

Parallelism and Chiasmus in Benjamin's Speech

John W. Welch

A stunning array of literary structures appears in Benjamin's speech, purposefully and skillfully organized.

Benjamin's use of chiasmus, all types of parallelisms, and many other forms of repeating patterns adds focus and emphasis to the main messages and the persuasive qualities of this text. The following discussions and textual figures explore the main structural features of Benjamin's speech.

King Benjamin was a sensitive and articulate man. He was interested in making the effort to arrange his words into a careful, artistic form. His speech, given at the coronation of his son and as part of a high and holy convocation of his people, does not appear to have been delivered extemporaneously. It was well thought out, and before it was distributed by Benjamin in written form, his text appears to have been beautifully polished. In Mosiah 2–5, one finds some superb examples of high literary achievement.

Studying the structure of Benjamin's speech enhances appreciation for this composition as a literary masterpiece. Writing can be appreciated in its own right only in light of the literary tools and ideals available to the author. So understood, Benjamin's speech stands as a monumental literary composition, which unfortunately has long been underestimated. Mark Twain, speaking of the Book of Mormon in general, once called it "chloroform in print."¹ In one sense, judged by the literary standards of Mark Twain's day, Benjamin's speech may not measure up. But judged in light of the ancient conventions and stylistic preferences that were evidently operative in Benjamin's day, his speech shines again as it did on the ceremonious day when these words were spoken and received in public.

Parallelism and Repetition in General

Dominant features of Benjamin's style are parallelism and repetition. At least fourteen types of parallelism appear throughout the three chapters. Donald W. Parry has demonstrated that "the Book of Mormon is replete with parallelisms. The poetic patterns serve, as they do in the Bible, to emphasize messages, define and expand them, make them more memorable, and structure them."² Over fifty times throughout his speech, Benjamin employed simple or extended synthetic parallelism, which is composed of two or more lines, the additional lines providing emphasis, explanation, or synthesis of the initial thought. As James Muilenburg explains, "The parallel line does not simply repeat what has been said, but enriches it, deepens it, transforms it by adding fresh nuances and bringing in new elements, renders it more concrete and vivid and telling."³

Benjamin's speech features techniques such as simple and extended synonymy; simple, repeated, and extended alternates; synthetic parallelisms; climax, anabasis, catabasis; contrasting ideas and antithetical parallelism; detailing and working out. I will not take space here to define these varieties of parallelism, since basic definitions are readily available⁴ and the rhetorical effect of each parallelism is fairly obvious once the arrangement is pointed out. A full index of Benjamin's parallelisms appears in the unabridged version of this volume. Only a few illustrations and observations will be given here.

A prevalent stylistic form that King Benjamin drew on is *simple, direct parallelism*. For example, Mosiah 2:18 (all scriptural references in this study, unless otherwise noted, are to Mosiah) says:

a Behold, ye have *called* me your *king*; a And if I, whom ye *call* your *king*, b do *labor* to *serve* you, b then ought not ye to *labor* to *serve* one another?

This passage is an example of poetic parallelism, or “words, phrases, or sentences that correspond, compare, contrast, or repeat.”⁵

Likewise, Benjamin effectively taught the principle of humility by using *synthetic parallelism* in 2:24:

[God] doth immediately bless you; and therefore he hath paid you.

And ye are still indebted unto him, and are, and will be, forever and ever.

Benjamin’s main thought in this passage was that God has been abundantly generous to his people, and through extended synthetic parallelism he went on to explain that people should show humility and gratitude on account of those many blessings.

Other types of parallelism in Benjamin’s speech include *antithetical parallelism*:

ye will not have a mind to injure one another, but to live peaceably (4:13);

alternates:

a the greatness of God, b and your own nothingness, a and his goodness and long-suffering towards you,
b unworthy creatures (4:11);

and *contrasting ideas*, such as yielding to the natural man versus becoming a saint (see 3:19). The feature of contrasting is most evident in Benjamin’s parallelisms.

Another important feature of Benjamin’s style consists of his *repetition* of key words that reverberate through the text and seem to be further evidence of deliberate organization. Certain themes echo through the speech. Such repeating themes provide continuity and structure to King Benjamin’s message and again form an indication of structure. For example, the phrase *list to obey* occurs several times in section 2 of the speech (for definitions and descriptions of the seven main section divisions, see below). The concept of Benjamin’s calling as king in 2:19 finds an echo in 2:26. Contention, serving the evil spirit, and becoming an enemy to all righteousness are themes that are found in section 2 and that surface again in section 4. The concept of the innocence or salvation of children appears three times in the speech. Keeping the commandments arises in sections 1, 2, 5, and 6. Remembrance characterizes sections 2, 5, 6, and 7; and salvation through Christ is a thread that runs through five of the seven sections: 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7. Structures such as duplication (“remember, remember”), chiasmus, many *ands*, or other forms all contribute to the stylistic continuity and coherence of Benjamin’s message.

Chiasmus

Probably the most interesting literary device used in Benjamin’s speech is the variety of parallelism known as *chiasmus*. The technique of presenting one set of words or ideas in one order and then retracing them in the opposite order operates in this text on several levels: in major structures, in extended word patterns, and also in smaller, simpler configurations. Benjamin’s speech lends itself unusually well to chiastic analysis.

Defining Chiasmus

Chiasmus is the literary technique of creating double structures in which the second half of a composition mirrors and balances the first half, but in reverse order. In general, the device is useful for several literary purposes, especially for concentrating attention on the main point of the passage by placing it at the central turning point rather than in a topic sentence at the beginning of a paragraph, as is the trend with modern writers. King Benjamin was particularly effective in creating chiastic structures. Many of his chiasms have one clear central point (see 2:27; 3:11–16; 4:6–7; 5:6–8), while others contain a focal point of two or more lines, forming a parallelism at the center of the chiasm. One may assume that chiasmus served Benjamin's purposes in several ways, for it can aid memorization, teach by means of calculated repetition, and confer a sense of completeness or closure to a lengthy textual development. Chiastic structures can also convey the meaning of a passage in many ways beyond the meanings of isolated words and individual phrases.⁶

In many cases the use of chiasmus is a conscious choice, but it need not always be intentional. Poets, authors, composers, and musicians create artistic works without being aware of every facet of their compositions. When the degree and precision of chiastic repetition is high enough, however—as in 3:18–19 and 5:10–12—it is likely that the author was aware of its existence. Thus it is plausible that Homer and the Homeric bards were aware that when Odysseus in the underworld asks the shade, or spirit, of his mother Anticleia seven things, she responds by addressing these seven questions in exactly the reverse order.

When does it make sense to speak of a passage as being chiastic or not? Passages can manifest varying degrees of “chiasticity.” Some passages are short, and their inverted order is obvious and noncontroversial. For example, Genesis 1:27 reads, “[a] God created man [b] in his own image; [b] in the image of God [a] created he him.” The a–b–b–a order here is objectively verifiable. At least ten a–b–b–a chiasms occur in Benjamin's speech, while other parts of the text are longer, or the structure is less certain. Thus one must work and think in terms of degrees of chiasticity.⁷

Several conditions should be satisfied before one can speak meaningfully of chiasmus in a given passage. The more a particular text fulfills these criteria, the higher its degree of chiasticity. Chiasms are stronger when they consist of elements that are *objectively observable* in the text, when they are apparently placed in a passage *intentionally* for stylistic purposes, and if they are the dominant forms that operate across a *literary unit* as a whole and not merely upon fragments or sections that overlap or cut across significant organizational lines in the text. Many chiasms in Benjamin's speech consist of elements that are indeed objectively observable in the text and do not require imaginative explanations.

Strong extended chiasmus at the verbal level is found in 3:18–19, 5:10–12, and a few other places. These chiasms exhibit *balance*—having elements on both sides of the proposed focal point nearly equal in terms of number of words, lines, or elements—and create a convincing *sense of return* and completion from the beginning to the end. Similarly, the more *compact* the chiasm—or the fewer irrelevancies between its elements—and the *longer* the chiasm, the higher its degree of chiasticity. Benjamin has many examples of strong chiasmus throughout his speech.

Chiasmus is a dominant feature in a passage when it is the main structuring device present, as appears to be the case in several passages in Benjamin's speech (see, for example, 2:26; 3:18–19). Of course, a powerful structural design revolves around *major concepts*, *unique phrases*, or focal words, and in some instances the only occurrences of a word or phrase in the Book of Mormon are found in two chiastically matched parts of Benjamin's speech (“natural man” 3:19; “have and are” 2:34 and 4:21; “left hand” 5:10, 12). Moreover, because the crux of chiasmus falls generally at its *central turning point*, it is significant that Benjamin often placed a well-defined centerpiece at

the heart of his chiasmic structures. Many factors like these give evidence of a high degree of chiasmaticity in Benjamin's speech. His application of this form was fluid, consistent, and well balanced, yet it does not draw undue attention to itself.

Of course, chiasmus is not exclusive to ancient Hebrew texts, but has also been found in Akkadian, Ugaritic, Egyptian, Aramaic, Greek, and Latin texts.⁸ Although chiasmus occurs in many ancient works of literature, and also to an extent in modern authors, it is employed more extensively and purposefully in the Hebrew Bible than anywhere else. Complex chiasms, such as those identified in Benjamin's speech, are recognized as a fairly salient characteristic of ancient Hebrew composition.

Some chiasms are lost in the translation process, but larger chiasmic patterns and parallelisms are usually preserved; the Book of Mormon is no exception to this rule. Of all poetical devices, extended chiasms and parallelisms are among the most likely to survive a translation. Although our knowledge is somewhat limited in this regard, it appears that several of these structures were faithfully preserved through Joseph Smith's translation process.

In Joseph Smith's day, not much was known about chiasmus. In England, two authors had written books in the 1820s about Hebrew literature in the Bible, and they explored the possibility of chiasmus in the Bible. But the idea took root slowly, and it was not until much later that biblical commentators endorsed chiasmus. Furthermore, those pioneering volumes of the 1820s do not seem to have found their way to the United States by Joseph Smith's day. And even if they did, there is no evidence that Joseph Smith was aware of them. The chance that Joseph Smith unconsciously assimilated chiasmus through his familiarity with the Bible assumes a great deal about literary osmosis.

What does the presence of chiasmus in the Book of Mormon prove?⁹ The presence of various forms of parallelism and chiasm in Benjamin's speech is significant in any literary evaluation of its qualities. It demonstrates that this text was composed carefully, meticulously, purposefully, and elegantly, in a manner consistent with the basic parallelistic norms of ancient Hebrew style.

The Main Divisions of Benjamin's Text

In overview, it is apparent that Benjamin's text divides naturally into seven sections, which are demarcated either by intervening ceremony or by abrupt shifts in subject matter. As can be seen below, after the preliminary account of preparations for the speech, section 1 (found in 2:9–28) is separated from section 2 (2:31–41) by the coronation ceremony itself (2:29–30). Between sections 2 and 3 (the latter of which is 3:2–10), Benjamin began as if anew: "And again my brethren I would call your attention [almost as if they had taken a break or he had lost their attention], for I have somewhat more to speak unto you" (3:1). After section 4 (covering 3:11–27), the people fall to the ground and are forgiven of their sins (4:1–3) in a purification ceremony. And after sections 5 and 6 (4:4–12 and 4:13–30, respectively) and before the final section 7 (namely, 5:6–15), the people enter into a covenant to continue living according to the will of God and to be obedient to the commandments, thereby honoring the new kings who should command them for the remainder of their days (5:1–5). Only the boundaries between sections 3 and 4 and between sections 5 and 6 are not delineated by explicit pronouncements. These, however, are formed by shifts in meaning and focus that are largely dictated by the fact that section 3 is the angel's testimony of the life of Jesus and section 5 is Benjamin's testimony of the necessity of faith in Jesus. The shift from section 3 to 4 is from a focus on Christ and his atonement to a focus on mankind and what mankind must do in order to take

advantage of the atonement; the shift from section 5 to section 6 is basically from faith to works: again, from believing in God to acting consonant with that belief.

Overview of Benjamin's Speech

Preparations (1:1–2:8) Successor named and new name to be given People gathered but not yet numbered Tower constructed

1. All are indebted to God (2:9–28)

God is the heavenly king God has physically created and sustains all people People should serve and thank God The hope of exaltation after death

First break (2:29–30) Coronation announcement

2. Consequences of obedience or disobedience (2:31–41)

Obedience brings victory and prosperity Prohibition of contention (2:32) Rebellion and disobedience bring pain and anguish All are eternally indebted to heavenly Father

Second break (2:41–3:1) Remember, remember, the Lord has spoken Benjamin calls again for attention

3. The angel's testimony of Christ's deeds (3:2–10)

Lord Omnipotent will come down in power and goodness The sacred name of God The suffering and death of Jesus Christ

4. Sanctification by the atonement of Christ (3:11–27)

The only possibility of reconciliation Putting off the natural man and becoming a saint People will be judged according to their works

Third break (3:27–4:4) Thus has the Lord commanded, Amen The people fall to the ground and confess Atoning blood is applied; joy and remission Benjamin begins to speak again

5. Benjamin's testimony of God's goodness (4:4–12)

God is good, patient, long-suffering Believe in God God is all powerful, loving, and glorious Call upon the name of the Lord daily

6. Righteous behavior of the redeemed (4:13–30)

Living in peace and social order Prohibition of contention (4:14) Because God imparts, all must give to those in need Avoid guilt and sin

Fourth break (4:30–5:6) Remember, and perish not Covenant response of the people Benjamin accepts their covenant

7. The sons and daughters of God (5:6–15)

God has spiritually begotten you this day The only head to make you free from debt
Excommunication upon breach of obligations Covenant people know God by serving him The hope
of exaltation after death

Final acts (6:1–3) Names recorded of all who accepted the name Mosiah consecrated Priests
appointed People dismissed

Although the interrelationships between these sections will not be discussed until their full texts have been examined below, the nature of the three ceremonies conducted during the course of the speech deserves attention at the outset. In the first ceremony, Mosiah₂ (Benjamin's son) was given charge over the people as their king and commander (2:29–30). In the second, staged at the middle of the speech, all the people were cleansed and forgiven of their wrongs (4:1–4). The third placed the people under the obligation of covenant to obey the commandments of God (5:1–5) or, in other words, to obey the commandments given of the new king (2:31). Thus the pattern of the ceremonies is a–b–a, namely, establishing the king over the people, cleansing the people, establishing the people under the king. Therefore, the entire ceremony was more than just a coronation; it was a ritual that recognized the reciprocity of relations and responsibilities between a ruler and his subjects, involving the entire nation, its purity, and its duty of civil obedience.

Certain general balances are achieved in the broad structure of these seven sections. First, their length is consistent: there are three long sections (1, 4, 6) containing 20, 17, and 18 verses respectively, and four short sections (2, 3, 5, 7) with 11, 9, 9, and 10 verses each. Second, the direction regularly alternates between expressing man's ultimate subservience to the king in heaven (1, 3, 5, 7) and formulating a humanistic basis of ethical behavior (2, 4, 6). In section 1, man was instructed to thank his heavenly king for the ultimate blessings of life; in 3, the ministry of Christ the King was prophesied; in 5, Benjamin testified of God; and in 7, the people took upon themselves the name of Christ through a covenant. In the even-numbered sections, however, the attention is directed to man, his accountability for his rebellious state, the necessity of putting off his natural state, and becoming charitable.

We now turn to the organization and structure of these seven individual sections.

Section 1 (2:9–28)

Outline. Benjamin started his speech with introductory material explaining why he had gathered the people together, and he reminded them—in chiasmic form—of their responsibilities as citizens of the land and as subjects of God.

**A Purpose of the assembly B What is man? C The laws in Benjamin's kingdom D Man
cannot boast of service to fellowmen E Imperatives to serve one another and thank God
D' Man cannot boast of service to God C' The laws in God's kingdom B' What is man? A'
Purpose of the assembly**

From the very beginning, then, Benjamin introduced his main form of organization—chiasmus—and also the fundamental point of his speech: people on earth are involved in a crucial relationship with God and with each other.

Detailed Analysis. When looking at the words and phrases in Benjamin's speech, one can readily see certain important parallelistic forms: simple synonymous (2:9, ye that have assembled yourselves together, you that can hear my words), extended synonymous (2:11, chosen by this people, consecrated by my father, was suffered by the hand of the Lord), simple alternate (2:22, all that he requires of you is to keep his commandments and he has promised you that if ye would keep his commandments), detailing (2:14, why he has labored), climactic forms (2:9, 11, 13–14, etc.), like paragraph endings (2:16–17), repetition and duplication of words, and many other forms, including, of course, chiasmus. The full text of section 1 can be displayed as follows:

A Purpose of the assembly

2:9 a My brethren all ye that have *assembled yourselves together* b you that can hear my words which I shall speak unto you this day a For I have not *commanded you to come up hither* b to trifle with the words which I shall speak

1 but that you should hearken unto me 2 and open your ears that ye may hear 3 and your hearts that ye may understand 4 and your minds that the mysteries of God may be unfolded to your view

2:10 a I have not *commanded you to come up hither* that ye should fear me

B What is man?

a Or that ye should think that *I of myself* b am more than a *mortal man* 2:11 a But I am *like as yourselves* b subject to all manner of infirmities in *body and mind*

1 Yet I have been chosen by this *people* 2 and consecrated by *my father* 3 and was suffered by the hand of *the Lord* 4 that I should be a ruler and a king over this *people*

And have been kept and preserved by his matchless power to serve you with all the might, mind, and strength which the Lord hath granted unto me

C The laws in Benjamin's kingdom

2:12 a *I say* unto you that b as I have been suffered to spend *my days* c in your *service* d even up to *this time* e and have not sought *gold nor silver* f nor *any manner* of riches of you

2:13 1 Neither have I suffered that ye should be confined in dungeons 2 nor that ye should make slaves one of another 3 nor that ye should murder 4 or plunder 5 or steal 6 or commit adultery 7 nor even have I suffered that ye should commit any manner of wickedness 8 and have taught you that ye should keep the commandments of the Lord in all things which he hath commanded you

2:14 b And even I myself have labored with *mine own hands* c that I might *serve* you e and that ye should not be laden with *taxes* f and that there should *nothing* come upon you which was grievous to be borne a and of all these things which *I have spoken* d ye yourselves are witnesses *this day*

D Man cannot boast of service to fellowmen

2:15 a Yet my brethren I have not *done these things* that I might *boast* b neither do I *tell* these things that thereby I might *accuse* you b but I *tell* you these things that ye may know that I can *answer* a clear conscience before God this day 2:16 a Behold I say unto you that because I said unto you that I had spent my days *in your service* I do not desire to *boast*

a for I have *only been in the service of God* 2:17 b and behold I *tell* you these things that ye may *learn* wisdom b that ye may *learn* that a when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are *only in the service of your God*

E Imperatives to serve one another and thank God

2:18 a Behold ye have called me *your king* a and *if I whom ye call your king* b do *labor to serve* you c then *ought not ye* b to *labor to serve* one another?

2:19 a And behold also *if I whom ye call your king* b who has spent his days in your *service* b and yet has been in the *service of God* d do merit any *thanks* from you c O how you *ought* d to *thank* a *your heavenly King!*

D' Man cannot boast of service to God

2:20 a I say unto you my brethren b that if you should render all the *thanks and praise* c which your *whole soul* has power to possess

1 to that God who has *created you* 2 and has kept and *preserved you* 3 and has caused that ye should rejoice 4 and has granted that ye should *live* in peace one with another

2:21 a I say unto you b that if ye should *serve* him

5 who has *created you* from the beginning 6 and is *preserving you* from day to day 7 by lending you breath that ye may *live* and move and do according to your own will 8 and even supporting you from one moment to another

b I say if ye should *serve* him c with all your *whole souls* a yet ye would be unprofitable servants

C' The laws in God's kingdom

2:22 a And behold *all* that he requires of you is to keep his commandments b and *he has promised* you c that *if ye would keep his commandments* d ye should *prosper* in the land

a and he *never* doth vary b from that which *he hath said* c therefore *if ye do keep his commandments* d he doth bless you and *prosper* you

B' What is man?

2:23 And now in the first place he hath *created you* and *granted* unto you your lives for which ye are *indebted* unto him

2:24 And secondly he doth require that ye should do as he hath commanded you for which if ye do he doth immediately *bless* you and therefore he hath *paid* you and ye are still *indebted* unto him and are and will be forever and ever Therefore of what have ye to boast?

2:25 a And now *I ask* b can ye say aught of yourselves? a *I answer* you, b Nay. Ye cannot say a that ye are even as much as the *dust of the earth* b yet ye were *created* a of the *dust of the earth* but behold *it belongeth* b to him who *created* you

2:26 And I, even I, whom ye call your king am no better than ye yourselves are a for I am also of the *dust* b and ye behold that I am *old* b and am about to yield up this *mortal* frame a to its mother *earth*

A' Purpose of the assembly

2:27 Therefore as I said unto you that I had served you walking with a clear conscience before God, even so I at this time *have caused that ye should assemble yourselves together*

1 that I might be found blameless 2 and that your *blood* should not come upon me when I shall stand to be *judged* of God of the things whereof he hath commanded me concerning you

2:28 I say unto you that *I have caused that ye should assemble yourselves together*

3 that I might rid my garments of your *blood* at this period of time when I am about to *go down* to my grave 4 that I might *go down* in peace and my immortal spirit may join the choirs above in singing the praises of a *just* God.

Comments. Benjamin used a number of rhetorical techniques in section 1. One is balancing the equivalent words and phrases. For example, “service” and “riches” in the first part of C balance “serve” and “taxes” in the second part of C. In E and D’, serving fellowman and God balances thanking and praising God. The association between service and thanksgiving was probably closer in Benjamin’s mind than it is in ours, since ancient Semitic languages speak of thanks more in terms of grateful love, blessing, or praise (compare 2:20), which was to be rendered as service was rendered. Effective contrasts are also achieved in C, C’, and E by means of the contraposition of the king on earth against the king in heaven.

We also encounter here frequent emphatic uses of quadripartite arrangements. Such figures are central in A, B, C (twice), D’ (twice), and A’, and are consistently present throughout the speech.

The continuity of this section was enhanced by Benjamin’s astute bridging from one thought to the next. After the initial order had been established from A to E, Benjamin retreated, connecting each step with a previous one. In E, two points were made, that man should serve his fellowman and that man should render “thanks to his God. In D’ the same ideas appear, but in the reverse order. The central quatrains of D’ describe the source of man’s indebtedness and, as such, they prepare the audience for the interrogatories of B’. The transition from C’ to B’ focuses on mortality, which leads back to Benjamin’s preparations for his death and hence to the very purpose of the assembly in A’.

The chiasmic outline exposes the development of Benjamin's thoughts as well as his style. When Benjamin repeated, he not only inverted but intensified what had previously been said. Accordingly, A' adds a new dimension to A, for he first tells the purpose of the assembly from the audience's viewpoint by indicating to them what they could expect to do and to receive at the assembly, but the second explains the purpose of the assembly from Benjamin's perspective and outlines his own purposes. Subsection B is a humble statement to be made by a king, but it is not nearly as abasing as the statements in B'. In B man is simply a mortal being subject to infirmities, while in B' he is irreparably in debt to God and is less than the dust of the earth. In C the topic is the civil order in Benjamin's kingdom, but in C' the operation of obligations under God's kingship is described. D asserts (and this is often misunderstood) that one cannot boast a record of service to other people because all service is unavoidably service to God. D' then adds the further humiliation that one cannot boast a record of service to God because, despite our most diligent efforts, we are all unprofitable servants to him.

The turning point at E contains the two moral imperatives—to serve one another and to thank God—written in concise parallel form. The logic of verses 2:18–19 is discussed below in conjunction with similar reasoning found at 4:21. The shift that occurs at the center of this section moves from giving an accounting of benefits, which had been received by Benjamin (B) or by the people (C, D), to becoming profoundly aware of the obligations of gratitude and dependence that derive from the receipt of those blessings (D', B'). The ultimate reciprocation and fulfillment of these obligations does not, however, enter the ceremony until the covenant is consummated in section 7.

Section 2 (2:31–41)

Outline. In section 2, Benjamin explains in further detail the relationship between God and his children and the consequences of rebellion.

F Temporal blessings of obedience G Willful rebellion against God condemned H The accountability of the people G' Willful rebellion against God condemned F' Eternal blessings of obedience

This section's central point, as seen in its chiasmic structure, is the accountability of the people to their creator. Benjamin's purpose was to turn the focus of his people from the temporal blessings of obedience to the more important eternal blessings of dwelling in the presence of God and having "never-ending happiness" (2:41).

Detailed Analysis. The second section of the speech employs various arrangements of chiasmic and alternating lines to create a meaningful formal basis on which a systematically complete message is imposed. The execution of chiasmus in this instance is carried out with substantial accuracy and, indeed, with several noteworthy variations that promote cohesion in the transitions from one subsection to the next. Benjamin showcased his versatility here, since while subduing the distinction between human and divine institutions that dominated the chiasmic augmentations in the first section, he proceeded to new contrasts to display his thoughts.

F Temporal blessings of obedience

2:31 And now my brethren I would that ye should do as ye have hitherto done

a¹ As ye have kept *my* commandments a² and also the commandments of *my father* b¹ and have prospered
b² and have been kept from falling into the hands of your *enemies*

a¹ even so if ye shall keep the commandments of *my son* a² or the commandments of *God* which shall be delivered unto you by him b¹ ye shall *prosper* in the land b² and your *enemies* shall have no power over you.

G Willful rebellion against God condemned

2:32 But, O my people, beware lest there shall arise contentions among you

a and ye *list to obey* the *evil spirit* b which was *spoken* of by my father Mosiah 2:33 b for behold there is a *wo pronounced* upon him a who *listeth to obey* that *spirit*

for if he *listeth to obey* him and *remaineth and dieth* in his sins the same drinketh *damnation* to his own soul for he receiveth for his wages an *everlasting punishment*

H The accountability of the people

a having *transgressed* the law of God *contrary* to his own knowledge 2:34 b I say unto you that there are not any among you except it be your little children that have not been *taught* concerning *these things* c but what *knoweth* d that ye are eternally indebted to your heavenly *Father* e to render to him all that you *have* and *are*

1 and also have been *taught* concerning the records which contain the *prophecies*

2 which have been *spoken* by the holy *prophets* 3 even down to the time our *father*

Lehi left Jerusalem 2:35 4 and also all that has been *spoken* by our *fathers* until now

d and behold also they spake that which was commanded them of the *Lord* e therefore they are *just* and *true* 2:36 c and now I say unto you my brethren that after ye have *known* b and have been *taught* all *these things* a if ye should *transgress* and go *contrary* to that which has been spoken

G' Willful rebellion against God condemned

a that ye do *withdraw* yourselves from the Spirit of the Lord b that it may have *no place* in you c to guide you in *wisdom's paths* that ye may be blessed, prospered, and preserved 2:37 d I say unto you that the man that doeth this the same cometh out in open *rebellion* *against God* d' therefore he *listeth to obey* the *evil spirit* c' and becometh an enemy to all *righteousness* b' therefore the Lord has *no place* in him a' for he *dwelleth not* in unholy temples

2:38 a therefore if that man repenteth not and *remaineth and dieth* an enemy to God b the demands of divine *justice* do awaken c his immortal soul to a lively sense of his own *guilt* which doth cause him to shrink from the presence of the Lord c' and doth fill his breast with *guilt* and pain and anguish which is like an unquenchable fire whose flame ascendeth up forever and ever 2:39 b' and now I say unto you that *mercy* hath no claim on that man a' therefore his *final doom* is to endure a never-ending torment

F' Eternal blessings of obedience

2:40 O all ye old men and also ye young men and you little children who can understand my words

a For I have *spoken* plainly unto you that ye might understand *remembrance* of the awful situation of those that have fallen into transgression. 2:41 b I pray that ye should awake to a *commandments of God* c' for behold they are *blessed* and *happy* state of those that keep the faithful to the end they are received into heaven that thereby they may dwell with *God* in a state of *never-ending happiness*. b' O *remember, remember* that these things are true a' For the Lord God hath *spoken* it.

Comments. We can first observe that the general tone of this section is not negative or pessimistic, even though a fair amount of its material would add punch to any hellfire sermon. That material, however, does not occupy the prime positions of dominance in the balance of this passage. The middle and the extremes of section 2 are promissory, optimistic, and promote the righteous desires of the subjects to continue living in civil and spiritual obedience. The negative topics are introduced to create rhetorical opposition and emphasis.

The theme of section 2 is introduced in subsection F, directly following the coronation of Mosiah₂: the king promises victory and prosperity in reciprocation for loyalty and obedience. Subsection F is essentially an eight-line double structure naming four lawgivers, namely, Benjamin, his father Mosiah₁, his heir Mosiah₂, and God. For Benjamin, political orders were sanctioned by two sources: the inherited right and the divine right. Thus Mosiah₁ stood to Benjamin as God stood to Mosiah₂ as the respective sources of these two sovereign rights (lines a²). In b¹ and b² the blessings of the monarchy were reinstated in a continuation from the kingship of Benjamin to the reign of his son. Perpetuity of legal powers from one administration to the next is the crucial aspect of any succession.

In subsection F, physical blessings alone occupy the attention of the orator; but in F', he was concerned about blessings "in all things both temporal and spiritual." Subsection F', though not engaged in assuring the succession of the king's rights, is devoted to increasing the subjects' propensity to obey. Benjamin prayed that the people would remember the consequences of disobedience. The central lines in F' contrast the awful situation of those who disobey with the blessed and happy state of the righteous. Two lines (c and c') then repeat "blessed" and "happy," words that appear at the center of the first line, with the interesting gravitation of "blessed" toward the beginning of the following line and that of "never-ending happiness" toward the end of the same line. In good chiastic passages, frequently accentuated words tend to gravitate to opposite extremes of corresponding lines; this is a minor point, but it is in the details that art must meticulously measure up. In addition, "blessed" and "happy" in F' balance the ideas of prosperity and victory in F; Benjamin's words, contrasted with those of God in F', harmonize with the posture of the lawgivers in F. Thus F and F' form a well-matched pair in both content and structure. F' is slightly more elaborate, but this is the result of the impulse to embellish the second of each pair as it elevates the original idea. This elevation consistently occurs in section 2, since both F' and G' are considerably more elaborate than F and G.

Subsection G features a short chiastic section, followed by four lines that mention listing to obey the evil spirit, remaining and dying in sins, damnation, and everlasting punishment as coterminous ideas.

Subsection G introduces the topics that receive greater treatment in G'. The bond between them is secured by the reoccurrence of the four elements: listing to obey the evil spirit, "remaineth and dieth" in opposition to God, the guilt and anguish of damnation, and a final doom. The first part of G' by itself exhibits a fine chiastic composition, made most apparent by the repetition of "no place" (b and b'). Significant is the association of "withdraw[ing] yourselves from the Spirit of the Lord"—which is done voluntarily, with the withdrawal of the Spirit—which is

necessary, “for he dwelleth not in unholy temples” (a and a’). Being guided in wisdom’s path is the obverse of following the evil spirit into antagonism against righteousness (c and c’). The center of G’ declares that a man who willingly withdraws from the Spirit is in open rebellion against God. Thus the logic of the passage is: if you withdraw from God he must withdraw from you, for without any guidance of wisdom you become an enemy of all that is good, and this means you stand in rebellion against God. The “wo” that was announced in general terms in G (b) is then pronounced in specific language upon such a person in G’.

Subsection G’ contains a mature psychological attitude toward punishment. Its central motif portrays two different reactions of the individual to the realization of his own culpability; these reactions appear to modify the two terms introduced in G—“damnation” and “everlasting punishment.” Thus Benjamin seems to hold that the judgment will be self-executing, for “damnation” can be linked with “shrink[ing] from the presence of the Lord,” and “eternal punishment” is identifiable with the anguish of the soul “which is like an unquenchable fire.” In this picture, punishment is strictly internal and existential; no external decree or fiery torture is necessary for spiritual anguish.

In the second half of G’, Benjamin made a successful effort to maintain equal lengths of lines in corresponding parts, even though the redundant addition of “and pain and anguish” was necessary in one case. The final line of G’ also functions in a remarkable way, for while “never-ending” relates back to “remaineth” an enemy to God, it also looks ahead to the contrast with “never-ending happiness” created in the concluding passage.

The middle and turning point of section 2 is subsection H. It is chiasmically framed by several lines (a, b, c, d, e) constructed around the key words “transgress,” “contrary,” “taught,” “know,” “heavenly Father” or “the Lord,” and “have and are” or “just and true.” Pairing the words “have and are” with “just and true” shows keen conceptual association, for *justice* is the equitable distribution or retribution of things, privileges, or rights which people *have*, and *truth* is that whose referent is those things which ultimately *are*. At the very center, somewhat similar to the structure of the middle, E, in section 1, a quatrain is presented that is comprised of two couplets. The first couplet mentions, parallelistically in lines 1 and 2, the content and authorship of the records; the second couplet mentions, chiasmically at the beginning and ending of lines 3 and 4, the two relevant time periods from which these records originate; the word “spoken” appears in the second and fourth lines, as in good form. The thought at the turning point is the accountability of the people, based upon the knowledge of their indebtedness to God, who is the source of their material existence and their holy writ.

The shift at the center is styled out of temporal elements, by dividing time periods before and after the departure from Jerusalem, and also out of the contrast between physical and spiritual indebtedness. But most important, H contains the thought that is indispensable to the logic of section 2, for it is axiomatic that a knowledge of one’s obligations is prerequisite for any assignment of responsibility, which in turn is necessary for the ascription of either praise or blame. Blameworthiness is the condition on which punishment is predicated, and praiseworthiness is the condition of reward. Hence accountability, or responsibility, is the keystone in the structure of section 2, whose topic deals with blessings and punishments.

In sum, although this section is structurally complex, its underlying framework can be simplified and displayed by highlighting certain words that appear in one order in the first half of the section and whose counterparts are introduced in the opposite order in the second half:

keep the commandments (31)	prospered (31)	contention, listeth to obey, remaineth and dieth (32–	
33)	transgress contrary (33)	taught these things (34)	knoweth (34)
have and are (34)	prophecies, holy prophets (34)	father Lehi, fathers (34–	

35) just and true (35) known (36) taught these things (36)
 transgress contrary (36) rebellion, listeth to obey, remaineth and dieth (37-38) blessed (41) keep
 the commandments (41)

The chiasitic organization of this passage makes its central point quite clear and also renders the overall logic of the section coherent.

Section 3 (3:2-10)

Outline. The angel of the Lord delivered to Benjamin the information about Christ and his atonement found in sections 3 and 4. It is interesting to see how Benjamin placed the words of the angel into the overall chiasitic structure of his own speech.

**J The Lord has judged thy righteousness K The Lord will descend L The Lord’s works among men
 M Christ’s power over evil spirits N Christ will be divine and bring salvation M’
 Christ will be accused of having an evil spirit L’ Men’s treatment of Jesus K’ The Lord will ascend
 J’ The Lord will judge the world righteously**

This section requires little exposition to elucidate its strong chiasitic structure. Here Benjamin set forth his prophetic vision of the great marvels of the ministry of the Savior and then contrasted these marvels with the deep ironies of his rejection by his own chosen people. It should be readily evident that chiasmus was employed here to intensify those ironies, for it is ironic that Jesus’ “own” should consider him merely a man after he has suffered more for them than any man of normal mortal frame can possibly suffer (N); that he should be accused of being possessed by a devil considering the fact that he drove out so many devils (M); and that the way he was put to death is rooted in the way that he blessed their sick and raised their dead (L).

Detailed Analysis. The important concepts dealt with in this section are righteousness, judgment, and the divinity and mission of Christ.

J The Lord has judged thy righteousness

3:3 Awake and hear the words which I shall tell thee: a for behold I am come to *declare* unto you
 b the glad tidings of great joy

3:4 for the Lord hath heard thy prayers and hath judged of thy righteousness a and hath sent me to
declare unto thee that b thou mayest *rejoice* a and that thou mayest *declare* unto thy people that
 b they may also be filled with joy

K The Lord will descend

3:5 For behold the time *cometh* and is not far distant that with power the Lord
 omnipotent who reigneth who was and is from all eternity
 to all eternity shall *come down* from heaven among the children of men and shall dwell in a
 tabernacle of clay

L The Lord’s works among men

And shall go forth amongst men working mighty miracles such as healing the sick raising the
dead causing the lame to walk the blind to receive their sight and the deaf to hear and

M Christ's power over evil spirits

3:6 And he shall cast out devils or the evil spirits which

N Christ will be divine and bring salvation

3:7 1 *and lo* he shall *suffer temptations and pain* of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue 2 even more than *man*
can *suffer* except it be unto death 3 for behold blood cometh from every pore 4 so great shall be his
anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his *people*

3:8 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 and his mother *shall be called* Mary

3:9 5 *and lo* he cometh unto *his own* 6 that salvation might *come* unto the *children of men* 7 even
through faith on his name 8 and even after all this they shall consider him a *man*

M' Christ will be accused of having an evil spirit

and

L' Men's treatment of Jesus

and

K' The Lord will ascend

3:10 and he shall *rise* the third day from the dead

J' The Lord will judge the world righteously

and behold he standeth to *judge* the world and behold all these things are done that a *righteous judgment*
might come upon the children of men.

Comments. This chiastic structure builds on the contrast between the eternal period of Christ's reign in heaven and the temporal duration of his spell with death, as well as the descension (K) and ascension (K') of God into earthly history. The center of K is constructed out of three pairs (power-omnipotent, who-who, eternity-eternity), while the elaboration in L contains two triads (healing-raising-causing, to walk-to receive-to hear). Also of significance is the appearance of "judgment" and "righteousness" in the J and J' subsections. This usage can be compared to a similar chiastic treatment of these ideas in certain psalms, such as Psalm 58. If this passage in Mosiah 3 is indeed following the pattern of Hebrew psalmody, we should recognize that "judgment" is used in the introduction and conclusion of several of the Psalms as a general desire and expectation of

The turning point (N) is certainly the central idea of the passage. The divinity of Christ and his sacrifice on behalf of mankind falls distinctly at the center of intention and attention in this portion of the speech. The nomenclature at the center is also of note, for vocatives calling upon the Lord often appear at the center of chiastic systems (compare Psalm 58; Alma 36). Here the form is declarative but the idea of using the name to call upon the Lord is not far distant. The unusual brevity of M', L', and K' accentuates the stark contrasts they expose.

A nice effect is also achieved by means of the two closely interrelated quatrains that flank the names at the center. These two quatrains should be read together. The one ends (4) and the other begins (5) with reference to Jesus' own people; even after the extent of his bleeding and suffering (2), he shall be considered only a man (8); ironically, his sufferings bring the possibility of salvation to man (6); the offering of Christ was his blood (3), in response to which people offer faith on his name (7).

Section 4 (3:11–27)

Outline. This section of Benjamin's speech continues with the words of the angel and discusses the atonement and the law, judgment and salvation. Its components may be outlined as follows:

P The atonement covers the sins of the innocent Q Repentance is necessary for the rebellious
R We may rejoice now as though Christ had already come Q' The atonement is necessary for the law of Moses
P' The atonement covers the sins of the innocent

S Salvation is exclusively in Jesus Christ T Putting off the natural man and becoming a saint
S' Salvation is universal in Jesus Christ

U The angel's words are witnessed by God W Final warning of God's judgment
U' The angel's words are witnessed by God

This is the central section of Benjamin's entire speech and covers the principles of repentance and the progression from one's natural state to becoming a saint.

Detailed Analysis. Section 4 is relatively difficult to parse, despite two unmistakable clues to its composition: First, this section is distinct from the foregoing section; section 3 dealt entirely with the mission of Christ, while section 4 discusses exclusively the human situation and the conditions related to it under which the atonement operates to absolve humans of sin. Second, section 4 contains one of the longest and most precise chiastic centerpieces in Benjamin's speech (subsection T, 3:18–19), which indeed occurs at the center of the central section of the whole speech. To this extent the structure and nature of section 4 is self-evident, but the organization of the materials that flank this monumental central passage is less obvious.

P The atonement covers the sins of the innocent

3:11 1 For behold and also *his blood atoneth* for the sins 2 of those who have *fallen* 3 by the transgression of *Adam*
4 who have died *not knowing* the will of God concerning them or who have *ignorantly* *sinned*

Q Repentance is necessary for the rebellious

3:12 5 but wo, wo unto him who knoweth that he *rebelleth* against God 6 for salvation cometh to *none* such 7 *except* it be through repentance and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ

R We may rejoice now as though Christ had already come

3:13 a and the Lord God hath sent his *holy prophets* among all the *children of men* to declare these things to every kindred, nation, and tongue that thereby

b whosoever should believe that Christ should *come* c the same might receive remission of their sins and rejoice c with exceedingly great joy b even as though he had already *come* among them

3:14 Yet the Lord God saw that his *people* were a stiffnecked people d and he appointed unto them e a law even the law of Moses 3:15 e And many signs and wonders and types and shadows d showed he unto them

b concerning his *coming* a and also *holy prophets* spake unto them concerning his *coming*

Q' The atonement is necessary for the law of Moses

5 And yet they *hardened* their hearts 6 and understood not that the law of Moses availeth *nothing* 7 *except* it were through the atonement of his blood

P' The atonement covers the sins of the innocent

3:16 4 and even if it were possible that *little children* could *sin* they could not be saved, but I say unto you they are blessed 3 for behold as in *Adam* 2 or by nature they *fall* 1 even so the *blood* of Christ *atoneth* for their sins

S Salvation is exclusively in Jesus Christ

3:17 v *and moreover I say unto you that* there shall be no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby *salvation* can come unto the children of men w *only* in and through *the name of Christ the Lord Omnipotent* 3:18 x for behold he *judgeth* and his judgment is just y and the *infant* perisheth not that dieth in his *infancy* z but men drink *damnation* to their own souls

T Putting off the natural man and becoming a saint

a *except* they *humble* themselves b and become as little *children* c and believe that salvation was and is and is to come in and through the *atoning* blood of *Christ the Lord Omnipotent* 3:19 d for the *natural man* e is an enemy to *God* f and *has been* from the fall of *Adam* f and *will be* forever and ever e unless he yields to the enticings of the *Holy Spirit* d and putteth off the *natural man* c and becometh a saint through the *atonement of Christ the Lord* b and becometh as a *child* a submissive, meek, *humble*, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father

S' Salvation is universal in Jesus Christ

3:20 v And moreover I say unto you that the time shall come when the knowledge of a Savior shall spread throughout every nation, kindred, tongue and people, 3:21 x and behold, when that time cometh none shall be found blameless before God y except it be little children w only through repentance and faith on the name of the Lord God Omnipotent 3:22 z and even at this time when thou shalt have taught thy people the things which the Lord thy God hath commanded thee even then are they found no more blameless in the sight of God only according to the words which I have spoken unto thee

U The angel's words are witnessed by God

3:23 And now I have spoken the words which the Lord God hath commanded me 3:24 and thus saith the Lord

W Final warning of God's judgment

a They shall stand as a bright testimony against this people at the judgment day a whereof they shall be judged

b every man according to his works whether they be good b or whether they be evil

3:25 c and if they be evil they are consigned to an awful view c of their own guilt and abominations

d which doth cause them to shrink from the presence of the Lord into a state of misery d and endless torment from whence they can no more return;

a therefore they have drunk a damnation to their own souls;

3:26 b therefore they have drunk out of the cup b of the wrath of God

c which justice could no more deny unto them c than it could deny that Adam should fall because of his partaking of the forbidden fruit;

d therefore mercy could have claim on them no more forever 3:27 d and their torment is as a lake of fire and brimstone whose flames are unquenchable and whose smoke ascendeth up forever and ever

U' The angel's words are witnessed by God

thus hath the Lord commanded me. Amen.

Comments. Working from the inside out, the turning point here (T) is exceptional. It is composed of six elements repeated in close proximity in reverse order. The phrase "natural man" is not only unique to this section of the speech, but these are its only two appearances in the entire Book of Mormon.

The central chiasm found in 3:18-19 can be summarized and displayed as follows:

a humble themselves	b become as little children	c salvation through the atoning blood of
Christ the Lord	d natural man	e enemy to God
Adam	f will be forever and ever	f has been from the fall of
	e yieldeth to the Holy Spirit	d natural man

c become a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord b become as a child a submissive,
meek, humble

In addition, 3:17–18 (S) can readily be identified with 3:20–22 (S'). Both are introduced by “moreover,” and both qualify the preceding discussion of the general effects of the atonement of Christ. Benjamin taught that there shall be no other name upon which salvation is predicated (making the name of the Savior universal). Both S and S' mention salvation or being found blameless only through the name of Jesus Christ (W), the innocence of infants (Y), the responsibility of men for their own evil doing (Z), and the judgment (or in other words, being found blameworthy of God). These concepts are presented in nearly identical sequences in both groups, which, therefore, form alternating lines in contrast with the extensive chiasmic centerpiece.

Two further groups remain on the extremities, namely, verses 3:11–16 (P–Q–R–Q'–P') and verses 23–27 (U–W–U'). The two are related only by contrast, since the single direct link is one reference to Adam (3:26), which perhaps echoes P (3:11) and P' (3:16), the only other references to Adam in the speech. But the contrast between these two groups is sharp and most likely intentional, therefore being sufficient to justify aligning them. In 3:11–16, emphasis is placed on the merciful manifestations of the atonement and the blessings that are bestowed on souls by its effective operation. Thus, “his blood atoneth for the sins of those . . . who have died not knowing the will of God concerning them, or who have ignorantly sinned” (P). Likewise, little children are blessed (P'). For those who have rebelled or have hardened their hearts, the way is prepared for reconciliation through repentance and faith (Q) and the atonement (Q'). Above all, it was necessary for Benjamin's era to know that the atonement could be operative upon those who believe that the Christ should come, even though Christ had not yet received his mortal shroud. Thus the key to the favorable, positive, and gracious working of the atonement among Benjamin's people is given at R: that they might “rejoice . . . even as though he had already come” and that the law itself is a sign, wonder, type, and shadow looking forward to his future coming. The structure of R itself is complicated by the occurrence of “holy prophets” at its beginning and end, followed by two minor chiasms, b–c–c–b in 3:13 and d–e–e–d 3:14–15. Although R manifests less discreteness of form, I prefer to leave it in a simple structural arrangement conjoining the futurity of Christ's coming and the presence of his atonement.

In contrast with the future working of the atonement, 3:23–27 focuses on the onerous responsibility that attaches to one's knowledge and awareness of the nature of the atonement. The mood is prepared for this stern warning as far back as 3:10: “all these things are done that a righteous judgment might come upon the children of men.” The cadence of these lines is introduced when Benjamin charged his people unequivocally with responsibility for their own knowledge; they were “found no more blameless in the sight of God” (3:22). The eight segments that comprise W portray the nature of the judgment. For Benjamin, the judgment occurred internally in the separate soul, which views its own guilt and shrinks from the presence of the Lord of its own accord, thus being placed beyond the help even of mercy by the unrelenting self-view and guilt-awareness that cannot be deceived away. It may be that these eight strophes, each of which manifests an element of duplication, divide into the conventional arrangement of two halves of four strophes each (compare Alma 34:18–25), for judgment is the theme of lines one and five (a), and torment is the subject of lines four and eight (d); further associations may be drawn that are helpful but not necessarily binding.

Section 5 (4:4–12)

Outline. After the review of Christ's life and work, Benjamin's next section describes how a knowledge of the power of God leads to action and progression of the human spirit.

X Man's knowledge of the goodness of God Y Articles of belief X' Man's knowledge of the goodness of God

Section 5 contains the king's testimony of God and of the efficacy of the atonement of Christ, coupled with thoughts that accent mankind's need for the remission of sins in order to be redeemed from a state of "nothingness" and unworthiness. If it is correct that the general organization of the speech associates Benjamin's testimony of God with the angel's testimony of Christ's ministry, then we may secure the antecedent of the phrase "in the faith of that which is to come" (4:11) as being the ministry and atoning acts of the Savior. The chiasmus in this section as a whole and in its subsections is powerful and effective.

Detailed Analysis. This section contains a balance of negative and positive aspects of life and obedience and many forms of parallelisms.

X Man's knowledge of the goodness of God

4:5 k for behold, if the *knowledge of the goodness of God* at this time – has awakened you to a sense of your nothingness – and your worthless and fallen state

4:6 k I say unto you if ye have come to a *knowledge of the goodness of God* + and his matchless power and his wisdom + and his patience and his long suffering

 a towards the *children of men* b and also *the atonement which has been prepared from the foundation of the world* c that thereby *salvation* might come to him d that should put his *trust* in the Lord
 e and should be diligent in keeping his commandments d and continue in the *faith* even unto the end of his life I mean the life of the mortal body 4:7 c I say that this is the man who receiveth *salvation*
 b through *the atonement which was prepared from the foundation of the world* a for *all mankind* which ever were since the fall of Adam or who are or who ever shall be even unto the end of the world.

Y Articles of belief

4:8 1 and this is the means whereby *salvation* cometh, and there is none other *salvation* save this which hath been spoken of

 2 neither are there any *conditions* whereby man can be saved except the *conditions* which I have told you.

4:9 3 believe in God, believe that he is and that he created *all* things both *in heaven and in earth*

 4 believe that he has *all* wisdom and all power both *in heaven and in earth*

 5 believe that *man* doth not *comprehend* all the things which the Lord can *comprehend*

4:10 6 and again believe that ye must *repent* of your sins and *forsake* them

 7 and *humble* yourselves before God and *ask* in sincerity of heart that he would forgive you

8 and now if you believe all these things see that ye do them

X' Man's knowledge of the goodness of God

4:11 And again I say unto you as I have said before

k that as ye have come to the *knowledge* of the *glory* of God k or if ye have *known* of his *goodness*

v and have tasted of his *love* s and have received a *remission of your sins* j

which causeth such exceedingly great *joy* in your souls

r even so I would that ye should *remember* r and always retain in *remembrance* + the greatness of

God - and your own nothingness + and his goodness and long suffering - towards you

unworthy creatures

h and *humble* yourselves h even in the depths of *humility*

n calling on the name of the Lord daily f and standing steadfastly in the faith f of that

which is to come n which was spoken by the mouth of the angel

4:12 and behold I say unto you that j if ye do this ye shall always *rejoice* v and be filled with the

love of God s and always retain a *remission of your sins* k and ye shall grow in the

knowledge of the *glory* of him that created you k or in the *knowledge* of that which is *just* and *true*.

Comments. Section 5 is constructed of three subsections: X-Y-X'. Both X and X' manifest adept chiasmatic arrangements and are closely associated with each other by the repetition of many thoughts and phrases occurring in both instances. X is introduced by two references to the "knowledge of the goodness of God," a phrase that reappears in increasingly elaborate forms twice at the beginning of X' and twice at the end (k). The two negative aspects of mortal existence (- -) and the two companion positive traits of divine nature (+ +) gravitate from the beginning of X to the middle of X', with identical phrases recurring in alternating lines in the complementary passage (+ - + -). This gravitation accompanies a broader shift in emphasis from X to X', in that X discusses the atonement in terms of its being "prepared from the foundation of the world" and coming to mankind, while X' approaches the atonement from the standpoint of mankind coming to it through faith, humility, and cognizance of the human plight. Thus it furthered Benjamin's purposes to position the conditions of salvation in the middle of X (d-e-d) and to move the terms describing mankind's contribution to the saving process to the middle of X' (h-n-f).

Whereas little remains to be said about the chiasmatic characteristic of X—since a-b-c-d-e-d-c-b-a is straightforward—the material in X' is presented in a very creative form. The two pairs of k lines at the beginning and ending of this system make reference to the knowledge of the glory and goodness of God; they are interesting in light of Moroni 10:6, which reads: "whatsoever thing is good is just and true." The chiasmatic structure of X' links "goodness" in 4:11 with "that which is just and true" in 4:12. Thus it can be concluded that the roots of the definition in Moroni 10:6 date at least to the time of Benjamin (124 B.C.) in Nephite thought.

In X', three ideas appear grouped in nearly inverted order in the second positions. As is often present in good chiasmatic writing, these repetitions are also accompanied by a careful sense of intensification: the first instance (v) refers to tasting God's love (4:11), while the corresponding line in 4:12 makes the promise of being "*filled* with"

that love. On one hand the remission of sins (s) is mentioned in 4:11, but on the other, its counterpart in 4:12 speaks of “always *retain[ing]* a remission of your sins”; likewise, line (j) first deals with feeling “great joy in your souls” now, but the intensification in 4:12 promises “ye shall *always* rejoice.” The thrust of these climactic contrapositionings may be eschatological, so that we should understand Benjamin to be saying that the everlasting joy, the fullness of love, and the retention of remission will all come in the day of the Lord’s final judgment. Or we may take the thrust of his comments to be more limited to events that are located in the scope of this-worldly experiences and expectations. According to the latter alternative, Benjamin expected the effects of salvation to become manifested in the field of this life. In light of Benjamin’s general humanistic bent, and from the sense apparent in the line “if ye do this, ye shall always rejoice” (4:12), we may infer that Benjamin’s perspective on the judgment of man was as much involved in events in this world as in the next.

In the center of X’ we encounter an interesting pattern constructed of two couplets containing climatic parallelism in their second lines: “remember” becomes “always retain in remembrance,” and “humble” becomes “the depths of humility.” The first quatrain then alternates the positive and negative concepts (+ – + –) that occurred at the introduction of X (– – + +), while the second quatrain is one of straight parallelisms (n–f–f–n), in which the first two lines describe two righteous forms of behavior, “calling on the name of the Lord daily” and “standing steadfast in the faith,” while the second two lines are relative clauses modifying the former two chiastically: the first and fourth lines (n) are linked because the angel gave the name that should be called upon daily, and the second and third lines (f) both associate with the idea of faith in future events.

Between X and X’ the text includes an eight-part interlude in subsection Y. These eight lines form a magnificent declaration of faith and promise, to compare favorably with the eight-part exhortation of Alma 34:18–25 or with the structure of the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:2–9.

Subsection Y may be viewed from several angles. As paired couplets, it is apparent that 1 and 2 are closely connected, since both express common conditions of salvation and confirm the exclusive nature of this way to salvation. Lines 3 and 4 are joined by the phrase “both in heaven and in earth,” which appears in each, and also by similar thoughts about God, his existence, and his power. Lines 5 and 6 deal with man’s ignorance and iniquity. Lines 7 and 8 describe the way in which man can fulfill the requirements necessary to achieve the goal of salvation. These pairs then fall into two groups, namely 1–2–7–8, which all speak of the conditions of salvation, humble asking and doing; and 3–4–5–6, which all begin with the word “believe,” the first two in reference to God, the second two in reference to man. And beyond that, an alternation occurs within this structure: lines 1–2–6–7 describe specific events or are limited by phrases of exclusion (“none other,” “except” and “must”); on the other hand 3–4–5–8 deal with generalities and universals and are especially detectable by the presence of the words “all things,” “all wisdom,” and “all these things.” Thus in the conventional pairing of couplets that occurs frequently in Hebrew literature, Benjamin incorporated an alternation of universal (U) and specific (S) features in the pattern SS–UU–US–SU in 4:9–10. This type of pattern has been encountered before, particularly at Mosiah 3:7, 9, the central panel of section 3 (this section’s counterpart), where the pattern was the reverse of this one, i.e., ab–ba–aa–bb. It is also found in X and X’, where the positive and negative aspects combine in the order – – + +; + – + –.

Section 6 (4:13–30)

Outline. The second to last section of Benjamin’s speech describes in more detail the obligations of social justice that require members of the community to impart of their substance to those who are in need.

A Distribution of property B Teach your children the laws of God C Ministering to the poor
D The rich man's excuse E Curse for not repenting F Imperative to impart
substance to one another E' Curse for not repenting D' The poor man's excuse C'
Ministering to the poor B' Adult approach to following the laws of God A' Distribution of property
Final warning against sin

Here Benjamin draws an important parallel between our treatment of fellow human beings and God's treatment of us.

Detailed Analysis. Aside from two unusual departures from the standard form, namely, the logic at the center and the reiteration of the sanction, the basic organization of section 6 may be justifiably described as chiasmic, even though Benjamin's style here has become more expositive and personal. In certain respects, it is as though Benjamin was writing from a broad chiasmic outline only, with the imperative at the center. For he had no intention of discarding—in order to enhance the chiasmus at this point—important thoughts or even afterthoughts that bolstered the logic of the moral obligation he was issuing. But still his thoughts retraced themselves as the passage unwinds from the twice-pronounced dependence of man on God (major premise, 4:19, 21), the twice-invoked “wo” upon those who turn away their neighbor in need (E, E', 4:18, 23), and reference to the two states of mind in which the rich and the poor approach the beggar (4:17, 24). Verse 25 appears to be a refrain, repeating one of the central ideas of the passage (4:22). Verses 29 and 30 are somewhat parenthetical, and together they form an epilogue spoken as the final admonition before the ceremony in which the people answered the king and made their covenant with the Lord (5:1–5).

A Distribution of property

4:13 And ye will not have a mind to injure one another but to live peaceably

and to render to every man according to that which is his due

B Teach your children the laws of God

4:14 a And ye will not suffer your children b that they go hungry or naked a neither will ye suffer that
they transgress *the laws of God* and b fight and quarrel *one with another*

and serve the devil who is the master of sin or who is the evil spirit which hath been
spoken of by our fathers he being an enemy to all righteousness

4:15 a but ye will teach them b to walk in *the ways of truth* and soberness a ye will teach them
b to love *one another* and to serve *one another*

C Ministering to the poor

4:16 and also ye yourselves will *succor* those that stand in need of *your succor*

ye will administer of *your substance* unto him that standeth in *need*

and ye will not suffer that the beggar putteth up his petition to you *in vain* and turn him out *to perish*

D The rich man's excuse

4:17 perhaps thou shalt say the man has brought upon himself *his misery* therefore I will stay my hand and will not give unto him of *my food* nor impart unto him of *my substance* that he may not suffer for *his punishments* are just

E Curse for not repenting

4:18 but I say unto you a O man, whosoever *doeth* this b the same hath great cause to *repent*
b and except he *repenteth* a of that which he hath *done* he *perisheth* forever and hath no interest in the kingdom of God

F Imperative to impart substance to one another

4:19 For behold, are we not *all* beggars Do we not *all* depend upon the same Being even God

for all the substance which we have for both food and raiment and for gold and for silver and
for all the riches which we have of every kind

4:20 and behold, even at this time ye have been calling on his name and *begging* for a remission of your sins and has he suffered that ye have *begged* in *vain*?

 May he has poured out his Spirit upon you and *has caused* that *your hearts* should be filled with *joy*
and *has caused* that *your mouths* should be stopped that ye could not find utterance so exceedingly great was your *joy*

4:21 a And now, if God, who has created you, on whom you are dependent for your lives and for all *that ye have* and are b doth *grant* unto you c whatsoever ye *ask* that is right d in faith
d believing c that ye shall *receive* b O then how ye ought to *impart* a of the substance *that ye have* one to another

4:22 And if ye judge the man who putteth up his petition to you for *your substance* that he perish not
and *condemn* him how much more just will be your *condemnation* for withholding *your substance*

a which doth not *belong* b to *you* c but to God c to whom also b *your life*
a *belongeth*

E' Curse for not repenting

and yet ye put up no petition nor *repent* of the thing which thou hast done

4:23 I say unto you wo be unto that man for his substance shall *perish* with him and now I say these things unto those who are rich as pertaining to the things of this world

D' The poor man's excuse

4:24 a and again I say unto the poor, ye who *have not* and yet have *sufficient* that ye remain from day to day
I mean all you who deny the beggar because ye *have not*

b I would that ye *say in your hearts* c that I *give* not d because I have not d but if
I had c I would *give* 4:25 b and now, if ye *say* this *in your hearts*

a ye remain guiltless, otherwise ye are condemned and your condemnation is just for ye *covet*
that which ye *have not received*

C' Ministering to the poor

4:26 And now *for the sake of* these things which I have spoken unto you that is *for the sake of* retaining a
remission of your sins from day to day that ye may walk *guiltless* before God I would that ye should impart
of your substance to the poor

every man *according to* that which he hath such as feeding the hungry clothing the naked
visiting the sick and administering to their relief both spiritually and temporally
according to their wants

B' Adult approach to following the laws of God

4:27 And see that *all these things* are *done in* wisdom and *order* – for *it is not requisite* that a man
should run faster than he has strength + and again *it is expedient* that he should be diligent
that thereby he might win the prize therefore *all things* must be *done in order*

A' Distribution of property

4:28 And I would that ye should remember that a whosoever among you *borroweth* of his *neighbor* a
should return the thing that he *borroweth* according as he doth agree b or else thou shalt *commit sin*
b and perhaps thou shalt cause thy *neighbor* to *commit sin* also

Final warning against sin

4:29 a And finally *I cannot tell* you b *all the things* whereby ye may commit sin b for there are *divers*
ways and means a even *so many* that *I cannot* number them

4:30 but this much *I can tell* you that if ye do not watch yourselves and your thoughts and your
words and your deeds and observe the commandments of God and continue in the faith of what
ye have heard concerning the coming of our Lord even unto the end of your lives

ye must *perish* And now, O man, remember, and *perish not*.

Comments. Subsections A–B–C (4:13–16) balance C'–B'–A' (4:26–28), with important recurrences being “impart of your substance” (C, C', 4:16, 26), “the hungry” (4:14, 26), and “render to every man according to . . . his due” (4:13, compare “return the thing that he borroweth according as he doth agree” 4:28). By incorporating both halves of these related subsections into a single unit, we find that, in each case, Benjamin specifically stated both the types of behavior that he desired his people to avoid and also the criteria he prescribed for remedying

difficulties should they arise: in A, the desired behavior was the return of physical property, which would have been especially meaningful in connection with the restitution of property associated with the jubilee-year rites. The necessary criteria were first, having “no mind to injure one another” and ultimately to desire to avoid committing sin or causing one’s neighbor to commit sin also. The remedy was found in rendering to each man according to his due, which appears to mean “according as he doth agree” (A, 4:28). Thus, A–A’ instructed the people to keep their promises and agreements regarding the return of possessions at this time and as a general ethical rule.

In B, the desired behavior was to raise children by providing them sufficient temporal and spiritual support. The prerequisites were to avert the devil and to avoid contention (compare section 2.G, 2:32). This was to be accomplished in B by teaching them to obey “the laws of God,” to “walk in the ways of truth and soberness” and to love and serve one another, and in B’ all this is “done in wisdom and order,” not *running* faster than one has strength.

In C, Benjamin desired to encourage charitable administration of substance to the needy. This is associated in C’ with the retention of “a remission of your sins from day to day,” which was achieved by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, and administering to those spiritually or temporally in need.

Although this section is softer in style than some of the earlier sections in Benjamin’s speech, the flowing, almost lyrical passages in this section communicate a feeling of warmth, goodness, and assurance, conducive of engendering the spirit of generosity and humanitarian goodness that Benjamin wants to instill in the minds and spirits of his audience. The overall feeling of fullness and completeness in this section is enhanced by the use of chiasmus in several of its subsections: fine chiasms in subsections E (a–b–b–a), F (a–b–c–d–d–c–b–a, a–b–c–c–b–a), and D’ (a–b–c–d–d–c–b–a) induce a natural sense of logical persuasion and moral closure. Moreover, to a greater degree than in other sections of his speech, Benjamin makes use of effective duplications in other parallelistic arrangements: suffer–suffer, teach–teach (B); succor–succor (C); my food–my substance (D); all the substance–all the riches, begging–begged, joy–joy, substance–substance, condemn–condemnation (F); have not–have not (D’); guiltless–guiltless (D’, C’); sake of–sake of, according to–according to (C’); order–order (B’); borroweth–borroweth, commit sin–commit sin (A’); cannot–cannot, perish–perish not (final warning). The recurrence of these numerous two-part repetitions comports stylistically with the central theme of this section, which emphasizes reciprocity, mutual support, and balanced equality among individuals.

At the center, Benjamin’s logic is intriguing. By drawing together certain relationships, he was able to derive a moral imperative by means of a conditional transitivity of obligations. The logic here, as discussed above in this volume (see chapter 3, subsection 11), is quite unlike traditional syllogistic or predicate logic, and in order to understand its operations on this occasion, it should be studied in conjunction with similar reasoning at 2:18–19 (1.E) and in terms of the structure of these passages. On all three occasions, the argument began with a statement of fact that, by its nature, entails certain rights, privileges, or obligations. A conditional or contingent premise then followed, through which an obligation was transferred to the people. Thus in 2:18 the lines of argument may be sketched as follows:

I am your king (fact) You should serve me (entailed obligation from kingship) I serve you (condition)
Therefore, you should serve one another (conclusion)

This conclusion follows logically only because Benjamin had voluntarily chosen to serve others, naming them as the recipients of all his efforts and assets. Thus the obligation owed to him by the people transfers from him to

“others” as his beneficiaries. Notice, however, that without the supplied entailment the argument will not go through, for

I am your king I serve you Therefore you should serve one another

is not in the least persuasive and appears to derive an “ought” from an “is,” a logical fallacy. From 2:19 we obtain:

I am your king (fact) You should thank me for my service to you (entailment) My service to you is service to God (condition) Therefore you should thank God (conclusion)

Here, the king’s right to thanks is dependent upon service which belongs to God. Benjamin, therefore, conveyed directly to God any credits that he might have earned in that service, and since the people still owed a debt of thanks, the obligation to pay that debt to Benjamin transferred to an obligation to thank God.

In 4:19–22, the reasoning employs the same methodology and structure:

We are all dependent upon the same God for everything (major premise) You should recognize him as the source and controller of all (entailment) God grants whatever is asked of him and even what is not asked of him (conditional premise) Therefore, you ought to impart your substance to one another (conclusion).

Benjamin was not just saying here that he preferred people to be charitable one to another. Instead, he argued that an obligation to be charitable derives from man’s obligation to recognize the immediate implication of the factual relationship asserted by the major premise. If there is a duty to recognize God as the controller, and God chooses to distribute benevolence universally, then people have an obligation to distribute their substance as the controller himself would distribute it. Just as the obligation is effectively transferred in 2:18 from one existing between the people and their king to one between the people and their fellowmen, here it transfers from a relationship between God and mankind to one between one human and another. In this way, Benjamin’s arguments have merit and they form an unusual model of ethical deduction and presentation.

Section 7 (5:6–15)

Outline. Benjamin maintained the chiasmic format to the very end of his epoch-making speech. Not only is each of the individual subsections well balanced and skillfully constructed, but section 7 as a whole is harmonic, contains an extensive chiasmic turning point (Z, 5:10–12), and features additional chiasms in 5:7 and 5:8–9.

**X Born of Christ Y Obedience to the name of Christ Z Excommunication for transgression Y’
Serving the master is the key to knowing his name X’ Sealed by God**

These elements contain Benjamin’s final warnings against sin and describe the eternal blessings of obedience.

Detailed Analysis. The principles of covenants and freedom, of rebirth and worthiness discussed in this last section of Benjamin’s speech were carefully encased in chiasms and parallelisms.

X Born of Christ

5:6 Ye have spoken the words that I desired

a and the *covenant* which ye have *made* is a righteous *covenant* 5:7 a and now because of the *covenant* which ye have *made* ye shall be called the children of Christ b his *sons* and his *daughters* c for behold this day he hath spiritually *begotten* you d for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name c therefore ye are *born* of him b and have become his *sons* and his *daughters* 5:8 a and under this head ye are *made free* a and there is no other head whereby ye can be *made free*

Y Obedience to the name of Christ

a there is no other *name* given whereby salvation cometh a therefore I would that ye should take upon you the *name of Christ* b all you that have entered into the covenant with God c that ye should be *obedient* unto the end of your lives 5:9 c and it shall come to pass that whosoever doeth *this* b shall be found at the right hand of God a for he shall know the *name* by which he is called a for he shall be called by the *name of Christ*

Z Excommunication for transgression

5:10 a And now it shall come to pass that whosoever shall not take upon him the *name* of Christ b must be called by some other name c therefore he findeth himself on the *left hand of God* 5:11 d and I would that ye should *remember* also that this is the name that I said I should give unto you e that never should be *blotted out* f except it be through *transgression* f therefore take heed that ye do not *transgress* e that the name be not *blotted out* of your hearts 5:12 d I say unto you, I would that ye should *remember* to retain the name written always in your hearts c that ye are not found on the *left hand of God* b but that ye hear and know the voice by which ye shall be called a and also the *name* by which he shall call you

Y' Serving the master is the key to knowing his name

5:13 a for how *knoweth* a man the master whom he has not served and who is a stranger unto him and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart? 5:14 b and again doth a man take an ass which belongeth to his neighbor and *keep him*? I say unto you nay. b he will not even suffer that he shall feed among his flocks but will *drive him* away and cast him out a I say unto you that even so shall it be among you if ye *know* not the name by which ye are called

X' Sealed by God

5:15 Therefore I would 1 that ye should be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works 2 that Christ the Lord God Omnipotent may seal you his 3 that you may be brought to heaven 4 that ye may have everlasting salvation and eternal life

through the 1 wisdom 2 and power 3 and justice 4 and mercy

of him who created *all* things in heaven and in earth who is God above *all*. Amen.

Comments. Regarding section 7, we note the following: In X it is interesting that a double reference (a a) to making a covenant (5:6–7) is contrasted with a double reference (a a) to making people free (5:8). This direct association is confirmed by the integral connection between the ancient Israelite concept of freedom and the rights of liberty and the notion of being a covenant people (see Exodus 21:2; Jeremiah 35:9–10; John 8:33).

The rebirth of the multitude (5:7) appears to be the enactment of the central admonition and requirement of Benjamin's speech (3:18), that one must become as a child. This points to the conclusion that to Benjamin, "becom[ing] as little children" meant being born of God.

The components of section 7 are almost exclusively constructed out of couplets and are matched with their corresponding elements in pairs. This technique seems to be executed in this culminating section of the speech more uniformly than in any other portion of the oration. The related couplets in X are nearly synonymous. In Y the (a) lines name the obligation and reward of obedience. Moreover, the (a) passages in Y relate to the (a) passages in Y', with the one addition that in Y the knowledge of the name is simply acquired by way of the ceremony but in Y' it is achieved by way of acquaintance through service.

Subsection X' invokes the final aspiration of the people of covenant, namely, to be sealed or marked with a seal, certifying purity of quality and accurateness of measurement in preparation for receipt by the Lord. It may be that the four stages of exaltation mentioned in 5:15 were intended to be paralleled by the four attributes of God mentioned immediately thereafter. Sealing is a product of God's wisdom or his knowledge of the quality of a person's works; "that you may be brought to heaven" is effected by God's power; "that you may have everlasting salvation" results from the justice of the atonement; and "eternal life," which is the greatest of the gifts of God, is bestowed on mortals by the Father's mercy.

The central chiasm found in 5:10–12 can be summarized and displayed as follows:

a name of Christ b called by some other name c left hand of God d remember the name
e blotted out f transgression f transgress e blotted out d
remember to retain the name c left hand of God b voice by which ye shall be called a the name by
which he shall call you

The sustained precision of form in these central verses merits comment. The length of this chiasm alone is impressive, equaled only by the central chiasm of the entire speech in 3:18–19. But even more meaningful is the successful integration of some unusual terms. For example, the phrase "left hand of God" appears twice in subsection Z (5:10, 12) and is a rare metaphor in the scriptures. Likewise, "blotted out" (5:11) occurs only in these verses in the Book of Mormon. This passage successfully builds to its climax and intensifies its final exhortation against transgression by the striking introduction of these carefully chosen and intentionally reiterated terms.

Chiasmus at the Level of the Entire Speech

We have so far examined the boundaries between the seven sections of the speech and the presence of chiasmus at the levels of main concepts and individual words as they appear throughout the seven main sections. One final level of overall analysis remains to be considered. When viewed as a whole and in detail, the seven major sections of Benjamin's speech associate with each other in a balancing and complementary fashion. The order is again chiasmic, pairing sections 1 and 7, 2 and 6, 3 and 5, with 4 at the center. The subject matter of each section relates to that of its complementary section more advantageously than it does to any other section in the system.

Section 1 (2:9–28)

Section 2 (2:31–41)

Section 3 (3:2–3:10)

Section 4 (3:11–27)

Section 5 (4:4–12)

Section 6 (4:13–30)

Section 7 (5:6–15)

Many links form a strong bond between the first and last sections of the speech. God's roles as heavenly king (2:19) and Heavenly Father (5:7) are brought to the audience's attention in 1 and 7. The first speaks of the physical creation, the latter of becoming spiritually begotten this day. At the end of 1.A' (2:28), Benjamin's thoughts turned to his death with the hope that his spirit will be raised up to praise God; the conclusion of 7.X' expresses the same hope for all people, "that you may be brought to heaven" (5:15). The turning point of 7.Z (5:10–12) impresses upon the audience the importance of the covenant (5:1–5), which placed the people under the rule of the king and God; likewise, the imperatives in 1.E (2:18–19) are emphatic about the obligations that devolved upon the people under the rule of God and their king. In 1.D–D', Benjamin disparages his own years of service, for one cannot boast of his service to his fellowmen, since that service is only in the service of God, but service to God is unavoidably unprofitable to God and therefore it too is not to man's credit. However, in 7.Y–Y', we learn that the purpose and benefit of service is not found in repaying God but in increasing our knowledge of the Lord, "for how knoweth a man a master whom he hath not served?" (5:13). The idea that all service is service to God (1.D, 2:16–17) is also related to the declarations in Leviticus 25:8–55, which forbid one child of the covenant from enslaving another after the beginning of the jubilee year, because "they are my servants, which I brought up from the land of Egypt" (Leviticus 25:42; see 25:55). Thus all charity is ultimately of God, and hence Benjamin explained: "neither have I suffered that ye should be confined in dungeons nor that ye should make slaves one with another" (2:13, 1.C). Leviticus 25:10 also required that because of this freedom and equality among the Israelites, at jubilee "ye shall . . . proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants of the land." Accordingly, in 7.X (5:8), Benjamin proclaimed his people to be reviewed under the covenant, "and under this head ye are made free."

Sections 2 and 6 both strive to create a well-ordered covenant community based on individual righteousness and generosity that is motivated by God's goodness and forgiveness. Both sections condemn contention and promote obedience. Benjamin warns in 2:32, "Beware lest there shall arise contentions among you and ye list to obey the evil spirit, which was spoken of by my father Mosiah," and in 4:14, "neither will ye suffer that they . . . fight and quarrel one with another, and serve the devil, who is the evil spirit which hath been spoken of by our fathers." Enough allusions to the jubilee laws of Leviticus 25–26 occur in sections 2 and 6 that it is probable that Benjamin had this portion of the Pentateuch in mind when he spoke of "the records" (2:34, 2.H) and "the laws of God" (4:14, 6.B). For example, Leviticus 25:10 says, "Return every man unto his possession," and Mosiah 4:28 says each person "should return the thing that he borroweth"; Leviticus 26:3 declares, "Walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them," and Mosiah 2:31 encourages, "Keep the commandments of my son, or the commandments of God." Accordingly, sections 2 and 6 are closely related by several factors, including the density of their simultaneous use of material from Leviticus 25–26.

Sections 3 and 5 naturally complement each other as the angel proclaims of Christ's mission and Benjamin testifies of God's goodness which provides the way for salvation.

Section 4, at the center, expresses the condition which all people must satisfy before they can be redeemed from their iniquities. This is clearly the turning point of a righteous relationship with God, the point of conversion, and the precondition of the covenant. Much the same condition is required in the Pentateuch: "If they shall confess

their iniquity . . . if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled . . . then will I remember my covenant with Jacob” (Leviticus 26:40–42; compare Mosiah 4:2; 3:18–19).

Conclusion

Since 1830, when the Book of Mormon was published, those who have believed in the book have asserted that its style reads like that of Hebrew texts. Those who have not accepted the book have insisted that its style is “stilted, complicated, diffuse, meaningless or even brutal”¹⁰ and that any resemblance between the style of the Book of Mormon and Hebrew is due solely to the passages in the Book of Mormon that have been “plagiarized from the Bible.”¹¹ The book has been attacked frequently because of its repetitive and apparently redundant manner of speaking. For many years, the literary qualities of the Book of Mormon remained inadequately studied. Even among its literary critics “the Book of Mormon has not been universally considered as one of those books that must be read in order to have an opinion on it.”¹² Several recent publications, however, have made significant progress in reversing these dour assessments of the Book of Mormon as literature, and this study takes one further step in that direction by examining the literary structure of a small but significant portion of that book. The results have shown that Benjamin achieved a substantially high and distinguished plateau of literary fluency and accomplishment in the use of ancient forms of parallelism and chiasmus. These attributes show Benjamin’s speech as a marvelous example of chiastic literature.

It is impressive how fluently Benjamin employed chiastic orders and sustained precise balances of length and meaning in the related sections and subsections of his presentation. It is insightful to see how much these literary figures enhance and convey the messages and especially the practical applications of Benjamin’s ethical principles; many details take on new significance in light of comparative and structural analysis. Interestingly, Benjamin frequently placed man and the human situation at the center of attention in his chiastic arrangements. This differs from Nephi, for example, who consistently placed the word of the Lord or revelations of the Lord at the focal point. In this regard, Benjamin’s approach accords with his renaissance personality and his overall moment in Nephite history, when several democratic impulses were shifting important privileges to the ordinary members of society.

For all these reasons, I believe that careful literary analysis helps in many ways to understand Benjamin’s speech itself. Seeing it against a background of Hebrew literature and formal artistry, in addition to all the other historical, religious, and cultural settings that have been detailed by the studies in this book, reveals an unmistakable congruence between Old World conventions, universal qualities, divine revelation, and the literary achievement of King Benjamin’s incomparable speech.

Notes

1. Mark Twain, *Roughing It* (New York: Harper, 1899), 132.
2. Donald W. Parry, “Hebrew Literary Patterns in the Book of Mormon,” *Ensign* (October 1989): 59.
3. James Muilenburg, “A Study in Hebrew Rhetoric: Repetition and Style,” *Vetus Testamentum* Supp. 1 (1953): 98, quoted in David J. A. Clines, “The Parallelism of Greater Precision: Notes from Isaiah 40 for a Theory of Hebrew Poetry,” in *Directions in Biblical Hebrew Poetry*, ed. Elaine R. Follis (Sheffield, England: JSOT, 1987), 87.
4. Defined in Donald W. Parry, *The Book of Mormon Text Reformatted according to Parallelistic Patterns* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1992), i–li. See also Donald W. Parry, “Poetic Parallelisms in the Book of Mormon” (FARMS, 1988);

“Parallelisms Listed in Textual Sequence” (FARMS, 1983); and “Parallelisms according to Classification” (FARMS, 1988).

5. Parry, “Hebrew Literary Patterns,” 59, citing Robert Lowth, *Isaiah: A New Translation* (London: Nichols, 1795), ix.

6. See John W. Welch, ed., *Chiasmus in Antiquity* (Hildesheim, Germany: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1981; reprint, Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1999), and John W. Welch and Daniel B. McKinlay, eds., *Chiasmus Bibliography* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1999).

7. For a list of fifteen important criteria, see John W. Welch, “Criteria for Identifying and Evaluating the Presence of Chiasmus,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4/2 (1995): 1–14.

8. See the various chapters in Welch, *Chiasmus in Antiquity*.

9. See John W. Welch, “What Does Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon Prove?” in *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited: The Evidence for Ancient Origins*, ed. Noel B. Reynolds (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1997), 199–224.

10. Bruce Kinney, *Mormonism, the Islam of America* (New York: Revell, 1912), 60.

11. Ibid.

12. Thomas F. O’Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 26.