



7-31-2003

Counting to Ten

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Welch, John W. (2003) "Counting to Ten," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*: Vol. 12 : No. 2 , Article 6.
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Title Counting to Ten

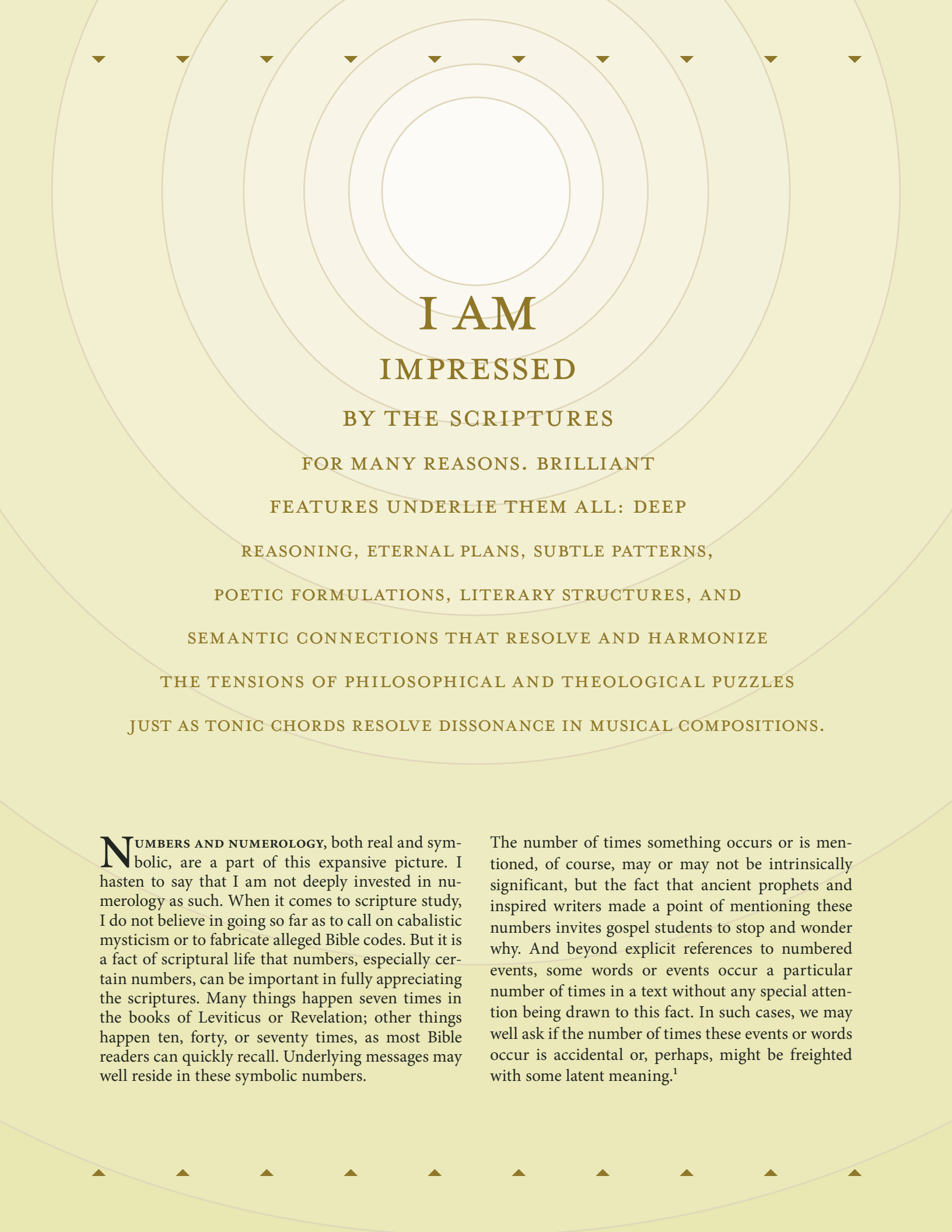
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Reference *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 12/2 (2003): 42-57, 113-14.

ISSN 1065-9366 (print), 2168-3158 (online)

Abstract The regular occurrence of things occurring ten times in the scriptures tends to relate to perfection, especially divine completion. Welch approaches this phenomenon through ten topics: perfection, worthiness, consecration, testing, justice, reverence, penitence, atonement, supplication, and ascension into the holy of holies or highest degree of heaven. The significance of the number ten in the ancient world relates to the tenfold occurrences in the Book of Mormon.

11TEN
COUNTING TO
JOHN W. WELCH



I AM
IMPRESSED
BY THE SCRIPTURES
FOR MANY REASONS. BRILLIANT
FEATURES UNDERLIE THEM ALL: DEEP
REASONING, ETERNAL PLANS, SUBTLE PATTERNS,
POETIC FORMULATIONS, LITERARY STRUCTURES, AND
SEMANTIC CONNECTIONS THAT RESOLVE AND HARMONIZE
THE TENSIONS OF PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEOLOGICAL PUZZLES
JUST AS TONIC CHORDS RESOLVE DISSONANCE IN MUSICAL COMPOSITIONS.

NUMBERS AND NUMEROLOGY, both real and symbolic, are a part of this expansive picture. I hasten to say that I am not deeply invested in numerology as such. When it comes to scripture study, I do not believe in going so far as to call on cabalistic mysticism or to fabricate alleged Bible codes. But it is a fact of scriptural life that numbers, especially certain numbers, can be important in fully appreciating the scriptures. Many things happen seven times in the books of Leviticus or Revelation; other things happen ten, forty, or seventy times, as most Bible readers can quickly recall. Underlying messages may well reside in these symbolic numbers.

The number of times something occurs or is mentioned, of course, may or may not be intrinsically significant, but the fact that ancient prophets and inspired writers made a point of mentioning these numbers invites gospel students to stop and wonder why. And beyond explicit references to numbered events, some words or events occur a particular number of times in a text without any special attention being drawn to this fact. In such cases, we may well ask if the number of times these events or words occur is accidental or, perhaps, might be freighted with some latent meaning.¹

To explore this possibility, this article turns attention to the number ten. Several things occur ten times in the scriptures. These instances can be organized and analyzed in several ways. Most often, these “decads” have been seen by readers, ancient and modern, as tending to relate to some manifestation of perfection, especially of divine completeness. I approach this phenomenon with respect to the following topics: perfection, worthiness, consecration, testing, justice, reverence, penitence, atonement, supplication, and ascension into the holy of holies or highest degree of heaven.

The “Perfect” Number Ten

Ten was a symbolic number in the ancient world, perhaps for obvious reasons, since humans normally have ten fingers and ten toes. But the significance of the number ten in scripture runs deeper than mere happenstance. Both in the Bible and in the Book of Mormon, counting to ten seems to serve as an important symbol of arriving at completion or perfection before God.

Regarding the meaning of the number ten in the biblical world, the widely published British scholar E. W. Bullinger concludes:

Ten is one of the perfect numbers, and signifies the perfection of Divine order, commencing, as it does, an altogether new series of numbers. The first decade is the representative of the whole numeral system, and originates the system of calculation called ‘decimals,’ because the whole system of numeration consists of so many tens, of which the first is a type of the whole.

Completeness of order, marking the entire round of anything, is, therefore, the ever-present signification of the number *ten*. It implies that nothing is wanting; that the number and order are perfect; that the whole cycle is complete.²

Of course, one must proceed with caution in studies of this type. As the Hastings *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* points out: “It is easy to be led into extravagance in attempting to interpret the significance of numbers; allegorical arithmetic has called forth fantastic absurdities from both Jewish and Christian writers.”³ At the same time, it remains incontrovertible that “the ancients were sen-

sitive to numbers,”⁴ and a school of numerological criticism has even arisen to analyze various literary passages “ordered by numerical symmetries or expressing number symbolisms.”⁵ Whether judged by certain standards to be fanciful or not, and without engaging the full range of numerological dimensions of ancient literature and thought, the truth is that certain numbers were commonly associated in many cultures with religious meanings, with “peculiar sanctity attaching to certain numbers, notably 7, 10, [and] 70.”⁶

The number ten is significant in several religions and cultures of the world. For example, in Buddhism it is said that “Buddha is possessed of 10 noble states, 10 powers, understands 10 paths of *karma* and is endowed with 10 attributes of *arhatship*.”⁷ In the Ottoman Empire, the aura of the fabled sultan Suleiman the Magnificent was enhanced because he was the tenth son of the tenth generation of his dynasty.

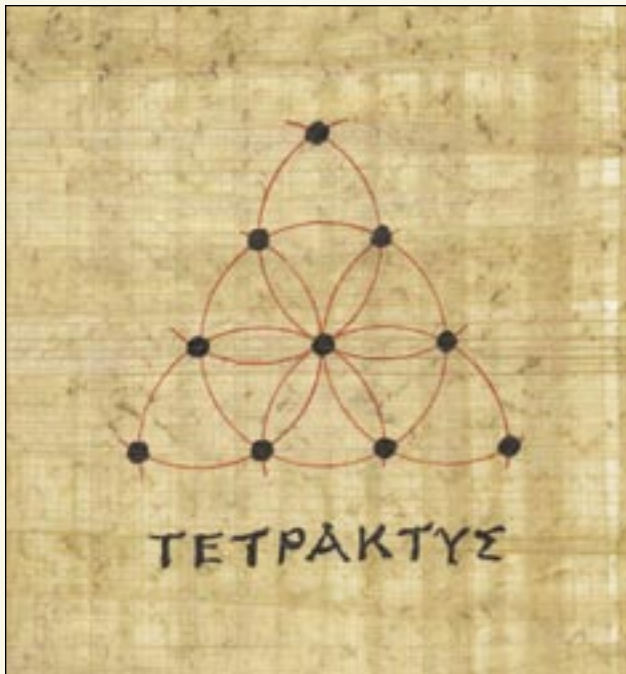
In civilizations not using a base-ten number system, however, the natural inclination toward the number ten can be overridden. Thus, in Mesoamerica, where the numbering system was based on twenty, the number ten had little if any symbolic significance, being associated only with the albeit important Venus god Lahun Chan (10 Sky).⁸

In the ancient world of the eastern Mediterranean, the origins of the tendency to attach significance to the number ten (among other numbers, especially 7) are very ancient. In Sumero-Akkadian mythology, ten kings ruled in primeval times; Gilgamesh is “laden with axes and swords weighing 10 talents,” and “Utnapishtim tells him how he made his ship 10 Nindan high [and] 10 Nindan square.”⁹

Aristotle explains at considerable length how Pythagoreans of the fifth and sixth centuries BC considered the number 10 to be the perfect number, for it was said to comprise “the whole nature of numbers” (being the sum of 1 + 2 + 3 + 4).¹⁰ But more than that, they also held that “the bodies which move through the heavens are ten,” and when they could see only nine visible bodies, they postulated the necessary existence of a tenth, unseen body, the “counter-earth,” which their metaphysics told them had to be out there somewhere.¹¹ Other members of this school systematized all matter into ten pairs of opposites: “limit and unlimited, odd and even, one and plurality, right and left, male and

female, resting and moving, straight and curved, light and darkness, good and bad, square and oblong.”¹² Though I will not comment further on the numerous references to the number ten in classical sources, I note here that the number ten figures in a fragment attributed to the pre-Socratic philosopher Ion as “an element of harmony.”¹³

Similar observations about the number ten can be discovered in the world of ancient Israel, as well as in the worlds that derived from that seminal Hebrew culture. The persistence of attaching symbolic meaning to the number ten extends into the Book of Mormon, the New Testament, and early Judaism.



The Pythagorean *tetraktys*, “fourness,” was the arrangement of ten points in an equilateral triangle, reflecting the inner harmony of the cosmos.

Tenfold Worthiness before God

We can begin with one of the most ancient and obvious uses of the number ten in the scriptures, the Ten Commandments. The laws of God, epitomized in the Hebrew Bible by the Decalogue, qualify people to stand worthily before him. The familiar Ten Commandments are listed in Exodus 20 and again in Deuteronomy 5. In addition, a second decalogue,

or set of “Ten Words” (Exodus 34:28), appears in Exodus 34:12–27, known as the Priestly Decalogue. In both cases, it is not clear exactly what is being counted by the “Ten Words,” which leads to the possibility that the idea of the “ten” here is itself more idealistic and symbolic than merely computational.

It is especially evident that the Priestly Decalogue in Exodus 34 pertains to the *sancta*, worship, sacrifice, redemption, sabbaths, and appearance before God on holy days. Obedience to its “ten” principles will allow God to “go among” his people (Exodus 34:9).

The Sinaitic Decalogue also has everything to do with standing worthily before God. Biblical scholar Moshe Weinfeld has demonstrated in great detail that one of the functions of the Ten Commandments in ancient Israel was to serve as a test or standard of worthiness required for entering the temple. In effect, these ten points served as a type of “binding foundation-scroll of the Israelite community (a constitution?),” and “believers were sworn to observe the Decalogue written on the tablets.”¹⁴ Although the Ten Commandments applied to the holy people of God everywhere and not just to temple visitors,¹⁵ these requirements certainly applied with even greater force to the people when they entered the sacred space, and thus the Ten Commandments may have functioned somewhat like a list of modern temple recommend requirements to determine who might ascend into the mountain of the Lord, or the temple (see Psalm 24).

Whatever their specific functions, the Ten Commandments themselves were certainly considered to be very sacred. These ten worthiness requirements were enshrined in the ark of the covenant and were utilized in temple worship:

In Second Temple times, the Decalogue was read daily in the Temple, together with the *Shema*^c prayer, close to the time of the offering of the Daily Offering (*m. Tamid* 5:1). In the Nash Papyrus, discovered in Egypt, the Decalogue preceded the *Shema*^c passage, a text that reflects a liturgical form. In phylacteries found at Qumran, the Decalogue is found next to the *Shema*^c, and according to the testimony of Jerome this was the custom in Babylonia up to a late period. Josephus testifies in regard to the Decalogue: “These words it is not permitted us to state explicitly, to the letter” (*Ant.* 3:90),

apparently meaning to say that it was forbidden to pronounce them in improper circumstances because of their sanctity.¹⁶

In this light, one can better understand why the prophet Abinadi quoted the Ten Commandments to King Noah and his court of priests (see Mosiah 12:34–35; 13:12–24). Being worthy was necessary if the people of Noah were to avoid the impending judgments of God. Moreover, if the priests of Noah were not keeping these commandments, they themselves were not worthy even to enter their own temple. To a modern reader, Abinadi’s recitation of the Ten Commandments seems rather naive and

adulterers, [4] nor effeminate, [5] nor abusers of themselves with mankind, [6] nor thieves, [7] nor covetous, [8] nor drunkards, [9] nor revilers, [10] nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

Consecration and Sacrifice

Righteousness and worthiness are manifested by one’s willingness to consecrate and sacrifice to the Lord. Thus, the number ten has long been associated with the idea of presenting a holy portion to God. Inasmuch as the full “ten” (or in other words “everything”) belongs to the Lord to begin with, the law of tithing allows men and women to return to God a representative part of his divine goodness by dedicating back to him a holy portion, which is reciprocally set at “one tenth.” This principle of tithing is taught in the Bible, the Book of Mormon,

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elementary. But to an ancient ear, these ten measuring words would have sounded much more imposing and ominous.

Some later Jewish writers were instinctively drawn to the aura of the number ten, especially as it was associated with the holiest of the Hebrew prophets and patriarchs. For example, according to Philo, worthiness or excellence was embodied in that number, which “is extolled in no ordinary degree by the holiest of men, Moses, who connects with it things of special excellence, governments, the first-fruits, the recurrent gifts of the priests,” and many other things.¹⁷ Thus, Noah was “the first man recorded as just in holy scriptures, as the tenth descendant from [Adam],”¹⁸ and likewise there were ten generations from Noah to Abraham, “to show how great was his [Abraham’s] long-suffering.”¹⁹

Probably modeled on or influenced by the Ten Commandments, other lists in scripture contain ten elements.²⁰ In 1 Corinthians 6:9–10, Paul lists ten prohibitions of evils that must be avoided if a person is to be worthy to inherit the celestial kingdom and enter the presence of God:

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: [1] neither fornicators, [2] nor idolaters, [3] nor

and modern revelation, and it was practiced in Jewish and numerous ancient civilizations.²¹

Tithing is mentioned in the encounter between Melchizedek and Abraham as the patriarch returns from battle with the booty of war (see Genesis 14:20). Jacob covenants to pay tithes: “Of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee” (Genesis 28:22). The practice of paying tithing to the gods or their temples is also found in ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilizations,²² and it is extolled in the Book of Mormon (see Alma 13:15; 3 Nephi 24:8–10).

The sanctity of the tenth part is also reflected in the law of sacrifice found in the law of Moses. The tenth was especially holy, being connected with the divine: “Concerning the tithing of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the Lord” (Leviticus 27:32). The Passover was instituted on the tenth day of the month, when the paschal lamb was sacrificed: “In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house” (Exodus 12:3). The priests in Israel were given charge of the tenth, as a holy priestly inheritance: “Behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance” (Numbers 18:21); and likewise, the Levites themselves were to

pay a tithe on the tithes they received from Israel: “When ye take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then ye shall offer up an heave offering of it for the Lord, even a tenth part of the tithe” (Numbers 18:26).

Perhaps claiming both a royal tithe and a priestly tithe, and hence a double tithe, King Noah and his priests collected a 20 percent tax. Apparently to drive home the weight of this burdensome tax, Mosiah 11:3 mentions this fraction five times: “one *fifth* part of all they possessed, a *fifth* part of their gold and of their silver, and a *fifth* part of their ziff and of their copper, and of their brass and their iron; and a *fifth* part of their fatlings; and also a *fifth* part of all their grain” (Mosiah 11:3).

In the New Testament parable, perhaps the woman who had ten pieces of silver but lost one and searched the house diligently for it (a tenth part) rejoices so exceedingly when she finds it precisely because it represents the finding of something holy or divine (see Luke 15:8–10; compare Proverbs 2:4). It is not hard to imagine that this tenth was her tithing, a holy portion, just as the lost sheep or the prodigal son represents souls that are holy and precious to the Lord (Luke 15:3–6, 11–32).

Testing and Trials

Long-standing tradition connects the number ten with testing and trials. Although not counted explicitly in the scriptures, it was probably not lost on the ancient reader that divine challenges came in blocks of ten. Perhaps recalling to the classical mind the fabled ten labors of Hercules, the Mishnah attests that Abraham withstood ten trials or temptations, thereby showing his deep love for God.²³

Enduring ten tests seems to have become a measure of divine probation and approbation. For example, although Laban probably did not intend to treat his son-in-law badly, the scripture seems to see special significance in the fact that the young patriarch Jacob proved his patience, long-suffering, devotion, and love while his father-in-law changed Jacob’s wages ten times: “Your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times.” So potent was this point that Jacob raises it not once, but twice, in his own successful legal defense against Laban (see Genesis 31:7, 41).

Prominent biblical commentator David Noel Freedman has suggested that the number ten in the testing context “probably has to do with a simple anatomical reality: ten is the number of fingers on the human hand. The rationale is this: once you have counted to ten, you have exhausted all of your fingers, and hence, all of your chances. In fact, that God was in the habit of giving people ten chances is seen in at least two other events in the Bible, both of which occur during the life Moses, the mediator of the Ten Commandments.”²⁴ As has been recognized since at least the times of Philo and the Mishnah,²⁵ this pattern is obvious both in the ten plagues imposed on Egypt and in the ten rebellions of the Israelites against their God in the wilderness. “The Ten Plagues were representative of the complete circle



“Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine; and he brake bread and blest it . . . , he being the priest of the most high God. And he gave to Abram, and he blessed him. . . . And Abram gave him tithes of all” (Genesis 14:17–18, 20 JST). Around 1465, the Flemish painter Dieric Bouts depicted this meeting of Melchizedek and Abraham by painting local costumes and scenery familiar to him. Both men are kneeling, showing reverence for the bread and wine, which prefigured the sacrament of the Last Supper. *Abraham and Melchizedek*, from the Altar of the Last Supper (left wing), by Dieric Bouts. Photograph by Erich Lessing. Collegiale St. Pierre, Louvain-Leuven.

of God's judgments on Egypt. 'I will . . . send *all* my plagues' (Exodus 9:14).²⁶ As Freedman explains:

Egypt suffers repeatedly for the obstinate behavior of its king, the Pharaoh, who refuses to let Israel go. Warning after warning, plague after plague, Pharaoh continues to harden his heart. Not until the tenth and final plague, the most severe of them all (the death of the firstborn), does Pharaoh finally agree to release Israel. Even though many scholars today see in this narrative several different sources, each with a different number of plagues, the final form of the text gives us ten. And it is the tenth that results in the final and decisive judgment on the nation of Egypt.²⁷

Although the number of plagues is not counted in Exodus, the Lord makes it clear that he is counting when he announces the final plague: "Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh" (Exodus 11:1). Freedman continues: "That this pattern of ten is not mere coincidence is demonstrated in our next example of ten violations, which also marks

mands. Both groups fail, and, as a result, God renders severe judgment upon both nations. For Egypt, the punishment is death of its firstborn and the destruction of its army at the Red Sea. For Israel, the punishment is the death of all those who witnessed God's miracles in Egypt and the wilderness, yet still rebelled against him "these ten times."²⁹

The fact that Israel rebelled against God ten times in the wilderness is not the product of some later rabbinic fetish with counting or the result of some scribal afterthought. The number ten in this connection was noted expressly by God, as recorded in the sacred record (see Numbers 14:22). Before Israelites entered the land of Canaan, Joshua spoke with the Lord about some of the stubborn ones, and the Lord replied, "Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened unto my voice; surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it" (Numbers 14:22–23).

Perhaps aware of this tenfold offense, Joshua sought out an auspicious day on which to begin the conquest of Canaan, which would put the Israelites to the test in their ultimate military ordeal: the Israelites crossed the River Jordan "on the tenth day of the first month" (Joshua 4:19).

Perhaps for related reasons, in his role as adversary, challenger, and instrument of divine testing or punishment, Satan

rules over a kingdom that also sports its tenfold features: "Antichrist's world-power is comprised in the ten kingdoms, symbolized by the ten toes on the feet of the image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Dan. 2:41), and by the ten horns of the fourth beast of Daniel's vision (Dan. 7:7, 20, 24, etc.; Rev. 12:3; 13:1; 17:3, 7, 12)."³⁰

The Book of Mormon also reflects this broad preexilic and general Israelite sense of tenfold testing. Jacob invokes ten woes on the unrighteous in 2 Nephi 9:27–38, testing the character of his people:

"AS HAS BEEN RECOGNIZED SINCE AT LEAST THE TIMES OF PHILO AND THE MISHNAH, THIS PATTERN [OF GOD'S GIVING TEN CHANCES] IS OBVIOUS BOTH IN THE TEN PLAGUES IMPOSED ON EGYPT AND IN THE TEN REBELLIONS OF THE ISRAELITES AGAINST THEIR GOD IN THE WILDERNESS. 'THE TEN PLAGUES WERE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE COMPLETE CIRCLE OF GOD'S JUDGMENTS ON EGYPT.'"

the end of Yahweh's patience and results in his judgment on a nation,"²⁸ namely Israel's ten rebellions in the wilderness:

Yahweh has been keeping track of Israel's rebellions throughout their wilderness wanderings, and they have just reached their limit: TEN! Just as Pharaoh is given ten opportunities to change his heart and comply with Yahweh's request to "let my people go," so this generation of Israelites is given ten opportunities to change its collective heart and comply with Yahweh's com-

[1] Wo unto him that . . . transgresseth. . . [2] Wo unto the rich. . . [3] Wo unto the deaf that will not hear. . . [4] Wo unto the blind that will not see. . . [5] Wo unto the uncircumcised of heart. . . [6] Wo unto the liar. . . [7] Wo unto the murderer who deliberately killeth. . . [8] Wo unto them who commit whoredoms. . . [9] Wo unto those that worship idols. . . [10] Wo unto *all* those who die in their sins.

Appropriately, the tenth and final wo includes the word *all*, signifying the perfect totality of this cursing. The intertextuality between these ten woes and the Ten Commandments has been discussed in more detail elsewhere.³¹

Reflecting a similar tone of warning, the book of 3 Nephi ends with a tenfold call to repentance, listing nine evils in particular and concluding with an all-embracing tenth:

Turn, all ye Gentiles, from your wicked ways; and repent of your evil doings, [1] of your lyings and [2] deceivings, and [3] of your whoredoms, and [4] of your secret abominations, and [5] your idolatries, and [6] of your murders, and [7] your priestcrafts, and [8] your envyings, and [9] your strifes, and [10] from *all* your wickedness and abominations, and come unto me. (3 Nephi 30:2)

The New Testament also utilizes this mode of expression to convey the testing of the children of men. The parable of the ten virgins represents a test of the faithfulness of Christians awaiting the coming of the Messiah (see Matthew 25:1–13). The judgment of God is illustrated through the parable of the talents, in which the most righteous turns his five into the divine number ten (see Matthew 25:14–30). In the parable of the pounds, ten men are given one pound each, and the one most praiseworthy turns his into ten, for which success he is entrusted

Jacob's Ten Woes and the Ten Commandments

2 Nephi 9:27, 30–38

Compare Exodus 20:3–17

1. Wo unto them who knowingly transgress God's commandments	1. Thou shalt have no other gods before me [but obey me]
2. Wo unto the rich who despise the poor and make their treasure their god	10. Thou shalt not covet [other people's treasure]
3. Wo unto the deaf who will not hear	5. Honor [hear] thy father and thy mother
4. Wo unto the blind who will not see	
5. Wo unto the uncircumcised of heart	3. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain [heartlessly]
6. Wo unto the liar	9. Thou shalt not bear false witness
7. Wo unto the murderer who deliberately kills	6. Thou shalt not kill
8. Wo unto them who commit whoredoms	7. Thou shalt not commit adultery
9. Wo unto those who worship idols	2. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image
10. Wo unto <i>all</i> those who die and remain in their sins	

with ten cities (see Luke 19:13–25). The gratitude of the ten lepers is tested in that only one of them came back to show thanks (see Luke 17:11–18). And finally, the book of Revelation refers to a ten-day testing period as days of tribulation, telling the church at Ephesus that it would suffer the extreme test: “Behold the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days; be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Revelation 2:10). It seems unlikely that the number ten appears in these teachings of Jesus by accident.

Administration of Judicial and Religious Affairs

With legal trials come judgment and justice. Thus, the number ten is also associated with God's

justice and the ideal administration of the law. In the Abraham cycle, “ten nations imply the whole of the nations which are to be the scene of Abraham’s covenant possessions (Gen. 15:19–21).”³² The rules of judicial procedure set forth in Exodus 23:1–3, 6–8 have been seen as embodying a decalogue with ten rules for the administration of local justice.³³

The number ten is prominent in the legal narrative in the story of Ruth. One of the main purposes of that narrative is to show that God’s justice will eventually come to pass. Thus, Naomi, her sons, and their wives dwell in Moab for “about ten years” (Ruth 1:4), and ten proper personal names or place-names are associated at first with injustice and disappointment in Ruth 1:1–7. Eventually, however, Boaz “[takes] ten men of the elders of the city” and before them sees that justice is done concerning Ruth’s marital rights and inheritance problems (Ruth 4:2).³⁴ And in the end, ten generations are listed from Pharez to David (see Ruth 4:18–22).

Legal injunctions may come in groups of ten. In the Book of Mormon, in 2 Nephi 27, the people are enjoined to read the plates, with the word *read* appearing in conjunction with the sacred record ten times (see 2 Nephi 27:11 [twice], 15 [twice], 18 [once], 20 [twice], 22 [twice], 24 [once]).

Another ancient legal application of the number ten, representing an ultimate execution of justice, is found in the requirement in the law of Moses that punishment may extend unto the tenth generation: “A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the Lord. An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the Lord for ever” (Deuteronomy 23:2–3).

Reverence for God

Building on the foregoing examples, it is easy to understand how, in the minds of people for whom the number ten was seen as the number of perfection, it became especially appropriate to mention or invoke the name of the most high God ten times, a perfect number of times. Philo, the Jewish philosopher from Alexandria of the first century AD, wrote at length about the number ten in the Hebrew scriptures.³⁵ He connected the number ten particu-

larly with the divine being. He spoke of worshipping God, “who stands alone as the tenth.”³⁶ Showing similar reverence for the perfection of God, the Talmud reports that on the Day of Atonement, the holiest day of the year, the ineffable name of God was spoken in the sacred liturgy ten times.³⁷

A decade ago, I pointed out that expanded forms of the divine name (as opposed to the generic word for God or the simple term for Lord) appear solemnly and strikingly for a total of ten times in King Benjamin’s marvelous and carefully crafted speech. In that text, the phrase *Lord God* appears five times and the words *Lord Omnipotent* or *Lord God Omnipotent* occur five times, for a total of ten. “Seven of these utterances are in the words of the angel to Benjamin (Mosiah 3:5, 13, 14, 17, 18, 21, 23); the other three are in the words of Benjamin (Mosiah 2:30, 41; 5:15), occurring at important ceremonial breaking points in the speech.”³⁸

What has not been noticed before, however, is that reverence for God’s divine greatness is shown even more remarkably by other Book of Mormon prophets in this same manner. Thus, Benjamin’s speech may have been following a long-standing Nephite custom in mentioning the holy name of God this number of times. Specifically, in the exquisitely phrased psalm of Nephi in 2 Nephi 4, the word *Lord* appears exactly ten times, as does also the interjection *O*. This does not appear to be inadvertent:

16 Behold, my soul delighteth in the things of the *Lord* [1]; and my heart pondereth continually upon the things which I have seen and heard.

17 Nevertheless, notwithstanding the great goodness of the *Lord* [2], in showing me his great and marvelous works, my heart exclaimeth: *O* wretched man that I am! Yea, my heart sorroweth because of my flesh; my soul grieveth because of mine iniquities. . . .

20 My God hath been my support. . . .

26 *O* then, if I have seen so great things, if the *Lord* [3] in his condescension unto the children of men hath visited men in so much mercy, why should my heart weep and my soul linger in the valley of sorrow, and my flesh waste away, and my strength slacken, because of mine afflictions? . . .

28 Awake, my soul! No longer droop in sin.

Rejoice, O my heart, and give place no more for the enemy of my soul. . . .

30 Rejoice, O my heart, and cry unto the *Lord* [4], and say: O *Lord* [5], I will praise thee forever; yea, my soul will rejoice in thee, my God, and the rock of my salvation.

31 O *Lord* [6], wilt thou redeem my soul? Wilt thou deliver me out of the hands of mine enemies? Wilt thou make me that I may shake at the appearance of sin?

32 May the gates of hell be shut continually before me, because that my heart is broken and my spirit is contrite! O *Lord* [7], wilt thou not shut the gates of thy righteousness before me, that I may walk in the path of the low valley, that I may be strict in the plain road!

33 O *Lord* [8], wilt thou encircle me around in the robe of thy righteousness! O *Lord* [9], wilt thou make a way for mine escape before mine enemies! . . .

34 O *Lord* [10], I have trusted in thee, and I will trust in thee forever. . . .

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

unto thee; yea, I will cry unto thee, my God, the rock of my righteousness. Behold, my voice shall forever ascend up unto thee, my rock and mine everlasting God.

The ten occurrences of the word *Lord* in this beautiful psalm of pleading, petition, atonement, and comfort give credence to the idea that the English word *Lord* is the direct translation in this passage of the Hebrew tetragrammaton, the sacred name of God that would only be spoken in solemn circumstances, if at all. Here that name of the Lord is invoked ten times, a solemn and respectful number of times. The likelihood that this number of occurrences was intentional on Nephi's part is increased by the fact that the interjection *O* also appears ten times in this psalm. After saying "O . . . I" or "O my" four times, Nephi turns firmly to the Lord six times with "O Lord."³⁹

Moreover, it is possible that Nephi's brother Jacob consciously followed his brother's lead in this regard. The main unit of Jacob's covenant speech (2 Nephi 9) also contains the word *Lord* exactly ten times (see 2 Nephi 9:1, 3, 6, 16 [two times], 24, 41 [two times], 46, 53).⁴⁰

Above all, the divine name was holy and sacrosanct in ancient Israel. Thus, it should also be noted that the distinctive "name" given by King Benjamin to his people near the central climax of his speech can be seen as containing exactly ten nouns. That name, as revealed to Benjamin by the angel of the Lord, seems to have consisted of an entire expression: "And he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning" (Mosiah 3:8). One may well assume that in the ancient language spoken by Benjamin, this expansive name would have consisted of ten terms, probably inflected or declined to indicate syntax: (1) Jesus (2) Christ, (3) Son (4) God, (5) Father (6) heaven (7) earth, (8) creator (9) all, and (10) beginning. The full expression is repeated absolutely verbatim in Helaman 14:12, confirming the prospect that this full expression was considered to be a formal composite name that was viewed as a solemn title.⁴¹ The precise recollection of this name among the Nephites was encouraged by the fact that Benjamin had promised to give them a special name, one that presumably would have been new and unusual enough so as to distinguish them from all other people of Israel (see Mosiah 1:11). The fact that this expression evidently



Nephi's Psalm, by Robert T. Barrett



King Benjamin delivered a masterful oration in which he gave his people a distinctive, revealed “name”—one whose sacred nature was reinforced by the ten nouns it comprised. Painting by Bill L. Hill, who used Hugh B. Brown as the model for King Benjamin.

contained exactly ten nouns would have added to the integrity and memorability of this *nomina sacra*. Perhaps more than we have previously realized, this ten-part name for the Nephites was very, very holy.

Penitence and Atonement

One of the most important reasons for invoking the name of the Lord is to seek forgiveness and atonement from his throne of mercy. In biblical times, ten was an important number associated with achieving atonement, or reconciliation with God.

On the ancient Israelite calendar, the time of fasting, repentance, and reconciliation was especially concentrated during the ten days between the New Year and the Day of Atonement. These ten days were known as the ten days of penitence or ten days of awe. Later tradition located the origin of this

ten-day period at the root of Israelite religion:

The *Midrash* records that Moses descended on the tenth day of *Tishray* with the second set of Tablets of the Law. He found the Israelites fasting and repenting for their great sin. G-d accepted their penitence and proclaimed that day as a day of forgiveness and pardon for all Israel and for every generation to come. *Yom Kippur* is the anniversary of this event.⁴²

Even though this season was relatively brief, these ten days “lent a solemnity to the entire period, which became known as the Ten Days of Penitence (*Rosh HaShanah* 18a).”⁴³

The importance of the tenth day and this ten-day period was established by authority of Moses in the Holiness Code given to the children of Israel: “And this shall be a statute for ever unto you: that in

the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger that sojourneth among you” (Leviticus 16:29). Moreover, “on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord” (Leviticus 23:27; see also Numbers 29:7).

The first ten days of that month at the beginning of the fall were a special time for seeking the presence of the Lord: “In the Talmud it says: It is written in *Isaiah* ‘Seek the Lord while He may be found.’ When can an individual find G-d? Rabbah b. Abbuha said: These are the ten days between New Year and the Day of Atonement” (*Rosh Hashanah* 18a).⁴⁴ Because the fates of the righteous and the wicked were sealed in the book of life during these ten days,⁴⁵ this period of time was especially important and revered.

Also connecting the number ten with the idea of atonement and redemption is the fact that “the redemption money was *ten* gerahs. . . . Now ten gerahs was half a shekel (Exodus 30:12–16; Numbers 3:47). Every male that was numbered over 20 years of age, must pay this sum and meet God’s claim.”⁴⁶

Benjamin’s word usage in Mosiah 2–5 similarly reflects this old liturgical requirement for showing respect and perfection in calling upon the divine name when seeking atonement. As has been discussed elsewhere, many factors point strongly in the direction of connecting King Benjamin’s speech with the Israelite autumn festival complex, particularly the Day of Atonement.⁴⁷ In Benjamin’s case, the people cry out, “O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins and our hearts may be purified” (Mosiah 4:2). Atonement, of course, is a dominant theme in Benjamin’s speech and temple covenant ceremony (he mentions the root word *atone* seven times), and atonement also is the key concept in Jacob’s text in 2 Nephi 9, thus adding further linkage between these two texts.

Yet another text in the Book of Mormon proclaims the doctrines of redemption and atonement: Alma 12–13. It should not go unrecognized that the words *Lord* and *Son* are each mentioned precisely ten times in this masterful exposition, one of Alma’s best. In addition, the words *hearts*, *high* (as in *high*

priesthood), and *men* also happen to occur exactly ten times in this same text. It is hard to know if this phenomenon was intentional on Alma’s part, either as a speaker or as a recorder, or if it was ever noticed by any of Alma’s listeners or readers. But if it was, then Alma’s subtle, coded message to his various audiences in this text, including particularly his clueless accusers in Ammonihah but also his inducted convert Amulek and his other faithful followers, emphasized tenfold the sacred truth constructed from those specific words—namely, that all *men* and *God* can eventually be reconciled to each other by the *Son* through his *high* priesthood, which brings about purification upon the eternal change of the repentant *heart*.

Supplication and Prayer

Calling on the name of God for forgiveness and atonement requires prayer and supplication. One must ask in order to receive. One must call upon God in order to receive his divine intervention. The pattern of calling on God ten times is present in the Old Testament and also in the Book of Mormon.

At the time of Lehi, the armies of Judah implored the prophet Jeremiah to seek guidance from the Lord. Jeremiah prayed for ten days: “And it came to pass after ten days, that the word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah” (Jeremiah 42:7).

Patience epitomizes the attitude of prayer. Hence, as Philo remarked, “only after a time and under the perfect number ten do we reach the desire for the lawful discipline which can profit us.”⁴⁸ For that reason, he observed, “Sarah gives Hagar to Abraham, not at once after his arrival in the land of the Canaanites, but after he has stayed there for ten years.”⁴⁹

Alma the Younger knew the importance of prayer, and on one occasion when he was most desperate, fearing that the Zoramites would join with the Lamanites and destroy the Nephites, he and his companions went to the Zoramite capital, Antionum, to see if they could convert any Zoramites back to the true fold of God. The words of his high priestly prayer are recorded in Alma 31:26–35, and, again, it is not likely mere coincidence that the phrase *O Lord* is found ten times in this powerful petition supplicating the true God for strength in bringing souls to Christ:

26 And he lifted up his voice to heaven, and cried, saying: O, how long, *O Lord* [1], wilt thou suffer that thy servants shall dwell here below in the flesh, to behold such gross wickedness among the children of men?

{27 Behold, O God, they cry unto thee, and yet their hearts are swallowed up in their pride. Behold, O God, they cry unto thee with their mouths, while they are puffed up, even to greatness, with the vain things of the world.

28 Behold, O my God, their costly apparel, and their ringlets, and their bracelets, and their ornaments of gold, and all their precious things which they are ornamented with; and behold, their hearts are set upon them, and yet they cry unto thee and say—We thank thee, O God, for we are a chosen people unto thee, while others shall perish.

29 Yea, and they say that thou hast made it known unto them that there shall be no Christ.}

30 *O Lord* [2] God, how long wilt thou suffer that such wickedness and infidelity shall be among this people? *O Lord* [3], wilt thou give me strength, that I may bear with mine infirmities. For I am infirm, and such wickedness among this people doth pain my soul.

31 *O Lord* [4], my heart is exceedingly sorrowful; wilt thou comfort my soul in Christ. *O Lord* [5], wilt thou grant unto me that I may have strength, that I may suffer with patience these afflictions which shall come upon me, because of the iniquity of this people.

32 *O Lord* [6], wilt thou comfort my soul, and give unto me success, and also my fellow laborers who are with me—yea, Ammon, and Aaron, and Omner, and also Amulek and Zeezrom and also my two sons—yea, even all these wilt thou comfort, *O Lord* [7]. Yea, wilt thou comfort their souls in Christ. . . .

34 *O Lord* [8], wilt thou grant unto us that we may have success in bringing them again unto thee in Christ.

35 Behold, *O Lord* [9], their souls are precious, and many of them are our brethren; therefore, give unto us, *O Lord* [10], power and wisdom that we may bring these, our brethren, again unto thee.

In addition to his ten supplications to Jehovah with the words *O Lord*, Alma also speaks the words

O God four times in this prayer, but in those four cases he is either speaking about or quoting from the apostate prayers of the Zoramites, and in such a context he would not want to mention the holy name of the true God whom he served and called upon. Hence, Alma shifts his terminology to reflect this shift in meaning. That shift is marked by the second occurrence of *O Lord*, which is the only instance of the expanded *O Lord God* in this text, indicating that the Lord Jehovah is indeed the true God.

A similar occurrence is found in Nephi's solemn words of prayer in Helaman 11:4, 10–16, in which he sealed up the heavens and called down a famine on the land to bring the people to repentance and then prayed again to end the pestilence. The Book of Mormon text presents these prayers in close proximity to each other, and indeed they go hand in hand. The first prayer caused the famine (see verse 4) and the second lifted it (see verses 10–16), according to the sealing and loosing power Nephi had been given by God (see Helaman 10:7). For that reason I combine Nephi's two petitions together as an interrelated text. In that combined exercise of priesthood power, Nephi calls out *O Lord* ten times:

4 *O Lord* [1], do not suffer that this people shall be destroyed by the sword; but *O Lord* [2], rather let there be a famine in the land, to stir them up in remembrance of the Lord their God, and perhaps they will repent and turn unto thee. . . .

10 *O Lord* [3], behold this people repenteth; and they have swept away the band of Gadianton from amongst them insomuch that they have become extinct, and they have concealed their secret plans in the earth.

11 Now, *O Lord* [4], because of this their humility wilt thou turn away thine anger, and let thine anger be appeased in the destruction of those wicked men whom thou hast already destroyed.

12 *O Lord* [5], wilt thou turn away thine anger, yea, thy fierce anger, and cause that this famine may cease in this land.

13 *O Lord* [6], wilt thou hearken unto me, and cause that it may be done according to my words, and send forth rain upon the face of the earth, that she may bring forth her fruit, and her grain in the season of grain.

14 *O Lord* [7], thou didst hearken unto my words when I said, Let there be a famine, that

the pestilence of the sword might cease; and I know that thou wilt, even at this time, heard unto my words, for thou saidst that: If this people repent I will spare them.

15 Yea, *O Lord* [8], and thou seest that they have repented, because of the famine and the pestilence and destruction which has come unto them.

16 And now, *O Lord* [9], wilt thou turn away thine anger, and try again if they will serve thee? And if so, *O Lord* [10], thou canst bless them according to thy words which thou hast said.

In these prayers, Nephi invokes the name of the Lord twice in the bleak first part and eight times in the optimistic second part.

Perhaps these terms were distributed by Nephi in literary imitation of his namesake's psalm in 2 Nephi 4, which also mentioned the word *Lord* twice in the agonizing opening phase (vv. 16–17) and then eight times in the relieved second phase (vv. 26–34).

Wishing to be heard by the Lord is one of the deepest desires of the righteous soul. Standing behind these prayers of Alma and Nephi may be the words of the ancient poem⁵⁰ of Zenos quoted by Alma in Alma 33:4–11, words that Alma knew well enough to recite spontaneously by memory as he and Amulek spoke to the poor from Antionum. Perhaps the number of times its key word appears made it easier for the ancients to memorize, for that poem of Zenos contains ten occurrences of the root word *hear* (appearing in English as *didst hear* or *heard* or *hear*). The ten are arranged in a balanced way: four times in the past tense (vv. 4–7), twice in a future sense (v. 8), and then four times again in the past tense (vv. 9–11), emphatically affirming that the Lord hears the prayers of the righteous wherever they may be whenever they pray.

4 Thou art merciful, O God, for thou hast *heard* [1] my prayer, even when I was in the wilderness; yea, thou wast merciful when I prayed concerning those who were mine enemies, and thou didst turn them to me.

5 Yea, O God, and thou wast merciful unto

me when I did cry unto thee in my field; when I did cry unto thee in my prayer, and thou didst *hear* [2] me.

6 And again, O God, when I did turn to my house thou didst *hear* [3] me in my prayer.

7 And when I did turn unto my closet, O Lord, and prayed unto thee, thou didst *hear* [4] me.

8 Yea, thou art merciful unto thy children when they cry unto thee, to be *heard* [5] of thee and not of men, and thou wilt *hear* [6] them.

9 Yea, O God, thou hast been merciful unto me, and *heard* [7] my cries in the midst of thy congregations.

10 Yea, and thou hast also *heard* [8] me when I have been cast out and have been despised by

SEVERAL THINGS OCCUR WITH SIGNIFICANCE TEN TIMES IN ISRAELITE SCRIPTURES AND WORSHIP: TEN COMMANDMENTS, TEN WORDS, TEN GENERATIONS, A TENTH PART, TEN TRIALS, TEN CHANGES, TEN PLAGUES, TEN REBELLIONS, TEN HORNS, TEN WOES, TEN VIRGINS, TEN TALENTS, TEN CITIES, TEN DAYS, TEN NATIONS, TEN YEARS, TEN ELDERS, TEN INVOCATIONS, TEN NOUNS, THE TENTH DAY, TEN PETITIONS, TEN CUBITS, TEN LAVERS, AND TEN HEAVENS.

mine enemies; yea, thou didst *hear* [9] my cries, and wast angry with mine enemies, and thou didst visit them in thine anger with speedy destruction.

11 And thou didst *hear* [10] me because of mine afflictions and my sincerity; and it is because of thy Son that thou hast been thus merciful unto me, therefore I will cry unto thee in all mine afflictions, for in thee is my joy; for thou hast turned thy judgments away from me, because of thy Son.

This poem of Zenos, built on beautiful strophes and rhythmic parallelisms, seems to be related to the prayer offered by Solomon at the dedication of his temple in 1 Kings 8:22–53, which repeats the prayer formula, “then hear thou in heaven,” seven times (vv. 32, 34, 36, 39, 43, 45, 49), a different but still religiously significant number of times.

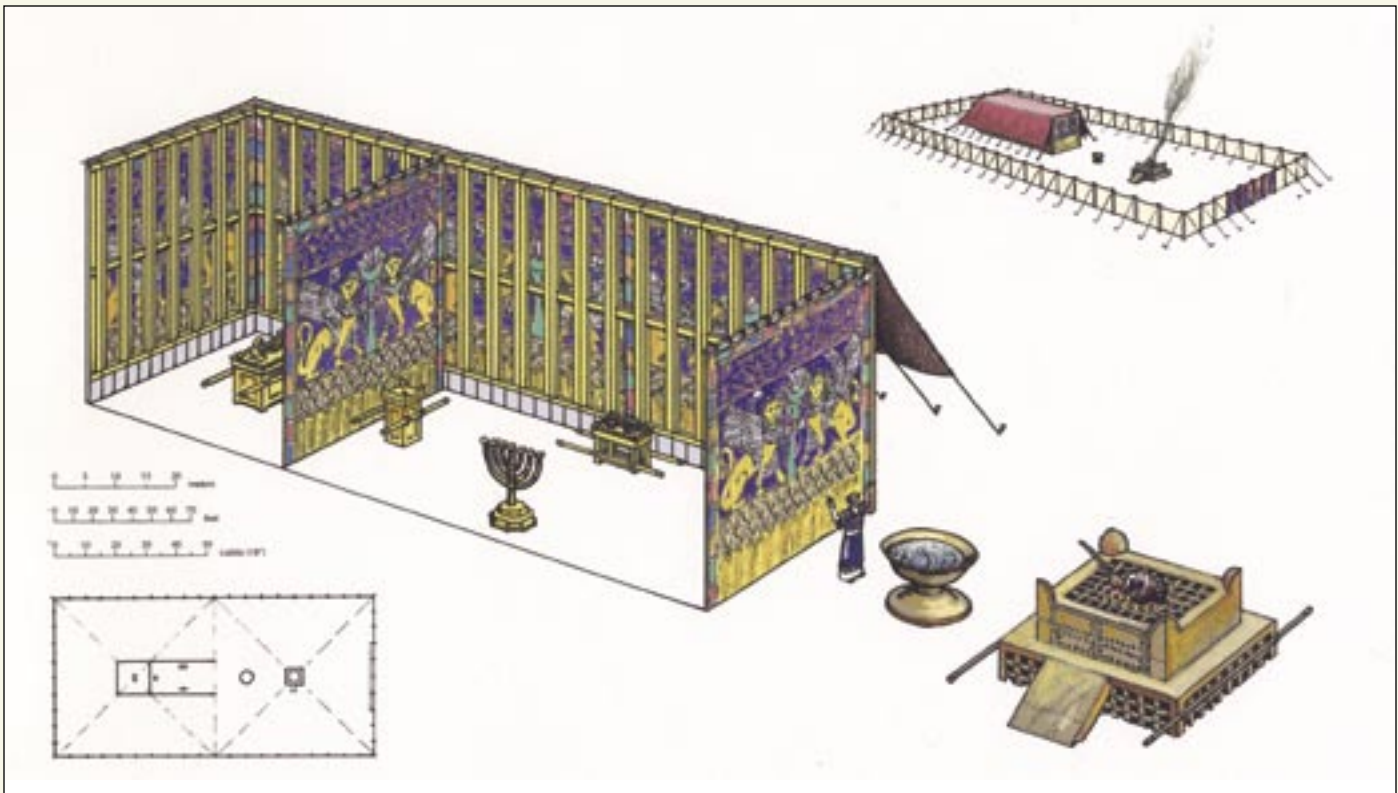
Sacred Cosmology

Each of the foregoing meanings associated with the number ten extends beyond the mundane realm and reflects a wider view of divine cosmology and of God's universe. Indeed, the cosmos itself was said by the Rabbis to have been created by ten sayings or words of God.⁵¹ That total world, as well as the temple that was constructed as a model of that complete realm, was often depicted in terms of tens.

Much earlier in Israelite history, the construction of the tabernacle in the wilderness employed several tenfold elements: "Moreover thou shalt make the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet: with cherubims of cunning work shalt thou make them" (Exodus 26:1; 36:8). "And thou shalt make boards for the tabernacle of shittim wood standing up. Ten cubits shall be the length of a board" (Exodus 26:15-6; 36:20-21). These boards, overlaid with gold, enclosed the holy of holies on three sides, with the veil on the east. This made the chamber ten cubits by ten cubits by ten cubits,

in other words, a cube. Evidently, this was a symbol of perfection in all three dimensions, as shown by its continued use in Solomon's temple (see 1 Kings 6:20).⁵² As Philo insisted, this pattern was significant because God's house embraces "the whole of wisdom," and thus to it belongs "the perfect number."⁵³

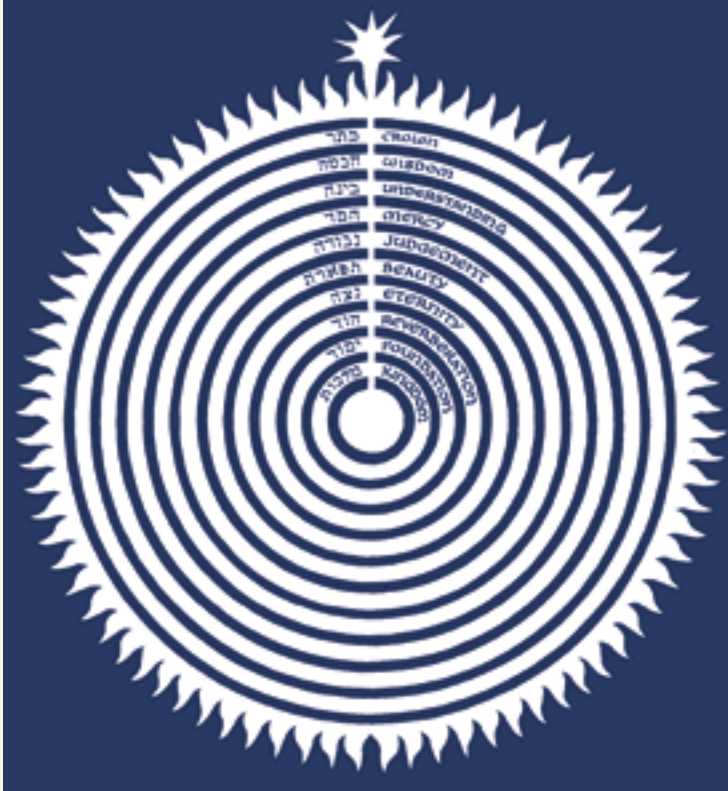
When the temple of Solomon was built, it also contained many features that came in tens. The height and width of the cherubim in Solomon's temple were both ten cubits: "And within the oracle he made two cherubims of olive tree, each ten cubits high. And five cubits was the one wing of the cherub, and five cubits the other wing of the cherub: from the uttermost part of the one wing unto the uttermost part of the other were ten cubits. And the other cherub was ten cubits: both the cherubims were of one measure and one size" (1 Kings 6:23-25). The diameter of the brazen sea was ten cubits: "And he made a molten sea, ten cubits from the one brim to the other . . . And under the brim of it round about there were knops compassing it, ten in a cubit, compassing the sea round about" (1 Kings 7:23-24). Ten



The specific directions given to Moses for building the tabernacle demonstrate the importance of paying attention to its details, such as the many features and dimensions that came in tens. Drawing by Michael P. Lyon.

“Ten Sefirot out of Nothing. Ten, not nine. Ten, not eleven. Understand this in Wisdom and in Wisdom understand. Enquire and ponder through their meaning, so as to return The Creator to His Throne.”

—from the *Sefer Yezirah*, sixth century AD



Kabbalah, a late form of Jewish mysticism, teaches that the ten Sefirot were emanations and attributes of God, part of the unfolding of creation, and that one must pass through them to ascend to God's presence.

bases were made for the ten lavers (see 1 Kings 7:27, 38, 43). Other accouterments in Solomon's temple had dimensions and numbers of ten: the brass altar was ten cubits high; ten candlesticks were made of gold; and ten tables were placed, five on each side (see 2 Chronicles 4:1–8).

The Book of Mormon reports that Nephi built a temple in the city of Nephi “after the manner of the temple of Solomon” (2 Nephi 5:16). Although no architectural details are given in this account, one can be quite sure that the number ten figured into the

design of that temple in many ways.

Also in close association with ancient temple symbolism, later Judaism recognized ten degrees of holiness, progressing into the temple's Holy of Holies: “The rabbinic classification of the ten degrees of holiness, which begins with Palestine, the land holier than all other lands, and culminates in the most holy place, the Holy of Holies, was essentially known in the days of the High Priest Simon the Just, that is, around 200 BCE.”⁵⁴ Echoing these ten degrees on earth were ten degrees in heaven. In the book of 2 Enoch, Enoch has a vision in which he progresses from the first heaven into the tenth heaven, where God resides and Enoch sees the face of the Lord, is anointed, given clothes of glory, and is told “all the things of heaven and earth.”⁵⁵

Conclusion

The number ten seems to have been significant in the ancient world, especially in Israelite religious literature. Ten conveyed a tight cluster of symbolic messages associated with the divine realms, namely, completeness, perfection, worthiness, consecration, testing, justice, reverence, atonement, supplication, and holiness (to mention ten). Regardless of whether all ten of these meanings were overtly intentional or only unconsciously subliminal in any

particular text, it seems clear that in-group audiences knew enough to look for these messages in pondering the scriptures. In most cases, these meanings are rooted in very early Israelite texts. Detecting these tenfold occurrences in the Book of Mormon uncovers a previously unnoticed ancient quality of Nephite scripture that was probably more obvious to ancient minds than it is to modern readers. ■

- of the Lord': The Anatomy of an Expression," *BYU Studies* 41/2 (2002): 149–60. Pike notes that many Hebrew expressions, when translated, are linked by the conjunction *and*.
33. Ellis T. Rasmussen, "Deuteronomy," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1:378.
 34. This word pair occurs only once in the Bible, as a parallel couplet in Psalm 89:14.
 35. See Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 321; also Noel B. Reynolds, "The Gospel of Jesus Christ as Taught by the Nephite Prophets," *BYU Studies* 31/3 (1991): 31–47.
 36. James T. Duke, *The Literary Masterpiece Called the Book of Mormon* (Springville, UT: Cedar Fort, 2003).
 37. Barney, "Poetic Diction," 23. See also his article "Understanding Old Testament Poetry," *Ensign*, June 1990, 51–54.
 38. These Canaanite languages include Hebrew, Ugaritic, Phoenician, Aramaic, and Akkadian, as well as a number of other dialects. See Avishur, *Stylistic Studies*, 50–52.
 39. Barney, "Poetic Diction," 23.
 40. See Tvedtnes, "Word Groups in the Book of Mormon," 262–68.
 41. Avishur, *Stylistic Studies*, 1.
 42. Word pairs that occur three times in the Book of Mormon include *profit/learning, limb/joint, large/mighty, power/gain, thoughts/intents, power/captivity, wild/ferocious*, and *days/years*. Word pairs that are used twice include *go/do, word/deed, prayer/supplication, witness/testimony, sinful/polluted, resurrection/ascension, body/mind, darkness/destruction, joy/peace, preaching/prophecies*, and *gulf of misery/ endless wo*. In addition, Dana M. Pike has identified the following word pairs that are associated with the word *great*: *great/coming, great/dreadful, great/everlasting, great/fair, great/judgment, great/lasting, great/notable, great/small, great/spacious, great/tremendous*, and *great/true*. It is not clear whether Pike considers any of these to be word pairs.
 43. See Avishur, *Stylistic Studies*, 626–63. Bullinger, in *Figures of Speech*, 673, utilized the term *hendiatris* to describe a figure of speech involving "three words used, but one thing meant."
 44. See Dahood, *Ugaritic-Hebrew Parallel Pairs*, 1:250.
 45. Other triplets used only twice are *weeping/wailing/gnashing of teeth, dark/loathsome/filthy, sing/dance/make merry, power/mercy/long-suffering, grace/equity/truth, Redeemer/Christ/Son of God, wicked/wild/ferocious, wild/ferocious/bloodthirsty, and spotless/pure/white*. Triplets used only once include *wild/hardened/ferocious, desires/faith/prayers, buy/sell/get gain, buy/sell/traffic, rights/privileges/liberty, kingdom/power/glorify, and adultery/steal/kill*.
 46. See Avishur, *Stylistic Studies*, 629.
 47. Watkins, *Aspects of Indo-European Poetics*, 47.
 48. Other quadruplets each appear only once in the Book of Mormon: *plain/pure/precious/easy, affliction/hunger/thirst/fatigue, dominion/might/power/glorify, might/mind/strength/soul, pride/wickedness/abominations/whoredoms, unbelief/wickedness/ignorance/stiffneckedness, nourished/pruned/dug/dunged, friends/brethren/kindred/people, mocked/scourged/cast out/disowned, howl/weep/wail/gnash teeth, lawyers/judges/priests/teachers, wars/pestilences/famines/bloodshed, people/rights/country/religion, contentions/disturbances/wars/dissensions, overpowered/trodden down/slain/destroyed, plots/oaths/covenants/plans, fools/uncircumcised of heart/blind/stiffnecked, word/deed/faith/works, driven/hunted/smiten/scattered, provisions/horses/cattle/flocks, power/authority/ riches/vain things, wives/children/houses/homes, spotless/pure/fair/white*, and *Christ/Redeemer/Lord/God*. The notable quadruplet *heart/might/mind/strength* is used only in the Doctrine and Covenants (4:2 and 59:5).
 49. See Watson's discussion of lists and what he calls "tours" and "expansion" in *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 349–56.
 50. See Parry, *Book of Mormon Text*, iii–ix.
 51. According to Bullinger, this is a classic example of "synthrosmos," or enumeration. This is a method of amplification in which a number of examples are given when one larger statement would have sufficed. See Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 436–37. Many other lists in the Book of Mormon could also be classified under this figure of speech.
 52. See Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 321.
 53. See Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 128.
 54. Many of these are also prepositional phrases.
 55. Barney, "Poetic Diction," 28–29.
 56. See also a triplet with the addition of *precious things*.
 57. See also the triplet *signs/wonders/miracles* and the quadruplet *signs/wonders/types/shadows*.
 58. The triplet *stricken/smiten of God/afflicted* is found in Isaiah 53:4.
 59. See also the triplet *hunger/thirst/fatigue*. The seven usages in the Bible extend from Deuteronomy to Revelation, so this was a very common expression of the Israelite people. Christ used this pair twice, once in a conjoined pair (Matthew 5:6) and once in a parallel pair (John 6:35).
 60. See Barney, "Poetic Diction," 32.
 61. See Tvedtnes, "Word Groups in the Book of Mormon," 263–64.
 62. The triplets *firm/steadfast/immovable, synagogues/houses/streets, flocks/herds/fatlings, and temples/synagogues/sanctuaries* were identified earlier by Tvedtnes, "Word Groups in the Book of Mormon," 263–64, 266.
 63. Originally discussed by Tvedtnes, "Word Groups in the Book of Mormon," 266–67.
 64. Also utilized in a different format in 3 Nephi 26:4.
 65. See also Mosiah 3:19; Alma 4:9; 3 Nephi 8:12; 8:19; and Moroni 6:9.
 66. See also Omni 1:25; Mosiah 3:5; 11:8; 29:14; Alma 43:47; 46:12; 3 Nephi 16:9; 17:9; and 4 Nephi 1:5.
 67. See also 1 Nephi 18:25; Mosiah 9:16; Alma 2:12; 43:20; 50:21; and Helaman 1:14. Tvedtnes, in "Word Groups in the Book of Mormon," 268, also noted the list *cow/ox/ass/horse/goat/wild goat/wild animals*.
 68. See also 2 Nephi 5:15; Mosiah 11:8; Alma 4:6; 9:26; 44:5; 62:39–40; Helaman 12:4; and 3 Nephi 16:10; 17:7.
 69. See also Jarom 1:8.
 70. See also 2 Nephi 13:1–3 for a list of 15.

Counting to Ten

John W. Welch

1. See, for example, "Number 24," in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992), 272–74.
2. Ethelbert W. Bullinger, *Number in Scripture: Its Supernatural Design and Spiritual Significance* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1967), 243.
3. James Hastings, John A. Selbie, and Louis H. Gray, eds., *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), 9:417.
4. Jacob Bazak, "Numerical Devices in Biblical Poetry," *Vetus Testamentum* 38/3 (1988): 333.
5. Alastair Fowler, ed., *Silent Poetry: Essays in Numerological Analysis* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), cited in Bazak, "Numerical Devices," 333.
6. Hastings, Selbie, and Gray, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, 9:406.
7. Hastings, Selbie, and Gray, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, 9:408.
8. I appreciate Allen Christenson for pointing out this connection to me.
9. Jöran Friberg, "Numbers and Counting," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David N. Freedman and others (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 4:1143.
10. Aristotle *Metaphysics* 985b23–986a13, quoted in Arthur Fairbanks, *The First Philosophers of Greece* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, 1898), 137.
11. Aristotle *Metaphysics* 986a9–13.
12. Aristotle *Metaphysics* 986a22–30.
13. Hermann Diels and Walther Kranz, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1951), 1:381, line 6. Even though the authorship of the Ion B5 fragment is uncertain, this text still provides evidence that some Greek thinkers regarded the number ten in this way.
14. Moshe Weinfeld, "The Decalogue: Its Significance, Uniqueness, and Place in Israel's Tradition," in *Religion and Law: Biblical-Judaic and*

- Islamic Perspectives*, ed. Edwin B. Firmage, Bernard G. Weiss, and John W. Welch (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 37; see pp. 32–47.
15. See Weinfeld, “Decalogue,” 38.
 16. Weinfeld, “Decalogue,” 34.
 17. Philo, *The Preliminary Studies* 89, in *Philo*, trans. Francis H. Colson and George H. Whitaker (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1968), 4:502–3.
 18. Philo, *Preliminary Studies* 90, in *Philo*, 4:502–3.
 19. TB *ʿAbot*, 5:2–3.
 20. Ten elements are also found in Romans 8:38–39 and Doctrine and Covenants 4:6.
 21. For example, donations to temples in ancient Greece around the time of Lehi often involved the gift of a tenth. In describing the riches dedicated to the treasuries at Delphi, Pausanias mentions a tithe sent by the Tarentines “from the spoils of the barbarous Peuketians.” He also tells of the ill fortune of the Siphnians, whose island had yielded gold mines; the god Apollo “commanded them to bring a tithe of the produce to Delphi, so they built a treasure-house and brought the tithe. When out of insatiable greed they gave up this tribute, the sea flooded in and obliterated the mines.” Pausanias, *Guide to Greece*, vol. 1, trans. Peter Levi (London: Penguin Books, 1971), 441, 433.
 22. See Christian Wilson, “Tithe,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6:578–80.
 23. See TB *ʿAbot*, 5:3. These ten are listed in Bullinger, *Number in Scripture*, 244–45.
 24. David Noel Freedman, *The Nine Commandments: Uncovering a Hidden Pattern of Crime and Punishment in the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 7.
 25. See Philo, *Preliminary Studies* 118, in *Philo*, 4:518–19; and TB *ʿAbot*, 5:4.
 26. Bullinger, *Number in Scripture*, 244.
 27. Freedman, *The Nine Commandments*, 7–8.
 28. Freedman, *The Nine Commandments*, 8.
 29. Freedman, *The Nine Commandments*, 12–13.
 30. Bullinger, *Number in Scripture*, 244.
 31. See “Jacob’s Ten Commandments,” in Welch, *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, 69–72.
 32. Bullinger, *Number in Scripture*, 244.
 33. See John W. McKay, “Exodus XXIII 1–3, 6–8: A Decalogue for the Administration of Justice in the City Gate,” *Vetus Testamentum* 21/13 (1971): 311–25.
 34. Perhaps echoing the ten who convened at the town gate in Ruth 4, a minimum of ten men is required in traditional Jewish law in order to constitute a religious quorum. See Abraham P. Bloch, *The Biblical and Historical Background of Jewish Customs and Ceremonies* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1980), 76–77. See also TB Megilla 21b and TY Meg. 4.3 as translated by Jacob Neusner in his *The Talmud of the Land of Israel: An Academic Commentary to the Second, Third, and Fourth Divisions* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 19:154–55.
 35. See Philo, *Preliminary Studies* 81–120, in *Philo*, 4:498–519.
 36. Philo, *Preliminary Studies* 103, in *Philo*, 4:508–9.
 37. See TB *Yoma* 39b.
 38. John W. Welch, “Ten Testimonies of Jesus Christ from the Book of Mormon,” in *Doctrines of the Book of Mormon*, ed. Bruce A. Van Orden and Brent L. Top (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 232–33. This topic is discussed further in John W. Welch and Terrence L. Szink, “King Benjamin’s Speech in the Context of Ancient Israelite Festivals,” in *King Benjamin’s Speech: “That Ye May Learn Wisdom,”* ed. John W. Welch and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 179, citing Hayyim Schauss, *The Jewish Festivals* (New York: Schocken Books, 1962), 135.
 39. The ten occurrences of *Lord* include two in the construct state (“of the Lord,” vv. 16, 17), then two in the indicative mood (“the Lord,” vv. 26, 30), and then six in the vocative (“O Lord”). The four isolated uses of *O* appear in two pairs (matching the two isolated pairs of *Lord*): one of exclamation (“O wretched man” and “O then if I,” vv. 17, 26) and one of exultation (“rejoice, O my heart,” twice, vv. 28, 30). The word *God* also appears six times in this passage (balancing the six instances of *O Lord*). The word *God* is a more generic and less significant word than *Lord*; the tetragrammaton was held in sacred reverence in ancient Israel (see Leviticus 24:11).
 40. I appreciate Dan Salgado for pointing this out to me.
 41. See “Textual Consistency,” in Welch, *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, 22–23.
 42. Moshe I. Sorscher, *Companion Guide to the Yom Kippur Prayer Service* (New York: Judaica, 1994), xi.
 43. Abraham P. Bloch, *The Biblical and Historical Background of the Jewish Holy Days* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1978), 28.
 44. Moshe I. Sorscher, *Companion Guide to the Rosh Hashanah Prayer Service* (New York: Judaica, 1994), xvi–xvii.
 45. See Hayyim Schauss, *The Jewish Festivals* (New York: Schocken, 1962), 146; and Louis Jacobs, “Rosh ha-Shanah,” in *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1972), 14:309.
 46. Bullinger, *Number in Scripture*, 243–44.
 47. See Welch and Szink, “King Benjamin’s Speech in the Context of Ancient Israelite Festivals,” 147–223.
 48. Philo, *Preliminary Studies* 88, in *Philo*, 4:502–3.
 49. Philo, *Preliminary Studies* 81, in *Philo*, 4:498–99.
 50. For a poetical display of this text essentially in eight quatrains, see Zenos, “Hearing Mercy,” *BYU Studies* 33/1 (1993): 172–73.
 51. TB *ʿAbot*, 5:1.
 52. I appreciate Michael Lyon for drawing this to my attention.
 53. Philo, *Preliminary Studies* 116, in *Philo*, 4:516–17.
 54. Elias J. Bickerman, *The Jews in the Greek Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1988), 134; see Donald W. Parry, “Demarcation between Sacred Space and Profane Space: The Temple of Herod Model,” in *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994), 413–14.
 55. See James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 1:110–61, quotation on p. 140.
- Straightening Things Out: The Use of *Strait* and *Straight* in the Book of Mormon**
Paul Y. Hoskisson
1. See Noel B. Reynolds and Royal Skousen, “Was the Path Nephi Saw ‘Strait and Narrow’ or ‘Straight and Narrow?’” *JBMS* 10/2 (2001): 30–33.
 2. There are 27 instances of *strai(gh)t* in the Book of Mormon. The passages have been conveniently listed in a table in Reynolds and Skousen, “‘Strait and Narrow,’” 33. Because 1 Nephi 16:23, 17:41 (twice), 21:20, Alma 14:28 (twice), and 3 Nephi 14:13 do not contribute to the questions at hand, I will not discuss them in this article. Distinctions between *path*, *way*, and *course*, which each appear with *strait* or *straight*, do not seem to influence either in English or in Hebrew whether *straight* or *strait* is correct. Therefore, *path*, *way*, and *course* will not enter into the discussion as determinants.
 3. For a general discussion of the confusion of homophones and near homophones in the Book of Mormon, see Stan Larson, “Conjectural Emendation and the Text of the Book of Mormon,” *BYU Studies* 18/4 (1978): 563–69. In this article, *strai(gh)t* is mentioned but not discussed. For a short treatment of *strai(gh)t* in the Book of Mormon, see John W. Welch and Daniel McKinlay, “Getting Things Strai[gh]t,” in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992), 260–62. See also the more recent article by Reynolds and Skousen cited in note 1 above.
 4. Second edition on CD-ROM, Version 3.0, under the various forms. Hereafter cited as *OED*.
 5. The complete statement reads, “It is customary to write *straight*, for direct or right, and *strait*, for narrow, but this is a practice wholly arbitrary, both being the same word.” See *Noah Webster’s First Edition of an American Dictionary of the English Language*, facsimile ed. (San Francisco: Foundation for American Christian Education, 1987). I want to thank my friend and colleague Neal Kramer for drawing my attention to the entry in *Webster’s*.
 6. Four verses use a form of *strai(gh)t* two times each. The information is conveniently gathered in Reynolds and Skousen, “‘Strait and Narrow,’” 33.
 7. In the table on page 33 of “‘Strait and Narrow,’” Reynolds and Skousen have provided a listing of when each occurrence