

Chapter 12

THE TRIAL OF JEREMIAH: A LEGAL LEGACY FROM LEHI'S JERUSALEM

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Early in the reign of King Jehoiakim (the son of King Josiah), the prophet Jeremiah found himself in legal difficulty at the temple in Jerusalem. This public encounter and perilously close call with the law have become an unforgettable feature in the cultural and religious landscape of Lehi's world. Gauging by the number of points of contact between the Book of Mormon and the account of the trial of Jeremiah found in Jeremiah 26, this lawsuit and its contemporary points of jurisprudence were influential both in the life of Lehi and also in the legacy he left his posterity. Some of those contacts were broad, cultural phenomena; other points were more direct, conscious reactions. Several legal elements manifested in or relevant to this proceeding remained pertinent in Nephite jurisprudence for many centuries to come. Reliving Jeremiah's courageous denunciation of the political potentates of his day affords readers over twenty-six hundred years later a significant glimpse into the social and legal dynamics of Lehi's day.

Several factors indicate that Lehi and Nephi probably knew of Jeremiah's temple sermon and the legal complications that his remarks sparked. It is even possible that Lehi was present on that occasion and witnessed the arrest of Jeremiah and the ensuing legal fracas. The trial of Jeremiah, which is the earliest autobiographical information recorded in the book of Jeremiah, occurred around 609 B.C., in the first year of the reign of King Jehoiakim. Lehi would have been around forty or forty-five years old at the time, making him a close contemporary of Jeremiah.¹ Jerusalem was a small city;² therefore, Lehi and the other men functioning concurrently in the circle of prophets in Jerusalem would undoubtedly have known each other fairly well.³ Jeremiah himself refers to other prophets who had stepped forward to criticize the wickedness that prevailed among the Jews in Jerusalem at that time (Jeremiah 26:5), so it is clear that Jeremiah did not operate alone. Nephi similarly attests that only a few years after that time "there came many prophets, prophesying unto the people that they must repent, or the great city Jerusalem must be destroyed," with Lehi delivering the same message (1 Nephi 1:4, 13).

In addition to his personal familiarity with Jeremiah (see 1 Nephi 7:14), Lehi may have had a written account of the trial of Jeremiah on the plates of brass, for they included "many prophecies which have been spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah" (1 Nephi 5:13). Although one cannot be sure which passages were contained on the plates of brass, Jeremiah's discourse in which he delivered the word of the Lord prophesying the destruction of the temple and the cursing of the city (Jeremiah 26:3–6) would have been among his earliest prophecies and thus among the most likely passages from this prominent prophet to have been found by Lehi on those hard-won plates. The trial of Jeremiah, of course, was not the only legal text found

on the plates of brass. Also included were five books of Moses, which contained the Ten Commandments and other legal materials and precedents. All these legal sources contributed to the legal legacy transported by Lehi from Jerusalem to the New World, but this study focuses on the trial of Jeremiah in particular because it can be dated with certainty to the world of Lehi's Jerusalem. Words and phrases, in addition to the overall pattern of legal concerns and procedures in the trial of Jeremiah, are echoed much later in the Book of Mormon, further indicating that Lehi and his posterity were familiar with this pivotal episode in Jeremiah's life.

Jeremiah's Message and Offense

Shortly after the catastrophic death of King Josiah in 609 B.C., Jeremiah positioned himself prominently in the court of the temple at Jerusalem in order to deliver his message to everyone who came in and out of that holy place. As directed by God (Jeremiah 26:2), he called the people of Jerusalem to repentance, their wickedness having well been the cause of God's disapproval that led to the debacle at Megiddo.

Jeremiah's aggressiveness may remind Book of Mormon readers of the boldness of the prophet Abinadi, who entered the temple city of Nephi to deliver a similar message of repentance or doom to the people of King Noah in the land of Nephi (Mosiah 11:20; 12:1).⁴ Besides affording these prophets the opportunity to speak to large crowds of influential people, the temple location of Jeremiah's prophetic reprimand also made his words that much more provocative.⁵ Predictions of doom and destruction made in private, outside the hearing of most people, and distant from the Holy Presence could probably have been tolerated in most cases; but the authorities administering

the temple could not tolerate such direct effrontery to the house of the Lord.

New Testament readers will readily recall that Jesus likewise caused offense when he disrupted the business of the money changers and predicted the destruction of the Temple of Herod while standing squarely in the temple precinct (Mark 11:15–18; 14:58). Interestingly, Jesus himself was compared by some people in his own day with the prophet Jeremiah (Matthew 16:14) and was quoting Jeremiah 7:11 (“Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes?”) when he denounced the temple administrators for turning the house of God into a den of thieves (Mark 11:17). The fact that significant similarities exist between the report of the trial of Jeremiah and the way in which the trial of Jesus is told in the New Testament Gospels shows that the trial of Jeremiah retained a prominent place in Jewish memory for several centuries in the Old World,⁶ making it all the more plausible that this legal encounter was vividly remembered in the New World as well. For instance, perhaps recalling the problems encountered by Jeremiah and Abinadi and thus attempting to avoid overly provoking the people in the city of Zarahemla to anger, Nephi, son of Helaman, did not go into the temple precinct but instead prayed from his own tower, from which he ended up delivering his message of prophetic warning and rebuke while more safely positioned on his own property (Helaman 7:10).

Jeremiah was instructed by the Lord to deliver a certain message word for word—“diminish not a word” (Jeremiah 26:2). The ability and duty of official messengers and legal agents in the ancient world to deliver the words of their patron perfectly verbatim is well attested in many literary sources from this time. For example, verbatim messages are common in the conduct of messengers in the Homeric epics.⁷ Similarly,

in Lehi's world, messengers did not have authority to add to or subtract from the message that they were to deliver, and accordingly Jeremiah makes a point of affirming that he delivered every word with which he had been entrusted, "all that the Lord had commanded him to speak" (Jeremiah 26:8). The Hebrew legal system, which depended primarily on verbal communication and oral testimony rather than on written documentation, placed particularly high value on the accuracy and faithfulness of such deliveries by messengers, spokesmen, witnesses, and officials.

In reading King Benjamin's speech and other texts in the Book of Mormon, one senses that the same principle continued to operate in Nephite legal religious practice. In Mosiah 3:23, for example, Benjamin certified that he had faithfully and precisely delivered the words given to him by the angel of the Lord: "And now I have spoken the words which the Lord God hath commanded me."⁸ Similar certifications of messengers are found in Mosiah 11:20 and 12:1.

The substance of Jeremiah's complaint against the people was that they had not conducted themselves according to the laws that God had set before them (Jeremiah 26:4) and that they had not obeyed the words of the prophets that God kept sending to them (Jeremiah 26:5). Significantly, Jeremiah required obedience to both the law and the prophets: "If ye will not hearken to me, to walk in my law, which I have set before you, To hearken to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I sent unto you, . . . then will I . . . make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth" (Jeremiah 26:4–6). For Jeremiah, these two sources of divine direction are not mutually exclusive. Typically, modern scholarship has segregated these two domains as wholly separate spheres of operation, but

the warning and indictment given by Jeremiah sees legal and prophetic mandates going hand in hand.⁹

In a similar way, the Book of Mormon prophets find themselves in strong support of both the law and the prophets, a dualistic position tracing back to the words of the prophet Jeremiah. Despite knowing the “deadness of the law” without its proper spiritual context (2 Nephi 25:27), the Nephites were strict to obey the law of Moses (2 Nephi 5:10; Jarom 1:5; Alma 30:3; 3 Nephi 1:24–25) until it was fulfilled through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (3 Nephi 9:17). At the same time, the Nephites perpetually venerated and utilized the writings of Isaiah and all the other holy prophets.¹⁰

Unfortunately, Jeremiah is not specific about which prophets or which laws the people had ignored. It would, of course, be extremely significant to know which laws (he uses here the word *torot*, the plural of *torah*) he had in mind. One may assume that he made reference to the laws of Deuteronomy, but other bodies of written or customary law are also possible. At a minimum, Jeremiah’s accusation provides evidence that laws were known, were used as standards of behavior, and could provide the basis for legal prosecution at the time of Lehi.

The threat from the Lord lodged by Jeremiah against the people in Jerusalem took the form of a simile curse: “I will make this house like Shiloh” (Jeremiah 26:6).¹¹ This curse alludes to the destruction of the shrine at Shiloh that resulted in the loss of the ark of the covenant in the disastrous battle of Ebenezer around 1050 B.C. when the Philistines dealt a severe military blow to the Israelites.¹² The point of Jeremiah’s curse, of course, was that even the tabernacle and the ark had not protected the Israelites at Shiloh, and similarly the temple at Jerusalem would not protect the kingdom of Judah unless its people would repent and remain righteous.

Jeremiah's use of simile curses and other symbolic speech-acts seems to have remained strong in the Nephite memory. The form of his judgmental simile curse, as well as its content and context, aligns well with the simile curse issued by Abinadi when he cursed King Noah to the effect that his life would "be valued even as a garment in a hot furnace" (Mosiah 12:3). Not only is the comparative form the same in both of these curses, but the essence of Abinadi's curse was also grounded, like Jeremiah's, in the warning that even the temple in the city of Nephi would not shelter the people as long as they retained their wicked ways. In addition, simile curses appear elsewhere in the Book of Mormon.¹³

Jeremiah also prophesied that the city of Jerusalem would become "a curse to all the nations of the earth" (Jeremiah 26:6). In other words, people in anger or distress would speak the name of Jerusalem in disparaging and denigrating ways in connection with oaths and cursing. The shame and dishonor of having one's name ridiculed and associated with evil and malediction was deeply offensive and insulting to ancient people.¹⁴

Reflecting not only this general sentiment but also the particular words of Jeremiah, the Book of Mormon also predicts that people who would reject the Holy One of Israel would become a "hiss and a byword and be hated among all nations" (1 Nephi 19:14; and conforming to Seidel's law of ancient Israelite rhetoric, this two-part imprecation is quoted in reverse order in 3 Nephi 16:9).¹⁵

The Indictment of Jeremiah by His Accusers

Legal action against Jeremiah was then initiated by the priests, prophets, and all the people who heard him (Jeremiah 26:8).¹⁶ They had witnessed his language and conduct. Under Israelite law, anyone who heard or knew of a violation of the law

was under an obligation to take action to prosecute and punish the offender: “If a soul sin, and hear the voice of swearing, and is a witness, whether he hath seen or known of it; if he do not utter it, then he shall bear his iniquity” (Leviticus 5:1). An example of the operation of this legal duty is found in the trial of the blasphemer in Leviticus 24:14; when “all that heard” the blasphemy brought the blasphemer before Moses, he sought the will of the Lord in the matter, pronounced the verdict, and turned the offender over to all those who had heard the blasphemy to take him outside the camp and stone him. Accordingly, in commencing the trial of Jeremiah, the priests, prophets, and presumably all the people seized him, thronging about him in a moblike action.¹⁷ Perhaps he was about to be lynched, exactly as would later just about happen to the apostle Paul, who was also seized at the temple of Jerusalem for the offense of bringing Gentiles inside the inner court of the temple, thus allegedly “pollut[ing] this holy place” (Acts 21:28–31).

Reflecting this typical Israelite practice, groups of people in the Book of Mormon were frequently the initiators of legal actions. The people seized Abinadi and took him to King Noah (Mosiah 12:9). The people apprehended Nehor and took him to Alma (Alma 1:10). Later, in Zarahemla, Nephi’s political opponents ask the people, “why do ye not seize upon this man and bring him forth, that he may be condemned according to the crime which he has done?” (Helaman 8:1), suggesting that even these Gadianton affiliates recognized that not only prudence but also long-standing legal tradition required them to wait until the people took action before they could initiate legal charges against Nephi.

The people accused Jeremiah with the phrase, “for this you must die” or, as in the KJV, “thou shalt surely die” (Jeremiah 26:8).¹⁸ The Hebrew expression used here is *mot tamut*, “die a

death,” and is related to the legal formula *mot yumat*, which is often used in legal contexts—for example, throughout the Code of the Covenant in Exodus 21–23—to describe offenses for which a person is subject to the death penalty or is worthy of death.¹⁹

Apparently the same formulation was invoked by King Noah in stating the charge of blasphemy against Abinadi: “We have found an accusation against thee, and thou art *worthy of death*” (Mosiah 17:7).

The Seating of the Judges

Before matters could develop very far in the trial of Jeremiah, however, certain princes or officials (*sarim*) from the palace arrived (Jeremiah 26:10). It is unclear whether they heard the commotion and came on their own accord or if they were summoned by Jeremiah’s friends or other concerned citizens.²⁰ Either way, their strong intervention in the case must have confronted and annoyed the priests and religious leaders associated with the temple, whose interests had been threatened by Jeremiah.²¹ Interestingly, the officials assumed full jurisdiction over the proceeding and, as far as the narrative in the book of Jeremiah discloses, the concerns and allegations of the accusers were given little attention.

This culture of factional interests competing against each other continues in the culture of the Book of Mormon, where the interests of the palace and the temple, not surprisingly, often collided. Thus, perhaps consciously following Jeremiah’s very example, the priest Jacob went to his temple in the city of Nephi (Jacob 2:2) to rebuke especially the royal faction who had begun “to excuse themselves in committing whoredoms” by citing the precedents of Kings David and Solomon (Jacob 2:23). Often in the books of Helaman and 3 Nephi, civic leadership was at odds

with religious leaders, and righteous religious groups frequently found themselves in the minority.²² Whether consciously designed or unconsciously developed, the competition between these elements in Nephite government created a type of balance of power, preserving the expectation manifested in the trial of Jeremiah that one segment of government would keep the other in check.

It is unclear, however, what authority was held by the officials who came in and took charge. In an effort to sort out this uncertainty and confusion, one may turn to the account of the legal reforms of Jehoshaphat in 2 Chronicles 17 and 19. Although those reforms are attributed to King Jehoshaphat, who was a contemporary of Elijah three hundred years before the time of Jeremiah, scholars often argue that the judicial system reported in this text reflects more accurately the courts at the time of the Chronicler (shortly after the time of Jeremiah and Lehi) rather than the system in operation in the early monarchy. Be that as it may, the purported reforms of Jehoshaphat offer important clues about the law courts as they would have existed in preexilic Israel generally.²³

At the outset of his reforms, King Jehoshaphat ordered five of his princes or officials (*sarim*) to go into the cities of Judah to teach, taking with them “the book of the law of the Lord” (2 Chronicles 17:7–9). After the death of Ahab, Jehoshaphat was rebuked by Jehu, the seer, for having helped the ungodly Ahab; in response, the king “set judges in the land throughout all the fenced [walled] cities of Judah, city by city” (2 Chronicles 19:5). He instructed these judges to judge righteously and to warn the people not to break the law of the Lord. Moreover, in Jerusalem a more elaborate court system was established, with the Levites, priests, and the chief of the fathers of Israel being appointed as judges (2 Chronicles 19:8). Amariah, the chief priest, was given

stewardship over “all matters of the Lord” or sacral concerns, while Zebadiah, the leading chief, was given jurisdiction over “all the king’s matters” (2 Chronicles 19:11). Interestingly, however, the *sarim* were not mentioned specifically in 2 Chronicles 19, although it may be understood that the terms “chief of the fathers of Israel” and “ruler of the house of Judah” were synonymous with these “officials” or “princes.”

That being the case, the *sarim*, who arrived at the temple and who took issue with the priests and the prophets who were accusing Jeremiah, technically may only have had jurisdiction over the civic matters of the king, whereas one would have expected that a charge of false prophecy would have arisen as a religious concern, a “matter of the Lord.” Nevertheless, in Jeremiah’s day (and in the ancient world generally), jurisdictional lines were not always sharply divided. Although a charge of false prophecy might technically be a matter of sacred concern, if the oracle impinged upon the king or his royal administration (as certainly was the case with Jeremiah’s broad censure of all the people, together with his cursing of the city of Jerusalem), then the matter could easily evolve into a concern worthy of royal cognizance.

Indicating the likely operation and persistent endurance of this divided judiciary in Jerusalem in Lehi’s day, a similar jurisdictional situation arises 450 years later in the trial of Abinadi (see Mosiah 12–17), where the interests of King Noah and the concerns of his priests were alternately raised against that prophet, who, like Jeremiah, had also chastised the people and cursed the king and his regime. In Abinadi’s case, however, the royal and priestly interests were allied together against the prophet, whereas in Jeremiah 26 the royal officials opposed the priests and prophets who had commenced action against Jeremiah.



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Excavation of the city gate at Beersheba (Tell es-Saba^c), showing the benches where men gathered to conduct business and the city elders held trials.

The officials took their seats in the New Gate of the house of the Lord.²⁴ Doing “justice ‘at the gate’” was idiomatic in ancient Israel.²⁵ When he purchased Naomi’s property and with that acquisition assumed the liabilities associated with raising up seed to Elimelech, Boaz convened a court of ten elders at the town gate (Ruth 4:1–2). Archaeology demonstrates that seats were placed within the gates of the walled cities of Israel.²⁶ The gates were quintessential public places controlled by guards and central to general traffic, making them ideal places for public legal proceedings. Jeremiah’s account makes particular reference to the fact that the officials “sat down in the entry of the new gate” (Jeremiah 26:10) on their judgment seats.

No physical feature of the Nephite justice system is more prominent than is the governmental judgment seat, which is mentioned forty-seven times in the Book of Mormon during the period of the reign of the judges.²⁷ While the high priests of Noah in the city of Nephi had seats that were “set

apart” specifically for them in their temple (Mosiah 11:11), the Nephite records do not indicate where the judgment seats were located in Zarahemla. But the tradition of having a place of judgment with seats that imbued officials with the cloak of judicial authority was clearly a part of Lehi’s world in Jerusalem that seems to have carried over into the Nephite legal system.

Before these seated officials, the prophets and priests pressed their charge against Jeremiah, accusing him of having “prophesied against this city” (Jeremiah 26:11). Typical of ancient jurisprudence, the alleged crime was not particularly well defined. Modern lawyers would want to define the criminal charge more specifically: Was the problem treason or false prophecy? In all likelihood, it was both. Any prophet who prophesied falsely could be subjected to the death penalty under the legal rules reflected in Deuteronomy 18:20, but it is unlikely that common people would have become very agitated over an alleged false prophecy unless it affected something very important, such as the temple, the king, or the core values of the nation.²⁸

Accordingly, Abinadi’s charges against King Noah (Mosiah 12:3), Alma’s castigation of the people in Ammonihah (Alma 9:12–24), or Stephen’s declamation against the law of Moses (Acts 7:47–53) were not only socially offensive to their audiences but became the impetus for legal actions precisely because they were inimical to such crucial and central institutions.

Jeremiah’s Defense

No lawyers or advocates, of course, were used in ancient Israelite courts. Jeremiah, like the Nephite prophets Jacob, Abinadi, and Alma, was given the chance to defend himself (Jeremiah 26:12–15). He testified that he spoke in the name of the Lord. He submitted to the will of the officials, telling them

that he was willing to have them do what they thought was “good and meet [proper]” (Jeremiah 26:14). The words used by Jeremiah seem to indicate his acceptance of the jurisdiction of these officials.²⁹ Since Jeremiah, of course, would rather have the officials as his judges than have the priests and people carry out their own version of justice, his preference to come under the jurisdiction of the princes is understandable.

Similar language was used by the people in Mosiah 12:16, as they willingly turned Abinadi over to the jurisdiction of King Noah, saying, “Do with him as seemeth thee good.” Evidently this phrase reflects some kind of formality in ancient Israelite law, for otherwise this would be an odd thing for the people to say to their king. One would think that a king could do whatever he wanted in any event. Whenever a lawsuit had begun in the hands of one group of people, however, it would be important for that group to relinquish their jurisdictional interest in the case as they formally turned the matter over to someone else.

Jeremiah, like Abinadi, defended himself most effectively by raising the specter of “innocent blood,” the shedding of which would bring divine judgment upon the judges, the city, and all the people (Jeremiah 26:15). God was seen in Jeremiah’s world as a redeemer, and in this capacity he was seen theologically as carrying out the ancient legal duties borne by the avenger or redeemer of blood. Members of a murder victim’s family were obligated to avenge that death and to seek blood for blood (see Genesis 9:5–6; Numbers 35:19, 21). Cities of refuge were established to harbor those who had shed blood accidentally, unintentionally, or involuntarily, but anyone who consciously shed innocent blood was given no place to hide, especially from divine judgment. In the same way, Jeremiah argued that if these judges and officials, who ruled over the city, acted wrongly, their misconduct would be answered with a collective curse of divine

judgment upon the entire city. Likewise, because the people had initiated the action against Jeremiah, the entire populace could be held liable under the legal principle of collective responsibility that still had force and effect in Jeremiah's day even though a more distinct sense of personal accountability was also emerging in biblical thought at this time (Deuteronomy 24:16; Jeremiah 31:29–30; Ezekiel 18).³⁰

Consistent with the underlying rationales implicit in Jeremiah's legal defense, similar conceptual forces remained operative in Nephite jurisprudence for several ensuing centuries. The fear of shedding innocent blood arises on several occasions: Abinadi warned Noah that "if ye slay me ye will shed innocent blood" (Mosiah 17:10); Alma argued that Gideon's blood "would come upon us for vengeance" (Alma 1:13)—that is, would bring condemnation not only upon Alma but also upon all his people if they were not to reach a proper verdict and execute Gideon's slayer, Nehor. Alma assured Amulek that the "blood of the innocent shall stand as a witness against [their slayers], yea, and cry mightily against them at the last day" (Alma 14:11). It is understood in these texts that the entire populace would suffer from the miscarriage of justice by the leaders of the land; nevertheless, the doctrines of the Book of Mormon (for example, Alma 34:11) and the teachings of Lehi in particular (for example, 2 Nephi 1:5–22) stand at an important juncture in the transition from a legal system based primarily on corporate responsibility to a theology and ideology grounded more on individual responsibility.

Judicial Verdict

The officials seated in the trial of Jeremiah reached their decision and announced their verdict fairly quickly, finding Jeremiah innocent without much difficulty, having decided

that he had indeed spoken in the name of the Lord (Jeremiah 26:16). In particular, older members of the panel of judges remembered and cited as precedent the case of Micah the Morasthite, who had prophesied against Jerusalem in the days of Hezekiah. Micah had said that Zion would become a plowed field, Jerusalem would be left as heaps of rubble, and the temple site would revert to a wooded ridge as the high places of a forest (Micah 3:12); in other words, the holy city would become an unoccupied, obliterated site filled only with trees, either natural or perhaps involving pagan worship.

These warnings, also expressed in the form of a simile curse, echo again the literary form that was used so provocatively by the Book of Mormon prophet Abinadi. The threat that Jerusalem would be piled up in “heaps” may also be an indirect allusion to Deuteronomy 13:16, where the law of the apostate city provides that after a city has been warned and does not repent of its apostasy, it will be destroyed by the sword and the city shall remain a ruin forever. The powerful effect of this formulation of divine judgment in Jeremiah 26:18 may well indicate that the elders in Jeremiah’s day were conscious of the law of the apostate city in Deuteronomy 13:12–18, giving further legal emphasis to the prophetic warnings of Micah in the days of Hezekiah. The fate of an apostate city—that it would become a “heap” or rubble—was suitably remembered by Alma and associated with the complete destruction of the apostate inhabitants and buildings of the city of Ammonihah: “Yea, every living soul of the Ammonihahites was destroyed, and also their great city, which they said God could not destroy, because of its greatness. But behold, in one day it was left desolate; and the carcasses were mangled by dogs and wild beasts of the wilderness. Nevertheless, after many days their dead bodies were heaped up upon the face of the earth, and they were covered with a shallow covering” (Alma 16:9–11).³¹

The elders at the trial of Jeremiah encouraged the people at the gate to be like their predecessors, who had listened to Micah and who had repented and sought to please Jehovah (Jeremiah 26:19). Jeremiah was released, but apparently the case was a close one even after the arguments and wisdom of the older men had been presented. One of the officials in particular, Ahikam, favored the release of Jeremiah; without his support, the text speculates that Jeremiah probably would have been executed (Jeremiah 26:24). Presumably he would have been turned over to the people to be put to death, following the traditional legal practice in which those who had heard and witnessed the misconduct would carry out the execution (Leviticus 24:14).

Conclusion

The trial of Jeremiah was an important part of the cultural landscape in the world of Jerusalem in the late seventh century. Not only did this procedure impress itself deeply on Nephite judicial procedure for years to come, but the specter of Jeremiah's trial must have hung ominously over Lehi himself, for Lehi and his fellow prophets would certainly have been well aware of Jeremiah's narrow escape. When asked to deliver essentially the same message as Jeremiah had already delivered (1 Nephi 1:13–18), Lehi could well have expected to receive a similarly hostile and life-threatening reception.³² Only with great courage could he have gone forward, delivering his message while knowing full well that serious legal ramifications would almost certainly follow.

NOTES

1. Although it is unknown exactly when Lehi was born, it is clear that he would have been middle-aged or older during this time. See

John W. Welch, “Longevity of Book of Mormon People and the ‘Age of Man,’” *Journal of Collegium Aesculapium* 3 (1985): 34–45. See also John L. Sorenson, “The Composition of Lehi’s Family,” in *By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley*, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 34–45.

2. Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), 1:229–31. See Philip J. King, “Jerusalem,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 3:753.

3. On the grounds “for thinking that guilds of professional prophets” functioned at this time, see E. W. Heaton, *The Hebrew Kingdoms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 231–37.

4. The specific details of the legal trials in the Book of Mormon have been examined in the course materials I have used for several years in teaching law in the ancient Near East, Bible, and Book of Mormon at the J. Reuben Clark Law School at Brigham Young University. The publication of those materials is forthcoming.

5. Robert P. Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary* (London: SCM, 1986), 515–16.

6. John W. Welch and John F. Hall, *Charting the New Testament* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2002), chart 10-16, based on Bernard S. Jackson, “The Trials of Jesus and Jeremiah,” *BYU Studies* 32/4 (1992): 63–77.

7. For example, *Iliad*, 2.11–40, 181–210. Discussed in E. Theodore Mullen Jr., *The Divine Council in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature* (Chico, Calif.: Scholars, 1980), 209–10; John W. Welch, “The Calling of Lehi as a Prophet in the World of Jerusalem,” in this volume, pages 421–48.

8. See also 1 Nephi 8:36; Mosiah 18:1; 25:21; Alma 6:8; Helaman 10:4; and 3 Nephi 11:40.

9. For a demonstration that the dual agency of Moses as law-giver and prophet strongly connects these two domains, especially in Deuteronomy 34:10–12, see Stephen B. Chapman, *The Law and the Prophets* (Tübingen: Mohr, 2000), 125–31.

10. See, for example, 1 Nephi 15:20; 19:23; 2 Nephi 11:2, 8; Mosiah 14; and 3 Nephi 23:1.

11. On simile curses in general, see Mark J. Morrise, "Simile Curses in the Ancient Near East, Old Testament, and Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2/1 (1993): 124–38.
12. John Bright, *Jeremiah* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1979), 170.
13. Donald W. Parry, "Hebraisms and Other Ancient Peculiarities in the Book of Mormon," in *Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon*, ed. Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and John W. Welch (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2002), 156–59.
14. Herbert C. Brichto, *The Problem of "Curse" in the Hebrew Bible* (Philadelphia: Society of Biblical Literature, 1963), 4–13; Lyn M. Bechtel, "Shame as a Sanction of Social Control in Biblical Israel: Judicial, Political, and Social Shaming," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 49 (1991): 47–76; Paul Keim, "Mundane Malediction and Sacral Sanction in Biblical Law," unpublished paper presented in 1994 to the Biblical Law Group of the Society of Biblical Literature, 15–16.
15. Moses Seidel, "Parallels between Isaiah and Psalms (in Hebrew)," *Sinai* 38 (1955–56): 149–72, 272–80, 335–55. For a discussion of some other quotations in reverse order, see David Bokovoy, "Inverted Quotations in the Book of Mormon," *Insights* 13/9 (2000): 2.
16. Bright, *Jeremiah*, 170.
17. *Ibid.*
18. See also verse 11, in which "the priests and the prophets" declare to "the princes and to all the people, saying, This man is worthy to die; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears." The Hebrew for "worthy to die" is *mishpat mawet*, literally meaning "judgment of death." See William McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1996), 2:678.
19. Bright, *Jeremiah*, 170; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 512.
20. Bright, *Jeremiah*, 170; McKane, *Commentary on Jeremiah*, 2:680.
21. Discussed in Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 516.
22. See, for example, the conflicts in Helaman 6 and 16; 3 Nephi 1 and 7. Relationships between royalty and the temple were undoubtedly complex and changing. During some administrations, such as in the days of Solomon or Alma, the political and religious institutions

were aligned; during others, however, they conflicted. Their separate domains made such tension always possible.

23. Robert R. Wilson, "Israel's Judicial System in the Preexilic Period," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 74/2 (1983): 229–48, esp. 244–45.

24. McKane, *Commentary on Jeremiah*, 2:678; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 513.

25. De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 1:152–53, 155.

26. Ephraim Stern, "How Bad Was Ahab?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 19/2 (1993): 18–29.

27. See, for example, Alma 1:2; 4:17–18, 20; 30:33; 50:37, 39; and 62:2, 8.

28. Bright, *Jeremiah*, 172.

29. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 517.

30. Joel S. Kaminsky, *Corporate Responsibility in the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 116–78.

31. See further discussion by John W. Welch, "The Destruction of Ammonihah and the Law of Apostate Cities," in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 176–79.

32. See, for example, Jeremiah 26:20–23, which records the account of the prophet Urijah. He fled to Egypt after delivering his message but was found and returned to Jerusalem by King Jehoiakim, who put him to death; see also McKane, *Commentary on Jeremiah*, 2:669–77.