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Samuel's Reliance on Biblical Language

Shon Hopkin

John Hilton III

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THIS ESSAY GROWS OUT OF A LARGER PROJECT focused on the word patterns of individual speakers in the Book of Mormon. As we have worked on this project, a unique characteristic that has come to the foreground is Samuel the Lamanite's use of certain biblical phrases. Naturally, many Book of Mormon speakers consistently employ biblical language and allusions since the Old Testament is presented as part of their historical and literary milieu. Three authors, however, demonstrate an especially marked reliance on certain specific biblical titles and phrases: Nephi, Jacob, and Samuel. However, because of the relatively surprising nature of Samuel's use of these biblical phrases, we will focus on him in this study.

One can explain Nephi's and Jacob's familiarity with and use of biblical language because of their close proximity in space and time to their Jewish origins and their documented enthusiasm for the Hebrew prophets. But Samuel's use of specific biblical phrases otherwise used only by Nephi and Jacob is not as easy to explain. He lived almost six hundred years after the time when the brass plates containing Old Testament writings were first obtained, was almost certainly not connected to the lineage that would have been trained to read and use the plates, and was not part of the Nephite community that had retained the primary biblical and Nephite religious records over the centuries. How is the reader to understand the fact that Samuel employs biblical phrases so rarely used by others? While this question lacks perfect answers, we will exhibit evidence of Samuel's reliance on biblical language, suggest answers regarding such usage from clues and literary patterns in the Book of Mormon, and explore how an awareness of Samuel's use of

biblical language can provide insights into his unique personality, message, and contribution in the Book of Mormon.

One note regarding methodology before turning directly to our task: The nature of the Book of Mormon as a text available only in translation complicates the analysis of voices and requires cautious conclusions.[1] Accordingly, this study does not seek to prove the validity of the Book of Mormon as an ancient text written by multiple authors.[2] Rather, in this study we take the Book of Mormon as it presents itself and use data-driven literary analysis to see what insights into Book of Mormon figures and their speech and messages come to light using that lens.

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1. Identifying the source of biblical similarities or differences in Book of Mormon authors can be challenging since the translation shows a strong preference for King James Version renderings, at times possibly selecting language that was similar to that biblical version because it was in prominent use in Joseph Smith's time. There is no perfect way to distinguish between translation choices and original language choices. Our database compares the use of specific and unique phrases in English between authors with the assumption that these likely would reflect unique phrases in the original language.

2. Many who have analyzed the Book of Mormon as a product of the nineteenth century, for example, have accounted for differences in language between Book of Mormon authors as a result of Joseph Smith's literary gifts and genius. For an example of this type of analysis, see Harold Bloom, *The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993). Some who have looked closely at the variance between different purported authors or editors of the Book of Mormon text have used detailed textual methodologies such as stylometry or wordprint to demonstrate that the book actually is the result of multiple authors. See, for example, Wayne A. Larsen, Alvin C. Rencher, and Tim Layton, "Who Wrote the Book of Mormon? An Analysis of Wordprints," *BYU Studies* 20/3 (1980): 225–51; reprinted by Wayne A. Larsen and Alvin C. Rencher in *Book of Mormon Authorship: New Light on Ancient Origins*, ed. Noel B. Reynolds (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1982), 157–88; John L. Hilton, "On Verifying Wordprint Studies: Book of Mormon Authorship," *BYU Studies* 30/3 (1990): 89–108; reprinted in Reynolds, *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited: The Evidence for Ancient Origins*, ed. Noel B. Reynolds (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1997), 225–53. For a word analysis study that demonstrated only one author of the Book of Mormon, see David I. Holmes, "Vocabulary Richness and the Prophetic Voice," *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 6/4 (1991): 259–68.

Samuel's background

In the Book of Mormon narrative, Samuel the Lamanite's historical background is shrouded in mystery. The text reports nothing about his childhood or his ministry apart from his brief interaction with the Nephites in Helaman 13–16. And he disappears from the narrative as rapidly as he appears, departing "unto his own country" (Helaman 16:7; see 13:2), never to be heard from again. Yet it might be noted that Mormon prefaces Samuel's teachings by declaring that the Lamanites at this unique time "did observe strictly to keep the commandments of God, according to the law of Moses" (Helaman 13:1). This reference to a "strict" observance "according to the law of Moses" seems intended to indicate to readers that the Lamanites of Samuel's day had access to a detailed biblical account, something on which they could rely closely in order to follow the commandments in such a detailed fashion.[3]

This characterization fits what the reader might expect to find culturally. The recently converted Lamanites had little cultural foundation on which to build their covenant identity as Israelites. They no longer trusted the traditions of their Lamanite fathers, but neither could they be termed Nephites. The difference in their appearance was presumably so overwhelming as to allow a clear, ethnic divide. Nor did they approach the gospel in the same way as the Nephites—a society often characterized by dissent, apathy, elitism, and rapid shifts in religious devotion. When an earlier generation of Lamanites was converted by Ammon and departed from their own people, they never integrated into

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3. The copying of the biblical records and their dissemination among the Lamanites is evidenced by Helaman 13:1, quoted above. The medium on which the records were recorded and how widespread the dissemination was, however, are never discussed in the text. The accessibility of biblical records would have been significantly lower than today because of a number of factors, including—most importantly—the lack of a means to print or copy in mass. For viewpoints on limited literacy among Book of Mormon peoples, see John L. Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 53; William G. Eggington, "Our Weakness in Writing: Oral and Literate Culture in the Book of Mormon," FARMS paper (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1992), 11. For an alternate viewpoint, see Deanna Draper Buck, "Internal Evidence of Widespread Literacy in the Book of Mormon," *Religious Educator* 10/3 (2009): 59–74.

Nephite society. Rather, they lived as a people apart, fully and fiercely loyal to their religious conversion. They indicated their feelings of otherness even by the name they adopted—Anti-Nephi-Lehies. (Various explanations for the name have been proposed, including the most simple, that they were describing themselves as "non-Nephite Lehites": not Nephites, but desiring to connect to their Lehite heritage rather than their Lamanite background. No matter the interpretation, the most obvious point of the name is that the converted Lamanites felt different.)

Where could the converted Lamanites of Samuel's generation look for a sense of identity, for an understanding of what it meant to be God's covenant people? Helaman 13:1 seems to indicate that they looked to the biblical text and were determined to interpret it conservatively and live it strictly. The Lamanite prophet's name itself, Samuel, fits this pattern. Few Book of Mormon prophets have overtly biblical names, although many Nephite and Lamanite names have been traced back to potential Semitic antecedents.[4] Among a sea of names such as Amalickiah, Ammoron, Nephi, Mormon, and Moroni, the few clear adoptions from famous biblical heroes—Jacob, Aaron, and Samuel, for example—stand out. Apparently, readers are to understand that a generation of converted Lamanites looked, as they named their children, to the biblical text, just as they did for their mode of daily life.

The converted Lamanites had something to prove to themselves before God in their religious devotion, as their earlier king had expressed when urging his converted people to bury their weapons as a testimony before God of their repentance (see Alma 24:15). This fits the sociological patterns of new religious converts in any time: deeply committed but somewhat insecure in their new identity, anxious to prove themselves both to themselves and to others, and seeking for stability amidst the instability of change.

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4. See, for example, Paul Y. Hoskisson, "An Introduction to the Relevance of and a Methodology for a Study of the Proper Names of the Book of Mormon," in *By Study and Also by Faith*, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990), 2:126–35; John A. Tvedtnes, "A Phonemic Analysis of Nephite and Jaredite Proper Names," FARMS Paper (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1977).

The Lamanites may also have felt a need to prove themselves to the Nephites, among whom sentiments of racial superiority had reverberated throughout the generations. In a scriptural account with numerous recorders and authors over the course of more than a thousand years of history, Samuel emerges as the *only* Lamanite prophetic voice throughout the text. This identity does more than make Samuel stand out in the account; he is a complete outlier in the Nephite religious experience, at least as Mormon has detailed that history. Mormon's inclusion of Samuel's teachings suggests that he was not guilty of deleting important Lamanite voices when they spoke—although Jesus's reminder that it was precisely one of *this* prophet's predictions that had been left out of the text (3 Nephi 23:7–13) may indicate some cultural bias on the part of the Nephite historians.[5] If Jesus had not given a specific command to include the prophecy, it is not certain that the Nephites would have felt obligated to do so. Nevertheless, whether the inclusion of only one Lamanite prophetic figure was a result of ethnocentricity, or whether the Lamanites simply did not produce prophetic figures that spoke to the Nephites (the Nephites *certainly* had a history of sending prophetic emissaries to the Lamanites), these hints can act as keys that help unlock Samuel's unique use of biblical language. First, Samuel came from a convert culture that clung tenaciously to their religious texts to give them a sense of identity. Second, Samuel would have felt a need to support the reality of his own prophetic calling with his audience as he broke centuries of non-Nephite religious tradition to prophesy to the Nephites.

While no close parallels exist between the life of the biblical Samuel and that of his Book of Mormon namesake, both offered messages to their people that were almost completely rejected (as was the case for many biblical prophets). The biblical Samuel encouraged his people to choose God rather than adopting the practices of surrounding nations in choosing a king. Samuel the Lamanite encouraged the Nephites to

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5. Joseph Spencer makes precisely this point when introducing his study of this unappreciated prophet, suggesting that Samuel may have been the recipient of negative cultural biases. See Joseph M. Spencer, "The Time of Sin," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 9 (2014): 88.

abandon their love of worldly things and rely upon the Messiah who would come. Closer parallels exist between Samuel the Lamanite and the messianic forerunner John the Baptist. Both emerged from the wilderness to cry strident messages of repentance, working to prepare a people for the coming of Christ. Both prophesied of the coming of the Messiah, warning that those who rejected the message would be hewn down (see Matthew 3:10; Helaman 13:5–6). Both relied on biblical language to strengthen their messages (see Matthew 3:3). In other words, both employed the ancient language of the biblical word in order to prepare for the coming of the living Word, who would also teach from scripture, bringing it to life in new ways. The remainder of this paper will reveal Samuel's unique reliance on biblical language and will demonstrate how that reliance supported his divine message and mission to the Nephites.

Samuel's use of selected biblical phrases

Samuel's use of selected biblical phrases is rivaled only by that of Nephi and Jacob in the Book of Mormon. Others have already noticed Samuel's propensity to use the biblical literary pattern known as the prophetic lament,[6] as well as other prophetic forms of speech.[7] Future studies will likely reveal more connections between Samuel and the Old Testament. In this study we have chosen four phrases that demonstrate most clearly

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6. S. Kent Brown, "The Prophetic Laments of Samuel the Lamanite," in *From Jerusalem to Zarahemla: Literary and Historical Studies of the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1998), 128–45.

7. Donald W. Parry, "Thus Saith the Lord: Prophetic Language in Samuel's Speech," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 1/1 (1992): 181–83. In this brief article, Parry outlines six types of common, prophetic forms that are found in Samuel's speech patterns: (1) Messenger Formula ("Thus saith the Lord"); (2) Proclamation Formula ("Listen" or "Hearken"); (3) Oath Formula ("As the Lord liveth"); (4) Woe Oracle (an accusation form, typically beginning with "Wo"); (5) Announcement Formula ("I say unto you"); and (6) Revelation Formula ("The word of the Lord came to me, saying"). Of these six forms, the first shows strong and unique emphasis in the words of Samuel and will be discussed further in this study.

some of the linguistic connections that exist. In analyzing these phrases we will focus on the number of times individuals used these phrases.[8]

"Saith the Lord"

The English phrase "saith the Lord" (most often found in Hebrew as *ʾāmar yhwh* or a similar form) is used 841 times in the Bible and is also used regularly by the biblical writers who are quoted in the Book of Mormon, such as Isaiah and Malachi. This phrase, however, is not often used by other Book of Mormon writers. Isaiah's and Malachi's writings make up only 3 percent of the Book of Mormon text, but their usage of "saith the Lord" accounts for one-third of its occurrences in the text. Analysis of the text (see table 1) indicates that three nonbiblical Book of Mormon authors exhibit a high rate of using the phrase "saith the Lord": Nephi, Jacob, and Samuel. Nephi and Jacob do not use the phrase

Table 1. Distribution of "saith the Lord"

Speaker	Total words	% of total Book of Mormon text	Usages of "saith the Lord"	Frequency per thousand words
Malachi	135	0.03%	9	67
Samuel	3,068	1%	17	6
Isaiah	7,818	3%	24	3
Jacob$_1$	8,363	3%	11	1
Nephi$_1$	28,590	11%	17	0.6
Others (11 speakers)	220,189	82%	21	0.1

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8. This is a somewhat subjective figure, given that we cannot be certain at any given time what words were actually being spoken by an individual. For example, are the words we have recorded as those of Samuel the Lamanite actually his words, or were they altered by a contemporary scribe, Nephi$_2$, Mormon in his abridgment, or in some other way? Although precise certainty is impossible, for the purpose of this study we counted words in the Book of Mormon as actually being spoken by the person to which they were ascribed. Even if the words of the speaker were influenced by a subsequent editor, the choice by the editor in the case of this study still reflects a word choice different than the editor's typical usage.

as frequently as biblical authors or as Samuel, but their language still manifests a much higher rate of usage than the other Book of Mormon voices. Whereas Nephi, Jacob, and Samuel collectively use the phrase "saith the Lord" 45 times, the phrase is used by *all* other nonbiblical Book of Mormon voices only 21 times in the remainder of the Book of Mormon text. These 21 times, moreover, are spread across eleven different voices, meaning that each uses the phrase only 1 to 2 times on average. Nephi uses the phrase with a frequency six times higher than other Book of Mormon voices, and Jacob about twice Nephi's frequency. Especially striking is the fact that Samuel uses "saith the Lord" six times more frequently even than Jacob.[9]

These quantitative data show that Samuel, along with Nephi and Jacob, uses this particular biblical phrase with considerable frequency. But what might be said about their usage in a more qualitative fashion? Biblical prophets use the phrase "saith the Lord" to endow their words with divine power and authenticity. According to biblical usage, prefacing a statement with "saith the Lord" indicates that the prophet with his human frailties was no longer speaking but that God himself was speaking through the prophet, who acted as the divine mouthpiece.[10] Samuel's use of the phrase "saith the Lord" fits this tradition. His discourse to the Nephites in Helaman 13–15 is full of prophetic pronouncements of future events (such as the coming of Christ) or of future judgments that would descend upon the Nephites. In offering these pronouncements, he speaks with the authentic voice of the biblical prophets who had gone before him and declares that his words are not his own but have been given to him by God.

This pattern also fits Mormon's preface to the Samuel narrative, which emphasizes the directness of God's revelatory voice to the Lamanite prophet:

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9. These figures come from *The Voices of the Book of Mormon Database*, created by John Hilton III, Shon Hopkin, Jennifer Platt, Randal Wright, and Jana Johnson, 2012.

10. See John J. Schmitt, "Preexilic Hebrew Prophecy," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 5:482; and John Barton, "Postexilic Hebrew Prophecy," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 5:494.

> The voice of the Lord came unto him, that he should . . . prophesy
> unto the people whatsoever things should come into his heart. . . .
> And he said unto them: Behold, I, Samuel, a Lamanite, do speak
> the words of the Lord which he doth put into my heart. . . . There-
> fore, thus *saith the Lord*: Because of the hardness of the hearts
> of the people of the Nephites, . . . I will withdraw my Spirit from
> them. (Helaman 13:3, 5, 8)[11]

Interestingly, Mormon's description of God's placing his words in Samu-
el's heart anticipatorily correlates with the content of Samuel's own first
use of the phrase "saith the Lord," warning the Nephites that because of
their hard hearts they would no longer have the Spirit. The connection
provides a contrast between Samuel (who receives the voice of the Lord)
and the Nephites (from whom the Spirit will be withdrawn) that will
culminate in the Nephite attempt to murder Samuel while he preaches
upon the city's wall.

 This feature of the Samuel narrative—the placing of the Lord's
words directly in the prophet's heart—may in fact indicate a unique
facet of Samuel's teachings. There are only three scriptural instances
where God puts ideas or words into people's hearts;[12] two of these in-
volve Samuel. According to Mormon's narrative, Samuel, after being
rejected once by the Nephites, "was about to return to his own land, . . .
[but] the voice of the Lord came unto him, that he should return again,
and prophesy unto the people whatsoever things should come into his
heart; . . . therefore he went and got upon the wall thereof, and stretched
forth his hand and cried with a loud voice, and prophesied unto the
people whatsoever things the Lord *put into his heart*. And he said unto
them: Behold, I, Samuel, a Lamanite, do speak the words of the Lord
which he doth *put into my heart*" (Helaman 13:2–5).

 All this seems to explain Samuel's frequent use of the phrase "saith
the Lord." Samuel, in a way distinct from other prophets, uses words
that the Lord puts in his heart rather than crafting his own message.

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11. Any emphasis within Book of Mormon quotations has been added.

12. See Helaman 13:4–5. The other instance is in Nehemiah 7:5.

Importantly, Samuel's speech patterns are not doctrinal or discursive in nature, in contrast to those of Alma, Benjamin, Jesus, and others in the Book of Mormon. Rather, Samuel foretells (tells the future) and forth-tells (reveals the current state of hidden things) with prophetic clarity, often using strong language that could easily offend his hearers. This feature, moreover, provides an explanation of why Samuel's use of this biblical phrase would mirror—and in fact exceed—that of Nephi and Jacob, two prophets whose rhetorical positions anticipate Samuel's. The similarity may in fact be attributed less to Nephi's and Jacob's devotion to biblical texts (although that does appear to be a point of comparison with Samuel) than to the fact that Nephi and Jacob often engage in pro-phetic foretelling, and—especially in the case of Jacob 2–3—prophetic forthtelling and warnings. Because of the mixed nature of Nephi's and Jacob's writings, however, with significant discursive portions, Samuel stands out in his use of "saith the Lord."

A further explanation lies in Samuel's marginal status as a Lamanite. While Samuel lived in a time when Nephites and Lamanites had "free intercourse one with another, to buy and to sell, and to get gain, according to their desire" (Helaman 6:8), Nephite ethnocentrism is a consistent problem in the Book of Mormon, whether coming from dissident groups such as the Zoramites or the people of Ammonihah, or whether found in troubled relations with Mulekites or Lamanites (see Jacob 7:24; Mosiah 9:12; 3 Nephi 5:20; 4 Nephi 1:43). Samuel, after all, preaches only after being initially rejected (see Helaman 13:2). Perhaps Samuel uses the phrase "saith the Lord" to bolster his authority and deflect his message from himself, emphasizing to the Nephites that he is but a messenger, notwithstanding the disconcerting fact that he is a Lamanite. Such an approach could potentially ease the discomfort that Samuel might have felt as he rebuked those who had been, for centuries, the more righteous part of the people (or at least had viewed themselves that way).

Finally, it is interesting that Samuel's use of this phrase is most simi-lar to the usage of Isaiah and Malachi, the two prophets in addition to Samuel to whom Jesus will refer to teach the Nephites and demonstrate

the fulfillment of prophecy in him.[13] Together, then, Isaiah, Malachi, and Samuel stand as three united prophetic voices, pointing forward to the Son of God. When Jesus arrives, he points back to the message of previous prophets in order to enhance his living message to his people, even commanding them to add specific words from both Samuel *and* Malachi (see 3 Nephi 23:13; 24:1).

What do these various insights and connections, gleaned from Samuel's use of "saith the Lord," reveal about Samuel and his teachings thus far? First, like John the Baptist, he chooses to decrease his role as a messenger so that the Lord can increase (see John 3:30). Rather than call attention to himself as the messenger, he points to the Lord as the giver of truth. Second, the inspiration that comes to Samuel in his heart causes him to essentially act as a direct conduit for the Lord's message. Third, Samuel the prophet is still a human figure with his own concerns. As a Lamanite, he needs to bolster his prophetic identity, and using the phrase "saith the Lord" helps him to do so. Fourth, the nature of his preaching seems to approach that of a biblical prophet more than a doctrinal teacher; he fits well within the scope of biblical prophets. Two things contribute to his prophetic behavior: his close attention to scripture and his close attention to those things that come into his heart. In other words, pure revelation—as found in the biblical texts and in his own heart—causes him to behave like earlier prophets. His behaviors cannot be attributed to cultural inheritance.

"Lord of Hosts"

Another phrase or title connecting Samuel, Nephi, and Jacob with biblical authors is the divine title "Lord of Hosts." This title, *yhwh ṣᵉbāʾôṯ* in Hebrew, is used 245 times in the Old Testament but never in the New Testament. The writings of the biblical authors Isaiah and Malachi in the Book of Mormon account for more than two-thirds of the title's occurrences (see table 2). Nephi, Jacob, and Samuel all use the title at a lower

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13. Samuel uses "saith the Lord" with greater frequency than Isaiah but with lesser frequency than Malachi as found in the Book of Mormon, positioning him squarely between these two Hebrew prophets' rhetorical styles (see table 1).

Table 2. Distribution of "Lord of Hosts"

Speaker	Total words	% of total Book of Mormon text	Usages of "Lord of Hosts"	Frequency per thousand words
Malachi	135	0.03%	9	67
Isaiah	7,818	3%	26	3
Samuel	3,068	1%	3	1
Jacob$_1$	8,363	3%	6	0.7
Nephi$_1$	28,590	11%	7	0.2
Others	220,189	82%	0	0

frequency than Isaiah and Malachi. But, significantly, they are the only other voices in the entire Book of Mormon who employ the title at all.

Biblical scholars have regularly affirmed that this title refers to God as the all-powerful being who can muster his troops or armies to battle.[14] Depending on its use, those armies could consist of the house of Israel, with God as warrior at their head; they could refer to God's role at the head of the heavenly council; or they could indicate God's power as the one who orders and is master of the universe, particularly of celestial bodies such as the sun, the moon, and the stars, which at times are called to fight on the Lord's behalf. According to C. L. Seow, "the sun, moon, and stars may be depicted as composing this heavenly retinue."[15] Joshua 10:12–13; Judges 5:20; Habakkuk 3:11; and Daniel 8:10 all speak of the heavenly hosts in this way.

In light of this last point, Samuel's use of the title "Lord of Hosts" is particularly interesting, considering his emphasis on two key events: the birth and death of the Messiah. The signs for these events center almost completely on heavenly bodies, such as a new star and light during the night at the time of Christ's birth (see Helaman 14:3–5) and the darkening of the sun, moon, and stars at the time of his death (see Helaman 14:21). God—as ruler of the universe, or "Lord of Hosts" (of the hosts of heaven)—could command those heavenly powers to testify of him. But

14. See C. L. Seow, "Hosts, Lord of," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 3:304–7.

15. E. Theodore Mullen Jr., "Hosts, Host of Heaven," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 3:303.

not only can God marshal the powers of heaven to testify of him, he can also command them to fight for him against the wicked. Samuel's use of the title "Lord of Hosts" in connection with punishment, cursing, and desolation because of wickedness fits this model (see Helaman 13:17, 32). Since the title "Lord of Hosts" often describes God as one who can demonstrate his power in battle, arrayed against his enemies, the Bible's uses of that phrase are often tied to desolation and punishment, as in Isaiah 5:9 and Jeremiah 33:12; 42:18. Thus not only does Samuel once again reflect biblical language, but his language mirrors biblical themes in appropriate ways.

Significantly, these two themes—power from heaven and destruction on earth—are intertwined in Samuel's prophecy. His words are full of warnings of the destruction that will precede the coming of the Savior, and these mark a connection between destruction and the heavens: "If it were not for the righteous who are in this great city, behold, I would cause that *fire should come down out of heaven and destroy it*. . . . Yea, wo be unto this great city, because of the wickedness and abominations which are in her" (Helaman 13:13–14). Shortly after this passage, Samuel uses the term "Lord of Hosts" as he warns that the earth will also, as it were, do battle against the wicked Nephites: "It shall come to pass, saith the Lord of Hosts, . . . that whoso shall hide up treasures in the earth shall find them again no more, because of the great curse of the land" (Helaman 13:18). (Samuel even depicts the earth as fighting directly against the wicked in their own attempts at war: "Behold, we lay a tool here and on the morrow it is gone; and behold, our swords are taken from us in the day we have sought them for battle" [Helaman 13:34].)

Considering that the Lord of Hosts is often found in the Book of Mormon marshaling the forces of his covenant people Israel (the righteous Nephites), to find him now using the heavens and earth against them, as they are left unto themselves, would be extremely disconcerting for his erstwhile people. The effect is even stronger if one remembers that it is Samuel, *a Lamanite himself*, who utters these prophecies, almost serving in his person as an image of the reversal of the Nephite fortunes because of their wickedness. Samuel even uses war imagery to prophesy that the Nephites will one day be completely destroyed by

their enemies, the Lamanites: "The sword of justice hangeth over this people; and four hundred years pass not away save the sword of justice falleth upon this people. . . . I will visit them with *the sword and with famine and with pestilence*. . . . Your enemies [will live] to behold your utter destruction" (Helaman 13:5, 9–10). Samuel includes not only the Lamanites among God's hosts in the destruction of the wicked Nephites, but also the earth, which smites them through famine and pestilence. Certainly Samuel could have used no more appropriate title for the Lord in these chapters than the biblical "Lord of Hosts."

Another possible reason for Samuel's use of "Lord of Hosts" may be to intentionally echo Nephi's and Jacob's use of the phrase, which follows biblical patterns. Nephi's most concentrated use of the phrase (in 2 Nephi 26:4–6) surrounds his prophecy of the destruction that would come to the Nephites at the time of the Savior's death, the very event of which Samuel prophesies. Jacob's six uses of this phrase all occur within Jacob 2:28–33. Following this passage (in the 1830 edition, no chapter break appears after verse 35), Jacob condemns the Nephites for being less righteous than the Lamanites, another message clearly utilized by Samuel. It may be that Samuel's use of "Lord of Hosts" is thus connected to either Nephi's or Jacob's use of the phrase—if not in fact both. If Samuel had been studying Nephite scripture in preparation for his preaching, both of these pericopes (the signs of Christ's death provided by Nephi and the condemnation by Jacob of the Nephites being less righteous than the Lamanites) would have been pertinent passages to review. Perhaps readers are meant to understand that Samuel saw the frequent use of the phrase "Lord of Hosts" in these instances and was thereby influenced in his own word choices.

Finally, similar to using the phrase "saith the Lord," Samuel's use of the title "Lord of Hosts" would likely strengthen the Nephite view of his prophetic authority since the phrase seems to imply that he has been given heavenly instruction by joining God as part of his divine council. According to E. Theodore Mullen, "a major conceptual background for Hebrew prophecy was formed by the idea of the prophet as the messenger of Yahweh (Hag 1:13; Mal 3:1) who had been privy to

Yahweh's council (Jer 23:18, 22; Amos 3:7). The frequent introduction of prophetic oracles with the phrase 'thus says Yahweh' (*kōh ʾāmar yhwh*) suggests a further connection between the prophetic messenger role and the name [Lord of Hosts] *yhwh ṣᵉḇāʾôṯ*."[16] Second Chronicles 18:18, for example, describes the prophetic experience in this way: "I saw the Lord sitting upon his throne, and all the *host of heaven* standing on his right hand and on his left" (emphasis added). In a passage quoted by Nephi, Isaiah speaks similarly when he sees God surrounded by angels: "Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (Isaiah 6:5). Mullen goes on to mention just how closely the use of "Lord of Hosts" was tied to biblical prophets and was also tied to the phrase "saith the Lord." According to Mullen, "Of the 285 occurrences of *ṣᵉḇāʾôṯ* [hosts] as part of a divine epithet, 251 (88%) are to be found in the prophetic books. Additionally, 244 instances (97.2%) of the phrase *yhwh ṣᵉḇāʾôṯ* [Lord of Hosts] . . . occur in the following six works: Isaiah 1–55 (62x); Jeremiah (82x); Amos (9x); Haggai (14x); Zechariah (53x); Malachi (24x)."[17]

Samuel not only uses the title "Lord of Hosts" appropriately considering the type of prophecies he makes, but in doing so, he also connects himself with other biblical prophets, many of whose words he would presumably have studied closely, thereby bolstering his own position. As the prophetic figure sent to prepare the way for the coming of Christ among the Nephites, he also joined with Isaiah and Malachi, the two other prophets who would be cited by Jesus Christ in his visit.

"Signs and wonders"

Samuel's use of "Lord of Hosts" as he proclaims God's power over heavenly bodies connects with another biblical phrase used by Samuel: "signs and wonders." This phrase, *ʾōṯōṯ ûmōpᵉṯîm* in Hebrew, is introduced in the Bible as a description of miracles that God will perform, often having to do with heavenly signs: "He worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth" (Daniel 6:27). It occurs five times in the Old Testament and is employed by New Testament authors (who adopted it from Old

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16. Mullen, "Hosts, Host of Heaven," 303; see Seow, "Hosts, Lord of," 306.

17. Mullen, "Hosts, Host of Heaven," 303.

Testament speech) nine times, as *sēmeia kai terata* in Greek.[18] Samuel, who uses the phrase twice, is one of only five Book of Mormon authors to employ it. Nephi also uses the phrase (once), as does Mormon (three times, although one instance is in connection with Samuel's discourse). The only other voices to speak these words are an angel (as quoted by King Benjamin) and Zenos (as quoted by Nephi in 1 Nephi 19), who cannot properly be called direct Book of Mormon authors since one is a divine messenger and the other an extrabiblical prophet from Old Testament times. Although Samuel's use of this phrase is more frequent than other voices in the Book of Mormon, the sample size is too small to determine whether this is significant. Nonetheless, the patterns of biblical usage already investigated, coupled with the relevance of "signs and wonders" to the themes already discussed, suggest that Samuel's use of this phrase is of interest. And it is to be noted that important uses of the phrase "signs and wonders" outside the Samuel narrative are actually closely connected to Samuel's prophecies. The frequency with which the phrase is found in Samuel's preaching is much higher than that of either Nephi or Mormon.

Samuel's usage of "signs and wonders" may be connected with an earlier prophecy of Nephi, which apparently relied on the words of Zenos (a Hebrew prophet whose words appear uniquely in the Book of Mormon). Zenos appears to be the original author of the prophecy that three days of darkness would be given to members of the house of Israel who inhabited the isles of the sea at the time of the death of Christ (see 1 Nephi 19:10). Zenos spoke of "*the thunderings and the lightnings of his power, by tempest*, by fire, and by smoke, and vapor of *darkness*, and by the opening of the earth, and by mountains which shall be carried up" (1 Nephi 19:11). Samuel likewise spoke of "*the thunder and the lightning . . . and the tempest*" that would occur at the time of Christ's death, along with "*darkness* [that] should cover the face of the whole earth for the space of three days" (Helaman 14:27). It is important to

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18. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., "σημεῖον, σημαίνω, σημειόω, ἄσημος, ἐπίσημος, εὔσημος, σύσσημον," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 7:200.

remember that Samuel has identified God, the God who would come down from heaven among them, as the Lord of Hosts, who can lead the powers of heaven described in Zenos's words to testify of him and to war against those who reject that heavenly message. Samuel occupies his role as forerunner of the Messiah among the Nephites, working to prepare a people that will receive him. Referring to those at Jerusalem, Zenos had said that they would "turn their hearts aside, rejecting *signs and wonders*, and the power and glory of the God of Israel" (1 Nephi 19:13). Samuel seems to hold out more hope for at least some of the Nephites, teaching that "*these signs and these wonders* should come to pass upon all the face of this land, to the intent that there should be no cause for unbelief among the children of men" (Helaman 14:28). Notwithstanding his inflection of Zenos's words, however, Samuel seems clearly to draw on them as Nephi does.

Further, these very heavenly signs first mentioned by Zenos ensure the existence of a remnant of believers to welcome Christ when he comes to the New World in the Book of Mormon's narrative. Following Samuel's witness, the people wait to see if his prophecies of heavenly signs will be fulfilled. When some calculate that the time has already passed, a day is set when the believers in the unfulfilled signs of Christ's coming will be killed. But at the climax of the story, the night before the wicked plan to destroy all the righteous, God marshals the hosts of heaven, showing the sign of light. "And they knew that it was the day that the Lord should be born, because of the *sign* which had been given. . . . And it came to pass also that a new star did appear, according to the word" (3 Nephi 1:19, 21). Thus Mormon tells of the high drama when God saves his people by signs and wonders, just as he had done to save the Israelites from Pharaoh centuries earlier on the other side of the world (see Deuteronomy 6:22; Nehemiah 9:10; and Jeremiah 32:20). A few verses later, Mormon indicates that Satan spread a lying spirit among the people "to the intent that they might not believe in those *signs and wonders* which they had seen; but notwithstanding these lyings and deceivings the more part of the people did believe, and were converted unto the Lord" (3 Nephi 1:22). This beneficial effect is,

unfortunately, only temporary. Awe at the signs begins to diminish, "and the people began to forget those *signs and wonders* which they had heard, and began to be less and less astonished at a sign or a wonder from heaven" (3 Nephi 2:1). Nevertheless the heavenly signs play their role, as prophesied by Samuel and confirmed by Mormon.

"Anger of the Lord" and "kindled"

The phrase "anger of the Lord" (Heb. *ʾap yhwh*) is used thirty-two times in the Old Testament, and the context is extremely consistent. The user of the phrase regularly states the reason for the Lord's anger and then proclaims the punishment that will come as a result of disobedience. For example, the anger of the Lord was kindled against the Israelites because they grew tired of the manna he had provided. The result of the Lord's anger is provided in the same phrase, "and the Lord smote the people with a very great plague" (Numbers 11:33). The Book of Mormon, although not using the phrase frequently (only five times) is also consistent in its usage. For example, in Helaman 13:28–29, Samuel lists some of the sins of the people—that they love false prophets and give their riches to them. Because of these sins, Samuel states that the "anger of the Lord" is kindled (v. 30) and declares that the land will become cursed so that their riches become slippery (v. 31). After fully revealing the future results of the people's wickedness, Samuel encourages them to turn away from their behavior so that the "anger of the Lord" will be removed from them and they won't have to experience the consequences mentioned (v. 39). Samuel's use of this phrase is consistent with its usage in the Bible, and although he employs the phrase only twice, this is more than any other voice in the Book of Mormon. (It appears only three other times, once in Alma's voice, once in Isaiah's voice, and once in a quotation of the Lord.)

Not only does Samuel's usage mirror that found in the Bible, he also warns that the anger of the Lord will be "kindled" (Heb. *yiḥar*) against the people. This word regularly accompanies the warnings of the Lord's anger in the Old Testament. Of the thirty-two times that "anger of the Lord" occurs in the Bible, twenty contain a declaration that the Lord's

anger is "kindled." Many of the instances lacking that wording encourage the people to repent so that the Lord will turn away his anger. Interestingly, Samuel's usage follows this pattern as well. In Helaman 13:30, he declares that the Lord's anger is "kindled," but in Helaman 13:39 he encourages them to repent, and the word "kindled" does not appear. Besides Isaiah and the Lord (whose words are a direct quotation from Isaiah), Samuel is the only voice in the Book of Mormon to use the word "kindled" along with "anger of the Lord."

The connection between the Lord's anger being kindled and the prophesied result continues to build the high drama, already reviewed, of Samuel's warnings to the Nephites. A Lamanite, typically despised by the Nephites, warns them of the Lord's anger and predicts consequences. Having already rejected him once, the Nephites grow so angered at his prophetic activity that they seek to silence Samuel by killing him. Samuel prophesies that his people will one day eliminate the Nephites, but they take up their weapons to demonstrate the opposite—that they will instead eliminate him. In so doing, however, they end up proving the truth of Samuel's message: they no longer act on behalf of the Lord, and they are powerless against this Lamanite.

Samuel may not look like a prophet to the Nephites, but he certainly speaks like one, and he demonstrates the power of a prophet as well. Accordingly, he not only warns that the Lord's anger is kindled—something that could be said by anyone—but he then provides the conclusive evidence of his prophetic calling by telling them the specific consequences that will prove God's anger to them. Years will pass before many of those consequences are fulfilled, but Samuel gives the Nephites all they need to determine whether he is indeed God's prophet according to the rule set down by Moses in Deuteronomy (a rule with which Samuel would have been familiar):

> I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee [Moses], and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. But *the prophet,*

> *which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die.* And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? *When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.* (Deuteronomy 18:18–22, emphasis added)

Whether or not the Nephites were familiar with this statement,[19] they put it to the test at the end of Samuel's words and find that they could not immediately claim the falsehood of his prophecies; Samuel does not die. The remaining history of the Nephites is required to completely verify Samuel's authority and fully prove to the Nephites that he has spoken as the Lord of Hosts has commanded him. Samuel prophesies of Jesus, serving as his forerunner. When Jesus indeed comes in fulfillment of this prophecy, he commands that an additional prophecy of Samuel also be included in the Nephite record, ensuring the existence of yet another evidence that Samuel, the Lamanite prophet, truly speaks on behalf of the Lord.

Conclusion

Samuel's use of selected biblical phrases—"saith the Lord," "Lord of Hosts," "signs and wonders," and "anger of the Lord" being "kindled"—in his discourse is consistently found at a higher frequency than for any other speaker in the Book of Mormon (besides biblical authors quoted in the Book of Mormon). These data display the depth of the Book of Mormon text that not only demonstrates a variety of styles between authors but also shows a varying degree of connection with the biblical text depending on the style and background of the author. Studying the Book of Mormon carefully by separating the various "voices" it portrays

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19. Passages from Deuteronomy 18—and from this larger passage in particular—are actually quoted at several points in the Book of Mormon, suggesting general familiarity.

can suggest potential insights into the personalities, backgrounds, and speaking preferences of its multiple prophetic voices, and it can help the reader understand the beauty, truth, and purpose of their messages more completely.

The background supplied by Mormon indicates the strong possibility that the text of the law of Moses specifically, and other biblical texts more generally, were likely available to the Lamanite people and that many of the faithful Lamanites were familiar with it in a detailed fashion. It may be that since the law of Moses was so foreign to Lamanite culture, their study of the brass plates was, of necessity, even more detailed in order to absorb and adopt viewpoints that had been alien to them. Samuel apparently either came from one of these converted families—which could explain his biblical name—or had himself studied the biblical text enough to have absorbed it into his own speech patterns. It may be that as an "outsider" Samuel sought to bolster his authority by using language similar to that found on the brass plates. Even more importantly, as has been shown, Samuel uses these biblical phrases regularly because he acts in the role of a biblical prophet—a foreteller of future events and a forthteller to expose the sinful attitudes of the Nephites and warn them to change—rather than in the role of a doctrinal teacher. As God spoke to Samuel, so he spoke to the Nephites, and in doing so gave powerful witness of the reality of the prophetic office, of God's ability to know and teach of future events, and of God's power as the Lord of Hosts.

Shon Hopkin is assistant professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University. He received his PhD in Hebrew studies from the University of Texas at Austin, with a focus on medieval Hebrew, Arabic, and Spanish literature, particularly in the Iberian Peninsula. His current research focuses on the book of Isaiah and on medieval Jewish literature.

John Hilton III is assistant professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University. He has a master's degree from Harvard and a PhD

from BYU, both in education. He has written articles focused on unique voices and intertextuality in the Book of Mormon, as well as on topics of learning and teaching in religious education settings. Besides being with his family, John's hobbies are reading, writing, and learning Chinese.