



9-2018

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### BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Rust, Richard D. "The Book of Mormon and Patriarchal Blessings: Reflections by an Ordained Patriarch." *Religious Educator: Perspectives on the Restored Gospel* 19, no. 3 (2018): 137-151.  
<https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/re/vol19/iss3/11>

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## *The Book of Mormon and Patriarchal Blessings: Reflections by an Ordained Patriarch*

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In my service as a stake patriarch before going on several missions with my wife and subsequently in giving patriarchal blessings to several of my grandchildren, I have learned how the Book of Mormon as a whole and in its parts can be likened in many ways to a patriarchal blessing. Likewise, a patriarchal blessing given by an ordained patriarch can be likened to the Book of Mormon. An increased understanding of the one can help us better understand and value the other. In looking at the Book of Mormon and patriarchal blessings together, one can see even more clearly God’s system of revelation and prophecy and its personal application.

### **The Principle of “Liking Unto”**

Likening one thing unto another does not mean there is equivalence between the two. Rather, it is a method of highlighting certain aspects of one thing found in the other. In a revelation given to Joseph Smith, the Lord asked, “Unto what shall I liken these kingdoms, that ye may understand?” Then he answered, “Behold, I will liken these kingdoms unto a man having a field, and

When a patriarchal blessing is given, the recipient first hears the blessing and can feel at the time a confirmation by the Holy Ghost. Subsequently, he or she can read and reread the blessing as a personal scripture.

he sent forth his servants into the field to dig in the field” (D&C 88:46, 51). Jesus used “likening unto” effectively when he illustrated characteristics of the kingdom of heaven by comparing it to “a man which sowed good seed in his field,” “a grain of mustard seed,” “leaven,” “treasure hid in a field,” and “a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind” (Matthew 13:24, 31, 33, 44, 47). Again, “Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom” (Matthew 25:1). Zenos recorded the Lord as saying, “I will liken thee, O house of Israel, like unto a tame olive tree” (Jacob 5:3). The auditor or reader is then left to work out the implications of the analogy.<sup>1</sup>

President Thomas S. Monson used “likening unto” when he called a patriarchal blessing “a Liahona of light to guide you unerringly to your heavenly home.”<sup>2</sup> While a patriarchal blessing is not the same as the Liahona described in the Book of Mormon, there are a number of likenesses between a patriarchal blessing as well as the Book of Mormon to a Liahona. Both contain “the word of Christ, which will point . . . a straight course to eternal bliss” (Alma 37:44). Like the compass, director, or “round ball of curious workmanship” found by Lehi (1 Nephi 16:10), a blessing and the Book of Mormon are and were prepared “by the hand of the Lord” (2 Nephi 5:12). Considering both a patriarchal blessing and the Book of Mormon to be like the Liahona, a reader is instructed figuratively to “look upon the ball, and behold the things which are written” (1 Nephi 16:26). The writing is “plain to be read” (1 Nephi 16:29). And just as successful use of the Liahona required faithful paying “heed and diligence” to the compass (Mosiah 1:16), “faith and diligence and heed” help give one “understanding concerning the ways of the Lord” (1 Nephi 16:28–29) as evidenced in the Book of Mormon and in patriarchal blessings.

### *Individual Application of “Liking Unto”*

If one takes the Book of Mormon simply as God’s words to humankind, there can be an inclination to read it shallowly and to skip over parts. However, if one takes it personally by likening it to oneself as though it were a patriarchal blessing, then every part of the book has more meaning. We learn from Nephi how focused application can take place. Regarding the words of Isaiah, Nephi said, “Ye may liken them unto you and unto all men” (2 Nephi 11:8). While the “you” here refers to Nephi’s people, it could also be taken to refer to specific persons or to an individual reader. For instance, in his not-so-veiled application of Isaiah to his brothers Laman and Lemuel, Nephi said, “That

I might more fully persuade them to believe in the Lord their Redeemer I did read unto them that which was written by the prophet Isaiah; for I did liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning” (1 Nephi 19:23). It appears that Nephi used the part that follows (comparable to Isaiah 48) to liken Isaiah’s reproofs to Laman and Lemuel who “do not stay themselves upon the God of Israel” (1 Nephi 20:2). Lehi had earlier pleaded to Laman: “O that thou mightest be like unto this river, continually running in the fountain of all righteousness!” (1 Nephi 2:9). Nephi’s later citing of Isaiah’s quotation of the Lord resonates with Lehi’s pleading: “O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments—then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea” (1 Nephi 20:18). This section of Isaiah ends with an admonition that Nephi likely implied had specific application to Laman and Lemuel: “There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked” (1 Nephi 20:22). In the hardness of their hearts, however, the brothers did not understand and were left to ask Nephi, “What meaneth these things which ye have read?” (1 Nephi 22:1).

Elder Dallin H. Oaks expressed this truth: “The scriptures can also help us obtain answers to highly specific personal questions.”<sup>3</sup> Regarding talks given at general conference, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland said, “If we teach by the Spirit and you listen by the Spirit, some one of us will touch on your circumstance, sending a personal prophetic epistle just to you.”<sup>4</sup> Speaking from personal experience, Julie M. Smith said, “Thoughtful scripture study leads to personal revelation.”<sup>5</sup> Elder Devin G. Durrant has wisely counseled us to both ponder on and memorize (to “ponderize”) chosen verses of scripture on a weekly and then yearly basis as they apply to oneself. “As you make this effort,” Elder Durrant promised, “you will feel an increase in spirituality. You will also be able to teach and lift those you love in more meaningful ways.”<sup>6</sup>

Joseph Smith’s responding to James 1:5 is an example of individual application. As Elder Holland said, “It was a divinely ordained encounter with the fifth verse of the first chapter of the book of James that led Joseph Smith to his vision of the Father and the Son, which gave birth to the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ in our time.”<sup>7</sup> Another example is Elder Jay E. Jensen’s reading the third section of the Doctrine and Covenants and being “deeply touched by the first five verses as they applied to my concerns.” Elder Jensen went on to say:

When I read a verse, I often insert my name in it. I did so with verse 5 and found the help I needed to remove my gloomy feelings: “Behold, you, Jay Jensen, have been

entrusted with these things, but how strict were your commandments; and remember also the promises which were made to you, Jay Jensen. . . .”

The words “remember also the promises” struck me with unusual power. I identified with the Prophet Joseph Smith when he read James 1:5. The words “remember also the promises” seemed to “enter with great force into every feeling of my heart. I reflected on [them] again and again” (JS—H 1:12).<sup>8</sup>

### The Book of Mormon Like a Patriarchal Blessing

In a manner similar to Elder Jensen’s account, prayerfully reading the Book of Mormon as though it were like a patriarchal blessing directed to one individually invokes “the spirit of revelation and of prophecy” (Alma 23:6).<sup>9</sup> Repeated pondering and praying about the Book of Mormon as well as one’s patriarchal blessing “in the spirit” (Enos 1:10) leads to receiving personal revelation. (A difference, of course, is that unlike a patriarchal blessing, the Book of Mormon is relevant to the personal lives of many individuals.)

Read for its individual application and in the spirit of its being likened to a patriarchal blessing, the Book of Mormon can help one “to know the mysteries [revealed truths] of God . . . according to the heed and diligence which [one gives] unto him” (Alma 12:9). It requires personal pondering and asking. As the Lord said: “If thou shalt ask, thou shalt receive revelation upon revelation, knowledge upon knowledge, that thou mayest know the mysteries and peaceable things—that which bringeth joy, that which bringeth life eternal” (D&C 42:61).

#### Identification with Book of Mormon Persons

Thinking of a patriarchal blessing as one’s personal scripture, one can also make the Book of Mormon a personal scripture by identifying himself or herself with persons in the Book of Mormon. With help from the Spirit, one can change instances of “I, Nephi,” “I, Mormon,” or “I, Moroni” to “I, [my name].” One can identify with a stripling Lamanite warrior under Helaman’s leadership (“We are as the army of Helaman”)<sup>10</sup> or with Nephi as he goes to get the brass plates (“I will go; I will do the thing the Lord commands. / I know the Lord provides a way; he wants me to obey.”)<sup>11</sup> In a Christmas message, Elder David A. Bednar suggested that one “try to imagine that you are 10 years old and a member of the multitude listening to a prophet of God foretell future events” and then that you are 15 and subsequently 50 years old to see the prophecies of Samuel the Lamanite fulfilled.<sup>12</sup> Learning that Jesus took the

little Nephite “children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them” (3 Nephi 17:21), readers can believe that Jesus knows them “one by one” and can imaginatively put themselves in the position of those little children. In the last lines of his poem, “One by One,” Elder David A. Bednar likened us to the children whom Jesus blessed:

One by one, one by one.  
He intercedes for each daughter and son.  
One by one, one by one.  
Strength from His grace gives us pow’r to become,  
One by one.<sup>13</sup>

#### The Book of Mormon as a Type of the Savior

Since “all things which have been given of God from the beginning of the world, unto man, are the typifying of him [Christ]” (2 Nephi 11:4), and since the Book of Mormon was “given of God,” the Christ-centered Book of Mormon can be considered a type of the Savior—another testament of and by Christ. Taking it a step further and listening to the words of Christ found throughout the book,<sup>14</sup> one can hear the Savior speaking specifically to him or her. For instance, one can imagine being at the Bountiful temple and hearing the Savior say: “Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world. And behold, I am the light and the life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning” (3 Nephi 11:10–11). In other words, read in a revelatory spirit, the book and its parts can become a personal revelation from the Savior.

#### A Patriarchal Blessing Likened unto the Book of Mormon

Just as the Book of Mormon can be likened unto a patriarchal blessing, so a patriarchal blessing can be likened unto the Book of Mormon. As with prophets, patriarchs speak the words “which have been delivered unto them by the Spirit and power of God” (1 Nephi 3:20). They “write the words which I [the Lord] speak unto them” (2 Nephi 29:11). Yet while each patriarch speaks the words of Christ as one of God’s instruments, he uses his own language and adapts to the level of the recipient’s understanding. Nephi taught, “The Lord God giveth light unto the understanding; for he speaketh unto men according to their language, unto their understanding” (2 Nephi 31:3; cf.

D&C 1:24). George A. Smith taught, “When the Lord reveals anything to men, he reveals it in a language that corresponds with their own.”<sup>15</sup>

Although adapted to their readers or hearers, both the Book of Mormon and a patriarchal blessing are like each other in being God-given and perfect in the sense of being complete. The word *perfect* in Matthew 5:48, according to President Russell M. Nelson, “was translated from the Greek *teleios*, which means ‘complete.’ . . . The word does not imply ‘freedom from error’; it implies ‘achieving a distant objective.’”<sup>16</sup> Reaching this “distant objective” is true of the Book of Mormon and is—or should be—likewise true of patriarchal blessings. As an ordained patriarch, I have experienced a heaven-sent flow of ideas that follow naturally and then have an end when there is no more to be said. My experiences remind me of what John W. Welch wrote about the translation of the Book of Mormon: “Almost all of the Book of Mormon as we now have it was translated between 7 April and 30 June 1829. . . . Considering the complexity, consistency, clarity, artistry, accuracy, density, and profundity of the Book of Mormon, the Prophet Joseph’s translation is a phenomenal feat. As Oliver Cowdery a few years afterwards testified, ‘These were days never to be forgotten—to sit under the sound of a voice dictated by the inspiration of heaven.’”<sup>17</sup>

As a stake patriarch, I experienced something like this. A Latter-day Saint friend said that the patriarchal blessing I gave his son was the best thing I had ever written. His wife also thanked me for “this beautifully and personally phrased blessing for my beloved son.” Yet there is an irony in this. My usual process in writing is to make a lot of notes and then to develop from them a tentative outline. I subsequently would work through several drafts as well as changing the structure of the work. Even near the end, I would repeatedly go through my composition making corrections and changes. Not so, however, with a patriarchal blessing. I record the blessing and then later transcribe it. While I may break a long sentence into two sentences or eliminate some repeated words such as “that,” the printed blessing is essentially the way I give it from first to last. My desire in giving blessings has always been that expressed by Alma: “I know that which the Lord hath commanded me, and I glory in it. I do not glory of myself, but I glory in that which the Lord hath commanded me; yea, and this is my glory, that perhaps I may be an instrument in the hands of God” (Alma 29:9).



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Prayerfully reading the Book of Mormon as though it were a patriarchal blessing directed to one individually invokes “the spirit of revelation and of prophecy” (Alma 23:6).

### *Prophets and Patriarchs as Instruments in the Hands of God*

Ancient and modern patriarchs are among those through whom as instruments come “the words of Christ.” They are like the sons of Mosiah who “fasted much and prayed much that the Lord would grant unto them a portion of his Spirit to go with them, and abide with them, that they might be an instrument in the hands of God” (Alma 17:9). In our own times an ordained patriarch typically fasts prayerfully prior to giving blessings; preparation on the part of the recipient of a blessing can likewise include fasting and prayer.

### *Blessings Given in Sacred Spaces*

Blessings in the Book of Mormon were often given in a sacred space. Nephi went to the tent of his father, a place that also served as a tabernacle, where he learned of Lehi’s dream (see 1 Nephi 3:1–2). To see the tree of life vision that his father had, Nephi was “caught away in the Spirit of the Lord, yea, into an exceedingly high mountain” (1 Nephi 11:1). King Benjamin’s people received instruction and blessings at a temple (see Mosiah 2:1), as did the people warned and blessed by Jacob (see Jacob 2:2), and, most of all, as did the righteous persons at the time of the Savior’s appearance (see 3 Nephi 11:1). In our time, patriarchal blessings are typically given in a sacred space such as the patriarch’s office or a set-apart room in the local meetinghouse.

### *Recipient Addressed by Name*

When a person receives a patriarchal blessing, he or she may reflect on how Lehi’s blessings illustrate the pattern of addressing the recipient by name. For example, Lehi said, “And now I speak unto you, Joseph, my last-born. . . . And now, blessed art thou, Joseph” (2 Nephi 3:1, 24). Receiving a blessing directly from his Maker, Enos was addressed by name: “And there came a voice unto me, saying: Enos, thy sins are forgiven thee, and thou shalt be blessed” (Enos 1:5). Addressed by name, the recipient of a patriarchal blessing can, through the Spirit, be assured that God knows him or her personally. Just as the Lord said, “Blessed art thou Lehi” and “Blessed art thou, Nephi” (1 Nephi 2:1, 19), so one receiving a patriarchal blessing may well feel the Lord saying, “Blessed art thou, [*name*].” One can be assured as well that his or her blessing is unique.

### *Hidden Things Revealed*

As is true of the Book of Mormon, a blessing can also reveal “hidden things” (Isaiah 48:6; 1 Nephi 20:6) pertaining to the future. The blessing Lehi gave his son Joseph shows that Joseph the patriarch knew through revelation that one of his descendants would be a “choice seer” whose “name shall be called after me; and it shall be after the name of his father” (2 Nephi 3:7, 15). “By the Spirit are all things made known unto the prophets” (1 Nephi 22:2)—which can be likened as well to patriarchs. President Hinckley told how the patriarch who gave him a blessing had never met him before, yet God knew Gordon Hinckley, and in time the blessing was completely fulfilled.<sup>18</sup>

Like Nephi, recipients of patriarchal blessings benefit from “having great desires to know of the mysteries of God” (1 Nephi 2:16).<sup>19</sup> Even if one “can no more than desire to believe,” that desire can open one’s heart and mind to gospel truths that enlarge the soul and enlighten the understanding (Alma 32:27–28). It requires a willingness to have “a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ” (Moroni 10:4). As an example of this, Nephi made known unto his brother Sam “the things which the Lord had manifested unto me by his Holy Spirit. And it came to pass that he believed in my words” (1 Nephi 2:17).

### *Lineage in the Book of Mormon and in Patriarchal Blessings*

By reflecting on lineage in the Book of Mormon, persons can better understand the pronouncement of lineage on themselves. In blessing his son Joseph, Lehi said, “Thou art the fruit of my loins; and I am a descendant of Joseph who was carried captive into Egypt” (2 Nephi 3:4). Knowing one’s lineage helps a person recognize the covenants which the Father “hath made to his people who are of the house of Israel” (1 Nephi 14:17). It affirms the relationship Heavenly Father desires to have with his children.

Using the example of the Book of Mormon as, among other things, an extended history of a family, a person can expand details and promises about family found in a patriarchal blessing. The blessing can serve as a précis that could be developed in one’s life story. As details in the blessing are fulfilled, one could amplify them after the pattern of the Book of Mormon. For instance, if reference is made in the blessing to one’s parents, then “I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents” (1 Nephi 1:1) could become “I, [*my*

*name*], having been born of goodly parents”—followed by a journal record of childhood family experiences. Reading Alma’s blessings on Helaman, Shiblon, and Corianton could stimulate one to reflect on, and write about, his or her own family relationships. A reference in a patriarchal blessing to marriage can be appreciated by examining the exemplary marriages of Nephi and his wife and King Lamoni and his queen. (See Nephi’s wife’s “tears and prayers” in Nephi’s behalf [1 Nephi 18:19] and Lamoni’s declaration to his faithful wife: “Blessed be the name of God, and blessed art thou” [Alma 19:12].)

### *Leadership Likenings*

A reference to leadership in a patriarchal blessing might prompt one to liken it to the leadership calling of Book of a Mormon prophet such as Mormon, who said: “Behold, I am a disciple of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I have been called of him to declare his word among his people, that they might have everlasting life” (3 Nephi 5:13). Likewise, Alma taught “according to the holy order of God, by which he had been called” (Alma 8:4), and the sons of Mosiah “taught with power and authority of God” (Alma 17:3).

### *Likenings of Tender Mercies*

If a blessing refers to “tender mercies,” it can be expanded by connection with Lehi’s experience with “the multitude of his [the Lord’s] tender mercies” (1 Nephi 8:8) and Nephi’s learning that “the tender mercies of the Lord are over all those whom he hath chosen” (1 Nephi 1:20). Just as Lehi’s family was delivered from Jerusalem and led to the new world “by the hand of the Lord” (Alma 9:22 and 2 Nephi 1:6) and just as the Book of Mormon records were entrusted to Mormon “by the hand of the Lord” (Mormon 6:6), so the recipient of a patriarchal blessing can elaborate on details in that blessing to make a record of the manifestations of the hand of the Lord in his or her own life.

### *Conditional Likenings*

A person can better understand the conditional nature of one’s patriarchal blessing by likening it to conditional blessings and promises in the Book of Mormon. A prevailing promise is the one the Lord God gave Lehi and others that *if* his people kept his commandments, they would “prosper upon the face of this land” (2 Nephi 1:9; cf. 2 Nephi 1:20; 4:4; Alma 9:13; 36:30; 37:13; 38:1). “*Inasmuch as* ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper” (1 Nephi 2:20). “And I will also be your light in the wilderness; and I will

prepare the way before you, *if* it so be that ye shall keep my commandments” (1 Nephi 17:13). “God . . . said: *If* ye will keep my commandments ye shall prosper in the land—but if ye keep not his commandments ye shall be cut off from his presence” (Alma 37:13; emphases added).

### *Blessings as Prophecies*

As the Book of Mormon teaches us, blessings can take the form of prophecies: “Before it came to pass I showed them thee; . . . even hidden things” (1 Nephi 20:5–6; cf. Isaiah 48:5–6). One may not know at first the purpose of a patriarchal blessing. Similarly, Nephi said: “The Lord hath commanded me to make these plates for a wise purpose in him, which purpose I know not” (1 Nephi 9:5). Too, some blessings may not be fulfilled until the next life.

### *Likenings of Service and Other Gifts*

A reference in a patriarchal blessing to missionary service can be expanded in one’s thinking by reflecting on missionary service in the Book of Mormon, such as that by the sons of Mosiah. A reference in a blessing to the gift of discernment can be better understood by likening it to the gifts Amulek and Alma displayed. As the “lawyers and hypocrites” began to question Amulek, “he perceived their thoughts” (Alma 10:17). To Zeezrom, Alma said that God “knows all thy thoughts, and thou seest that thy thoughts are made known unto us by his Spirit” (Alma 12:3).

### *Instructions and Admonitions*

A patriarchal blessing can contain instruction, admonitions, and warnings like those found frequently in the Book of Mormon: “For the Lord spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people” (2 Nephi 18:11; cf. Isaiah 8:11). “And they did admonish their brethren; and they were also admonished, every one by the word of God” (Mosiah 26:39). “And now I, Jacob, spake many more things unto the people of Nephi, warning them against fornication and lasciviousness, and every kind of sin, telling them the awful consequences of them” (Jacob 3:12).

### *Benefit of Both Hearing and Reading*

The Book of Mormon shows the benefit of both hearing and reading the Lord’s instructions or blessings. In his first reported vision, Lehi both “saw

and heard,” while later he was given a book to read (1 Nephi 1:6, 11). Similarly, when a patriarchal blessing is given, the recipient first hears the blessing and can feel at the time a confirmation by the Holy Ghost. Subsequently, he or she can read and reread the blessing as a personal scripture. While there is power and testimony in the spoken word, the written word allows for remembrance and purity of knowledge. As King Benjamin said to his sons about the brass plates, “I would that ye should remember that were it not for these plates, which contain these records and these commandments, we must have suffered in ignorance, even at this present time, not knowing the mysteries of God” (Mosiah 1:3). In written form, both the Book of Mormon and patriarchal blessings help persons to “remember the Lord their Redeemer” (1 Nephi 19:18). However, those who neglect their patriarchal blessings are in some ways like the Mulekites who lost track of their faith and language because of their lack of written scriptures (see Omni 1:17).

#### *Blessings Applicable to Posterity*

A blessing can apply to one’s posterity. For instance, Lemuel’s descendants eventually received the blessing Lehi intended for his second-oldest son: “O that thou mightest be like unto this valley, firm and steadfast, and immovable in keeping the commandments of the Lord!” (1 Nephi 2:10). Nearly six hundred years later, “A few of the Lamanites who were converted unto the true faith . . . were firm, and steadfast, and immovable, willing with all diligence to keep the commandments of the Lord” (3 Nephi 6:14). In his patriarchal blessings to Laman and Lemuel, Lehi promised that their descendants “shalt not utterly be destroyed; but in the end thy seed shall be blessed” (2 Nephi 4:9). In like manner, our patriarchal blessings today can also have application for our descendants, and our ancestors’ blessings can apply to us.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, since patriarchal blessings are kept in the archives of the Church, they help fulfill the Lord’s intention that “there shall be a record kept among you” (D&C 21:1), that “the more sacred things may be kept for the knowledge of [our posterity]” (1 Nephi 19:5).

#### *Interpretation of Blessings*

When Moroni called his plates “The Book of Mormon: An Account Written by the Hand of Mormon upon Plates Taken from the Plates of Nephi,” he avowed that the interpretation thereof was by “the gift of God” (title page). In saying so, Moroni foresaw Joseph Smith’s role as translator; he may well

also have envisioned latter-day readers interpreting the book “by the power of the Holy Ghost” (Moroni 10:5)—with that power manifest through gifts of the Spirit such as Moroni enumerated in his last testimony. Likewise, recipients of patriarchal blessings are expected to interpret their own blessings with heavenly help.<sup>21</sup> In other words, given by revelation, both the Book of Mormon and patriarchal blessings are understood by revelation. As the Lord said through Nephi, “If ye . . . ask me in faith, believing that ye shall receive, with diligence in keeping my commandments, surely these things shall be made known unto you” (1 Nephi 15:11).

#### *Testimony of Christ*

Just as a testimony of Christ and his gospel is central to the Book of Mormon, so it is to one’s patriarchal blessing. The blessing can be thought of as the Savior’s promises and counsel personally directed. As a personal scripture, it bears frequent rereading and even memorization. Further, this process can be enhanced by connecting words and phrases in the blessing to their appearance in the scriptures.

#### *“Small and Simple Things”*

Both the Book of Mormon and a patriarchal blessing can be considered “small and simple things,” yet “by small and simple things are great things brought to pass; and small means in many instances doth confound the wise. And the Lord God doth work by means to bring about his great and eternal purposes; and by very small means the Lord doth confound the wise and bringeth about the salvation of many souls” (Alma 37:6–7).

#### *Size of Scriptures and Blessings*

In terms of size, a typical patriarchal blessing today is larger than the General Epistle of Jude and nearly as long as the rich and complex twelfth chapter of 3 Nephi. And just as those scriptures expand greatly on repeated prayerful pondering, so a patriarchal blessing can continue to expand. Indeed, the Holy Ghost gives a person who engages in faithful pondering “the greater portion of the word, until it is given unto him to know the mysteries of God until he know them in full” (Alma 12:10). Again, “That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day” (D&C 50:24).

## Ultimate Purpose of Prophets and Patriarchs

Finally, given by God through imperfect people who serve as his instruments, the Book of Mormon and patriarchal blessings are alike in being God’s “word . . . gathered in one” (2 Nephi 29:14). Those human instruments can say with Joseph Smith, “I never told you I was perfect—but there is no error in the revelations which I have taught.”<sup>22</sup> Their purpose as prophets and patriarchs is ultimately the same as that of patriarchs anciently: to help bring the children of Israel into the presence of God—into his rest, “which rest is the fulness of his glory” (D&C 84:24).<sup>23</sup> **RE**

### Notes

1. An exception is the explanation by Jesus of the parable of the sower in response to the request by his disciples, “Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field” (Matthew 13:36).

2. Thomas S. Monson, “Your Patriarchal Blessing: A Liahona of Light,” *Ensign*, November 1986, 67.

3. Dallin H. Oaks, in *Scripture Study—the Power of the Word Teacher Manual*, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2001), 45.

4. Jeffrey R. Holland, “An Ensign to the Nations,” *Ensign*, May 2011, 113.

5. Julie M. Smith, *Search, Ponder, and Pray: A Guide to the Gospels* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2014), [xi].

6. Devin G. Durrant, “My Heart Pondereth Them Continually,” *Ensign*, November 2015, 112.

7. Jeffrey R. Holland, “My Words . . . Never Cease,” *Ensign*, May 2008, 92.

8. Jay E. Jensen, “Remember Also the Promises,” *Ensign*, November 1992, 80.

9. While the phrase “the spirit of prophecy” is found once in the Bible (Revelation 19:10), it or its expanded form to include revelation is found throughout the Book of Mormon. In addition to those already cited, some notable instances are found in the title page; 2 Nephi 25:4; Jacob 1:6; 4:6; Alma 3:27; 4:13, 20; 5:47; 6:8; 8:24; 10:12; 12:7; 13:26; 16:5; 17:3; 25:16; 37:15; 43:2; and 3 Nephi 3:19.

10. Janice Kapp Perry, “We’ll Bring the World His Truth,” *Children’s Songbook* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989), 172.

11. Wilford N. Hansen Jr. and Lisa Tensmeyer Hansen, “Nephi’s Courage,” *Children’s Songbook*, 120.

12. David A. Bednar, “The Light and the Life of the World” (Christmas devotional, 6 December 2015), <https://www.lds.org/broadcasts/article/christmas-devotional/2015/12/the-light-and-the-life-of-the-world>.

13. David A. Bednar (words) and Paul Cardall (music), “One by One,” *New Era*, July 2016, 39–40.

14. A chart of the words of Christ in the Book of Mormon is found in the appendix to Richard Dilworth Rust, “Taste and Feast: Images of Eating and Drinking in the Book of Mormon,” *BYU Studies* 33, no. 4 (1993): 751–52.

15. George A. Smith, in *Journal of Discourses* (London: Latter-day Saints’ Book Depot, 1869), 12:335 (15 November 1863).

16. Russell M. Nelson, “Perfection Pending,” *Ensign*, November 1995, 86.

17. John W. Welch, “How long did it take Joseph Smith to translate the Book of Mormon?,” *Ensign*, January 1988, quoting Cowdery, Letter 1. (See Joseph Smith—History 1:71n), <https://www.lds.org/ensign/1988/01/i-have-a-question/how-long-did-it-take-joseph-smith-to-translate-the-book-of-mormon?lang=eng>.

18. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Seek Ye the Kingdom of God,” *Ensign*, May 2006, 82. “When I was a young man, a mere boy of 11, I received a patriarchal blessing from a man I had never seen before and never saw thereafter. It is a remarkable document, a prophetic document. It is personal, and I will not read extensively from it. However, it contains this statement: ‘The nations of the earth shall hear thy voice and be brought to a knowledge of the truth by the wonderful testimony which thou shalt bear.’ When I was released from my mission in England, I took a short trip on the continent. I had borne my testimony in London; I did so in Berlin and again in Paris and later in Washington, D.C. I said to myself that I had borne my testimony in these great capitals of the world and had fulfilled that part of my blessing. That proved to be a mere scratching of the surface. Since then I have lifted my voice on every continent, in cities large and small, all up and down from north to south and east to west across this broad world—from Cape Town to Stockholm, from Moscow to Tokyo to Montreal, in every great capital of the world. It is all a miracle.”

19. Nephi’s desire “to know the things that my father had seen, and believing that the Lord was able to make them known unto me” was fulfilled by his remarkable vision of the tree of life and its meaning (1 Nephi 11:1; see 1 Nephi 11–14).

20. Blessings of direct ancestors are accessible through “My Account and Ward” at lds.org.

21. Stake patriarchs, on the other hand, are not supposed to interpret the patriarchal blessings they give.

22. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, 1980), 369.

23. Ehat and Cook, in *The Words of Joseph Smith*, 9, quote Joseph Smith as saying: “This is why Abraham blessed his posterity: He wanted to bring them into the presence of God.”