali</i> 6:7)	we were all dispersed, even to the <i>outer limits</i> (T <i>Naphtali</i> 6:7)	["the <i>ends of the earth</i> "] used in passages relating to scattering (Isa. 26:15) and gathering (Isa. 43:6; Mic. 5:4) of Israel]
*it <i>stirreth</i> him up (T <i>Gad</i> 4:4)	he conspires (T <i>Gad</i> 4:4)	<i>stir</i> him up (Num. 24:9; Job 41:10; Song. 2:7; 3:5; 8:4; 2 Pet. 1:13)
*true repentance after a <i>godly</i> sort (T <i>Gad</i> 5:7)	for according to God's truth, repentance destroys disobedience (T <i>Gad</i> 5:7)	for <i>godly</i> sorrow worketh repentance (2 Cor. 7:10)
* <i>abstaineth from meats</i> (T <i>Asher</i> 2:8)	is abstemious in his eating (T <i>Asher</i> 2:8)	to <i>abstain from meats</i> (1 Tim. 4:3)

Charles	Kee	KJV
<i>beguile</i> me (T <i>Joseph</i> 6:2)	lead me astray (T <i>Joseph</i> 6:2)	<i>beguiled</i> me (Gen. 3:13; 29:25)
*let this <i>suffice</i> me (T <i>Joseph</i> 7:6)	that is enough (T <i>Joseph</i> 7:6)	let it <i>suffice</i> (Deut. 3:26; Ezek. 44:6; 45:9)

### One-Sided Clusters

On pages 11–12, after listing ten parallels between 2 Esdras 13 and the Book of Mormon, the Tanners affirm, “It is difficult for us to believe that all of these parallels to the Book of Mormon could have occurred by accident when the same wording falls within just 14 verses of the apocryphal book of 2 Esdras” (p. 12). But upon discovering that these ten parallels are scattered through ten chapters of six separate Book of Mormon books, one is less impressed. A similar problem of one-sided clusters appears on the other end of the spectrum with their parallels to Maccabees and Judith (pp. 2–8). “Twenty-eight of the thirty-two parallels to the Apocrypha are found *in the first five chapters of the Book of Mormon*. . . . It seems obvious that the only answer to these remarkable parallels is that Joseph Smith borrowed from the Apocrypha” (p. 8). The Tanners also discuss two additional parallels to 2 Maccabees which they do not include in their list of 32, bringing the total to 34 (pp. 2–3). The 34 parallels listed by the Tanners were gleaned from 13 chapters in the Apocrypha, scattered through three separate apocryphal books (1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees, and Judith) having a total of 47 chapters. The reader can well imagine that the larger the corpus the more likelihood of finding parallels. Also of interest is that 21 of the 34 parallels were published by the Tanners in 1968. This means that, in the intervening 27 years, they have only been able to produce 13 additional parallels between the Book of Mormon and three books of the Apocrypha (1–2 Maccabees and Judith). Despite this unimpressive performance, they declare, “It will be very difficult for Mormon scholars to explain this extraordinary cluster of similarities” (p. 8). Given the paucity of examples and the scattered nature of alleged sources, this hardly amounts to much. Perhaps they define *extraordinary* and *remarkable* differently than we do.

## Apocryphal “Parallels”

In examining the Tanners’ parallels between the Book of Mormon and the KJV Apocrypha, we find that, as with their earlier New Testament parallels, there is little reason to suspect that Joseph Smith borrowed them to “forge” the Nephite record.

Let’s examine some of the parallels that the Tanners suggest Joseph Smith plagiarized from the Apocrypha, noting other parallels found in the Old Testament but not mentioned by the Tanners. In citing counterparallels, we do not mean to imply that the Book of Mormon was dependent on any of these, although in some cases this is possible. Our purpose in doing so is simply to direct the reader to additional information about which he or she may be unaware and which the Tanners for some reason have chosen to ignore.

### Parallels to the Laban Story

The supposed parallels with the apocryphal book of Judith are particularly weak. For example, we see little connection between the phrases “Nephi . . . was favored of the Lord” (Mosiah 10:13) and “she feared God greatly” (Judith 8:8), number 4 in the Tanners’ list (p. 6). Not only are the two ideas unrelated, the passage they cite from the Book of Mormon is not even part of the story from 1 Nephi, but a later reflection by Zeniff. It remains a mystery why they didn’t use 1 Nephi 1:1 (“I, Nephi . . . having been highly favored of the Lord”) or 1 Nephi 3:6 (“thou shalt be favored of the Lord”).

The story of Nephi’s finding and slaying of Laban (1 Nephi 4) has much more in common with that of David and Goliath than that of Judith and Holofernes, but to cite from 1 Samuel 17 would have detracted from the Tanners’ thesis that Joseph Smith got the idea from the book of Judith. To illustrate these parallels, let’s look at the stories of Nephi and David. Nephi had three older brothers (1 Nephi 2:5); David’s three older brothers had gone to join Saul’s army (1 Samuel 17:13). When Lehi told his sons to go to Laban, all but Nephi murmured (1 Nephi 3:4–6). David’s father sent him to his brothers (1 Samuel 17:17). Nephi told his father, “I *will go and do* the things which the Lord hath commanded” (1 Nephi 3:7); “David said to Saul . . . thy servant *will*

go and fight with this Philistine” (1 Samuel 17:32). Laman, then all the brothers, fled from Laban, the second time hiding from his servants (1 Nephi 3:14, 26–27); the Israelites fled from Goliath “and were sore afraid” (1 Samuel 17:24). In addition to his fifty servants, Laban had tens of thousands under his command (1 Nephi 4:1); Goliath was accompanied by a Philistine army (1 Samuel 17:1–2, 19, 21, 23). Laman and Lemuel, Nephi’s elder brethren, were “angry” with Nephi and murmured (1 Nephi 3:28, 31), but Nephi answered them courageously (1 Nephi 4:1–3); the “anger” of David’s older brother was kindled against him and he scolded him (1 Samuel 17:28), but David answered him courageously (1 Samuel 17:29). Nephi left his brothers and went alone to find Laban (1 Nephi 4:5); David left his brothers and the other Israelite soldiers to go meet Goliath (1 Samuel 17:40–44). Nephi found Laban, who “had fallen to the earth” (1 Nephi 4:7); when struck by David’s sling-stone, Goliath “fell upon his face to the earth” (1 Samuel 17:49). Nephi said that “the Lord had delivered Laban into my hands” (1 Nephi 4:12, 17); David said to Goliath, “This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee” (1 Samuel 17:46; see also 1 Samuel 17:34–37). Nephi approached the fallen Laban, “beheld his sword, and . . . drew it forth from the sheath thereof” (1 Nephi 4:9), then “smote off his head with his own sword” (1 Nephi 4:18); David “ran” to Goliath, “took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut off his head therewith” (1 Samuel 17:51). Nephi wrote, “After I had smitten off his head with his own sword, I . . . did gird on his armor about my loins” (1 Nephi 4:19, 21); David tried on Saul’s armor and sword (1 Samuel 17:38–39) and later stripped Goliath and kept his armor (1 Samuel 17:54; Goliath’s armor is described in 1 Samuel 17:5–6). When Nephi’s brothers saw him dressed in Laban’s armor, they were “exceedingly frightened . . . and they fled from before my presence; for they supposed it was Laban, and that he had slain me” (1 Nephi 4:28); “and when the Philistines saw their champion [Goliath] was dead, they fled” (1 Samuel 17:51). Laban’s servant tried to flee, but Nephi, though young was “a man large in stature, and also having received much strength of the Lord” (1 Nephi 4:31; cf. 2:16); Saul told David, “thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth”



(1 Samuel 17:33). Nephi promised the servant that if he accompanied them “he should be a *free* man like unto us” (1 Nephi 4:33); Saul promised to whoever would slay Goliath that he would “make his father’s house *free* in Israel” (1 Samuel 17:25).

The following chart contrasts the events and characters in the Book of Mormon story of Nephi and Laban with that of Judith and Holofernes in the Apocrypha (which the Tanners see as the source of the Laban account) and lists similar events in the biblical stories of Deborah’s battle with Sisera (Judges 4–5) and David’s combat with Goliath (1 Samuel 17). The listing shows that the Tanners’ parallels are not significant enough or unique enough to establish that Joseph Smith plagiarized the book of Judith.

Parallel	1 Nephi	Judges	1 Samuel	Apocrypha
Laban	3:3	None, but name Laban 55 times in OT		Judith 8:26
Devout servant of God	(Mos. 10:13)	5:24; common OT theme	13:14; 16:22	Judith 8:8
Wicked men seek to destroy God’s people	Servants (3:25)	Army (4:13)	Army (17:1)	Army (Judith 7:1)
People fear	3:31		17:11	Judith 7:25
Counsel to be strong	4:2	4:6–7, 14; see Joshua 1:9	17:24–37	Counsel to set an example (Judith 8:24)
God’s strength not in numbers	4:1	7:2–8	17:47 (17:42–47; see 14:6)	Judith 9:11
Secret mission	4:4–5	cf. 4:20	24:1–8; 26:6–7	Judith 10:6, 10

<b>Parallel</b>	<b>1 Nephi</b>	<b>Judges</b>	<b>1 Samuel</b>	<b>Apoc- rypha</b>
Enemy delivered into hands of God's servant	4:11-12	5:27; 4:18-21	17:49	Judith 13:2
Wicked man drunk	4:7	Drinks milk (4:19; 5:25)	None, but cf. 25:36 ("Nabal" is "Laban" backwards).	Judith 13:2
Hero takes hold of enemy's weapon	sword (4:9)	hammer and nail (4:21)	sword (17:51).	fauhion (Judith 13:6)
Hero takes enemy by the hair	4:18			Judith 13:7
Hero beheads enemy with his own weapon	4:18	5:26	17:51	Judith 13:8
Hero returns safely	4:27	cf. 4:22	cf. 17:53-54, 57	Judith 13:12
Hero despoils enemy of some possessions	4:19, 38	cf. 4:15	cf. 17:51, 54; 21:9; 22:10	cf. Judith 15:11
People rejoice at mission's success	5:9	5:1-31	18:6	Judith 14:9
Burnt offerings	5:9	None, but see 6:26	None, but see 11:15; 13:9, 12	Judith 16:18

Parallel	1 Nephi	Judges	1 Samuel	Apocrypha
"Ten thousand"	4:1	4:6, 14; cf. Deut. 32:30; 33:2	18:7	Judith 16:4
Raised in a house then lived in a tent	4-5	cf. Jer. 35:7; 2 Sam. 7:6; 11:11		Judith 8:4-6
Change of apparel	4:19		cf. 17:38-39; see also 18:4	Judith 10:2-3, 7
Trickery	4:19-26	cf. 4:18-21	cf. 21:10-15	Judith 11:1, 5-6, 19
Enemy slain at night	In the street (4:5)	In the tent (4:18-21; 5:25-27)		In the tent Judith 13:1-2
left gold and silver, and all manner of riches	3:16	None, but cf. Josh. 6:23-24		"Inherited" wealth (Judith 8:7)
The words <i>treasury</i> , tables of <i>brass</i> , and <i>commanded</i>	4:20, 24	None, but cf. Josh. 6:19, 24; Jer. 38:11		1 Mac. 14:48-49
People travel to Jerusalem to plunder the temple treasury	To obtain plates, not loot treasury (4:14-17)	None, but cf. 2 Kgs. 18:13-16	cf. 21:8-9	To loot temple money in Jerusalem (2 Mac. 3:7-9)
Enemy brought to the ground	Fallen drunk (4:7-8)	5:27; see also 2 Kgs. 19:35-37	17:49	2 Mac. 3:27

## Parallels with 2 Esdras

Citing a parallel from B. H. Roberts, the Tanners (p. 11) note that 2 Esdras speaks of the lost tribes traveling to a northern location "where never mankind dwelt" (2 Esdras 13:41). They compare this to a phrase from Moroni's abridgment of Ether in which Jared's people traveled through a wilderness "where there never had man been" (Ether 2:5). The Tanners describe this as "a remarkable discovery" (p. 11), yet Jeremiah uses similar language when he describes the Israelites traveling "through the wilderness" in a land "where no man dwelt" (Jeremiah 2:6). The Tanners note that the phrase *sawest thou* in 2 Esdras 13:47 also occurs in the Book of Mormon (Ether 3:9), but this exact phrase is found in Genesis 20:10 and 1 Samuel 28:13. The Tanners acknowledge this (p. 12), but cite the parallel anyway, making one wonder how this example demonstrates borrowing from the Apocrypha.

The Tanners (p. 12) cite a passage from the Apocrypha which states that no one can know things which "are in the deep of the sea" (2 Esdras 13:52). They compare this with Mormon's statement that the bodies of Lamanite fatalities "are in the depths of the sea" (Alma 3:3). Even though Esdras uses *deep* and the Alma passage uses *depths* the Tanners claim that "there is no strong parallel to this in the Bible" (p. 12). This claim simply isn't true. God made a path through "the depths of the sea" when he delivered Israel from Egypt (Isaiah 51:10) and in the last days he will bring his people "from the depths of the sea" (Psalms 68:22). *Depths* are certainly closer than the *deep*. More significantly, Micah states, "thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19). We remember that the Lamanite bodies are in the depths of the sea because they were "cast into" the waters of the river Sidon (Alma 3:3). Clearly the Micah passage is closer to the Book of Mormon than 2 Esdras.

The Tanners note (p. 12) that the two-word phrase *thee mighty* occurs only in the Apocrypha and the Book of Mormon. In the latter, the Lord says that he will "declare unto *thee mighty* and wondrous things" (2 Esdras 13:56). They compare this passage with the Lord's statement to Nephi, "I will make *thee mighty* in word and in deed" (Helaman 10:5). Why the Tanners consider

the words *thee mighty* to be more significant than the words *make* and *mighty*, which occur in Psalms 106:8 and Helaman 10:5—but not in 2 Esdras—is a mystery. The Psalms passage also speaks of God's "power" (Psalms 106:8), just as God gives Nephi great "power" as well (Helaman 10:6). The 2 Esdras passage is much closer to material found in the Old Testament (Psalms 71:17; 75:1; 86:10; 119:27; 145:4).

The Tanners correctly note (p. 12) that the four-word phrase *and now when they* occurs together only in the Apocrypha (2 Esdras 13:46) and the Book of Mormon (1 Nephi 16:32); however, the phrases *and now when* (Genesis 30:30) and *now when they* (Daniel 11:34; Matthew 28:11; Acts 2:37; 4:13; 16:6; 17:1) are found in the Bible. But is this the kind of material that a forger really looks for?

The Tanners also note (p. 12) that the three words *defend his people* occur only in 2 Esdras 13:49 and Alma 48:13, but how significant is this, given the fact that God's defense and deliverance of his people is such a common theme in the Bible? The Tanners correctly note (p. 12) that the two words *diligence unto* occur in both the Apocrypha (2 Esdras 13:54) and the Book of Mormon (2 Nephi 29:4), but not in the Bible. However, since diligence is a common idea in the Bible (38 times in the Old Testament), this is hardly significant.

Phrases such as *diligence unto, thee mighty, as they that are, and now when they, said unto me, and I saw, and whom thou seest* are not exactly golden nuggets of insight. Yet the Tanners apparently view such examples as evidence that Joseph Smith used the Apocrypha. So it would seem, for they write, "It is difficult for us to believe that all of these parallels to the Book of Mormon could have occurred by accident when the same wording falls within just 14 verses of the Apocryphal book of 2 Esdras" (p. 12). But the nine parallels suggested by the Tanners are scattered over ten distinct passages in five Book of Mormon books (Ether 2:5; Alma 50:34; Mormon 2:29; 1 Nephi 16:32; Ether 3:9; Alma 14:7; 48:13; 3:3; 2 Nephi 29:4; and Helaman 10:5). It is a strange method of plagiarization that causes Joseph Smith to search the Bible, including the Apocrypha, for insignificant phrases to create a book of 588 pages.

The Tanners note six parallels between 2 Esdras and the Book of Mormon account of the brother of Jared (pp. 12–13). Their argument here is weakened by the fact that many of these ideas are common and can be found for the most part in the Bible.

1. Both Esdras and the brother of Jared were mighty prophets who diligently prayed and received visions from the Lord. But as the Old Testament makes quite clear, this is exactly the kind of thing that happens to prophets. In fact, this is one of the main reasons they are prophets. They testify about the things they have seen and heard from God.

2. Both Esdras and the brother of Jared go up a mountain. Anciently, mountains were considered a place for revelation, and such prophets as Moses, Elijah, and Ezekiel went to mountaintops to converse with the Lord. Aside from references to this in the Bible, there is a vast literature on the subject, showing that the idea was so common as to have been almost taken for granted.

3. Both men were shown innumerable multitudes of people and things that would happen in the last times. Other prophets, such as Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, foresaw what would happen to Israel after their death. The apostle John the Revelator saw innumerable multitudes of people and many things that will happen in the last days. This is what prophets do.

4. Both men saw Jesus long before he came into the world. But Jesus declared that Abraham had seen his day (John 8:56). Others prophets saw him, too. After all, “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Revelation 19:10).

5. Both men are commanded to write the revelations they receive. Had the prophets not recorded their revelations, we would not have a Bible. Again, this is something prophets are expected to do.

6. Both men were warned not to reveal certain things they had written. From the Bible, it is obvious that God not only reveals secrets to the prophets (Amos 3:7), but sometimes places limitations on what they could reveal to others. God told Daniel to “shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end” (Daniel 12:4). Jesus told Peter, James, and John not to reveal the things they saw on the Mount of Transfiguration until after he had risen from the dead (Matthew 17:9). Paul speaks of certain things “not lawful for a man to utter” that he was shown in vision

(2 Corinthians 12:2–4). John “was about to write” things he had heard during his revelation and “heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not” (Revelation 10:4).

### Parallels with 2 Maccabees

The Tanners believe that it is “significant that the very first verse found in 2 Maccabees mentions the Jews in Egypt, and that the second verse in the Book of Mormon speaks ‘of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians’” (p. 3). But “the Jews which dwell in the land of Egypt” are mentioned in Jeremiah 44:1. Significantly, Jeremiah was a contemporary of Lehi and Nephi, whose story is told in 1 Nephi 5:13 and 7:14; consequently, we should expect the two books to reflect the culture and history of the time.

The Tanners (pp. 2–3) compare the wording of 1 Nephi 1:6 (“*as he prayed unto the Lord, there came a pillar of fire and dwelt upon a rock*”) with that in 2 Maccabees 2:10 (“*as when Moses prayed unto the Lord, the fire came down*”). They then note that their “computer research of the Bible does not reveal any wording that is as close to this portion of the Book of Mormon as the Apocrypha” (p. 3). They evidently did not take note of 2 Chronicles 7:1, which says that “when Solomon had *made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven.*” Or what about Elijah, who built an altar of stones and *offered prayer*, whereupon “*the fire of the Lord fell*” (1 Kings 18:30–38)? Rocks or stones and divine fire are also found together in Judges 6:21 and Ezekiel 28:14, 16.

The Tanners believe that the words *in the records* (1 Nephi 13:41, mistakenly listed as verse 40 by the Tanners) were taken by Joseph Smith from the same “three-word parallel” in 2 Maccabees 2:1, which “is never found in the Old or New Testament of the King James Bible” (p. 3). There is only one significant word in the passage, *records*, preceded by a common preposition *in* and the even more common definite article *the*. The parallel is weak indeed, especially when one considers that the Bible refers to records in several passages. Note the roll (scroll) record of Ezra 6:2 and “the book of records” of Esther 6:1. In Ezra

4:15, which postdates Lehi, we find two occurrences of the words *in the book of the records of thy fathers*, which not only contain the three magical words, but also remind us of the wording of 1 Nephi 1:2 (cf. 3:3, 12, 19; 5:16) and closely parallel the wording (twice) in 1 Nephi 1:17; 19:1–2, *the record of my father* (cf. 1 Nephi 6:1; Mosiah 1:6). Moreover, we find the word *record* or *records* 27 times in the book of Mosiah, which the Tanners acknowledge to have been produced by Joseph Smith before 1 Nephi.<sup>30</sup> If the prophet was influenced by the passage in the Apocrypha in 1 Nephi 13:41, how does one explain the use of the word in earlier passages he dictated that have no tie to 1 Nephi? Indeed, the word *record* or *records* is found eleven times in 1 Nephi *before* the passage the Tanners believe Joseph Smith took from the Apocrypha (1 Nephi 3:19, 24).

The same thing could be said about the Tanners' assertion that Joseph Smith picked up the wording *make an abridgment* and *abridged* in 1 Nephi 1:17 from 2 Maccabees 2:23, 26, 28, 31. Since the word *abridgment* is found in Mormon 5:9, which the Tanners believe was dictated by Joseph Smith before 1 Nephi, it is clear that Joseph Smith didn't need to borrow from the Apocrypha when dictating 1 Nephi.

The Tanners believe that the story of Nephi obtaining the plates of brass from the "treasury of Laban" (1 Nephi 4:20) was taken from an account in 2 Maccabees 3:27, in which a certain Heliodorus tried to plunder the temple treasury but "fell suddenly unto the ground," just as Laban had "fallen to the earth," where Nephi found him (1 Nephi 4:7). To this they add that "in both cases God was responsible for their fall" (p. 4). In reality, the Book of Mormon states that Laban had fallen to the ground because "he was drunken with wine."<sup>31</sup> The Tanners' conclusion that "there are enough similarities between the two stories to make one believe that Joseph Smith was borrowing from the

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<sup>30</sup> The Tanners' support for the primacy of Mosiah is evidenced in their *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1990), 32–37.

<sup>31</sup> It is true that the text also says that the Lord had delivered Laban into Nephi's hands (1 Nephi 4:11), but this may refer to the fact that the Lord guided Nephi to where Laban had fallen (1 Nephi 4:6), not that the Lord had caused Laban to fall.



Apocrypha" (p. 4) is unwarranted, for the stories are far more different than similar. Heliodorus was under orders to rob the temple treasury to bring it to his sovereign (2 Maccabees 3:1-14, 23), while Nephi came in search of the brass plates kept in a private treasury, "not knowing beforehand the things which I should do" (1 Nephi 4:6). Nephi came alone in stealth by night (1 Nephi 4:5), but Heliodorus came openly with his guards (2 Maccabees 3:24). The appearance of the angelic horseman to stop Heliodorus (2 Maccabees 3:25-27) is totally foreign to the Book of Mormon story. Nephi, of course, succeeded, while Heliodorus did not. But the most significant difference is the nature of the "treasury." The temple treasury contained money, while Laban's treasury contained a record written on brass plates. Only once in the Bible, in Ezra 5:17-6:2, do we find that a "treasure house" contained written records. Significantly, the Aramaic word used for *treasure* in this passage is *ginzayyâ*, from the root meaning "to keep, hide" in both Hebrew and Aramaic.<sup>32</sup> From the same root is the Mishnaic Hebrew *gânîzâh*, which denotes a repository for worn synagogue scrolls,<sup>33</sup> and *gannâz*, "archivist" or one in charge of records. The very fact that Joseph Smith, unacquainted as he was with things Jewish, used the term *treasury* for a place where records are stored is evidence of his prophetic calling. In the collection of Jewish traditions known as *The Book of Jasher*, we find reference to writings kept in a treasury: "And in those days Cainan wrote upon tablets of stone, what was to take place in time to come, and he put them in his treasures" (*Jasher* 2:13). William J. Hamblin, citing Plutarch, noted that "a 'golden book' . . . containing the poetry of Aristomache of Erythrae, was deposited in the Treasury of the Sicyonians at Delphi."<sup>34</sup> This is another example in which the Tanners, guided by their preconceived notion of Joseph Smith as a charlatan and unacquainted with the

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<sup>32</sup> In Esther 3:9; 4:7, the Hebrew word of the same origin is used to denote a treasury where money is kept.

<sup>33</sup> For this practice, which continues in Judaism today, see Mishnah *Shabbat* 9:6.

<sup>34</sup> Plutarch, *Moralia*, "Quaestiones Convivales," V, 2, 675B = Loeb 8:387, cited in William J. Hamblin, "Sacred Writings on Bronze Plates in the Ancient Mediterranean" (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1994), 13.

ancient Near East, simply cannot go beyond a surface analysis to discover what really lies behind the Book of Mormon text.

Had the Tanners searched more diligently, they would have noted that expressions found in the story of Nephi's encounter with Laban have parallels in later parts of the Book of Mormon, indicating that Joseph Smith had already dictated them and had no need to rediscover them in the Apocrypha. Thus, for example, when "Laban was angry" with Laman "and *thrust him out* from his presence; and he would not that he should have *the records*," he threatened to slay him, and Laman fled (1 Nephi 3:13-14). When Laman returned with his brothers to purchase the plates with the wealth their father had left behind, Laban again "*thrust [them] out*" and sought to slay them (1 Nephi 3:25). But they fled and "*hid [them]selves in the cavity of a rock*" (1 Nephi 3:27). Subsequently, Nephi returned to the city "*by night*" (1 Nephi 4:5) and found the unconscious Laban (1 Nephi 4:7-8), who "*had been out by night*" (1 Nephi 4:22). Some of the same terminology is found in the story of Ether, whom the people "esteemed . . . as naught, and *cast him out*; and he *hid himself in the cavity of a rock* by day, and *by night he went forth*" (Ether 13:13). Of special interest is that "as he dwelt *in the cavity of a rock* he made the remainder of this *record*," going out from time to time "*by night*" to see the doings of the people (Ether 13:14). Also from the book of Ether is the story of "the sons of Shule [who] *crept into the house of Noah by night* and slew him" (Ether 7:18). The wording is similar to that of 1 Nephi 4:5, in which we read that Nephi "*by night . . . crept into the city* and went forth towards *the house of Laban*," whom he slew.

Another close parallel with the story of Nephi and his brothers and their encounter with Laban is found in Alma 51. Just as Nephi and his brothers had brought their "tents" with them to Jerusalem (1 Nephi 3:9), "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" (Alma 51:32). "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*. . . . 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* (Alma 51:33–34). The stealthy manner in which Teancum went into the Lamanite camp by night and slew the unconscious Amalickiah is very similar to the story of Nephi and Laban in 1 Nephi 4. The Teancum account even makes mention of Amalickiah's "servants," just as 1 Nephi 3:25–27 mentions the "servants of Laban." Of interest, too, is the fact that Teancum "*went out by night*" with "*his servant*," while in 1 Nephi 4:20–36 we read that Nephi encountered "*the servant of Laban*" (verse 20), who thought that he was Laban, who "*had been out by night*" (verse 22), and the two of them took the brass plates "*without the walls*" of the city (verse 24). With such rich parallels as these in portions of the Book of Mormon that had already been dictated by Joseph Smith, why would he need the Apocrypha when he came to 1 Nephi?

Furthermore, there are close parallels to the story of Nephi and Laban in the Old Testament. We have, for example, the story of the Israelite spies who came into the city of Jericho by night (Joshua 2:2) and were hidden by Rahab (Joshua 2:4; 6:25), just as Nephi hid his brothers outside the wall of Jerusalem before going toward Laban's house (1 Nephi 4:5). Like Jerusalem, Jericho, too, had a wall (most renowned for its fall in Joshua 6:20), for Rahab's house was built atop the wall (Joshua 2:15). It also had a gate that was shut at night (Joshua 2:5, 7). Rahab told the men of the town that the spies had left before the gate was closed and recommended that they "*pursue after them quickly; for ye shall overtake them*" (Joshua 2:5). "And the men *pursued after them*," (Joshua 2:7) "*but found them not*," for they hid themselves in the mountain (Joshua 2:16, 22). Similarly, when Lehi's sons ran from Laban, they "*fled into the wilderness, and the servants of Laban did not overtake [them], and [they] hid [them]selves in the cavity of a rock*" (1 Nephi 3:27). During their stay at her house, Rahab "*said unto the men, I know that the Lord hath given you the land*" (Joshua 2:9). Nephi, as he stood contemplating the Spirit's command to slay Laban, reflected on "*the land of promise*" (1 Nephi 4:14). And just as Nephi had reminded his brothers of how "*Moses . . . 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*" (1 Nephi 4:2), Rahab told the Israelite

spies, “we have heard how *the Lord dried up the water of the Red sea for you*” (Joshua 2:10). She knew that, with the Lord’s help, the Israelites could readily defeat her people, so she pled that they might “deliver” her and her family “from death” (Joshua 2:13). Similarly, Nephi had followed up his comments about the Red Sea by assuring his brothers that “the Lord is able to *deliver us*, even as our fathers, and to destroy Laban, *even as the Egyptians*” (1 Nephi 4:3). The spies, upon their return to the Israelite camp, “said unto Joshua, Truly *the Lord hath delivered into our hands all the land*” (Joshua 2:24), paralleled by the statement that “*the Lord hath delivered him [Laban] into thy [Nephi’s] hands*” (1 Nephi 4:11; 3:29).

There are other similarities between the two stories. For example, just as Nephi told Laban’s servant “with an *oath*” that, if he would accompany them, they “would spare his life” (1 Nephi 4:32–33), the two spies swore an “*oath*” to save Rahab’s family from destruction (Joshua 2:14, 17, 20, 22). When, at length, the Israelites attacked Jericho, Rahab’s family was spared “because she *hid* the messengers” (Joshua 6:17). But “the city shall be accursed” (Joshua 6:17) and was destroyed (Joshua 6:24), just as, in Lehi’s prophecy, “Jerusalem . . . should be destroyed” (1 Nephi 1:13). Two verses later in the Joshua account, we read of “all the *silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron*” of Jericho that should be “put into *the treasury* of the Lord” (Joshua 6:19, 24). These remind us of the “*gold . . . silver, and . . . precious things*” left behind by Lehi (1 Nephi 2:4), which his sons tried to exchange for the “plates of brass” in Laban’s possession (1 Nephi 3:22–25) and of the “*treasury*” in which Laban kept the plates (1 Nephi 4:20). Finally, just as Nephi slew Laban “*with his own sword*” (1 Nephi 4:18), the Israelites destroyed the inhabitants of Jericho “*with the edge of the sword*” (Joshua 6:21).

Another Old Testament story that has parallels to the events in 1 Nephi 3–4 is found in Nehemiah 2. Nehemiah recorded, “So *I came to Jerusalem*” (Nehemiah 2:11) in wording similar to 1 Nephi 3:9 (“*I, Nephi, and my brethren took our journey . . . to go up to the land of Jerusalem*”), 1 Nephi 3:10 (“*we had gone up to the land of Jerusalem*”), and 1 Nephi 4:1 (“*let us go up again unto Jerusalem*”; cf. 4:4). Like Nephi, who went “*by night*” toward Laban’s house (1 Nephi 4:5), Nehemiah went “*in*

*the night*" (Nehemiah 2:12, 15) or "*by night*" (Nehemiah 2:13) to do "*what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem*" (Nehemiah 2:12). We are reminded that Lehi's sons had returned to Jerusalem because "*the Lord ha[d] commanded*" their father Lehi (1 Nephi 3:2, 4-5).

Nehemiah took with him "*some few men,*" and "*went out by night by the gate*" to inspect "*the walls of Jerusalem*" and its gates (Nehemiah 2:12-13). Nephi's brothers, also few (three) in number, "*did follow [him] until [they] came without the walls of Jerusalem,*" where he "*caused that they should hide themselves without the walls*" (1 Nephi 4:4-5). Then Nephi "*crept into the city . . . not knowing* beforehand the things which [he] *should do*" (1 Nephi 4:5-6). Similarly, after inspecting the wall, Nehemiah "*returned*" inside the city (Nehemiah 2:15; cf. 1 Nephi 4:1, "*Let us go up again unto Jerusalem*"), ensuring that "*the rulers knew not whither I went, or what I did*" (Nehemiah 2:16). While this parallels Nephi's not knowing what he would do, it also parallels his statement that they took Laban's servant with them so "*that the Jews might not know* concerning our flight into the wilderness" (1 Nephi 4:36). We can also compare this with Nehemiah's statement, "*neither had I as yet told it to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor to the nobles, nor to the rulers, nor to the rest that did the work*" (Nehemiah 2:16).

Nehemiah's purpose was to inspect the walls and gates of the city, with a view to rebuilding them, for "*Jerusalem lieth waste*" (Nehemiah 2:17). This destruction was the result of the Babylonian attack that Lehi had predicted (1 Nephi 1:4, 13; 2:13; 10:3).

### **Parallels from Sources Unavailable to Joseph Smith**

As we examined the Tanners' parallels between the Book of Mormon and the Apocrypha, we were struck by the fact that there are often closer parallels with Old Testament materials. For example, 1 Nephi's closest parallels are found in the book of Jeremiah. Since Jeremiah was a contemporary of Nephi, we should *expect* a large number of parallels of both language and themes in their writings. Indeed, scholars have already noted parallels between Jeremiah's writings and the contemporary Hebrew letters discovered at Lachish, south of Jerusalem, in the 1930s.

Also interesting—but less explainable from the Tanners' viewpoint—are the close parallels between the Book of Mormon and ancient extracanonical works that were not available until many decades after Joseph Smith's death. For purposes of illustration, we shall examine three of these works here. They are *4 Baruch*, the *Pistis Sophia*, and the *Cologne Mani Codex*.

### Parallels with *4 Baruch*

The text denominated *4 Baruch* or "Things omitted from Jeremiah the prophet," known from ancient Greek, Ethiopic, Armenian, Old Slavonic, and Romanian versions, was first made available in English in 1889. For the purpose of comparing it with 1 Nephi, we use a recent translation by S. E. Robinson.<sup>35</sup>

The story begins at the time "when the children of Israel were taken captive by the king of the Chaldeans"—the same captivity from which Lehi was escaping. The Lord told Jeremiah to "rise up and get out of this city . . . because I am going to destroy it for the multitude of the sins of those who inhabit it" (*4 Baruch* 1:1; cf. 4:7). The Lord had warned Lehi that Jerusalem would be "destroyed" (1 Nephi 1:4, 13; 2:13; 10:3) and "the Lord commanded [Lehi] . . . that he should take his family and depart" (1 Nephi 2:2). The wording of the *4 Baruch* passage is very similar to that of 1 Nephi 3:17: "For he knew that *Jerusalem must be destroyed, because of the wickedness of the people.*" Immediately after learning that "*Jerusalem must be destroyed . . . Lehi, as he went forth prayed unto the Lord . . . in behalf of his people*" (1 Nephi 1:4–5). Similarly, immediately after the Lord told Jeremiah that he was going to destroy the city, he told him, "*your prayers are like a firm pillar in the middle of it, and like an unbreachable wall encircling it*" (*4 Baruch* 1:2). That night, Jeremiah went to the temple, determined that he "would pray for the people until the sin was forgiven them" (*4 Baruch* 2:3; cf. 3:4).

Jeremiah told Baruch, "God is delivering the city into the hands of the king of the Chaldeans, to take the people captive into Babylon" (*4 Baruch* 2:7; cf. 3:8). This is like Lehi's prophecy "concerning *Jerusalem*—that it should be destroyed, and the

<sup>35</sup> In Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2:413–25.

*inhabitants* thereof; many should perish by the sword, and many should be *carried away captive into Babylon*" (1 Nephi 1:13).

At one point, we read that some of the exiled Jews "*came to a desert place some distance from Jerusalem*" (4 Baruch 8:11), just as Lehi and his family left Jerusalem "*and departed into the wilderness*" (1 Nephi 2:2-4).

The Lord told Jeremiah to rise "at the sixth hour of the *night*, [and] get up on *the wall of the city*" (4 Baruch 1:11). This reminds us that "it was by *night*" that Nephi and his brothers "*came without the walls of Jerusalem*" (1 Nephi 4:4-5). Jeremiah and Baruch "*went up together onto the walls of the city*" (4 Baruch 3:1), where they saw that "*angels came out of heaven holding torches*" (4 Baruch 3:2). Lehi, too, had seen "*the heavens open*" and "*angels*" (1 Nephi 1:8) and "*saw One descending out of the midst of heaven . . . [whose] luster was above that of the sun at noon-day,*" followed by twelve other bright individuals (1 Nephi 1:9-10). 4 Baruch 4:4 also mentions "*the sun.*" Like Lehi, who saw God on his heavenly throne (1 Nephi 1:8), Jeremiah received a visit from God, who then "*went up from Jeremiah into heaven*" (4 Baruch 3:17).

After the Chaldeans took Jerusalem, Baruch "*went outside the city . . . and he remained sitting in a tomb while the angels came to him*" (4 Baruch 4:11-12). The story bears some resemblance to that of the sons of Lehi who, when fleeing from Laban's house in the city of Jerusalem, hid themselves "*in the cavity of a rock*" and were visited by "*an angel of the Lord*" (1 Nephi 3:27-29). The tombs of Lehi and Jeremiah's day were hewn out of bedrock.

Meanwhile, Jeremiah had told Abimelech to leave Jerusalem (4 Baruch 3:12-14, 21), as the Lord had told Lehi to depart. Abimelech sat down to rest and fell into a very deep sleep (4 Baruch 5:2), reminding us that Lehi, after his first vision, "*cast himself upon his bed, being overcome with the Spirit*" and "*was carried away in a vision*" (1 Nephi 1:7-8). After this second vision, Lehi "*did exclaim many things unto the Lord . . . in the praising of his God*" (1 Nephi 1:14-15). Abimelech, upon awaking, exclaimed, "*Blessed (be) the Lord,*" adding that "*a great stupor has befallen me*" (4 Baruch 5:12). After returning to Jerusalem, Abimelech "*went outside the city and prayed to the Lord,*" whereupon an angel appeared to him (4 Baruch 6:1-2).

After he had rejoined Baruch in the tomb (*4 Baruch* 6:2), Baruch also prayed and the angel again appeared (*4 Baruch* 6:15). This is reminiscent of "Lehi, [who] *as he went forth prayed unto the Lord . . . and [as] he prayed unto the Lord*" a pillar of fire appeared before him (*1 Nephi* 1:5–6).

In his second vision, Lehi "saw One descending out of the midst of heaven, and he beheld that his *luster* was above that of the sun at noon-day. And he also saw *twelve others* following him, and their brightness did exceed that of the stars in the firmament. And they came down and went forth upon the face of the earth" (*1 Nephi* 1:9–11). In *4 Baruch* 9, we read of "Jesus Christ the *light* of the aeons, the inextinguishable lamp" (*4 Baruch* 9:14) who, "coming into the world" would "go out and choose for himself *twelve apostles*" (*4 Baruch* 9:20). In Lehi's vision, Christ "gave unto him a book, and bade him that he should read" (*1 Nephi* 1:11). In *4 Baruch* 7:16–22, God has an eagle deliver to Jeremiah a letter with instructions to read it. When Lehi told the people about his vision "of the *coming of a Messiah*, and also the redemption of *the world*, . . . *the Jews . . . 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*" (*1 Nephi* 1:19–20; cf. Helaman 8:22). In like manner, "as Jeremiah was saying these things about the Son of God, that he is coming into the world, the people became angry" and recalled that Isaiah had similarly testified that he had seen "*the son of God*." "Come, therefore," they said "and let us not *kill him* by that (same) death [as Isaiah], but let's *stone him with stones*" (*4 Baruch* 9:21–22). But like Lehi, Jeremiah escaped death for a time by divine intervention (*4 Baruch* 9:25–29).<sup>36</sup>

In *4 Baruch* 9:1–2, Jeremiah and the people offer sacrifices, just as Lehi offered sacrifices upon the return of his sons from their mission to get Laban's brass plates (*1 Nephi* 5:9). As he was praying at the altar, Jeremiah fell as though dead, though he was not dead and rose up after three days (*4 Baruch* 9:7–14). The

<sup>36</sup> When the crowd sought to stone him, Jeremiah declared, "they will not kill me until I have described to you everything that I saw." It was not until after he had delivered his message, when "his stewardship was fulfilled" that they could take his life (*4 Baruch* 9:24–31). This part of the story resembles that of Abinadi in Mosiah 13:5–9; 17:1; cf. Mosiah 11:26.



story is similar to Lehi's "cast[ing] himself upon his bed, being overcome with the Spirit" (1 Nephi 1:7), though it is closer to the stories of Alma (Alma 36:10, 16; 38:8) and Lamoni (Alma 18:42–19:8), each of whom lay as though dead for three days and three nights. In the case of Jeremiah, as with Lamoni, there were some who wanted to bury him, but God made it known that this was not to be done.

There are other similarities between *4 Baruch* and the story of Lehi, such as his vision of the tree in 1 Nephi 8, but what we have given here is sufficient to show that one can find such parallels in texts that were unknown in Joseph Smith's day. This being so, there seems to be little, if any, value in the Tanners' comparison of parts of 1 Nephi with books found in the King James Apocrypha, especially when one notes that the passages in the Apocrypha are more scattered than those in *4 Baruch* that we have cited.

### Parallels from the *Pistis Sophia*

The *Pistis Sophia* is thought to have been written in the second or third century A.D. Though the British Museum acquired a manuscript of the Coptic text in 1785, by the time the Book of Mormon appeared it had not yet been translated. The earliest French translation was in 1856. Several pages were translated into English in 1887, but the full text, translated by G. R. S. Mead, did not appear in English until 1896.<sup>37</sup>

According to *Pistis Sophia* 3, there was, at the time of Jesus' ascension into heaven, a great *earthquake* that lasted for *three hours*. An alternate view given in the manuscript is that the earthquake lasted from the third hour on the fifteenth day of the month Tybi until the ninth hour the following day. This accords with the statement in 3 Nephi 8:19 that "the *quakings of the earth* . . . did last for about the space of *three hours*; and it was said by some that the time was greater."

For three days after the earthquake and other agitations of nature, the Nephites were "howling and weeping" in the darkness and lamenting the destruction of the people in a number of cities (3 Nephi 8:23–25; 10:8). In *Pistis Sophia* 4, we read that "the

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<sup>37</sup> In this study, we use *Pistis Sophia*, trans. G. R. S. Mead, rev. ed. (1921; reprint London: Watkins, 1955).

disciples sat together in fear and were in exceedingly great agitation and were afraid because of the great earthquake which took place, and they wept together, saying: 'What will then be? Peradventure the Saviour will destroy all regions?' Thus saying, they wept together." During this time, the heavenly host "all sang praises . . . so that the whole world heard their voices" (*Pistis Sophia* 3). Among the Nephites, after the quaking had stopped, "all the people of the land" heard the voice of Christ (3 Nephi 9:1–10:8).

On the day following the earthquake, according to *Pistis Sophia* 4, as the disciples "wept together . . . the heavens opened, and they saw Jesus descend, shining most exceedingly . . . so that men in the world cannot describe the light which was on him."<sup>38</sup> Joseph Smith used similar terminology to describe the brilliant light that surrounded the Father and the Son when they appeared to him in the Sacred Grove in the spring of 1820 (Joseph Smith–History 1:16–17). We are also reminded of Joseph Smith's description of Moroni on the night of his first appearance, 21/22 September 1823: "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" (Joseph Smith–History 1:32). The gradients of light are features shared by both Jesus and Moroni. Of Moroni's departure, Joseph Smith wrote, "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" (Joseph Smith–History 1:43). In *Pistis Sophia* 6, the apostles, unable to withstand the brilliant light, asked Jesus, "withdraw thy light-glory into thyself that we may be able to stand. . . . Then Jesus drew to himself the glory of his light." The opening of the heavens and the drawing

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<sup>38</sup> According to the text, there were three types of light—also called glories—that surrounded Jesus, each more brilliant than the other (*Pistis Sophia* 4). These remind us of the three degrees of glory, with the terrestrial being more glorious than the telestial and the celestial being more glorious still (D&C 76:70–71, 78, 81, 96–98; cf. 1 Corinthians 15:41).

of the light to the person of the heavenly visitor is a feature shared by both stories.

The Book of Mormon does not say that Jesus was surrounded by light when he descended from heaven to visit the Nephites after his resurrection, but it is significant that he introduced himself by saying "I am Jesus Christ. . . . I am the light and the life of the world" (3 Nephi 11:10–11). The Book of Mormon text notes that Jesus appeared to the Nephites "after his ascension into heaven" (3 Nephi 11:12), while in *Pistis Sophia* 3–4 the reappearance of Christ to his apostles occurred the day following his ascension. The apostles were frightened, so Jesus reassured them by saying, "Take courage. It is I, be not afraid" (*Pistis Sophia* 5). To the Nephites, who had fallen "to the earth" (3 Nephi 11:12), he said, "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. . . . 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" (3 Nephi 11:14–15). In *Pistis Sophia* 6, "all the disciples took courage, stepped forward to Jesus, fell down all together, adored him, rejoicing in great joy."

In both stories, Jesus then teaches the people, though the contents of his teachings are not identical. To the Nephites, he delivered the sermon he had previously given to his disciples in the Old World. To the apostles of *Pistis Sophia* 6–7, he told of the pre-existent world from which they had come and of his return to his Father after the resurrection to receive his heavenly garment. One passage is of particular importance because it, too, has a parallel in the Book of Mormon. Jesus told the twelve apostles, "when I set out for the world [from the preexistence], I brought from the beginning with me twelve powers, as I have told you from the beginning, which I have taken from the twelve saviours of the Treasury of the Light, according to the command of the First Mystery [i.e., God]. These then I cast into the womb of your mothers, when I came into the world, that is those which are in your bodies today" (*Pistis Sophia* 7).

This scene is like one from Lehi's vision, in which "he saw the heavens open, and . . . God sitting upon his throne," then "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. And he also saw twelve others following him, and their brightness did exceed that of the stars in the firmament. And they came down and went forth upon the face of the earth" (1 Nephi 1:8–11). The brilliance of Christ and his twelve apostles, as described by Lehi, reminds us that, in the *Pistis Sophia*, they are said to have come forth from "the Treasury of Light."

Nephi, having asked to see what his father had seen in vision, was also shown Christ and his twelve apostles (1 Nephi 11:27–29). Like Lehi, he "saw the heavens open" and was shown Jesus' mother Mary, "a virgin, most beautiful and fair above all other virgins," who became "the mother of the Son of God, after the manner of the flesh" (1 Nephi 11:14–21). Similarly, in *Pistis Sophia* 8, Jesus, speaking of the preexistence, says, "I looked down on the world of mankind and found Mary, who is called 'my mother' according to the body of matter," into whom his spirit was then placed when the spirits of the apostles were placed inside their mothers.

A number of Latter-day Saint practices and beliefs introduced by Joseph Smith are also found in the *Pistis Sophia*. In one scene (*Pistis Sophia* 136), the apostles and their wives stand around Jesus dressed in linen as he prays for them at the altar, reminiscent of the prayer circle. The words spoken by Jesus are unintelligible and are hence merely transliterated (and not translated) in the English text. This reminds us that, in the Book of Mormon, when Jesus prayed for the Nephites, his words were so great that they could not be recorded (3 Nephi 17:15–17). In *Pistis Sophia* 141–43, as the apostles stand around Jesus with the "cipher" of "the name" in their hands, Jesus tells them about the power he has given them to seal on earth and in heaven, so they can perform the mysteries for men, and mentions anointing and the mystery that leads into the Holy of Holies, in connection with the ciphers and names. In several passages of the *Pistis Sophia* (128, 130, 146–47), Jesus talks about baptism for the dead and indicates that the living must perform for them that which they can no longer do for themselves. Did Joseph Smith get his ideas for the temple from this ancient document that was unknown in his day?

There are other parallels as well. In *Pistis Sophia* 7–8, Jesus speaks of the "soul of the rulers" in the premortal existence, in

terms reminiscent of Abraham 3:23 in which, in the premortal world, God stood among a group of spirits and declared, "These I will make my rulers." The following is an interesting comparison between part of a revelation received by Joseph Smith and a section of the ancient Coptic text:

**D&C 18:15–16**

And if it so be that you should labor *all your days* in crying repentance unto this people, and *bring, save it be one soul* unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father! And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me into the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy if you should *bring many souls* unto me!

***Pistis Sophia* 104  
(Mead's translation)**

Amen, amen, I say unto you: He who shall *keep in Life* and *save only one soul*, besides the dignity which he possesseth in the Light-kingdom, he will receive yet another dignity for the soul which he hath saved, so that he who shall *save many souls*, besides the dignity which he possesseth in the Light he will receive many other dignities for the souls which he hath saved.

Were we to use the Tanners' reasoning, we could conclude that Joseph Smith plagiarized the *Pistis Sophia* which, since it postdates Lehi, clearly makes the Book of Mormon—and some of Joseph Smith's later revelations—a fraud. But since Joseph did not and could not have possessed a copy of that document, this argument fails. Ironically, the Book of Mormon has better parallels with the *Pistis Sophia* and other ancient texts than it does with the King James Apocrypha.

**Parallels with the *Cologne Mani Codex***

The *Cologne Mani Codex* is a miniature parchment document from the fifth century A.D. Not opened and rendered readable until 1969, a preliminary survey was published in 1970 and German translations in 1975 and 1978. The first English translation,

which we employ here, was published in 1979.<sup>39</sup> Numbers referenced here are page numbers in that translation. We compare Nephi's vision with that of Mani.

### 1 Nephi

For it came to pass after I had desired to know the things that my father had seen . . . as I sat pondering in mine heart (11:1)

I was caught away in the Spirit of the Lord (11:1)

yea, into an exceedingly high mountain (11:1)

And the Spirit said unto me: Behold, what desirest thou? (11:2) [Nephi wants to have the "mysteries of God" revealed to him (10:17, 19)]

The Spirit cried with a loud voice, saying: Hosanna to the Lord, the most high God; for he is God over all the earth, yea, even above all (11:6)

[Nephi beheld many things in a vision (11-14)]

And it came to pass that I saw the heavens open; and an angel came down and stood before me (11:14)

### *Cologne Mani Codex*

I was reflecting about how all the works came to be. As I pondered (43)

The Spirit snatched me up (41)

Suddenly the living [Spirit] snatched me, [lifted me up] with greatest [force] (43)

set me [down] on [the pinnacle] of a [very] high mountain (43)

and carried me off to the mountain in silent power (41)

Now he spoke with me and said: He who is eminently most powerful sent me to you so that I may reveal to you the secrets which you pondered (43)

The living [Spirit] . . . said to [me: . . .] give glory to the greatest King of honor (43)

There many great [visions] were revealed to me (41)

I saw a glorious throne room coming down from the highest height and a mighty angel standing by it (43)

<sup>39</sup> Ron Cameron and Arthur J. Dewey, trans., *Cologne Mani Codex* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1979).

**1 Nephi**

[Nephi beheld many places in his vision (11:13; 12:1; 13:1; 14:11–27), including other angels (11:30)]

[Nephi is questioned by the angel (11:14, 16, 21; 14:8)]

[Nephi is forbidden to write many of the things which he sees since others have and will write them (14:28)]

The things which I have written sufficeth me [He writes only what the angel tells him he can write] (14:28)

[Lehi's family has "plates of brass" (13:23). Nephi makes plates of ore (19:1–6). The Lord commands him to make another set of metal plates later in 2 Nephi 5:30]

These things shall be hid up, to come forth unto the Gentiles, by the gift and power of the Lamb (13:35). [Records similar to Nephi's are "sealed up to come forth" in a latter time (14:26)]

[The Nephites] shall write many things which I shall minister unto them, which shall be plain and precious (13:35)

[John sees "many things" which Nephi has seen, but Nephi only wrote "but a small part" of the things he saw (14:24, 28)]

These plates should be handed down from one generation to another (19:4)

***Cologne Mani Codex***

[to the] north and I beheld there enormous mountains and angels and many places (43)

He beheld everything and carefully questioned the angels (47)

Now all these things that are hidden, write (43)

And whatever they said to him, he would inscribe in his writings (47)

Write upon bronze tablets (43)

And store them up in the desert land (43)

All that you write, write most clearly (43)

[Now many other things] like these are in his writings, which tell about his rapture and revelation (43)

For all which he heard and saw he wrote down and bequeathed to all posterity of the Spirit of Truth (43)

<p>[Following his vision Nephi is left weak from the experience and sorrows over his brothers' unbelief (15:1-6)]</p>	<p>My heart became heavy, all my limbs trembled, my backbone was shaken violently, and my feet did not stand on their pins (41)</p>
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As with 4 *Baruch* and the *Pistis Sophia*, the *Cologne Mani Codex* was unavailable to Joseph Smith or anyone else of his time. The close conceptual parallels between these documents and the Book of Mormon answer the Tanners' assertion that "it will be very difficult for Mormon scholars to explain this extraordinary cluster of similarities [with the Apocrypha]. It seems obvious that the only answer to these remarkable parallels is that Joseph Smith borrowed from the Apocrypha in creating his Book of Mormon" (p. 8). If we can find closer parallels with documents that Joseph Smith *could not* have borrowed from, the tenuous ties that the Tanners make between the Nephite record and the Apocrypha evaporate as evidence for their theory of direct borrowing from the Apocrypha and demonstrate the faulty and arbitrary nature of their methodology.

### Parallels with the Tree of Life Visions

The Tanners claim that Lehi's vision of the tree of life was crafted from phrases found in the book of Revelation and parts of 2 Esdras (pp. 13-14). God promised the faithful at Ephesus that they would be permitted to "eat of the tree of life" (Revelation 2:7) and rule the nations with "a rod of iron" (Revelation 2:27). In vision John saw "a pure river of water of life," which proceeded from the throne of God, and also "the tree of life," which bore twelve kinds of "fruits" (Revelation 22:1-3). Thus John describes a "tree" or the "tree of life" that has "fruit" which is eaten by the righteous and is also near "a pure river of water" (i.e., waters of life). The Tanners equate these elements with ideas found in the Book of Mormon in which the "tree of life" and its "fruit" are also described in connection with "a river of water" (1 Nephi 8:13, 26). According to the Tanners, passages such as these constitute "irrefutable evidence" that Joseph Smith "plagiarized" from Revelation (p. 13). The Tanners appear to be unaware that the symbols discussed by John in Revelation were



not unique, but were the common property of the ancient Near East. As one authority notes, the tree of life mythology is "a primal image which can be glimpsed as early as the third millennium B.C."<sup>40</sup> In one significant study, Widengren contrasts Mesopotamian tree of life imagery with that of Israel. After noting that these elements are "bound up with the oldest strata of Sumerian culture and religion," he states:

All interest centres around the holy garden of the divinity. In this garden is found the *Tree of Life*, the *fruits* of which are *eaten* by man while its oil is used for the anointment of his body and especially his head. There the *Water of Life* is streaming from beneath the roots of this tree. Further we note the crown twined from the shoots of the tree, from its *leaves* and flowers, the branch cut from the trunk of the tree, a *rod* acting both as a sign of dignity and as an instrument for magical-medical purifications, the water drawn from the well with the Water of Life, serving for medical-religious purifications.<sup>41</sup>

Even the casual reader of Revelation will recognize these patterns in John's vision: the "tree of life," the "water of life," the "leaves" which are "for the healing of the nations" (Revelation 22:1-2). Earlier, evoking the description of the Psalmist (Psalms 2:9), Revelation mentions the "rod of iron" with which Christ and the faithful will rule the nations (Revelation 2:27). Obviously, when John describes his vision of the tree of life he is simply adopting the language and terminology of the ancient Near Eastern world in depicting what he saw. These ideas were well known to the world from which Lehi came, and it would have been as easy for Lehi to have used these themes as it was for John seven centuries later. Therefore, to claim that the parallels between the Book of Mormon, Revelation, and the Apocrypha constitute "irrefutable evidence" of plagiarism is absurd. Where the Tanners' argument really breaks down, however, is when they fail

<sup>40</sup> Leon Yarden, *The Tree of Light: A Study of the Menorah* (Uppsala: Skriv Service, 1972), 40.

<sup>41</sup> Geo Widengren, *The King and the Tree of Life in Ancient Near Eastern Religion* (Uppsala: Lundequistska, 1951), 59, emphasis added.

to examine other elements found in the Book of Mormon, but not found in the Bible or the Apocrypha. The Book of Mormon does not merely use certain symbols and themes used by John, but it also portrays additional elements found in other Near Eastern documents that were unavailable to Joseph Smith at the time the Book of Mormon was published.

While both the Book of Mormon and Revelation mention fruit, in John's vision there are "twelve manner of fruits" on the tree John saw (Revelation 22:2). Lehi describes only one kind of fruit (1 Nephi 8:11–12). John speaks of the leaves of the tree that will heal the nations (Revelation 22:2), while the Book of Mormon says nothing about leaves on the tree. The Book of Mormon describes people partaking of the fruit. Some people fall away after partaking, while others do not (1 Nephi 8:24–34). There is none of this in Revelation. According to Lehi the tree's beauty exceeds that of anything else (1 Nephi 8:11–12, 15; 11:8), the fruit is "sweet" (1 Nephi 8:11) and fills people with "joy" (1 Nephi 8:12) and happiness (1 Nephi 8:10). While Revelation alludes to the fruits and the positive effect of the tree's leaves, it fails to describe its taste and other attributes mentioned by Lehi and Nephi (Revelation 22:2). Moreover, Revelation tells us nothing about the color of the tree or its fruit. In the visions of Lehi and Nephi, however, we are clearly told that both the fruit and the tree itself are white (1 Nephi 8:11; 11:8). The golden candlestick of the Tabernacle and temple is believed to have been made in the shape of an almond tree and the almond tree itself was considered a representation of the tree of life.<sup>42</sup>

The almond is the first tree of spring in the Near East, sometimes waking as early as mid-December, when it decks itself in *radiant white*—at bottom pinky—blossoms even before leafing, besides being "the last to shed its leaves." In short, an ideal image of life, resurrection and "*White Goddess*," whose fruit—in itself a delicacy and early appreciated for its medical and cosmetic properties—has been described as "perfect." For as we read in an antique source, the seed and edible part, unlike most other fruits, are identical, both "a

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<sup>42</sup> Yarden, *The Tree of Light*, 46.

beginning and an end; a beginning in that it springs from no other power than itself, an end in that it is the aspiration of life which follows nature."<sup>43</sup>

A document found at Nag Hammadi, Egypt, declares, "Now the color of the tree of life is like the sun. And its branches are *beautiful*. Its leaves are like those of the cypress [a white tree]. Its *fruit* is like a bunch of grapes when it is *white*."<sup>44</sup>

### Rivers of Water

John speaks of a river of pure water representing the waters of life (Revelation 22:1). Lehi's dream, however, has two fountains. The fountain of living waters, whose source is at or near the tree (1 Nephi 11:25), and the "river" or "fountain" of filthy water, whose worldly source is at the opposite end of the path and the iron rod (1 Nephi 8:20; 12:16; 15:26–29). John speaks only of one river, the "living fountains of waters" (Revelation 7:17) or the "pure river of water of life" (Revelation 22:1), while the Book of Mormon mentions two. As Wilfred Griggs showed years ago, this concept of two rivers, one good and one bad, being near the tree of life is found in the religious literature of the ancient Mediterranean world and dates to the time of Lehi.<sup>45</sup>

Similar elements are reflected in later pseudepigraphic works. *First Enoch* describes the waters of life in these terms: "And in that place I saw the fountain of righteousness Which was inexhaustible: And all around it were many fountains of wisdom; And all the thirsty drank of them, And were filled with wisdom, And their dwellings were with the righteous and holy and elect."<sup>46</sup> There are other waters, however: "Woe to you who drink water from every fountain, For suddenly shall ye be consumed and

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., emphasis added.

<sup>44</sup> *On the Origin of the World* (II, 5, and XIII, 2), 110.13, in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, ed. James M. Robinson, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 178–79, emphasis added.

<sup>45</sup> C. Wilfred Griggs, "The Book of Mormon as an Ancient Book," *BYU Studies* 22/3 (1982): 259–78; reprinted in Noel Reynolds's anthology, *Book of Mormon Authorship* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1982; reprint, Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1996), 75–101.

<sup>46</sup> *I Enoch* 48:1, in Charles, *The Book of Enoch*, 93.

wither away, Because ye have forsaken the fountain of life.”<sup>47</sup> The *Thanksgiving Hymns* found with the Dead Sea Scrolls speak of the “torrents of Death” or the “rivers of Belial,” which “burst their high banks” and “cast up mire in abundance.”<sup>48</sup> Likewise, the Book of Mormon describes the river as one of “filthy water” (1 Nephi 12:16) or “filthiness” (1 Nephi 15:27), in which depths “many were drowned” (1 Nephi 8:32). Nephi says that the river of filthy water “was a representation of that awful hell, which the angel said unto me was prepared for the wicked” (1 Nephi 15:29). In similar terms, the *Thanksgiving Hymns* describe “the floods of Belial,” which “burst forth unto hell itself,” sweeping men away.<sup>49</sup> This is completely different from the “pure river of water of life” described in John’s vision (Revelation 22:1).

### The Great and Spacious Building

Unable to find parallels between Lehi’s “great and spacious building” and the book of Revelation, the Tanners appeal to the Apocrypha. They note that Lehi’s building was “as it were in the air” (1 Nephi 8:26), which they compare to a passage from Esdras, in which the prophet is told “to go into the field, where no foundation of any *building* was” (2 Esdras 10:53). Esdras is shown “the beauty and *greatness* of the *building*” (2 Esdras 10:55). In light of this, the Tanners argue, “The Book of Mormon uses the word ‘great’ in referring to the building, and the Apocrypha speaks of the ‘greatness’ of the building” (p. 13). The building in Esdras, however, is the heavenly Jerusalem. By way of contrast, Lehi and Nephi portray the great and spacious building in an extremely negative light, not as the New Jerusalem, but as Babylon or the “great and abominable church,” which they describe in similar terms (compare 1 Nephi 11:36 with 1 Nephi 22:14; 2 Nephi 28:18). For Lehi and Nephi, it is the tree that is beautiful, not the building (1 Nephi 11:8).

Symbols of heavenly buildings seen in vision are not unique to 2 Esdras, but are also found elsewhere in Jewish literature.

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<sup>47</sup> 1 Enoch 96:6, in Charles, *The Book of Enoch*, 239.

<sup>48</sup> Theodor H. Gaster, *The Dead Sea Scriptures*, 3rd ed. (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1976), 155–56.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

When Ezekiel saw the future Jerusalem temple in vision, an angel showed him the measurements of “the *building*” (Ezekiel 40:5; 41:12–13, 15; 42:1, 5–6, 10). Among other things, Ezekiel described the “height” of the house and the “foundations” of the side chambers, which were “a full reed of six *great* cubits” (Ezekiel 41:8). Or we might compare the Tanners’ parallels with *1 Enoch*. In a vision Enoch was shown several impressive buildings standing in the clouds. One of these was a frightening building that Enoch described as “a *spacious* habitation,” made of stones of crystal and engulfed in fire. “When I entered into this dwelling, it was hot as fire and cold as ice. No trace of delight or life was there.” Then Enoch says, “And behold there was another habitation more *spacious* than the former, every entrance to which was open before me, erected in the midst of a vibrating flame.” This building contained the throne of God and “so greatly did it excel in all points, in glory, in magnificence, and in magnitude, that it is impossible to describe to you either the splendour or the extent of it.”<sup>50</sup> Other examples could be mentioned also.

If Lehi’s “great and spacious building” (1 Nephi 8:26) was not derived from the Tanners’ apocryphal source, then where did it come from? Lehi seems to be familiar with the symbol and, in contrast to other symbols in the dream, Laman and Lemuel do not ask Nephi what it means, implying that they know already (1 Nephi 15:1–36). A more likely relationship can be found in sources that would have been known to a man like Lehi. When Solomon was king he undertook an ambitious building program. In addition to the temple, he constructed a large palace (1 Kings 7:1–12). This palace complex, which was adjacent to the temple proper, was built largely of cedar (1 Kings 7:2–3, 7, 12). Not only did the palace serve as the royal residence, but it also contained other notable features. One of these was the so-called “house of the forest of Lebanon,” which featured several rows of high columns carved from cedar (1 Kings 7:2–5). For Isaiah, the cedars of Lebanon were a symbol of pride (Isaiah 2:12–14). Likewise, the building of Lehi’s dream is said to represent the “pride of the

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<sup>50</sup> *1 Enoch* 14:8–25, in Richard Laurence, *The Book of Enoch the Prophet* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, 1883), 17–20, emphasis added. The chapters are numbered differently in Laurence’s translation. Our numbering follows the newer, commonly accepted numbering found in more recent translations.

world" (1 Nephi 11:36) and the "vain imaginations . . . of the children of men" (1 Nephi 12:18). Another prominent feature of the palace was the impressive throne room built by the king (1 Kings 7:7). Solomon, of course, was renowned for his great wisdom (1 Kings 4:34; 10:4, 7, 24). The building in the Book of Mormon is also associated with worldly wisdom (1 Nephi 11:35). King Jehoiakim, who reigned shortly before Zedekiah, undertook an ambitious building program during his reign in which he appears to have expanded and enlarged this royal palace complex. Jeremiah harshly condemned the king for these oppressive actions. "Woe to him who builds his palace by unrighteousness, his upper rooms by injustice. . . . He says, 'I will build myself a *great* palace with *spacious* upper rooms'" (Jeremiah 22:13-14, NIV). This great and spacious building would have been an excellent symbol for the pride and vanity and wisdom of the world. Such a relationship at least seems far more plausible than that proposed by the Tanners.

### Jeremiah and the Tree of Life

Jeremiah speaks of the Lord "who brought us up from the land of Egypt, who led us in the *wilderness*, in a land of *waste* and ravine, in a land of drought and utter *darkness*" (Jeremiah 2:6, Holladay).<sup>51</sup> Lehi says, "Methought I saw in my dream, a *dark* and dreary *wilderness*" (1 Nephi 8:4). He also describes this wilderness as "a *dark* and dreary *waste*" in which he "traveled for the space of many hours in *darkness*" (1 Nephi 8:7-8). Recalling Israel's entrance into the promised land, the Lord says, "And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat *the fruit thereof* and the goodness thereof" (Jeremiah 2:7). Jeremiah describes his own call as a prophet in terms of eating: "Thy words were found, and I did *eat* them; and thy word was unto me the *joy* and rejoicing of mine heart" (Jeremiah 15:16). In similar language the Lord answers Lehi's prayers by bringing him into a field where "it came to pass that I beheld a tree, whose fruit was desirable to make one happy. And it came to pass that I did go forth and *partake* of *the fruit thereof*. . . . And as I partook of *the fruit thereof* it filled my

<sup>51</sup> William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah Chapters 1-25* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986).

soul with exceedingly great joy” (1 Nephi 8:10–12). Nephi says that “*the fountain of living waters*,” whose source was apparently near the tree itself, was, like the tree of life, “a representation of the love of God” (1 Nephi 11:25). The book of Jeremiah describes the Lord’s great love for Israel in spite of her unfaithfulness and patiently tries to get her to return to him, but she will not. “They have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living waters” (Jeremiah 17:13; 2:13), and made a leaky cistern which cannot hold water and have also sought after inferior sources of water that will not bring them peace (Jeremiah 2:18). In the visions of Lehi and Nephi, there is another “*river*” or “*fountain*” that is “filthy,” whose source comes not from the tree, but elsewhere (1 Nephi 8:13, 19–20, 32; 12:16; 15:26–29). “As a *fountain* casteth out her waters, so she casteth out her wickedness” (Jeremiah 6:7).

In Jeremiah, the Lord continually calls backsliding Israel to return to him once again: “Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein” (Jeremiah 6:16). After Lehi partakes of the fruit of the tree he beckons to his family to come and partake. His wife Sariah and sons Nephi and Sam do, but Laman and Lemuel will not come (1 Nephi 8:14–18). After this, Lehi “beheld a *strait* and narrow path” which passed along the banks of the *river of water* and then led to the tree.

A “rod of iron” also extended along this same path (1 Nephi 8:19–20). “They shall come with weeping,” says Jeremiah, “and with supplications, will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the *rivers of waters* in a *straight* way, wherein they shall not stumble” (Jeremiah 31:9). Jeremiah never uses the term *rod of iron*; however, he does consider Israel to be “the *rod* of his [the Lord’s] inheritance” (Jeremiah 10:16).

Jeremiah begs the people of Judah to humble themselves and repent, “Hear and give ear, don’t be haughty, for Yahweh has spoken; give to Yahweh your God glory before he brings *darkness* and before your feet trip on the mountains of twilight; and you will long for light, but he will make it *deep darkness* and bring a *thick cloud*” (Jeremiah 13:15–16, Holladay). In Lehi’s dream, he sees that, after many people commenced up the path,

“it came to pass that there arose a *mist of darkness*; yea, even an *exceedingly great mist of darkness*, insomuch that they who had commenced in the path did *lose their way*, that they wandered off and were lost (1 Nephi 8:23). He saw other people reach the tree and partake of the fruit, “and after they had partaken of the fruit of the tree they did cast their eyes about as if they were *ashamed*. . . . 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. . . . And many were lost from his view, wandering in strange roads” (1 Nephi 8:25, 28, 32). “As a thief is *ashamed* when he is found, so is the house of Israel *ashamed*.” The kings, the princes, the prophets who have gone after other gods “have turned their back unto me” (Jeremiah 2:26–27; see also 5:5–7). “Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet” (Jeremiah 14:10). “Will a man leave the snow of Lebanon which cometh from the rock of the field? or shall the cold flowing waters that come from another place be forsaken? Because my people hath forgotten me, they have burned incense to vanity, and they have caused them to stumble in their ways from the ancient paths, to walk in paths, in a way not cast up” (Jeremiah 18:14–15). As they have forsaken the fountain of living waters they will perish when the lesser waters fail (Jeremiah 23:10). The people have knowingly rebelled against God “for they have known the way of the Lord and the judgment of their God” (Jeremiah 5:5) but they have broken their covenants and apostatized: “For both prophet and priest are profane; yea, in my house have I found their wickedness, saith the Lord. Wherefore their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness: they shall be driven on, and fall therein: for I will bring evil upon them, even the year of their visitation, saith the Lord” (Jeremiah 23:11–12).

Jeremiah bemoaned, “I am in derision daily, everyone mocketh me; . . . the word of the Lord was made a reproach unto me, and a derision, daily” (Jeremiah 20:7–8). “The words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts. I sat not in the assembly of the mockers” (Jeremiah 15:16–17). Lehi says that “on the other side of the river of water” there was “a *great and spacious building*; and it stood as it



were in the air, high above the earth. And it was filled with people, both old and young, both male and female; and their manner of dress was exceedingly 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" (1 Nephi 8:26–27).

We have already mentioned Jeremiah's criticism of Jehoiakim's great palace with spacious upper rooms (Jeremiah 22:13–14). We may recall that it was the kings along with the *sarim* who usually led the Israelites into idolatry and wickedness. When Jeremiah discusses the wicked establishment at Jerusalem he focuses on their pride (Jeremiah 13:9), vanity (Jeremiah 2:5; 3:17; 4:14; 9:14; 13:10), and empty pretensions of worldly wisdom (Jeremiah 4:22; 8:8–9), just as Nephi does (1 Nephi 11:35–36; 12:18), and the contrast between the vain wisdom of the world and the true wisdom of God (2 Nephi 9:28–29, 42–43). It is also interesting to compare Jeremiah's descriptions of the word of the Lord (Jeremiah 15:16) with the Book of Mormon theme of "feasting upon the word of Christ" (2 Nephi 31:20). These parallels are not meant to be exhaustive by any means.

## Conclusions

A vital test for any theory or explanation is how much it explains. The Tanners' nineteenth-century explanations remind us of the blind men who tried to describe the elephant. One man, feeling only the trunk, said it was a snake, while another, gripping a leg, said it was a tree. Yet another, feeling the tail, thought it resembled a rope. Each went his way, telling his tale, certain he had it right; some may even have believed them. But their superficial descriptions hardly defined the nature of the beast. The Tanners' parallels to the Apocrypha, like those provided elsewhere, explain very little about the Book of Mormon. They note a common phrase here, a similar idea there, but like the blind men in our story, their conclusions have questionable value. In past reviews of the Tanners' criticisms, we have noted certain authentic elements in the Book of Mormon that are *not* found in accessible nineteenth-century sources. The Tanners have yet to deal with these. Some might be persuaded by the Tanners' recent arguments, but we think they are groping in the dark.